

# The Blue Shield Movement:

## Protecting heritage in conflict and disaster

Dr Emma Cunliffe

# A word from our founders...

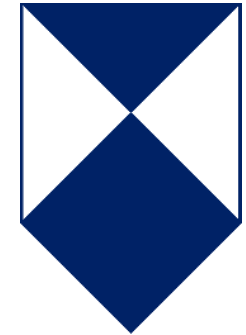
## **George Mackenzie, IFLA representative**

One of the factors that stimulated the formation of ICBS was the experience of the crisis in former Yugoslavia. Cultural heritage was shown to be profoundly at risk, while the reaction of the professional community was uncoordinated and inefficient. For example, multiple missions were mounted to Sarajevo, and while doubtless helpful in showing solidarity with professional colleagues there, these were generally carried out in ignorance of each other, and valuable opportunities for sharing information and resources were missed. The Yugoslav experience also demonstrated clearly how buildings and their contents were inextricably linked, and how cultural heritage property of all types had been destroyed. There was clearly scope for increased co-operation.

George P. Mackenzie (2000) Working for the Protection of the World's Cultural Heritage: The International Committee of the Blue Shield, *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, 21:1, 5-10, DOI: 10.1080/00379810050006876

# The Blue Shield: What is it?

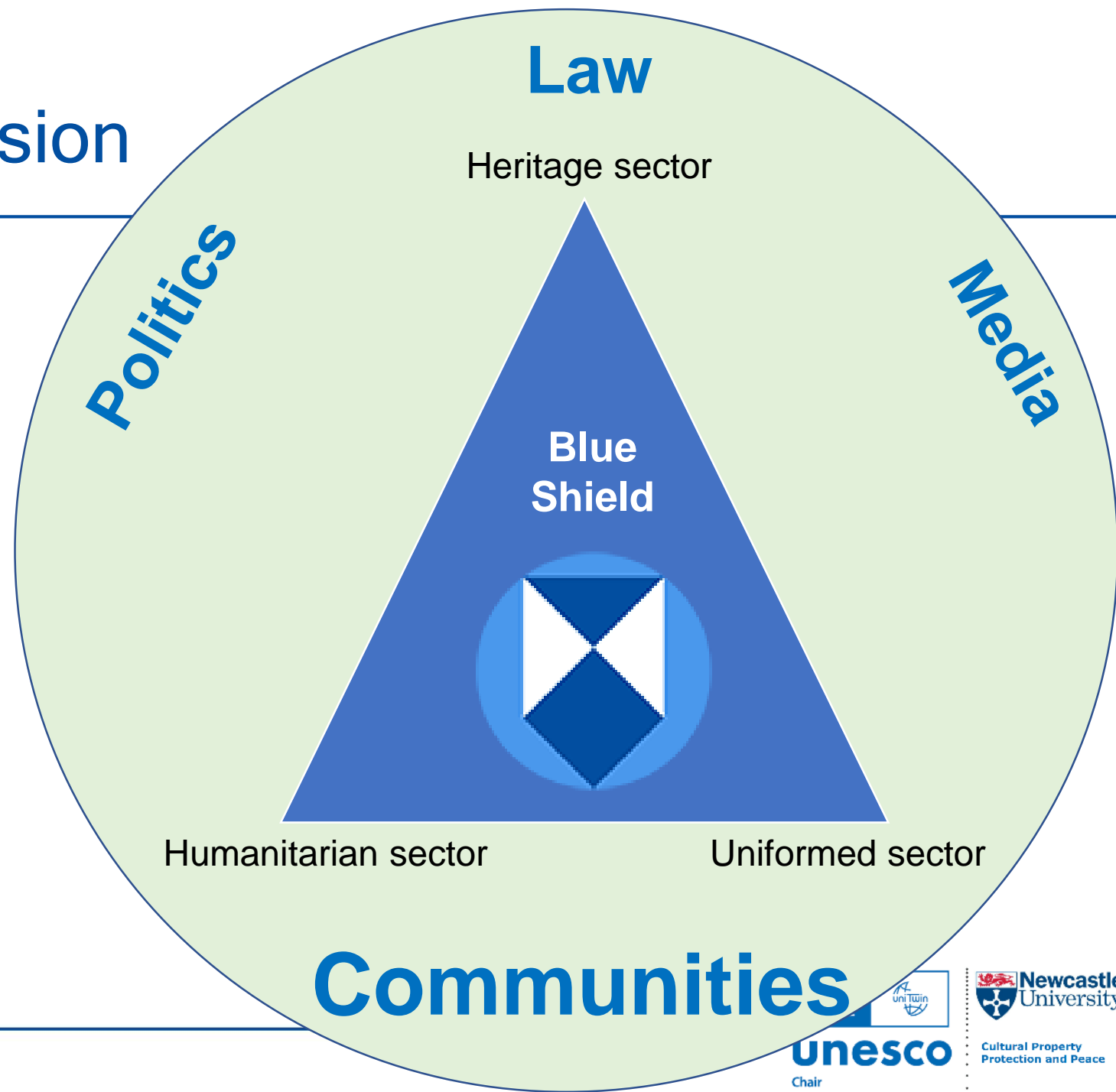
- The Blue Shield is an NGO established in 1996, dedicated to the protection of heritage from conflicts and disasters.
- National committees, and an international Board and its Secretariat called Blue Shield International (BSI), with ICOM, ICOMOS, IFLA and ICA.
- Named after the emblem in the 1954 Hague Convention that identifies cultural property protected under the Convention.
- 1999 Second Protocol named International Committee of the Blue Shield as an advisory body to the Inter-Governmental Committee for Cultural Property Protection in Armed Conflict



# The Blue Shield: Mission

Commits Blue Shield  
*to the protection of the world's  
cultural property, and is  
concerned with the protection  
of cultural and natural heritage,  
tangible and intangible, in the  
event of armed conflict,  
natural- or human-made  
disaster.*

(Article 2.1, 2016 Statutes)



# The Blue Shield: Around the Globe

30 registered committees

5 under construction

2 considering construction

- January 2023 -

- Blue Shield Peru, registered 2018 -



# The Blue Shield: Members

**ICOMOS**

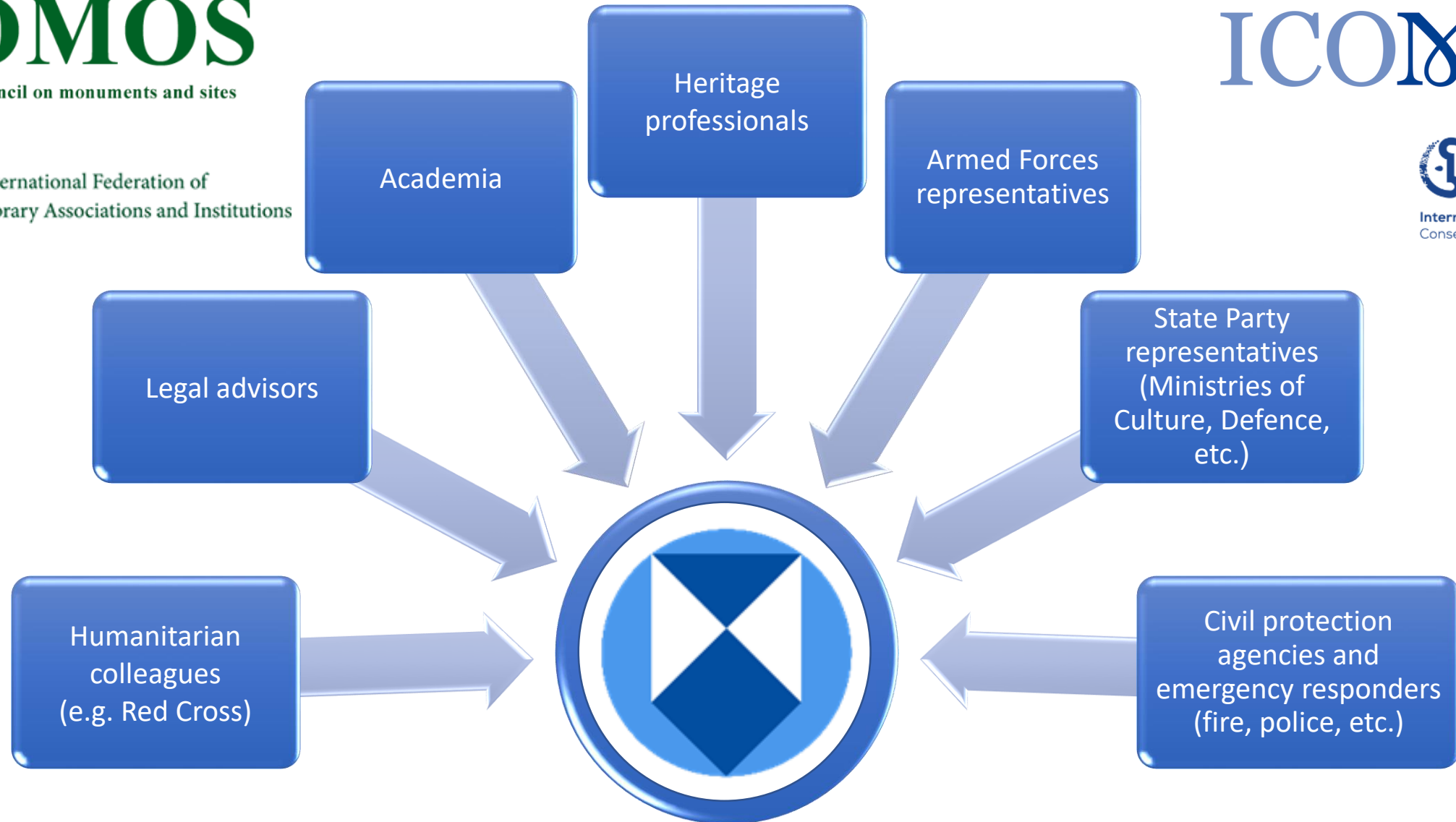
international council on monuments and sites



International Federation of  
Library Associations and Institutions

**ICOM** international  
council  
of museums

**ICA**  
International Council on Archives  
Conseil International des Archives





# The Blue Shield: When do we work?

Includes:

- Proactive heritage protection before, during and after
  - conflict
  - natural and environmental disasters
- Destruction outside “official” armed conflict
- Tackling looting and ensuing illicit trafficking



Collapse of Cologne / Köln City Archive, 2009

©Frank Domahs, [Wikimedia Commons](#).

# The Blue Shield: Areas of Activity

1. Proactive protection and risk preparedness
2. Emergency response
3. Stabilisation, post-disaster recovery, and long-term/ongoing support activities
4. Legal compliance, policy, and their implementation
5. Capacity building activities, and education and training in support of the Blue Shield's Areas of Activity
6. Co-ordination – *of* Blue Shield members and *with* partner organisations





# The Blue Shield: Approach

- Independent, Impartial, Neutral –  
also
- Joint action, Professionalism, Respect for cultural identity, Not-for-profit -

Our primary context is the  
1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the  
Event of Armed Conflict and its 1954 First Protocol and 1999 Second  
Protocol

- underpinned by IHL / LOAC -

- also the UN's and UNESCO's strategic agenda –
- and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction -



Blue Shield International Staff working  
with the UNIFIL Peacekeeping Deployment  
in Lebanon to conduct cultural property  
protection training.

© Joe Farres, 2019

# 1954 Hague Convention

for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and its First (1954) and Second (1999) Protocol

The protection of cultural property (CP) comprises  
safeguarding  
and  
respect  
(Article 2)



Signed by Peru, along with its both Protocols.

# Respect

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The obligations placed on states during conflict (C. Art. 4, 2P Art. 6) .

- Not to use (their own and others') cultural property and its immediate surroundings for purposes which are likely to expose it to destruction or damage,
- To refrain from acts of hostility against it
  - (unless military necessity imperatively requires it (C Art. 4). )
- Prevent pillage, looting, and vandalism
- Not to requisition cultural property and not to conduct reprisals against it (C. Art 4)
- Can only do what is feasible.

# Safeguarding

Preparatory measures in pe  
of conflict (C Art 3).

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- Designation of compete
- Preparation of inventori  
(minimum)
- Registration of particula
- Optional application of I
- Planning in situ protecti  
measures for protection
- preparations for the ren

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protective measures

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prepared refuges.



Casa Inca Garcilaso de la Vega – the  
current Regional Historical Museum  
of Cusco, May 2022



# Safeguarding

Preparatory measures in peace to protect cultural property against the foreseeable effects of conflict (C Art 3).

There are no obligatory measures, but recommended measures include:

- Designation of competent authorities to advise and coordinate protective measures
- Preparation of inventories of cultural property (including what it is and where it is, as a minimum)
- Registration of particularly important places for special and enhanced protection
- Optional application of blue shields
- Planning in situ protection for cultural property that cannot be moved, **and emergency measures for protection against fire or structural collapse**, and
- preparations for the removal of movable cultural property to pre-prepared refuges.



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Have you prepared?

Some examples

“Where they burn books, they will, in  
the end, burn people too”

(Heinrich Heine 1821)

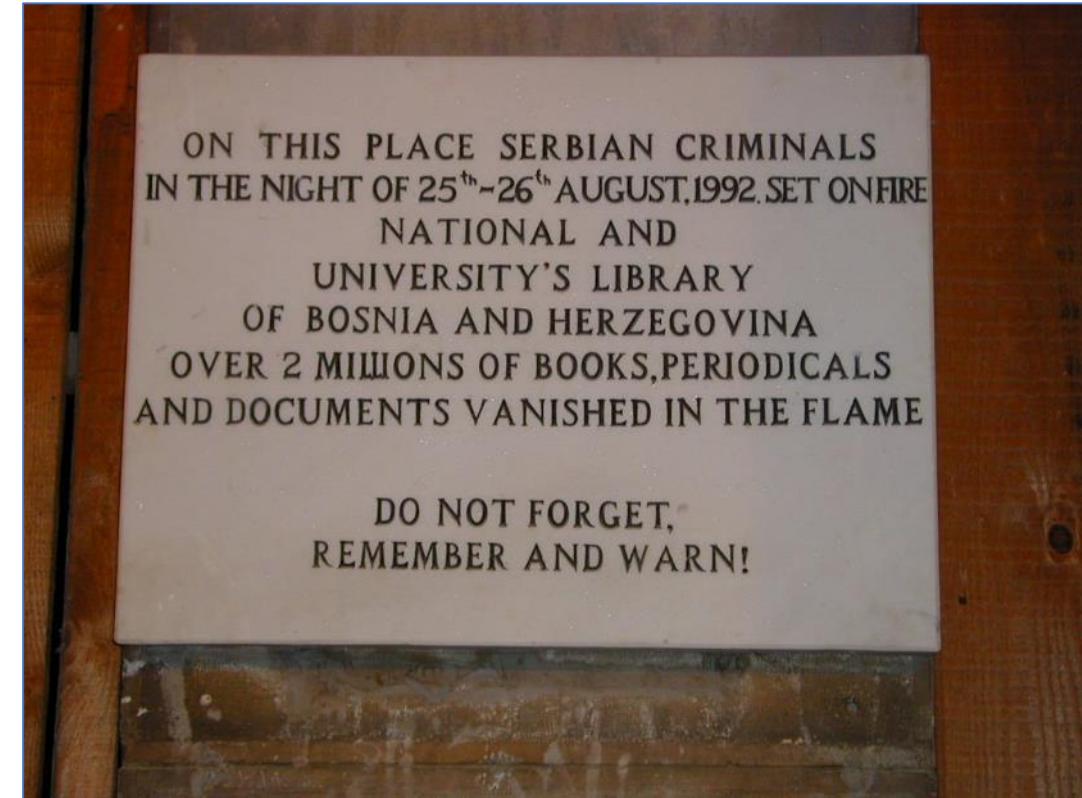
People first – *but cultural property is  
about people, the two are  
**intertwined and completely  
indivisible***



Book burning by the Nazi Party in the 1930s of  
Jewish books and manuscripts

U.S. National Archives and Records Administration. Wikimedia Commons  
Public Domain.

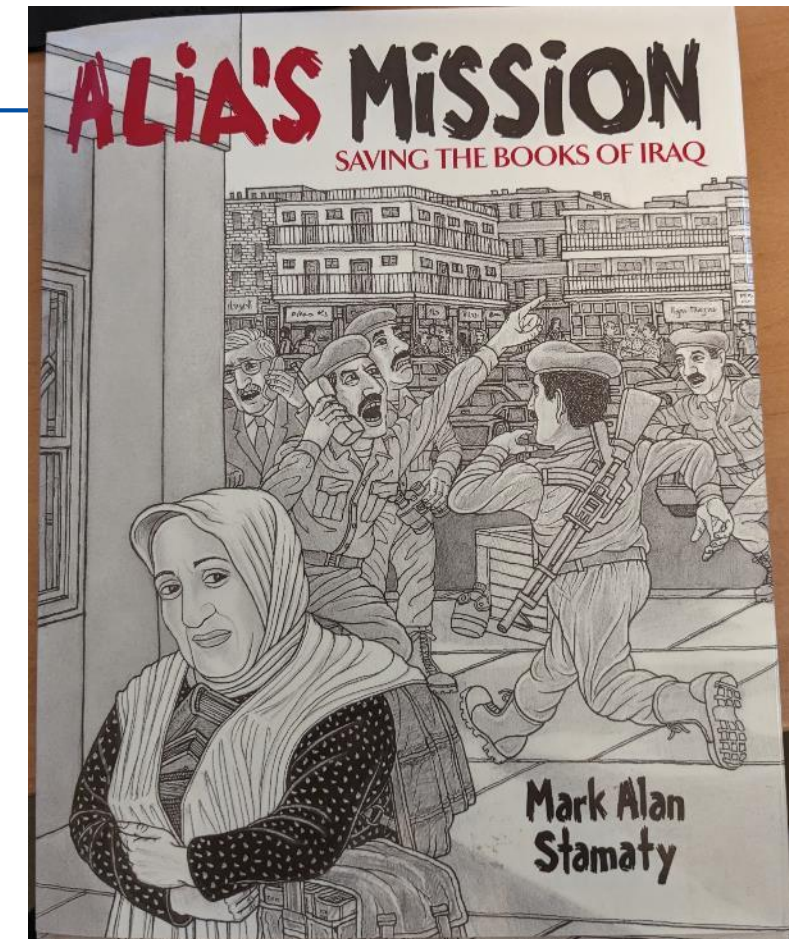
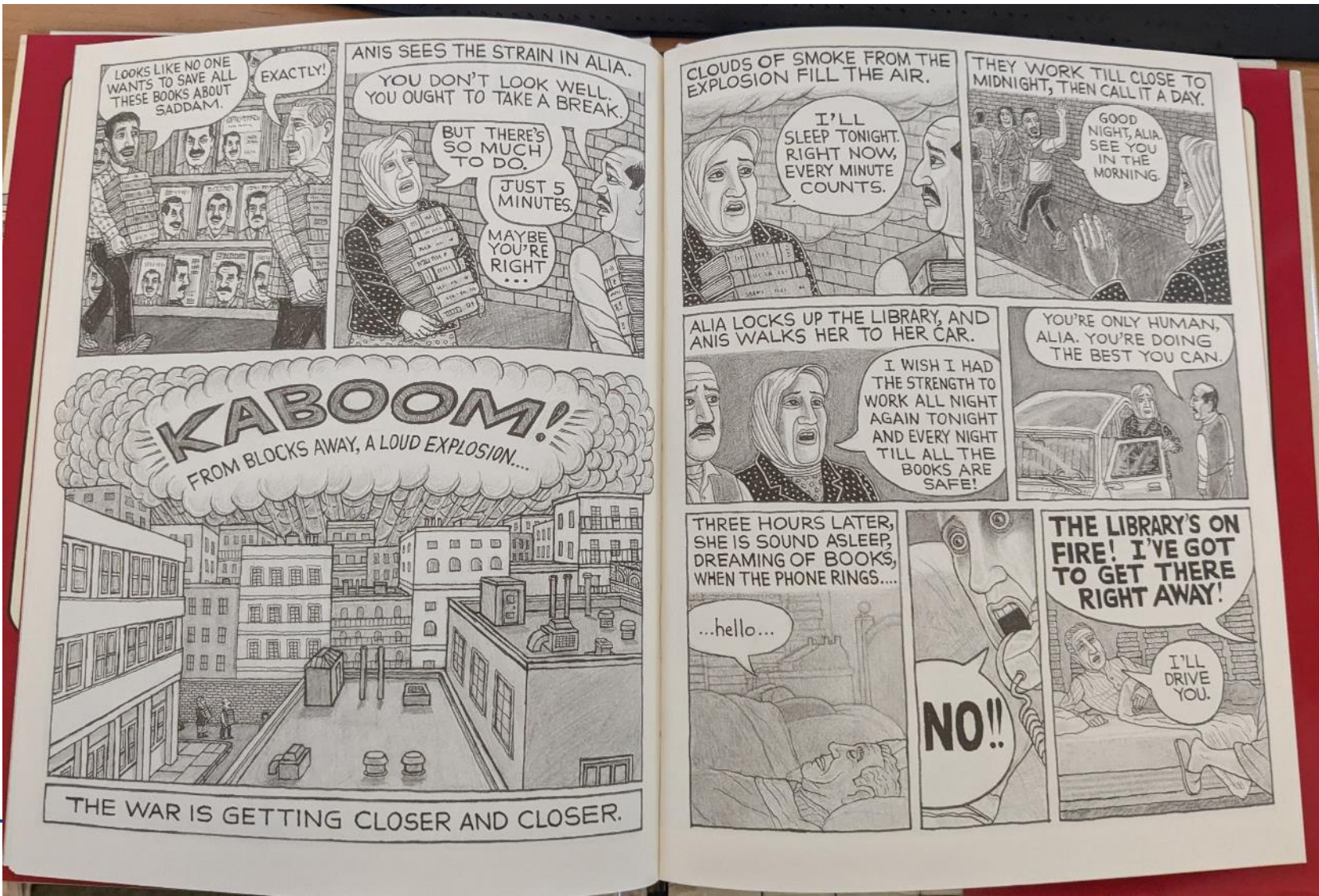
# Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992)



Aida Buturovic (age 32). "Aida was killed with a single mortar shrapnel [...] she was on her way back home from the already burnt library. She had been trying, together with her colleagues and some volunteers, to save what could be saved from the ashes of our national book collection"



# Iraq (2003)



Alia's Mission: Saving the Books of  
Iraq, Mark Alan Stamaty, 2010  
Dragonfly Books

# Emergency measures – English practice (2015)

- Legally, Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) must
  - safeguard the historic environment (natural and built),
  - address this in their strategies
  - take account of the heritage nature of property when putting out fires,
  - and prevent or limit the extent of the potential for further damage to occur as a result of actions taken when responding to an incident.
- However, “the cultural heritage sector, while advancing in terms of planning, ... and through the development of local and regional networks in response to events, is, however, not well integrated in the wider emergency planning structures of the UK”.



# Emergency measures – UK practice (2017)

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- The government considers that [required emergency measures] are common sense precautions which are likely to be covered by existing contingency planning for an emergency or natural disaster.
- *“The owners, guardians and trustees of protected cultural property will not be required to take any new measures to comply with this obligation. [...] [Government] does not intend to impose any additional safeguarding requirements during peacetime.”*

# Lima, Peru (2019)

- On 19th April 2019, a massive fire hit Mesa Redonda area in the historic centre of Lima. Among the buildings severely damaged by the flames, several historic properties were also damaged, including the Church of Jesús Reparador – a national monument containing movable cultural property (e.g. paintings, sculptures, and clerical objects, amongst others).
- The Secretary of the Peruvian Committee of the Blue Shield was part of the team leading the rescue of cultural objects inside the Church, working alongside the Municipality of Lima, the Ministry of Culture, the firefighters, and the police.
- The rescue operations included:
  - Identifying and prioritizing the movable cultural heritage inside the church to be rescued;
  - Moving cultural objects to a safe extraction point and making a quick inventory of items rescued;
  - Moving the cultural objects to a safe location, in this case the Convent of Santa Catalina;
  - Registering and documenting the objects.
- 65 objects were safely removed from the church before being damaged or destroyed by the flames and water used by firefighters to extinguish the fire.



# Türkiye (2021/2022)



Buttoned houses burning in Kepezbeleni Village in Türkiye, during the wildfires 2021 © Blue Shield Türkiye.

## AFET SONRASI KÜLTÜREL MIRASIN BELGELENMESİ İSTANBUL BALIKLI RUM HASTANESİ

POST-DISASTER DOCUMENTATION OF  
CULTURAL HERITAGE  
İSTANBUL BALIKLI GREEK HOSPITAL



# Fire Risk Analysis of Wooden Mosques of Konya and Karaman (Türkiye).

- Case studies: - Konya Beyşehir Eşrefoğlu Mosque, Konya Doğanhisar Grand Mosque and Karaman Kethane Mosque.
- The aim of the project is to contribute to the development of strategies for the protection of the wooden mosques of the Konya and Karaman provinces against current and potential fire risks and ensure they are preserved for future generations. Since there are no detailed regulations and study for the protection of cultural heritage from fire, the project also aims to produce concrete proposals which may help for developing a legal framework.
- Partners: Blue Shield Türkiye together with Konya Regional Directorate of Foundations, Konya Chamber of Architects and supported by Mevlana Development Agency.



# Ukraine

Urgent and immediate need for fire prevention equipment

Request for equipment supply for Ukraine cultural assets protection:

In the context of securing/safeguarding cultural values in loco:

Item	Quantity
Bubble wrap (rolls)	as much as possible
Power generators (diesel, gasoline)	589
PVC power wires	as much as possible
Fire extinguishers	6496
Electric heaters (oil, inverter, ceramic, infrared)	1228
Polyethylene film (rolls)	as many as possible
Archive boxes (three-layer corrugated cardboard)	300
Kraft paper (rolls)	as many as possible
Wrapping paper (rolls)	as many as possible
Archive folders/files A4	200
Climatic boxes	50
Fireproof fabric	as much as possible
Micalent paper	as many as possible
Tyvek by Dupon (rolls)	12
Tubes	15
Multiplex film (rolls)	3
Corrugated cardboard	as much as possible
Cardboard boxes (different size)	as many as possible
Silica gel powder	5 kg
Motor pumps	3
PVC film (rolls)	as many as possible
Agricultural fibre	as much as possible
Heat guns	32
Dehumidifiers	150
Battery accumulators	325
Moisture-resistant OSB (oriented strand board)	3000
Rechargeable LED flashlights	350
Polyethylene foam	as much as possible
Clothes covers	200
Micalent paper	as much as possible
Plywood transport boxes	50
Plastic boxes	200
Packing tape, packing ropes	as many as possible
Refractory cloth (basalt fabric)	as much as possible
Refractory solution	as much as possible
Fiberglass fire blanket (fire blanket)	120
Extension cords	94
Uninterruptible power supply (UPS)	20
Charging station (576 W)	4
Thermohygrometers	12
Polypropylene bags	500
Foam rubber	as much as possible
Foam plastic	as much as possible

Annex

Wood stoves (Buleryan type)	3
Thermometers	50
Hygrometers	48
Germicidal lamps	20
Air purifiers	3
Humidifiers	93
Emergency lights	40
Linen fabric	as much as possible
Fire shields	2
Flimsy paper	as much as possible
SSD drives	5
Air conditioning systems	1
Stretch film (rolls)	as many as possible
Protective shutters	4
Folding metal racks	30
Fireproof file cabinets	80
Wooden boxes	200
Airvelope Clip envelope files	1700
Self-adhesive labels	as many as possible
Mineral wool	as much as possible
Fireproof paper	as much as possible
Moisture absorbent paper	as much as possible
Protracted seals	1500
Protection clothes (fire protection, chemical protection)	as many as possible
Respirators	3000
Vacuum cleaners for soot/ash/combustion	100
LED spotlight	40
GP 7 gas masks	3000
Air compressor	1
Insulation foil (rolls)	100
Ozoniser	1
Reverse osmosis installation for water filtration	1
Air conditioners	20
Asbestos fabric	as much as possible
Large water storage tanks	3
Hydro-barrier film (rolls)	20
Plasterboards	50
Self-adhesive tapes for isolation of wooden windows and doors (rolls)	20
ABB automatic switch	60
Styrofoam filler	5
Painting storage boxes	20
F2FP respirators	5
Heating system thermometers	16
Heat-saving film for windows	as much as possible
Laminated PPE canvas	as much as possible
Galvanized steel plates	20
Fire protection doors	2



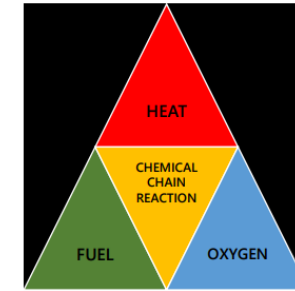
# Ukraine – total lack of guidance

- No instructions on
  - fire extinguishers
  - Wooden buildings
- Existing guidance not available (or saved “somewhere” in organisation’s files)
- Existing guidance not appropriate (too long / too detailed to use in emergencies, only hard copy / unsharable, language barrier)
- Emergency response guidance sheets drawn up

FACT SHEET

Emergency Response

## HOW TO USE FIRE EXTINGUISHERS



The Fire Tetrahedron



This Fact Sheet explains how to use **fire extinguishers** to put out small fires, including

to a major flame, and escalate into a potentially catastrophic event. Museums, tents, historic buildings and collections present particular risks, making the effective use of extinguishers essential, as it greatly aids fire control.

ІНФОРМАЦІЙНИЙ  
БЮЛЕТЕНЬ

Реагування на надзвичайні ситуації

## ЯК користуватись вогнегасниками



Вогняний тетраедр



Цей інформаційний бюлетень пояснює, як використовувати вогнегасники для гасіння невеликих пожеж, включаючи поради щодо їх використання на історичних об'єктах.

Менш ніж за 30 секунд невелика пожежа може перетворитися на велике полум'я і перерости в потенційно катастрофічну подію. Історичні будівлі та старовинні колекції через свій вік, конструкцію та матеріальний склад становлять особливий ризик, який посилюється в конфліктній ситуації. Навчання ефективному використанню вогнегасників є важливим, оскільки це значно підвищує шанси взяти під контроль невелику пожежу.

### Як працюють вогнегасники

Вогонь є результатом хімічної реакції згоряння між киснем (зазвичай киснем повітря) і певною формою палива (наприклад, деревом або бензином). Для гасіння або гасіння палива

Вогнегасники працюють, видаляючи вогнегасну речовину з портативної ємності під тиском, щоб усунути або придушити один або кілька з цих факторів. Вогнегасники працюють різними

### Коли використовувати

Вогнегасники призначені для гасіння пожеж на першому етапі загоряння або на початковій стадії. Початок пожежі можна визначити як пожежу, де:

- Полум'я невелике і обмежене

### When to use

Fire extinguishers are designed for tackling fires in their first ignition, or **incipient stage**. An incipient fire may be defined as one where:

- Flames are **small** and contained
- Smoke levels allow for **visibility** in the room.

# Lessons learned

# The problems

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- Cultural institutions include museums, libraries, archives, historic buildings, and religious buildings (old and new), archaeological sites, etc.
- In peace, little investment is made in heritage protection, by owners or managers.
- In conflict, heritage is often targeted deliberately because of the people it is associated with, but it can also be collateral damage
- Many cultural institutions have no emergency planning or disaster preparations in place, and do not have the necessary equipment or contacts
- Heritage agencies and owners (many of whom are private individuals) are not well integrated into national resilience and response planning
- Emergency response staff have probably had no training in heritage buildings or collections handling
- There may be no appropriate guidance or standards for any involved sector

# The problems

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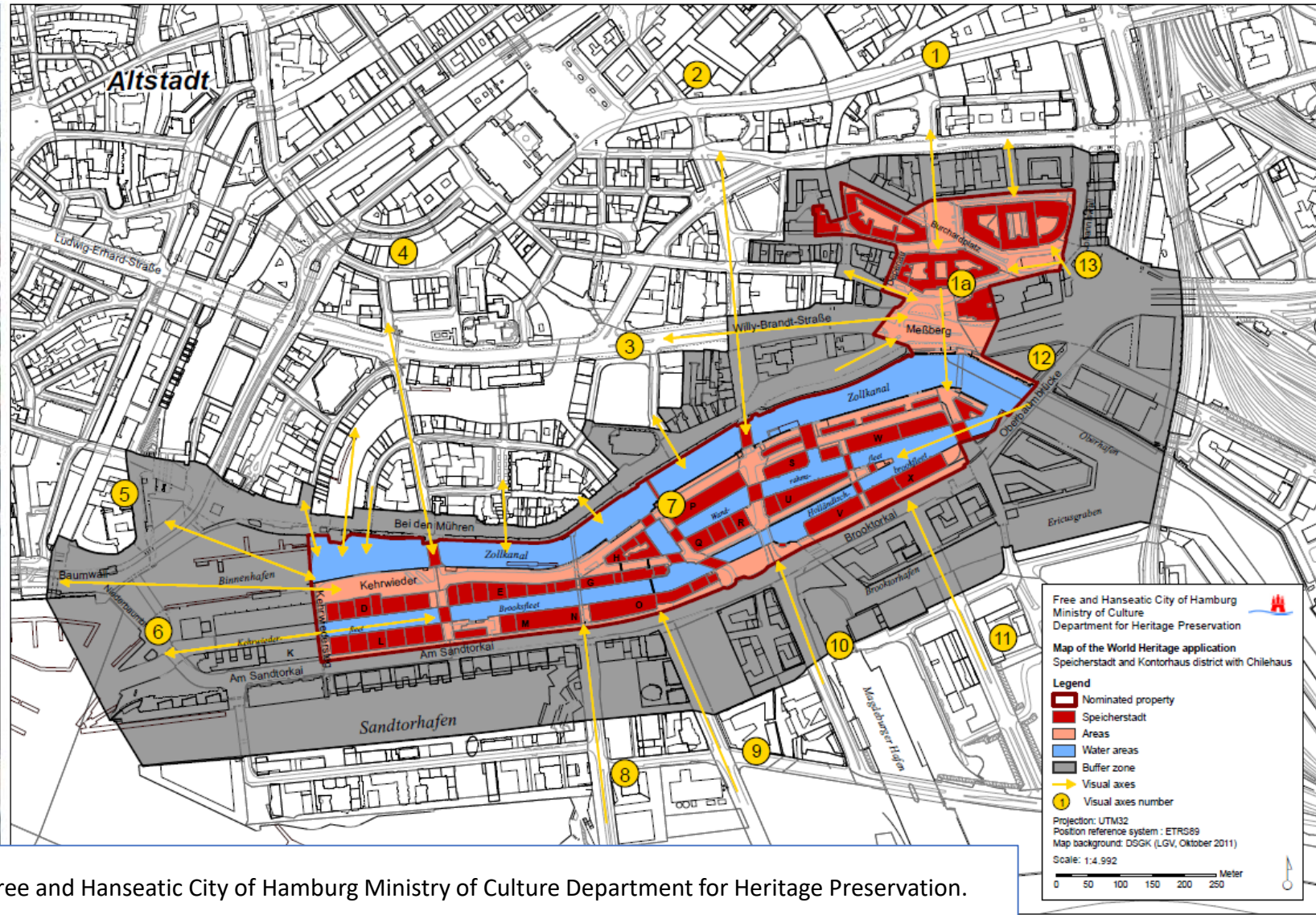
- Historic structures present a unique set of problems
- Historic construction materials may not be fireproof (or worse, highly flammable)
- The value lies in the structure, which is very expensive / impossible to replace.
- The contents (collections) may be as important - or more important – than the structure – but there may not be a record of what is there, or what the most important items are.
- Access may be limited due to the historic construction



# Speicherstadt and Kontorhaus District with Chilehaus World Heritage site: Coping with Culture 2019



Aerial view of the Speicherstadt from east



© UNESCO / Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg Ministry of Culture Department for Heritage Preservation.



# Speicherstadt and Kontorhaus District with Chilehaus

- 26.08-ha property, measures only 1.1km in length
- It is one of the largest coherent historic ensembles of port warehouses in the world (300,000 m<sup>2</sup>).
- Speicherstadt, the “city of warehouses,” includes 15 warehouse blocks, 6 ancillary buildings (and a connecting network of canals, c. 19 bridges and elevated walkways .
- Kontorhaus district is an area of over five hectares featuring 8 very large office complexes:
- Cobbled streets & remnant railway tracks
- 8 (or 9) museums,
- And 2 adjacent
- 2 x WH info centres / Hafen centre
- Port authority



Speicherstadt district, Hamburg  
© E Cunliffe 2019

# Lessons learned

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- Heritage owners and managers must
  - Conduct emergency planning long before disaster
  - Inventory collections, and prioritise them
  - Actively seek out first responders and carry out heritage-focussed training with them
- Those with any responsibility for fire prevention should actively seek out owners of at risk structures and engage to learn how to respond to fires in historic structures. It's everyone's responsibility.
- All those involved in fire prevention should review their guidance – does it cover fire in historic structures (of all kinds)

# Lessons learned

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- Collaboration and integration is key to effective response and effective resilience, and testing across all integrated sectors.
- It is essential all partners are involved as early as possible.
- It is crucial that the heritage sector is fully integrated into the further development and implementation of these frameworks and agreements, and that it participates in stakeholder meetings, including government agencies and departments.
- Blue Shield is available to assist (nationally and internationally)

# Thank you

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Dr Emma Cunliffe

Secretariat

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