

# A Blue Shield for the Protection of our Endangered Cultural Heritage



Proceedings of the Open Session  
co-organized by PAC Core Activity  
and the Section on National Libraries

translated and edited by  
Corine Koch



International Preservation Issues  
Number Four

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## PREFACE

During the past years, numerous and recurrent disasters have damaged an important part of the cultural heritage. Wars and ethnic or religious conflicts have also haphazardly or voluntarily destroyed it, hence the necessity of launching an information campaign so as to safeguard and protect, as far as possible, our memory in order to pass it on to future generations.

Considering that amnesia is not a path towards the future and that libraries, as well as other cultural institutions (museums, archives, monuments and sites...) are responsible for the care and preservation of documentary heritage, IFLA-PAC decided to devote an Open Session to that theme during IFLA General Conference in Glasgow (2002). The project was supported by the Section on National Libraries.

The first paper presented deals with the elaboration of the *Hague Convention (1954) for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict*. The second paper explains how four non-governmental organisations (ICA, ICOM, ICOMOS and IFLA) have decided to join efforts and share experience within the International Committee of the Blue Shield. Two other papers more specifically focus on two major disasters that struck the world's community: the 1966 floods in Florence and the terrorist attack of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001. A fifth paper shows how to mitigate the consequences of a disaster, or how to prevent them. It encourages managers of cultural institutions to pay more attention to threats and risks and should allow them to better master the measures necessary for elaborating an efficient disaster plan, adapted to each specific situation.

Let us mention that at the end of the IFLA Conference the Council adopted the following resolution: "Be it resolved that, considering the many risks that threaten the cultural heritage, all libraries responsible for collections of national significance should set up, test, implement and regularly up-date a disaster plan".

A poster on the Blue Shield was presented during the Poster Session and leaflets distributed, which was a way to emphasize the necessity for all actors in the cultural arena to work together for the safeguard of the heritage they share, to join the Blue Shield and to participate efficiently in its activities.

I wish to thank Corine Koch, PAC Programme Officer, for translating the papers, which allowed us to present a bilingual publication.

Marie-Thérèse Varlamoff  
IFLA-PAC Director

## THE 1954 HAGUE CONVENTION ON THE PROTECTION OF CULTURAL PROPERTY IN THE EVENT OF ARMED CONFLICT AND ITS 1954 AND 1999 PROTOCOLS

by Professor Patrick J. Boylan, City University London

Over a period of many centuries, in parallel with the slow emergence of the concepts of international diplomatic and humanitarian law, both the international community and national law began to accept the concept that in times of armed conflict important immovable cultural property, such as historic, religious and educational sites, buildings and zones, and movable cultural property, such as works of art, and museum, library and archive collections and the institutions caring for these were entitled to respect and protection from both direct acts of war, and associated risks, particularly looting and acts of vandalism.

A history of the evolution of the concept of cultural protection in times of war from the Crusades to the present-day has recently been published: P.J. Boylan, "The concept of cultural protection in times of armed conflict: from the crusades to the new millennium", pp. 43 - 108 in N. Brodie & K. Tubb (editors), 2002. *Illicit Antiquities* (London: Routledge), and this present short paper has been largely based on this.

However, despite the adoption of provisions in the developing more formalised international Laws of War from the second half of the 19th century onwards, the Second World War in Europe saw cultural destruction on an unprecedented scale, with the loss of many hundreds of thousands of historic buildings, whole historic zones and millions of items of movable cultural property. Faced with the risk of a further World War, and in the light of the experience of the Spanish Civil War, in the late 1930's the International Museums Office of the League of Nations, the predecessor of the present-day UNESCO-based International Council of Museums (ICOM), began work on a proposed international treaty aimed specifically at the protection of both immovable and movable cultural property in times of war.

Though work on this stopped in 1939 with the outbreak of war in Europe, this important pre-war work was taken up again by the Italian government initially, but the lead responsibility soon passed to UNESCO. Following a considerable period of preparatory work, including a detailed development of the pre-war proposals prepared by the Government of The Netherlands, a Diplomatic Conference was formally convened at The Hague in 1954. The result was the adoption on 14 May 1954 of *The Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, The Hague, 1954*, which was amplified by detailed *Regulations* for the practical implementation of the Convention (which form an integral part of it), and a separate *Protocol for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict*. Despite much debate and many differences of opinion on the details – particularly at the practical level, the 1954 Conference was clearly agreed on a number of impor-

tant principles, particularly the concept of a valid international interest of the world community in cultural property as part of the cultural heritage of all mankind, requiring special legal measures at the international level for its safeguarding.

The background and objectives to the Convention and Protocol are set out clearly at the beginning:

*“The High Contracting Parties,*

*Recognizing that cultural property has suffered grave damage during recent armed conflicts and that, by reason of the developments in the technique of warfare, it is in increasing danger of destruction;*

*Being convinced that damage to cultural property belonging to any people whatsoever means damage to the cultural heritage of all mankind, since each people makes its contribution to the culture of the world;*

*Considering that the preservation of the cultural heritage is of great importance for all peoples of the world and that it is important that this heritage should receive international protection;*

*Guided by the principles concerning the protection of cultural property during armed conflict, as established in the Conventions of The Hague of 1899 and of 1907 and in the Washington Pact of 15 April 1935;*

*Being of the opinion that such protection cannot be effective unless both national and international measures have been taken to organize it in time of peace;*

*Being determined to take all possible steps to protect cultural property;*

*Have agreed upon the following provisions:....”*

[Hague Convention 1954: Preamble]

The Convention itself first defines within the single term “**cultural property**” (“**biens culturels**” in the French version) three different conceptual categories:

1. both immovable and movable items which are themselves of intrinsic artistic, historic, scientific or other cultural value such as historic monuments, works of art or scientific collections,
2. premises used for the housing of movable cultural property, such as museums, libraries and archive premises, and
3. “**centres containing monuments**” such as important historic cities or archaeological zones. Protection is also offered by the Convention [Article 2] to temporary wartime shelters, to authorized means of emergency transport in times of hostilities, and to authorized specialist personnel: concepts derived directly from the protection for civilian air-raid shelters, hospitals and ambulances in relation to humanitarian protection in the Geneva Conventions.

The language of the 1954 Convention is very uncomplicated in relation to the second of the two key concepts of its title and purpose: that of “**protection**” of cultural property. This is simply defined as comprising “**the safeguarding and respect for such property**”. However, the subsidiary definitions (“**safe-guarding**” and “**respect**”) are rather odd. “**Safeguarding**” is used not in the obvious sense of guarding and keeping safe that which is safeguarded (in this case cultural property) at all times, including the times of greatest danger (e.g. in this case during armed conflicts). Instead, in the Convention “**safeguarding**” is explicitly defined as referring only to peacetime preparations for the possible effects of war or other armed conflicts:

*“The High Contracting Parties undertake to prepare in time of peace for the safeguarding of cultural property situated within their own territory against the foreseeable effects of an armed conflict, by taking such measures as they consider appropriate.” [Article 3]*

Protection in times of war or internal armed conflict is instead merely termed “**respect**”; a term that, at least in common English parlance, falls far short of the term “**protection**” used in the overall definition. “**Respect**” is defined in some detail, though with the main emphasis on “**refraining from**” defined activities, rather than on the taking of active measures for “**safeguarding**” during actual hostilities:

*“The High Contracting Parties undertake to respect cultural property situated within their own territory as well as within the territory of other High Contracting Parties by refraining from any use of the property and its immediate surroundings or of the appliances in use for its protection for purposes which are likely to expose it to destruction or damage in the event of armed conflict, and by refraining from any act of hostility directed against such property.” [Article 4(1)]*

Under customary international law the general staff and individual field commanders of invading and occupying forces have an established responsibility not merely to refrain from unlawful acts (“**respect**”) but to ensure adequate military and/or civil police etc. control over not only their own forces, but also irregular forces and civilians within the occupied territory so as also to “**safeguard**” (in the Hague Convention sense) both the lives and property of non-combatants. Indeed, in the current discussions about possible war crime cases in ex-Yugoslavia, the issue of field command and control over irregular forces and civilians in relation to the wilful destruction of property is seen as an important issue. It therefore seems reasonable to require attacking and occupying forces not merely to “**respect**” but also to “**safeguard**” positively cultural property in so far as this is practicable. However, despite much discussion and counter-argument at the 1954 Hague Conference all of these obligations were qualified by the retention of the long-established, but by then already controversial, doctrine of “**military necessity**” for the benefit of both the attacking and defending powers:

*“The obligations mentioned in paragraph 1 of the present Article may be waived only in cases where military necessity imperatively requires such a waiver.” [Article 4 (2)]*

Few topics in relation to the humanitarian laws of war have attracted more comment and discussion than the exception for “**military necessity**”, and the limitations that international law places on this. It is generally accepted that the doctrine of “**military necessity**” by no means gives unlimited and unrestrained power to either attacking or defending forces. However, the moment that the enemy uses an otherwise protected monument or other feature for a military purpose, or indeed places any form of the “**apparatus of war**” (in the widest sense) in proximity to a protected place, it immediately loses its protection under the 1954 Convention, and only regains protection when the military use ends. If this is not done, then no matter how important the feature, it becomes a legitimate military target.

The general requirement of “**respect**” (subject of course to imperative “**military necessity**”) was further clarified by two further clauses in the 1954 Convention requiring effective measures against theft and pillage, and prohibiting reprisals against cultural property, respectively:

*“3. The High Contracting Parties further undertake to prohibit, prevent and, if necessary, put a stop to any form of theft, pillage or misappropriation of, and any acts of vandalism directed against, cultural property. They shall refrain from requisitioning movable cultural property situated in the territory of another High Contracting Party.*

*4. They shall refrain from any act directed by way of reprisals against cultural property.”* [Article 4]

There is also an express prohibition of reprisals or otherwise prohibited acts whereby, even if another High Contracting Party fails to comply with the Convention, counter-action is still not allowed:

*“5. No High Contracting Party may evade the obligations incumbent upon it under the present Article, in respect of another High Contracting Party, by reason of the fact that the latter has not applied the measures of safeguard referred to in Article 3.”* [Article 4]

Other important obligations accepted by the States Parties to the 1954 Convention are the provisions relating to Occupation. These require any Contracting State in occupation of all or part of the territory of another Party to support so far as possible the established structure of cultural property protection in the occupied lands. However, should the competent national authorities be unable to handle the tasks the occupying power itself must “**take the most necessary measures of preservation**” [Article 5]. This is followed by a rather obscurely worded provision that:

*“Any High Contracting Party whose government is considered their legitimate government by members of a resistance movement, shall, if possible, draw their attention to the obligation to comply with those provisions of the Convention dealing with respect for cultural property.”* [Article 5]

The other fundamental concept of the Convention is the obligation of States Parties in respect of peacetime preparation for the protection of cultural property, defined as “**safeguarding**”:

*“The High Contracting Parties undertake to prepare in time of peace for the safeguarding of cultural property situated within their own territory against the foreseeable effects of an armed conflict, by taking such measures as they consider appropriate.”* [Article 3].

◆ Chapter I of the Convention concludes with important provisions requiring the peacetime training of the armed forces:

*“1. The High Contracting Parties undertake to introduce in time of peace into their military regulations or instructions such provisions as may ensure observance of the present Convention, and to foster in the members of their armed forces a spirit of respect for the culture and cultural property of all peoples.*

*2. The High Contracting Parties undertake to plan or establish in peace-time, within their armed forces, services or specialist personnel whose purpose will be to*

*secure respect for cultural property and to co-operate with the civilian authorities responsible for safeguarding it.*” [Article 7]

◆ Chapter II [Articles 8-11] of the 1954 Hague Convention introduces and regulates the concept of “**Special Protection**”. Under this UNESCO, after consulting all High Contracting Parties may place on a special list at the request of the state concerned, a limited number of temporary refuges or shelters for movable cultural property, and also “**centres containing monuments and other immovable property of very great importance**”, subject to the defending State being both able and willing to demilitarize the location and its surroundings.

◆ Chapter III provides protection and immunity, modelled closely on that granted to ambulances under the Hague and Geneva Conventions, for official transport used in both internal and international transfers of cultural property, subject to prior authorization and international supervision of the movement [1954 Convention Articles 12-14; Regulations Articles 17–19].

◆ Chapters IV-VII cover a wide range of provisions requiring belligerents to provide for the protection of authorized personnel engaged in the protection of cultural property [Article 16], details relating to the use of the official emblem of Hague Convention (a blue and white shield), and issues relating to the interpretation and application of the Convention [Articles 15-18]. Again all of these are closely modelled on parallel provisions relating to humanitarian protection found in the 1949 Geneva Conventions.

Of particular, and growing, importance was the decision of the 1954 Intergovernmental Conference to follow Common Article 3 of the 1949 Geneva Conventions, and extend the protection of cultural property beyond the traditional definition of “**war**” into the difficult area of internal armed conflicts, such as civil wars, “**liberation**” wars and armed independence campaigns, and – probably – to major armed terrorist campaigns:

*“1. In the event of an armed conflict not of an international character occurring within the territory of one of the High Contracting Parties, each party to the conflict shall be bound to apply, as a minimum, the provisions of the present Convention which relate to respect for cultural property.*

*2. The parties to the conflict shall endeavour to bring into force, by means of special agreements, all or part of the other provisions of the present Convention.*

*3. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization may offer its services to the parties to the conflict.*

*4. The application of the preceding provisions shall not affect the legal status of the parties to the conflict.”* [Article 19]

In the years since the adoption of the 1954 Convention non-international armed conflicts, particularly those relating to internal strife along national, regional, ethnic, linguistic or religious lines, have become an increasingly common feature of the world order and in losses of monuments, museums, libraries and other cultural repositories. A cynic might argue that possibly the exploding “**heritage**” movement that has developed in almost all parts of the world in the past half-century has done far too good a job in promoting the understanding of the cultural heritage, including museums, monuments, sites, archives and libraries, and in particular in presenting these as proud symbols of the cultural, religious or ethnic identity of nations, peoples and communities. Whatever the

reason, it is clear that the period since the end of World War Two has seen deliberate iconoclastic attacks on, and destruction of, cultural heritage symbols unprecedented in modern times, more reminiscent of the religious conflicts of the Crusades, the Protestant revolution and religious wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

So far as dissemination of the 1954 Convention is concerned, the High Contracting Parties undertake to do so widely within their countries, certainly among the military, and if possible to the civilian population [Article 25], to communicate their national translations (beyond the French, English, Russian and Spanish texts of the 1954 Hague Conference) to other Parties (through UNESCO), and to submit periodic reports to UNESCO at least once every four years on the measures being taken to implement the Convention [Article 26]. In fact it is evident that only a small minority of High Contracting Parties have made serious efforts to disseminate knowledge of the Convention more widely within their countries, and the same is true of the submission of the required periodic reports [Boylan 1993: 43, 89-90, 199-200].

Bearing in mind the importance of measures for enforcement, and indeed the Nuremberg War Crimes Tribunal rulings, the provisions for enforcement action and sanctions were remarkably weak and rather vague:

*“The High Contracting Parties undertake to take within the framework of their ordinary criminal jurisdiction, all necessary steps to prosecute and impose penal or disciplinary sanctions upon those persons, of whatever nationality, who commit or order to be committed a breach of the present Convention.”* [Article 28]

The concluding Articles of the Convention dealt with a range of mainly technical legal issues, including a provision permitting the application of the Convention to colonies and other dependent territories, formalizing the relationship of the new Convention to existing general laws of war, and provisions relating to both individual denunciation by a High Contracting Party and for inter-governmental revision of the Convention and Regulations [Articles 28-40].

The 1954 Hague Regulations, which form an integral part of the Convention, set out first [Chapter I, Articles 1-10] the practical procedures to be followed in relation to the compiling by the Director-General of UNESCO of an international list of persons qualified to carry out the functions of Commissioners-General, and procedures to be followed in the event of armed conflict, including the arrangements for the appointment of cultural representatives, Commissioners-General and the responsibilities of the Protecting Powers (appointed in accordance with the Hague 1907 and Geneva 1949 principles).

The second part [Chapter II, Articles 11-16] of the Regulations deals with the practical arrangements and procedures for the granting and registration of **“Special Protection”**, including the notification of all proposals to every High Contracting Party and arrangements for the submitting of objections and for eventual arbitration on these if necessary, as well as provisions for the cancelling of **“Special Protection”** where appropriate.

Chapter III of the Regulations [Articles 17-19] sets out in some detail the procedures for the transport of movable cultural property to a place of safety (possibly abroad) for protection, with the approval of the neutral

Commissioner-General overseeing cultural heritage matters during the conflict; while the final part, Chapter IV, regulates the use of the Official Emblem and the identity cards and other identifying markers of persons duly authorized to undertake official duties in relation to the implementation of the Convention [Articles 20 - 21].

At a comparatively late stage in the 1954 Hague Conference proceedings it became clear that there was an irreconcilable split. The majority of Delegations wanted to include in the new Convention binding controls over transfers of movable cultural property within war zones and occupied territories. However, a number of countries argued strongly against this position, arguing variously that such measures would either damage the international art and antiquities trade, interfere with private property rights within their countries or, in most cases, both.

The final compromise over these objections was to separate out such measures into a separate legal instrument: the Protocol for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (now known as the First Protocol following the March 1999 Diplomatic Conference to update the Convention – see below). The 1954 Protocol has two unambiguous purposes. First, a State Party to the Protocol undertakes to take active measures to prevent all exports of movable cultural property as defined in the Hague Convention from any territory which it may occupy during an armed conflict. Second, all High Contracting Parties undertake to seize and hold to the end of hostilities any cultural property from war zones which has been exported in contravention of the first principle of the Protocol. In marked contrast with the position taken by the United States and Soviet Union at the Berlin (Potsdam) Conference of July–August 1945, less than a decade earlier, the Protocol also provides that such cultural property shall never be retained after the end of hostilities as war reparations.

The 1954 Intergovernmental Conference was attended by official delegates of a majority of the Sovereign States in membership of the United Nations at that date, and most participating States signed the Final Act over the following months. However the number of States that formally ratified the Convention and Protocol was disappointing. Forty years on from the adoption of the 1954 Hague Convention 82 countries (less than half of the United Nations member states) had become parties to the Convention itself, and of these 14 had accepted only the main Convention, while rejecting the additional protection offered to movable cultural property by the Protocol. Thanks to a major effort by UNESCO, the situation has improved considerably over recent years, though there are still substantial gaps. In particular, few African or Latin American countries have adopted the 1954 Convention, while the failure of three of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council – China, United Kingdom and United States – to ratify the Convention undoubtedly greatly weakens its authority and effectiveness.

Those drafting the 1954 Convention probably envisaged war in terms of well-defined international conflicts between structured and well-disciplined military commands on the pattern of the two World Wars. However, even in historic terms, this was probably a mistake: more than half of all the armed

conflicts resulting in fatalities that occurred between 1820 and 1945 were mainly internal rather than external conflicts, or mixed conflicts, and certainly, the great majority of the perhaps almost two hundred armed conflicts that have occurred in the world since 1954 have been sub-conventional and guerrilla wars. Even in the case of more organized and centrally directed military operations involving States or territory subject to the 1954 Hague Convention and Protocol, only rarely were its principles and detailed terms honoured by all parties during conflicts and subsequent occupations, including those affecting many regions of great cultural heritage.

There were, however, some important advances in the protection of cultural property more generally during the 1970's and subsequently. For example, following long and difficult negotiations the 1970 General Conference of UNESCO adopted the *Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property* (UNESCO 1985), which aimed to outlaw the widespread trafficking in both smuggled and stolen works of art and other cultural property. Two years later UNESCO adopted the *World Heritage Convention* (1972), which provided for the designation of sites and zones of pre-eminent world importance as "**World Heritage Sites**". This Convention covers both cultural and, for the first time, natural sites, which included the important provision that States Parties to it must actively promote respect for the national and international patrimony throughout the population, and to establish and maintain adequate systems and organizational structures for the necessary practical measures.

Public concern and horror mounted over the events in disintegrating Yugoslavia from late 1990 onwards, particularly the extended sieges and bombardments of Vukovar and the World Heritage city of Dubrovnik, both in Croatia, and then of the historic centres of Sarajevo and Mostar (among many other places) in Bosnia Herzegovina. By this time UNESCO and a number of key member governments had already turned their attention to apparent ineffectiveness of the 1954 Hague Convention, and had decided to embark upon a major review of the treaty. The government of The Netherlands offered UNESCO additional funds out of the Dutch budget for projects supporting the United Nation's International Decade of International Law, 1990–99 to supplement UNESCO's own budget for work on the Hague Convention, and using these funds in September 1992 UNESCO asked me if I would carry out such a review of the 1954 Hague Convention, Regulations and Protocol, not so much from the strictly legal standpoint, but to try to identify the practical reasons for its apparent ineffectiveness in so many cases.

My report was considered first in draft form at a meeting of experts from nineteen countries held in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Hague, in June 1993, where the total of more than 40 recommendations addressed to governments, UNESCO, the United Nations and non-governmental organizations were reviewed. The finalized version of the Report in both English and French editions was presented to the autumn meeting of the UNESCO Executive Board, which agreed to its publication and widespread distribution free of charge [Boylan 1993]. It was also agreed to invite all States Parties to the 1954

Convention to a formal meeting of States during the next UNESCO General Conference to discuss the issues raised, and to redouble UNESCO's efforts to persuade more States to adopt the 1954 Convention and Protocol, and all countries that had not ratified or otherwise adopted them to do so without further delay, a move to which there was a moderately encouraging response.

In the same year, discussions were initiated by Dr Leo van Nispen on behalf of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) on the establishment of a kind of "**Red Cross**" for the Cultural Heritage, proposing the title "**International Committee of the Blue Shield**" – the official symbol of cultural heritage protection under the 1954 Hague Convention being a blue and white shield. After initial meetings and seminars involving monuments and sites and museum and gallery specialists and organizations, particularly ICOMOS and the International Council of Museums (ICOM), Blue Shield (ICBS) was broadened to bring in the UNESCO-recognized bodies for the other two areas of cultural property protected by the Hague Convention; the International Council on Archives (ICA) and the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA). The ICBS was finally formally constituted as a standing emergency co-ordination and response committee of the four non-governmental organizations in 1996, with the two specially relevant inter-governmental organizations, UNESCO and the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration, Rome, (ICCROM), as the closest possible partners and as permanent observers at all ICBS meetings. Following this there have been a growing number of moves to parallel the rapidly emerging co-operation and solidarity between the four ICBS professional bodies at the international level by the development of national Blue Shield organizations, beginning with Belgium and Canada.

After two preliminary meetings of experts in 1993 and 1994, during the 1995 biennial General Conference of UNESCO, a meeting of States Parties to the 1954 Hague Convention was convened, with all other member States of UNESCO and the UN (plus representatives of key non-governmental organizations) invited to attend as observers. This meeting supported the moves towards some kind of updating of the Convention, as recommended in my 1993 Report and by the two expert meetings, either by the revision of the Convention itself, or by the adoption of a new International Instrument linked to it, such as an Additional Protocol, under the international law of treaties. This in turn was followed by a further experts' drafting meeting hosted by the government of Austria and then a further meeting of States Parties and observers during the next UNESCO General Conference in 1997.

In the course of the latter meeting the Government of The Netherlands formally announced that it intended to invite all UNESCO and UN member states to a formal Diplomatic Conference in The Hague to review and, if felt fit, revise or supplement the 1954 Hague Convention, as a further contribution to the World Decade of International Law. After some slippage in the Netherlands' provisional timetable due to delays in completing the negotiations for the establishment of a Permanent International Criminal Court, finally agreed by a Diplomatic Conference in Rome in May–June 1998, invitations were

issued in late 1998 by the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs calling a two week Diplomatic Conference to revise or supplement the 1954 Hague Convention.

This Conference opened on 15 March 1999 in the Congress Centre, The Hague. This was a specially significant, even symbolic, location, being just a short distance from the Peace Palace where the original 1954 Convention had been drawn up, and on the same city block as the Courts of the International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia, where criminal trials of men accused of both humanitarian and cultural war crimes were taking place. The 84 national delegations participating were made up of more than 300 diplomats and legal, military and cultural experts, and there were also representatives from both inter-governmental and non-governmental international organizations, including the International Committee of the Red Cross. The Conference Secretariat was provided by UNESCO's Division of Cultural Heritage, with much support from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Also officially accredited to the Conference were the four leading UNESCO-linked international non-governmental organizations: the International Council on Archives (ICA), the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), the International Council of Museums (ICOM) and the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), through a joint delegation under the auspices of the International Committee of the Blue Shield (ICBS). This delegation was led by myself, and supported from time to time by Manus Brinkman, Secretary-General of ICOM, and Mrs. Marie-Thérèse Varlamoff, the IFLA representative on the ICBS.

After two gruelling weeks, 15–26 March 1999, during which things often looked very bleak because of deep-seated differences between States, it was decided to adopt a new supplementary legal instrument to the 1954 Hague *Convention on the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict*, in the form of an Additional Protocol, named the Second Protocol (the original 1954 Protocol being renamed the First Protocol). The new measure was formally adopted by unanimous consensus of the Conference on the evening of Friday 26 March, with the Heads of all national Delegations taking part in the Diplomatic Conference signing the formal “**Final Act**” [Boylan 1999]. However, this does not automatically commit any State then to proceed to sign and ratify the new treaty itself. National legislative and other legal procedures vary considerably from country to country, and usually require often prolonged consideration at the political level (and in this case consideration of the military aspects also) and, in most cases, major new primary legislation at the national level.

The new Protocol represents much the greatest advance in international cultural protection measures for decades – certainly since the 1972 World Heritage Convention, and probably since the original 1954 Hague Convention. It is also the most substantial development in the general field of International Humanitarian Law since the drawing up of the Geneva Convention Additional Protocols of 1977.

After the necessary preamble and definitions in Chapter 1, the new Chapter 2 greatly clarifies and amplifies the provisions of Hague 1954 in respect of “**protection**” in general. There are now much clearer explanations of, for example, the very limited cases in which “**imperative military necessity**” can

be claimed in order to allow an attack on cultural property – in effect substantially reducing the possible use of this (a long-standing problem dating back to the original 1899 and 1907 Hague Laws of War). The obligations of States in relation to peacetime preparation and training have also been clarified and expanded, giving amongst many other things a major emphasis on the obligation to develop adequate inventories and catalogues of both monuments and sites and museum collections. The Chapter also clarifies (and limits very considerably) what an occupying power may do in relation to cultural property within occupied territories, placing very narrow limits on archaeological excavations and the alteration or change of use of cultural property, and requiring the occupying power to prohibit and prevent all illicit export, removal or change of ownership of cultural property.

Chapter 3 creates a new category of “**Exceptional Protection**” for the most important sites, monuments and institutions. This will be an international designation publicised in advance (rather along the lines of the World Heritage List under the 1972 *World Heritage Convention*). The detailed provisions restrict even further than the new Chapter 2 provisions the 1954 “**Imperative Military Necessity**” exemption: even in the case of gross misuse by the enemy, it will be lawful to attack or retaliate only if the cultural property is currently being actually used in direct support of the fighting etc., and even then there must be no reasonable alternative. Further, any military response must always be proportionate to the risk and strictly limited in both nature and time.

One of the two areas in which there is a very major advance in international humanitarian law and international criminal law is the new Chapter 4. This establishes a range of five new explicit crimes in relation to breaches of cultural protection and respect contrary to either the original 1954 Convention, the First Protocol, or the cultural protection provisions of the 1977 Additional Geneva Protocols. States adopting the 1999 Protocol will have to legislate for these and in normal cases will be expected to prosecute such crimes in their normal civilian or military courts. However, there is also provision for universal international jurisdiction – giving the possibility of criminal prosecution anywhere else in the world, at least within a State Party to the Second Protocol, and the most serious new crimes will be extraditable. These provisions, perhaps above all others, will require major new legislation at the national level in the case of each country adopting it, and for this reason alone the process of ratification will inevitably be a relatively slow one.

Chapter 5 deals with non-international conflicts, such as civil wars and internal “**liberation**” conflicts, and aims to clarify and strengthen considerably the Hague 1954 provisions, which above all others been consistently ignored by rebel and other irregular forces, as well as by the defending national forces at times. The “**cultural war crimes**” provisions (including universal international jurisdiction) of Chapter 4 will apply unambiguously to such conflicts in future. The other major advance and significant innovation is Chapter 6, which establishes for the first time permanent institutional arrangements in respect of the application of the 1954 Convention. There will be two-yearly meetings of the States Parties (compared with a 22 year gap between the 1973 and 1995 meetings!), and the States will elect a twelve member “**Committee for the protection of cultural property in the event of armed conflict**” which will meet

at least once a year, and more frequently in cases of urgency. The Committee will have a duty to monitor and promote generally, and consider applications for both “**Exceptional Protection**” and financial assistance from a (voluntary contributions) Fund to be established under the Protocol.

For the first time there will be a clear role for “**civil society**” – represented by the non-governmental sector – within the Hague Convention system. The International Committee of the Blue Shield (by name) and its constituent “**eminent professional organizations**”, i.e. the four UNESCO-recognized world NGOs for archives (ICA), libraries (IFLA), monuments and sites (ICOMOS), and museums (ICOM), together with ICCROM and the International Committee of the Red Cross, will have important standing advisory roles in relation to the Committee and the regular meetings of States Parties. They will also be consulted on proposals such as the new “**Exceptional will have Protection**” designation under Chapter 3, and an advisory role in the implementation of the new Second Protocol Committee and its work at all levels, (paralleling directly the official role that ICOMOS and ICCROM have had under the World Heritage Convention since 1972).

Chapter 7 strengthens the 1954 provision in relation to information, training etc. about the Convention, Protocols and general principles of cultural protection. There is now a call for States to raise awareness among the general public and within the education system, not just among military personnel and cultural sector officials, as in the 1954 text (This important development had to be non-binding in the final text because of the large number of federated States where the central government no longer controls or influences directly the school curriculum – though there remains a further important recognition of the importance and role attached to “**civil society**” and public opinion nevertheless).

As indicated above, with highly important constitutional issues to be addressed at the national level, such as the further extension of the principle of international jurisdiction for the most serious of the new, explicitly designated, war crimes, it will take a significant length of time for each country to go through the process of first gaining national government approval for the principles of the Second Protocol, and then legislating to bring it into effect. Further, the Protocol will only come into effect when at least twenty States have deposited formal instruments of ratification with the Director-General of UNESCO – a process that will clearly take several years. It was however, encouraging to see that by Monday 17 May 1999, during the week of celebrations to mark the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1899 Hague Peace Conference and Convention, and less than two months after the Diplomatic Conference, and now (June 2002) 44 States are signatories and 12 (or the required minimum of 20 to bring it into force) have formally ratified the Second Protocol, so there is every reason to hope that the new Hague Convention regime will be operating by the time of the Convention’s 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2004.

*Patrick Boylan directed major regional museums, arts and archives services in England for 23 years before becoming Professor of Heritage Policy and Management at City University London in 1990. A former Vice-President of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) and through this a founder member of ICBS, he has been working on the protection of culture in times of war for UNESCO, governments and other bodies for more than 10 years.*

Translator’s note: special thanks to Michèle Battisti (ADBS) to whom I’ve borrowed a few ideas of translation.

## THE BLUE SHIELD: SYMBOL OF CULTURAL HERITAGE PROTECTION

*by George MacKenzie, National Archives of Scotland*

Our vision is that in time the Blue Shield symbol should become for cultural heritage protection what the Red Cross is for humanitarian protection.

The Blue Shield is the symbol specified in the 1954 Hague Convention for marking cultural sites to give them protection from attack in the event of armed conflict. It is also the name of an international committee set up in 1996 to work to protect the world's cultural heritage threatened by wars and natural disasters.

The International Committee of the Blue Shield (ICBS) brings together the knowledge, experience and international networks of four expert organisations: the International Council on Archives (ICA), the International Council of Museums (ICOM), the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), and the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA). These represent an unrivalled body of expertise to advise and assist in responding to events such as war in former Yugoslavia or Afghanistan, hurricane damage in Central America or earthquakes in the Far East. ICBS is international, independent and professional.

The ICBS works for the protection of the world's cultural heritage, in particular by:

- ◆ encouraging safeguarding and respect for cultural property and promoting risk preparedness;
- ◆ training experts at national and regional level to prevent, control and recover from disasters;
- ◆ facilitating international responses to threats or emergencies threatening cultural property;
- ◆ co-operating with other bodies including UNESCO, the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

## RADENCI DECLARATION

A seminar was held in Radenci, Slovenia, in November 1998, to train personnel to intervene following armed conflict or natural disasters. Participants from 12 countries, drawn from museums, archives, libraries and historic buildings, spent a week discussing strategies and tactics for dealing with disasters. Case studies on war damage in Bosnia and Croatia, flood damage in Poland, earthquake damage in Italy, together with the experiences of Dutch and Swedish military personnel, including a former UN commander in Bosnia, provided the raw material for the seminar, which was targeted at personnel in Eastern and Southern Europe.

The seminar drafted a joint statement, to be known as the Radenci Declaration calling for:

- ◆ the protection, safeguard and respect of cultural property - in both normal and exceptional situations - to be included in national policies and programmes;
- ◆ strategies to assess and reduce risk and to improve response capacity in the event of threat to cultural property to be developed;
- ◆ institutions caring for the cultural heritage, to integrate risk preparedness and management within their activities.

## NEW PROTOCOL TO THE HAGUE CONVENTION

The ICBS has actively worked for the revision of the 1954 Hague Convention for protecting cultural heritage in armed conflict, believing that the preservation of cultural property is of great importance for all peoples of the world. ICBS welcomes the new Protocol agreed in The Hague in 1999, which gives clearer and increased protection, and extends the ability to prosecute those who breach it.

The new Protocol also established an inter-governmental committee of states to monitor and review the operation of the Convention. UNESCO is responsible for organising the committee. The ICBS, together with the ICRC and ICCROM, is given a specific advisory role to this new committee. The recognition of ICBS in the new Protocol is unprecedented, and adds weight to its work in national and international circles. ICBS regularly surveys the world's trouble spots for cultural heritage and identifies areas for co-operation, in conjunction with the other international bodies.

## TO MARK OR NOT TO MARK?

One question arises frequently in discussion: does using the Blue Shield symbol help to protect the building or site, or does it, as some recent experience indicates, mark it out as a target for hostile forces? Whilst recognising the danger, the ICBS is strongly in favour of marking, since without it the full protection of international law will not be available to cultural sites and their contents. After all, the Red Cross symbol has on occasions been attacked in 20 century conflicts, yet there is no suggestion that it should not be used.

## NATIONAL BLUE SHIELD COMMITTEES

It is vital that the international initiative is taken up and supported by local initiatives. Blue Shield Committees have already been formed in a number of countries including Belgium, France, the Netherlands, Poland and the United Kingdom.

ICBS works to encourage the formation of other national Blue Shield committees, drawing in the different cultural heritage organisations and institutions. To facilitate this, ICBS has established a series of principles which all national committees must respect. The first is that the different organisations should support joint actions with each other, which will increase their effectiveness and avoid duplication of effort. Second, each of the organisations represented on the committee must respect the independence of the others. Third, the committee must remain neutral, avoiding political controversy, and also maintaining balance between the interests of the different organisations. Fourth, the committee must uphold the highest professional standards, including mutual respect for the professional values of other members. Fifth, the committee must respect the diversity of cultural identity. Sixth, the committee must always work on a not for profit basis.

National committees can multiply effectiveness by bringing together the different professions, local and national governments, the emergency services and the armed forces. They can provide a forum to improve emergency preparedness by sharing experiences and exchanging information. They can provide a focus for raising national awareness of the threats to cultural heritage. They can also promote the ratification and implementation by national governments of the Hague Convention and associated Protocols.

The great strength of Blue Shield is that it is cross-sectoral, bringing together professions and institutions across the cultural spectrum. By pooling their expertise, and drawing in military authorities and emergency services, the Blue Shield offers a powerful model for managing disaster risks at a national level.

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## DISASTER PLANS AS A PRIORITY: DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

*by Marie-Thérèse Varlamoff, Director of IFLA Preservation and Conservation Core Activity (PAC)*

Everyone, even those who are not librarians, keep in mind major disasters such as the fire of the Library of Alexandria, the floods in Florence of 1966 or the destruction of the Library of Sarajevo. Unfortunately, there is a wide range of examples: today, the increasing number of civil wars, ethnic conflicts and acts of terrorism daily threaten our cultural heritage as the two last world wars did it in the past. We must also include natural disasters, some of which are unpredictable, and human mistakes that open the way to numerous and unfortunately recurring disasters.

### 1 - VARIOUS TYPES OF DISASTERS

Usually, a distinction is made between natural disasters and damages caused by man. However, I do not think that this distinction is the most relevant; actually, we often notice, in both groups, the same causes and consequences. So I will just rapidly point out the most frequent types of disasters that is to say:

- ◆ fires,
- ◆ floods or water damage,
- ◆ chemical attacks,
- ◆ power failures,
- ◆ time damages.

Those disasters are due:

- ◆ to the intent to destroy
  - war
  - terrorism
  - vandalism
- ◆ to carelessness
  - building deficiencies
  - maintenance deficiencies
  - poor storage conditions and poor environmental control
- ◆ or more simply to nature, in which case, they are called natural disasters:
  - earthquakes,
  - landslides,
  - floods,
  - hurricanes, storms, lightning,
  - volcanic eruptions,
  - tsunamis.

## 2-WHAT TO DO IN CASE OF DISASTER?

What can we do when confronted with this range of potential risks?

Of course, it is impossible to:

- ◆ get rid of all the factors relating to specific conflicts in which the cultural heritage becomes a target for destruction. That was the case, not so long ago, during the ethnic conflicts in Kosovo or Sierra Leone (not to mention others) where the destruction of either the Library or the Archives was the main goal.

It is also impossible to:

- ◆ stop natural disasters. What to do when you are facing an earthquake, a volcanic eruption or a huge rise in the water level?

But, obviously, even if we are powerless in front of the outburst of terrestrial and celestial forces, we still have the possibility to:

- ◆ take all known and possible measures to minimize the consequences of such disasters.

In conclusion, we need to set up a disaster plan including preventive measures to take, long before the disaster strikes, and relating to the building, the equipment, the staff training, the emergency response...

## 3-WHAT IS A DISASTER PLAN?

A disaster plan is a written document (this point is very important) which points out the measures to take in case of disaster, and the emergency procedures to adhere to when the disaster strikes. It includes the list of emergency procedures and recommendations, as well as updated lists of resource people to contact when the crisis arises, of suppliers and service providers. The disaster plan must also point out the collections for priority rescue and contain the building floor-plans mentioning the location of these collections and technical strategic sensitive points (electrical, cut-off and water supply points, fire extinguishers...)

### 3-1 People involved

The disaster plan is intended for the entire staff of the institution; but it will not be efficient unless it is accepted by directors. Different members of the staff will be provided with specific responsibilities; this shall be done according to their abilities, not to their status. That is why a storage area employee who has been working at the library for twenty years is more qualified than a recently appointed deputy director to select water-damaged items to be evacuated from the shelves. It would be useless as well for this director himself to proceed to the rescue of the documents. His job is to coordinate operations with the emergency services (firemen for example) and to keep in touch with the local (mayor), district (prefect) or national (minister) services.

If the managerial team is not involved from the very beginning in the working-out and implementation of the disaster plan, we run the risk of losing the necessary funding:

- ◆ to buy emergency equipment supplies,
- ◆ to change certain elements of the structure and provide the buildings with appropriate equipment,

and we will not have the possibility to achieve:

- ◆ staff training (response, handling of damaged collections...);
- ◆ compilation of the list of documents for priority rescue;
- ◆ contacts with local authorities and emergency services;
- ◆ essential daily updating of the disaster plan.

### 3-2 Lists

The disaster plan will include the list of:

- ◆ phone numbers of emergency units;
- ◆ people in the library who might be able to help in case of disaster and the extent of their intervention. The list will also mention what kind of responsibility they will be given, namely the composition of the various teams and how people can be contacted rapidly (name / address, home, office / phone-numbers: home, office, mobile);
- ◆ external staff capable of providing help;
  - staff working in other neighbouring cultural institutions,
  - consultants,
  - volunteers,
- ◆ suppliers (cardboards, blotting papers, gloves, towels...);
- ◆ service providers (transporters, freezer-companies, decontamination centers...).

### 3-3 Budgetary and administrative measures

The plan also includes budgetary and administrative measures to take and to adhere to in case of emergency as well as copies of insurance contracts. Finally, it gives a range of details about rescue procedures and staff instructions:

- ◆ location of collections,
- ◆ rescue priorities,
- ◆ handling of damaged collections according to the various types of disasters and documents.

### 3-4 Premises

Moreover, the disaster plan includes plans of the premises, the technical areas (water, electric power, extinguishers, emergency exits).

While the disaster plan is being drafted, it is essential to provide oneself with the material means which will allow the institution to cope efficiently and as soon as possible with a disaster, even (and most of all) a minor disaster. Placing rescue kits or carts with essential response equipment in strategic sensitive points of the building, will help to avoid losing precious time later on.

### 3-5 Back up copies

In case of major disaster, fire, explosion, or bombing for example, the collections and their inventories or catalogues might be partly or totally destroyed. According to the budget available and the value of the items, it is wiser to make copies of the most important documents, and to store them off-site. This is particularly recommended for catalogues; actually, making copies facilitates a precise and detailed idea of what has been lost, and consequently makes it possible to reorganize the collection some day, either by acquiring documents still available on the market or by duplicating them (microforms or digital copies) thanks to collections stored in other libraries.

#### 4 - RESCUE PROCEDURES

When a disaster strikes, the evacuation of people is often made immediately, and when the staff is allowed to re-enter the site, it is many hours later and for a limited time. It is, however, essential that the building be secured and that firemen allow entry for a limited period of time, at least at the beginning.

Everybody knows that, particularly in case of flood, it is necessary to act immediately because two or three days might be enough to ruin water-damaged documents. This is why we must carry out the emergency response as soon as possible. However, and I would like to focus on this point, saving time is important, but it is better to spend a few minutes to decide on the best emergency strategy than hurrying around erratically, which would only lead to chaos and handling mistakes. So it is better to think before doing, to calmly define a strategy for action and then to follow the different steps, remaining open-minded to changes in case new parameters arise.

We must be attentive to the security and comfort of the staff taking part in the rescue. To achieve this, we must:

- ◆ be sure that, in case of major natural disaster, people appointed to take part in the rescue have been reassured about the situation of their family and property;
- ◆ increase the number of teams and make them work in short rotations; actually, working in a hurry, in difficult environmental and climatic conditions is often much more tiring;
- ◆ plan to provide (if necessary) rescuers with good equipment (boots, raincoats, pullovers, blankets, glasses, gloves...);
- ◆ plan to provide refreshments.

In the days following the disaster, it will probably be necessary to plan psychological support sessions for employees who witnessed their life's work fade away.

#### 5 - FOR A BETTER EFFICIENCY

There is no perfect disaster plan, and it is only by drawing up a list of a disaster consequences that its efficiency may be appreciated and its shortcomings revealed. However, using common sense prevents making mistakes. We've seen that the disaster plan is a written document, but there is a long way from theory to practice. So we'll need to:

- ◆ train the staff. Time dedicated to theoretical training and the way to face potential risks will be complemented by disaster workshops and technical sessions. Topics may include for example the handling of damaged documents. This is an important operation which needs time and money; nonetheless, that is the only way to be sure that the emergency units are efficient when the disaster strikes;
- ◆ well in advance, it is necessary to get in touch with emergency services (firemen in particular), local or district administrative services which might be called for help in case of disaster. Every workshop dedicated to library specific problems, from discussing equipment and response measures to the

handling of documents, is a positive experience. Eventually, it is advised to get in touch with people heading neighbouring cultural institutions: museums, archives... in order to make a list of available resources, to organize joint trainings and to help one another in case of major disaster.

When the plan has been written, the work is far from being done yet. It is necessary:

- ◆ to make it known, namely to deliver it to the whole staff by:
  - placing it in strategic sensitive areas;
  - distributing technical rescue cards to the services involved (conservation, storing areas...);
- ◆ to update it regularly, paying particular attention to lists, addresses and phone numbers. This job requires attention to detail and may take a long time in large institutions. There will be one leader designated for this job;
- ◆ to test it if possible and re-conduct the tests regularly;
- ◆ to set up organized teams: volunteers, whether they be part of the staff or not, will have to follow orders given by team leaders who will follow orders given by the person in charge of rescue operations;
- ◆ to make a list of both human resources, equipment and services off-site and update it. The leader in charge of these lists might also be appointed to this task. The disaster plan is partly confidential (cf. personal addresses, phone numbers, location of valuable documents) which means that it must not be distributed to the whole staff.

There must be constant surveillance. A disaster plan will not keep a disaster from striking, whether it be a natural or a man-made disaster. So we must get and keep in touch with the prevention services namely those in charge of natural disasters (meteorology, seismic movements, floods...). Concerning minor or human inflicted damages, we must pay particular attention, after hours, when the building is closed, or when renovations are underway; actually, week-ends and holidays are the most favorable time for disasters to spread.

To conclude, I would like to invite all of you (if this has not been done already) to provide your library with a disaster plan. Too many institutions are still lacking them, and we are unfortunately inclined to think that disasters always happen to others. Whatever your present situation, either with or without a disaster plan, you must try to improve it, by paying particular attention to premises, equipment, preventive and response measures, training, even information. And if you are fortunate enough to be provided with a disaster plan, take care that it does not remain at a standstill. Test it, make it evolve. Trouble and expenses are inevitable; but they are nothing compared to what you would have to face in case of disaster.

Finally, don't work alone, help one another, join the Blue Shield by taking part in the creation of Blue Shield national committees in your own country, and working toward the creation of local branches of the Blue Shield in your own city.

*Marie-Thérèse Varlamoff has been Director of the Core Activity on Preservation and Conservation of IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions) since 1994. She has held various positions as a librarian at the*

*Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris.*

*Author of many articles and co-author of surveys and books, she is the Director of all PAC publications among which "IFLA Principles for the Care and Handling of Library Material" and "International Preservation News".*

*She has long been collaborating with the archival world, as a member of ICA Committee on Preservation of Archives in Temperate Climates and as a founding member of JICPA (Joint IFLA-ICA Committee on Preservation in Africa).*

*She is also a member of UNESCO "Memory of the World" Register Sub-Committee and Vice-Chair of the French National Committee of the Blue Shield.*

# LESSONS FROM A DISASTER: 1966-2002

*by Antonia Ida Fontana, Director of the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze  
(National Library of Florence-NLF)*

## INTRODUCTION

Floods in Prague and Dresden have dramatically taken the world of library back to an old episode destined not to remain a scientific case history but to be relived in the never ending struggle between Mankind and forces of Mother Nature. On this occasion I would like to address my country's heartfelt solidarity to the Central European colleagues and wish them a fast and successful recovery from the disaster, and if possible the same extraordinary international help enjoyed by the Library of Florence in those distant days.

The National Library of Florence is also willing to offer its help and expertise if needed.

I would like to thank IFLA-PAC Core Activity, and Mrs. Marie-Thérèse Varlamoff in particular, for enabling me to give evidence of what happened in 1966.

This paper would like to offer a series of clues for discussion: what priorities should be considered during rescue operations, and what mistakes should be avoided in the recovering phase?

Contrary to nowadays approach to natural disasters, in 1966, the Library of Florence could neither rely on a preventive policy for environment, nor on a pre-alert programme of rescue for citizens and cultural heritage. This has made more heroic the effort carried out by those who, with the only help of unprepared equipment and facilities, enabled the National Library of Florence to survive the tragedy and to join with intact enthusiasm the new Millennium.

### 1- CHRONICLE OF AN UNFORETOLD DISASTER

From 1 p.m. on November the 3<sup>rd</sup> 1966 to 7 p.m. on the day after, an unceasing rain had kept falling on Florence, gaining the level of 200 millimetres of water.

During the night of November the 4<sup>th</sup>, the river flooded and a wave made of water, mud, fuel (belonging to the central heating of the neighbouring houses) struck the sleeping city. The library, laying on the right bank of the Arno river, became an easy target. Its basement and ground floor were flooded up to 1 metre height.

#### **First rescue activities of the staff, the help from volunteers and international cooperation**

Dr. Casamassima, Director, and two members of the staff, Mr. Manetti and

**Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup>  
November 1966**

**Friday 4<sup>th</sup>  
November 1966**

**Saturday 5<sup>th</sup>  
November 1966**

Mr. Baglioni, both of whom will soon after be charged of managing all of the emergency actions, went into the library with the four resident keepers of the building.

Floodwaters were beginning to subside, leaving behind the effects of a blind destructive fury: gutted doors; electrical system, plumbing heating equipments and water system damaged; catalogues covered with mud; books and library furnishings swept and spread on the floor. Nobody would be able to go in the basement before several days had passed.

Shovels and brooms were the basic tools needed to clear rooms, free doors and reintroduce the minimum security measures for safeguarding the part of cultural heritage spared by the flood.

Since Saturday, the 5<sup>th</sup> of November in the evening, acting on a common impulse, a spontaneous stream of young people arrived on the disaster site. On their own or in group they offered their help and started to rescue books from mud with their bare hands.

Their number was destined to grow in the next days forming a small army of hundreds that would prove to be essential for the very first rescue operations.

At the same time international cooperation started to move. I would like to remember among the others the cooperation offered by UNESCO, CRIO (Committee to Rescue Italian Art), and the experts of the British Museum.

## 2 - COMPLEXITY OF RESCUE OPERATIONS

For the very first time the Italian world of libraries had to face the problem of a huge mass of books soaked and misshapened, with no national or international scientific reference for the management of a disaster of such a proportion, neither appropriate guidelines for undertaking first technical rescue operations. A brand new term made its appearance in the vocabulary of scientific case history: "mass restoration".

Not considering loss and damages to building and furniture the Director and librarians were obsessed by the idea that all the collections placed in the double level storehouses of the basement had been covered with mud: the great format volumes belonging to Palatina and Magliabechiana collections (dated from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries); the national library of newspapers and periodicals; the whole collection of national playbills and electoral posters dated from 1860 to 1966; the miscellaneous collection, the post graduate thesis publications deposited from France and Germany.

In other words one million volumes out of the three millions held by the library had been at various levels damaged by flood. To pass all limits all of the catalogues, both the volumes and the "cards" based ones, had also been damaged.

Two main actions appeared urgently needed and strictly linked: on the one hand provision in short time of an efficient rescue net; on the other hand rapid acquisition of technical guidelines in order to successfully orientate restoring activities thus reducing damages and losses to cultural heritage.

Those demanding issues being solved, Director Casamassima threw himself “body and soul” in providing a modern rescue net: both rapidly forming and instructing the heterogeneous rescue teams made of firemen, soldiers and young volunteers, and getting over if necessary Italian bureaucracy rules, totally ignorant at the time of emergency problems.

Since November the 5th, 1966, within a period of six weeks, more than 3 000 tons of documents were dug out of the flooded storehouses of the library. This material by means of 530 journeys of various lorries, temporarily lent by people or public institutions, was hauled towards safe sites where it could be perfunctorily cleaned and then dried.

The other main concern of professionals involved was to choose the more suitable technical measures to be taken. In these frantic moments a number of inappropriate actions were taken: hundreds of the dust jackets (cover) of damaged great format volumes were removed in order to be cleaned and dried. The removal of the cover and plates have made impossible to refurbish these volumes.

Technical guidelines were also desperately sought in order to cope with demanding issues such as how avoiding and stopping the development of micro-organisms from the mould covering the damaged material. The initial pouring of sawdust and talcum powder on the folios of the damaged volumes, so as to accelerate the drying process, proved to be ill-timed and accelerated the loss of the treated documents.

Today, experts would have no doubts in recommending the freezing process as the best method to stop mould proliferation. Unfortunately at that time this method was neither indubitable, nor sufficiently supported by adequate technologies.

On that point the various cultural institutions were oriented towards different methods. While the Vieusseux Cabinet chose the cold process, consisting of drying the damaged material by the cold blast of fan, after having previously spread documents on strings tightened up at the Galluzzois Charteuse, the National Library of Florence chose the hot process considering it the quickest way of arresting mould proliferation. Damaged materials were dried in the kilns of the Richard Ginoriis factory or in the furnaces of the local Tobacco Manufacture. This technical solution produced further damage to treated documents such as deformations and consolidations which were extremely difficult and expensive to cope with afterwards.

At the end of November 1966 three restorers from the British Museum, among whom Roger Powell and Peter Waters, arrived in Florence to contribute successfully to the scientific coordination of the complex restoration process and to start the core of what would become our Laboratory of Restoration. Pending the organisation of the cleaning room, various damaged volumes were sent to Austria and to other Italian specialised laboratories to be recovered. The unsatisfactory result of this experience drove to its interruption.

As soon as possible two special rooms for cleaning and whipping up the treated books of the National Library of Florence were provided in Florence: one was located within the Heating power plant of the Italian Railways Public Company, and the other in the monumental building of Belvedere Fortress. In these sites hundreds of experts, volunteers, later replaced by specialised

personnel of the library engaged on purpose, carried out the entire phase of cleaning volumes and books in hot water swilling tanks.

Peter Waters, one of the three experts from the British Museum, described a complete process of twelve sequences needed for the standard treatment of damaged volumes.

1. Photographic documentation of the visible part of the document
2. Registration of the kind of damage suffered by the analysed documents by means of symbols taken from the table of possible pathology in the state of preservation of documents (OK-little amount of mud; R OK-clean No mud found; R-to dampen etc.)
3. First collating
4. Dry cleaning for the removal of mud
5. Pulling: removal of the cover in contemporary with their cataloguing, unstitching of the corresponding installments.
6. Preparation of the documents for the cleaning process: inter-foliation with filtering paper and colour fixing by means of liquid nylon
7. Cleaning process: immersion in hot water added with a saturated solution of Topane (2 idrosi-fenolo). If needed processes of whitening and deacidification are applied to paper. Before and after the above said process a check of the level of pH is made.
8. Pressing procedures in order to eliminate an excess of liquid.
9. Drying process: bifoli, spread on mobile loom, then inserted in a special kiln generating hot airy blast, placed within the library site.
10. Final collating made by the staff of the library
11. Parcel wrapping and storage with Kraft paper treated with fungicide
12. Re-allocation, according to signature, of the packages of the cleaned volumes. These packages are placed in dedicated restoring storehouses. Re-unification of the damaged collection.

At the same time the xerographic reproduction of the signature card of funds belonging to Magliabechiana and Palatina collections has been carried out in order to provide the list of damaged or lost volumes (so called restoration catalogue). For the Magliabechiana collection an additional xerographic reproduction was made in order to provide users with an alphabetic catalogue. By January 1967 all the damaged books were disinfected within the vacuum-sealed cold store place in the garden of the library.

### 3-THE RESTORATION LABORATORY OF THE NLF: GLORIOUS TRADITION FACING FUTURE CHALLENGES

The Laboratory of Restoration of Florence was born as an answer to the demanding need of mass restoration. It has been conceived as an assembly line of the process previously made by an individual craftsman, and thus organised in various sections corresponding to the main phases of the restoration process.

- ◆ Stripping and collating
- ◆ Damp processes
- ◆ Paper recovering and hinging
- ◆ Stitching and binding
- ◆ Gilding of the title and signature

Up to 1976 the staff working at the laboratory has been under the direction and administrative control of a private company and has consisted at maximum of 120 employees.

After 1976 the remaining staff has been enrolled as public employees.

In 1997 the laboratory moved to the ex-Monastery of Saint Ambrose. Its employees boast also at international level a renowned expertise in the field of preservation.

The cut in the public expenses for the laboratory's staff and the change in the restoration policy of the supervising Minister has transformed the role of the Laboratory: less direct activities in the field of preservation and more and more technical preparation and coordination of the tenders for restoration contract. The supervising Minister considers more convenient and quicker to let private companies, winners of the tender for restoration contract, to carry out the restoration of the library's collection damaged during the 1966 floods. Thanks to the Buglioni Project 19 000 flooded volumes have been provided by the end of 2001 with collating and compilation of restoration data cards.

The Laboratory hopes that this important preliminary activity of preparation for the successive phase of effective restoration may be useful to the launch of a massive tender for restoration contract.

At the moment a private company, winner of a tender for restoration contract, is ensuring within a period of two years the preservation of 1 200 ancient and flooded volumes.

<b>Magliabechiana Collection</b>	<b>Palatina Collection</b>
flooded volumes 59 428	flooded volumes 10 090
restored volumes 34 401	restored volumes 5 654
cleaned only volumes 14 024	cleaned only volumes 3 098
to be cleaned volumes 1 278	to be cleaned volumes 454
missing volumes 4 268	missing volumes 372

### **Damages and prospects of restoration**

#### 4- HOW IS THE NLF PREPARING HERSELF TO FUTURE EMERGENCY?

A big organisational effort has been carried out in order to better enable the library to face possible critical situations.

- ◆ The chronic lack of space for depositing the annual growth of deposited material forced the NLF to make a second time the mistake, underlined by my report on 1966 events, of exploiting the storehouse located in the basement, under the level of the Arno river. However in order to reduce damages only foreign documents have been placed in this area on the basis that in case of disaster their preservation would be ensured by respective foreign National Libraries. A part of the newspaper and periodical library is also placed in this area. This material is preserved under an altered atmosphere.
- ◆ In case of pre-alert by the local authority for a menacing increasing in the level of the Arno River a special convention signed among the NLF and some portage companies (Coop. LAT and CTS), would immediately ensure the transport of the volumes in danger to the nearby S. Croce's cloister,

according to a precise sequence of priority. General trials are held every two years.

- ◆ Since 1998 our Restoration Laboratory has been provided with a freezing and freeze-drying centre allowing to treat wet documents. Wet volumes are inserted into plastic envelopes, put into a temperature reducer, that quickly drives them to a temperature of – 40 Celsius degrees, in order to avoid the making of big crystals, that could distort volumes. Waiting for the next step in the restoration process the above treated volumes are placed into normal deep-freezers in order to be stored. These first preventive measures stop the development of micro-organisms, enabling experts to decide whether they defrost the volumes and make them pass through the normal restoration process, or breeze-drying them, using an other special machine held within the laboratory. This second method exploiting the sublimation process (the passage from ice to steam, getting over the phase of liquid state) enables the volumes to be pressed and reshaped without any damages.

#### FINAL REMARKS

I am conscious that libraries located in historical buildings, in an old city and in addition nearby potential threats as rivers, are fragile masterpieces always in danger, extremely expensive to be kept up to technological innovations and to security standard rules. That means that if satisfaction and evocative power are doubled, ruling one of these extraordinary witnesses of the past may sometimes multiply by four problems and risks.

In my opinion a plan of risk should provide:

- a priority plan mentioning the volumes to be saved first;
- evacuation routes for the transport of threatened materials;
- provision and place of equipment needed for rescue operations;
- training of a task force team within the staff of the library.

Last but not least, a plan of risk should also consider electronic data and the fragility of tools offered by technological innovation.

Technological innovation has enlarged library's tasks and potentialities of storage, but has not completely cancelled risks and fragility related to electronic data. In other words a digital storehouse or a bibliographic database may not be safe from potential disasters as well as a traditional collection.

Thus a disaster plan should include rescue procedures, replacement and restoration measures also for this kind of data. The bibliographic data of the NLF reckon upon a remote back-up system, provided by the application service company TELECOM. This system is able to ensure a back-up via Internet, the headquarter responsible for it being located at minimum 300 kilometres far from the site of the database.

As to the digital storehouse of the NLF a complex system of back up is under consideration and we hope to provide it as soon as possible.

*Antonia Ida Fontana has a degree from Genoa University. She is a Doctor of Classics and has a diploma of archivist-paleographer that she has obtained at the School of Archives connected with the National Archives of Genoa.*

*She joined the State Administrative Services on September the 1<sup>st</sup>, 1970, and was appointed by competitive examination on October the 1<sup>st</sup>, to manage State Public Libraries. From August 23<sup>rd</sup> 1991 to May 10<sup>th</sup> 1996 she had been the Director of the State Library of Trieste when she was appointed as the Director of the National Library of Florence. Today, she is also the Director of the Italian National Bibliography.*

*She has taught classification (theory and practice) at Udine University; she has also given a range of different courses to librarians working in various establishments and institutions.*

*She is a representative of the Ministry of cultural properties and activities in various national foundations and committees, among which the committee in charge of the Development of the Italian Digital Library.*

*She is also in charge of different projects led by the European Community. She is a member of various professional associations (AIB, CENL, CDNL, ECPA...), of the "Soroptimist International" and the "Rotary Club".*

# TRUST... AND TERROR

## New Demands for Crisis Information Dissemination and Management

### A Proposal to Expand the Role of U.S. Libraries in Crisis Information Dissemination and Management

by Joan R. Challinor, Ph. D.,  
Vice Chairperson (U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science - NCLIS)

#### IN A CRISIS, PEOPLE MUST HAVE INFORMATION

Whether related to a terrorist event or a natural disaster, during and following a crisis people *must* have access to information.

In such times, a lack of information can be both dangerous and terrifying. At the same time, information overload and misinformation, whether accidental or deliberate, can become “weapons of mass disruption”.

Crisis information is critical both at the time of crisis and in the hours, days and weeks that follow. The information must be available when and where it is needed, both during and after the immediate crisis. Some information needs to be available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Crisis information must:

- ◆ come from authoritative sources;
- ◆ be usefully organized and independently verified;
- ◆ come from around the world in real time, yet be available in local communities;
- ◆ be sensitive to cultural concerns and available in peoples’ own language;
- ◆ communicate a sense of order, control and continuity;
- ◆ foster understanding, a sense of community and hope;
- ◆ be given in context and distributed in multiple formats.

*In light of recent events, the United States **must** mobilize a comprehensive system for more effective crisis information dissemination and management.*

A new national crisis information infrastructure could potentially cost billions of dollars and take years to create. But, it does not need to. A significant investment has already been made.

#### PUBLIC LIBRARIES ARE A RESOURCE IN TIMES OF CRISIS

The Nation’s more than 16,000 Public Libraries already form an extensive network of resources that can be empowered to meet this need for crisis information. This resource is in place we need only to leverage it, engage it, and empower it.

After September 11<sup>th</sup>, libraries in New York City, in Arlington, Virginia, and in Somerset County, Pennsylvania, mounted heroic efforts to answer important questions. Similar responses occurred in many libraries around the

country, *acting without coordination or direction*, because the U.S. network of public libraries is already a tremendous national resource for information dissemination and management, particularly in times of crisis. We need to expand and enhance this resource as an essential component of U.S. crisis information dissemination and management.

The U.S. library system is a network of information resources and knowledgeable, skilled individuals that exists both virtually and physically. If phone lines go down, if computers freeze up, most people can still drive or walk to a nearby library where they can get essential information.

Libraries and librarians can respond quickly and effectively by creating collections of resources and by building organized, accessible databases of information about the crisis and about relief efforts and agencies.

Public libraries are trusted and reliable sources for information. They are familiar, neutral, physical places where people can come together to learn and to talk about what has happened.

Public libraries know how to organize and verify information and have systems in place that keep large amounts of information easily and readily accessible. They provide Internet access and e-mail for those who need it.

Libraries have incredibly valuable human resources in their skilled librarians. They know how to assist others to focus their questions, and they are familiar with proven ways to verify the accuracy and validity of the information that is found.

Libraries are the acknowledged repository of information both present and past. They already have global reach and local presence. They are part of a vast system of libraries not only across the country but around the world.

Public libraries are places where people can meet and come to recognize themselves as a community. They communicate a sense of order, of being in control, of normalcy.

Public libraries have resources to help people deal with the aftermath of a crisis. Many psychologists believe the emotional toll of September 11th will last for months, if not years, as people cope with events that changed their worldview dramatically - and permanently.

Libraries are excellent at providing the context for crisis information. They routinely provide information in multiple formats: in person - from reference librarians to storytellers - through video and audio recordings, from the Internet, and of course, in print.

Public libraries serve people of different ethnic background and who speak many different languages. From the spontaneous conversations among teens around a library table to current event discussion forums and book talks, libraries know how to facilitate and encourage dialogue and intellectual exploration to foster understanding.

Public libraries foster hope. Libraries offer not only information but a sense of place and community. By assisting them to obtain knowledge of the past and present and gain insight into the future, libraries help people to move forward through times of despair and terror.

#### INCLUDING PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Many people who need information are already seeking it at the library, so those who have crisis information to disseminate *must* include the library in their dissemination plans. Planning for emergency preparedness and homeland security at all levels - federal, state, and local - must include public libraries immediately.

*Public libraries have all the characteristics that contribute to effective crisis information dissemination and management.*

*Public libraries provide both immediate and long-term access to information resources. They can make information available where and when people need it, both during and after crises.*

Federal, state, and local government agencies must have systems in place - and use them - to distribute essential, up-to-date information to public libraries. This can be done in cooperation with the state libraries which can efficiently channel the information to appropriate libraries and library systems in each state.

The libraries and librarians, in turn, must be ready to disseminate the information to people when and where it is needed.

Funding must be allocated from federal, state and local emergency sources so that libraries can remain open for extended hours during crises - even 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, when necessary.

Print and broadcast media must be required to produce and run public service announcements that direct people to libraries for crisis information.

In the future, a nationwide phone number should be established for crisis information to relieve the burden on the "911" phone number. While we have a highly sophisticated system for emergency response, it is often overwhelmed with non-emergency calls. We need an expanded system for crisis information dissemination and management that specifically addresses the public need for information.

*It is clear that the United States needs more effective crisis information dissemination and management. It is also clear that we have a vital, comprehensive system of libraries in the United States that can meet the information needs of the public during, and after, an emergency or disaster.*

The National Commission on Libraries and Information Science will join with others in the government and the library community to make this happen. The Commission believes that the cooperative efforts of government agencies and libraries can make an enormous difference in the strength and competency of the United States, and indeed in all of us as individuals, to meet the challenges ahead.

The National Commission on Libraries and Information science (NCLIS) is a permanent, independent agency of the Federal government, established in 1970 with the enactment of Public Law 91-345.

The Commission is charged with:

- ◆ advising the President and the Congress on the implementation of policy;
- ◆ conducting studies, surveys, and analyses of the library and informational needs of the nation;
- ◆ appraising the adequacies and deficiencies of current library and information resources and services; and
- ◆ developing overall plans for meeting national library and informational needs.

The Commission also advises Federal, state, and local governments, and other public and private organizations, regarding library and information sciences, including consultations on relevant treaties, international agreements and implementing legislation, and it promotes research and development activities which will extend and improve the nation's library and information handling capability as essential links in the national and international networks.

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*She has also served on the Board of Directors of Knight-Ridder, a newspaper and information company.*

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