

# The Romanian Libraries in the Electronic Age

Romania

Oana

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The importance of preserving and sharing heritage is a constant preoccupation of humanity. In 1974 René Maheu, the sixth general manager of UNESCO, said "Par la prise conscience d'un patrimoine culturel universel, l'humanité se reconnaît solidaire dans le temps et dans l'espace et proclame l'unité de son destin à travers les siècles et les nations".<sup>1</sup>

Over the centuries humanity has tried to find solutions for saving its discoveries from destruction due to many and varied causes. The dream of continuity is old as humanity. We live in a world full of contradictions and different customs and we have to coexist in this finite space, with rules that defend values recognized by all of us. Today everyone believes that the Internet is the solution for making us known to others and others known to us. Following this idea, in the Romanian libraries we have begun to develop a program for preserving the values of cultural heritage and transmitting them to future generations through the creation of a virtual library. The most important institutions in our country are participating in this initiative: The Romanian Academy Library, the Metropolitan Library of Bucharest, the Bucharest Central University Library, and the Institute for Cultural Memory. The partnership between The Romanian Academy Library (RAL) and the Metropolitan Library of Bucharest has produced the site named Dacoromanica; in this way RAL is joining the United Europe libraries, through its participation at Europeana, the Digital European Library

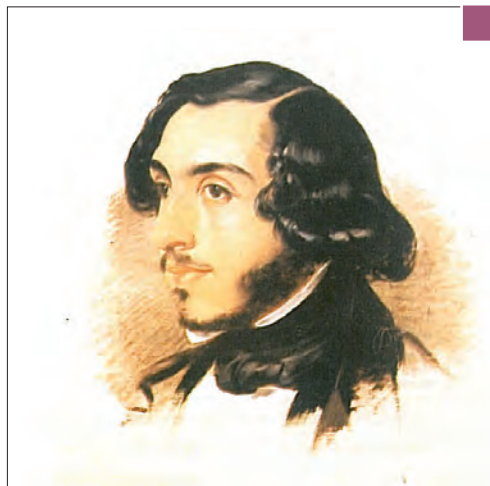
[www.europeana.eu/portal/](http://www.europeana.eu/portal/). In this program we can access online the entire fund of Romanian Old Books of the RAL.

[www.digitool.dc.bmms.ro:8881/R/](http://www.digitool.dc.bmms.ro:8881/R/)

With the valuable help of UPC, Romanian cable television operator, the RAL has started the program "Personalities that have changed the world" based upon materials available in Romanian Libraries. This virtual library can be accessed online on the site of Romanian Academy Library:

[www.biblacad.ro/UPCprezentare.html](http://www.biblacad.ro/UPCprezentare.html).

The works of 29 Romanian and foreign personalities, starting with the most famous work of Dante Alighieri – *La Divina Commedia*, translated into Romanian by the famous Romanian poet, translator, and journalist George Cosbuc (1866-1918) – are available online. The program was started two years ago by the Romanian Academy Library together with UPC, and the results are available for all to see. The 40 books and articles, including 360 drawings and watercolours by Nicolae Grigorescu (1838-1907), one of the founders of modern Romanian painting, and other foreigner painters can be accessed and downloaded in PDF format on the website of the Romanian Academy Library at [www.biblacad.ro/](http://www.biblacad.ro/) in the virtual library section.



Charles-Edouard  
Boutibonne, 1816-1896,  
*Portrait of Ion Ghica*  
1816-1927,  
diplomat, prime minister





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Henri  
Toulouse-Lautrec,  
1864-1882,  
*Le Missionnaire*,  
drawing



SHORT

ARTICLES

FROM

CLOSED

DOORS

TO OPEN

GATES

Baccio Bandinelli, 1493-1560,  
*The three stages of human*, drawing



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Uncommon  
Culture



Rembrandt, 1606-1669,  
*Jesus healing the sick*,  
aqua fortis



Theodor Aman, 1831-1891,  
Romanian painter, considered predecessor of Impressionism,  
*Folk dance*

Nicoale Grigorescu,  
1838-1907,  
one of the founders  
of modern Romanian painting,  
*Peasant with veil*



Detail of a document issued  
by Constantin Mavrocordat  
Hospodar of Wallache,  
1711-1796,  
28 November 1732



The Romanian National Library is publishing its magazine *The Revue of Book History* in digital format and has decided to make available a significant part of its collections by digitizing special funds such as manuscripts, historical archives and rare books. To ensure better preservation and to increase the visibility of heritage documents for both academic researchers and the general public, the Enrich project started in 2007. The European manuscripts portal is funded through the eContentPlus program, coordinated by the Czech National Library, whose objective is to ensure unlimited access to European cultural heritage specialized in manuscripts, rare books, incunabula, and other historical documents.

The portal is built on the Manuscriptorium platform, which has successfully integrated collections from over 46 representative institutions in Europe, mainly national libraries. The Romanian National Library became an associate partner in the project and contributes to the Enrich project with Romanian Old Books from the 16th and 17th Centuries with special cultural, historical and artistic value. Most of the documents are religious, but many are also in the fields of history and law. One of these is the precious work of Macarie, a Romanian bishop and chronicler from the end of the 15th Century: *The Slavonic Missal*, printed in 1508, the first book ever printed on Romanian territory. [www.bibnat.ro/index-ro.htm](http://www.bibnat.ro/index-ro.htm).







The Bishop Macarie,  
Title page of  
*The Slavonic Missal*,  
1508,  
Targoviste, Wallachia



The Bucharest Metropolitan Library provides free access to the classics of Romanian culture. The working environment is the most comprehensive Romanian virtual library yet made, including electronic books, notes, shareable books and annotations, virtual personal shelves, and shared virtual shelves. The papers can be easily found via a search engine and using the index of authors and literary genres. The number of titles is still low, but the most important names in the literature and history of Romania are represented, such as Dimitrie Cantemir (1673-1723), Prince of Moldavia, man of letters, philosopher, historian, composer, musicologist, and linguist; Miron Costin (1633-1691), Moldavian political figure and chronicler; Ion Costin (1887-1940), Moldovan politician; Constantin Cantacuzino (1655-1716), Wallachian High Steward, historian, and diplomat; Nicolae Filimon (1819-1865), Wallachian Romanian novelist and short-story writer.

[bmb.on/line.ro/scripts/master.htm](http://bmb.on/line.ro/scripts/master.htm)

The Bucharest Central University Library has provided online access to the first edition of the poems of Titu Maiorescu (1840-1917), a Romanian literary critic and politician who is highly sought by bibliophiles. Also presented on the site are works in the librarian field.

[www.bcub.ro](http://www.bcub.ro)

The site belonging to the Ministry of Culture, under the lead of the Institute for Cultural Memory, has digitized over 50 000 pages of documents belonging to the national cultural heritage of the Battyaneum Library from Alba Iulia.

[http://cimec.ro/Resurse/Biblioteca\\_digitala\\_en.htm](http://cimec.ro/Resurse/Biblioteca_digitala_en.htm)

Another site of the Institute for Cultural Memory provides very valuable services including sources for Romanian's cultural history, literary works, works of interpretation, bibliographical works, and iconography.

All documents are openly accessible if they are not subject to copyright or rights that have been negotiated with the legal heirs. For those documents covered by copyright and which are exclusively available on the site, only the metadata icon is displayed together with the first five pages of the document, starting on the title page.

Florin Gheorghe Filip, vice president and director of the Romanian Academy Library, said that the aim of the partnership is to create a synergy between objects of culture and new technologies in order to achieve a democratization of access to content. Through this project, users can access rare cultural objects. Virtual libraries will continue to increase gradually, as other works of science, music and visual art are digitized.

**1** René Maheu, *Revue Patrimoine culturel de l'Humanité UNESCO*, Bulletin d'Information, 1974 no 2, p.1, "By taking note of a universal heritage, humanity recognizes herself, her solidarity in time and space and proclaims the unity of destiny over centuries and nations."