



## **IFLA Rare Books and Manuscripts Section**

### **Annual Report 2013**

The Rare Books and Manuscripts Section provides a forum for discussion and exchange of information on matters of particular concern to rare book and manuscript librarians, including the collection, preservation, bibliographic control, and use of such materials, in all types of libraries. The Section is a part of Division II: Library Collections.

#### *Membership*

At the end of 2013 the Section had 110 members and also maintains a separate list of about 100 additional interested parties.

#### *Standing Committee*

The Standing Committee currently has 17 members and 4 corresponding members. The countries represented in the Standing Committee are Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Russia, Serbia, Spain, Sweden, The Netherlands, United Kingdom, and United States. The corresponding members are from China, Cuba, Sierra Leone, and The Netherlands. We are actively seeking better representation from Asia, South America, and Africa. A list of the current membership of the Standing Committee is maintained on the section's website: <http://www.ifla.org/rare-books-and-manuscripts/standing-committee>

#### *Officers*

The following officers concluded their terms of office in August: Raphaële Mouren (Chair), Isabel Garcia-Monge (Secretary), and David Farneth (Information Coordinator). The following officers were elected in Singapore: David Farneth (Chair), Krister Östlund (Secretary), and Edwin Schroeder (Information Coordinator and Newsletter Editor). Contact information for the officers is available on the section's website: <http://www.ifla.org/about-the-rare-books-and-manuscripts-section>

## *Meetings*

Two business meetings were held in Singapore, and we were pleased to welcome attendees from Singapore, Malaysia, China, Sri Lanka, India, and Egypt. Principal topics of discussion included:

- Introductions, approval of meeting minutes, financial report, election of officers
- Formal endorsement of the Digitization Guidelines
- Report on the publication of *Ambassadors of the book* (see below)
- Program planning for Lyon sessions and post-conference
- 2015 satellite meeting in Africa
- 2014 midterm meeting in the U.S.
- National bibliographies survey
- Proposal to update the section's brochures and change them from PDF files to webpages.
- Proposal to provide translations of object labels for an exhibition to be held at ENSSIB in Lyon in conjunction with our post-conference meeting.
- A review of the section's various communications mechanisms including mailing lists, website, newsletter, and the potential use of a blog and social media
- Three proposed goals for the section:
  - Gain IFLA ratification of the Digitization Guidelines; disseminate and translate them
  - Devise and implement a communications plan
  - Finalize discussion about the Sections' scope of work and decide if we want to request a new name for the Section

## *Publications*

The section published two newsletters, in January and July. They feature a wide range of information of interest to special collections librarians including continuing educational opportunities, new standards and best practices, new publications, exhibitions, new digital collections and projects, and collaborative activities.

<http://www.ifla.org/publications/rare-books-and-manuscripts-section-newsletter>

The section continued to receive positive feedback for the IFLA publication that grew out of a midterm meeting in 2011 in Antwerp: *Ambassadors of the book : competences and training for heritage librarians* edited by Raphaële Mouren.

<http://www.ifla.org/publications/ifla-publications-series-160>

## *Programs*

The Section sponsored an impressive 17 hours of programming at the Singapore conference:

- On Monday, August 19, the section partnered with the Asia and Oceania Section for an all-day, off-site session (Session 95) at the National Library of Singapore under the title “Rare and special collections in the Asian or Oceanian context.” Speakers from Singapore, New Zealand, China, Philippines, Canada, India, and the U.S. participated in the all-day session, which revealed a wealth of rare and special collections largely unknown outside of their countries. The session also featured a special set of poster presentations from Sri Lanka, Java, Iran, Scotland, and China. The staff of the National Library of Singapore provided excellent meeting facilities in the beautiful, new library, wonderful food and drink for breaks, lunch in the special events room at the very top of the building with stunning views of the city, and tours of the library and special collections.
- On Tuesday, August 20, the Section held a public session (Session 132) to present the draft Digitization Guidelines for comment. After a summary of the major sections of the guidelines, the audience of over 200 attendees participated in an enthusiastic 45-minute discussion and Q&A period. A wide majority of the comments were positive, and the session underscored our feeling that guidelines of this kind are greatly needed by our international community.
- Also on Tuesday, the section joined Information Technology, Preservation and Conservation, and Library and Research Services for Parliaments in presenting a session entitled “Preserving for the future: Integrating physical and digital preservation” (Session 146). Speakers from Germany, France, Australia, Japan, Finland, and the United States provided case studies describing successful project in their home institutions on a wide range of collections.
- On Thursday, August 22, RBMS co-sponsored Session 202 with the Art Libraries Section entitled “Lost and found: innovative approaches to discovery and use of visual material found in books, manuscripts, and special collections.” Speakers from Sweden, Germany and the U.K. participated. The audience had the opportunity to compare and contrast two image recognition software applications still under development.

## *Ongoing Projects and Initiatives*

- *Digitization Guidelines.* Over the past two years the Section has written digitization guidelines for cultural heritage librarians. These guidelines are intended to provide a broad framework for digitizing collections of manuscripts and rare books for the purpose of improving longterm research use, access, and dissemination. These principles can also be applied to any collection that an institution considers of special importance or to any item whose physical support has as much relevance as the images or texts it contains. The guidelines should also help professionals and non-professionals create sustainable and adaptable digital collections that will continue to have research value into the future. The audience for the guidelines includes library leaders who are proposing projects, librarians who are planning and executing projects, and funding organizations that are considering supporting digitization projects. The projects have been submitted to the Standards Committee for review and comment.
- *Review of mission and section name.* The Section has embarked on a productive 2-year discussion about the mission and scope of the section, and if it should be expanded to include all kinds of rare and unique collections that are typically found in libraries. These are now commonly called “special collections” or “cultural heritage collections.” This discussion will soon be documented on the Section’s website. In the coming year we plan to bring this discussion to an end and decide whether to propose a change of name for the section.
- *Communication plan.* From September – December the section officers have been refining a communication plan for the section, which entails a careful review of the mailing lists and newsletter, updating our informational brochures, as well as proposals to become more active in social media and blogs. The plan will be presented to the Standing Committee at the midterm meeting in Washington for discussion and endorsement.
- *National bibliographies survey.*
- *List of International Organizations and Projects Related to Rare Books and Manuscripts*

*This annual report was submitted to the Division II chair in January 2014.*



Photographs from sessions sponsored by the Rare Books and Manuscripts Section at the IFLA World Library and Information Congress in Singapore, 2013.