

## Library Security Management: An Introduction

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During the last week of January 2001, the Royal Library suffered serious thefts in both its special reading rooms for maps and for manuscripts and rare books. Precious maps were removed from folio editions and smuggled out by a thief who was something of a magician. For years the Royal Library has been one of the most effectively secured buildings housing cultural assets in Denmark. Nevertheless, this incident happened and apparently could happen. The thefts were discovered the same day, but the thief had become suspicious and did not reappear over the next few days as expected. However, because the theft had been filmed on security cameras in the reading room, we had very good photographs of the thief. After days of hard work we were able to discover from the security film how the theft had been carried out and how the items had been smuggled out of the reading room. On the second day after the incident, I warned my fellow directors in the Nordic national libraries and in a number of university libraries with historical collections. Nevertheless, the following week the thief or his accomplice visited Helsinki University Library, and later we discovered that they had been in the Royal Library in The Hague at almost the same time, as well as some months earlier, and in the Royal Library in Stockholm on numerous occasions from the autumn of 2000 onwards.

Following an announcement on the websites of the Royal Library and the Museum Security Network<sup>1</sup>, we were contacted by several libraries, and it became apparent that the thieves had also at least visited the National Library of Wales, the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, and the Jagellonian University Library in Krakow; and, some years earlier, the National Library of Scotland, Cambridge University Library and the British Library. Frankly speaking, I was amazed. We knew nothing about this, and we had not been informed, either officially, or in confidence. There was also, at least at the beginning, a reluctance in many libraries to be open about such matters and to inform other libraries, even in confidence. Library directors and staff felt embarrassed, so in the past they had normally chosen to keep silent, if not directly denying the problem.

In my opinion this was simply too bad a state of affairs. As a result, under LIBER's auspices, I set out to improve matters by:

1. Organising a closed conference on security matters and security management built on the assumption that security is the responsibility of chief executives of libraries with important historical holdings, and thus the key group of participants should be directors and chief security officers.
2. To establish a security network among European national and university libraries with rare and valuable collections and, especially, among chief security officers in those libraries, so that in future counter-measures can be implemented as quickly as possible, and we can try to prevent such incidents as we have seen in recent years.

The Conference on Library Security Management was accordingly organized and took place in Copenhagen, hosted by the Royal Library, from 12 to 14 May 2002. Fifty chief executives, deputies, chief security officers, and special department heads from twenty European countries and the USA took part, and a range of reports about past and present incidents of theft, security problems in old and new buildings, security concepts, systems, and strategies, and a report from Interpol were presented. The discussions were lively and, within the Conference's closed walls, frank and open.

At the end the Conference, it was unanimously decided to convey to LIBER a set of recommendations termed 'The Copenhagen Principles for a new LIBER Security Network of 2002', which had been drafted by the Organizers and Conference Chairmen.

The Executive Board of LIBER, at its meeting on 2 July 2002, decided to endorse both the 'Principles' and the proposal to set up a closed-circuit network to share information about known or suspected thefts and attempted thefts from libraries. The Board asked the Royal Library, Copenhagen, to organise the security network in the autumn of 2002. The Annual General Assembly of LIBER also endorsed these proposals on 5 July 2002.

With the consent of contributors, this issue of *LIBER Quarterly* publishes some of the Conference papers in revised form. Information of a highly confidential nature that could compromise security systems has been omitted. The papers should be regarded as reports of past incidents that have both changed the policies and strategies of libraries and the minds of their executives and staff. There are reports by the present National Librarian of Sweden, Dr Tomas Lidman, the former National Librarian of Finland, Professor Esko Häkli, the Deputy National Librarian of the Netherlands, Dr Els van Eijck van

Heslinga outlining recent incidents and experiences, and by the former Keeper of Printed Books, National Library of Scotland, Dr Ann Matheson, on the lessons from an incident some years ago. In addition, the keynote speech by the Conference Organiser, Mr Erland Kolding Nielsen, which was presented in a slightly expanded version at the 31st LIBER Annual General Conference in Graz, Austria, in July 2002, touches on concepts and elements of a security policy based on two case studies within a span of twenty years.

Finally, the text of the endorsed version of 'The LIBER Security Network of 2002 – The Copenhagen Principles' is reproduced.

#### REFERENCES

- 1 <<http://www.kb.dk/tyveri/index-en.htm>> and <<http://www.museum-security.org/frameengels.html>>