RECOMDOC '92—Closing Remarks

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The rapid changes in Central and Eastern European countries opened a new era of development and collaboration possibilities in museum documentation and information interchange. Following the discussions at the CIDOC/ICOM Conference in Copenhagen, May 1991, the need to survey cultural heritage projects developed in isolated circumstances and the creation of a regional organisation were outlined.

This conference was convened to encourage collaboration—national, regional, and international—to provide an opportunity to establish closer links between museums and heritage institutions, to bring together museum staff, librarians, registrars, system designers, and computer specialists. The setting up of a Regional Committee on Museum and Cultural Heritage Documentation to provide a survey of cultural heritage projects, common problems, and possible solution had been one of the ends of the conference.

RECOMDOC '92 was organised by Ministerul Culturii din Romania (Dialogue Cultural International—Departamentul de Informare si Documentare—Departamentul Memorie Culturala), The Romanian Ministry of Culture (The International Cultural Dialogue, Information and Documentation Department and Cultural Heritage Department), Directia Muzeelor si Colectiilor—Museums and Collections Board, Centrul de Informatica si Memorie Culturala—the Information Center for Culture and Heritage, and the generous contribution of the Getty Art History Information Program.

RECOMDOC '92 took place at Sinaia (a mountain resort, 160 km from Bucharest), 4-6 May, 1992.

Eighty specialists (curators, librarians, art critics, historians, engineers, programmers, and analysts) representing 46 museums, institutions, and international organisations from 10 countries: (Canada, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Greece, Great Britain, Hungary, The Republic of Moldova, Romania, Slovenia, and the USA).

The conference had three sessions:

1. National, European, and International Collaborative Projects
2. Documentation and Collections Management Projects
   2.1 Arts, Ethnography, Slides, Rare Books, and Photos
   2.2 Archaeology, Numismatics, History, and Natural Sciences
3. Standards and Interchange Formats in Museum Documentation

The Opening and Welcome session took place at the Palace Hotel in Sinaia. The speakers were Dan Matei, the Director of the Information Centre for Culture and Heritage (CIMEC); Radu Boroianu, Secretary of State, Ministry of Culture, Romania; Dr. Michael Ester, Director, and Eleanor Fink, Program Manager, from The Getty Art History Information
Program (USA); and Ecaterina Geber, the Chief of the Systems Development Department (CIMEC), who saluted the conference and outlined the importance of the event.

Then Mary Case, Director of the Office of the Registrar at the Smithsonian Institution, USA, presented a very interesting analysis of the documentation/museum situation in the USA entitled: "How We Manage."

Andrew Roberts, the chair of the International Documentation Committee/International Council of Museums (CIDOC/ICOM), welcomed the conference and presented a very comprehensive illustration of "Documentation Practice, Systems, and Standards in European Museums".

The first day's afternoon session (Monday, 4 May, 16:00), was chaired by Dr. Dinu Giurescu. Irina Oberlànder-Tàrnoveanu and Ecaterina Geber (CIMEC, Romania), presented "SI-PCN: The National Cultural Heritage Information System in Romania." Zdenek Lenhart (Moravske zemske muzeum, Czechoslovakia) talked about "Czechoslovak Museums, Documentation of Collections, and Computers". Jeremy Warren (Museums & Galleries Commission, Great Britain) made a very instructive presentation of the Museums & Galleries Commission network and relationships. Jeremy Rees (EVAC, Great Britain) revealed the details of the logic, advantages, contradictions, and problems encountered in aiming for (and achieving) European and international collaboration in his paper entitled "Arriving at International Collaboration". Barbara Rottenberg (CHIN, Canada) presented "The Evolution of a National System"—very impressive and most helpful conclusions for those from Central and Eastern Europe who are experiencing the same process which CHIN had already gone through. Dan Matei (CIMEC, Romania) presented a challenging and ambitious project, "A Software System for Romanian Museums". Henrik Jarl Hansen (The National Museum of Denmark), the last speaker of the first day, presented in a very attractive way the Danish Museum Index.

On the second day, Tuesday, 5 May, two workshops made possible by the Getty Art History Information Program, "Planning for Museum Automation" and "The Art and Architecture Thesaurus," kept the attention of participants. John Perkins (Museum Computer Network, USA) and Margaretta Sander (Art Information Task Force, USA), convinced their audience that a combination of lectures and group exercises are an enjoyable and instructive way to learn about strategies for planning museum information management. Susanne Warren (Art and Architecture Thesaurus, USA) provided a background of standards for information interchange in the use of controlled vocabulary in an automated environment.

Those who did not attend the workshops took part in a nice spring sunny-day walk and a visit to the very unusual Peles Castle.

During the afternoon, the two parallel sections of "Documentation and Collections Management Projects" had to compete with the splendid sunny day outside. The "Arts, Ethnography, Slides, Rare Books, and Photos" section was chaired by Laszlo Szabo (Hungary), and the "Archaeology, Numismatics, History, and Natural Sciences" section was chaired by Irina Oberländer-Tàrnoveanu (Romania).

In the first section, Camelia Savu (CIMEC, Romania) presented a database, STAR, about the history of theatre performance in Romania; Carmen Smaranda Farcași (Peles Museum, Romania) read an essay entitled "Mode, Model, and Modality"; Ecaterina Geber (CIMEC,
Romania) tried to answer a very frequently asked question: "Why the BRANCUSI Interactive Multimedia Project?", Iuliana Ciotoiu and Dr. Ion Godea from the Village Museum (Romania) analysed the correlation of an information system in an ethnographic museum; Iuliana Ciotoiu, Mihaela Dâmbu, and Florin Patrascu (Romania) detailed the previous paper with an example: "Informational System of the Village Museum: CAMUS Programme." Lucia Cusnir (Museum of Folk Civilization, Romania) emphasised the importance of the links between the systems describing the objects or specimens and the documentation archives (slides and photos) in her paper "Computerised Management of Photo and Slide Collections". Victoria Angelescu and Mariana Velicu closed the day with a very interesting sociological analysis performed at the National Museum of Cotroceni in Bucharest (Romania).

In the parallel section, Ernest Oberländer-Târnoaveanu (The National Museum of History, Romania) presented the benefits of the computerised numismatic catalogues; Simona Suceveanu (National History and Archaeology Museum, Constantza, Romania), formulated proposals for an integrated documentation project for their museum. Victor Serbanescu and Petre Sitov (Brasov, Romania) described an attempt to design software for museum information inventory and correlation; Mariuca Radu (History Museum, Brasov, Romania) discussed the possibilities of computerised management of the ancient maps collection from Brasov. Zoia Maxim (History Museum of Transylvania, Cluj, Romania) introduced a "Catalogue of Shapes and Ornaments for Archaeological Databases"; Dr. Gheorghe Lazarovici and Lucian Tarcea (Cluj, Romania) presented their project of a database management system for archaeology, called "ZEUS". Dorel Rusti presented "A Fauna Database from the 'Grigore Antipa' Natural History Museum".

The last day (Wednesday) was dedicated to the discussion of standards and interchange formats in museum documentation. The session was chaired by Nicolas Papageorgiou (Greece). Anisoara Burlacu (CIMEC, Romania) shared with the audience new potentials in managing a museum database; John Perkins (MCN, USA) discussed data standards for information sharing; Andrew Roberts (CIDOC, Great Britain) presented "National and International Standards Initiatives"; Irina Cios (CIMEC, Romania) established correspondences between the Romanian Art Thesaurus and the AAT, a future basis for information sharing. Alenka Simikic (Slovenia) presented "Galleries of Slovene—Problems and Achievements". Marjeta Mikuz (Slovenia) invited us to take part in the coming CIDOC conference in Ljubljana, Slovenia, 1993.

Unfortunately, many of our colleagues from neighbouring countries were not able to come, mostly because of lack of funds.

Subsequently, at the end of the conference we found out that we have not yet defined how to collaborate and what each of us means by collaboration.

The two questions:

1. What is collaboration? How to collaborate?
2. What do you mean by collaboration?

might be, we suggested, the subject of a special session, at the following CIDOC meeting, in Ljubljana, Slovenia, 10 - 16 September, 1993.
In the meantime the participants in RECOMDOC '92 will take the responsibility of creating links between different groups in the region, fostering communication and information sharing. (Our colleagues from Slovenia, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary have already accepted, with much enthusiasm, the task of helping us.) Thus, people will be able to define what they expect to be the outcome in participating in common projects, to define their own interests. We feel that we need some time to investigate the process. We understood very well that collaboration means, first, equal partnership. Our conclusion is that we have to take small and very concrete steps.

CIMEC will:

- Produce a report about RECOMDOC '92 for all the participants and other organisations which did not attend the conference
- Produce a report about RECOMDOC to CIDOC/ICOM
- Encourage contacts within Romania as well as among countries
- Encourage contacts among professionals, museums, and coordinating bodies
- Publish (with the generous help of the Getty Art History Information Program) these conference proceedings
- Identify (together with future partners from other countries) specific, concrete proposals
- Encourage and coordinate all the initiatives regarding common standards in Romania, promote and use international standards
- Coordinate with Slovenia for the CIDOC conference that is planned for Ljubljana in 1993.