WRITTEN CULTURAL HERITAGE IN THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF ROMANIA

Elena Tirziman
University of Bucharest
General Director, The National Library of Romania
elena.tirziman@bibnat.ro

Abstract

The National Library of Romania (NLR) ensures the creation, processing, preservation, management and exposing of the national documentary patrimony. With its highly valuable collection, the NLR is part of the European cultural heritage, a real cultural wealth for future generations, and therefore it will endorse the role of coordinator of the digitization process for the entire national system of libraries.

The National Library of Romania is involved in international projects aiming at the creation of relevant digital content for the European Culture: ***The European Library – TEL*** *and* ***ENRICH*** *-* ***E****uropean* ***N****etworking* ***R****esources and* ***I****nformation concerning* ***C****ultural* ***H****eritage, a project coordinated by the National Library of the Czech Republic. The National Library of Romania has contributed to the projects Manuscriptorium / ENRICH by old Romanian books from the 16th-17th centuries.*

Key Words: *The National Library of Romania; Digital Library, Projects; TEL, Manuscriptorium, ENRICH*

In the context of globalized information, the mission of the National Library of Romania should be defined in a unitary way with that of other national libraries, as formulated by consensus within the specialized section "National Libraries" of the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) (1). The role of national libraries in the society is to capitalise and preserve the national intellectual heritage by organizing, processing, providing access and making available the national documentary patrimony for all media. The promoted

BDD-A20448 © 2010 Valahia University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.58 (2026-11-16 17:12:15 UTC)

principles are: the principle of freedom of information and of universal access to information; preservation of the national intellectual heritage; respect of intellectual property; sharing of information and documentation resources; promoting the role of libraries and librarians in society; promoting specific legislation; promoting professional cooperation at national and international levels etc.

In accordance with Law no 334 of May 31, 2002 republished in 2005 (2) on libraries, the National Library of Romania has a number of ***specific functions*** within the National System of Libraries, as well as functions common to all other libraries of the system. As concerns the specific competences, we should mention the characteristic competences of national libraries which are pursued in a non-competitive environment. The competences on Legal Depository, the National Bibliography, the National Centre of Exchange, the National Centre of Pathology and Restoration of documents, the management of the National Reserve of Publications, methodological responsibilities – all the above grant a special role and place within the National Libraries System.

At international level, the National Library of Romania is part of the specialized section „National Libraries" of the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA), on the Board of Directors of the National Libraries (CENL), and defines its institutional policy by correlating the national objectives with the goals defined by IFLA for that section and participates in the specific projects and programmes, including the project for the creation of the European Library (a project that started in August 2004).

Concerning the ***users***, the first beneficiary is the Romanian society in its whole, therefore we can identify an extremely heterogeneous category of them, individuals with various interests, occupations and information needs. We have users with the same information profile as the users of public libraries; users interested in documents that ca be found only in the special collections of the

BDD-A20448 © 2010 Valahia University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.58 (2026-11-16 17:12:15 UTC)

National Library; users interested in documents that cannot be found in the country and who directly or through other libraries benefit of the international exchange services or of the international inter-library lending services etc.

Another category of users, a very specific one, is the National System of Libraries (they may be considered specialized domestic users, as well as partners of the national Library). As concerns judicial entities as users, one should mention publishing houses for the services of granting them ISBN and ISSN and CIP; the Romanian cultural institutions in other countries that are supported by the National Library in completing their collections; research institutions that may benefit on request of support for the preparation of bibliographical works and of documentary sources from own funds or by domestic or international borrowing; meanwhile, media entities, economic entities, foundations, various organisations that may request specific information and documentation products and services from the National Library.

The National Library of Romania possesses two funds of patrimony collections located in Bucharest and Alba Iulia (the Batthyaneum branch).

The special collections of the National Library of Romania (3)

The core of ***special collections in Bucharest*** contains a number of funds that have been previously constituted, such as: the collections of the Cultural Foundation Ion I.C. Bratianu, the collection of documents of the Al. Saint-Georges Museum, the collection of documents of the M. Kogalniceanu Foundation, the Scarlat Rosetti funds, the Exarcu and Adamescu funds that have belonged to the Library of the Romanian Atheneum.

The service is structured according to the specific content of each collection in seven individual compartments:

The **Cabinet of Bibliophily**: about 53,000 bibliographical units – old books printed between 1508 and 1830 on the entire Romanian national and

BDD-A20448 © 2010 Valahia University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.58 (2026-11-16 17:12:15 UTC)

political territory and in printing centres abroad, such as Roma, Lvov, Alep, Sankt Petersburg, etc.

The collection of modern bibliophile book contains rare and valuable issues, therefore we should like to mention the first issue of poetry signed by Eminescu and printed in year 1883, and the princeps issues and final issues of classics of the Romanian literature such as the representatives of the Transilvanian School, Timotei Cipariu, Ion Eliade Radulescu, Vasile Alecsandri, etc.

The **Cabinet of Manuscripts**: - Latin, Arab, Persian, Slave, Greek manuscripts; - ca. 30,000 bibliographical units correspondence and journal pages (Titu Maiorescu, Martha Bibescu, George Enescu, Simona Lahovari, Mircea Eliade, Emil Cioran, Vasile Voiculescu, Mihail Sebastian etc.); literary manuscripts (L. Blaga, Camil Petrescu, M. Sadoveanu, T. Arghezi, etc.).

The **Historical Archive**: the "M. Kogălniceanu" resources (1,162 files), "I.C. Brătianu" (724 files), "Al. Saint-Georges" (5,804 files).

Old Romanian periodicals (from the beginning of the 19th century up to 1948): calendars, almanacs, year books, annals, newspapers, organs of the political parties, cultural, literary, juridical, economic magazines, etc.

The print cabinet contains Romanian graphics starting with the pioneers of the genre: Carol Pop de Szatmary and Theodor Aman, to the works of Nicolae Grigorescu, Sava Hentia, Theodor Pallady, Iosif Iser, Francisc Sirato, Jean Al. Steriadi, Nicolae Tonitza.

The foreign collection of graphics includes mainly works of the French, Italian, Dutch, English and German schools.

The **Cabinet of Photography**: ca. 113,000 bibliographical units – original photos and illustrated post cards.

The **Cabinet of Cartography**: ca. 3,661 bibliographic units – historical maps, linguistic maps, ethnographic maps, demographic maps, military maps, tourist maps, topographical surveys, plans of cities and estates; ca. 1,000

BDD-A20448 © 2010 Valahia University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.58 (2026-11-16 17:12:15 UTC)

geographical, geological, climatic, meteorological, hydrographical atlases, books of maps of the soil and the environment.

The **Audio-Visual Cabinet** comprises gramophone plates, records, CDs, DVDs, scores, monographies, etc.

The **Batthyaneum Branch of Alba Iulia (4)**

The library was created on July 31st, 1798, as the initiative and on the costs of the Roman-Catholic bishop of Transilvania Batthyany Ignac (1741-1798), within the framework of the cultural foundation initially named *Institutum Batthyaniani Albae Carolinae / The institute of Batthyany from Alba Iulia /.* The institute included initially, beside the library, an astronomic observatory, historical and natural sciences collections, binding and printing units aimed at serving them.

The personal collection of Batthyany Ignac was the nucleus of the Institute's library and remained till now the golden fund of the library. The library is functioning for two hundred years in the building of the former Trinitarian church of Alba Iulia. The total number of publications of the library (the old books and the contemporary funds together) is of 70,958 bibliographic units, of which 24,000 bibliographic units are old books.

The most important collection is the **collection of manuscripts**. It contains 1,775 bibliographic units illustrating the European and Transilvanian cultures of the 19-20th centuries, in Latin, German, Hungarian, Italian, Spanish, French, Hebrew, Armenian, Arabic and Turkish.

The international fame of the library is also due to the existence at Alba Iulia of the oldest Western Medieval illuminated codex in Romania. It is *the Codex Aureus* or *Das Lorscher Evangeliar. I Theil / The Gospel of Lorsch. Part I. /*, as the manuscript is known in the Western specialized literature.

The collection of incunabula preserves 571 bibliographic units, most of which were in the initial fund of the library. The oldest incunabulum is the *Opera*

BDD-A20448 © 2010 Valahia University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.58 (2026-11-16 17:12:15 UTC)

of Lucius Madarensis, printed in Rome by the pioneers of Italian printing Konrad Sweynheym and Arnold Pannartz, on 28th February 1469.

The old book collection printed between 1500-1800 at various European printing houses has a total of 24,000 bibliographic units, of which 7,950 are from the 16th and 17th centuries.

The library has also preserved other **collections of archive and museum values**. The **archive documents fund** is mainly constituted of the archive of the Roman-Catholic Capital of Alba Iulia and of the Cluj-Mănăştur Convent (about 17,163 documents), in addition to which we find the handwritten correspondence of Roman-Catholic bishops of Transilvania (43,081 documents). The **museum collections** contain: coins, seals, medals, decorations, decorative medallions, minerals, etc.

The valorisation of the highly valuable patrimony of the library takes various forms, from signals in catalogues and data bases, to the printing of specialized works, to organizing thematic cultural events, documentary support for other institutions for printed or audio-video cultural materials etc. and involvement in national and international projects on the preservation and valorisation of the national cultural heritage. We would mention below only the projects in which the library is being involved.

The National Library of Romania is involved in some very interesting and large **international projects**, especially in projects that create relevant digital content to the enhancement of European cultural memory.

- "**Manuscriptorium**"(5), financed and coordinated by the National Library of the Czech Republic, aiming to build a virtual research environment for the sphere of historical resources. The main contributors to the project are libraries, museums, archives and other cultural institutions, depositories of cultural patrimony of this type. Currently, Manuscriptorium is the largest digital library of manuscripts and old books in Europe providing over 1 million pages of digitized

BDD-A20448 © 2010 Valahia University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.58 (2026-11-16 17:12:15 UTC)

manuscripts, old books, maps or other historical documents. The catalogue has over 180,000 bibliographic entries of which 3,082 are fully digitized volumes.

A superior phase of Manuscriptorium is the project **ENRICH - E**uropean **N**etworking **R**esources and **I**nformation concerning **C**ultural **H**eritage (6), coordinated by the National Library of the Czech Republic, which aims to provide easy access to old documentary heritage from various European cultural institutions. The main objective of the project is to represent and provide online access to over 5 million pages from the direct partners and hundreds of thousand from the associated partners.

The National Library of Romania has made a contribution to the Manuscriptorium/ ENRICH projects in the form of old Romanian books dating from the 16th and 17th centuries. These are items of outstanding cultural, historical and artistic value. Most of these treasures are religious works, but amongst them there are also law and history books.

- **The European Library – TEL** (7), a project initiated with European funds having as objective to provide free access to information and documentation resources existing in 47 national libraries in Europe in 20 languages. The digital resources may be full text or bibliographical (bibliographical registration of non-electronic documents). Why the National Libraries? The National Library of a country is the one assuming the role of capitalizing, organizing, processing, preserving and valorising the national cultural patrimony by its specific mission (legal depository, national bibliographic control, national centre for conservation and preservation, methodological centre).

The 47 European national Libraries participating in "The European Library - TEL" are members of the CENL- **Conference of European National Librarians** (8).

New projects that would further develop TEL benefited of co-funding:

BDD-A20448 © 2010 Valahia University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.58 (2026-11-16 17:12:15 UTC)

The **TEL- ME- MOR** (2005-2007) supported 10 national libraries in Europe from the new Member States to become full-members of TEL.

TEL+ (2007-2008) is financed by the European Commission and has two main objectives: to digitize 20 million pages of content in several languages and to support Romania and Bulgaria to become full-members of the **European Library**

The National Library of Romania is member of TEL+ since October 2007.

- European Digital Library – EDL(9) (2006- 2008) is financed by the European Commission within the framework of the eContent+ Program. EDL is an extension of the European Library, founded by CENL and its goal is to provide access to the electronic collections of libraries through a single access point. The TEL and EDL projects will mutually support each other and will develop the multilingual aspects of interfaces, due to the involvement of CENL in i2010 Digital Libraries. The European Library – TEL is crucial for the organizational foundation of the European Digital Library. EDL is supportive of the collaboration between the European Library and other non-library cultural initiatives with a view to protecting and valorising the national and European cultural patrimony.

As of year 2008, the **European Digital Library – EDL** entered a new stage of its evolution. It became **EUROPEANA** (10) and aims to become involved in the development of digital content in all member countries of CENL. The European Commission wishes that the initiative developed at library level be extended to museums, archives and to any other structures having a role in the conservation and valorisation of the European cultural patrimony. For this purpose two recommendations were issued: *Council Conclusions on Digitisation and Online Accessibility of Cultural Material, and Digital Preservation (2006/C 297/01)*; *Commission recommendation on the digitisation and online accessibility of cultural material and digital preservation (2006/585/EC).*

At national level, the Ministry of Culture and Cults initiated a Public Policy for the implementation of the Digital Library of Romania in compliance with the two

BDD-A20448 © 2010 Valahia University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.58 (2026-11-16 17:12:15 UTC)

recommendations of the European Commission. The National Library of Romania is involved in the definition and substantiation of this public policy. The underlying principle is that the Digital Library of Romania is a unitary structure representing the national cultural patrimony in digital format, observing the accessibility to digital resources from a single access point and at the same time following a thematic and institutional organization. Accordingly, the following thematic benchmarks were defined:

- Written documentary patrimony (libraries)
- Mobile patrimony (museums, collections)
- Audio-visual patrimony (audio-visual archives)
- Immobile patrimony (monuments, archaeology)
- Archive patrimony

For the "libraries" module the National Library of Romania prepared a feasibility study (11) for the entire system of public libraries of Romania, in order to identify the minimum conditions for promoting and implementing such a public policy in the domain of libraries. The study was based on a questionnaire distributed to county libraries (that assume also a methodological mission in their area), to the Library of the Romanian Academy, the Central University Library of Bucharest (later the questionnaire was also sent to other university libraries in order to extend the results of the research).

The consultation process focused on:

- Identification of problems and solutions for digitization of cultural resources on each thematic pillar (documentary written heritage, movable heritage, audio-visual heritage, unmovable heritage, archives heritage);

- Identification of optimal solutions for digitization on each specific thematic pillar and proposals for stages of implementation;

- Identification of specific cultural material already digitized;

BDD-A20448 © 2010 Valahia University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.58 (2026-11-16 17:12:15 UTC)

- Identification of social and economic impact digitization will have on each thematic pillar;

- Identification of a representative corpus of cultural material to be digitized (criteria, stages, concrete examples)

The public policy proposal became effective starting with January 2008 and represents the basis of a **multi annual programme for 7 years regarding the process of the digitisation of cultural resources** and the creation of the Digital Library of Romania(12).

Conclusions

With his valuable collections, NLR is part of the European cultural heritage for the next generations, thus will take the leading role in the development towards a digitization of the Romanian library environment, as a challenge to put forward a variety of competitive services.

The current activity, the projects and programmes carried out at the level of the institution are interrelated and sub-ordinated to the objective to fulfil the specific mission of the National Library of Romania: to capitalize and preserve the national intellectual heritage by organizing, processing, valorising and making available and preserving the national documentary patrimony within all media.

Bibliographic references

1. International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA), National Libraries Section. http://www.ifla.org/VII/s1/index.htm.
2. *Legea bibliotecilor (nr.334 din 31/05/2002),* Republicată in Monitorul Oficial, Partea I nr. 132 din 11/02/2005.
3. NEMEŞ, Doina. Colecţii speciale- prezentare. În: *Informare şi Documentare: lucrări ale sesiunilor profesionale:2007*. Bucureşti: Editura Bibliotecii Naţionale a României, 2007, pp. 105-108; ŢILICĂ, Dana Silvia. Colecţia de carte bibliofilă românească: rarităţi. În: *Informare şi Documentare: lucrări ale*

BDD-A20448 © 2010 Valahia University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.58 (2026-11-16 17:12:15 UTC)

sesiunilor profesionale: 2007. Bucureşti: Editura Bibliotecii Naţionale a României, 2007, pp. 109-115.
4. Dârja, Ileana. Biblioteca Batthyaneum- Alba Iulia. În: *Informare şi Documentare: lucrări ale sesiunilor profesionale:2007*. Bucureşti: Editura Bibliotecii Naţionale a României, 2007, pp. 138-141.
5. Manuscriptorium. http://www.manuscriptorium.com/Site/ENG/about_the_project.asp.
6. ENRICH - European Networking Resources and Information concerning Cultural Heritage. http://enrich.manuscriptorium.com/.
7. The European Library – TEL. http://search.theeuropeanlibrary.org/portal/en/index.html
8. Conference of European National Librarians. http://www.cenl.org/
9. European Digital Library Project – EDL http://www.edlproject.eu/
10. EUROPEANA connecting cultural heritage. http://www.europeana.eu/
11. *Studiu de fezabilitate privind digitizarea, prezervarea digitală şi accesibilitatea on-line a resurselor bibliotecilor*. [document inedit] Studiu realizat de Biblioteca Naţională a României. - Bucureşti, 2007.
12. Ministerul Culturii şi Cultelor. Propuneri de politici publice (2007): Digitizarea resurselor culturale naţionale. http://www.cultura.ro/Files/GenericFiles/PPP-Digitizare.pdf.

BDD-A20448 © 2010 Valahia University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.58 (2026-11-16 17:12:15 UTC)