Reference document
Combating the trafficking of documentary heritage

General Archive of the Nation of Mexico

27th September 2016
The General Archive of the Nation of Mexico was created in 1823, when the statesman and historian Lucas Alaman engaged in the effort of collecting the manuscripts of the Archive of the Secretariat of the Viceroyalty and the courts extinguished by the independence of Mexico, in one institution.
Combating the trafficking of documentary heritage
Since then, it was an administrative unit, and until the year 1980 it becomes the central entity and main consultant of the Federal Executive in managing administrative historical archives of the Federal Public Administration.

Later, with the publication of the Federal Records Act in 2012, the General Archive of the Nation of Mexico becomes a decentralized governing body.
The General Archive of the Nation of Mexico 2013.

The Cave of Snuff or Cave of the Bats in the State of Coahuila (1864-1867).
Combating the trafficking of documentary heritage
The first Regional Seminar on Trafficking of Documentary Heritage in Ibero-America

Extraordinary General Assembly of the Latin American Association of Archives (ALA).
Agreement which disclosed formats relating to the authorization of the departure of documents declared documentary heritage of the Nation; and the alienation from the sale of an acquis or document, procedure that will allow greater control of the location of documentary heritage.
The dissemination on the importance of preserving the national memory and the fight against the illicit trafficking of documentary heritage

International norms and principles on the subject.

The General Act on Archives which includes provisions on combating illicit trafficking of documentary heritage.

And finally the development of the Reference Document. Combating the trafficking of documentary heritage.
Combating the trafficking of documentary heritage

Trafficking of documentary heritage

Documentary heritage of Peru sold by eBay

Religious scholar finds ancient New Testament papyrus on eBay for $99
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At the end of the 1960s and in the beginning of the 1970s, thefts were increasing both in museums and at archaeological sites, particularly in the countries of the South. In the North, private collectors and, sometimes, official institutions, were increasingly offered objects that had been fraudulently imported or were of unidentified origin.

It is in this context, and to address such situations, the Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property was created in 1970.

Memory of the World Programme

1954 and 1970
Conventions
The Reference document pretends:

- Analysis of the subject;
- Joint international efforts, and
- Tackle the phenomenon more effectively worldwide
Mechanisms for the safeguarding of documentary heritage

UNESCO and other international organizations have established various programmes and mechanisms to protect documentary heritage. These actions have focused on meeting the following objectives:

• Raising awareness about the existence and importance of documentary heritage;
• Generating lists, regulations and instruments to monitor and recover property, and
• Informing stakeholders and custodians of property.
• Proposals:

A first step should be to explore the correlation of the Subsidiary Committee’s mandate with that of the Memory of the World Programme, whose main goal is also the protection of documentary heritage. The Memory of the World Programme has an institutional framework that could be used both to study the issue of trafficking and to implement some of the actions listed in the Reference document.

Furthermore, each of the mechanisms described in this document performs a vital role for the protection of documentary heritage; however, a better coordination and integration could be advantageous and increase the reach of our actions.
✓ Create a network of specialists.
✓ Enable greater access to information on stolen documents for international organizations such as INTERPOL to carry out investigations.
✓ Take action to generate public policies on archives.
✓ Promote the development and adoption of archival regulations on the safeguarding of documentary heritage.
✓ Issue a joint statement of support and collaboration among national archives, including the commitment not to acquire documents that belong to other nations.
✓ Develop archival monitoring and referencing tools.
✓ Regulate auction houses’ trade in historical documents.
✓ Incorporate into documents non-invasive identification mechanisms.
✓ Develop programmes for making facsimile versions of historical documents available to everyone.
✓ Strengthen the Census-Guide.
✓ Continue with the development of Red Lists on documentary heritage.
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