13.11.2006

Ms Joie Springer
Information Society Division -
Universal Access and Preservation Section
UNESCO
1, rue Miollis
75732 Paris

Re: Memory of the World Register
Kinder- und Hausmärchen (Children’s and Household Tales)
REF. N° 2004-10
Correction of false information

Dear Ms Springer,

We are delighted that UNESCO agreed in 2005 to include the personal annotated copies (Handexemplare) of Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm’s Kinder- und Hausmärchen (KHM) on the register of its Memory of the World programme. These five volumes (of originally nine) are in our opinion certainly deserving of that recognition and honour. However, we regret to inform you that the application submitted by the nominator, Association of the Brothers Grimm / Brüder Grimm-Gesellschaft e. V. (Kassel), and now posted as a public document on your website, contains factual errors which misrepresent the history and ownership of these personal copies of the KHM. We would draw the following matters to your attention.

1. Under the heading History (§3.2., p. 4) the application claims: „After the Brüder Grimm-Gesellschaft e. V. (Brothers Grimm Association), whose first member was Herman Grimm, son of Wilhelm Grimm, was founded in 1897, the association acquired the Handexemplare of the Grimm Brothers’ most important works (including the “German Grammar” of 1819, et al.) for the Kassel Grimms collection“. Historical records in our possession and also available as public documents show that this is factually incorrect. The Brüder Grimm-Gesellschaft e. V. was not founded in 1897, but in 1942. There was a „Kasseler Grimm-Gesellschaft“ founded mainly by Kassel librarians in 1897, but it was formally dissolved on 11 June 1920 and all its assets and holdings were transferred in accordance with its statutes to the Provincial Library in Kassel (Landesbibliothek Kassel). The present Brüder Grimm-Gesellschaft e. V. is a new and separate foundation, and it is not the legal successor to the former society. The application suggests a continuity of existence of the society - and ownership of the KHM copies - which misrepresents the historical situation.

2. Under the heading Authenticity (§4.1., p. 8) the application states: „The KHM were in the possession of the Brothers Grimm themselves until 1859/1863; thereafter in the possession of Herman Grimm, eldest son of Wilhelm Grimm; from 1897 onward and without interruption in the possession of the Brüder Grimm-Gesellschaft e. V. Kassel (Association of the Brothers Grimm);“ and under Responsible Administration (§5.3.(d), p. 10): „The Kassel Handexemplare (Annotated Reference Copies) have
been part of the Kassel Grimms Collection since 1897 and are preserved in the Museum of the Brothers Grimm in Kassel."

This claim of ownership by the Brüder Grimm-Gesellschaft e. V. / Kasseler Grimm-Sammlung since 1897 is likewise false. According to documents in our possession the early historical record is as follows (in summary):

As approved by Herman Grimm, the KHM copies were handed by the administrator of the Grimms’ literary remains, Reinhold Steig, to the folklorist Johannes Bolte on 4 January 1899 in Berlin;

Johannes Bolte delivered 9 volumes of the KHM copies to the Provincial Library in Kassel (Landesbibliothek) with a letter dated Berlin, 8 October 1932. The two annotated volumes of the first edition 1812/15 and the three of the second edition 1819/21 now registered as Memory of the World were part of the delivery as listed in Bolte’s letter;

Wilhelm Hopf, director of the Provincial Library, acknowledged receipt of the volumes in a letter to Bolte dated Kassel, 12 November 1932.

From 1932 Grimms’ personal annotated copies of the KHM were in the possession of the Provincial Library in Kassel. In 1957 the copies came into the possession of the Murhardsche und Landesbibliothek Kassel (MuLB), because Kassel’s two leading academic libraries were united as a consequence of the dramatic losses the Provincial Library had to bear during World War II. However, the statement that the KHM-copies were in the possession of the Brüder Grimm-Gesellschaft e. V. Kassel (Association of the Brothers Grimm) from 1897 onward and without interruption (as stated in the application and as posted on your website) is a falsification. On the contrary, all the documents prove that the Kassel personal copies of the Grimms’ works (nine volumes KHM, two volumes German Grammar) have been - since 1932 and 1885 respectively - and still are a part of the former Provincial Library (Landesbibliothek), later the Murhardsche und Landsbibliothek and now the University Library of Kassel. In addition, no Grimm Association to whom the copies might have been donated existed in 1885 or in 1932.

3. Under the heading Owner (name and contact details) (§5.1., p. 10) the application claims: „Association of the Brothers Grimm / Museum of the Brothers Grimm Brüder Grimm-Gesellschaft e.V. / Brüder Grimm-Museum Kassel“.

This claim of ownership leads to the following conclusion about copyright (§5.3.(c)):

„The Association of the Brothers Grimm (Brüder Grimm-Gesellschaft e.V.) holds all copyrights of the Kassel Handexemplare (Annotated Reference Copies)“.

Both claims are not justified. As stated above, the owner of the copies is neither the Brüder Grimm-Gesellschaft e. V. itself nor the Brüder Grimm-Gesellschaft as one of the curators of the Brüder Grimm-Museum Kassel. The historical records available to us reveal the following (again in summary):

According to its statutes, the former Kassel Grimm Society, which existed from 1897 to 1920, was intended to collect documents by and on the brothers Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm solely for the collections of the Provincial Library (Landesbibliothek). It may be noted that the initiator of the society was the director of the Provincial Library, Edward Lohmeyer. When the Society was formally dissolved on 11 June 1920, its assets and holdings were transferred to the Library;

When he delivered the copies to the Provincial Library in 1932, Johannes Bolte explicitly stated in his letter of 8 October that he was doing so at the express wish of Herman Grimm. We quote: „bestimmte er [Herman Grimm], daß diese Bücher nach Erledigung meiner Arbeit an die Grimm-Sammlung der Casseler Landesbibliothek
übergeben sollten. Diesem Auftrag gemäß, erlaube ich mir, Ihnen jene neun Bände zu
übersenden ...“;
In his reply of 12 November 1932 the director Wilhelm Hopf thanked Bolte for this
enrichment of our Grimm collection, as welcome as it is valuable. We again quote
from the original: „darf Ihnen zugleich den ergebensten Dank aussprechen für Ihre
Sendung, die für uns eine eben so willkommene wie wertvolle Bereicherung unserer
Grimmsammlung bedeutet.“
These documents show quite clearly that, at the wish and behest of Herman Grimm,
the former Provincial Library in Kassel was the legal owner of the KHM copies and
that the copies were in its possession from 1932 until at least 1957 (see 4. below).
The legal successor to the Provincial Library is currently the University Library in
Kassel (Universitätsbibliothek Kassel). As such, the University and the University
Library claim that the Library is the legal owner of the KHM copies.
4. Under the heading History (§3.2., p. 4), the application states: „Since 1959, the
Kassel Handexemplare have been preserved in the Brüder Grimm-Museum, Kassel. “
In its early years the Brothers Grimm Museum was located in the same building and
under the same direction as the Murhardsche und Landesbibliothek. The inclusion of
the KHM-Handexemplare in the Museum’s exhibitions and research did not mean that
the Library gave up its ownership of these and other objects it contributed to the
Museum’s exhibits. We are currently searching the relevant records to try and
establish when and how the copies came to be transferred to the Brothers Grimm
Museum. The former Provincial Library changed ownership twice last century, 1957
and 1976. Nevertheless, the federal province of Hesse (Hessen) and hence the
University of Kassel retained ownership of the copies.
The results of this additional research will only affect the period since 1957. The
history of the KHM personal copies between the death of Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm
(1863/1859) and the end of World War II can be traced clearly and completely by the
documents mentioned in this letter. The following conclusions are incontrovertible:
the Grimms’ personal annotated copies of the KHM copies were not owned by
any Brothers Grimm Association;
the KHM copies have been located in Kassel since 1932, not since 1897;
during the whole period covered by the historical documents available to us the
Provincial Library (Landesbibliothek Kassel) was the legal owner of the KHM
copies in accordance with the express wish of Herman Grimm, Wilhelm
Grimm’s son.
There are further issues raised in the nominator’s application that require clarification,
but the points of prime concern are those mentioned above. We repeat that we wholly
support and endorse the inclusion of the KHM copies on the Memory of the World
register. That is not in dispute. However, we consider it essential as a matter of
academic integrity and in the interests of the credibility of UNESCO’s programme
that the historical record on the Grimms’ personal annotated copies of the KHM be set
straight and that the disputed questions of their legal ownership be settled as urgently
as possible. We urge you, therefore, to instigate immediately an enquiry to investigate
the issues raised in our letter. We will be happy to submit the historical documents
supporting our views for scrutiny by any forum you consider appropriate, and we trust
that the nominator, Association of the Brothers Grimm / Brüder Grimm-Gesellschaft
e. V. Kassel, will also have and avail itself of the opportunity to present material
substantiating the claims made in its application.
We are sending a copy of this letter with a covering note to the German Commission for UNESCO, attn. Prof. Dr. Joachim-Felix Leonhard. Please address further communication on the matter to Alan Kirkness in the first instance.

Thanking you for your consideration,
Yours sincerely,

Dr Alan Kirkness
Emeritus Professor of Applied Language Studies, University of Auckland
14 Gardner Road, Epsom, Auckland 1023, New Zealand
Email: a.kirkness@auckland.ac.nz

Dr Claudia Brinker-von der Heyde, Professor of Medieval Studies,
Institute of German Studies, University of Kassel
Universität Kassel, Fachbereich 02: Sprach- und Literaturwissenschaften,
Institut für Germanistik, D - 34109 Kassel
Email: brinker@uni-kassel.de

Dr Berthold Friemel, Director of the Centre for Grimms’ Correspondence,
Humboldt University of Berlin
Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Philosophische Fakultät II, Arbeitsstelle
Grimm-Briefwechsel, Jägerstraße 10-11, D - 10117 Berlin
Email: BF@grimmmetz.de

Dr Andreas Gardt, Professor of German Linguistics and Language History,
Institute of German Studies, University of Kassel
Universität Kassel, Fachbereich 02: Sprach- und Literaturwissenschaften,
Institut für Germanistik, D - 34109 Kassel
Email: gardt@uni-kassel.de

Dr Axel Halle, Head Librarian, University Library, University of Kassel
Universitätsbibliothek Kassel, D - 34111 Kassel
Email: halle@bibliothek.uni-kassel.de

Dr Konrad Wiedemann, Head of Manuscript Department, University Library,
University of Kassel
Universitätsbibliothek Kassel, D - 34111 Kassel
Email: kowi@bibliothek.uni-kassel.de

Wolfgang Windfuhr, former President of the Association of the Brothers Grimm (Kassel), former member of the City Council Kassel (Chair of the Cultural Committee), former member of the Provincial Parliament of Hesse (Chair of the Committee for Academic Affairs and Art)
Werraweg 7, D - 34131 Kassel