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**Archives, Libraries, Museums: Possibilities of Co-operation in the
Global Information Infrastructure
Series of Seminars Held from 1997-2004**

Summary

Series of seminars entitled *Archives, Libraries, Museums: Possibilities of Co-operation within the Global Information Infrastructure* have been organized for eight years now by the Croatian Archival Society, Croatian Library Association, Croatian Association of Museums and Department of Information Sciences of the Faculty of Philosophy, Zagreb. Co-organizers are the Croatian State Archives, National and University Library, Museum Documentation Centre and CARNet - Croatian Academy and Research Network.
The aim of the seminars is to research the theoretical framework of the possible co-operation of the three sectors, get acquainted with the contemporary information and communication infrastructure, standards and guidelines as a basis for information organizing and a foundation for co-operation, and, on the basis of concrete examples examine possible applications of such considerations.
Overview of the topics of the seminars and analysis of results will be presented.

Introduction

Eight years ago introduction to the presentation on co-operation among archives, libraries and museums started like this:

"… there [is] a need for libraries to open up toward related institutions so that the user [can] get as complete, precise and competent answer as possible to his/her question through a singular, coherent approach to various information sources. The information technology which is available today makes the realization of this idea possible."

And continued like this:

"It is no longer sufficient for libraries to seek out paths for solving their most acute problems on their own: how to transform their functions and secure the

quality of their services in a situation of a sudden technological boom into overall globalization."[1]

One also started by citing Professor Tomislav Šola's complaint he had written already in 1990:

"Most professions and their related disciplines take pleasure in the comfort of decontextualised dilemmas and refute the need for a temporary consensus, co-operation and collective thinking."[2]

Today, eight years later and working together under the umbrella title of *archives, libraries and museums: possibilities of co-operation in the global information infrastructure* it seems that such an introduction is no longer necessary. However, as there is always a need to pause and do the summing up, this is a good occasion for evaluation, and also for future planning.

The title set up for the first seminar that was to be organized in 1997 pointed to the main focus of our interest: to find out the possibilities for a "temporary consensus, co-operation and collective thinking". What we needed were the representatives from all three sectors, and, as the forth leg in our stool, ICT and internet specialists. We also needed the framework within which to work, and concrete topics from which to start.

The theoretical framework was found within two presuppositions:
    (1) recognition of the widely accepted opinion that the convergence among "memory institutions" and their related disciplines has been provoked by the consequence of the emergence and the use of networking information technologies and a demand for end-user access to their stored cultural heritage, and
    (2) that the disciplines inside the field of information sciences, e.g. Library and Information Science, Archive Studies, Museum Studies and Information Science, have been more or less connected by some fundamental principles.[3]

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[1] Arhivi, knjižnice, muzeji : mogućnosti suradnje u okruženju globalne informacijske infrastrukture : zbornik radova / uredile Mirna Willer i Tinka Katić. Zagreb : Hrvatsko knjižničarsko društvo, 1998. P. XIV.

[2] Šola , Tomislav. Muzeološki prilog teorijskim osnovama informacijskih znanosti . // Informacijske znanosti i znanje / eds. Slavko Tkalac, Miroslav Tuđman. Zagreb : Zavod za informacijske studije, 1990. P. 35.

[3] Aparac, Tatjana; Willer, Mirna. Some Fundamental principles of the knowledge and information organisation for the purpose of improving the citizen's access to the digitized heritage. // Convergence in the Digital Age: Challenges for Libraries, Museums and Archives: proceedings of a Conference held in Amsterdam on 13-14 August 1998 / organized by TNO and supported by the European Commission under the Telematics for Libraries Programme. Luxembourg: European Commission, Directorate-General Information Society, 1999. P 35. Also available at: http://www.cordis.lu/libraries/en/ifla/session2.html.

The concrete topics were found in the recognition that only standards and highly standardized procedures could secure the efficient and authoritative organization of information about the objects collected in our respective institutions, the storage of objects themselves (particularly e-objects), and the end-user's approach to that information and object. The communication chain from the author to our institutions and to the user has become ever more complex due to the "constitution" of the object itself, the communication channel through which it presents itself, and the ever growing users' needs, requirements and habits gained from using internet technologies. The latter is also connected with the change of the concept of perception and experience of the object our institutions deal with, its complex relation to other objects and to the environment of its life-circle.

The most important aspect in visualizing and organizing the first and subsequent seminars was, however, the audience. The main purpose of the organizers was to bring together experts in the above mentioned fields, to motivate the participants to exchange their ideas, knowledge and experience, and generate new ideas to further co-operation and realize concrete projects. Students in the field of information science have all the time been the unavoidable part of the audience.

Seminars are organized by the national library, archival and museum associations that take turn each year as main organizers. Department of Information Science of the Faculty of Philosophy in Zagreb, Museum Documentation Centre, National and University Library and Croatian State Archives are the co-organizers. Croatian Academy and Research Network – CARNet supported several first seminars with information infrastructure, and also with their expertise in the field if ICT. Seminars are organized in the form of keynote presentations, workshops, panel discussions and poster presentations to open the possibilities to potential speakers or presenters to finding the most suitable form for their active involvement. Seminars are organized in Istria at the end of November, last for three days, with the forth day devoted to cultural tourism. Proceedings of the seminars are regularly published. For more information about the seminars visit the ALM website at: http://public.carnet.hr/akm/.

Overview of the Topics of the Seminars
At the theoretical level the seminars have been covering the following topics: the phenomena of cultural heritage and the definition of a material unit; basic concepts, development and problems of information science; museology and science in the virtual environment; archival theory and technology; ethics of librarianship. The necessity to reconsider our institution's functions and our own placement and/or role in such institutions was emphasized by questions: The mission of the museum, or What do we need museums for? (T. Šola). The topics dealt with were also those of education in respective fields; free access to information; private or public access to museum material and museum documentation; the public and confidential in librarianship; digital heritage in national programmes, etc.

The issues of information technology covered wide topics of general introduction of cutting-edge internet technologies to descriptions of particular applications and projects. For example, digitization of geographic maps and photographs; digital archive of visual material from the field of arts and architecture (*Bildindex*) and of manuscripts (*Manuscripta Mediaevalia*); digital sources for the blind and visually handicapped; electronic archives as such, and authorization/authentication issues; models for long-term preservation of digital objects i.e. collections (OAIS Reference Model), and the need of a unified approach of ALM institutions to finding the appropriate solution; quality evaluation criteria in the design and content of digital collections and services; web space in general, and the use of metadata in Croatian web space; web-art.

Standards and standardization, yet, have been placed in the focus of the seminars. How to meet users' demands to get information on searched topic in the way it most suits his/her particular purpose, i.e. how to model information to enable such an access and how to present it in the environment most suitable to a particular user profile? How to enable user to obtain the document regardless of the type of material and information carrier, and regardless of the type of institution it is stored in?

The convergence of the three pus one (information and communication technology) professions from the service point of view has very much been seen in the analysis of authority control over name access points, extended to diverse classification systems and schemes, and subject heading systems. International work on these convergences has been followed closely. Attention has been also paid to descriptive cataloguing and the level at which autochthonous characteristics of the material and the processes of creation of their presentation through metadata in library catalogues, finding aids, museum registers become visible. Standards, guidelines of studies like the following were presented: CIDOC's International guidelines for museum object information and Dublin Core were viewed from the aspect of their problems and perspectives; FRBR and FRANAR models were analysed respectively and in interaction, guidelines for electronic inventory-taking and cataloguing of museum object with the aim to the creation of standardized vocabulary; monument inventories, etc. In this respect metadata formats and schemes were analysed, i.e. MARC formats, SGML "dialects" like Text Encoding Initiative (TEI.DTD) and Encoded Archival Description (EAD.DTD), Computer Interchange of Museum Information (CIMI), Dublin Core, as well as their carriers, i.e. ISO 2709, XML, RDF. Protocols for search and retrieval of open systems were presented, i.e. Z39.50 and its applications, Open URL concept, and OAI harvesting methods.

It is important to mention that the
"complexity of metadata formats is parallel to the complexity of the data they carry and their function. MARC formats are designed to convey all the minute details of bibliographic information, and (often) are not appropriate for the

creation of finding aids or museum registers. The Dublin Core, on the contrary, is the product of a wide community of users of internet space and has narrowed down the number of resource description elements to 15, thus providing means for carrying information from the most varied digital objects and their varied functions. Material specificity is lost, but information transparency is gained. Realistically, it is at this level that we can find space for cross-domain co-operation, that is, at the level of transmission of the first, elementary, most general information."[4]

In order to enable communication among the participants of the seminar themselves, we recognized the need to deal with terminological issues. *Glossary of Terms for Archivistics, Librarianship and Museology* was published in the proceedings of the first seminar, to be followed by glossaries on technical processing terminology (cataloguing, inventory-taking, creation of finding aids), internet terminology and information access.

From the forth seminar onward new themes were opened and they became extremely attractive to our audience. These were cultural tourism (2000); restoration and conservation documentation, and information system for registration of works of art in the process of restoration (2002); and collection level description as a new concept for describing *information landscape* (2002).

Evaluation of the seminars
The series of seminars, although organized by national associations and supported by national institutions in the ALM sector, can be characterized as non-institutional. Namely, although the idea of the seminar was to promote use of standards, guidelines etc., concepts of new services, co-operative projects etc., no concrete projects or services were realized. That was at one point a serious objection to the organizers from some of participants.

The obvious disproportion in professional and organizational input and concrete results shows that we should not take certain things for granted. We can find the reasons for the success of the seminars (each year there are about 100 to 120 participants with international participation) in the choice of topics, their actuality both on international and national levels, quality of their presentation, but also obvious lack of such content in our sectors. Still another reason can be found in the fact that the choice of topics and form of their presentation very much depends on enthusiastic individuals who find in seminar programmes the space for the research into topics they would not be able to do within their respective institutions. Thus, the question of the mission of heritage institutions (our mission as professionals included), or What do we need heritage institutions for? is still the actual one.

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[4] Ibid.

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