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## **Documentation and Continuous Training**

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### **„Carol I” Central University Library Continuous Training Program through Documentary Visits. A Documentary Visit to Cotroceni Museum**

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#### **Abstract**

In this essay we aim to emphasize the role of documentary visits in continuous training programs of library professionals. As alternative form of continuous training, the "Carol I" Central University Library runs an annual program of documentary visits to Bucharest museums, in order to identify from the historical, biographical, literary, artistic and scientific perspective, the manner in which evolved Romanian spirituality nationally and beyond. As a form of initial training for national inheritance understanding, the professional visits to cultural institutions allows the discovery of the categories of collections, the structure and their pedagogical value in learning, teaching and training.

**Keywords:** *continuous training, librarians, documentation, documentary visit*

#### **Introduction**

We do not think there is a Romanian nowadays who has not heard of Cotroceni Palace. Up on the hill, in the neighborhood with the same name, across the street from the Botanic Garden, is the headquarters of the Presidential Administration. For the inhabitants of the city, who are passing hurriedly through the beautiful neighborhood

Cotroceni Palace seems to have been there forever and that is almost true. For over three centuries it witnessed a turbulent and thrilling history. Initially a monastery, it soon became a royal establishment, a Royal Palace and after the abolition of the monarchy, the headquarters of the Presidential Administration till now.

After December 1989, pursuant to Government Decision no. 478 of 10 July 1991, the Cotroceni National Museum was established as an institution of national representation, under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture. On the 27<sup>th</sup> of December 1991, the old wing of the Palace was opened to the public, and, subsequently, pursuant to Government Decision. 1279 of 20 December 2001, the Museum was subordinated to the Presidential Administration. (1). Surrounded by high walls, the Palace Museum celebrates a quarter of a century of enchanting its visitors, eager to reveal its tumultuous history.

Cotroceni National Museum comprises Cotroceni Palace, the Church of Cotroceni Monastery and the Kitchen with the royal cellars.

## **History**

The Cotroceni Hill, once a dense forest, as part of Codrii Vlăsiei, was historically attested in the 17th century by a decree from 27<sup>th</sup> November 1614. The estate is inherited by Șerban Cantacuzino in June 1660 for his services to Prince George Ghica. But as at that time the reigns were often changed, Șerban Cantacuzino was forced to flee to escape persecution from Duca Voda, the new ruler with whom he clashed. Thus, he hid a few days in the dense forest. On October 7<sup>th</sup>, 1678 he managed to reach Țarigrad (Istanbul – Constantinople) and thence to return as ruler of Țara Românească.

As gratitude for the land that helped him hide, on the 26<sup>th</sup> May 1679, the Cotroceni Church inscription attests the start of works, finished three years later in October 1682. A beautiful monastery, an architectural jewel, built in the beautiful Brâncoveanu style.

The history of settlement of Cotroceni has four stages:

- a) The stage of its construction – until 1893 when the monastery was a royal summer residence;
- b) The second stage is from 1893 until 1947 when it was a Royal Palace;
- c) The third stage – the forced abdication of King Michael 1947 to 1976, a period of destruction and degradation. During that time it was the Palace of Children;
- d) Starting with 1977 until now, it was and still is the headquarters of the Presidential Administration.

In the first stage, from its construction until 1893, it was a monastery and royal summer residence. The monastery had typography and became an important center of Romanian culture, similar to many Romanian settlements. Also, it was used as residence of the Romanian rulers: Șerban Cantacuzino, Constantin Brâncoveanu, Nicolae, Ioan and Constantine Mavrocordat. Prince Șerban Cantacuzino was buried here after his wish.

Due to its strategic setting, being outside of Bucharest in such turbulent times, the monastery served as refuge and defense shelter for Romanian rulers in the way of foreign armies: the Ottoman, the Russian, and the Austrian. It witnessed the Revolution of Tudor Vladimirescu: “because on the 19 to 31 March Tudor *was* at Cotroceni, where he got ready to enter in Bucharest” (2).

Two decades later, during the 1848 Revolution Fuad Efendi, the High Porte delegate in Bucharest participated in suppressing that uprising replacing Suleyman Pasha at the insistence of Russian diplomacy; he placed his troops around the monastery. Later he used the monastery as a prison for the revolution's leaders who were arrested. `` From their arrest at Cotroceni, they were sent to the Danube and embarked on *ghimii*`` (3).

Weather conditions, the earthquake from 1802 severely damaged the establishment. It was repaired and subsequently refurbished during the reign of Alexandru Ioan Cuza in 1862, which also used it as a summer residence. Later, after his removal, he was arrested also there. Of course, later Prince Carol, as well, withdrew to Cotroceni in the summer of 1870 after the outbreak of the Franco-German war, because of the Francophile orientation of the public opinion and triggered discontent amid the scandal between Strousberg and the Railway Society.

Gustav Heinrich Wilhelm Rasch, a German traveler who journeyed around principalities, was participant in the Revolution of 1848. During his exile in Paris he met C. A. Rosetti. His trip to Romania took place in the spring of 1866 during the *Locotenenta Domneasca*. This note about the monastery: "*This is a monastery or a summer palace of a prince? In the midst of the courtyard still stands the old church of the monastery.*) ...) *At the left and right of the ugly towers are two modern buildings, which do not distinguish neither by the proportions of spaces, nor through their lines. Prince Cuza had built both houses in order to live there during the hot summer months*" (4). Being German and admiring Prince Carol I, he criticizes the modesty of the site reckoning it unworthy of a German prince.

The second stage is from 1893 until 1947 when the complex served as a Royal Palace. Between 1893-1895, at the wish of King Carol I, Cotroceni Palace was built over the former royal establishments by the architect Paul Gottereau. In 1890, electric lighting and telephone were introduced in Romania for the first time - in Bucharest, thus the palace was equipped with all the amenities of that epoch.

The French architect Alfred Jules Paul Gottereau modernized the old royal establishments; some were demolished, turning them into a palace that King Carol I wanted to be a residence for the family of the Crown Prince. The palace was built in the French eclectic style. In 1897 the young princely family moves into the new Palace Cotroceni. In 1915 the palace was fitted with central heating.

During this period the palace was badly damaged by the 1940 earthquake and then by bombing in 1944. Due to serious damage by the earthquake of November 10, 1940, it was temporarily put out of use. Repairs were started in the Palace by the architect Mario Stoppa, as well as works to strengthen the church and bell entrusted to architect Petru Antonescu.

Next came the bombing in 1944, which destroyed a part of the south wing of the main enclosure where the apartment of the prince was situated. Work continued under the direction of the architects N. Lupu and Stefan Bals. But considered unsatisfactory, in 1946 it was targeted by a commission which ordered the demolition of the main body of the palace. After the forced abdication of King Michael and removal of the Monarchy, the Palace suffered the destruction of its valuables. Later in 1953, it will be reopened and become the Palace of Children. It hosted classes of literature, painting, ballet. It was made available to children until 1976.

Even before the earthquake of 1977 it an extensive restoration project of the palace was started. The 1977 earthquake was devastating. Later what was not demolished by the unleashed nature was destroyed by the "killer" hand of man. The Cotroceni monastery church, a historic monument, was demolished in June 1984.

As stated in the exceptional monograph of the authors - the architect, Nicolae Vlădescu and the engineer Petre Badea 'Cotroceni Palace', the authors who were appointed to rescue and restore the palace, "*old bodies totals an area of 20900 square meters, which represents approximately 59% of the entire palace and the new body has a surface of 14,100 square meters, representing 41% of Cotroceni Palace*" (5).

### **Cotroceni Palace**

Cotroceni Museum impresses with its beauty and good taste; it attracts the admiration of any visitor. Rebuilt and restored to be open to the public, the Palace bears the imprint of its tenant the Queen Maria. Loving beauty, the modern, always abreast of the times and technical discoveries, the palace is a piece of her soul.

Ever since its construction the palace had a steam heating system and electric lighting. The heating system was replaced in 1916 with the radiator and the lighting installations were improved and were mounted luminaires in 1927. The gold salon was paved with tiles in 1920. In 1936 in the palace an elevator was installed and the palace was equipped with a film projector.

Carol I built around the palace the Cotroceni Station that served as the royal train station and was functional until 1947. The station was closed together with the sections linking the line to the railway network CFR. The former station building serves today as one of the entrances of the Cotroceni Palace.

The entire complex was restored; the monastery was rebuilt by the same team that restored 'Carol I' Central University Library of Bucharest, another masterpiece of the architect Gottereau executed under the auspices of Carol I. The accommodations designed for the future King Ferdinand present a certain German feature through its pieces of furniture, architectural style, decorations - they are sober but imposing. The accommodations designed for Queen Mary in contrast, are delicate, bright, decorated with sensitivity, by Maria herself or by her sketches, to her desire.

The Hall of Honor, currently the place where the tours of the museum start, was designed by the French architect Paul Gottereau (1843-1904), at the end of the XIXth century. He was inspired by the interior of the Garnier Opera in Paris, presents a Cibolino imposing marble staircase with marble steps of Carrara, comprising two levels. Although it does not have the monumental dimensions of the famous work, the beauty and richness of decoration compensate this aspect successfully, perfectly managing to give the impression of greatness, sparking reactions of delight in the eyes of visitors. The pilasters frame the arches and support the decorative frieze, partly gilded, denticulate, acanthus leaves and corncobs.

From the Hall of Honor through a long corridor the transition is made to the Dining Room of King Carol I, also known as the German Dining Room. It was fully restored during the process of restoration after the model of the Peleş Castle dining room.

Also, and most of the items are new, reconstructed based on photos from the era, but the chandelier is the original one.

The Hunting Salon is designed in the style of the Italian neo-Renaissance by the Czech architect Karel Liman (1855-1929) and dates from 1925-1926. Ceiling, frames and paneling, carved in linden wood, form an interesting contrast with the white stone of Rusciuc material from which the pavement and the columns were made. The salon includes panoply of weapons, trophies and specific stylistic furniture.

The Flower Salon or the Golden Salon as it was known at the time is arranged space arranged at the urging of Queen Marie of Romania, decorated by her, inspired by the secession style in 1900. The delicacy and the beauty of the place are impressive, keeping and forwarding her mark over time. The walls are adorned with beautiful garlands and shelter pieces of decorative art specific to the Louis XVI style, lining the salon with chairs, armchairs, sofas and benches carved wood gilt and upholstered in natural silk, embroidered and two valuable drawers by marquetry art, paved with tiles. There is also the Queen Elizabeth Steinway piano.

The Library or the Working Cabinet of Prince Ferdinand belongs to the French style Henri II, made in elm wood. At the top is the storey gallery, whose handrail sawed is supported by groups of columns and a special fireplace from Portoro marble, in green completes the vintage atmosphere.

The White Salon is known today as Cerchez Salon, named after the Romanian architect Grigore Cerchez (1850-1927), who, at Queen Maria of Romania's initiative set up this space in the years following World War I, in neo-Romanian style. This is the Great Reception Salon of the Cotroceni Palace. In order to create this salon, two areas were decommissioned, namely the Ballroom and the Dining room. The latter, the Dining room is the place where in August 1916, Romania's decision to enter in World War I on the Entente side was ratified. King Ferdinand replied firmly to P.P. Carp: ``Romania did not bring either my uncle, King Carol I to start a German dynasty at the mouth of the Danube, but a national dynasty and claim for my House the honor to have met fully the mission that people have entrusted in him`` (6). In the salon is situated the table where in December 1947 King Michael was forced to sign his abdication. Over the years, here have been shot some frames of the film \* Dowry or jewelry of Lady Ralu (7).

Today the Cerchez Salon borders and continues itself in the same neo-Romanian style with the Cotroceni Palace Dining room, built before the First World War. Impressive for any visitor of this place is the furniture: the table, large, round and chairs, 24, with backs carved with *the tree of life*, - those destined for the ladies' and *eagles*, - for the gentlemen. Highly suggestive is the symbolism: *the tree of life* is the woman, the life-giving while the man is *the eagle*, the power. The furniture was made after the sketches and the drawings of Queen Mary. Thereby, she managed in a subtle manner to impose the presence of ladies at the table with men, even if they were conservative in this regard. Thus the dining room table, big and round reminds even of the famous table of `` King Arthur``!

The bedroom of Queen Mary is designed in the Tudor style, furnished with pieces belonging to the Art Nouveau style and is restored according to the style of 1929. A tapestry from the XVIIth century is located above the bed, and the entrance special door

to the bedroom is rebuilt from linden wood fretted like a lace. Two statues signed by Milita Patrascu induce us into the grace - so typical of the Queen Mary.

In a decor wallpapered with cherry color silk, specific to the early XIXth century, the former chamber of princes, we find the Empire Salon, furnished with Egyptian influences with abundant decorations of sphinxes, rosettes, palmettes, laurel wreaths resting on mahogany wood. Another salon located in the west wing of the Palace, consists of this apartment inspired by the Louis XVI style, but designed with accents of English styles from the late XVIIIth century, developed by the Scottish architects brothers Robert and James Adam, but also by the cabinetmaker Thomas Sheraton.

### **Cotroceni Monastery Church**

After the forced abdication of King Michael and after the takeover of the Palace by the new regime, the church was closed. Subsequently, the Cotroceni Palace later became the Pioneers Palace, but the church was still closed, which led to an advanced degradation. The Palace changed hands, taken by Ceausescu who wanted it to be the headquarters of the Presidency. The 1977 earthquake almost completely destroyed the entire church. The Cotroceni Church, monastic center, the oldest and most important building was included in the original plan of the ensemble restoration. But the communist regime did not consider this, and the 80s were marked by the demolition of valuable religious architecture

The Cotroceni Monastery Church was demolished in June 1984, at 300 years after the defeat of the Turks at the siege of Vienna, destroying its mission, stopping time. It was entirely rebuilt in 2008-2009 exactly on the original location and since reunified the entire museum; its founder Serban Cantacuzino and his family have found their lost tranquility, with their bones reburied. The funeral plates are the original ones; miraculously they were saved and hidden after the demolition.

The Kitchen and the royal cellars are the medieval heritage of the assembly, silent witnesses of 3 centuries of history. They took part, as well, in the extensive restoration of the Cotroceni Ensemble. The imposing thick walls, over one meter have been carefully restored. Distinctive to the medieval period in building church and royal cellars from Tara Românească is their realization that as spaces engraved on the walls height vaults being above the ground, to allow, through lunette windows for ventilation (8). These days the sites are in use and host temporary exhibitions. Cotroceni was always present in the heart and soul of Queen Mary, her last child, Mircea, was buried in the monastery church, in haste, in the tragic fall of the year 1916 because the royal family and the leadership of the state were forced to take refuge in Moldova due to German occupation. On returning to the capital after the end of World War I, Queen Mary notes in her Daily Diary: *“To Cotroceni (...) all my longing heads there, those long, dramatic shaking years, there to that old, little church in which the little grave was barely closed when we left. I turned to you, little Mircea.”* (9) Following the request of Princess Ileana, in 1941, he will be reburied at Bran castle chapel.

Also, at Cotroceni, Princess Mărioara, the daughter of Carol I and Queen Elisabeta was buried in the alley near the monastery in 1874. Later at the death of Queen Elizabeth in 1916, Mărioara was reburied with her mother at Curtea de Arges. Her tomb

was discovered accidentally, during the leveling work of the platform from the south of the park in autumn 1989, when the tomb stone sculpted by Frederic Storck was discovered. (10) "*People and the hand of God have saved the Cantacuzino foundation from Cotroceni, the monastery and the princely establishments founded by the principles heirs and by the monarchy.*" (11)

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