INFORMATION SYSTEM IN THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ART OF ROMANIA - ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROJECTS

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Since April 1997 the National Museum of Art of Romania became the first museum in Romania presenting a home page on the Internet on his own computer server with a whole class of Internet users.

The difficult economical period wich Romania as an eastern country is going through makes it almost impossible for the cultural institutions to maintain an adequate level of high technology. Under the circumstances our solution was to create a general program in order to ensure a possibility to up-grade the configuration, from the level of the LAN up to the external communications and Internet connection. Together with our colleagues from IT institutes in Bucharest, we started different programs designed to be followed step by step.

The general aspect for our information system has 3 main categories:

A – internal administration for the museum's collections, including archives, research, conservation and restoration, environments parameters' control, multimedia kiosk

B – internal administration for human and financial resources, protection and security in redundant structure

C – administration of communications and the exchange of information with others, including protocols, techniques, copyrights and benefits

Steps and results

- LAN divided in four subnetworks following the topology of the building and also for the other branches of the museum (at this moment 35 workstations and a dedicated data line for one branch at Zambaccian Museum);
- installation of Linux operation system on the web, ftp and mail server - cooperation with the Institute for Research in Informatics
- dial-up clients for e-mail accounts on the museum's server
- a team from museum's employees trained to develop technical support for usual technical assistance hard and soft
- implementing first necessary knowledge in data base configuration at the level of curators and restorers
- Configuration for a model of RDBS for museums under Oracle 2000 – cooperation with Institute for Research in Informatics. The general structure of the data base system consists in:
    1. a class of entities concerning process-states, operations, actors, files and associated multimedia objects
    2. classified lists concerning on one hand term lists in a kind of dictionary and on the other hand categories lists for art object's category, materials, school, period, storage methods, department specificity, techniques a.s.o.
- developing the museum home page initially started in cooperation with the Institute for Computers – our web site is http://art.museum.ro
- high quality printing line consisting in: digital professional camera with SCSI interface, graphic workstation, slides scanner, print server and network color printer

Problems

- because of the little money involved in the cultural activities is very hard to maintain a high standard concerning hard (our dedicated lines' speed at 512 baudes) and soft configuration (that's why our option for free Lynux system)
- very weak financial possibilities to advertise about what the museum can do, show and teach for the public (the main achievement is our web page)
- difficult connection with similar institution in Western Europe concerning the possibilities to cooperate in European programs, which is a general problem for East European countries.

Projects

- in cooperation with the specialists from IT institutes we will develop next steps concerning:
    - multimedia kiosk for the European collection of the museum which is going to reopen after 10 years (the museum was seriously damaged in the events of 1989)
    - CD ROMs by themes and/or artists
    - improving the image presentation on the museum home page, in order to obtain a good rate quality, communication speed, price
- Local video and multimedia interactive presentation for children, students and general public.
- Drawing classes and art thematic games on computers for children.
- Starting a project of cultural tourism in cooperation with 3 other museums in Romania concerning a virtual tour on our home pages

We must underline that in the course of time Romanian IT specialists have presented at EVA meetings the idea of cooperation in the field of multimedia access to the European heritage between West and East European countries.

Our museum was a signatory member of MoU and after this of MEDICI program and unfortunately for us it was a transfer from Working Groups in MoU to Action Lines and Special Interest Group in Medici. We hope that now, due to the general policy of the Medici's board that Internet can be a solution for everybody to cooperate and to be informed about state of the art in this field.

We intend to focus on the idea that East European countries have a very rich cultural message, their heritage being part of the European heritage and also a bridge for the European integration.

In a few words we see a possible European cooperation for multimedia access to the heritage as follows:

- Defining at the level of the EU (through EVA, Medici, public institutions and/or private companies) a portfolio of projects on different themes without restrictions for participants.

- For each project there will be nominated museums and IT companies teams from each country

- Using the previous experience from MoU – the former group Priorities in Culture Economy in order to develop the idea to "foster the International Virtual Bridges Initiative based on public – private partnerships between national/regional governments and industry"

Proposals

- An important support for cooperation must be the free access to information in the field of multimedia access to heritage especially for museums, which will give the real quality of each project in this field by involving curators and artists.

- At the level of European organizations it will be useful to have links to all the sites of the museums participating to the European projects with specialists and/or ideas

- Defining an European touristic tour presenting the cultural sites of each country or following a certain theme in two versions:

    1 a virtual tour presented on the web site of each country from the defined touristic path

    2 the second step by creating a CD-ROM with detailed presentation on the same theme

The main advantage will be that people surfing the net will know more about museums.

Concerning the eventuality of CD ROM production our proposal for the revenue is that it be shared between museums and the IT companies involved, with a 70% quota for the museums.