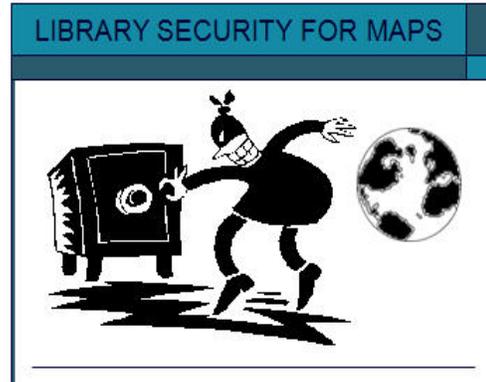


## Library Security for Maps: 2007 Conference Program and Guidelines

*We live in a world where crime is reported daily on the front pages of newspapers, websites, and seen each evening on the daily media news. It has been stated that after international drug trafficking the second largest category of crime is within the fine arts market. Such crime is not limited to Picasso or Rubens but also includes Blaeu, Mercator, Jefferson, and nineteenth-century U.S. government documents.*



*Increased security of our collections should be synonymous with increased responsibility. As librarians we have a responsibility to preserve the collections under our care and provide access to them in our institutional environments. Access to our collections has supported scholarship throughout the humanities, sciences, and social sciences and remains the key to intellectual freedom. Similarly, we must create an environment where primary source materials are respected, handled carefully, and returned intact to the collection so that they might be studied again in the future.*

These powerful statements, the opening paragraphs of the *Map Collection Security Guidelines*, authored by the Map and Geography Round Table (MAGERT) Task Force on Library Security for Cartographic Resources, served as the opening comment at the program "Library Security for Maps" held on Sunday, June 24, at the ALA annual conference in Washington, DC. The program was co-sponsored by MAGERT, the Government Documents Round Table (GODORT), and the Rare Books and Manuscripts Section (RBMS).

Over 125 attendees heard four speakers discuss the impacts and implications of map collection thefts and map collection security, with David Cobb, Harvard University Map Collection, as moderator. Edward Redmond, Library of Congress Geography and Map Division, described the Division's security procedures including reader registration, level of staffing, control of access, and limit on the number of items viewed at a time. The Division is proactively developing a system to track which items are served to each reader as well as staff use of materials.



David Cobb, moderator, and panelists preparing their responses

Alice Hudson, New York Public Library Map Division, and Rob Lopresti, Western Washington University, both have experienced map theft from their collections. Alice emphasized finding a way to view the library through fresh eyes, to identify possible weak points in a unit's security which may be overlooked by the staff. Alice invited students in a map librarianship course to perform a security audit of her library. The students spotted a number of things that could be simple to correct, including the improvement of sightlines, check-out for use of materials, and reduction of distractions. The theft from Western Washington's collection targeted the *U.S. Serial Set*. Rob described the problems they encountered when trying to determine the extent of the theft, because of the *Serial Set*'s publication pattern. Rob also described the sequence of steps taken to notify libraries, collectors, and dealers. He was particularly emphatic about the need to publicize that a theft had occurred.

The final speaker was Christopher Schmeisser, from the US Attorney's office for the District of Connecticut and the prosecuting attorney in the recent case against Forbes Smiley. The key point that Mr. Schmeisser made was that library security needs to be improved in order to impress upon potential thieves that it would be too much trouble and that this is not a location where a theft will be easy. Libraries need to keep maps from "going out the door." It is much easier to deter theft than it is to recover materials once they have been taken. Recovery of materials is especially difficult because the materials are not necessarily unique and because a market exists so that materials can disappear quickly. Digital images of maps are becoming increasingly important to identify specific copies by unique markings such as worm holes, creases, stains, and tears. When asked for a synopsis of the Smiley case, Mr. Schmeisser said that the people who can hurt a library the most are often those who are held the closest (such as library friends and employees). He also commented on the inexact nature of library cataloging. Libraries are paying more attention to the security issues surrounding their maps, as an outcome of the Smiley case.

In response to recent map thefts, MAGERT has developed a set of library security guidelines for maps. These draft guidelines, available for comment as linked from the MAGERT website, are intended to spark conversation and proactive improvements in security for map collections at libraries of all sizes. The members of MAGERT's Task Force on Library Security for Cartographic Resources invite you to read and comment on the Guidelines by September 15, 2007. The final version of the Guidelines will be distributed via MAGERT's website, and a printed executive summary is also under development.

[Written by Jenny Marie Johnson, Janet B. Dixon, David A. Cobb, Co-chairs of MAGERT Task Force on Library Security for Cartography Resources, July 2007.]