



INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF THE PRESERVATION AND THE RESTORATION OF CULTURAL PROPERTY
CENTRE INTERNATIONAL D'ETUDES POUR LA CONSERVATION ET LA RESTAURATION DES BIENS CULTURELS

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ABSTRACTS

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Background

In November 1991, the Council of ICCROM decided to reduce by half the budget reserved for the production of abstracts, starting with the publications received by ICCROM's library.

At the time it was felt that while waiting for a final decision on the 1993-1994 budget, it was necessary to think about the usefulness of such a service, to find other alternatives and to carry out a survey among Associate Members of ICCROM and among international organizations in order to see whether it was possible to create a collaboration network in this field.

The results of the survey were not very satisfying. Four of the eight institutions who had offered to supply us with abstracts said they could only do so for their own publications. The other four remained vague in their answer. ICCROM has a great need of producing abstracts starting with its own acquisitions which vary extremely in subject matter and in order to take advantage of the collaborators outside of Rome, the publication should be sent out and before it is returned with the relevant abstract, it can take up to 6 months: one should bear in mind that the potential "abstractor" aside from the production of abstracts is asked as well to translate into English or French a list of key-words which are given by the Library staff. Furthermore, the large diversity of languages that the books are written in creates a problem, without taking into consideration that a minimum of specialization in the subject covered is necessary. One should also consider that the number of abstracts to be done each year amount to ca. 2000 and should we be fortunate enough to receive 30 abstracts per year from each of the eight institutions, for a total of 240, this would still be largely insufficient. From a practical point of view, one should also note that the work to be carried out by the Library would become extremely complicated.

Present methods of working and distribution

Ever since we stopped producing abstracts, it was decided to increase the number of subjects on each entry card in order to allow research to be as complete as possible: key-words, information on materials used, on the materials tested, geographical information, names of artists, of monuments, of museums, and of objects as well as information on the exhibitions and conferences etc. (all this information being partially bilingual in French and in English). When a summary or a short introduction, which can replace an abstract, is available in the publication, it is re-copied with the initials A.A. (author's abstract).

All of this information has continued to be available for the past 15 years on the Conservation Information Network with the intermediary of telecommunication networks and recently with the use of Internet. Furthermore, after our Library has adopted the use of the CDS/ISIS system distributed by UNESCO, all institutions may consult the diskettes containing the new acquisitions.

Possible options for 1996-1999

Assess the need to write abstracts:

The following problems should be taken into consideration:

- the difficulty of finding specialists in Rome who are able to cover all fields;
- the need to have specialists available on the spot
- the cost of each abstract which is presently around US \$ 15 (the Canadian Institute of conservation recently paid CAN \$ 25 for an abstract).

One could conceive proposing a scholarship for all those who wish to come to Rome and work for one year in our Library; the total expense should include travelling expenses, the cost of life in Rome, the insurance and the cost of each abstract which could amount to ca. US \$ 35.000 per year. This amount could decrease if the person is already residing in Rome. An amount in the order of US \$ 10,000 should also be added to take into account the additional work to be carried out by the Library's staff.

How to optimize the Library's resources:

Taking into consideration that access to information on subjects in general is not affected too much from the absence of the abstract and given that each analysis is accompanied by key-words and technical notes and that the access to our Data Bank is possible in different ways, (see paragraph on Present methods of working and distribution), it would be desirable if the Library's staff, in the global framework of the documentation service, could exploit more in depth the enormous resources of the Library by providing information on a regular basis for updating or creating a Data Bank like the Training Index or a Data Bank on conferences.

It is fundamental to determine the priorities in terms of human and budgetary resources and it is desirable that a final decision be taken on this subject.

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