

CALL FOR PAPERS

Ambassadors of the Book. Competences for heritage librarians

An international conference in Antwerp, 1–2 February 2012

What are the competences needed for the heritage librarians of the future, and how can these competences be taught at different levels of library education? Those questions will be discussed during an international conference at the University of Antwerp (Belgium), on 1 and 2 February 2012. During two days, librarians and people in charge of library teaching programmes will be invited to confront their ideas. It is hoped that presentations of best practices during the conference will serve as inspiring models of new programmes in the future, and that at the end of the conference, some consensus may be reached about the range of competences needed.

The conference is organized by the Library and Information Science Department of the University of Antwerp and Flanders Heritage Library, with the collaboration of the École nationale supérieure des sciences de l'information et des bibliothèques (ENSSIB, Lyon), FARO - Flemish interface centre for cultural heritage, and under the auspices of the IFLA-Rare Books and Manuscript Section, the LIBER Steering Committee for Heritage Collection and Preservation, and the Consortium of European Research Libraries (CERL). The conference will be held in English.

SUBMISSIONS

Submissions are invited for 30 minute presentations on the competences that librarians in charge of special (or heritage) collections should acquire during their training, and how library training programmes can teach these competences. Participants may also want to discuss related issues such as the re-training of library staff or the ways in which skills can be kept up-to-date. We welcome both presentations of best practices (e.g. discussions of existing programmes) and papers discussing these matters at a more fundamental level.

The deadline for submission is 31 August 2011. Submissions received after this date will not be considered for acceptance.

If you wish to put forward a paper for the conference, please send the following information in the form of a Word-document to prof. dr. Pierre Delsaerd, chair of the organizing committee, at pierre.delsaerd@ua.ac.be:

- 1) name
- 2) institutional affiliation
- 3) contact e-mail
- 4) title of your proposed paper
- 5) abstract of no more than 500 words

DEADLINES

August 31, 2011: Deadline for submission of proposals

September 30, 2011: Notification of acceptance or rejection of proposals

October 15, 2011: Deadline for confirmation of acceptance by presenters.

BACKGROUND

It seems trivial, these days, to state that libraries have been challenged by recent technological, social and economic developments. On the other hand, these developments have not minimized the library's mission as a memory institution, quite the contrary. Among the many roles that libraries will continue to play in the 21st century and beyond, their responsibility for the preservation of the written heritage is perhaps the one that is questioned least.

This role of libraries, ancient as it may be, implies that library staff be trained adequately to meet the specific requirements of heritage collections in libraries. These requirements are multiple. Expertise in preservation and conservation is a major one, but it certainly has to be supplemented – and perhaps even preceded – by other competences, e.g. an insight into heritage policies, a profound knowledge of the management of collections and acquisitions, a familiarity with the material aspects of books and manuscripts, with the history of libraries and book collecting and with techniques of bibliographical description, an awareness of the need to open the collections to the public and of the challenges of digitisation, an understanding of the marketing of heritage collections... Will heritage librarians who are equipped with such diverse qualities be able to serve as the future Ambassadors of the Book?