

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The story of the Glagolitic script is a story of Croatian literacy, its beginnings and roots which have nourished the many branches of the rich tree of Croatian culture for centuries. And we always return to the roots – so that we do not forget who we actually are. The lines which we carefully draw by pencil or quill to shape the intricate letters of the Glagolitic cuneiform script – quite like the monks in monastery scriptoriums did in the old days – also delineate the contours of our identity, which in its complexity has never lost touch with the awareness of the glorious past. Therefore the Glagolitic alphabet, i.e. Glagolitsa, is not only an old script – it has long transcended its original boundaries and become a symbol within Croatian cultural context.

The transformation that the Glagolitic script went through along its historical path, from being a customary writing system to becoming a symbol, runs parallel with its journey from the book to the museum, which has taken it in and gives it a secure home in modern times. This transition proved both natural and useful, since it saved the Glagolitic script from fading into historical oblivion. Nevertheless, the museum must by no means be its final place of residence. In our endeavour to preserve the Glagolitic alphabet and everything that it represents to us, we must think of the future, new media and modern ways in which we will make it available and interesting to the coming generations. The significance of the National and University Library in Zagreb and its vital social function give it a prominent role in this context.

The exhibition *The Luminance of the Glagolitic Script*, already recognized in some public circles as a praiseworthy combination of sophisticated artistic techniques and motifs particularly significant for Croatian culture, has moved from Rijeka, where it originated, to the National and University Library in Zagreb. This journey also represents a symbolic transition – beginning in the Croatian Littoral, the cradle of the Glagolitic script, and leading to the library which preserves the first Croatian Glagolitic incunabulum, the first missal in Europe not printed in the Latin script. Being fully aware of the role and mission of the Library, as the shrine of Croatian written heritage, as well as of our responsibility to preserve the Glagolitic script for the future, we consider this exhibition the most suitable and timely occasion for the announcement of Virtual Glagolitic Script Centre, a project which will assemble the rich and diversified Croatian Glagolitic heritage and make it available to everyone. In this way the Glagolitic script will take a major step toward tomorrow: from museums and libraries it will pass into our homes. Our cooperation with the University Library Rijeka is similarly symbolic – this library has hosted a permanent Glagolitic script exhibition ever since 1968 and it became our first partner institution in the project Virtual Glagolitic Script Centre. It is absolutely essential to use this occasion to call for cooperation all the institutions, individuals and organizations whose great past contributions to the preservation of the Glagolitic script make them indispensable in establishing the future Virtual Glagolitic Script Centre.

I express my gratitude to everyone whose efforts and dedication contributed to the organizing of this exhibition and Željka and Boris Rogić, who saw the National and University Library in Zagreb as the perfect place to host their artistic impression of the Glagolitic alphabet. And here the story of the Glagolitic script goes on. Into the future.

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