

STANDARDS

A. Introduction

Record, catalogue, general inventory, Register - different names for the same activity: cultural heritage documentation, recording of the information related to each cultural object, movable or immovable, for knowledge, protection, and scientific and cultural valorisation for the public.

For over two hundred years various countries have conducted the systematic recording of their cultural heritage, while developing documentary archives and museum, regional and national records, seen as important tools for maintaining cultural testimonies of the past. In the face of the rapid change of modern times and of the risk of irreparable damage or loss of historical evidence under our eyes, the rigorous and thorough identification and recording of cultural heritage – by descriptions, scientific inventories, collections, catalogues, directories, text or document collections, drawings, plans, maps, surveys, photographs – have been considered one of the most secure action for saving our collective memory. The issue is today as thorny as ever.

Those working in heritage institutions need inventories, catalogues, directories, stored conventional and digital images, three-dimensional reconstructions, audio and video recordings, digital maps and, further, to combine this information in publications, exhibitions, websites, data networks and portals. But how do we document cultural property?

Studies on standards, methodologies and national and international recommendations in the field of recording, inventorying, cataloguing and description of cultural heritage property are almost non-existent in Romania. In this regard, we seriously fall behind international practices in this field. Using information technology has further complicated the situation. Ignorance or disregard of standards have often led to spending of resources and the design of incompatible, amateurish information systems, which did not meet the minimum requirements of quality and interoperability.

Here we gather - for the first time in the Romanian language – the main data, metadata standards and cataloguing recommendations used worldwide and in Romania. In other words, the work intends to present a selection of the most important, most influential and most used standards, provisions and recommendations on international, European and national level, governing the field of cultural heritage documentation. We have chosen above all standards that specify **what** information we must record for a cultural property and **how** to do it, both from the point of view of content and form. These regulations refer both to the physical heritage, documented on conventional support or on digital support, and to the digital heritage (obtained from digitization operations, such as, for instance, the scanned documents and images files, as well as those natively digital: three-dimensional reconstructions, computer animation, digital maps, digital images, and others). We could not include, for reasons of space, terminology standards, so necessary for retrieving information.

No less, we tried to illustrate current practice in Romania in the record of cultural heritage, especially at national level. The databases created and managed by CIMEC – the Institute for Cultural Memory for movable cultural property records in all the fields of cultural heritage (art, archaeology, ethnography, memorial history, documents, rare books, numismatics, and natural science), for archaeological sites and monuments in the National Archaeological Record (RAN) or for the record of the places of worship of Romania make up de facto Romanian standards, accepted and used by institutions, organizations and professionals in the field. They use standardized forms for the supply of information to national databases, are assisted for the development of local databases compatible with the current national ones and currently consult information from online or offline databases, thereby contributing to the unitary documentation of cultural heritage, required for its knowledge, protection and enhancement.

We gathered the information on chapters according to the major categories of material cultural heritage - movable heritage, immovable heritage (archaeological sites and buildings) - more for reasons of organization of the book. In practice the divisions cannot be so clear-cut, as there are many links and interferences between different categories of cultural and natural heritage property, which necessarily involves the use of a combination of regulations specific of an area or another.

This paper is the result of a recent research project conducted by the authors in *RECONEX - Restoring connections applicable to historical, ethnic, economic, cultural, and spiritual continuity and community traditions of group and family, in an area of discontinuity of memory and erasure of identity (funded by the National Authority for Scientific Research - ANCS by the National Centre of Program Management – CNMP, within the National Plan for Research and Development PNCDI-II, Program 4 - Partnerships in priority areas 2008 - 2011)*¹. No less, it is based on a long professional experience of the two authors.

Irina Oberländer Târnoveanu, an archaeologist and system analyst, graduated from the University of Bucharest, Faculty of History, specializing in world ancient history and archaeology (1975) attended cultural heritage record courses (Training Centre for Culture Staff, Bucharest, 1978) and analyst-programmer training courses at the Informatics Training Centre in Bucharest (1980). She has worked in the field of cultural heritage documentation since 1980. A curator and archaeologist with field experience (at the Danube Delta Museum in Tulcea, currently the Institute for Eco-Museum Researches), she participated in the desing of the first computer system for recording the movable cultural heritage (SI-PCN), the creation of national databases in the field of cultural heritage and of numerous documentary projects for museums, archaeological archives, digital libraries, European heritage data networks, thesauri, and web publications. She joined the working group of CIDOC/ICOM that has developed The International Data Standard for Archaeological Sites.

¹ <http://web.ipa.ro/reconex/index.php>

She has been the Deputy Director of CIMEC – the Institute for Cultural Memory, Bucharest (since 1993).

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Aware of the limitations of this first attempt to gather standards and recommendations for the documentation of cultural heritage in Romanian, we think with gratitude of the colleagues and friends with whom we have worked over the past two decades, in working groups, international organizations and projects (CIDOC/ICOM, ELAG, HEREIN, Europeana, ATHENA, and others) and of our colleagues at CIMEC and from other heritage institutions in this country who, by their curiosity and interest, have almost forced us into writing this book.

The authors