

2nd Meeting of the UNIMARC Users Group
Florence, 14th March 2008
Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze

Introduction

Antonia Ida Fontana
Director, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze

First of all, I wish to welcome all our guests. It is a great honor to host the 2nd meeting of the UNIMARC users, and gather in Florence such a numerous group of distinguished colleagues, coming from countries involved in the *Permanent UNIMARC Committee* such as Italy, of course but also Croatia, France, Greece, Lithuania, Portugal, Russia, U.K and the U.S.A.

It is my pleasure to welcome also those participants to the workshop coming from Slovenia and Germany, but also the representatives of African countries gathered here today for the first time, that I welcome also wishing that this meeting could be the starting point for a long term cultural co-operation.

The National Library of Florence is very proud to be one of the first UNIMARC "users", the adoption of UNIMARC for the BNI (Italian National Bibliography) dating 1985, and to be part to its evolution.

It was in this room that the first international Workshop on UNIMARC took place in 1991. The Workshop entitled *UNIMARC/CCF* was jointly sponsored by the UNESCO General Information Programme and the IFLA UBCIM Programme. It was attended by format experts and users belonging to 24 different countries, thus reflecting the wide international interest in the subject, and the importance of communication formats. One of the major result of the above mentioned Workshop has been the establishment of the Permanent UNIMARC Committee.

At national level the main reasons to adopt UNIMARC in 1985 were the convenience of using an international standard format and its very detailed structure able to meet the needs of a national bibliography. Nowadays, in the Web 2.0 era, the UNIMARC format is still an important tool for us. The use of UNIMARC for the Italian National Bibliography persists and new uses of UNIMARC are currently in place. One of the most significant use of UNIMARC today is that adopted for the online catalog (OPAC): where we are expressing UNIMARC records in XML syntax taking into account the fact that XML is one of the most important components for a Web application based on open source software.

From 1975 to 1985, before introducing UNIMARC, MARC format (ANNAMARC) has been the national format, and the Italian National Bibliography was available in MARC format also. The choice of MARC was announced 40 years ago, in 1968, by Diego Maltese, who we have the honour to see here with us and that I salute both as the great Director of the National library of Florence and as one of the most innovative Italian experts in this field.

In 1968, thanks to Diego Maltese, this library held the international conference entitled "Razionalizzazione e automazione alla Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze" ("Rationalisation and automation at the National Central Library of Florence"). The conference, sponsored by UNESCO and the Italian Ministry of Education, was held two years after the Florence flood of November 1966 and the results were summarized in 12 resolutions. The first resolution promotes "the formal and immediate adoption of MARC II format for the Italian National Bibliography".

Coming back to our time I wish to thank the Director-General Maurizio Fallace for his participation that shows the interest of the *Direzione Generale per i beni library gli istituti Culturali ed il diritto d'autore* in the development of cataloguing studies both at national and international level.

And now I would like to address few words of thanks to the colleagues who have contributed to organize this Meeting: Giovanni Bergamin, who is well known to many of you and is in the charge of the Information Department; also to Silvia Alessandri, Dina Pasqualetti, Gianna Megli, Paola Rogai, Federica Paradisi, for her help in the translation, Clara Ronga and Paolo Poggesi.

Last but not least many thanks to our Sponsor BASS.NET, a society based in Florence and involved in the production of software for cultural heritage

During the coffee-break all of you are invited to admire, as a preview, the exhibition based on art books that will be inaugurated on the 28 of March. This exhibition will be held within the frame of the "Settimana della Cultura" the annual spring cultural initiative of the Ministry for Cultural Affairs.

You will have the opportunity to get acquainted with the COLOPHON production, of one of the most active and fascinating Italian art publishers. The decorations on display are an example of the perfect combination between the poet's and the painter's inspiration shift on great value paper. I wish to thank the curator of the exhibition, our colleague Lucia Chimirri.

Being proud of this long tradition in the UNIMARC field I wish success to the meeting and to all of you.