The LIBER Security Network of 2002 – The Copenhagen Principles

BACKGROUND AND PRESENT OVERVIEW

The last decade has seen the rapid development of a number of factors affecting the security of significant library collections.

- The market value of large parts of library collections now equals the prices of the most expensive antiques and works of art;

- The interest of the free market in items held in libraries is constantly increasing;

- Valuable parts of library collections have been subject to grave instances of theft of a trans-national character across Europe.

Recognizing these developments, we have decided to set up closer co-operation among libraries with the purpose of preventing or resolving such incidents.

From the evidence it is clear that individual libraries have dealt with these matters in a rather isolated way in the past, and that co-operation between libraries has been only sporadic. On the other hand all libraries tend to involve the police authorities at the point of theft. Bodies such as Interpol and Europol also have considerable expertise in counteracting thefts of cultural assets. But Europe has a wide range of different legal systems, and this can make theft investigation more intricate and therefore rather slow.

The international criminal world is not dependent on legal and administrative restrictions, but can exploit to the full the openness of the modern communication and information society. This creates the basis of a ‚crime internet'.

Interpol and national and international police authorities are, on the other hand, completely dependent on the evidence produced by the victim of the theft. Insufficient evidence weakens the case both for the police and the law.

Libraries entrusted with collections of cultural value must give a high priority to their security policies and systems. They need to develop better communication and co-operation on security issues with police organisations such as Interpol and Europol and with national legal systems.

In the business world, if a company loses valuables through theft, it will normally have made arrangements in advance for compensation, either through insurance or replacement. For cultural institutions the situation is almost exactly the opposite. Libraries cannot insure their collections, because what they might lose is almost impossible to replace. One cannot insure against such things in a traditional way.

Libraries have to be open to the general public and make their collections available to the public. Librarians generally have an open mind and show a co-operative approach to users, both scholars and the general public. This very openness and co-operation can be exploited by criminals.

This is the kind of reality libraries have to face. They are no longer safe retreats. They are for better or worse an active part of society, with all that this entails.

Those of us who are entrusted with the task of preserving cultural assets must realise this fact and face up to it in order to forestall acts of criminality directed at our collections. Without surrendering our open approach, we should try to overcome the naivety with which it has from time to time been associated and act in a more professional way.

The evidence suggests that there are a number of weaknesses in the way we handle criminal attacks against our collections and in the organisation of our security arrangements. These must be addressed and eliminated if our libraries are to be in a stronger position against international criminality. Openness on the part of libraries is a crucial factor in this development. Institutional silence can only be to the benefit of the thief.

AN ORGANISATIONAL NETWORK
FOR INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION ON SECURITY PROBLEMS
IN NATIONAL AND RESEARCH LIBRARIES
DRAFT PRINCIPLES

Principle 1

The representatives of the national and research libraries present (hereafter called the representatives) agree to establish a new security network for trans-national co-operation between libraries in order to prevent and combat criminal offences against significant library collections.

Principle 2

The representatives accept that each national or research library is responsible for setting up its own security policies and security systems, but they endorse their commitment to co-operation as part of a wider security network.

Principle 3

The representatives agree to inform and assist one another in a secure network when a library is subject to potential or actual criminal attacks against its collections.

Principle 4

The representatives agree to commit themselves to defining and developing a common ethical code of practice on security information handled and exchanged among libraries.

Principle 5

The network will co-operate with the police at an international level.

Principle 6

The representatives agree to nominate a designated member of staff as the library contact for the network.

Principle 7

The designated staff (security managers) will share experiences on security issues and best practice with one another.

Principle 8

Information about security issues is confidential to the security network.

Principle 9

The representatives encourage LIBER to establish co-operation on security issues with the book trade and with other memory institutions.

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Unanimously endorsed by the delegates at the LIBER *Conference on Library Security Management*, Copenhagen, 12-14 May 2002.

Copenhagen, 14 May 2002

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