

## Preface

All throughout history, libraries and archives have been the guardians of the documentary heritage of mankind. Although during past centuries the writing medium underwent only very few changes, from parchment to paper, the last two centuries have seen the recurrent emergence of the new media, ranging from daguerreotype to digital disk.

Given the rapid evolution of the new technologies, safeguarding the cultural heritage becomes more and more a concern for specialists. At the same time the participation of the entire library and archive profession is necessary. It has become equally indispensable to raise awareness among decision-makers, professionals and the public at large.

One of the main goals of the UNESCO "Memory of the World" programme is to promote the preservation of the documentary heritage of mankind. Thus a guide providing the recommended practices and listing the standards and reference literature related to preservation of documents of all kinds was published by the Sub-Committee on Technology of the Memory of the World Programme. In order to disseminate this guide among a wider range of users, hoping that it becomes an initial or permanent training tool, UNESCO contracted IFLA to create a thoroughly illustrated CD-ROM both in English and French on the causes of deterioration of library collections and archival documents as well as on the preventive measures to be taken. Thanks to the hypertext links this CD-ROM should be able to extend the possibilities of research by providing the links with other Internet sites dealing with similar information in the preservation field.

Besides the participation of the experts from UNESCO "Memory of the World" programme who edited the Guide, the CD-ROM is the result of work and fruitful collaboration of many library and archives professionals along with their institutions. This project, directed by IFLA PAC (Preservation and Conservation) Core Programme, hosted by the National Library of France, was carried out successfully thanks to scientific assistance from the Mission on Research and Technology of the Ministry of Culture, Paris, France.

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