

IFLA Rare Books and Manuscripts Section Standing Committee Report for 2010–2011

1. Members of the Standing Committee

During 2011 members for the Standing Committee were elected, nine for their first term and two for their second term.

During this conference, officers finished their term and new officers had to be elected: Raphaële Mouren stayed as chair of the section and there were elected new secretary and treasurer (Isabel García-Monge) and new information coordinator and newsletter editor (David Farneth). As John Meriton had left the section, his place was to be offered to Chu Shuqing, Director of Hangzhou Public Library. Jan Bos joined the section as corresponding member, a status that also enjoys Olga Vega.

2. Midterm Meeting in Madrid

A midterm working meeting took place in April 2011 in Madrid, in the Ministry of Culture. Sessions were dedicated to shape the first draft of the Guidelines for the Digitization of Manuscripts and Rare Books. It was completed with visits to the Universidad Complutense Historical Library, El Escorial Monastery Library, Museo del Prado Library and National Library.

3. IFLA Preconference in San Juan

The preconference "Libraries in Islands: Setting-up Collections, Promoting Cultural Heritage and Networking", organized with Core Activity on Preservation and Conservation (PAC) and celebrated on August 18th in the Museum of Art of Puerto Rico, was the opportunity for librarians from the Caribbean to present their collections and their programs for preservation and dissemination. RBM section also presented its project and first draft of Digitization Guidelines. Preservation and Conservation (PAC) was to publish a report on this conference.

4. IFLA Congress in Puerto Rico

The activities of the RBMS in Puerto Rico included three working meetings on 13th, 15th and 18th, the RBM session with LACS and a visit to Casa del Libro in San Juan. The session with Latin America and the Caribbean Section had the theme: "Rare and special collections in the American context".

5. Financial report

The section annual sum received from Headquarters (€ 700) had been fully invested in expenses associated to the Preconference with Core Activity on Preservation and Conservation (PAC) "Libraries in Islands: Setting-up Collections, Promoting Cultural Heritage and Networking".

6. Strategic Plan

The strategic plan contemplates:

- 1 - to increase the visibility of special collections
- 2 - to increase the attention for the special collections in their libraries
- 3 - to encourage networking for special collections and associations around the world
- 4 - to promote the attention to the bibliographical heritage
- 5 - to help specialist to face new problems and adapt to the evolution of the profession.

The first priority action of the RBM section would be to develop the definition of rare books and cultural heritage and its possible implications for the change of the section name.

7. Definition of Special Collections – meeting during the IFLA Congress in Puerto Rico

As part of the RBM first priority action a meeting was held to study different aspects of the definition of Special Collections, covering the following aspects:

Definition of Special Collections

- Different definitions in different countries. Importance of laws and policies in these definition.
- Concepts implicated in the definition:
 - Combination of content and container
 - Focus on the object
 - Chronological limits
 - Importance of items as part of a broader collection
 - Study at level collection
 - Questions about limiting to physical objects or including digital technology

Creation and preservation of special collections

- Definition of special collections regarding its materials or its subject: a collection can be "special" under different criteria
- Creation of collection as creation of heritage for the future
- Creation of heritage collections combining materials, not only text and images

Heritage and preservation

- Definition of heritage
- "Material designated to permanently represent its time"
- What is going to be preserved and for whom
- Dependency on the institution and its preservation policy
- Librarians as part of a broader effort

Collection policy, collection description

- Need of a acquisition and selection policy
- Need of a collection policy
- Risk of building a collection on consults and access to the collection, it can be counterproductive
- Preservation of the container, problem of the volatility of the digital information support
- Selection is necessary for space problems