



## **Blue Shield Rescue mission for the destroyed City Archive of Cologne**

May 27<sup>th</sup> – April 1<sup>st</sup> 2009

**On Monday 27<sup>th</sup> April an international Blue Shield team will go to Cologne to support the rescue work on the valuable collection of the collapsed City Archive of Cologne. Throughout week about 80 heritage professionals from The Netherlands, France, United States, Sweden, Switzerland, and Bosnia Herzegovina will try to save as much of the collection as possible.**

The Blue Shield is the cultural equivalent of the Red Cross or Doctors without Borders, with a network of experts working for the protection of the world's cultural heritage (museums, monuments and sites, libraries and archives). This body of expertise wants to make its knowledge available to advise and assist in responding to damage to cultural heritage caused by armed conflict or natural disasters. The Blue Shield is still young; every year new national Blue Shield committees are founded. Worldwide twenty committees already exist and more than twenty new committees are being currently set up.

Since 2008 the Blue Shield organization has a coordination centre in The Hague, city of peace and justice. Thanks to cooperation with the Dutch Nationaal Archief and the Branch organization of Archive Institutes in The Netherlands (BRAIN) and partner institutes like Erfgoed Nederland, ICA, IFLA, ICOM and ICOMOS and the German Blue Shield (under construction), the call for participants for this mission was distributed and recommended all over the world. Within a few days more than 80 highly motivated professionals, who were deeply touched by the tragedy, applied. The team was limited to 85 persons, because the facilities in Cologne cannot accommodate more rescue workers than this at any one time. However, there were more applicants, and they may be called upon in the near future.

Precisely one month after the collapse of the building a Blue Shield delegation went to Cologne to see how to match the help offered with the help needed. The delegation was very much impressed by the work that has been done so far. The process of searching and finding the material is taking place under extremely dangerous and difficult circumstances. It is, therefore, a tremendous achievement to have made such progress. Rescue plans have been altered several times, always in order to look further ahead. The prognosis is that the first phase of the recovery process (separating material, storage, registration, first aid to the objects like cleaning and drying or preparing for further treatment) needs one more month, so this will end even before summer holidays.

The delegation was also very impressed by the determination and the motivation of everyone at work. After a month of stress, and extremely long working hours, the spirit seems unbroken though the fatigue is showing. Firemen are still the only ones working on the slope, because of the danger. They have a whole team working day in day out and they will stay till the slope is gone. A coordinated mission is needed as soon as possible and will be most helpful in this first phase of the recovery process, when several teams work at the same time and on the same location.

On Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> April David Leitch, Secretary-General of ICA, the International Council of Archives in Paris and Robert Kretzschmar, President of the German Archivists Association, will visit the damaged City Archive and the Blue Shield rescue team.

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**More information:**

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Please visit our website [www.ancbs.org](http://www.ancbs.org) or join our presentation on Saturday April 25 in the Restoration Fair in 's Hertogenbosch, 12.00 -13.00 hrs. In the large theater we provide more information about the actual situation in Cologne, the working conditions, tasks and facilities for the volunteers.