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## **Library: its basic role in the protection and valorization of Written documentary heritage**

**Abstract:** The library is the institution known to have as its basic mission the creation, processing, preservation of the written documentary heritage. Libraries express the metaphorical memory of humanity. Over time, libraries have been involved in preserving the cultural heritage of humanity. In ancient, medieval, Renaissance and modern times, the patrimonial mission was their core mission and their prestige in the community was given by the richness and importance of collections. In the contemporary period, the user has access to information and the patrimonial role is expressed through the management of special collections and the preservation for future generations of rare and valuable documents of cultural and scientific importance. The work exemplifies the patrimonial function of the libraries through the case of the National Library of Romania.

**Keywords:** library, documentary heritage, collections, National Library of Romania

### **Introduction**

The library is recognized as the institution that aims to keep cultural and scientific heritage in written form for future generations. Many times, the library is metaphorically defined as *community memory*. The library has assumed this role and has done it successfully over time. The patrimonial function of libraries is more visible in national and public libraries than in scientific and educational libraries.

We will try to highlight in our work what the function and the patrimonial attributions for libraries are, as well as the way they are achieved over time and during the contemporary period. We will illustrate the patrimonial function of a representative library through the case of the National Library of Romania

### **Library: A Historical Approach to Its Patrimonial Mission**

In the classical sense, the *library* is defined by the *collection* concept as a library being a public or private collection of documents held and administered by a person or an institution. The term *library* is also used to denote the building or part of the building that houses such a collection. The definition is correct but somewhat simplistic as it does not reflect what this institutional structure represents in terms of its social mission and the services it provides. We will use in our work the term library with the meaning of an institution that manages collections of documents.

Throughout history, we find the library as an institution present in the life of society in different representations according to the level of development of society, the existing editorial activity, the circulation of documents and the interest shown for the preservation of the printed heritage, the level of education of the population and the interest manifested for knowledge.

The *period of antiquity* was favourable for libraries and for activities designed to preserve the intellectual creation of humanity. The Antiquity Library was found near temples and royal palaces and was a symbol of social recognition as a kingdom and community were particularly appreciated for the level and intellectual value of documentary collections and the prestige of its scholars. Not a few times, the written document had a sacred connotation and the librarian joined the scholars of the time. The history of libraries cannot be separated from the history of writing. Antiquities libraries have been established and developed together with copy centres. Copying documents was the most common way of enriching collections. Representatives for this period are: The Ugarit Library (12<sup>th</sup> century BC) containing literary work and historical and diplomatic archives; The Library of King Assurbanipal, from Nineveh (7<sup>th</sup> century BC), which is the largest collection of clay tablets (in the thousands of tablets was also found the Epic of Gilgamesh); The Library of Alexandria (3<sup>rd</sup> century BC), the most famous library of antiquity that in its blooming age had more than half a million

documents, unfortunately lost today; The Pergamum Library (3<sup>rd</sup> century BC), which is estimated to have over 200,000 documents, and is the library that imposed the scroll as a writing medium. Libraries also existed in Rome, at the palace of the Roman Empire, but also in China and India, besides Buddhist learning centres.

In *medieval times*, scholarly traditions are preserved and developed and libraries are predominantly present in monasteries and their role is not merely the keeper of the documents of the times, but the famous scriptures are copied manuscripts, much of the legacy of antiquity being saved in this way. We also notice the various domains of documents and collections: theology, law, medicine, music, rhetoric, history, grammar, and so the emergence of schools (and universities in the Western world) seems to be a natural approach. The librarian had the reputation of the scientist, the researcher. The medieval library is a social institution with a remarkable reputation in the era, and which, from the present perspective, can be considered the fundamental institution of emancipation and social progress.

The most famous medieval library is the Library of Patriarch Fotius in the 9<sup>th</sup> century AD. This great Byzantine library, alongside other monastic libraries, contributed to the survival of Greek-Roman culture as well as to the development and spread of Christian culture. The first scribes appeared at the Vivarium monastery in southern Italy (7<sup>th</sup> century AD) and were an authentic model for many other monasteries and hundreds of monks who had the task of copying theological documents and documents of Greek and Latin cultures. The scriptorium model was so powerful that libraries also appeared in areas that were not under the influence of Roman civilization such as Ireland. The invasion of barbarian populations leads to the destruction of many medieval collections and libraries. From the 12<sup>th</sup> century, we can talk about a revival of manuscript copy activities and, implicitly, a revival of libraries. The Toledo Translators and Copiers School, the libraries of the Paris cathedrals (which later formed the core of collections of university libraries), appear. In the 14<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries, in Italian space, private collections and libraries appear to have become the nucleus of public libraries. In the medieval Romanian space (represented by the three Romanian provinces) as well, the monasteries were true centres of culture and guarantors of the Orthodox faith. For example, the Putna, Voroneţ, Humor Monasteries in Bucovina had representative copywriter and miniature centres even for the European space.

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And in the *Renaissance* and then *modern period*, the library remains the institution that reflects community and community space. The emergence of printing has contributed decisively to facilitating access to the book, and this has been reflected in the development of libraries, both in terms of numeracy and in terms of the activities offered. Communities (national or regional) are concerned with setting up libraries for the benefit of the general public. There are national libraries, public libraries, and there are talks about democratization of access to culture and education. The prestige of universities is linked to the library. Also, private libraries are of great importance and constitute a prestige and social appreciation mark. The librarian becomes a documentary with the mission of organizing and administering the documentation and providing access to them. The major libraries of the world crystallize in the post-print period.

In Romanian space we have, for this period, significant libraries. Some of the most important, in terms of the number of documents and the structure and diversity of the collections are Udriște Năsturel's Library, Cantacuzino's Library, The Library of the Mavrocordates, and many monastic libraries, of which we notice the Library of St. Sava's Monastery from which they later formed The Library of the University of Bucharest and the National Library (17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries). In the Transylvanian space, three private libraries founded by great cultural personalities of the day become important patrimonial libraries (the Batthyaneum Library in Alba Iulia founded by the Roman Catholic Bishop of Transylvania Ignățiu Batthyány, Teleki-Bolyai, established under the direct guidance of Count Samuel Teleki Brukenthal Library, whose foundation is due to the book fund acquired by Baron Samuel von Brukenthal). In the modern period of Romania, many public libraries also appear, such as the V.A. Uruechia in Galati or the libraries founded by the Astra Society in Transylvania, also found in rural areas. All the libraries that appeared during this period had as objectives declared the preservation of the cultural heritage and the contribution to the education and emancipation of the population.

### **Library: A Contemporary Approach to Its Patrimonial Mission**

The 20<sup>th</sup> century genuinely democratizes access to information and libraries are indispensable presences of communities performing patrimonial, educational, scientific, and cultural functions. The model of the 20<sup>th</sup> century library is present with small adaptations, and today in

the sense that access to information becomes the fundamental mission of libraries and derives from its patrimonial function of capitalizing on human knowledge.

At the national level, libraries delineate their competences and constitute the National Library System, responding as much as possible to a country-specific social need.

*National libraries* assume the patrimonial mission as the main mission. By registering the publishing intentions (national ISBN, ISSN, CIP), by managing and managing national editorial productions (legal deposit attributions), by bibliographic reporting of the national documentary heritage (national catalogues and national bibliography), by preserving, preserving, restoring collections and documents (National Centre for Pathology and Document Restoration) and by providing access to documents (the National Digital Library), national libraries exercise a number of specific tasks and assure the creation, management and valorisation of the contemporary documentary heritage. In addition, through rare historical documents, bibliophiles that make up special collections, national libraries contribute to the assertion and valorisation of written cultural heritage.

*Public libraries* are at the service of local communities by supporting them in their educational and cultural activities. Public libraries exercise their patrimonial role by assigning them the preservation of documents that constitute community memory, i.e. documents of interest to the local community, documents that have as members of the community, documents containing information about the community in question, or having a value historical, cultural, artistic, etc. Public libraries reflect (or should reflect) the identity of the community they serve. They identify relevant documents of the local community expressing its heritage in documentary form, managing donations of local personalities, organizing activities and events for capitalizing on local cultural heritage. Special collections of public libraries, even if they do not always have a high artistic and bibliophile value, remain valuable because they express the best, socially, historically, culturally, artistically a community. Libraries exercising their powers at the level of a larger administrative unit, such as counties in the case of Romania, are involved in the management of local documentary heritage through local legal deposit duties and local bibliography. In local communities, the library is the keeper of collective memory. Recognizing the role of the library in the community is given by the extent to which local authorities and community members use the skills and resources made available by

this type of public institution. A community greatly relieves their work and solves a lot of problems if they can use the library effectively. IFLA – The International Association of Libraries and Librarian Associations and UNESCO recognize and support the role of public libraries in the memory of the local community.

*University libraries* develop their educational and research functions and their patrimonial function is found in the tasks of managing special collections with historical and bibliophile value (where such collections exist) as well as in the tasks of establishing and managing collections of scientific or identity property value for the institution and for the served community. For example, a university library may be involved in building collections that reflect the history and activity of the college which, in time, becomes a collection with a patrimonial role. Also, the creation of a collection of publications expressing the scientific activity of the university (an institutional scientific deposit) can also be considered as an information dissemination activity but also as an activity with a patrimonial role.

*School libraries* remain a component of the didactic process, distinguishing themselves in the typology of libraries through their special mission and specific characteristics related to formal and non-formal education and are less involved in activities with a patrimonial role.

*Specialized libraries* serve specialized communities and most of the time support research activities both in the pre-research phase through information and documentation activities and in the phase of capitalizing on research results through dissemination activities. Specialized libraries are a category of libraries within the National Library System, which is very heterogeneous, since both research libraries and libraries for communities with special needs such as disadvantaged people or minorities or libraries belonging to specific communities or institutions are included. For example. The Academy Library is a specialized research and heritage library of national rank, which belongs to an institution (Romanian Academy) and access to information is offered quite restrictively, especially to researchers. A library of outstanding heritage is also the Library of the Holy Synod. Monastery libraries are also considered to be specialized libraries with patrimonial value.

The use of documentary heritage is done in multiple forms, starting from the reporting of documents in catalogues and bibliographies, the organization of exhibitions, the use as documentary and informational support in research activities, the publication of monographs, albums,

studies and articles up to modern forms of valorisation by editing works in digital form, the creation of digital collections and libraries, involvement in national and international projects providing the prerequisites for integrating national heritage into the universal heritage.

The tasks of establishing, preserving, administering and capitalizing on the national documentary heritage are shared by three types of institutions: libraries, archives, museums. Each type of institution has specific attributions and is specialized on certain types of activities. This does not mean that there are situations in which types of documents and collections can coexist, with specific attributions in the same institution type. So, there are libraries that hold museum collections (usually numismatic, heraldic) or historical archives as well as museums or archives that hold libraries or library-specific documents and collections. Starting from these real situations, norms, working methodologies as well as specific legislation have emerged that mainly deal with the type of document and collection, and in secondary the type of institution that manages documentary heritage. It is essential to understand that these institutions have a fundamental, complementary role in the constitution and management of the national documentary heritage.

### **The Romanian Documentary Heritage Reflected in the Collections of the National Library of Romania**

For each country, its national library is the most representative institution with well-defined legal attributions for the creation and administration of the written documentary heritage.

The mission of the National Library of Romania, according to the Law of Libraries and the recognition by the society of its institutional status, is to ensure, through specific functions, the preservation, research, development and valorisation of the national documentary heritage. In order to accomplish its mission, the National Library ensures the registration of the institutions with editorial attributions on the national territory, records the intentions of publishing by assigning the standard numbers for books and serials (ISBN, ISSN), assigns the record of each monographic publication to be published (CIP – Cataloguing prior to publication); organizes the Legal Deposit, the National Reserve of Publications; Performs National Bibliographic Control as part of Universal Bibliographic Control; elaborates the current National Bibliography for all categories of documents; develops,

manages and updates the National Collective Catalogue (in collaboration with libraries in the National Library System), organizes and manages the international exchange of publications as well as other specific attributions.

Compared to other European countries, Romania has a relatively young national library. The necessity of fulfilling the functions of a national library by any library institution led to the re-establishment of this institution after a 54-year interruption (we are considering the 1901 parliament's decision when the Central State Library established by Al. I. Cuza as the public library continuator 1836 is abolished and its heritage is transferred to the Romanian Academy Library). By decision of the Council of Ministers no. 1193 of June 25, 1955, the settlement resumed its activity under the old name, slightly modified, by the Central State Library until 1990, when it was given the current title by the National Library of Romania (HG 476, February 5, 1990).

Initial collections of the library were made up of funds from large public libraries, or rather from what remains of them, libraries of some settlements, foundations and museums as well as private collections. Many of these funds were the basis for the creation of the current special collections of the National Library of Romania.

The National Library of Romania holds two funds of heritage collections located in Bucharest and Alba Iulia (Batthyaneum Branch).

The core of the *special collections in Bucharest* represented a series of previously established funds such as the collections of the Cultural Institute Ion I. C. Bratianu, the collection of documents from the Al. Saint-Georges, the M. Kogălniceanu Foundation's collection of documents, the Scarlat Rosetti funds, the Exarcu and Gheorghe Adamescu funds belonging to the Romanian Athenaeum Library. Subsequently, collections grew and diversified through various purchases, shopping, donations, transfers, etc. currently obtaining documents from almost all types of bibliophile and heritage documents.

The service is structured according to the specific content of each collection on seven distinct compartments: Bibliophilia, Manuscripts, Historical Archives, Old Romanian Periodicals, Stamps, Photos, Cartography. To this is added the audio-video documentary section that has a collection of musical prints, collections of recordings on various media, from album discs to CDs and DVDs.

*The Bibliophilic Cabinet* counts about 53,000 bibliographic units – incunabula, old books, rare books and bibliophiles, historical documents,

leaflets. The Romanian Book Collection of the National Library of Romania counts 7,043 titles with 12,638 bibliographic units and contains an old book printed between 1508 and 1830 on the Romanian national and political territory as well as in printing centres abroad such as Uniev, Rome, Lvov, Aleppo, St. Petersburg, Venice, Vienna, Buda, Leipzig, Tiflis, Paris or Ausbach, centres that printed a Romanian book for the Romanian Principalities. The National Library holds in its collections old and rare prints, of which we mention: a copy of the “Slavic Liturgy” printed by the Serbian hieromonk of Macarie, the only original copy on the territory of Romania from “Apostol Slavonic” and one from the “Molitvenic Slavonic” both printed between 1545 and 1547 by Dimitrie Liubavici.

*The Manuscript Cabinet:* Latin, Arabic, Persian, Slavic, Greek – about 30000 bibliographic units.

*The historical archive* includes the “M. Kogălniceanu” (1,162 files), “I.C. Bratianu” (724 files), and “Al. Saint-Georges” (5,804 files) funds.

*Old Romanian periodicals* (from the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to 1948) include calendars, almanacs, yearbooks, newspapers, political party organs, cultural, literary, legal, economic magazines, etc.

*The Stamp Cabinet* includes Romanian graphic works of some representative artists from us: Carol Pop de Szatmary and Theodor Aman, Nicolae Grigorescu, Sava Hentia, Theodor Pallady, Iosif Iser, Francis Şirato, Jean Al. Steriadi, Nicolae Tonitza, to the contemporaries Dimitrie Ghiţă and Corneliu Baba.

*The Photos Cabinet* has about 113,000 bibliographic units – original photos and illustrated postcards.

*The Cartographic Cabinet* holds approx. 3661 bibliographic units – historical maps, linguistic maps, ethnographic maps, demographic maps, military maps, tourist maps, topographic maps and plans, city and state plans; approx. 1000 geographic, geological, climatic, meteorological, hydrographical maps, maps of the soil and the environment.

*The Audio-Visual Cabinet* has several thousand record players, discs, CDs, DVDs, scores, monographs, etc.

#### *The Batthyaneum Branch of the National Library of Romania in Alba Iulia*

The personal collection of Bishop Batthyány Ignác was the core of the library of the Batthyani Institute in Alba Iulia and is still the gold fund of the library. Donations from private individuals and Transylvanian institutions have been another means of enriching the library of Bishop of

Transylvania. The library is for two hundred years in the building of the former Trinitarian church in Alba Iulia. Since 1951, the library has been named Batthyaneum Documentary Library and in 1962 it became the Central State Library (the current National Library of Romania).

The total of the publications of the library (the old book fund and the combined contemporary funds) now total 70,958 bibliographic units, including 24,000 bibliographic units of old books.

From a scientific and bibliophile documentary point of view, the most important collection is the collection of manuscripts. It sums up 1775 illustrating bibliographic units for European and Transylvanian culture from the 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The most famous is the Codex Aureus, a part of Carol's great gospel. The *incunabula collection* preserves 571 bibliographic units, most of which come from the library's original book fund. There are over thirty princeps editions and a large number of editions of great rarity. The *collection of old books* printed between 1500 and 1800 in various European publishers houses a documentary fund of 24,000 bibliographic units, of which 7,950 are from the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. From the series of Romanian typographical rarities preserved in Batthyaneum we mention: *Palia* (Orăștie, 1582), *The New Testament* (Balgrad, 1648), *The Gospel* (Blaj, 1765), *Targeting the Law* (Targoviste, 1652), *The Teaching Gospel* (Dealu Monastery, 1644), *The Psalms* (Râmnic, 1743), etc.

The library also preserves *other collections that have archival or museum value*. The archive documents archive consists mainly of the archive of the Roman Catholic Church in Alba Iulia and of the Cluj-Manastur Convent (about 17,163 documents), plus the manuscript correspondence of some Roman-Catholic bishops of Transylvania (43,081 documents).

### *Contemporary collections*

According to the minutes concluded in November 1955, the Central State Library began its journey in 1956 when it opened for the public with 41,959 bibliographic units. Funds are rising rapidly, the main ways of completing it include entry through the legal deposit, massive transfers from the State Fund of the Book, current acquisitions, donations, international exchanges, and even entire libraries of some disbanded institutions. The size and profile of collections is largely due to the national functions that the library has to fulfil. We can talk today about the existence of about 12 million library units, a large part requiring bibliographic processing and cataloguing. As a documentary typology, books (current book, old book, rare and bibliophile,

incunabula), periodicals (current periodicals, old periodicals, rare periodicals and bibliophiles), manuscripts (original, handwritten or printed, bound or filed), micro formats (microfilms, microfiches), cartographic documents (maps, atlases, plans, earth globes), printed music documents, graphic documents (engravings, art reproductions, stamps, painting studies, technical drawings), dissertations and doctoral theses, standards, guides, methodologies and other technical documents, numismatic and philatelic documents, posters and leaflets, lithographs, photographs, audio-visual documents and electronic documents.

The processing of documents from the collections of the National Library of Romania is carried out according to norms, methodologies and procedures specific to each type of document but at the same time unitary with the international standard norms contributing to the realization of the National Bibliography of Romania (as a National Bibliographic Agency) with its known series (Books, albums, maps; Serial publications; Musical notes, discs, tapes; PhD theses; Articles from periodicals, Romanica) and creating the prerequisites for informational exchanges through specific information systems. The main way of developing collections and establishing the national documentary heritage remains the Legal Deposit.

The valorisation of the highly valuable heritage of the library takes place in various forms starting from the reporting in catalogues and databases, publishing of specialized works, organizing thematic cultural manifestations, documentary support in the production of printed or audio-visual cultural materials by other institutions, etc. until involvement in national and international projects of preserving and capitalizing on the national cultural heritage. The main European projects attended by the National Library of Romania with representative documents and collections illustrating the Romanian documentary heritage are:

*The Manuscriptorium / ENRICH project* developed and supported by the National Library of the Czech Republic. Manuscriptorium aims to create a virtual library that allows access to the old book, manuscripts, rare or bibliophile books, and to create an electronic information, documentary and research context. The National Library of Romania contributed to the Manuscriptorium / ENRICH project with old Romanian books dating back to the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. These materials have a special historical and artistic value. Most of these heritage works are religious works, but they are also books of law or history.

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*The REDISCOVER project* expresses a partnership between four national libraries (national libraries in the Czech Republic, Romania, Latvia, Poland) for capitalizing and promoting documents from the medieval and Renaissance period.

*The European Library – TEL* project initiated with European funds that aims to provide free access to information and documentation resources in 48 national libraries in Europe in 20 languages.

*The European Digital Library – EDL* is an extension of The European Library and aims to provide access to electronic collections of libraries through a single access point. Since the beginning of 2008, the European Digital Library – EDL has entered a new stage in its evolution. It became EUROPEANA. EUROPEANA, as an organizational and administrative structure, aims to involve all European countries in the development of digital content and to extend the library initiative to museums, archives and any other structures that have a role in preserving and capitalizing on cultural heritage European.

## **Conclusions**

The mission of the library over time has been indissolubly linked to documentary heritage, all activities of establishing, processing, preserving, capitalizing on heritage, ensuring its integrity and access for future generations. Even though the last decades focus more on the user and the diversification of information services, the patrimonial function, mainly reflected by the preoccupations for the preservation of rare, bibliophile documents of historical, cultural, scientific value, remains a constant concern of libraries.

There are two directions of activity regarding the creation and preservation of documentary heritage in libraries. A first direction is the documents from the special collections that are predominant, rare and historical documents. For this type of documents, collections are made by retrospective purchase (mainly from antique shops or from private individuals) or by donations; are processed according to special norms and standards, often require additional conservation and restoration activities and have a special regime of communication and use. Another direction is the creation of contemporary heritage and is based on the current editorial production and the established library management norms.

Digital documents diversify the issue of preserving and capitalizing on documentary heritage. There are two large categories of digital documents: digital documents resulting from the digital conversion of printed documents (i.e. documents that have an equivalent in the traditional format) and digitally-born documents, thus unparalleled in the printed format. Managing digital documents requires specific rules and rules.

In order to fulfil the patrimonial mission of libraries, it is necessary, first of all, that the tutelage authorities understand and support the mission of libraries. Secondly, legislative and administrative legislative and unitary laws and regulations should be put in place to help libraries in their specific activities. Libraries, museums, archives also need to cooperate to support their patrimonial mission.

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