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SIXTH
ANNUAL
DISTINGUISHED
LECTURE

Herndon

a cause de Lumbré

Chère Madame Lathu
Votre charmant programme
arrivé comme j'avais eu
lettre écrite pour vous. Et
est que de la "rouvrie", je
le recommence, pour vos dix
d'ailleurs la même chose: c'est
les deux tourments de ma vie ces
jours - si ont été
1° que le mari de Caliste était
parti depuis une huitaine jours de
Logan...

...ER 29, 1857.
Business Card
W. H. STRYKER
Architect and Superintend
...
TREMONT, MA
BOWLING ALLEYS
...
AMERICAN
PRESS CO.
...
L. BARTLETT
...
MAN & PULL

PRESERVING
THE WRITTEN
INTELLECTUAL AND
CULTURAL HERITAGE:
AN OBSOLETE TASK
OF LIBRARIES?

HANS-PETER GEH

SEPTEMBER 28, 1995

UNIVERSITY
OF ILLINOIS
AT URBANA-
CHAMPAIGN

INTRODUCTION



It gives me great pleasure to present to you the sixth annual C. Walter and Gerda B. Mortenson Distinguished Lecture, delivered on September 28, 1995, by Hans-Peter Geh, director of the Württembergische Landesbibliothek in Stuttgart, Germany.

Dr. Geh studied history, political science, and English literature at the Universities of Frankfurt am Main and Bristol. He received his library education and training at the City and University Library of Frankfurt am Main and at the College of Librarianship in Cologne. He served as president of the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) from 1985 to 1991, and is currently president of the European Foundation for Library Cooperation. He is also a member of the International Commission for the Revival of the Ancient Alexandria Library.

In "Preserving the Written Intellectual and Cultural Heritage: An Obsolete Task of Libraries?" Dr. Geh discusses the enduring importance of old and rare materials, illustrating his points with examples drawn from his own experience.

Marianna Tax Choldin

Director, Mortenson Center for International Library Programs
and Mortenson Distinguished Professor

PRESERVING THE WRITTEN INTELLECTUAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE: AN OBSOLETE TASK OF LIBRARIES?



I should like to deal with a subject that appears to me to be important at the present time for a wide variety of reasons, and one that is closely connected with the aims of the Mortenson family: "Preserving the written intellectual and cultural heritage: an obsolete task of libraries?"

First I shall give a brief appreciation of the altered role of libraries, then consider the postulate "the future needs origins" and the ever-increasing flood of information and its effects, after which I shall talk about the social significance of culture and the cultural heritage, concluding with a practical demonstration by describing two outstanding acquisitions of this kind by my library. I shall also go into the obvious reasons for such purchases.

It is a fact that we are now living in an information society, a fact that undoubtedly also has drastic effects above all academic libraries. There can be no doubt that if libraries wish to remain on top of the times, libraries must become the information-communication place for all creative media, offering access to sources of information worldwide. This development is in harmony with the wishes of your Vice President Al Gore, who has made the creation of information superhighways a high-priority political issue.

For academic libraries this means that every effort must be made to fulfill their task as provider and interpreter of information as effectively as possible. The goal is to give the end-user worldwide access to all kinds of information under the motto "access versus ownership." This is all the more urgent for the position of libraries as they now no longer have a monopoly as regards gateways to information, but are increasingly being forced into hard competition with private providers of information. I am thus an unreserved supporter of the new role of libraries, which involves making full use of the new media

and communications technologies and also, for instance, adopting the preservation of relevant documents in digital form. I had already clearly vowed to do this in my inaugural speech at Stuttgart over twenty-five years ago. During the subsequent dinner with the Minister of Culture and Education, the statements I had made in this context provoked a comment from the chairman of the Württemberg Society of Libraries and sometime publisher of the *Stuttgarter Zeitung* that I was out of place at a library so famous for its excellent specialized collections of old literature that it represented a very special type of cultural center.

The future-oriented development of libraries with regard to obtaining information via expensive means of communication must not, however, lead to a two-class information society, i.e. to a situation where there are some who can afford all items of information and others who, for financial reasons, are not in a position to do so. I already see this danger at present in several European countries, caused among other things by the relatively high telecommunication line costs and the corresponding utilization fees, particularly for commercially oriented specialized databases where the end-user must bear a share of the costs.

And as a former president of IFLA, who has experienced the situation at first hand in numerous developing countries, I also see the danger of these new developments increasing in the information gap between these countries and the industrialized nations.

It is obvious that highly specialized expert knowledge, particularly scientific and technical knowledge, will increasingly move away from the media of paper and print in order to be accessible to all those interested from the day it is stored, so to speak, in a central electronic database for each subject. The situation with the humanities, however, will be different. I am thus of the opinion that electronic books are not bastards but legitimate members of the book family, especially as within a few years the distinctions between the publishing of traditional books and electronic publishing will become more and more hazy. The backing material should after all not be the decisive element in the final analysis.

In this connection there would be a lot to say about things like the relationships between academic author, publisher, library, and reader, which are already changing considerably. But this would go far beyond my topic today.

However, even as a proponent of the new role of libraries, I also quite definitely subscribe to the opinion that libraries should not renounce their traditional academic role as storehouses of the written cultural heritage. In the present mood of enthusiasm for the latest developments and in view of the sparse financial resources available, one frequently hears the opinion voiced that we should adjust exclusively to the new requirements and use all our funds in this field. The only goal should, they say, be the electronic or virtual library as a supplier of up-to-date information. Some people even go so far as to say that the "historical" stocks should, so to speak, be exhibited in a kind of museum corner of libraries. This would of course contradict the ever-valid importance of culture for human coexistence and as a means of communication between the peoples of the world.

I should now like to justify this by first touching on the phenomenon that "the future needs origins" before going on to speak about the importance of culture in the political and social spheres, as well as in terms of values, and its significance for the coexistence of nations.

I should like to begin with an event that has, in my country, understandably given rise over the past few months to considerable attention and discussion: the end of World War Two fifty years ago. The question concerned was: Should we remember or should we forget? One consequence of this discussion for libraries was an increasing demand for literature on this subject, particularly for material from the period concerned, to allow people to get their own picture of the facts.

Almost 100 years ago the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche said in this connection: "Forgetting and remembering are equally necessary for living: Someone who remembers everything would be utterly engrossed with the past and would be as unviable as someone who had no memory whatsoever. So knowing how to forget at the right time is as important to man . . . as remembering at the right time."

In these discussions about the end of the Second World War the opinion that one should not forget has clearly won the day, for, as the philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey postulated long ago, "History tells man what he is." And how could this lesson be learned better than from the eloquent witness borne by

books in libraries? They, the libraries, form, as Jorge Luis Borges once said, "a bulwark against forgetfulness." They form a gigantic memory apart, preserving the fame and disgrace of mankind, a place where man can systematically search for the material that he needs and that interests him.

Or let me quote George Bernard Shaw in this connection: "Libraries are the memory of mankind. An infamous memory, but with those we shall build the future which will resemble, however slightly, our hopes."

"The future needs origins" as the Marburg compensation theoretician and philosopher Odo Marquard put it some months ago with regard to new technical developments and the glut of information that confronts us. His theory is as follows: The faster ever-increasing amounts of new material are churned out, the more important it is for mankind to cherish the old. The greater the excessive load of innovation gets, the more important the culture of continuity becomes. For modern man, the future thus separates itself from its origins. The more the future becomes modern for us, new and strange, the more of the past will we have to take along — like a cherished teddy-bear — with us into the future, searching out and caring for an ever-increasing number of antiquities. This is indeed the book's big opportunity.

And another aspect. The wide variety of new media and information technologies has led to an increasingly serious overload of information "which the individual," so Marquard writes, "cannot cope with or cannot use in the way he requires." It may then happen, as it already does today, that excessive information is replaced by the word-of-mouth approach. One picks up the telephone or goes to the next congress to listen to the specialists talking about the latest developments in this or that field of knowledge.

The famous Italian writer Umberto Eco recently lamented the senseless flood of information in a brief note on the collapse of his fax machine. The fax is constantly spewing out often unsolicited messages and, as Eco goes on to say: "The following morning one just throws away what has accumulated during the night without reading the information. The telefax is rapidly becoming the channel for irrelevant information just as the car is rapidly becoming the slowest means of transport, something for people with plenty of time who like sitting in traffic jams listening to Mozart or Madonna."

Indeed, and this is an experience that I myself share in discussions with qualified users of our library, in view of the flood of information confronting us we are forced to ask, as T.S. Eliot once did, "Where is the wisdom that has been lost in knowledge, and where is the knowledge that has been lost in information?" Or to quote Daniel Boorstin, the former librarian of Congress, "One can be informed, but one cannot be knowledgeable."

There can be no doubt about the chasm that exists between being superficially informed and being well-read. This is the result of the failure of anything worth knowing to crystallize, to be preserved, and to be stored where the knowledge can be retrieved. One's intellectual liberty would also be restricted if libraries were limited to the latest up-to-date information available and were unable to preserve the knowledge of earlier and present generations. For whoever walks through the storerooms of old libraries with their miles of shelving would, if the books could talk, hear a tremendously dissonant chorus. So much the better, as it shows that each may speak and that no one may claim veracity for himself alone, dominating the others. The many-voiced choir of free expression of opinion is infinitely preferable to the monotonous melody of apparently absolute truth.

In summary, this section can be closed with quotations from Marc Bloch and the cultural scientist Lothar Gall: "Not understanding the present is often an unavoidable consequence of ignorance of the past" (Marc Bloch). "Additionally, what makes a man specifically a man both as an individual and within a group, what gives him individuality within the general framework of being a human being can, like the culture which he supports and which, conversely, puts its stamp on him, only be conceived in historical terms" (Lothar Gall).

The word "culture" gives me the cue for the next aspect of my exposition: the importance of culture and its heritage today and thus for libraries now and in the future.

Culture is politics and vice versa. When he gave the speech of laudation to the winner of the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade in St. Paul's Church, Frankfurt, two years ago, Germany's most recent ex-president, Richard von Weizsacker, commented on this as follows: "A wall separating culture and politics?" What help would that be?" Culture does not exist in separation from the hard facts, interests, and struggles of life. It is not an article reserved for

a few initiated persons. It is the fullness of all human life. It is thus the essential substance with which politics should be concerned. Whoever understands the importance which his neighbor places on his culture will understand both his neighbor and himself better. He will begin to respect him and will cease to see in him a stranger or, worse, an enemy." This means that without cultural dialogue, conflicts cannot be set aside. This applies in one's own country and between countries, so that cultural policies must also play an important role in foreign policy. France was the first European country to clearly recognize cultural policy as an important aspect of foreign policy, and it still maintains this attitude. This is for France so self-evident that the new French prime minister, Alain Juppé, only referred to it in one sentence in his government statement on May 23, 1995: "Everywhere in the world, France rhymes with culture."

Even Jean Monnet, the great architect of the European Economic Community, is said to have said at the end of his life, though this may be apocryphal, "If everything had to be started from scratch, I would start with culture"

Jacques Delors, former president of the Commission of the European Communities, referred to Monnet's statement in his speech at the opening of last year's Frankfurt Book Fair when he said: "The Europe of culture must fertilize the Europe of politics, otherwise the latter will never reach birth. Political Europe cannot exist without cultural Europe."

In this context it is important to recall our common cultural roots in the Middle Ages when manuscripts, for instance, were considered to be items of the cultural heritage of Europe as a whole, particularly as the continent did not as yet have any distinct national states. In the thirteenth century it was thus possible for the German Albertus Magnus and the Italian Thomas Aquinas to be rectors of the University of Paris. Perhaps — and this is a possibility devoutly to be wished, we will one day be able to return to this openness.

Indeed, unless this feeling for our shared cultural roots — and this also applies to the integration of the countries of central and eastern Europe into the European Community — is strengthened, Europe will lose an identity without which it would be nothing more than a big marketplace.

And what does this mean for libraries? Here I can refer to the French cultural scientist Evelyne Pisiér, who recently put it like this, "Without culture there will be no Europe, and culture mainly means books." Indeed, the handing down and continuation of culture without the written and codified word is unthinkable. Books are the mediators of ideas, the banks of the intellect. They are, as Thomas Mann put it, "messengers of human respect, international understanding, and therefore, humanity, the wholeness of the human problem, which permits nobody to separate the intellectual and artistic from the political and social, and to isolate himself within the ivory tower of the cultural proper."

It is obvious that without libraries culture cannot be transmitted. They provide broad access to culture. In fact, "the library is our cultural barometer, the delicate instrument by which wise men measure important changes — past, present and future," as a very wise man once put it.

Libraries are still El Dorado and Utopia rolled into one, for the image is still one of the real future of mankind. But as I mentioned right at the beginning, libraries in their traditional form have become problematical. The problem facing libraries is the same as that facing books. On the other hand, however, static books, which have stood and will stand the test of time, bear indispensable witness to our forefathers' way of life, to understand which is a task we undertake for our own sakes. Above and beyond that, our previous cultural development is based both on language and on the permanent fixation of language in documents made of the most varied materials, from stone to paper. There is no alternative to the book as the central medium of a historically organic text.

And allow me to add one more aspect in this context. Since Gutenberg's invention, texts can no longer be suppressed, not even by the burning of books or censorship of any kind aimed at restricting intellectual freedom. Here I see a danger in the case of electronically stored texts, as they can be manipulated. This is a serious encroachment on intellectual property and thus on the authors' rights. For the preservation of copyright in the case of dynamic books has, at least in Europe, not yet been guaranteed. Authors, of course, naturally place the greatest importance on this, as they wish their names to be linked to the products of their intellects.

In our context the historical stocks of libraries are of particular interest. We can of course neglect and banish them, but we can also, a course of action I recommend, recognize their topicality and turn them into a unique kind of library, a library in which the book refers to itself, thus helping us to rediscover it.

In my opinion, manuscripts, old books, and new media are thus equally important not only for our present and future libraries but also for the information and culture society worldwide. Libraries should be lighthouses on the ocean of information - lighthouses securing safe navigation towards the harbored knowledge of the world.

Alongside all efforts to maximize material goods and economic prosperity, the necessary attention should today be given to culture and its heritage. For our most important raw material is our intellect. President Clinton once made the following comment in this context: "Natural resources . . . are being replaced with knowledge and technology . . . as the source of national economic competitiveness."

Let me now, after all these theoretical remarks on culture and our cultural heritage, briefly mention two examples from my library that are intended to illustrate what has been mentioned earlier.

These are the purchase at auction of a copy of the Gutenberg Bible in 1978 and the acquisition of the collection of manuscripts from the Prince Furstenberg Court Library at Donaueschingen in 1993.

Back in the eighteenth century, the founder of the Wurttemberg State Library, Duke Karl Eugen, had already laid the foundations for several of our particularly valuable special collections: The collection of manuscripts, incunabula, and bibles, as well as the collection of maps and plans.

Over the past two decades we have increased the number of our special collections by acquiring from Doris and Leslie Niles of California the biggest private ballet collection, comprised of materials for the Stuttgart Ballet Company as well as an important library on artistic glass, both of which, like the special collections already mentioned, are constantly being added to.

When I took over the Wurttemberg State Library in January 1970, I tried, right from the start, not only to expand this library into a smoothly functioning utilitarian library taking advantage of all the new media and communication technologies that seemed suitable, but also to fulfill the commission of the founder of this library, namely: to acquire the "most famous and rarest books."

In order to be able to do this in a relatively systematic way, we have placed our numerous special collections under rubrics of special emphasis, seeing one of our main roles as a state library in the collection of the rich treasures originated in Baden-Wurttemberg and, to a great extent, still located in castles, palaces, and monasteries or in private hands.

In addition to the possibility of purchasing such stocks, we also engage in preventive measures that enable the state of Baden-Wurttemberg to prevent valuable cultural treasures from being disposed of at random. These include, above all, the following two measures:

1. Entering items in the so-called list of cultural treasures of the Federal Republic of Germany, which prevents such items from being sold abroad, and
2. Listing items in the book of ancient monuments, which means that even a change of location may only be carried out with the permission of the relevant state authorities. This applies in the main to furniture and art treasures in castles and palaces, but also to valuable books.

In employing such draconian measures, however, the greatest possible cooperation with the owners is the aim. For once one has lost the confidence of princes and potentates, the latter will no longer be prepared to provide information about other valuable and, as yet, uncatalogued items in their collections. Nor are they then likely to continue to give prior notification of their intentions to sell to a relevant institution of the state or to the government of Baden-Wurttemberg.

In order to be able to continue making purchases to complement our special collections I tried, right at the start, to obtain a special budget item for this purpose. I soon succeeded in doing so. These funds, made available from year to year, are not, however, sufficient to allow us to acquire spectacular and particularly expensive items for our special collections. Again and again

I have had to go cap in hand to the ministry responsible, a procedure that one day won for me the title "biggest beggar in Baden-Wurttemberg." To this criticism I was able to calmly reply in the words of Lessing's "Nathan the Wise," "The greatest beggar is, sole and alone, the one true king."

But to return to my first example, the acquisition of a copy of Gutenberg's Bible.

The driving force for me in this case was not bibliomania, as in the case of the poor bookseller Giacomo, whose search for a copy of the Bible at any cost ended tragically. Gustave Flaubert described him as follows: "Giacomo's sole thought, his only love, his single driving passion was books. And this love, this passion devoured his innermost soul, ruined his life, consumed his being. Giacomo's life is finally ended by a sentence of death because in his hunt for a Bible of which only one copy existed he did not shrink from murder and arson."

Our interest in a copy of the Gutenberg Bible was as follows. Our collection of manuscripts also includes one of the so-called Paris manuscripts of the bible used by Gutenberg as a model for his first book printed with movable metal type. As our collection of incunabula also includes the even rarer 36-line bible printed in Bamberg in 1460, the 42-line Gutenberg Bible represented, for us, a missing link.

Having been offered an incomplete copy of the Gutenberg Bible for 8 million Swiss francs in 1971, we were informed towards the end of 1977 by an antiquarian bookseller in New York that the copy belonging to the General Theological Seminary in New York was to be auctioned at Christie's. As everything had to be done beneath a cloak of the deepest secrecy, I myself immediately instigated the necessary research into the history of this copy. It turned out that this two-volume copy of the Gutenberg Bible had been in the possession of the Church of the Holy Cross in Offenburg, Baden, until 1689. From there it was carried off to France by troops of Louis XIV, later reaching England, from where the London antiquarian bookseller Quaritch sold it to Dean Eugene Augustus Hoffmann of the General Theological Seminary in 1898. This was therefore an item that had been at home in Baden-Wurttemberg for centuries, thus falling under the category of cultural heritage, and it was our duty to buy it back. This duty was additionally underscored by the fact that local

historians in Offenburg, as it later turned out, had repeatedly written to the librarian of the General Theological Seminary in an attempt to obtain information about the numerous entries of names dating from the Offenburg period.

After I had made all the necessary inquiries and been informed of an estimate of the price, I plucked up courage — especially as the date for the auction was dangerously close — and went over to the Baden-Wurttemberg parliament building, where I spoke to the prime minister in person. He was not primarily interested in this edition of the Bible, nor in the significance of this item for the history of letterpress printing, but in the fact that this item had once belonged to a church in Offenburg. As a man from Baden, this was the decisive factor that encouraged him to consider the purchase. He asked me to draft a cabinet bill, which I did right away, and which was in due course approved by the state government. The following day, with a sum equivalent to 3 million U.S. dollars, the secretary of state from the Ministry of Culture and I flew to New York. On our arrival at our hotel we were quite surprised to hear about "the world's biggest book auction" on local television every half hour. You will easily understand that we were not exactly optimistic. At Christie's that very evening, at about 10 p.m., we were allowed, under strict surveillance, a look at the two folio volumes. In order not to be recognized we spoke a kind of gobbledygook that no one — not even we — could understand, and that only made the Christie's people frown and shake their heads.

Afterwards, we discussed auction tactics with the antiquarian bookseller and purchased an insurance policy for 2 million U.S. dollars. On April 7th, at 1 p.m., the Gutenberg Bible was put up. The actual auctioning, which took a mere twenty-eight seconds, was broadcast on television. Only when the Bible had been knocked down to us for 2 million U.S. dollars did the identity of the institution for which the item had been bought become known.

We got a shock next day when the *New York Times* reported that we would have to pay state and city tax. Luckily, discussions with a tax expert proved that this was not the case.

The following day, under strict surveillance, the two volumes were carefully packed at Christie's and numerous photos were taken for the archives, and then we drove to the airport in an inconspicuous private car. On arrival there

another problem cropped up, as we were energetically requested to give up the two suitcases. After long consideration, we hit on the brilliant idea of explaining to the airport clearance staff that we were very timid individuals who wished to read the Bible during the flight. Our serious, fearful faces made the right impression. On instructions of the airline staff we were the last people to be taken to the security check. This took almost twenty minutes, so we even made the plane late. Just when we thought we would be able to look forward to a few hours' peace and quiet, a gentleman suddenly tapped me on the shoulder and said: "Be honest! You've got the Gutenberg Bible there under your seats. I saw you beaming all over your faces on television!"

The second example I should briefly like to mention is the purchase of the collection of manuscripts from the Prince Furstenberg Court Library at Donaueschingen in 1993.

This most valuable collection of manuscripts, known the world over from a catalogue dated 1865, has a very special significance for Baden-Wurttemberg. Since 1488 this collection has been constantly added to, thus representing an unbroken tradition to which very few libraries can lay claim. This collection is not only of the greatest relevance to the history of our region of Germany, it also contains first-rate examples of book illumination and, above all, the works of the most famous German poets, from the Middle Ages to early modern times. It also contains chronicles, municipal histories, legal codes — seven editions of the "Schwabenspiegel" (Swabian Code of Laws) alone — heraldry books, and, last but not least, works with wonderful leather bindings from the late Middle Ages. These calf-bound volumes would certainly have delighted Theodor, the 18th century French bibliophile whom Charles Nodier (1780 – 1844) describes as follows: "One day Theodor stopped speaking, laughing, playing and eating. The women whom he had loved in his youth no longer attracted his glances. He gazed down, at best, at their shoes, deep groans emanating from his bosom: 'Alas! What a waste of fine morocco leather!'"

Without the state having been informed, twenty precious illuminated manuscripts from the Furstenberg collection had already been auctioned at Sotheby's in London in 1982. The resulting acrimonious press campaign not only accused Prince Furstenberg of having sold for purely material gain items of our cultural

heritage, but the state government was criticized for not having taken any measures to prevent this from happening.

In the summer of 1992 we were informed by the administrator of the Furstenberg estates of plans to sell the entire collection of 1050 manuscripts. After first informing the ministry responsible, I immediately began to sound out the lay of the land — again very discreetly — in *tete-a-tete* discussions with the prince's agent, Count Douglas, who is at the same time Sotheby's agent for Germany. It turned out that the entire collection of manuscripts — with the exception of the three items that had, for decades, already been on the list of cultural treasures already mentioned — had already been shipped abroad to Zurich. This had been done for two reasons:

1. To prevent any other items from being listed as cultural treasures, and
2. To put pressure on the government of Baden-Wurttemberg by threatening a quick sale.

In these confidential discussions I was mainly concerned with taking over the collection of manuscripts in their entirety. For it soon emerged that extremely attractive offers for individual top items had already been submitted from abroad. We also talked about the possible purchase price, of course, taking individual estimates made by the manuscript experts of Sotheby's as a basis. We finally agreed to purchase the entire collection, with the exception of the famous Nibelungenlied Manuscript, for which alone the sum of 20 million marks would have been required. The final purchase price was 48 million marks, which, according to experts, is a ridiculously low price.

I should like to pass over the many discussions I had with the minister and the ministerial civil servants responsible, as well as the subsequent talks with the prince's agent Count Douglas, merely mentioning that after six weeks of negotiations a draft contract between the state of Baden-Wurttemberg and the prince had been signed. Only when this stage had been reached did the press learn, through indiscretions, of the planned purchase, which was then the source of a great deal of publicity. But despite the extremely critical economic situation, the government of Baden-Wurttemberg has succeeded in saving cultural treasures of the highest rank for academic study and research and for the people of Baden-Wurttemberg.

In this connection I should however point out that such a spectacular library purchase would never have come about if the Württemberg State Library did not consider itself to be a repository of culture that hosts many national and international exhibitions, lectures, poetry readings, colloquia, etc. Such events never fail to lure politicians into our library while simultaneously — and often most helpfully — promoting contacts with leading representatives of the economy. And as the populace, with the exception of a few critical voices, reacted very positively to this purchase, coming in droves to visit the exhibitions of Furstenberg manuscripts held in many places, and as the academic world at home and abroad welcomed the acquisition of this collection, all politicians felt satisfied too.

Finally, just let me mention that, as a counterblast to the triumphant victory march of information technology, several great libraries in Germany are now ranking old books higher than some two decades ago. This is proved by measures in Berlin, Göttingen, and Munich aimed at providing old books with a special organizational and spatial home within the library unit as a whole.

Let me conclude by mentioning the title we selected for the Furstenberg exhibitions in consultation with the minister responsible. It summarizes most succinctly what I have said: "Incalculable Interest — A Cultural Heritage Preserved." The first part of this title refers to a saying of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, whose life was inseparable from libraries, a saying which, in my opinion still retains its full validity today: "Libraries are a great item of capital which soundlessly returns incalculable interest."