

Save the typographical heritage of the French Imprimerie nationale

The French government is currently engaged in selling off various buildings and businesses of the Imprimerie Nationale Group, a commercial limited-liability company in which the French state is sole shareholder. This is being done with no thought to any separate solution to preserve its historic heritage – part of which is covered by a preservation requirement, being classified as a “historic monument” – other than to pack it into crates for permanent storage. This move is scheduled for the first half of 2005, destination unknown. ♣ The historic collection it holds – due to be so dispatched – is a unique, priceless testimony of the history of the written form, from the 16th century to the present. It includes the Cabinet des poinçons, or Punch Room, holding hundred of thousands of letterform and character punches, for both western and oriental scripts; functional workshops – a foundry, presses for typography, lithography and copper-plate engraving work, stitching and binding – as well as a library with over 30,000 volumes, and the archives of the State printing works. Set up in 1539 by King Francis I, at the same time as the Collège de France, the national center of academic excellence, this collection stands as the memory of specialized know-how and expertise, and as a center for creation, now fated to disappear if its continued survival is not ensured. ♣ This whole must not be scattered or split up, as regards either its contents, or its functions: museum and conservation, typeface creation, publishing and research. It must be released from the oversight of a ministerial department driven by concerns of economic profitability. This heritage must be housed in Paris, held by an institution guaranteed adequate resources, having the capacity to further enlarge and expand it. Better still, it could be set up as a foundation – a controlled, non-profit organization – which would be a dedicated space for conservation, but equally of interfacing with outside elements, and for research. Concurrently, and as of now, measures should be taken to ensure that the transfer of equipment and expertise proceed speedily, using a transition formula, with no interruption to production, conservation, research or training activities. ♣ Priceless artifacts must be saved, but equally persons, skills, a store of knowledge must be safeguarded, that are at risk of being lost to all humankind. ♣ We demand that all possible action be taken to stop this vandalism. What is at stake are the very foundations of our own history, and of the dissemination of human thought, ideas and knowledge. ♣ [This petition and all signatures will be sent to the President of the French Republic.]

Sign

and send this petition to:

Pétition Imprimerie nationale

78 rue des Ormes

F-93230 Romainville, France

or, even better, sign at:

<http://www.garamonpatrimoine.org/petition.html>.

Name

Profession, Company

Town, Country