



# THINKING ABOUT RISKS TO ARCHIVES: A FRAMEWORK

Trudy Huskamp Peterson  
Certified Archivist



- ◆ 1. What are the risks to archives?
- ◆ 2. What archives need protection outside the country of custody?
- ◆ 3. What planning needs to happen before threats materialize?
- ◆ 4. Where are we, where do we need to be?



# Risks

Fire, accidental

Fire, arson

Flooding, from outside

Flooding, from inside

Earthquake

Other natural causes



# Risks

Civil disorder

Terrorism

Armed conflict

Removal by occupying forces

# Risks

Inherent instability

Bacteria, insects and rodents

Mold and humidity

Dust

Pollution





# Risks

Bad storage conditions

Lack of restoration capacity

Bad restoration

Neglect

Loss while moving offices



# Risks

Administrative order

Unauthorized destruction

Theft

Damage from use

# Risks

Options for reducing risk

Local initiatives in situ

International relocation





# Protection outside country required

Three threats requiring international relocation

1. Drone-enabled nation-wide armed conflict
2. Pervasive condition of repression by state or non-state actors
3. Irreversible climate change affecting the entire country



Type of threat

Speed required

Duration

Armed conflict

Likely urgent

Duration of conflict

Repressive conditions

Moderate until direct  
threat

Until conditions change

Climate changes  
or natural causes

Within years

Prolonged/permanent



# Where are we?

- ◆ Switzerland revised the Law on the Protection of Cultural Property in 2013
- ◆
- ◆ Legal authority to provide a “safe haven” for the temporary storage of cultural property, including archives, under threat in the country of origin due to armed conflict or natural disasters.

# Where are we, cont.



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
Confédération suisse  
Confederazione Svizzera  
Confederaziun svizra

Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA  
**Directorate of Political Affairs DP**  
Human Security Division:  
Peace, Human Rights, Humanitarian Policy, Migration  
  
Federal Department of Home Affairs FDHA  
**Swiss Federal Archives SFA**

swiss  
peace

Schweizerische Friedensstiftung  
Fondation suisse pour la paix  
Fondazione svizzera per la pace  
Swiss Peace Foundation

## International Expert Working Meeting: Safe havens for archives at risk

### Vision and goal

The goal of this meeting is to convene sending and receiving institutions as well as experts and practitioners on the subject matter to jointly discuss the needs, challenges, good practice and the way forward of safe havens for archives at risk. We aim at specifically discussing the content and the process that could lead to the establishment of a model agreement between sending and receiving institutions as well as to the development of principles both parties should adhere to. We anticipate that this expert working meeting forms the start of an ongoing conversation on the subject matter with the interested stakeholders.



## Where are we, cont.

- ◆ Working group, January 2017 agreed to draft:
  - ◆ Criteria for trustworthy safe havens
  - ◆ Standards for safe haven solutions
- ◆ swisspeace to serve as central information point through 2020 with UNESCO and ICA as validating and supporting organizations



## Where are we, cont.

- ◆ Working group drafts completed and circulated for comment July 2017:
- ◆ 1) Safe havens for archives at risk - an introduction
- 2) Criteria for trustworthy safe havens
- 3) Standards for hosting institutions
- 4) A generic (model) agreement
- 5) A form for a roster (basis for a future database of receiving institutions)



# Where are we, cont.

- ◆ Revised drafts circulated for comment in September 2017
  - Guiding Principles of Safe Havens for Archives at Risk (Preamble, Definitions, General Principles, Principles on the content of agreements, Principles on the characteristics of hosting institutions)
  - Generic Agreement
  - Fact Sheet to explain the initiative
  - Form for a roster of hosting institutions



## Where are we, cont.

- ◆ Working group virtual meeting September 28, 2017
  - Small Swiss-based editorial group appointed
- ◆ Redrafts late October of “Guiding Principles” and “Generic Agreement”
- ◆ Another round of comments and revisions
- ◆ Goal to share drafts broadly in spring 2018



# Guiding Principles - Audience

- ◆ Local, national and international, public and private actors (that is, everyone)
- ◆ Concerned with archives at risk that are potentially relevant for dealing with the past processes
- ◆ Interested in safe havens solutions, either as sending or hosting institution



# Guiding Principles: Why developed

- ◆ Current examples of bilateral agreements may not address all equitable issues
- ◆ Need for additional hosting arrangements foreseen



# Guiding Principles: Key elements

- ◆ Last Resort Principle: A safe haven abroad should be adopted only when it is deemed impossible to safely preserve the information locally.
- ◆ Fair Agreement Principle: Safe havens shall be based on a fair agreement, acknowledging the potential asymmetrical nature of the relationship and the need to mitigate the risks deriving therefrom.



# Guiding Principles: Key elements

- ◆ Ownership Principle: While the hosting institution becomes the custodian of the archives, the sending institution keeps sole ownership, unless specified otherwise in the agreement between the two.



# What also needs to be done?

- ◆ Focus on countries whose archives are affected by climate change
- ◆ Focus on documentation of World Heritage sites



## What needs to be done, climate change

UNESCO and the International Council on Archives should convene a special meeting of the national archivists of the nations in danger from countrywide climate change, with a special focus on island nations to discuss risk and develop strategies for preservation.



# What needs to be done, climate change

## Estonia to set up world's 1st data embassy in Luxembourg

11222ed time: 20 Jun, 2017 19:07 Edited time: 21 Jun, 2017 09:38 RT

The world's first ever data embassy is set for launch next year after the Estonian government signed a deal with Luxembourg. Estonia is planning to keep backup files of its vital information on servers in the duchy in order to guarantee country's digital continuity.

*"This is the first data embassy in the world. Its establishment is part of the Estonian general strategy of data management and fundamentally a double guarantee to our data and services,"* Estonian prime minister, Juri Ratas, said in [a statement](#).

He also hailed the deal for *"serving as the pioneer in the field of transnational digital cooperation both in Europe and throughout the world."*

The landmark agreement was signed between Ratas and his Luxembourg counterpart, Xavier Bettel. Luxembourg has been chosen as the location for the embassy, since it has capabilities to provide high level of security for the stored data, the Estonian PM said.

Luxembourg servers are said to house registers of the Estonian treasury, pensions insurance, land cadastre, identity document database and the population register, [according](#) to the Err broadcaster.

*"Estonia is the world's first country that uses this method to double secure its digital consistency in close cooperation with Luxembourg,"* Ratas said. In addition, the data embassy will have the same rights as any other physical embassy of Estonia, according to information technology minister, Urve Palo, as [cited](#) by the Tass news agency.

The location of future data storage won't be disclosed, with only those cleared by the state being granted



# What needs to be done, World Heritage documentation

- ◆ UNESCO require preservation of records documenting the history, built environment and related records for each World Heritage site, extant or future
- ◆ UNESCO consider establishing a special Memory of the World register category for the records of World Heritage sites



# What needs to be done, World Heritage documentation

- ◆ Consider establishing a safe haven for all World Heritage documentation
- ◆ Determine what role UNESCO can play in guaranteeing the safe haven



# Needed: Perception of risk

- ◆ Help archival institutions, archivists, and governments understand and define risks
- ◆ Offer risk assessment and management educational materials
- ◆ UNESCO/ICA regularly monitor and make public report on risks to archives