RECOMDOC '92—A Necessary Effort Toward Convergence

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"You may say I'm a dreamer
But I'm not the only one"

John Lennon

The process of European integration, particularly complex, had already begun, at all levels and fields of socio-economic and cultural life when, in 1989, Europe's political entity suddenly acquired new dimensions. The crash of communist regimes in the Central and Eastern European side of the continent, the disappearance of some states, the (re)appearance of others, and the restructuring of the region's fundamental framework affected the very delicate field of cultural heritage as well.

To be administered, studied, and represented properly, this heritage should first be known. That is what requires the largest amount of work and specialised tools (both conceptual and material). From Czechoslovakia to Russia and from Estonia to Albania, the problems are all the same, even though the levels reached in creating and developing data banks and in analysing the cultural items are not identical. Moreover, the necessity of correlating the national systems with those internationally accepted, mainly through CIDOC, has become evident.

This should be of importance not only to specialised bodies affiliated (or not) with ICOM, but also to the national ones in Western Europe and even the USA and Canada—as the latter two are very much engaged in the common European destiny.

The Romanian suggestion to create a regional committee for documentation in the field of cultural heritage and museums, especially in Central and Eastern Europe, came just in time, as it drew the experts' attention to the urgent need to solve the problems. The Sinaia conference has set itself far more ambitious objectives than simply adhering to the "natural" (slower) course of things.

Unfortunately, the lack of financial means, as well as other reasons concerning the tense political situation in the area, and the outbreak of undeclared but real wars, led to participation far below our expectations.

Representatives from the former "Soviet Republics" were absent (except Moldavia), as well as those from Albania and Bulgaria, while from Yugoslavia only Slovenia took part. Under these circumstances, participants could only formulate problems and take into account the actual moment's specific situations. RECOMDOC '92 was only the initial call for everybody to come to the starting line. The race (counting major obstacles: different definitions of cultural heritage, lack of specialists and instruments, insufficiency of legislation, etc.) is beginning now and it has to bring all the runners together to the finish, at the same time. It is a common effort, based on a common motivation: information exchange, without which the existence of information itself would be pointless.
Considering all these, it seems that the period (nevertheless, short enough) that is left until the Ljubljana CIDOC conference in September 1993 should be used to increase the number of participants in this regional activity—by involving all the countries geographically and politically situated in Europe—and to prepare a larger contribution of the official responsible institutions, namely those institutions which, in the absence of other sponsors, will concretely assure the financing of this effort.

Here is the place to express our gratitude for the support already offered by the J. Paul Getty Trust, through the Getty Art History Information Program, and the hope that our effort will prove fruitful while we’re still within the second millennium.