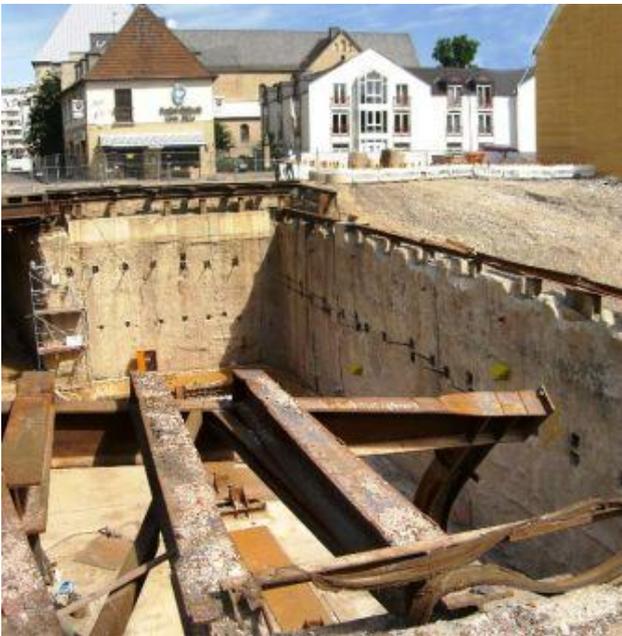


Cologne City Archives Rescue mission (2009)

*By Angela Dellebeke
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The Cologne City Archives is one of the largest communal archives in Europe and it manages records since the Middle Ages. The *Historisches Archiv der Stad Köln* on the Severinstraße (Severin street) was considered one of the most important historical archives in Germany. The six-storey building was built in 1971 under the leadership of architect Fritz Haferkamp.

On Tuesday, March 3rd, 2009 the building collapsed along with two neighbouring buildings, killing two residents of the adjacent properties . Archive employees and visitors luckily remained unharmed.



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At the time of the collapse, the repositories held over 65,000 charters (the oldest dating from 922), 104,000 maps and city plans , 50,000 placards and 800 private collections.

Blue Shield rescue mission

Once the Cologne Archives called for (international) help a 'rescue mission' was organised by The Hague under the banner of Blue Shield. In late April eighty volunteers went to Cologne to work on two kilometres of archives. The work consisted of sorting the material (wet, dry, partially-wet), removing dirt and soot, and preparation for freeze-drying. Lodging and food and drink for all (Blue Shield) volunteers was provided by the city of Cologne.

A rough estimate done several years after the disaster indicates that 35% of the material is severely damaged, 50% and 15% slightly damaged. A large part of the archive is (partially) dirty and dusty and / or affected by moisture and mould.



2009 Rescue mission Cologne City Archives

The Cologne archives will be working on the restoration of their archives for many years to come. Since this is not only time consuming but also very expensive, they have initiated a project for individuals or organisations to 'adopt' a book or another object so it can be restored.

Adoption Memorial Buch from the Cologne Archives

In 2013 the Dutch National Archives (Nationaal Archief) 'adopted' a memorial book from the 13th-14th centuries from the Cologne Cathedral. In this book (a kind of notebook) key dates and events in the history of the Domstift of the Archbishop of Cologne in the period of 1250-1390 are recorded.

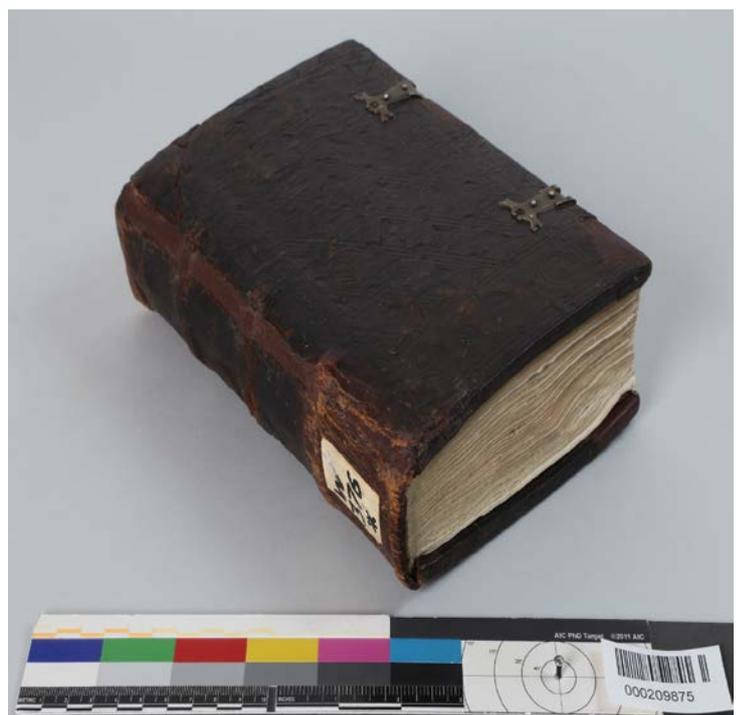
Since the Nationaal Archief has its own restoration department and several professional restorers, the memorial book was brought to Netherlands by a German delegation of the Cologne archives and a restoration plan and restoration techniques were decided upon.

The memorial book need first and foremost to be thoroughly cleaned. In addition, the binding was bent by the collapse of the archive and the back of the book needed to be renewed as well.

Before



After



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Photographs

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