

Welcome Address by Markus Hilgert, General Secretary of the Cultural Foundation of the German Federal States

What does original preservation of written cultural heritage look like at the Danish Royal Library in Copenhagen? What mass deacidification measures do experts at the Swiss National Library in Berne use to increase the lifespan of paper? How can AI help to turn fragments of the Historical Archive of the City of Cologne back into complete units? With this volume of papers from the two-day international conference in Berlin in 2021 entitled ‘Preservation in Perspective’, the Coordination Office for the Preservation of Written Cultural Heritage (KEK) shows the work being done nationally and internationally to save paper from irreversible decay.

The KEK has been campaigning for the preservation of written originals for more than ten years. In doing so, it strengthens interdisciplinary cooperation between archives and libraries in Germany as well as the development of infrastructure in the area of preservation of holdings. From the outset, the Cultural Foundation of the German Federal States, together with the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media, supported the Coordination Office for the Preservation of Written Cultural Heritage. On behalf of the sixteen German federal states, the Cultural Foundation of the German Federal States promotes, develops, advises and supports projects and initiatives in the areas of art and culture that are of national importance and implemented in cooperation with several partners. Its core tasks include the promotion of preservation of cultural assets that are of great value to the cultural identity and social coexistence of people in Germany.

Besides the preservation of written cultural heritage, it is also important to strengthen the resilience of those institutions that safeguard our cultural heritage. The energy and climate crises, the flood disasters in 2021 and the current armed conflicts show that the protection of cultural heritage is facing entirely new challenges in the twenty-first century, which is why the Cultural Foundation of the German Federal States decided for the first time in 2023 to provide the KEK with additional funding for projects in the area of emergency preparedness. The projects pursue the shared objective of improving regional emergency preparedness in the cultural sector, for example by establishing emergency networks for strategic cooperation. In addition, the Cultural Foundation of the German Federal States launched the Emergency Alliance for Culture [Notfallallianz Kultur] in 2021, whose partner institutions include the Coordination Office for the Preservation of Written Cultural Heritage. As an alliance for society as a whole, it is oriented towards institutions and organisations in Germany that contribute independently to emergency aid in the area of culture in crisis and emergency situations within the scope of their specific

capabilities and possibilities. Strengthening the resilience of museums, libraries and archives against insidious but also concrete dangers and crises is an important and honourable concern in the service of our cultural memory, and we are pleased to support the Coordination Office for the Preservation of Written Cultural Heritage on behalf of the sixteen federal states.

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