Creative Use of the Collection of Historical Documents of the Romanian Academy Library

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In the foreword to their *Introduction aux Etudes Historiques* (published in Paris in 1899), Ch. -V. Langlois and Ch. Seignobos assert that *"History is written with the help of documents. They are the traces left by the thoughts and actions of our forerunners. [...] The lack of documents is the reason why the history of long periods in the past of mankind will forever remain unknown"*[1].

Generations of Romanian historians and researchers have been concerned with gathering, ordering and promoting the value and use of historical documents. According to Nicolae Iorga, the most prominent among them, Nicolae Bălcescu and Mihail Kogălniceanu, were two modern, ground-breaking historians[2].

Founded in 1866, the Romanian Academy assumed the responsibility of promoting the value and use of the country's document collections, because, as D. A. Sturdza asserted on 24 August 1878: *one of our most ardent wishes is to see assembled in one place the whole historical treasure of Romania – only in this way the heritage left by our ancestors will be protected from the storms of times*[3]. Many other Romanian historians, such as Eudoxiu Hurmuzachi, B. P. Hasdeu, Ioan Bogdan, Stefan Nicolaescu, P. P. Panaitescu, etc., worked for the publication of these documents.

Document collections began to be assembled in the 19th century. The most important collection, *Documenta Romaniae Historica*, started in the middle of the last century and was published by the *Nicolae Iorga* Institute of History of the Romanian Academy in Bucharest, in association with the *A. D. Xenopol* Institute of History in Iași and with the *George Baritiu* Institute of History in Cluj.

All researchers can benefit from the study of the documents in the Romanian Academy

Constantin Brâncoveanu, Prince of Wallachia (1688-1714)

Charter by which Constantin Brâncoveanu, Prince of Wallachia, confers to Şerban, vel logofete, the ownership of the Runcul village, Dâmbovița district. 1705 (7214), January 4, Bucharest. Romanian in the original; parchment, stamped seal mobile. R. A. L., Doc. Ist. 20/MDCLXV

Regular users - who are not traditionally seen as creators - can now design, assemble, build, and disseminate new collections of information, starting from the collections available to their digital libraries.

Stephen the Great vv., Prince of Moldavia, reconfirms to John Negoescul the villages Beresti,
Drinjesti and Harvati. 1459 (6967), June 12, Iasi. Slavonic in the original; parchment,
6 pendent seals. R. A. L., Seal 216

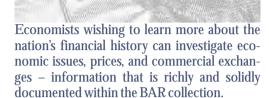Stephen the Great,
Prince,of Moldavia
(1457-1504)

Library (BAR) collection. They are studied by historians with regard to the course of history, as well as with regard to the development of the state and its institutions, and to the evolution of society, human activities, and human interests. For those interested in the study of juridical history, these documents offer a frame of research on the development of the rights of individuals or of certain social groups, and the organization of the latter according to their activities and privileges.

Geographers can use these records to ascertain the administrative division of localities, and the various names assigned to the same places during time. Indexes of localities (the names of localities in Moldova and Wallachia have been preserved as they were found in documents of various historical periods) invaluable in the study of a nation's history and geography.

Economists wishing to learn more about the nation's financial history can investigate economic issues, prices, and commercial exchanges – information that is richly and solidly documented within the BAR collection.

Researchers interested in the study of foreign policy will find ample material in the diplomatic documents issued by the Princely Chancelleries.

Linguists can use the BAR collection to study the evolution of language and writing methods. For example, the documents issued by the Chancelleries of Wallachia and Moldavia or by local monasteries originally were written in the literary Middle Bulgarian and Serbian Slavonic; later, documents were also written in Greek and in Slavonic, which served the same role in this region that Latin played in Central and Western Europe. In the 16th century, Romanian became predominant. Until the beginning of the 19th century, Romanian written with Cyrillic characters prevailed in documents.

Slavs arrived in the Danube countries in the 6th-7th centuries AD together with the Bulgarians, migrating people of Turkish origin assimilated by the Slavs after the founding of the Bulgarian state in the 7th and 8th centuries. The oldest Slavic elements that entered the Romanian language had the characteristics of the North-East Bulgarian language.

The cultural language in the three Romanian provinces was the Slavonic and the alphabet used in writing was the Cyrillic. Most experts believe that the penetration of an alphabet into the Romanian language occurred with the adoption of the Slavic liturgy: the two phenomena are inseparable; the church service is celebrated assuming the existence of religious

Michael the Brave, Prince of Wallachia (1593-1601), Transylvania (1599-1600, 1601) and Moldavia (1600)

Charter by which Michael the Brave, Prince of Wallachia vv., confers to the Vierasi Monastery the ownership of the Urâþi village in Dolj district, with its entire land and all the Romanians living there; 1595 (7103) July 24, Bucharest, Slavonic in the original, BAR Doc.Ist. CDL/13

Dimitrie Cantemir, Prince of Moldavia (1693,1710-1711), Romanian scholar, member of the Academy of Sciences in Berlin since 1714.

Charter by which Dimitrie Cantemir, Prince of Moldavia, reconfirms the exemption of the priests in all the churches in Iaşi from paying any taxes; 1710 (7219) December 18, Iaⁿi. Romanian in the original, BAR Doc.Ist. CXLI/28

texts in Slavonic. There is no consensus regarding the date when Romanians adopted the Cyrillic alphabet for the Slavonic ecclesiastical writing texts. The date is most likely the tenth century. In the fifteenth century, the cultural Slavonic knew its peak period.

The Greek language was less used in the chancellery documents of the 16th and 17th centuries.

In the sixteenth century the first acts of chancellery written in Romanian with Cyrillic alphabet were issued. Three basic operating styles were developed: fictional, legal-administrative and scientific. The legal-administrative style was considered the official style.

In the era of great transformations produced by the action of the so-called intellectuals grouped around the Scoala Ardeleană[4], in the late sixteenth century, writing with Latin characters came to be used.

The change to Romanian written with Latin characters, which became permanent in 1860, marked a turning point in the modernization of Romanian society.

Art historians can peruse the documents for the wonderful miniatures and floral motifs represented therein. Heraldists can examine the seals. The seals of princes, boyars, churches and, later on, those of districts, boroughs and guilds form an object of scientific and artistic study.

These documents are also important sources for genealogists, who can use this collection to trace the history of a country, as well as that of individual families. We are referring here not only to the lists of princes, which couldn't have

been compiled accurately without documents, but also to the genealogies of some noble families, the lands they owned, and especially the state functions they performed. Biographies of prominent historical characters were written exclusively on the basis of documents, which completed the votive portraits painted on the walls of monasteries and churches.

The votive painting is a sensitive barometer of an epoch completing the letter of the documents and the commentary of the chronicles.

The study of the documents in the Romanian Academy Library is not limited to the history of present-day Romania, but extends to all South-Eastern Europe, as the Slavonic texts offer comparative material for the research of the feudal institutions in this part of the continent.

Be it parchment or paper, and regardless of the way it was processed, the material on which the documents have been written possesses the great quality of having preserved the original text very well. The material can be studied with regard to its processing, origin, paper filigrees,

etc. These documents are true x-rays of the time when they were written and constitute the indisputable primary sources of any researcher.

The presence of the BAR document collection in the AthenaPlus Project (an integral part of the Europeana plan of the Council of the European Union) is in accordance with the objective of assembling and preserving the cultural heritage of every European Union member state.

The digitization of a considerable part of the BAR document collection within the Athena Plus project makes it possible to provide the users with accurate, precise, and clear information in the shortest time possible. Attaching the picture of the document to the descriptive file further clarifies and explains the source material. Digital Library, a creation of the classical library, has much to offer to the modern community of users. Large collections of text, images, music, videos, and other types of information can be organized and accessed by them in different ways. Regular users – who are not traditionally seen as

Filipestii church - Matei Cantacuzino, aga, and his family, Valachia

Horezu Monastery - Constantin Brancoveanu Ruler of Valchia, and his family

creators – can now design, assemble, build, and disseminate new collections of information, starting from the collections available to their digital libraries.

In the Romanian Academy Library, various projects and events have been organized that have resulted in the digitization of Romanian heritage collections housed by the library.

The Byzantion project aims to create a thematic and virtual presentation based equally on erminia texts and on common features of the selected iconographic representations.

With the completion of the project, users benefit from a work instrument that enables them to highlight regional differences, the evolution along the centuries and the artistic innovation by comparing each image with the picture established by religious tradition. The portal created allows free public access for viewing and secure private access for authorized users to edit / update the portal content; it allows differentiation among authorized information items provided by scientific or common sources; it contains modules of information (cultural, addresses) and a virtual gateway for all contents related to the Byzantine context, which are on other public sites; it also helps to solve interoperability issues regarding the content of metadata / security / communication of the sources available to the project. The workshop organized on the theme "Heritage Collections in the Digital Era" offered very interesting and actual presentations on the current preservation and processing of digital and electronic media to promote heritage collections and more. At the workshop, virtual exhibitions and models of interaction between project partners were presented. In this framework, implementations of virtual exhibitions on mobile devices were presented, aiming at increasing visibility and improving access to national cultural heritage. The workshop reviewed the motivation to develop mobile applications for national cultural heritage by facilitating user access to rare collections such as historical documents, old and rare books, manuscripts, picture galleries, coins, available in the virtual environment on mobile devices like smartphones and tablets.

Probota Monastery - Petru Rares Ruler of Moldavia and his family

Voronet Monastery, Ètefan the Great Ruler of Moldavia and his family

An important example of the implementation of mobile applications in the cultural field is the project http://statuidedaci.ro presenting important statues of Dacians and different places around the world where they are present. The project is based on the work "Dacians in the Romanian sculpture. A Study of Ancient Iconography", for which the Romanian Academy awarded the prize Eudoxiu Hurmuzaki to the historian Leonard Velcescu, as G. Dumitrescu, head of the Department of manuscripts and rare books at the Romanian Academy Library, mentions[5]. Another manifestation of digitizing collections, following the recently completed European Project AthenaPlus, is to create an online catalogue of the collection of medieval documents with seals from all the Romanian territory. Users have direct access to the text and can freely download the image of the document. In this way, the users gain direct access to historical documents. Online access is possible through the catalogue of the Academy Library available at http://aleph500.biblacad.ro:8991/F. It is possible to search the catalogue by names of princes, communities, historical documents, and so forth.

Prints added a large background image of Romanian rulers or of political figures who can be found using the same search engine.

On the site of the BAR virtual library comprising manuscripts and rare books collections held by our library, we can access various collections: the collection of personalities who have changed the world includes the work of local and foreign personalities (www.biblacad.ro/UPCmeniu.html), Emil Cioran manuscript collection (www.biblacad.ro/manuscriseCioran.html), Mihai Eminescu's manuscripts, the Romanian national poet can be found at the address:

(www.biblacad.ro/Eminescu.html), and manuscripts and plans by Traian Vuia, who invented airplanes (www.biblacad.ro/Vuia.htm). These digitized collections are available for the interested public to study online or download and use later.

The Digital Library of Bucharest offers access to collections of books, manuscripts, periodicals which are part of Romanian history, to be protected online and offline in a format at: www.digibuc.ro/colectii.

On the BAR site, it is possible to access virtual exhibitions that include the latest exhibitions presented to the public: among them this dedicated to King Ferdinand I the Unifier, (www.biblacad.ro/expoFerdinand.html), and The Romanian Portrait in the 19th Century, (www.biblacad.ro/expoPortret.html), among other exceptional exhibitions.

These examples show the importance of heritage owners – in our case BAR – granting free access to manuscripts, rare books, the first Romanian periodicals, historical documents, and photographs, all through our digital library.

Accessing and processing information has not only a national importance, but is also useful to the entire European community. The current digital era aims at dissemination and transparency. Thus, participating in European projects allows the specific heritage of each member state to be recognized internationally. This recognition enhances individual national heritages, while also serving the best interests of Europe as a whole.

1. *L'histoire se fait avec des documents. Les documents sont les traces qu'on laissées les pensées et les actes des hommes d'autresfois.[...] Faute de documents, l'histoire d'immenses périodes du passé de l'humanité est a jamais inconnaissable.*

2. N. Iorga, *The Gathering and the Printing of the Sources, D. A. Sturdza to the reach the 70*, Bucharest, The Printing Press and Publishing House of the Graphic Arts Institute Carol Gobl, 1903, p. 11.

3. *The Annals of the Romanian Academy Society*, 1878, Vol. 11, p. 31-32.

4. The Transylvanian School was a cultural movement which was founded after part of the Romanian Orthodox Church in Habsburg-ruled Transylvania accepted the leadership of the Pope and became the Greek-Catholic Church (ca.1700). The links with Rome brought to the Romanian Transylvanians the ideas of the Age of Enlightenment. The Transylvanian School's major centres were in the cities of Blaj, Oradea, Lugoj and Beiuș. It created the current phonetic system of the Romanian alphabet based on the Latin alphabet, largely derived from the Italian and the French alphabets. This replaced the use of the medieval Romanian Cyrillic alphabet as well as the previously Latin alphabet based phonetics.

5. Cristian Ciurea, *Virtual exhibitions and interaction models between the actors involved*,
www.biblacad.ro/workshop/VolumWorkshopBAR_vf.pdf