

Dag Hammarskjöld and the United Nations Library as a Library Promoting Peace

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May I first of all thank you for inviting me to join this Symposium. An occasion like this belongs in a very special way to me and all my colleagues who work as professional librarians with UN documentation.

Every morning when I am on my way to work I am reminded of Dag Hammarskjöld. I walk along the same streets as he did in his childhood in Uppsala, one of the oldest university towns in Europe and a former seat of Swedish royalty. I walk past the hill with the old fifteenth century castle which dominates Uppsala and overlooks the town's spires and gables. Here the Hammarskjöld family resided when Dag Hammarskjöld was a boy, and his father was the county governor.

Dag Hammarskjöld showed early signs of interest in books, and he spent much of his time in the castle library reading all the children's books available. Later he became a frequent visitor to the University Library nearby with its thousands of books and manuscripts.

When Dag was only nine years old, World War I began and his father became Prime Minister of Sweden. Little Dag overheard political discussions at the dinner table, and the father told his son that all nations should join together in an effort to eliminate war altogether. For, if this conflict proved anything, it demonstrated that all nations suffer, neutrals as well as those who actually fight in the war. Dag thought a great deal about the words his father had spoken and decided they were wise words indeed. Knowing that great things were not only expected but required of the children of the Hammarskjöld family, he made up his mind to become a statesman like his father.

Hammaraskjöld was little known to the world when, in 1953, he became Secretary General of the United Nations, but he soon showed that he had the capacity to make the young United Nations organization more effective. He was a dedicated leader with far-sighted vision for his office. Most importantly, he perfected a style of active but quiet diplomacy which proved to be extraordinarily successful in a series of seemingly hopeless situations.

Hammaraskjöld was astonishingly modern in the sense that he was convinced of the importance of mass public opinion as a living force in international affairs. "The more I get on the inside of the UN problems", he commented, "the stronger I feel the need for a development of our approach to the broad public as well as the intellectual groups in the member countries. We have to work hard for a greater awareness of the realities of the world today".

Consequently, he fully understood the importance of libraries as the best peacekeepers for the promotion of understanding democratic principles and human rights and raising awareness of the world community.

Significantly, Hammaraskjöld's last legacy to the United Nations was a scheme for a great library - a library that would attract scholars from all over the world to engage in research which plays a vital role in the attainment of the high aims and purposes of the United Nations.

I feel sure that he would be enthusiastic about the tremendous development of library resources during these past forty years with database search systems, electronic publishing and the Internet!

As a branch of the UN worldwide system of depository libraries there is a Dag Hammaraskjöld Library in Uppsala. It was founded not as a monument but as a lasting memorial to Dag Hammaraskjöld in his home-town. It serves as a centre for research and learning about international issues, and in my daily work in that library I strongly feel his great influence. Although Dag Hammaraskjöld, the man, is gone, and his final resting place is located near our library, his work and ideals will remain with us in our efforts to disseminate among all people the universal

message of peace, freedom, and justice, as well as an understanding of the important work of the United Nations.