

## Conference of the Liber Groupe des Cartothécaires, Paris 29th August-2<sup>nd</sup> September 2006

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Following on from Copenhagen (2000), Helsinki (2002) and Cambridge (2004), the meeting of the "Groupe des Cartothécaires" took place in Paris from the 29<sup>th</sup> of August to the 2<sup>nd</sup> of September 2006. It was hosted by the Bibliothèque nationale de France ([BnF](#)), with the support of Institut Géographique National ([IGN](#)), Service Historique de la Défense ([SHD](#)), [Archives nationales](#) and the Library of the [Château de Chantilly](#). The Conference was organised by the Comité Français de Cartographie (CFC). A committee was set up within the CFC, which organised the scientific program and participated in the general organisation.

The number of delegates was particularly high - 70 map librarians representing 20 countries with backgrounds in libraries (national, university, public), archives (national, regional or local), cartographic agencies, research institutions or museums. As in preceding years, the conference began with the various national reports presented by 16 National Correspondents. These reports provide an overview of activities during the years 2004-2006 and also the difficulties faced by professional staff in a time of significant change in the methods of cartographic production which has a serious impact on access and conservation.

For these reasons, the committee chose the following theme for the Paris meeting: "Cartographic materials: access and conservation". The sessions took place from Wednesday morning till Friday afternoon in the national library (Richelieu site and Tolbiac site), in the IGN (at Saint-Mandé) and the SHD (at Vincennes).

After an introduction by the President of the Library, Jean-Noël Jeanneney, the Wednesday morning session was dedicated to conservation of digital documents. Henrik Dupont (Royal Library of Denmark) spoke about legal deposit of digital maps, the difficulties faced in establishing a system to support this and the possibilities created for the library user. Emmanuelle Bermès (BnF) presented "Digital preservation, a challenge for libraries" which considered the 'why' and 'how' of preserving digital material while Göran Bäärnhielm (National Library of Sweden), describing his paper in his usual self-effacing way as the 'reflections of an amateur' gave us all a considerable amount to think about based on his long experience in the world of map libraries. In his paper, 'The Future of Geodata, in the context of local Communities in Sweden', he emphasised the contrast between the extent of web creation and the weakness of deposition and archiving of this product. The lack of expertise in handling new products and the complexity of map files resulting in deferred decisions on preservation were themes returned to during the discussions which followed the presented papers.

The afternoon session, chaired by Wouter Bracke, (Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België, Brussels) considered ways to promote access to digitised map products. Firstly, Marcel Watelet, from the European Community, challenged the Group to become involved in the eContentplus program. He highlighted the need for interoperability, the use of existing content and the involvement of content providers combined with an emphasis on user needs. He was followed by Liudmila Zinchuk (Russian State Library) who reported on the challenges faced by librarians due to increased demand for maps. Digitisation as a solution poses a series of questions on the strategy, priority and service technology to be employed and the paper offered an example from the two main libraries in Russia. Annick Anceau (University Library of Liege) warmed the hearts of many delegates by her presentation on a very practical but invaluable local in-house electronic map collection created to preserve and improve access to the geological maps of Belgium drawn between 1890 and 1919 at 1:40,000. Philippe Cazamajor d'Artois and Marie-Odile Schnepf (Institut de recherche pour le développement, Paris) demonstrated the Phosat project which includes aerial photographs and satellite images, a coverage particularly important for francophone Africa. Marco van Egmond (Utrecht University) concluded the day's session with a presentation on Dutch thematic maps on the web, a cooperative project which adds value to the maps by extensive descriptions.

The Thursday morning meeting took place at the IGN where the participants had an extensive presentation of the tasks, duties and responsibilities of the Institute and of its role in the conservation of its products, which included an overview of Geoportail, a visit to the map collection, the instruments collection and the printing room. It is always a delight to be shown round by people enthusiastic for what they do and, certainly, the cartographers of France still love to talk about maps. During the afternoon, the delegates were received at the SHD where Marie-Anne de Villèle presented a panorama of map collections and the changing needs of the Armed Forces, complete with background fanfares.

On Friday, the conference moved to the Tolbiac site of the BnF. The morning session, chaired by Jan Werner, was dedicated to new ways of accessing digital documents. Laetitia Azzolin (Institut de Géographie Alpine) presented a review of how GIS and library management operated in cartography at her institution using electronic index sheets and a geospatial search tool for maps. Jens Bove (University Library of Dresden) spoke about "Kartenforum Sachsen"- a system allowing access to a digital library of rare cartographic material launched in July 2005. About 300 items valuable for teaching and research have been digitised as a union library of maps of Saxony. The first morning session closed with Jürg Bühler (ETH Zurich) who returned to the use of "Toporama" as a spatial search tool in the map library. His paper stimulated much discussion as a foundation for a wider European approach to accessing national topographic sheet series and holdings. His solution seems to have met the expectations of most map librarians and it may yet prove to be a valuable catalyst for future activity. As Jürg will be retiring next year, it was a fitting occasion on which to thank him for his services to the "Groupe des Cartothécaires", particularly as webmaster. Although he may be retiring, his pragmatic and thoughtful paper emphasised the need for basic solutions built on experience.

The second morning session opened with Steffi Mittenzwei (Staatsbibliothek Berlin) who spoke about the retrospective conversion of the Staatsbibliothek's map catalogues, a project which ran between July 2005 and July 2006. Ewa Szykiewicz and Elzbieta Dziemianczuk (University of Wroclaw) introduced Virtua, a union catalogue of every edition of multi-sheet maps of Silesia (1850-1950) at scales varying between 1:25,000 and 1:300,000.

Before lunch, the BnF staff took great pride in escorting the delegates on a visit to the installation of the two Coronelli globes made for Louis XIV. While installation is still in progress, the size, complexity and quality of restoration impressed us all. The final session of papers included a presentation on the bibliography of Polish cartography, by Lucyna Szaniawska from the National Library of Poland, and the new access means to the French national bibliography of maps by Véronique Thomé (BnF).

At the end of the formal sessions of the Conference there was an opportunity to discuss future destinations for our congresses (Amsterdam in 2008 and – perhaps - Tallinn in 2010) and possible areas for the Group's future involvement: shared management of and access to records of European multi-sheets series using interactive graphical indexes, website, and board of the group.

Cultural and social occasions were not overlooked, as the congress was received wonderfully by the BnF, by the IGN and by the Archives nationales. An excellent conference dinner took place at the restaurant "le Cardinal" on the Grands Boulevards and our hosts will be long remembered for the warmth and generosity of their welcome receptions. Special exhibitions were presented by BnF (at both Richelieu and Tolbiac sites), Archives nationales, IGN and SHD.

Finally, most delegates took advantage of an excursion to Chantilly on Saturday where they visited map collections of the Duc d'Aumale and viewed documents chosen by the curator of the Library. Many will take away a lasting impression of maps of the Egyptian campaign annotated in Napoleon Buonaparte's own hand. Last, but not least, everybody had the opportunity to visit the chateau and the park after having tasted the real "Crème Chantilly".

This conference was extremely rich, providing an opportunity to discuss fundamental questions about the future of map libraries and services to their users, particularly for those who feel somewhat isolated in their own situation. The variety of presentations from different types of libraries and institutions emphasised the common ground shared and problems faced. It was also an opportunity to meet with French map librarians and, therefore, to widen the audience of the Commission de Documentation of the Comité Français de Cartographie. Helene Richard and the staff of the Bibliothèque nationale de France were gracious, hospitable and most attentive hosts.

The proceedings will be published on the Liber website, and all the delegates are looking forward to meeting again in July 2008 at Amsterdam.

**WEB SITES REFERRED TO IN THE TEXT**

Archives nationales. <http://www.archivesnationales.culture.gouv.fr/>

BnF - Bibliothèque nationale de France. <http://www.bnf.fr/>

Château de Chantilly. <http://www.chateauchantilly.com/>

IGN - Institut Géographique National. <http://www.ign.fr/>

SHD - Service Historique de la Défense. <http://www.servicehistorique.sga.defense.gouv.fr/>