The ArchiMEDE Project for an Electronically Digitized Archive of Historical Monographs

Onofrio Erriquez

University of Bari, Italy
erriquez@fisica.uniba.it

First of all I would like to thank the organizers for having invited me to this round table discussion, and in particular my colleagues Floriana Esposito, whom I studied with at university, and Maristella Agosti, whom I have had the pleasure of meeting for the first time on this occasion.

As you are all well aware, there are numerous initiatives involving the digitization of cultural heritage, which have the dual aim of preserving cultural heritage, as proposed by the topic of this round table discussion, and improving its accessibility.

Allow me to mention just two examples: the MiBAC CulturaItalia portal and the MICHAEL project (Multilingual Inventory of Cultural Heritage in Europe). These two initiatives also happen to be the main suppliers of Italian digital resources for the European Union's Europeana Portal.

It could be said that the University of Bari, which was founded in 1925, is far too young to have books worthy of being part of a digitization project. However, thanks to numerous donations and several acquisitions, the university can boast a rather prestigious collection, which includes over 2,000 volumes from the 16th century.

In particular, there are the volumes on Roman Law included in the donation made by the Stella-Maranca Foundation, which belonged to the first Dean of our Faculty of Law, and the volumes of the Chiovenda Foundation acquired by the former Botany Institute.

This is the setting which gave rise to the idea of the ArchiMEDE Project (Archivio Monografie d'Epoca Digitalizzate Elettronicamente – Archive of Electronically Digitized Historical Monographs) which was approved and funded by the Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio di Puglia with a EUR 75,000 grant and will draw to a close in October 2012.

As mentioned earlier, the aim of the project is to preserve and make accessible the considerably prestigious cultural heritage possessed by our university.

In order to achieve this aim, the project involves the following:

- start-up of the digitization of the collection of 16th century volumes (the first 500 of over 2,000) using a planetary scanner acquired by our university in the setting of the "Unknown Heritage" project of Nicola Barbuti and involving specially selected and trained external staff;
- cataloguing (historical book) and classification of the digitized heritage;
- inclusion in the university's catalogue and the relative OPAC;

- creation of a consultable archive;
    - o in the geographic network   (resolution 72 dpi);
    - o in the local network   (resolution 300 dpi);
    - o on DVD   (resolution 600 dpi).

The hope but also the conviction is that this heritage – in part unique, especially in Southern Italy – may emerge from the limbo of poorly known or even completely unknown heritage and return to life thanks to scholarly consultation.