

Training for Preservation Management

by MIRJAM M. FOOT

In August 1997 the first of a series of summer schools in Preservation Management was held at the Archivschule in Marburg (Germany). The school was organised by the ECPA, the LIBER Division on Preservation, ICA and the Archivschule itself and was aimed at archivists and librarians in management positions from European institutions. It dealt with managerial, organisational and financial aspects of preservation and required active participation by those attending. Apart from introductory sessions by the teaching staff at the Archivschule, a large part of the course took the form of working groups, discussions, assignments and role play, to which participants were expected to take their own experience and problems. The school was conducted in German. Topics, spread over five days, ranged from preservation in the context of the core activities of libraries and archives; planning of preservation projects; general management issues, such as resource management, budgeting, priority setting, communication and effecting change; to more detailed considerations of day-to-day issues, such as storage, disaster control, microfilming and digitising, mass conservation processes, and moulds and fungi.

It was a very useful course and participants were very positive in their reactions.

A second summer school was organised in Budapest, and supported by the Open Society. It was this time aimed specifically at archivists. The programme lasted 10 days and the main course language was English. After an introductory day on more general archive issues and the concept of preservation management, a day was devoted to planning a preservation programme after which participants were required to develop a preservation action plan for their own institution. A day was spent on moving archives, one on disaster planning, and a day each on preservation issues regarding paper, audio-visual material, and electronic records. Preservation policies and the development of preservation strategies were discussed, so were awareness raising and team building. Security, handling, reformatting, surveying and risk assessment, as

well as active conservation were all considered and various options for and aspects of all these issues were discussed.

The third Summer School, again organised by LIBER (Division on Preservation) and the ECPA, this time in collaboration with the Public Record Office, the British Library, the National Preservation Office, and the School for Library, Archive and Information Studies at the University of London, will take place in England (at the PRO in Kew, on the edge of London), in English, and will be held from 19-23 July. It will follow the lines of the two earlier courses, although this time, it will be aimed somewhat more at librarians. It is again directed at those who have a responsibility for managing preservation in national, university, specialist and local libraries, archives and record centres throughout Europe and even beyond. The 21 participants come from Holland, France, Portugal, Belgium, Switzerland, England, Ireland, Jersey, Latvia, Estonia, Finland, Norway, Brazil and New Zealand. The content of the course will centre on the whole life-cycle of library and archive material and it will seek to develop the managerial, strategic, financial and technical skills of preservation managers. It will deal not only with traditional parchment and paper-based collections, but also with those that have only ever existed in electronic format. The first day will concentrate on preservation policies and strategies and there will be a workshop on the development of a preservation policy. Day two will deal with environmental control, with engineering issues as well as practical problems relating to developing a suitable environment for the storage of library and archive material. The third day will be spent on risk assessment and disaster preparedness. Day four - which will be held at the British Library - will be devoted to moving libraries and archives, and will cover general planning and contractual issues, as well as managing a move, and move control systems. On the last day we will consider preservation management in the context of Europe and European programmes, and there will be a session on training for preservation management.

The leaders of the course will consist of senior preservation managers and specialists in specific, related fields.

As about three times as many people applied as could be accommodated on the course, we will consider repeating it, possibly in a different location, in the not too distant future - always provided that it will prove to be useful.

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