

January 26, 2010

News about the Haitian patrimonial libraries/National Archive

Dear colleagues and friends,

There has been significant confusion as to the state of the four main patrimonial libraries in Port-au-Prince after the earthquake on January 12, 2010. Based on information that I have received from the Digital Library of the Caribbean partner libraries in Haiti, all four of the following library buildings are standing.

- Archives nationales d'Haïti
- Bibliothèque haïtienne des Pères du Saint-Esprit / San Martial
- Bibliothèque haïtienne des Frères de l'Instruction Chrétienne / Saint Louis de Gonzague
- Bibliothèque nationale d'Haïti

Importantly, the library at Saint Louis de Gonzague (FIC) was NOT destroyed. The reporter that stated the library had fallen was incorrect.

According to the director of the National Library, Mme. Françoise Thybulle, the structures must be inspected before the local staff can assess the situation and prepare detailed plans that will certainly ask for international assistance. While the buildings are standing, this does not diminish what will be the very real need for assistance once the local leadership is able to assess the situation. All of the library directors have asked that interested parties work together to help preserve the collections bring these libraries/archives back into service.

Many institutions and individuals have expressed an interest in supporting the Haitian libraries/archives as they begin to rebuild. The outpouring of support and interest for the preservation of Haitian patrimony is unprecedented. Many of you are already in contact with colleagues regarding ways to help. I am trying to serve as a clearinghouse for the Haitian libraries of the different people, institutions or groups that would like to offer support to the libraries. Once I have feedback from the partner libraries in Haiti, I will share a working document of the projects I am aware of and an online survey for interested individuals to complete via www.dloc.com.

The Digital Library of the Caribbean (www.dloc.com) has been working with partners in Haiti since it began in 2004. The National Archives in Haiti was a founding member of dLOC, and in the last few years we have developed strong relationships with both the National Library and the Fathers of the Holy Spirit (San Martial) Library. As more information becomes available from the local leadership, I will share it as widely as possible. I have been hesitant to send a large response until now because of the many conflicting reports. This information is confirmed, and comes from the directors of each library/archive.

As the many researchers that have worked in these four libraries know, their directors are completely dedicated to the preservation of their national patrimonial collections. All

four have been fighting to preserve these collections for decades, and I am confident with support from the international community these collections will be preserved and accessible for many years to come.

Sincerely,
Brooke Wooldridge
Digital Library of the Caribbean