UNESCO-ICOMOS Documentation Centre:
A specialized bibliographic resource on built heritage
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1. Introduction

ICOMOS, the International Council on Monuments and Sites, is an association of professionals throughout the world that currently bring together over 8.000 members. ICOMOS works for the conservation and protection of cultural heritage places. It is the only global non-government organisation of this kind, which is dedicated to promoting the application of theory, methodology, and scientific techniques to the conservation of the architectural and archaeological heritage. Its work is based on the principles enshrined in the 1964 International Charter on the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites (the Venice Charter).

ICOMOS is a network of experts that benefits from the interdisciplinary exchange of its members, among which are architects, historians, archaeologists, art historians, geographers, anthropologists, engineers and town planners.

The members of ICOMOS contribute to improving the preservation of heritage, the standards and the techniques for each type of cultural heritage property: buildings, historic cities, cultural landscapes and archaeological sites.

ICOMOS is named in the 1972 UNESCO *Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* (the World Heritage Convention) as one of the three advisory bodies, with IUCN and ICCROM, to the World Heritage Committee. It is the professional and scientific advisor to the Committee on all aspects of the cultural heritage.

As such, ICOMOS is responsible for the evaluation of all nominations made to the World Heritage List by States Parties to the Convention against the criteria of outstanding universal value, authenticity, management, and conservation laid down by the World Heritage Committee. This involves consultation of the wide range of expertise represented by its membership and its National and International Committees, as well as the many other specialist networks with which it is linked. Expert missions are also sent to carry out on-site evaluations. This extensive consultation results in the preparation of detailed recommendations that are submitted to the World Heritage Committee at its annual meetings.

2. A brief history of the UNESCO-ICOMOS Documentation Centre

In 1966 the Brussels Symposium was held with the purpose of defining the aims, structure, and objectives of the ICOMOS Documentation Centre, which are also de-

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scribed in the Statutes: «*to gather, study and disseminate information concerning principles, techniques and policies for the conservation, protection, rehabilitation and enhancement of monuments, groups of buildings and sites*» (Art. 5b).

The centre was inaugurated in 1974 and became operational in 1977, when ICOMOS hired a documentalist and an assistant to organise and manage it. In 1982 the centre is computerised and a bibliographical database devoted to cultural heritage - ICOMOS - is created. The documentation centre was part of the *UNESCO-ICOM-ICOMOS network*, it was linked to the central computer at UNESCO by a special line where all the bibliographical information accessible from the computer terminals placed in the different centres was stored. However, in 1998 UNESCO changed its computer systems, and so the bibliographical database had to be transferred from their mainframe system to ICOMOS's own micro system.

Since June 2002 the database can be searched on the internet at <http://databases.unesco.org/icomos>. The search interface was produced by WWWISIS, an authoring software for visually producing web forms to query CDS-ISIS.

The Database is also available on the *Conservation Information Network (CIN)* web site <http://www.bcin.ca>, of which ICOMOS is a partner.

In 2003 we have started the digitalizing of the ICOMOS old publications and made them available on the web in PDF format (for the moment, there are more than 1.100 articles available).

3. The Collections

The UNESCO-ICOMOS Documentation Centre specializes in the built heritage, the conservation and restoration of historic monuments and sites with:
  - more than 30.000 titles concerning most countries and regions in the world;
  - 550 periodicals (150 received regularly by exchange);
  - 33.000 slides, photographs, and plans;
  - The original nomination files of all the monuments and sites inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

The specialised bibliographical collections include:

archaeology; conservation and restoration techniques; cultural landscapes; cultural routes; cultural tourism; earthen architecture; historic gardens and parks; historic towns and villages; industrial heritage; intangible heritage; inventories; legislation; monuments in seismic areas; photogrammetry; risk preparedness and heritage at risk; rock art; stone and other building materials; town planning; training; underwater heritage; vernacular architecture; wooden architecture; world heritage cultural properties and the world heritage convention.

4. The original archives of the World Heritage monuments and sites

The UNESCO-ICOMOS Documentation Centre is the primary repository for the original documentation of the cultural properties and mixed (natural and cultural) properties that have been inscribed on the World Heritage List since 1978.

Once a cultural property has been included on the World Heritage List, the UNESCO-ICOMOS Documentation Centre keeps the nomination files and makes them available for consultation. All these nomination files and the associated documentation, which is in many cases very comprehensive, constitute by themselves the most important collection of the Centre.

Each nomination file contains the following items:

➢ Documentation and information provided by the States Parties:

- Description and identification of the property

- Justification for inscription

- Management: legal status, protective measures, site management plan, visitor facilities, etc.

- Factors affecting the site

- Monitoring: key indicators for measuring state of conservation, administrative arrangements for monitoring property

- Documentation:

  a) photographs, slides and, where available, film/video/CD-ROM;

  b) copies of site management plans, legislation, and other legal instruments;

  c) cartographic material, measured drawings, etc;

  d) bibliography.

➢ ICOMOS evaluation reports (The ICOMOS expert's reports are not available).

At the present time, the UNESCO-ICOMOS Documentation Centre keeps the files on 668 cultural and mixed sites inscribed on the World Heritage List, and every year this collection grows with the dossiers of the newly inscribed sites (around 20–30).

5. ICOMOS Bibliographic Database <http://databases.unesco.org/icomos>

1. Search interface of the ICOMOS Bibliographic Database <http://databases.unesco.org/icomos>.

The UNESCO-ICOMOS Documentation Centre was formerly part of the UNESCO-ICOM-ICOMOS Network. In 1997 UNESCO changed its computer system and the two bibliographical databases of ICOM and ICOMOS, which had been merged on UNESCO's mainframe computer in the ICOMOS database, have since been split into two databases, one for each documentation centre. The transfer of the bibliographical database from UNESCO's mainframe system to ICOMOS's own micro system was completed in June 1999.

The database contains:

- 29.900 bibliographical references (October 2006);
- A very rich collection on built heritage, its conservation, and preservation; technical reports, proceedings of conferences, mission reports, etc
- Articles from the most important magazines and periodicals available at the Documentation Centre;
- The original nomination files of the World Heritage List.

ICOMOS Bibliographical Database on the web:

Since June 2002 the Database can be searched on the internet at the following address: <http://databases.unesco.org/icomos>.
All the ICOMOS bibliographic records are also available on the Conservation Information Network (CIN) web site <http://www.bcin.ca> of which ICOMOS is a partner.
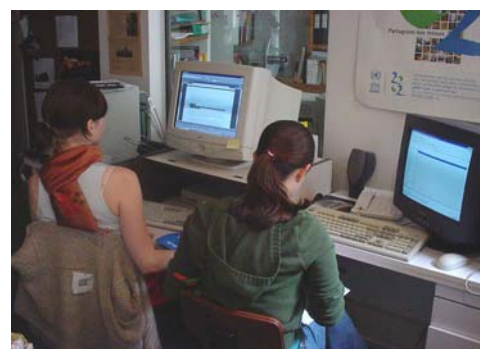
6. Documentation Centre services

The Documentation Centre offers the following services and facilities:

- a reading room

- bibliographical searches

- search of the ICOMOS bibliographic database

- photocopying service: Visitors can photocopy articles from journals and chapters from books, subject to the limits of copyright legislation

- e-mail reference service and document delivery

- sale of ICOMOS publications

- dossiers, specialised bibliographies, *bulletin de sommaires*, etc

- online search of the BCIN database

- The documentation centre is open: Monday: 14h00-20h00;   Tuesday-Friday: 14h00-17h00.

2. Reading room.

3. Visitors using the database.

7. BCIN: Bibliographic database of the *Conservation Information Network*

The *Conservation Information Network* (CIN) is the product of international collaboration. It is intended to facilitate the retrieval and exchange of information concerning conservation and restoration of cultural property.
The Bibliographic Database of the Conservation Information Network (BCIN) provides access to over 200.000 bibliographic citations for conservation literature. BCIN includes citations from the Art and Archaeology Technical Abstracts (prior to 1998), technical reports, conference proceedings, journal articles, books and audiovisual and unpublished materials. The database also includes previously unavailable material

from private sources, as well as new information gathered by a worldwide network of contributors.

BCIN was first initiated by the Getty Conservation Institute and ICCROM. It was launched in 1987 as a subscription database, available through the Canadian Heritage Information Network (CHIN). In May 2002, BCIN was made available free of charge on the CIN Web site, hosted by CHIN. The database interface, re-designed in 2002, includes both a simple and advanced search, and the ability to refine searches, among other features.

The partners of the BCIN are: Canadian Conservation Institute, Canadian Heritage Information Network, Getty Conservation Institute, ICCROM, Instituut Collectie Nederland, ICOM, ICOMOS, Library and Archives Canada and Smithsonian Museum Conservation Institute.

In 1986 ICOMOS became a partner in CIN and since then, the UNESCO-ICOMOS Documentation Centre has been participating in BCIN.

The BCIN database is available at <http://www.bcin.ca>.