



# Archive Salvage Cooperation after the Floods in Germany, Summer 2021

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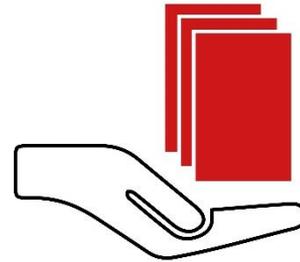


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# The Emergency Association of Archives and Libraries Cologne

- Founded 2018
- 25 member institutions
- Fire Brigade is actively and enthusiastically involved
- Regular meetings, lectures and visits – hoping to begin again with in-person training days in 2022



**Notfallverbund**  
Kölner Archive und Bibliotheken

# The Emergency Roll On/Off Container

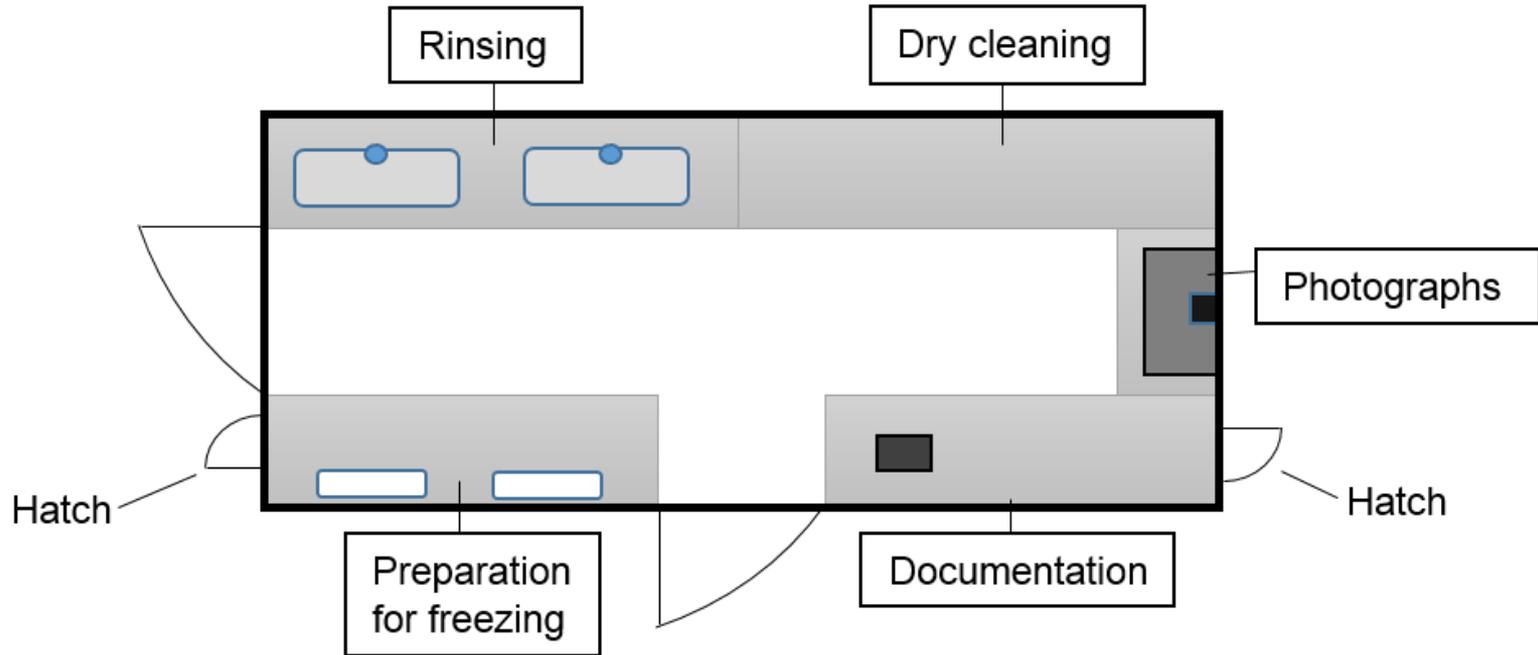
- Mobile workstation and storage for most necessary material and equipment
- Completed in 2020
- 6,9 x 2,5 x 2,55m
- Weighs 8.5 tonnes
- Connections for water and electricity
- Lights and infra-red heating – can be used in all weathers



- Container transported by the Fire Brigade
- Loaded on and off the transport vehicle using an hydraulic hook arm



# The Work Stations



# The Stations: Continued



# Storage

- 5 roll-container trolleys
- Three sizes of euro boxes



# Damage in Stolberg

- Severe damage to properties and businesses
- No electricity, drinking water or internet for many weeks
- Affected area uninhabitable and all access controlled by police



# Damage in the Stolberg City Archive

- 4 Storage Rooms in different locations
- All basement level
- Entirety of Collections became wet/contaminated



# Structures and Cooperation

- City Archivist overseeing the operation
- The Army, The Fire Brigade and Technisches Hilfswerk (Disaster Organisation) on-site
- The Emergency Association of Cologne
- Many local volunteers





# Covid-19 Pandemic Precautions

- Group sizes and contacts kept to a minimum
- Only 4 people working inside the container at any one time
- FFP2 masks worn in contained areas (and when working with salvaged objects)
- Gloves and hand-disinfection
- Volunteers reminded of risks and encouraged only to undertake tasks that they felt comfortable with

# The Salvage

- A generator was provided by the local Fire Brigade
- Light, water pump and air ventilation were arranged in the cellar so that it was safe to enter and work
- The army and volunteers made human chains to bring the objects out of the cellar
- At some points this did not work so smoothly – there would either suddenly be ‘too many’ objects that must be temporarily stored somewhere, or there would almost not be enough objects to keep the workflows running - individuals would bring up boxes themselves
- Full body personal protection had to be worn in the cellar: tyvek suits, gloves, FFP2 masks and safety rubber boots



# Types of Objects : Archive

- Large rolled and flat architectural plans, folders, 'hanging' folders, photographs



# Types of Objects: Social History Museum

- Glass, wood, textile, metal, paper including paintings, puppets, shoes, large presses, bicycles, 168 coffee grinders...



# Damage to Objects

- Remained wet for up to a week
- Thick mud layer on almost everything
- Many extremely fragile
- Deformations, tears, loss of top layer of photographs & architectural plans
- Only a few objects developed mould – mostly manuscripts and leather objects



# Sorting, Rinsing and Packing



# The Tents

- Flexible working space or storage
- Sun, rain or wind protection
- Easily transportable



# Completed Treatment On-Site

- Once the objects were rinsed and packed, they were transported to cold storage – there were several transports each day
- Alternatively, many of the museum objects were rinsed and taken to a nearby hall to air-dry





# Lessons learned and improvements

- Attempting to 'predict the future' is tricky but it is important to remain flexible: each day new types of objects needed to be processed and different numbers of volunteers would arrive
- Cooperation essential: working with city archivist, the army, the fire brigade and the volunteers
- Sending enthusiastic volunteers away is dispiriting for everyone, though also organising 'extra' tasks involves much effort
- Small breaks and refreshments are essential for motivation and concentration
- It is worth spending more to get high quality personal protective equipment
- Many people have size 37 feet!
- Take the time afterwards to process the experience, and talk to someone if necessary

# Plans for the Future

## Alterations to the Container:

- To make the stations more flexible, for instance adding taps to the dry cleaning area and stretch film roll dispensers to the documentation area to be used as needed
- Protective covers to keep the boxes and their contents dry and clean
- Foldable boxes to transport the salvaged objects
- Training days with the Fire Brigade and more members of the Emergency Association

# Thank you for listening!

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