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LAMMS AND INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION

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On 21 November 2008, Claudia Lux, President of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) convened a meeting with its sister international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) for archives (International Council on Archives-ICA), museums (International Council of Museums-ICOM), audiovisual archives (Co-ordinating Council of Audiovisual Archives Associations-CCAAA) and on monuments and sites (International Council on Monuments and Sites-ICOMOS). Two other organizations, the Conference of Directors of National Libraries (CDNL) and the International Council for Scientific and Technical Information (ICSTI) were invited as observers. President Lux was acting on a directive from IFLA's Professional Committee and Governing Board to "intensify cooperation on convergence in the cultural heritage sector."¹ From this alphabetic soup of international organizations emerged another acronym, LAMMS, for Libraries, Archives, Museums, Monuments and Sites. The purpose of the meeting was to create interest and assess the willingness among these NGOs to renew and reinforce a sense of co-operation and to come to a concrete working agenda of common interests which would benefit from collaborative activity. IFLA agreed to serve as the secretariat for the group.

This was not a unique development. The idea of library, archive, and museum collaboration has been a frequent panel, conference and paper topic, at least in North America, since at least 2005. For example, the Rare Books and Manuscripts Section (RBMS) of the American Library Association held a conference in 2006 called "Libraries, Archives and Museums in the Twenty-first Century: Intersecting Missions, Converging Futures?" In a play on the title of a well-known American movie, the Research Libraries Group,² issued a report called "Beyond the Silos of the LAMS: Collaboration Among Libraries, Archives, and Museums."³ A paper presented at the Society of American Archivists meeting in August 2008 bore the title "Both Sides Now: The 'Something Lost' and 'Something Gained' in Museum, Library, and Archives Collaboration."⁴ Now at the upcoming American Society for Information Science and Technology (ASIS&T) conference in November 2009 there will be a panel called "Information Organization in Libraries, Archives and Museums: Converging Practices and Collaboration Opportunities."

One can easily list the commonalities among these groups: their missions to collect, organize and preserve information resources, objects, artifacts, specimens and data relating to our intellectual life and cultural heritage, so as to support education, learning and curiosity for a more informed society. Of course, we can add those in the monuments and sites community to the others in many regards. But these groups also exist separately and independently in their own professional cultures. What has stimulated the wave of interest in collaboration and, in some cases, the assumption of convergence, is no surprise: the appearance of enabling technology and the availability and "freedom" of the Internet as a means of dissemination.

In some cases, it is the user, or customer, who can make his or her own sense out of the incredibly diverse offerings available from the members of the LAMMS community on the Internet. In others, diverse organizations draw together resources and provide added value consisting of contextual information or navigability to help the consumer make sense of it. One can point to a broad range of projects in which various partnerships among the LAMMS are creating wonderfully combined digital resources on a broad national or international scale. I'm sure you're aware of sites like these:

Europeana, a multi-lingual online collections of 4.6 million digitized items from European museums, libraries, archives, and multi-media collections⁵

World Digital Library, a collaboration of the US Library of Congress and UNESCO “to create an Internet-based, easily-accessible collection of the world’s cultural riches that would tell the stories and highlight the achievements of all countries and cultures, thereby promoting cross-cultural awareness and understanding,” which now involves 34 partners around the world with an avowed emphasis on quality and standards.”⁶

Picture Australia, a centralized database of images from over 50 Australian archives, libraries, and museums.⁷

Nations with ministers of culture may draw together the LAMMS community in a formal way, especially if they are supported with government funding. In the United States, we have the Institute of Museum and Library Service and in the United Kingdom is the Museums, Libraries, and Archives Council. Again, in the U.S., the professional associations overseeing archives, libraries and museums, work together in a committee called CALM.⁸ Museums have come into some of these groups only recently, such as the Pacific Islands Association of Libraries and Archives, which now includes museums.⁹

While most of the discussion has involved convergence in the digital world, there has also been evidence of closer associations in the physical and/or administrative world. One well-known example is the Library and Archives Canada. In a more recent example, last July 8, in Berlin, the President of Germany opened an exhibition at the Altes Museum intended to signal the kinds of things that will happen in something called the Humboldt Forum, to be built by architect Frank Stella on the site of the old Berlin City Palace.¹⁰

According to a press release, around 1,000 guests marvelled at an art collection and objects from non-European cultures, dipped into letters and reports by famous researchers and collectors and took a look at the current plans of the three partner institutions involved in the project: the National Museums, the Humboldt University, and the Central and Regional Library, all in Berlin. The National Museums are contributing their unique collections of non-European art and culture from the Ethnological Museum and the Asian Art Museum. The Central and Regional Library will be contributing in its most active core areas: dance, theatre, film, art, and music and there will also be a modern teaching library for children and young people and a helpdesk providing a wide range of services. The third partner, the Humboldt University, is planning exhibitions and events on current fields of research, as well as presentations focusing on items from its scientific collections. The museums, library and university have joined forces to “develop idea forms of complementary co-operation.” However, for each of the core areas, the three partners will be “*independently responsible*.”¹¹ (my emphasis)

Another example comes from the University of Calgary in Canada where Thomas Hickerson is now the Vice-Provost for Libraries and Cultural Resources (note the title), which “brings together the University Library, Archives and Special Collections, The Nickle Arts Museum and the University of Calgary Press. According to their website, this unit “develops, preserves, and provides access to large collections of print, digital and three-dimensional objects, and archival materials.”¹² Mr. Hickerson’s business plan calls for co-locating some units and building a new high-density storage building to accommodate all kinds of collections.

So there is much going on at the local, state and national, and in some cases international, levels to suggest that cultural organizations are coming closer together in a variety of ways and under a variety of models. The economic downturn and the struggles of cultural organizations, hard-hit by diminishing support from public and private sectors, may be fueling some of this. There is no doubt that when money is tight, cultural organizations suffer. If nothing else, the present set of circumstances has made it clear that loud and clear advocacy needs to be at the top of the priority list for cultural heritage organizations.

But what does the idea of collaboration and convergence mean for the international cultural heritage organizations like the NGOs, whose senior leadership has started to meet? First, it is quite clear that the NGOs also have distinct characteristics and cultures.

1. ICOM and ICOMOS unite basically large groups of personal members and have organized their members into national committees and specialist groups. ICA and IFLA unite associations and institutions. Does this make a difference in how they shape their priorities and focus their attention?

2. ICOM and ICOMOS have a strong position within UNESCO with various programs and conventions for which there is substantial financial support: world heritage convention, underwater heritage convention, etc.¹³ They reside under UNESCO's Division of Culture. ICA and IFLA work through UNESCO's Communication and Information Division, where there is less funding for projects and competition with radio and broadcasting initiatives and technology infrastructure as the division pursues its strategy of promoting the free flow of ideas and universal access to information. This is quite important of course, but it doesn't always mesh well with IFLA's agenda.

Even with the best will in the world, collaboration is hard, even among members of the same group, not to mention in the LAMMS context. At home, in my own large and diverse institution, the Smithsonian Institution, for example, there are 19 museums, 9 research centers and the National Zoo. (We like to refer to the occupants of the zoo as our "living" collections.)

Anthropologist Richard Kurin, who is the Smithsonian's Undersecretary for History and Art, said recently that the institution is a place which, even though all units operate under a single umbrella, often seems more like "warring, entrepreneurial tribes," or, as we often say, a thousand flowers blooming with little cross-institution cohesion. I'm sure that phrase resonates among all of you as well, as you think about your organizations. Yet the Smithsonian's top executive, who bears the title of Secretary, Dr. Wayne Clough, sees the bigger picture and the virtue of collaboration. He is urging us to align ourselves under several big ideas that speak to our strengths—in the case of science, that is global warming—which can have an impact on society as a whole.

The LAMMS organizations operate at a much different and higher level from those involved in the projects described earlier. Obviously they are not discussing the merging either of collections on the Internet or their organizations, but rather on finding ways in which these autonomous bodies can exchange information and work together on common issues which affect them all. Last November, five issues emerged as possible priorities for collective endeavor:

1. WIPO—the World Intellectual Property Organization
2. Blue Shield – protection of cultural heritage in times of war and natural disaster
3. UNESCO and its relationships to the NGOs
4. Overlapping common issues such as global digital libraries
5. Training in preservation and emergency planning.

At the same meeting, the LAMMS group established a practical structure for exchanging information. IFLA agreed to provide the Secretariat for the next three years and created a special email address for the group. IFLA now provides the group with a regular electronic newsletter: the NGO Newsflash, which contains relevant information, alerts on events coming up and actions taken.

As far as the five topics are concerned, the LAMMS cluster plans to create a group of specialists for each topic, with members drawn from each NGO, to serve as working groups or information sources. Realizing that presidents and secretaries general have set terms and inevitably turn over, the plan is for the groups to commit for three-year terms, so as to provide continuity for action. The LAMMS group is also hopeful that this enhanced collaboration and the ideas it generates would be part of the future agendas of all of the NGO governing boards or councils.

The LAMMS cluster met again in April 2009 and each organization took responsibility for developing concrete steps in one or more of the five areas.

1. IFLA, through the energetic activities of its Committee on Copyright and other Legal Matters, will take the lead for work within the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). Created in 1967, WIPO is one of sixteen specialized agencies of the United Nations and was established "to encourage creative activity, to promote the protection of intellectual property throughout the world."¹⁴ WIPO currently has 184 member states,¹⁵ administers 24 international treaties,¹⁶ and is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland. Since 2004, IFLA's leadership and members of the Copyright Committee have persistently worked alongside other NGOs to insert the interests and protections for libraries and other organizations operating in the public interest so that a better balance can be achieved between copyright owners and consumers of information.¹⁷ (See CLM position papers regarding WIPA at <http://www.ifla.org/en/node/471>).
2. ICA and ICOM will work on issues relating to the Blue Shield (more about this later).
3. ICOMOS will take the lead on UNESCO matters.

4. IFLA and CDNL are focused on the common issues surrounding digitization and digital libraries. However there are other common issues identified as important, including collections care (preservation, collection security, disaster management); funding (we all suffer from being underfunded, operating on a shoe string, and relying on volunteer commitments for progress); standards in many areas; and advocacy through joint endorsement of policy statements. With regard to digitization, the Conference of Directors of National Libraries drafted a vision statement for a global digital library, which focuses on advocacy for digital libraries, business models for funding, the need for multi-lingualism and respect for indigenous cultures and cultural property, and relationships between national libraries and their governments in this area. The LAMMS members felt that with some adjustment, the statement might be made suitable for adoption by all the NGO partners, while recognizing there is still a need for actual standard guidelines on digitization and digital preservation.
5. ICOM will work on training in preservation and emergency planning.

It was further agreed at the April 2009 meeting that IFLA will create a website page to publish the activities of the LAMMS group and hopes to have it launched before the end of 2009. Presentations like the one I am giving will be put on the agendas of the individual organization members' congresses.

Activities relating to the Blue Shield deserve further attention. As I am sure you know, there has traditionally been strong cooperation among the international NGOs concerning protection of cultural heritage. IFLA, ICA, ICOM and ICOMOS (joined later by the CCCAA) established the International Committee of the Blue Shield (ICBS) in 1996. Described on its website as the equivalent of the Red Cross for cultural heritage, I am sure that most of you know that the ICBS has actively promoted the ideals of the Blue Shield, which has resulted in the creation of a number of national Blue Shield committees,-- and more are forming. What was missing since the inception of the ICBS was a central secretariat with an office, stable address and contact points; until recently the secretariat had followed the ICBS presidency, which rotated among the members. Last December saw the establishment of an Association of National Committees of the Blue Shield (ANCBS) to strengthen the network and set up a central office. The municipality of The Hague has provided office space for a period of three years.

This year, the ICBS/ANCBS have issued statements on the conflict in Gaza, the collapse of the Municipal Archives of Cologne, Germany, and the earthquake in the Abruzzi region of Italy. In addition, the ANCBS organized two international expeditions to assist colleagues in the Cologne Archives with their rescue work.¹⁸

ICA provided the LAMMS group with a discussion paper on three possible models of how to continue with the International Committee and the new association. There are some stresses and strains among the two groups that must be resolved in order to work out responsibilities and legal issue, and to develop the strongest possible way of carrying out the Blue Shield mission of protecting the world's cultural heritage which is threatened by wars and natural disasters.

The next meeting of the LAMMS group will be in December 2009. Will this new initiative result in real change? Change of this sort takes time and perseverance. All parties must continue to feel that the collaboration will provide benefits to them individually as well as collectively, if a true collaboration is to be long-lived.

So where does ICOMOS fit in this picture of enhanced collaboration? Clearly there has been collaboration within the community, especially bibliographically through the documentation center. Are there other opportunities to get your message out to the general public in a higher or broader level of collaboration, which would serve your needs?

I want to finish by briefly describing a project that shows how, with the right idea and the right partners, a collaboration can move from within an institution to a global enterprise: the Biodiversity Heritage Library (BHL) and the Encyclopedia of Life (EOL) two more acronyms in our soup. The BHL's mission is to digitize the published literature of biodiversity and provide open access to it for scientists, researchers, students and the public world-wide. Currently there are 12 partners in the U.S. and the United Kingdom encompassing natural history museum, botanical garden, and academic libraries.¹⁹

The Encyclopedia of Life plans to create an online reference source and database for every one of the 1.8 million species that are named and known on this planet. EOL adopted the BHL as one of its strategic components, so that when the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur and Alfred P. Sloan Foundations decided to fund the EOL, some of the funding (now \$6 million) was passed along. You can see the convergence here on the EOL web pages about the polar bear. When a researcher or student looks it up, they not only get information about the bear, such as its morphology, habitat, or threats to it, they can also call up the relevant literature.

The Encyclopedia of Life involves scientific staff of museums and universities and will bring in, and link to, information from a variety of sources. The BHL involves libraries and may at some time involve archival material, such as field notes. Together, these projects have the capacity to fundamentally change the research methodology of scientists around the world. The BHL has spawned a BHL Europe and is working on memoranda of understanding with the Chinese and the Australians. The important thing here is that the collaborating bodies remain independent; the convergence is on the web. Harkening back to the Humboldt Forum, where I started, I think we can see that whether the LAMMS are within a single organizational structure, move together into a single physical location, join together on the web, or co-operate in the international arena, one of the keys to collaboration is to find ways of complementary co-operation combined with independent responsibility.

Ken Soehner, Chief Librarian at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, said in 2005, "True collaboration...devises a new vision for a new way of doing things. It inevitably and fundamentally involves change. Collaboration is transformational and the elements, institutions and individuals involved in collaboration must change. That's why it occurs so infrequently."²⁰ There are signs that in 2009, collaboration is becoming more frequent and to the benefit of all.

¹ <http://archive.ifla.org/III/announce/convergence-ngos.htm>

² A partnership operating within the OCLC Programs and Research Division

³ Zorich, Diane, Günter Waibel and Ricky Erway. Beyond the Silos of the LAMs: Collaboration Among Libraries, Archives and Museums. (.pdf: 334K/59 pp.) September 26, 2007

⁴ Steven L. Olsen, "Both Sides Now: The 'Something Lost' and 'Something Gained' in Museum Library, and Archives Collaboration," in Session 309: "You Say You Want a Revolution . . . : Combining Archives, Museums, Libraries," Society of American Archivists Annual Meeting, August 28, 2008.

⁵ <http://www.europeana.eu/portal/>

⁶ <http://www.wdl.org/en/>

⁷ www.pictureaustralia.org

⁸ <http://www.mla.gov.uk/about>

⁹ <http://piala.org.googlepages.com/>

¹⁰ http://www.smb.museum/smb/hufo/index.php?node_id=6&lang=en

¹¹ http://www.smb.museum/smb/hufo/index.php?node_id=14&lang=en

¹² <http://lcr.ucalgary.ca/>

¹³ Museums are specifically mentioned in UNESCO's Biennial priority 1: Protecting, safeguarding and managing the tangible and intangible heritage, action 3 (04016) (http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL_ID=35752&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html). ICOM also operates a Museum Information Center housed in UNESCO's Geneva headquarters. ICOMOS is clearly engaged in UNESCO activities regarding world heritage sites.

¹⁴ Convention Establishing the World Intellectual Property Organization, signed at Stockholm on July 14, 1967, Preamble, second paragraph.

¹⁵ <http://www.wipo.int/members/en/>

¹⁶ <http://www.wipo.int/treaties/en/>

¹⁷ See CLM position papers regarding WIPA at <http://www.ifla.org/en/node/471>.

¹⁸ See www.ancbs.org for more information.

¹⁹ Nancy E. Gwinn and Constance Rinaldo, "The Biodiversity Heritage Library: Sharing Biodiversity Literature with the World," *IFLA Journal* 35 (2009): 25-34. Also see <http://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/> and <http://www.eol.org/>.

²⁰ "Out of the ring and into the future: the power of collaboration," presented at the 2005 RLG Members Forum: "Libraries, Archives and Museums—Three Ring Circus, One Big Show," p 7. <http://tinyurl.com/67evlv>. Quoted in: Diane M. Zorich, Günter Waibel, Ricky Erway, "Beyond the Silos of the LAMS: Collaboration Among Libraries, Archives and Museums," Report produced by OCLC Programs and Research, p. 12. www.oclc.org/programs/reports/2008-05.pdf.