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MANAGING THE NUMISMATIC HERITAGE IN SLOVENIA

Peter Kos

Narodni muzej Slovenije

Slovenia, with its 20,256 km² of land and a population of 1,900,000, is among the smaller of the European states. It lies at the crossroads between Italy, Eastern Europe, and the Balkans at the top of the Adriatic and as such, through history, was often a transitional area, where various peoples migrated or settled, where battles and wars were fought, and where the political powers of various ruling parties were changing constantly with variable luck. All of this is reflected, dramatically, in the very sensitive mirror that is its monetary history (from the first appearance in prehistory of pre-monetary forms to the inauguration of a new currency of the independent Slovenian state ten years ago [1991]).

However, to be able to study, to evaluate, and to interpret monetary circulation during the history of this part of Europe and to become acquainted with its monetary history, a thoroughgoing documentation of the numismatic heritage in the area in general is needed.

Slovenia has 252 museums, galleries, and collections. This number includes 56 major museums (municipal, provincial, and national museums). However, the largest and oldest museum institution in modern Slovenia is the National Museum of Slovenia, which was established 180 years ago, in 1821, as the Landesmuseum für Krain in Ljubljana, at that time the capital of Krain or Carniola, one of the Austrian countries (Land).

Today the National museum of Slovenia is a complex museum incorporating various departments. From its very beginnings in 1821, the museum has also been collecting rich numismatic finds from the area. Some important private collections were donated to the museum as well. However, during the long period of museum activities up to the end of the Second World War, a special curator for the numismatic collections was never employed, since they were part of the archaeological department. As a result, the collections were often neglected during the museum's early history, even partly devastated during periods of crisis, and very important and even unique numismatic museum objects (reported in the contemporary newspapers as being donated to the museum) were missing when the first professional curator was appointed to the museum in 1948. Only then did the numismatic collections begin to be managed appropriately, and order was slowly introduced according to the relevant standards. The Coin Cabinet as a special department in the museum was established as late as 1964. During its first decades, the Coin Cabinet was operating in a small room; it was very poorly supported financially, equipped with only a small number of publications, and with hardly any financial means to be able to enrich its collections. At that time, the first collaboration with other local museums in Slovenia was established but

the documentation of coin finds from the area was never the focus of its interest. During the seventies, the first numismatic monographs were published by the Cabinet in the series of scientific publications of the museum. However, a breakthrough in the development of numismatics in Slovenia was made in 1987 when the Coin Cabinet of the National Bank of Slovenia (established in 1977) was incorporated into the National Museum's Coin Cabinet. Since then, the financial support of the National Bank (now Bank of Slovenia) on a yearly basis has been secured. Today, the Coin Cabinet of the National Museum of Slovenia has charge of 74,000 items and the collections are rapidly growing thanks to its clear acquisition and collecting policy. Significantly, this number represents only half of the number of numismatic items known to have been kept in the museum before World War II. A huge special numismatic library enables the two curators to study in-depth almost every numismatic item found in the territory of modern Slovenia. A permanent numismatic exhibition cannot be presented to the public because of the lack of exhibition space in the museum. Temporary numismatic exhibitions are therefore occasionally prepared and presented in Slovenia and abroad. Today, the staff of the Coin Cabinet is also involved in teaching at the University of Ljubljana.

Other provincial museums in Slovenia, some of them established as early as the second half of the 19th century (like Ptuj, Celje), also have smaller numismatic collections consisting mostly of numismatic material found in the area (for instance, the Roman towns of Poetovio and Celeia). In these museums, however, there is no special numismatic literature nor is the appropriate academic staff available.

Mostly on the basis of the sketched past development of the Coin Cabinet of the National Museum of Slovenia, it is clear that its development has resulted in the fact that it is the only numismatic institution in the Republic of Slovenia, and as such is responsible for numismatics throughout Slovenia. Due to the initiative and activity of its staff, permanent numismatic exhibitions were set up in the regional museums at Ptuj and Celje in the late eighties of the past century and small accompanying booklets on numismatics were published. Simultaneously with the preparation of these exhibitions, the numismatic material was studied and documented in these and some other local museums. Already in the late seventies, the project of documenting the Celtic, Roman, and Byzantine numismatic heritage from the territory of Slovenia was initiated in the Coin Cabinet of the National Bank of Slovenia and later taken over by the Coin Cabinet of the National Museum of Slovenia. The project *Die Fundmünzen der römischen Zeit in Slovenia* was born, and from that time we can also speak of the beginnings of the creation of a central database of the numismatic heritage from the whole area of Slovenia. A couple of years ago the preparation of a corpus of medieval and modern coin finds from the territory of Slovenia was introduced by Andrej Šemrov.

The central numismatic database, comprising public and private collections in Slovenia and coin finds from its territory, was therefore foremost the result of different research projects of individual curators and of their enthusiasm, as well as of their effective collaboration with the personnel of the local museums. Only in autumn 2000 did the Slovenian state endorse legislation according to which the national museums became officially responsible for the creation of central databases of mobile cultural heritage. With this act, the Coin Cabinet is now for the very first time officially responsible for the central database of the numismatic heritage on the territory of Slovenia. Thanks to the enthusiasm of its curators in the past, however, a great part of the work has already unofficially been completed. The database today comprises data about the collections of nearly all local museums as well as some private collections. It also contains data on coin finds from all periods which have been excavated during archaeological research in Slovenia. With varying success we are also trying to incorporate into the database coins which have been illegally found by means of metal detectors. This policy might be morally questionable but data on new archaeological sites and their approximate dating are secured in this way. At the present time, the central Slovenian numismatic database includes ca.106,000 objects but it is yet far from being completed (ca.5,000-6,000 coins per year are being found).

It has been shown that the number of documented numismatic monuments has grown rapidly during the past two decades and the preparation of documentation cards and of catalogues or publications became more and more time consuming. At the end of the eighties the huge amount of data became barely manageable. A rapid switch to the creation of a computer steered database was therefore essential.

In 1988, the collaborators of the Coin Cabinet (Peter Kos, Andrej Šemrov, Robert Primoi) undertook the project of developing a computer program which is today called NUMIZ. One of the main aims was that it should be as user-friendly as possible. The program is intended for use by numismatists, primarily in museums or institutions with large collections of monetary material. Hence, simplicity of design and ease of use were essential. This modified database program does not require advanced computer skills on the part of the user either in entering individual data or in searching through the database itself (i.e. for specific subjects).

NUMIZ provides an elegant manner of entering all the relevant data into the database (taking into account all data connected with a museological item, i.e. coin, banknote, medal, etc., as well as all archaeological data connected with the exact provenance of the coin). Searches can then be made according to any possible information requirement. The curator directly enters all the required information into the computer. In the case of a coin, for instance, this might include date, ruler, mint, etc., in addition to provenance. On the basis of the object under consideration,

required entry fields (e.g. different fields for the input of data for a Celtic coin or a modern medal) are automatically shown on the screen. These fields correspond to the type of material being entered into the program. All special mint-mark symbols, monograms as well as countermarks are incorporated into the program, which also enables the writing of obverse and reverse legends in Greek. Furthermore - since the electronic scale Mettler is connected to the computer - the program also enables the automatic transmission and storage of weight data.

What is important and new, however, is the fact that the NUMIZ program is able to perform the management of data according to built-in parameters (chronological and geographical as well as purely editorial), which correspond to the standards of various international projects, such as *Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum*, *Fundmünzen der römischen Zeit* (comprising single and grave finds as well as hoards), and catalogues of numismatic collections (coins, medals, banknotes) or catalogues of coin finds from other periods (Celtic, mediaeval, modern). For instance, the whole chronology of rulers and their family members in the Roman, Byzantine and Ostrogothic Empires (as well as in Medieval and Modern Europe) has been built into the program, thus making it possible to trace an exact chronological sequence through the automatic cataloguing of coins. After considering the chronological sequence, the following aspects are also automatically taken into account for out-print: the sequence of mints (from the West to the East) and within this segment also the sequence of mint *officinae* (noted with Roman: *P*(rima), *S*(ecunda), *T*(ertia), etc., or Greek alphabets: *A*, *B*, *Γ*), the sequence of denominations (from larger to smaller), the sequence of catalogue numbers of standard publications (e.g. RIC [The Roman Imperial Coinage, Vols. I-X, London 1928-1994], MIB [W. HAHN, *Moneta Imperii Byzantini*, Bd. 1-3, Wien 1973-1981]), etc. Additionally, the entire development and typology of European Celtic coinage has been inserted into the program to help establish the exact geographical and chronological sequence of Celtic coins in the printed catalogue. The geographical distribution of Greek coins according to Eckhel (J.H. Eckhel, *Doctrina numorum veterum*, (Vindobona 1792)) has also been built into the program.

The program NUMIZ (its Windows version is in preparation) in addition to the printing of documentation cards, coin bags, acquisition and inventory books also further enables the direct printing of:

- 1) Paginated print-ready catalogues of a coin collection or its segment with corresponding footnotes and elaborated indices. There are different parameters built into the program for editing a catalogue either of a collection of Celtic, Roman or Mediaeval coins, whereas a catalogue of Greek coins is always printed out according to the project *Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum*,
- 2) Paginated print-ready catalogues of coins found at various sites or areas with corresponding footnotes, numbered site complexes (Celtic,

Roman, Mediaeval), and numerous automatically elaborated indices: geographical (according to alphabetical criteria, by hoards, and according to chronological criteria) and purely numismatic (e.g. Republican coins, Roman provincial coins, halved coins, countermarks, imitations, etc.).

- 3) An edited catalogue of a coin hoard, taking into account, for instance, the criterium of decreasing weights in coins of the same type.
- 4) Paginated print-ready SNG volumes according to the relevant standards valid for the project *Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum* (paginated, with the number of the coins listed on one page corresponding to the number of the photographs of the coins on the opposite page, and with various indices).

All preparations for printing are elaborated according to the specified format of each publication.

The computer program NUMIZ further enables the analysis of numerous data. For instance, it can produce lists of coins from different minting periods by number and percentage (using the formula of Ravetz where the duration of the minting period is also taken into account), which are automatically transmitted into the program QUATTRO PRO or Microsoft EXCEL. In this program the bar or line graphs for chosen sites or regions are automatically elaborated and drawn, representing the intensity of monetary circulation at single sites or in broader regions. The graphs can be additionally edited (for instance, inserted texts) and printed.

The data of the exact site of the coin (such as for the projects *Die Fundmünzen der römischen Zeit* and *Die Fundmünzen des Mittelalters und der Neuzeit*) are automatically transmitted into the graphics program AutoCAD 12, thus allowing for the production of distribution maps of coins of either single rulers, mints, denominations, minting period or hoards of a specific period. The distribution can be shown for the area of a whole country or for merely an archaeological stratum, according to the user's specific requirements.

Since the program NUMIZ takes into account all possible parameters, its application is appropriate for museums and private collections as well as for other institutions whose research also includes numismatics. It is, moreover, also suitable for universities, since its use enables students to learn which aspects should be taken into consideration when working on a specific project (SNG, Fundmünzen, the publication of a collection).

As already mentioned, the personnel of the Coin Cabinet of the National Museum of Slovenia is providing the support in documenting numismatic material from all Slovenian regional museums. In such a way the central numismatic database for the country is being created on the computer server of the National Museum of Slovenia. Access to this server is enabled for the regional museums via modems and through the relevant

password each museum gains access to its part of the database. Access to the database is possible also through the Internet.

At the same time special computer programs for archaeological material (ARHEO) as well as for objects of the applied arts (FUNDUS) were created by other departments of the National Museum of Slovenia. All three programs are compatible and it is possible to intertwine them on some joint topics, such as on the basis of site data. So, for instance, we can acquire complex data about the material (numismatic and archaeological) from different sites.

It has already been noted that the state of Slovenia has invested the Coin Cabinet of the National Museum of Slovenia (and some other of the museum's departments) with the official task of creating a central numismatic database as one of its primary tasks and duties. According to the Ministry of Culture, access to the database should be given to the broadest possible public.

Since the creation of any database is governed by the law on intellectual property rights, the level of the accession rights to the database for different users is still under question. The Coin Cabinet is unwilling to enable free access to the databases - which have been created by its collaborators during the past 15 years - to the broadest public without any restrictions and intends to suggest a policy of regulating public access. Access to the numismatic database of individual museums will, beyond any doubt, be possible for a responsible curator of such a museum with a designated password. We are proposing the same policy of access for material which was excavated by official institutions (museums, institute of archaeology, heritage protection services) and submitted for evaluation to the Coin Cabinet. We intend to enable access for the broader public to that part of the collections of the Coin Cabinet of the National Museum of Slovenia which have already been published, however only to a certain level. The same policy will be introduced regarding that part of the database comprising the data on coin finds from different periods from the area of Slovenia which have already been published in the series FMRS1 or *Fundmünzen des Mittelalters und der Neuzeit*. Access to the unpublished and unevaluated part of the database will be denied to the public and only the most general data on the find site will be given to the Ministry. At the present time the central Slovenian numismatic database contains ca.106,000 objects but it is yet far from being completed.