WELCOME ON BEHALF OF THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE OF THE PRE-CONFERENCE

Yang Jianxin, Director of the Cultural Department of Zhejiang Provincial Government and Chairman of The Preparatory Committee of the 2006 IFLA RBMS Pre-Conference in Hangzhou, China

Dear respected former Member of the IFLA Governing Board, Dr. Marian Koren; Respected Chair of IFLA RBMS, Dr. Susan Allen; Respected Secretary of IFLA RBMS, Dr. Jan Bos; Ladies and Gentlemen:

Good morning!

The 2006 IFLA RBMS Pre-Conference, “The History and Cultural Heritage of Chinese Calligraphy, Printing, and Library Work,” hosted by IFLA RBMS and the Cultural Department of Zhejiang Provincial Government, now has its grand opening here on the banks of West Lake in the beautiful city of Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, China. Please allow me on behalf of the Conference Preparatory Committee and the Cultural Department of the Zhejiang Provincial Government to extend our warm welcome and sincere thanks to the leaders of the China Society for Library Science, the China National Library, and to the specialists, scholars, and colleagues who traveled thousands of miles from home and abroad to participate in this pre-conference.

In December 2004 in order to support the 72nd IFLA World Congress to be held in Seoul, Korea in 2006, the Zhejiang Library delivered an application to IFLA RBMS proposing a 2006 IFLA RBMS Pre-Conference in Hangzhou. In order to make this Pre-Conference successful, IFLA RBMS and the Cultural Department of the Zhejiang Provincial Government set up a Preparatory Committee, raised funds in different ways, called for papers from colleagues at home and abroad, carefully planned the Pre-Conference program and local arrangements. Seven Preparatory Committee meetings were held to discuss different subjects for this conference. To provide an enchanting cultural evening, we have arranged for a local Yue Opera production, “The Story of the Fan Family Library,” which shows the history of 440 years of the Tianyi Ge Library as performed by the Zhejiang Xiao Baihua Yue Opera Troupe. The Yue Opera, founded in Zhejiang Province one-hundred years ago, is a type of local drama. The Yue Opera performance of “The Story of the Fan Family Library” is totally in keeping with the Pre-Conference theme. I’m sure it will be of interest to all of you. After more than one year of hard work, we finally greet you at the grand opening of this pre-conference. We believe that this Pre-Conference will be of high quality, of far-reaching significance, and
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successful due to the great efforts of the IFLA RBMS and the other leaders, specialists, scholars, and colleagues attending from home and abroad.

Zhejiang Province is located on the west bank of the East China Sea, and to the south is the Changjiang (Yangtze) Delta. It has a long history of people of talent coming forth in large numbers, and it has beautiful landscape. Its good products from the earth are nature’s treasures. Usually, Zhejiang has been taken as a land of abundance, known as “the home town of rice and fish, the capital of silk and green tea, land of historical cultural relics, and beautiful scenic spots for tourists.” Zhejiang Province covers an area of 101,800 square km with a total population of about 46 million people. There are eleven municipalities under the jurisdiction of the Provincial Government. Since the 1980s, the economy of Zhejiang has been developing rapidly and has followed the route of Zhejiang’s characteristics. In 2005, the GDP in Zhejiang reached 133.65 billion yuan with 27,550 yuan (over $3,400) per capita, which placed it first among Chinese provinces. The revenue of the province reached 20 billion yuan ($25.7 billion) in 2005. According to the Global Competitive Force Reports by the Luosan International Management Institute, Zhejiang Province is evaluated as one of the highest efficiency regions in China.

Zhejiang Province with its rich, colorful, bright and distinctive traditional culture is one of the birth places of Chinese civilization. Its long history and magnificent culture has won this province the fine sounding name of “The Capitol of Silk,” “The Home Town of Rice and Fish,” “The Beautiful Scenic Spots for Tourists,” as well as “The Land of Historical and Cultural Relics,” etc. During the last few decades, archaeologists have found the 8,000 year old Kua Huqiao Ruin, the 7,000 year old Hemudu Ruin, the 6,000 thousand year old Majia Bing Ruin and Luojiajiao Ruin, and the 5,000 year old Songze Ruin and the Liangzhu Ruin, etc. in Zhejiang Province. All these historical ruins embody the vast reservoir of rich pre-historical information in China and have become an important source of original evidence of 5,000 years of traditional Chinese civilization. Our ancestors in Zhejiang Province created a striking historical and brilliant civilization by remolding nature and through social evolution.

According to a survey at the beginning of the 1980s, the density of the cultural relics found in the earth in Zhejiang Province took second place in China. There were 132 sites named as “An Important Chinese Relic Preservation Spot,” ranking the province fifth in all of China. There were 279 sites named at the provincial level as “Important Relic Preservation Spots.” On May 20, 2006, the State Council of the People’s Republic of China issued the first group of “The List of Chinese National Non-materials Cultural Heritage.” There were forty-four items from Zhejiang Province included which ranked Zhejiang Province first in all the provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities directly under the central government. Zhejiang is one of the original places where Chinese wood blocks and letter boards for printing have been found. There is a long history here. During the Qingli Emperor Period (1041–1048 A.D.), Mr. Bi Sheng, an ordinary craftsman in Hangzhou, invented the letter board for printing, and created a great revolution in
printing technology about four hundred years earlier than Johann Gensfleisch zum Gutenberg of Germany. Hangzhou’s printing technology had reached a world leading level during the Song Dynasty (960–1279 AD). Techniques of book binding and the design layout of books were perfected in the Song Dynasty. It appeared the inkling for the formats in books binding and layout at that time (sic). The books of the Song Edition, the most precious rare books, are now known to all the world because they are similar to the original edition with exquisite and excellent printing. As the splendid outcome of a glorious example and great wisdom, which were created by the spirit of creativity in the region, Chinese wood blocks and letter boards for printing are a great historical contribution to civilization and progress not only for the Chinese nation, but also for the whole of mankind. Zhejiang is the hometown of book collecting. There is a saying that: “The east of Zhejiang paid attention to collecting books, while the west of Zhejiang upheld scholars of profound knowledge.” In Zhejiang Province there are eleven ancient libraries that still survive. Among them, one is the emperor’s library, and ten others are private libraries. The Tianyi Ge Ancient Library, which was established in the Jiajing Emperor period of 40–45th (1561–1566 AD) during the Ming Dynasty, became the earliest existing ancient library in China and one of the oldest ancient libraries in the world.

Local chronicles (recording local history, geography, historical personalities, customs, and other sociological data) which document Chinese characteristics and collected almost all the local information, began to flourish in the Song Dynasty (960–1279 AD). During the period 1127–1279 AD of the South Song Dynasty, three successive magistrates of the Lin An Prefecture (now Hangzhou City) conducted research and compiled the famous Hangzhou local chronicles, “Qian Dao Lin An Local Chronicles,” “Chun You Lin An Local Chronicles,” and the “Xiao Chun Lin An Local Chronicles,” which are called collectively “Three Lin An Local Chronicles.” The existing genealogical documents in Zhejiang are also quite rich. In 2005, the Zhejiang Library organized a group of scholars and specialists, which included more than 180 colleagues that worked over a three year period to compile and publish “An Annotated General Bibliography of Zhejiang Genealogy.” This bibliographic database project described more than 12,000 titles of genealogical works available in Zhejiang Province, and also established an automatic access system in order to retrieve entries in the database. At the same time another project, “A Union Catalogue of Zhejiang Provincial Ancient and Rare Books” has been initiated in order to reflect the state of antiquarian and rare book collection and preservation in the province.

In recent years, librarianship in Zhejiang Province has made considerable progress. There are ninety libraries (above the county level) with collections of more than twenty million volumes, and a public library service system has been established to provide various kinds of information services to the whole province. This public library service system plays an active role in the development of social, cultural and economic growth of the whole province.
Zhejiang possesses an excellent environment and splendid, superior resources for holding this international academic conference.

Today, scholars from home and abroad gather in the Zhejiang Library to conduct textual research into the origins and development of the cultural heritage of Chinese calligraphy, printing, and library work; to allow everyone to express intelligent views; and to learn from each other by exchanging views. We will have an excursion to Hua Baozhai, a living museum which gathers together in one place demonstrations of Chinese traditional paper-making, the design and engraving of wood blocks for printing, book binding, etc. We will also visit the oldest Chinese library of Tianyi Ge Ancient Library; one of China’s most famous private libraries, the Jiaye Tnag of Zhejiang Library where we will see a collection of wood blocks for printing; and the Chinese calligraphy brush museum. This will be an excellent gathering of academic significance and practical value. We are extremely happy to have this magnificent preconference in Hangzhou City, Zhejiang.

We hope that through our hardwork we have created a good environment for this preconference, and we hope to make all our guests feel at home. We also hope the scenic beauty of West Lake will compensate for the unusually hot weather that threatens to interfere with our work.

There is a Chinese saying: “A bosom friend afar brings a distant land near.” Let’s study and learn from each other about every aspect of the cultural heritage of Chinese calligraphy, printing, and library work through this magnificent international conference for the promotion of the international cultural heritage of printing and library work in order to make a contribution to human knowledge. Finally, we would like to express our sincere thanks to the IFLA RBMS for giving its painstaking guidance; thanks for the strong support of the scholars and specialists from home and abroad, who provided high quality presentations and papers; and also thanks to the co-organizers who gave energetic support to this preconference.

Many thanks again!

With best wishes for the complete success of the 2006 IFLA RBMS Preconference in Hangzhou!