

Symposium
The 40th Anniversary of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library
Legacy of a Secretary-General

Introductory Remarks

Shashi Tharoor
Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information
Moderator

I would like to welcome you to today's Symposium, "The 40th Anniversary of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library: Legacy of a Secretary-General". My name is Shashi Tharoor, and I head the Department of Public Information at the United Nations.

This Symposium was originally scheduled for 16 November 2001, the exact day of the 40th anniversary of the dedication of the Library building, a gift from the Ford Foundation. However, it was re-scheduled as a result of the tragic events of September 11th. It is now the first event to be held in the refurbished Dag Hammarskjöld Auditorium, which has been so magnificently restored to its original elegance. We have been anticipating today's re-opening since last November, and it certainly lives up to our highest expectations. I understand that one of the architects who worked on this project is with us today, and I wish to congratulate the entire team.

Before beginning what I am certain will be an extremely stimulating and thought-provoking programme, I would like to extend the Department of Public Information's sincere appreciation to the Government of Japan for its generosity in sponsoring this symposium. We are delighted to have with us today Ambassador Yoshiyuki Motomura of Japan, currently Chargé d'affaires of the Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations. Ambassador Motomura will be addressing you shortly.

Our symposium consists of two panels: a morning panel with the theme "Dag Hammarskjöld and the United Nations Library as a library promoting peace" and an afternoon panel entitled "The changing role of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library – Bridging the information gap between developing and developed countries".

Prior to his tragic death on 17 September 1961, Dag Hammarskjöld was very much involved in the process of building a new United Nations Library. As the writer Henry P. van Dusen noted in his 1967 book "Dag Hammarskjöld: the Statesman and his Faith":

There was a peculiar appropriateness in the fact that Hammarskjöld's last legacy to the United Nations was a scheme for a great Library, made possible by the generosity of the Ford Foundation. Hammarskjöld himself not only conceived the idea but personally supervised almost every detail of the planning....As there was special appropriateness that Dag Hammarskjöld's final contribution to the United Nations should have been a Library, so it was no less fitting that the United Nations' principal memorial to him should have taken the form of the naming of the Library in his honor ...

Mr. Henry T. Heald, President of the Ford Foundation wrote to the President of the General Assembly:

We hope that the new Library will be considered in some measure an appropriate remembrance of Mr. Hammarskjöld's life...We believe that his name on the Library would symbolize the hopes we all have for it ... in the years ahead the Library may become a centre for men and women from all parts of the world whose efforts are dedicated, as were Dag Hammarskjöld's, to peace on earth.

Dag Hammarskjöld hoped that the new United Nations Library would be one promoting peace, and it was one of his last legacies.