



**EN**

**GOVERNING COUNCIL**  
**98<sup>th</sup> session**  
**Rome, 8-10 May 2019**

UNIDROIT 2019  
C.D. (98) 12 rev.  
Original: English  
March 2019

**Item No. 12 on the agenda: Library and Research Activities**

(Memorandum prepared by the Secretariat)

<i>Summary</i>	<i>The document illustrates developments at the Library and its activities in 2018, perspectives for 2019 as well as proposals for the coming years</i>
<i>Action to be taken</i>	<i>The Governing Council is invited to take note of the progress made and to consider additional measures</i>
<i>Mandate</i>	<i>Work Programme 2017 - 2019</i>
<i>Priority level</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Related document</i>	<i>Annual Report 2018 (C.D. (98) 2); UNIDROIT 2018 – Study LXV/Scholarships: Impl. 29</i>

**I. LIBRARY COOPERATION AND NETWORKING**

1. The UNIDROIT Library continued in 2018 the cooperation strategy with other Roman and foreign libraries.

**II. CATALOGUING AND SOFTWARE UPGRADING OF THE LIBRARY MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE**

**A. Library management software upgrading**

2. The Library's software management system Aleph500 was upgraded to the latest version Aleph 21.4.4 without any interruption of services for the Institute's scientific staff or the researchers in the Library.

**III. DIGITISATION**

3. At its 96<sup>th</sup> session (Rome, May 2017), the Governing Council agreed to proceed with the in-house digitisation of Library materials so as to offer the Library readers an even broader range of research material. The project was considered an attractive opportunity to make the collection of a large library, such as the UNIDROIT Library, accessible in digital form.

4. Thanks to the ADAM library management software module for the implementation of the digitised objects into the online catalogue, distributed by the firm Ex Libris, it is now possible to easily connect a large quantity of electronic documents to the catalogue data. The professional book scanner "ALPHA PLANETARIO" was ordered in December 2017, and was delivered in February 2018. Thanks to the greatly improved technical resources of the UNIDROIT Library, the full entry into the partial digitisation of the UNIDROIT library collection has been secured.

5. In 2018 the UNIDROIT Library proceeded, therefore, with the challenging project of the digitisation of library materials. About 300 monographs and articles of the international and international commercial law section were scanned and the digitised objects were added to the electronic catalogue. In order to valorise one of the Library's rarest and most valuable historical collections, the project was amended to concentrate on the cataloguing and digitisation of monographs of the "Gorla collection". The "Gorla Collection" was donated to the UNIDROIT Library in 1987 by Professor Gino Gorla, formerly Professor of Comparative Law at the University of Rome "La Sapienza". It is a collection of antique books which served as a support to his research on case law in Europe from the 17th to the early part of the 19th Century. This collection of over 550 titles comprising about 900 volumes is composed of treatises, commentaries, collections of *decisiones*, *resolutiones*, *consilia*, *responsa*, *allegationes* and *controversiae forenses*, as well as a number of books dealing specifically with commercial law and maritime law.

6. The quality of the previously digitised objects is checked by the library staff. Subsequent to quality control and the process of indexing, the digital objects can be incorporated into the digital collection and made available to users (with privileged user rights) for research. The UNIDROIT Library also continues to follow the strategy of "scan on demand", as agreed on the occasion of the UNIDROIT Governing Council's 97<sup>th</sup> session in 2018. The digitisation of less sought-after materials can be prevented and the best possible use can be made of the financial resources available for the project.

7. The Institute is aware of the need to consider possible copyright issues in the process of scanning books and documents, especially in view of the revised strict copyright law of Italy and the new copyright framework of the European Union. Currently, the Secretariat is conducting a thorough legal and compliance analysis of the topic.

#### *PRESERVATION OF THE GORLA COLLECTION*

8. One of the Library's future projects with high priority is the preservation of the ancient part of the generally most valuable Gorla collection. Old books can be damaged by several factors, including moisture, heat, excessive sunlight and general mishandling. As soon as a book is exposed to excessive moisture, heat or direct sunlight the book's structure may be compromised to the point where it may potentially become permanently damaged. Appropriate storage materials should be provided for fragile materials. The Gorla collection is currently stored on carefully located shelves of the Library, but we do not count on express expert assurance that adequate protection against the negative effects of light and dust is in place. Expert advice has therefore been requested from specialists for the preservation of book heritage, the "L'Istituto centrale per il restauro e la conservazione del patrimonio archivistico e librario (ICRCPAL) <http://www.icpal.beniculturali.it/indice.html>", in order to adequately store and protect the valuable collection for the future. Measures will be immediately adopted following the conclusion of the expert report.

9. With the aim of ensuring the best preservation possible, the Secretariat is in the process of acquiring suitable shelves where rare materials can be best preserved and conserved for the future. To this end, a number of estimates from various companies specialised in the manufacture of furniture for the storage of antique books has been requested.

10. In addition, the room in which the Gorla Collection is kept is to be equipped with a humidifier to prevent the destruction of valuable books due to drought.

### NEW FURNITURE OF THE READING ROOMS

11. The two "small" reading rooms of the Library (i.e. the reading room which hosts most of the UNIDROIT Interns and Scholars and the reading room where senior researchers and professors are lodged) have been furnished with new, modern, more adequate furniture (desks and chairs).

### ACQUISITIONS, DONATIONS, EXCHANGES

12. In 2018, the Library's holdings increased by 989 titles, of which 563 were purchased outright, 132 were obtained on an exchange basis, while 294 further titles were received as gifts. The expansion of the Library's holdings has been hampered by steady increases in the price of publications and a chronic lack of resources.

13. In 2018, as in previous years, the Library received donations in kind from the Max-Planck-Institute of Foreign Private and Private International Law in Hamburg.

## IV. COOPERATION WITH ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS

14. In line with its policy over preceding years but with the intention to further develop it in the future, the UNIDROIT Secretariat has promoted cooperation with academic institutions or fora in relation to UNIDROIT activities. Memoranda of Understanding have been signed in 2018 with Zhongnan University of Economics and Law (ZUEL) (P.R. China), the Islamic Azad University (Iran), *Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso* and the *Asociación Chilena de Derecho Internacional Privado* (ADIPRI), and in 2019 with the University of Nicosia (Cyprus), the University of Opole (Poland) and the Strathmore University (Nairobi, Kenya) to contemplate the collaboration in research projects for the promotion of UNIDROIT's purposes and achievements and the participation in UNIDROIT research and internship programme.<sup>1</sup> In the coming months, it is the purpose of the Secretariat to substantially enhance the number of agreements with research centres and universities. Negotiations with a number of high level international universities are underway.

## V. RESEARCH ACTIVITIES AND INTERNSHIPS

15. UNIDROIT's *Research Programme* and *Internship Programme* are important tools for promoting UNIDROIT's work and related research in the field of international and comparative law.<sup>2</sup>

16. Initially designed as a simple tool in support of the Institute's scientific and legislative activities, over the years the UNIDROIT Library has grown into one of the foremost legal documentation centres in Europe and beyond. It provides an ideal setting to carry out research in areas of international private law, commercial law and uniform law. In 2018, the Library received a total of 1031 visits, and hosted 74 scholars and researchers from 30 different countries.

17. While most of scholars and researchers were hosted on an independent basis, often funded by their university, or under cooperation schemes with academic institutions (see above), in 2018 ten scholars were awarded a grant under the *Scholarship Programme* thanks to contributions from the Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China (MOFCOM), the UNIDROIT Foundation, as well as from members of the UNIDROIT Governing Council. For a full presentation of the Scholarship Programme and its beneficiaries in 2018, see the Implementation Report for 2018 (UNIDROIT 2018 – Study LXV/Scholarships: Impl. 29). The Secretariat expresses its gratitude to all donors in 2018 and hopes that they will wish to renew their financial commitment, and that new donors may join them.

---

<sup>1</sup> For a list of academic institutions with cooperation agreements with Unidroit see: <https://unidroit.org/english/legalcooperation/agreements/190115-academic-institutions.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> For a full presentation of the Research Programme and the Internship Programme, including a list of current and former guests see: <https://unidroit.org/research-and-internships>

18. Taking advantage of the presence of distinguished scholars at UNIDROIT, starting in January 2019, the Secretariat has organised a series of lectures and presentations on topics related to the scholars' areas of research, attended by members of UNIDROIT Secretariat and current guests in the library as well as interested outside expert participants. To this end, UNIDROIT has partnered up with institutions such as the Bank of Italy or Roma Tre University.

19. UNIDROIT's internship programme hosts each year a select number of interns to participate in the work of the Secretariat. Interns are generally expected to conduct research on specific aspects of the selected subject and assist members of staff. In 2018, 31 researchers were welcomed as interns (See Annual Report 2018, C.D. (98) 2), p. 27).

20. In addition, the following persons were hosted as Research Assistants in the UNIDROIT Secretariat in 2018: Ms Giuditta Giardini (Italy), LL.M. Candidate 2019, Columbia Law School, New York, Research Assistant in the UNIDROIT Secretariat, working on Cultural Property; Mr Hamza Abdul Hameed (Pakistan), Advanced LL.M., Leiden University, Assistant to the UNIDROIT Foundation; Mr Paul Fabel (Germany), M.A. International Relations, Dresden University of Technology, Mercator Fellow on International Affairs, Mercator Foundation, Federal Foreign Office, Berlin.

## **VI. ACTION TO BE TAKEN**

21. *The Governing Council is invited to take note of the progress made and to consider the additional measures proposed by the Secretariat.*