

LIBER Collection Security Conference

Friday, November 23rd 2012

Ladies and gentlemen,

Welcome to The Hague: the residence of the government of the Netherlands and the Peace Palace; the city of the Blue Shield and the protection of cultural heritage and hometown of National Library and National Archives of the Netherlands. I learned this is your 4th Conference after successful meetings in Copenhagen (2002), Paris (2004) and London (2008). I am really happy the preparation of this meeting was a co-production between Dutch National Library and National Archives. In terms of financial sponsoring and hosting the conference it is appropriate to thank the National Library.

The program addresses both the library and archival world. At least from two perspectives I am very interested in your experiences, findings and recommendations. As archivist of the Netherlands I am responsible for the safety and integrity of our national archival holdings, and better I make sure our institution is fit for that job! As president of the International Council on Archives (for librarians: the sister body of IFLA) I try to support initiatives to ensure a safe future for recorded memories worldwide. Not only the quality of paper and digital records, not only the climate, our repositories and the level of peace and tranquility in our societies influence the future of our collections. Also the behavior and reliability of our users, and.....our staff members. Any curator of a heritage collection denying or underestimating this, forgets one of the most important aspects of his or her job. It makes sense the job title of my colleagues in London and Edinburgh is "keeper of the records....". That is what we do, we "keep".

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All libraries and archival institutions deal with collection security issues. It is interesting to learn that the organizers of this conference still feel the need not only *to share information* but also *to increase awareness*. And I agree with them. Why is there still a need to increase awareness?

Are library and archives professionals not aware of the value of their collection?

Do they feel a need to share and to serve at any price?

Is it boring or maybe embarrassing to protect our collections? Do we feel that an atmosphere of trust between our visitors and researchers and ourselves is more important than an atmosphere of security for our collection? Maybe.

What I want to tell you is that I do not see a tension between an atmosphere of trust and one of security. On the contrary: clear and strong security procedures in our institutions support an atmosphere of trust, and any decent and trustworthy user/researchers will respect these procedures and support our effort to protect our collections against damage or loss.

The risk of theft and threats is a real one. This week one of our security officers had to stop one of the visitors of our reading room, taking some original documents from a classified file. What we learned this week is that our effort to train staff and to provide security procedures did work out. It was worth doing it, and is worth to continue it. Thanks to our security policy and the alertness of our staff, events like the one of this week are exceptional. Sometimes these incidents help to underpin the importance of a collection security policy.

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From next year on this network will work under the responsibility of CERL (Consortium of European Research Libraries) as the CERL Security Network. My congratulations for this acknowledgement. What I do hope is that recent cooperation between archives and libraries (like in Sweden) will continue and I am sure a lot of ICA members are also interested in new developments, like DNA marking of books and archives.

Ladies and gentlemen, once again: thank you for visiting The Hague and sharing your knowledge and experiences with us. Have a nice conference.

Martin Berendse

Director National Archives of the Netherlands

President International Council on Archives