



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Cluster Office
for the Caribbean



Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland
OCW

GERDA HENKEL STIFTUNG

REGIONAL APPROACHES TO DISASTER RECOVERY AND HERITAGE PRESERVATION REPORT



Figure 1: New Government Administration Building Sint Maarten

JULY 30TH - AUGUST 2ND 2018

SINT MAARTEN

PRESENTED BY: DESARAY PIVOTT-NOLAN

NEW PROFESSIONAL 2018

Aims and Objectives

The International Council on Archives (ICA) and the Caribbean Archives Association (CARBICA) in collaboration with the Government of Sint Maarten, hosted a four day working conference entitled “Regional approaches to disaster recovery and heritage preservation” in the New Government Administration building of Sint Maarten from July 30th to August 2nd 2018. The conference involved approximately twenty-two (22) countries and representatives from various arms of the cultural heritage field such as archives, archaeology, libraries, museums, built heritage and intangible heritage, to allow them to share their experiences in the aftermath of hurricanes Irma, Maria and Jose in 2017 and explore the possibility of strengthening support for each other in the event of future disasters, through the creation of a Caribbean Heritage Protection Network.

As the name states, the conference sought to not only address the preservation of archival documents but also heritage materials including museums, monuments and intangible cultural heritage all of which are at risk during times of disaster and all of which need to be given increased levels of protection to preserve the cultural foundation of nations. The four day event was well organized into sessions which took on both theoretical and practical elements to allow participants the opportunity to physically engage with materials in real life situations, while being guided by international experts who shared practical planning and recovery ideas, resources and techniques.

DAY 1 (Monday 30th July 2018)

Opening Ceremony and Welcome Remarks

The opening session was chaired by Mr. Alfonso Bijden, Application Manager, Department of Records and Information Management, Sint Maarten. Opening remarks and greetings were presented by Ms. Rita Tjien Foooh President of CARBICA, Ms. Anthea Seles, Secretary-General ICA (via audio address), Mr Yuri Peshkov Culture Programme Specialist, UNESCO Cluster Office for the Caribbean and Ms. Leona Romeo-Marlin, Prime Minister of Sint Maarten. All speakers reflected their regrets for the impact of the 2017 disasters but stressed the importance of the preservation of cultural heritage and the need for improved collaboration and training across the region.

Session 1: Regional Responses/Challenges to the Protection of Heritage 2017

This session contained contributions from regional bodies where Civil Authority Responses to the protection of heritage were presented by Ms. Donna Walker, Human Resources and Administrative Manager, CDEMA and Ms. Lida Pandt who represented the Association of National Committees of the Blue Shield, Curacao. They were then followed by Cultural Organizations' Responses by Mr. Richenel Ansano, who spoke on behalf of David Brown, the Global Facilitator to the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, Mr. Yuri Peshkov, Culture Programme Specialist, UNESCO Cluster Office for the Caribbean and Mr. Samuel Franco Arce, Chair of International Council on Museums (ICOM), Latin America and the Caribbean. All presenters provided participants with an introduction and background information on the works of their organizations and upcoming initiatives. Representing parties responsible for the preservation of different areas of the cultural heritage field including human life, heritage sites, cultural heritage, intangible cultural heritage and museums these presenters unanimously highlighted importance of the preservation of cultural heritage in its various forms.

Questions and Answers

At the conclusion of all the presentation, participants engaged in a question and answer session.

Q: Can persons outside of CARICOM join CARBICA?

A: Yes they can

Also stemming from this session was the suggestion that:

Greater emphasis needs to be placed on earthquake preparation and not just hurricanes

Session 2: Caribbean responses/challenges to the protection of heritage 2017

This session was chaired by Ms. Avril Belfon, Vice President, CARBICA and Government Archivist, Trinidad and Tobago. Presenters included Mr. Christopher Varlack, Chief of Archives and Records, Archives and Records Management Unit, Deputy Governor's Office (AKA Virgin Islands National Archives, Tortola, Virgin Islands), Ms. Carmen Marla Lopez, Director, Built Heritage Conservation Programme, Institute of Puerto Rican Culture, Mr. Alfonso Blijden, Application Manager, Department of Records and Information Management, Sint Maarten, Ms. Stephanie Dargaud, Heritage Curator and Director of Territorial Archives and Heritage, Collectivité de Saint-Martin, Archives territoriales de Saint-Martin and Ms. Vernanda Raymond, Chief Librarian, National Library, Dominica. They all shared their experiences with hurricanes Irma, Maria and Jose, detailing impacts suffered, challenges and recovery efforts.

Challenges

- ❖ Limited resources
- ❖ Poor infrastructure
- ❖ Archives not seen as a priority by authorities
- ❖ No support from administration
- ❖ Limited trained staff
- ❖ Loss of communication
- ❖ Total loss of electricity
- ❖ Delayed response time
- ❖ Poor location of archives
- ❖ Limited clearance for access to enter site after disaster

Key points

- ❖ Emergency plan needed
- ❖ Security windows were effective in mitigating damage
- ❖ Regular maintenance is important
- ❖ Collaboration with non-government agencies / non- profit organizations vital
- ❖ Back up your back-ups – e.g. solar power
- ❖ Keep essential documents- plans, photographs etc. properly secured
- ❖ Proper training needed
 - Train the trainers
- ❖ Greater need for disaster risk management plan for cultural heritage
- ❖ Be prepared for anything
- ❖ Make proper documentation of events
 - Photographs and video
- ❖ Use your initiative
- ❖ Foster team support
- ❖ Use social media tools to communicate and share information
 - What's app, messenger
- ❖ Networks help

Questions and Answers

Q: Do you recommend the use of shipping containers?

A: Yes, but they need to be properly bolted.

Session 3: Conservation Case Study: CARBICA's First Aid Programme: observations on visits to St. Marten, British Virgin Islands and the commonwealth of Dominica, April 2018

Mr. Max Scriwanek, presented on behalf of Ms. Valérie Martens-Monier, Conservator, National Archives, Curacao and shared the results of fact finding missions conducted from April of 2018 where she visited the, Sint Maarten, funded by the Dutch Government, and subsequently British Virgin Islands and Dominica which was funded by CARBICA with the support of ICA, as part of their Archives at Risk Project. This led to the visit of a total of 43 affected sites where she noted what went well, what did not and made recommendations for the future. Ms. Avril Belfon, Vice president, CARBICA and Government Archivist, Trinidad and Tobago then shared the upcoming Proposed Strategy of CARBICA and upcoming goals, highlighting that the fact finding missions and the execution of this conference are within the fulfillment of these goals.

Also mentioned was a proposed memorandum of agreement for the formation of the Caribbean Heritage Protection Network which would be addressed later on in the conference.

Challenges

- ❖ Absence of repositories
- ❖ Inadequate storage spaces
- ❖ Limited climate control
- ❖ Improper storage equipment
- ❖ Limited layers of security
- ❖ Lack of qualified staff
- ❖ Limited priority of archives by officials and administration
- ❖ Freeze dryers not readily available

Key points

- ❖ Emergency plans are essential
- ❖ Teamwork is important
- ❖ Identify your priority items/ collections
- ❖ Gamma radiation equipment is effective in killing mould
- ❖ Preservation/salvaging of cultural heritage needs to be included in National Disaster Plans
- ❖ Compile emergency kits and know how to use them
- ❖ Administrative support is essential
- ❖ Building awareness of the value of cultural heritage - People must be connected to the objects to see the importance
- ❖ Quarantine severely affected items
- ❖ Improved support and networking will reduce duplication of efforts

DAY 2 (Tuesday 31st July 2018)

Session 4: Initial damage and risk assessment for cultural heritage custodians; salvage priorities; response techniques; recovery and resources

Workshop session

This session was facilitated by Dr. Emelie G. Leumas, ICA Expert Group on Emergency Management and Disaster Preparedness and Ms. Margaret Crockett, ICA Training Officer who provided participants with the draft of a workbook they compiled entitled “Emergency Management and Disaster Preparedness Workbook”, which would be used as a guide for the day’s proceedings and the following workshop session. The workbook provides definitions, guidelines, checklists and resources that participants can utilize subsequent to the conference within their individual organizations. Ms.

Key points

- ❖ Social media – checking in ‘safe’ on Facebook
- ❖ The importance to share your story
- ❖ Disaster Risk Management Cycle
- ❖ Definitions and terminology
- ❖ The importance of preparedness and mitigation
- ❖ Be prepared at work and at home
- ❖ The need for collaboration – another set of eyes – creating teams - assessment
- ❖ Having a Disaster bin
- ❖ Being prepared for small disaster better prepare you for the big ones
- ❖ You can be better prepared for hurricanes because of the early warning systems

Crockett discussed the disaster preparedness cycle of mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery and their definitions, as well as the types of hazards and disaster assessment. This session fueled a lot of discussion and the sharing of advice, tips and resources for recovery.

Activities and exercises

- Signing small book for wet document exercise
- Introduction and sharing of disaster stories
- Case study scenario: Supply list
- The “Go bag”

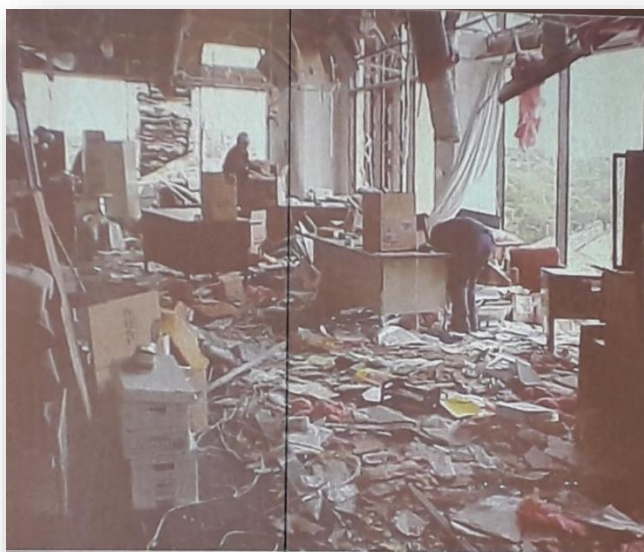


Figure 2: Case study scenario. Participants were asked to assess the situation and compile a list of supplies needed to operate.



Figure 3: The "Go bag"

Session 5: Advance preparation - disaster readiness and supplies with a focus on preventative measures (packing/storage (etc.) for libraries, archives, museums; monuments and sites

This session also facilitated by Dr. Leumas and Ms. Crockett focused on assessment forms referenced in the workbook, with specific attention paid to the need for conducting various levels of risk assessment including on the collections, internal and external structures that house them and the wider region. Identifying potential risks (natural, industrial, human and technological) as well as their probability and potential impact is extremely important so that appropriate measures can be implemented.

Activities and exercises: Dealing with wet records

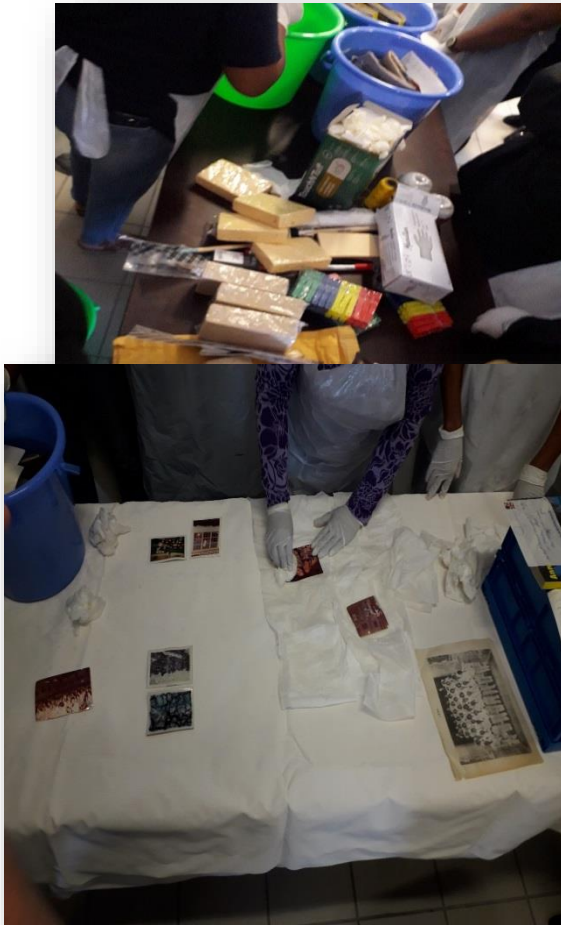


Figure 6: Dealing with wet photographs



Figure 7: Water damage to Polaroid photographs

DAY 3 (Wednesday 1st August 2018)

Session 6: Post disaster first aid to cultural heritage custodians: mitigation/stabilization measures

Workshop session

Mr. Samuel Franco Arce facilitated this session and began by referencing a three week course offered by ICCROM entitled “First aid to cultural heritage in Times of Crisis” after which he shared the contents of two useful ICCROM manuals namely:

- “A Guide to Risk Management of Cultural Heritage” which focuses on agents of deterioration, risk occurrences and analyzing risks, similar to the risk assessment noted by Ms. Crockett and Dr. Leumas in the previous session.
- Then he presented the other guide entitled “Endangered Heritage: Emergency Evacuation of Heritage Collections,” which as the name suggests speaks to methods of evacuating heritage collections.

Both of which are available for download in the ICCROM website.

Activities and exercises

- A video of a recovery exercise in Kenya was shared as an introduction to the outdoor recovery exercise to be conducted.

Key points

- ❖ Know political standing of country to engage and get permission and clearance in disaster
- ❖ Know financial ramifications – where will the money go – is there an account
- ❖ ICCROM aids in legal process of repatriation of heritage materials
- ❖ ICA has a shared heritage group which also aids with repatriated materials
- ❖ Know the types of fire extinguishers and how to use them
- ❖ Maps and floor plans are good to have in times of disaster
- ❖ Tap into sources of information
 - Weather stations, indigenous people
- ❖ Route of evacuation
- ❖ Proper transportation –use the right type of vehicle with good suspension
- ❖ Labelling is important
 - Keep dry, fragile, this way up etc. to guide packing and transportation

➤ Outdoor recovery exercise



Figure 8: Supplies for outdoor activity



Figure 9: Outdoor activity scenario. Participants had to retrieve only the valuable items

Key points from exercise

- ❖ Know where the necessary keys are
- ❖ Labelling is important
- ❖ Note the number of items in each box
- ❖ Various point persons need to be assigned during disaster and recovery to ensure efficiency. For example:
 - Security person
 - Lead person
 - Media person
 - Document person
- ❖ Service fire extinguishers regularly
 - Take photos of everything
 - Turn on the location when taking pics – it helps with documentation
 - Know your GPS co-ordinations – the army works with GPS and this will help them to locate you faster in times of a disaster
- ❖ Track everything every step of the way to keep the collection together and not to misplace anything



Figure 10: Documenting all actions taken on items and their location.



Figure 11: Packaging items for transportation.

Session 7: Putting it all together: disaster management planning for cultural institutions; development of disaster management plans

This session included a case study scenario of a fire at an offsite storage unit and separated in groups participants discussed the various roles each member of staff would be required to undertake.

Activity

You have just been notified that in your offsite storage, there was a small fire last evening. The second floor of the building was most affected. The sprinkler system was activated in the storage area. The fire department responded and the fire was suppressed. The sprinkler system was shut off. The building is now safe to enter.

There is water on the floor, archival material is wet and shelves have fallen over. Some material burned and other material has smoke damage.

There is 400 cubic feet of records in the affected area, which contains several key collections of original material that was due to be scanned in the upcoming months.

Your staff includes you, two processing archivists, an archives technician and one maintenance worker.

Figure 12: Case study scenario of fire at offsite storage unit. Participants were asked to conduct group discussions on how responsibilities would be divided among staff members on different levels.

This activity was followed by group presentations of their ideas. Ms. Crockett then discussed the contents and importance of writing a disaster preparedness plan and manual.

Key points from Ms. Crockett

- ❖ All persons with responsibilities need to be included in disaster manual
- ❖ It is a growing document – review at least once every year
- ❖ Have electronic version on hand for disasters
- ❖ Secure finding aids – to resume services after disaster
- ❖ Check emergency bin yearly for expired items such as batteries and flash lights. Also ensure that it is fully stocked with other items such as waterproof gloves, dust masks, goggles and protective clothing to name a few.
- ❖ Keep the essential items that will be needed first to the top of the bin.

DAY 4 (Thursday 2nd August 2018)

Session 8: Presentation of models of coordinated approaches to emergency planning

Following a review of the previous workshop sessions by Dr. Leumas, Mr. Max Scriwanek, Director, National Archives of Curacao and Mr. Gerrit Bruin, Senior Advisor

Conservation at the National Archives of the Netherlands, then led the discussions on the importance and impact of networks. They also provided examples of existing networks, and engaged participants in the thought processes and steps involved in setting up a network, through the use of direct questions to be

answered in group discussions. The objectives of the activities were to guide the working group that would emerge from this conference in the actual setting up of the Caribbean Heritage Protection Network. Within this session Ms. Veronique Parmentier from Archives without Borders, also shared a presentation, outlining the works, purpose and accomplishments of the group.

Key points

- ❖ To be good stewards to the profession networks are important
- ❖ “If you think you are too small to make a difference, try sleeping with a mosquito” - Dalai Lama
- ❖ Support is essential in networks
- ❖ Networking involves communicating with other organizations and networks
- ❖ Legal ramifications need to be considered
- ❖ Setting up a network requires a step by step approach

Session 9: Development of a Memorandum of Agreement between parties taking part in the Caribbean Heritage Protection Network and Selection of a Working Group

In this final session of the conference Ms. Rita Tjien Foooh gave a synopsis of the entire conference proceedings and with the assistance of Ms. Avril Belfon, they went through the contents of a document entitled Resolutions of “the working conference on Regional Approaches on Disaster Recovery and Heritage Preservation” calling for the establishment of a Caribbean Heritage Preservation Network, to allow participants to assist in making any necessary adjustments before the final product can be distributed among relevant authorities for agreement. Also noted was the creation of a working group representing each field of cultural heritage that will be formed out of this conference. This was followed by the distribution of certificates and closing ceremony and remarks.



Figure 13: Receiving my Certificate

Conclusion

Experiencing the, “Regional Approaches to Disaster Recovery and Heritage Preservation” conference has led me to have a greater appreciation of not only archival materials and their value, but also of other related fields such as archaeology and intangible cultural heritage. What stood out to me was the notion that, despite how prepared we are, disasters will happen, and the difference in the speed of response and recovery is ongoing mitigation and preparedness. The common adage, “prevention is better than cure” holds true for the preservation of cultural heritage and definitely stood out in the presentations.

As a Masters student it was an amazing experience for me to see theoretical principles learnt in the course content of modules such as ARCM 6002 - Acquisitions, Organization and Access of Archival Material, ARCM 6003 - Preservation of Archival Materials in Tropical Environments and ARCM 6006 – Memory and Recordkeeping in the Caribbean, being materialized in real life situations. The arrangement of collections is essential to being able to identify the crucial items in times of disaster, if this is not maintained it will be chaotic to retrieve the gems and jewels of

archival holdings and risk their destruction or loss. Most prominent to my learning were the hands-on techniques utilized during the recovery exercises which were learnt in ARCM 6003. What stood out for me was how practical the techniques are to recover damaged materials. It is often said that there are limited resources to get the work done, but the items utilized in the exercises appeared to be relatively easy to accumulate over time with proper planning.

Also noticeable was the enthusiasm of everyone involved. As the days progressed it was constantly mentioned that the timing and content of the conference was ideal and the lessons learnt were appreciated by all. Some even hoped it would have been longer. Being the new professional in such an environment was quite comforting because I was able to experience firsthand the passion of the individuals involved. As unfortunate as these disasters of 2017 have been, it has indeed spawned a greater appreciation for cultural heritage, and through the hosting of this conference a greater appreciation among professionals in the various fields and the work they do. I do hope that the formation of the network will indeed be successful and operational in the long term because we are our brother's keeper for a common cause in the preservation of cultural heritage.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Dr. Stewart, Dr. Griffin, Ms. Rita Tjien Foooh, Ms Avril Belfon, the New professionals programme of CARBICA and fellow participants for making me feel welcomed and allowing me to have experienced such a ground breaking conference, one of which I hope will be the first of many more to come.



Figure 15: Dr. Griffin and I outside the New Government Building



Figure 3: Standing next to the Conference banner