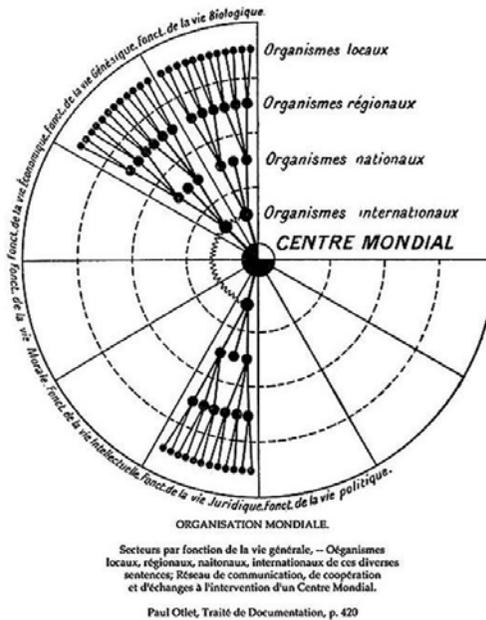


# Occasional Papers

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## MUNDANEUM: ARCHIVES OF KNOWLEDGE



Sectors by general functions in life—local, regional, national, international organisms in these different areas; network of communication, of cooperation, and of exchanges through a World Center, Paul Otlet, *Traité de Documentation*, p. 420.

Translated and adapted by  
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## PREFACE

The original version of *Mundaneum: Les Archives de la Connaissance* was published by Les Impressions Nouvelles in Brussels in 2008. Beautifully designed by the publisher, its text was prepared by the professional staff of the Mundaneum: Raphaële Cornille, Stéphanie Manfroid, and Manuela Valentino, the whole coordinated by Charlotte Dubray. Working within strict space limits, they produced a book filled with striking images, in color as well as black and white, drawn from the collections of the Mundaneum by Raphaële Cornille. This pictorial emphasis necessarily limited the amount and order of text that could be included. Moreover the book was designed to be read in a movement from the provision of quickly apprehended summary information to longer sections providing more depth, and this leads to some repetition.

I have both translated and adapted the book for the English version. I have been able to include almost none of the illustrations of the original French version and have selected and commented on other illustrations that I hope will add substantively to the text. Without the same restrictions on space, I have here and there also added to the text in a way that I hope is helpful to the English reader but otherwise unnoticeable. I have also here and there, in consultation with Stéphanie Manfroid, the archivist in charge of the Service des archives at the Mundaneum, introduced some corrections and changes to the original text. Jacques Gillen, from the Service des archives, has read my English text with an eagle eye and helped in a myriad of other ways. A special vote of thanks goes to Raphaële Cornille for her help in finding and copying images.

A word about names of organizations, associations, and so on. In most cases I have given the French name first, followed by an English translation. Where the English seems so similar to the French as to be almost simple repetition, I have left the French stand alone. In the case of International organizations that are officially “bilingual,” I have tended to give the English name alone.

As one of the academic researchers from around the world, whom Charlotte Dubray mentions in her introduction, I can testify to the helpfulness with which such persons are received within the Mundaneum. I can also testify to the extraordinary riches of its collections. For the Belgian student and historian, they are simply a treasure trove awaiting much fuller exploitation than has hitherto been the case, though use has been rapidly increasing. But I suspect that anyone who is interested in almost any area of European history in the first half of

*Mundaneum: Archives of Knowledge*

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the twentieth century might well find something of value in these collections so extraordinarily ramified and various were the networks in which Otlet and La Fontaine took an active part. And of course the two men tended to retain compulsively the documentation arising from these interactions.

W. Boyd Rayward,  
Professor Emeritus,  
University of Illinois &  
University of New South Wales

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## FOREWORD

*Mundaneum: Archives of Knowledge* testifies to the utopianism of two men, Paul Otlet and Henri La Fontaine. Descendants of the Enlightenment and of nineteenth century positivism, and committed pacifists, they embarked on a bibliographic adventure that would create international networks designed to promote the exchange of knowledge. Over time Paul Otlet became a collector of documents, any kind of document, from the book to the image. He had become persuaded that the dissemination of knowledge will lead to universal peace. Henri La Fontaine's was a political life. He received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1913. The two men were visionaries in many ways as they imagined, dreamed, planned. Some of their dreams were realized while they lived or later, but others, too grandiose, were never achieved. The utopia of a World City, which was to have charge of the peaceful destiny of the Nations, was the most emblematic of these failed dreams.

In 1993, on the initiative of Elio Di Rupo and supported by Jean-Paul Baras and Jean-Paul Deplus, part of the surviving collection of this gigantic enterprise of Otlet and La Fontaine came to Mons. A nonprofit association was charged with managing, conserving, and developing the collections. It was called Mundaneum after the neologism that Paul Otlet had used so long ago. In June 1998, the Mundaneum, now a center for the unofficial archives of the French Community of Belgium, inaugurated its new museum. Situated in the historic heart of Mons between the rue de Nimy and the rue de Passages, the Mundaneum since that date has occupied the repurposed art deco buildings of an old department store called "Indépendance."

Remodelled in 1998, the complex consists of three buildings. Two of the buildings house the archives while the third has been transformed into a museum space open to the public. The museum has been organized around a large rectangular room surrounded by two levels of galleries. A first scenographic step—undertaken by Benoît Peeters, François Schuiten, and the staff of the Bleu Lumière—symbolized what was essential in Otlet and La Fontaine's thinking by the conjunction of three elements: at the center, a slowly rotating impressive terrestrial globe; on the walls, the original bibliographic repertory; and on the ceiling, a vault displaying a futuristic vision of the information highway. Ten years later a second scenographic approach is being examined to further enrich the significance of the setting.

The year 2008 marks the tenth year of existence of the exhibition space of the Mundaneum and provides an opportunity for an appraisal of what has been done. During these years, reclassifications, inventories, and publications have followed each other, bringing their share of discoveries and surprises. A fuller

knowledge of the vast bequest that these two men have left us has renewed our understanding of their remarkable work. The time has come, therefore, to publish a synthesis of what we now know and to share it with you.

More than a traditional archival center, the Mundaneum's situation reflects its double heritage. A physical heritage, that of archives and collections, but also a spiritual heritage, that of ideas of peace, of access to knowledge, of justice, of democracy, and of humanism that were championed by Otlet and La Fontaine throughout the whole of their lives. This spiritual affiliation, in the light of today's social changes, guarantees the vitality of a project that constantly has to find new ways of revealing its relevance.

To carry out its mission for sharing knowledge, the Mundaneum is preparing for the transmission of its physical heritage by beginning to digitize its collections and to put its inventories online. In parallel, aimed at a wide public, it is organizing exhibitions of heritage materials that interrogate the present, lectures that explore the future for a better way of life, scientific or philosophic colloquia, debates about ideas for a new kind of citizenship, and also versions of these matters for young people. Oriented towards the world, towards the future, it is a lively place for opening things up and for exchange.

What are the issues for the coming years?

First of all, our storage space needs to be improved and expanded so as to be able to keep our six running kilometres of documents in good condition. The present conservation arrangements in effect increase the fragility of a heritage that history has not spared from harm.

Next, the Mundaneum needs to engage in the world of scholarship. Making our digitized archives available on the Net is an immediate requirement, but other ways need to be explored such as rethinking museology and interacting with scholarly networks.

Finally, we intend to become involved with a renewal of what have been called pedagogical methodologies by reexamining the triangular relationship between teacher, student, and cultural function. The future of our societies depends on the future creativity of our youth. We want to stimulate in them the desire to learn.

Already uniquely positioned because of the distinctiveness of its heritage, the Mundaneum is committed to a policy of partnership with Belgian and European regional, cultural, and scientific institutions. A place of reference for teachers, library school students, historians, and other adults seeking information, the Mundaneum regularly receives researchers from around the world. It holds dear at the heart of its archives the ideal of a better world.

Charlotte Dubray,  
Director, Mundaneum

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## PART I: MEN IN THE SERVICE OF KNOWLEDGE AND PEACE



**Illus.1: Paul Otlet (center) and Henri and Mathilde La Fontaine (right) outside the Palais Mondial (undated) (other figures unknown)**

### *PAUL OTLET (1868-1944)*

Recognized as the father of modern documentation, Paul Otlet was a passionate innovator—in architecture, urbanism, documentation, bibliography, and museology. His interest in the sciences led to his discovery of the power of bibliography. This tool became his major focus for providing an information basis for reorganizing society in the interests of progress. His interest in architecture enabled him to imagine structures and forms both physical and conceptual in a concrete way.

### *HENRI LA FONTAINE (1854-1943)*

A diplomat of a new kind, Henri La Fontaine received the 1913 Nobel Peace Prize for his work for the International Peace Bureau among other pacifist undertakings. He was a distinguished participant in the long battle for pacifism and feminism and a lifelong collaborator with Paul Otlet.

## PAUL OTLET (1868-1944)

**Illus. 2: Paul Otlet**

A product of the Brussels middle classes, Paul Otlet's life at first took a traditional direction. His father, Édouard Otlet, an industrialist and politician, made his fortune in the construction of tram and railways across Europe and elsewhere. L'Entreprise, the company that he directed, managed the family's financial and commercial interests that reached across the entire globe. The professional career of the young Paul Otlet was at first determined by this family context in that he began to study law to enable him to be in a position to defend the family's legal and financial interests. But his passion lay elsewhere in a universe abounding in knowledge that he dreamt of exploring. At 20, he already had two publications to his credit, *l'Île du Levant* (1882) and *l'Afrique aux noirs* (Africa for the Blacks) (1888).

His law degree in his pocket, Otlet was articulated to the famous Brussels lawyer and literary figure Edmond Picard. Otlet became part of the multidisciplinary team mobilized to compile and publish the *Pandectes belges*, an enormous compendium of Belgian jurisprudence, founded in 1878 by Picard and edited by him until his death in 1924 at which time 117 volumes of the still unfinished work had been produced. In Picard's offices, Otlet became aware of bibliography as a predominating interest, a domain that later he was to seek to elevate into a science. It is here, too, that he might first have met Henri La Fontaine, at one time Picard's secretary.

At first Otlet continued to be attentive to his family obligations. In 1901, he took over from his father the direction of the family company that had been formed to exploit their hunting grounds in Westende as a seaside resort, a major development that his father had begun in 1894. Working with the architect Octave Van Rysselberghe in the planning of Westende, Otlet's interest in architecture and urban development began to find daring expression. His collaboration with Van Rysselberghe had begun a few years earlier at the time of the construction of Otlet's house in Brussels, which remains a landmark example of art nouveau design. Inspired by recent developments in Garden-City urbanist theory, the two men set about creating a model seaside community. It was designed to attract modest as well as privileged families. The eventual bankruptcy of the venture and its almost total destruction in World War I have left almost no traces of this initially successful effort of urban planning.

Otlet's most lasting legacy was the International Institute and Office of Bibliography (Institut and Office international de bibliographie) created with Henri La Fontaine in 1895 to prepare a bibliography of the publications of all times and places. This was supported by a library and was gradually extended into a center for universal documentation organized according to the principals of the Universal Decimal Classification or UDC. This was based on Melvil Dewey's Decimal Classification that Otlet had discovered in 1894 and with his colleagues was to transform. Otlet envisioned as the ultimate form of documentation the creation of a new kind of encyclopedia constituted from all sources of knowledge without limits. He also redefined the concept of the museum which, for many of his contemporaries, was still no more than the cabinet of curiosities typical of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries or a monumental exhibition space for artistic treasures. His approach led to the inauguration after the First World War of a new kind of museum in the Parc du Cinquantenaire in the center of Brussels, The Palais Mondial (Word Palace, 1920), later called Mundaneum.

In 1907, Paul Otlet and Henri La Fontaine founded a Central Office of International Associations (UIA) which became the headquarters of the Union of International Associations that grew out of a huge international congress that they organized in 1910. Their aim was to link and encourage some kind of coordinated action between the rapidly increasing numbers of international associations of various nongovernmental kinds, many with headquarters in Brussels. After 1910, Otlet began to direct much of his energy to developing his concept of a Cité mondiale or World Center which, supported by the international community, might in time become humanity's intellectual and moral capital. To help bring this gigantic, utopian project into existence physically, he sought the help successively of Hendrik Andersen, a Norwegian-American sculptor in Rome who was developing architectural plans related to a similar project, and the great modernist architect, Le Corbusier, who collaborated with Otlet for a number of years. A number of other well-known architects of the time were also attracted to attempting to find a physical representation of

Otlet's world city ideas. An extremely diverse range of sites was envisaged for the foundation of this great but never-to-be-realized urban adventure.

At the very outset of World War I, Otlet had proposed the foundation of a League of Nations based on a charter of human rights. He was to work tirelessly during the war for this idea and so can be considered to have made important contributions to the movement that ultimately led to the creation of the League of Nations. He and La Fontaine were also prominent among those who argued for the creation within this new assembly of nations of an organ for international intellectual cooperation. This was to become the International Institute for Intellectual Cooperation (IIIC) headquartered in Paris, the forerunner to UNESCO.

The bibliography of Otlet's publications is enormously long, but his major works were the *Traité de Documentation, le livre sur le livre* (Treatise on Documentation: the Book about the Book), published in 1934, and *Monde* (World), published in 1935. The former, synthesizing his decades of experience working in his various organizations and thinking about documentation, became not only a work of reference but perhaps one of the first comprehensive treatises on what was later to be known as "information science." It discussed the nature and relationships of the various formats and media in which knowledge is conveyed. Among the many innovative ideas expressed in these books were what Otlet called "Livre irradié" (the broadcast book) and the "livre téléphoté" or "Telephoto Book." He described what we would know as a scholar's work station (sometimes called by him Mondotheque) in which were incorporated a range of multimedia functionalities some of which have still not become routinely available in personal computers. He also wrote extensively about the need for a universal network for the communication of knowledge. His theoretical approach to the organization and dissemination of information was far ahead of its time, notably in foreshadowing the Internet, Hypertext, and the World Wide Web.

HENRI LA FONTAINE (1854-1943)



**Illus. 3: Henri La Fontaine**

A product of the upper middle classes, Henri La Fontaine was the older child of Alfred La Fontaine, a government official, and Marie Louise Philips, a well-known feminist. The education that Henri and his younger sister, Léonie, received was strongly influenced by the positivism of Auguste Comte and by pacifist and feminist values. These had a profound impact on the brother's and sister's personalities.

His studies led Henri La Fontaine to specialize in international law. His belief in the progress of law and of justice led him to adopt a pacifist approach to social action. Thus began his work within a diverse range of international associations that then lay at the margins of traditional diplomacy. From the beginning of the twentieth century, he was intensely active especially in the Interparliamentary Union and the International Peace Bureau. He was president of the latter from 1907 until his death thirty five years later.

La Fontaine's modern conception of politics recognized that individual rights were the basis of democracy. The rights of minorities became an especially important aspect of his work. He also played an important role in the feminist movement of the period in which questions of education and access to the professions were central. From 1879, he was involved in the management of the Bischoffsheim School in Brussels which offered professional education to young girls from modest backgrounds. "The Popelin Affair" of 1888 involved

a male veto that effectively denied Marie Popelin, a university graduate in law, admission to the Bar and hence to the legal profession. La Fontaine took an active part in the feminist protests that followed. In 1892, he participated in the foundation of the *Ligue du Droit des Femmes* (the League for Women's Rights). In 1901 he published *La Femme et le Barreau* (Women and the Bar), which cemented his reputation as a defender of a political minority that was not fully enfranchised in Belgium until 1948.

His political views were profoundly affected by the controversies occasioned by the extension of universal suffrage in Belgium. In 1889, he became a member of the *Cercle des étudiants et anciens étudiants socialistes* (Current and Former Socialist Students Club). The major concerns of this group, founded among others by Louis de Brouckère and Emile Vandervelde, later to become prominent socialist politicians, were popular education and work regulation. In 1893, after much social unrest, the Belgian constitution was revised. In the lower house of the parliament, the Chamber of Deputies, the franchise was extended universally to men but with multiple votes for those meeting certain conditions. In the upper house or Senate, a complicated system was put in place. A number of senators able to meet certain qualifications were directly elected while a number were appointed by Provincial Councils. In the elections of 1894 following the promulgation of the new constitution, Henri La Fontaine took his seat as a provincial senator, thus becoming one of the first Socialist Senators in the Belgian parliament. After the War, he became a Vice-President of the Senate, later premier Vice-president. He was to remain almost uninterruptedly as a provincial senator until 1932, with a brief further period in 1935-6.

In the early part of his career, he collaborated in the development of the *Pandectes belges*, in association with its founder and editor, Edmond Picard, to whom he was secretary. As was the case later with Paul Otlet when he was a young articled clerk of Picard, this encyclopaedic work provided La Fontaine's introduction to the world of bibliography. And this in turn may have led to the foundation of his friendship with Otlet, who shared La Fontaine's pacifist view of society and interests in bibliography.

When the International Office of Bibliography was created in 1895 by the two men, Henri La Fontaine played a major role in adapting Melvil Dewey's Decimal Classification to form the Universal Decimal Classification (UDC). He was to make major contributions to the preparation and publication of the first two complete editions of the UDC (1905 and 1933).

During the First World War, La Fontaine's major publication on the subject of peace was in English, *The Great Solution: Magnissima Charta, Essay on Evolutionary and Constructive Pacifism*. In it he not only developed a plan for a League of Nations but also called presciently for the constitution of a United States of Europe. At the end of the war, as a member of the Belgian delegation to the

Peace Conference in Paris in 1919 and a member of the Belgian delegation to the first General Assemblies of the League of Nations in the period 1920 to 1922, he participated in the foundational work of this forerunner to the United Nations and was *rapporteur* for the first meetings of its Committee for Intellectual Cooperation. Later, after his mandate as an official member of the Belgian delegation was withdrawn by the government, with Otlet he tried from the outside but not very successfully to encourage cooperation between the League's International Committee in Geneva (and later Institute for Intellectual Cooperation in Paris) and the International Institute of Bibliography and Union of International Associations (UIA) that he and Otlet had founded in 1895 and 1907, respectively, in Brussels.

These involvements did not express all the many facets of his personality. An amateur poet, he was also devoted to music, alpinism, and Free Masonry. The last was a particularly vital interest associated with his pacifism and internationalism. At 28 he had been initiated into the extraordinarily influential Loge des Amis Philanthropes (the Philanthropic Friends Lodge) in Brussels and rose to be several times its Venerable Master. He was also, not surprisingly, involved in the foundation of the first mixed gender masonic lodge in Belgium, la Loge de Droit Humain (The Human Rights Lodge) and developed an extensive international network of masonic relationships. Throughout his long life he remained faithful to these first commitments expressed as: "To Work for the Progress of Humanity."

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## PART II: INSTITUTIONS IN THE SERVICE OF KNOWLEDGE AND PEACE



**Illus. 4: Catalog Room, International Office of Bibliography**

### THE INTERNATIONAL OFFICE AND INSTITUTE OF BIBLIOGRAPHY

Otlet and La Fontaine's work in Edmond Picard's law offices had stimulated them to recognize that bibliography, in providing information potentially on the existence of all the works that existed on a subject regardless of format, location, and language, was an indispensable tool for the discovery, organization, and utilization of published knowledge.

Acting on this realization in 1893 in relation to law and the social sciences, Otlet and La Fontaine founded the International Office of Sociological Bibliography. This was to continue and expand the bibliographical activities, in which La Fontaine had been deeply involved for a number of years, of the Brussels-based Société d'études sociales et politiques (Society for Social and Political Studies) and later of the Institut des sciences sociales. The aim of the International Office of Sociological Bibliography was to collect and organize information related to the social sciences and to coordinate two bibliographical publications, one on

law and the other on sociology for which the two men had assumed responsibility. While the Office dealt principally with current publications, it also aimed to collect everything relevant that had been published in earlier periods. It was organized into four services: bibliographic publications, card catalogues, collections on cards of social facts and, finally, a special library.

There had, of course, been forerunners to the idea of creating organizations dedicated to the compilation by international collaboration of bibliographies in various areas of the sciences and social sciences. A resolution to this effect, for example, had been adopted at the International Congress of Statistics in 1856. A similar project had been presented at the Antwerp International Conference on the book in 1890 on the occasion of the three hundredth anniversary of the death of Plantin. In 1885, the Société mathématique de France had created a *Répertoire bibliographique des sciences mathématiques* that was to have a relatively long international life. In England in 1867, the Royal Society had begun to issue its great *Catalogue of Scientific Papers*, covering the literature of the sciences of the nineteenth century. This was not to be completed essentially until 1925. Almost contemporaneously with Otlet and La Fontaine's work for the International Office of Sociological Bibliography, however, important bibliographical discussions were taking place in the Belgian Royal Academy and in the Royal Society of London. The Royal Society was especially important in this respect in that, building on its experience with the *Catalogue of Scientific Papers*, it was beginning to explore the idea of publishing for the twentieth century a new kind of comprehensive bibliography of the sciences that would be compiled by systematic international cooperation. Most of these discussions and the projects they represented were initially carried out independently of each other in the different countries involved.

In Brussels, then, in September 1895, with support from the Belgian Government and under the aegis of the International Office of Sociological Bibliography, Otlet and La Fontaine convened a general International Conference on Bibliography. Before scholars, bibliographers, and librarians from around the world, Otlet and La Fontaine revealed the results of their work at the International Office of Sociological Bibliography and discussed the enlarged ideas that this work had inspired in them. Important in what they displayed to the conference participants was a major component of the catalogue of the Office of Sociological Bibliography. The catalogue had been rapidly reclassified according to Melvil Dewey's Decimal Classification that Otlet had recently discovered. The practical experience in bibliography of the two men along with the revelation of the potential for bibliographic organization of the Decimal Classification had led them to envisage the creation of an infinitely larger project than what they had begun to call the *Bibliographia Sociologica*. They named this new creation the *Répertoire bibliographique universel* or Universal Bibliographical Repertory (or catalogue—often referred to simply as the RBU). This would embrace all knowledge domains. They sought among other things the conference's support to create the RBU, to accept the

Decimal Classification for international use in the organization of the RBU, to encourage the standardization of bibliographical methods, and to create a system of international cooperation to help achieve these objectives.

The major outcomes of the conference were an agreement that the RBU was desirable, that it should be elaborated on cards, and that it should be classified according to what was to become the UDC. The basis for international cooperation in these ventures was the decision to set up an International Institute of Bibliography. The importance of forming an International Bibliographical Union of Bibliographical Associations and Organizations from around the world was also acknowledged. This idea was constantly to recur in Otlet's thinking and work, though it was never to materialize. Otlet even proposed, without success, that such a union should become part of the structure of scientific unions set up after World War I as components of the International Research Council that was soon to transition into the International Council of Scientific Unions.

Official acknowledgement of the conference's resolutions occurred a few days after the conclusion of the conference when a Royal Decree of 17th of September 1895 created the Office international de bibliographie (International Office of Bibliography—OIB) as a part of the Belgian administrative establishment. The OIB was given the task of compiling and publishing the RBU. It would also constitute a headquarters organization for the IIB. The latter with its international network of members, was primarily intended to deal with theoretical studies about bibliography as well as the development of the Universal Decimal Classification.

The period before the outbreak of World War I was very fruitful for the two institutions, effectively indistinguishable except for the periodic international conferences of the IIB (1897, 1900, 1908, and 1910). The development and publication of the UDC, the *Bulletin* of the International Institute of Bibliography, and what was called the *Bibliographia Universalis* were all undertaken in this period. The last was a general or "series" designation for a range of specialized bibliographies which were either published by the OIB itself or by other organizations following the methods recommended by the OIB, especially the use of the UDC, to indicate the subject of individual bibliographic entries. The Office developed a good library. It also created a collection of examples and objects related to bibliographical methods (especially cards and cabinets) that initially allowed the OIB to function as a European bibliographical supply agency and that later served as the nucleus of a bibliographical museum. A print shop, l'Auxiliaire bibliographique, was set up to facilitate the OIB's publishing program.

The Office's staff was made up largely of women responsible for the clerical work of physically preparing entries on cards and of specialist collaborators who carried out the intellectual task of classifying them. In the early years, most

of the clerical workers were paid (the pay was poor and sometimes late and they sometimes complained about it), though the more intellectual work was on occasion done by volunteers. The work of the OIB and the IIB advanced rapidly and was exhibited, for example, at the World's Fairs of Brussels in 1897 and Paris in 1900 where it was awarded a gold medal.

The Institute encouraged the development of international agreement and cooperation at several levels. On the one hand, the members of the IIB and scholarly associations and large libraries were encouraged to adopt the bibliographical methods recommended by Brussels, and many did so. But important developments of a different kind were represented by the creation of the Concilium Bibliographicum in 1895 in Zurich and the Bureau bibliographique de Paris (Bibliographic Bureau of Paris) in 1896. These constituted in effect Swiss and French sections of the IIB. Their aim was to cooperate actively in the Institute's bibliographical work in a number of ways but especially by developing special parts of the UDC and publishing bibliographies following the Brussels methods so that the entries in these bibliographies could be incorporated directly into the RBU. They also served as depots for IIB publications, specimens, and bibliographical accessories.

The work of the IIB began to diversify after the beginning of the twentieth century to deal with information in media other than print. According to Otlet and La Fontaine, books and periodicals were not the only containers of information: newspapers, maps, images of all kinds, even objects had documentary functions. This led to Otlet developing the concept of "documentation." For Otlet, documentation was "the means of bringing into use all of the written or graphic sources of our knowledge . . . Documents consist of whatever represents or expresses an object, a fact, an impression by means of any sign whatever (writing, picture, diagrams, symbols)." These ideas led to the creation of special sections in the OIB according to their physical formats. These are discussed in detail below.

During the years of the Office and Institute's greatest success, the work in Brussels excited interest world wide, as correspondence preserved in the Mundaneum's archives attests. Each day dozens of requests were addressed to the IIB. They dealt with the organization of catalogues, bibliographic searches, information on particular class numbers for the UDC, or the purchase of bibliographical cards and card cabinets. The Universal Decimal Classification was gradually adopted by libraries and bibliographical publications throughout the world, and editions in a number of languages were prepared. It is still under active international development.

The First World War severely constrained the work of the Office and Institute, but after it, in 1920, all of the institutions created by Paul Otlet were integrated into a single location in the Palais du Cinquantenaire in Brussels to form the

Palais Mondial. The broadened focus of interest represented by documentation and the international constitution of the IIB, however, eventually led to a change in its name and an eventual relocation. In 1920, a young Dutchman, Frits Donker Duyvis, became interested in the UDC, and in 1924, he was elected to be a third secretary general to take his place beside Otlet and la Fontaine. In 1931, the IIB was renamed as the International Institute for Documentation. In 1934, following the closure of the Mundaneum by the Belgian Government, the headquarters of the IIB was transferred to The Hague, and in 1937, the IID became the International Federation for Documentation, which finally ceased activity in 2001.

All of these projects did not proceed without difficulty even in the pre-War period. But especially after the War, financial resources, consisting of a subsidy from the government and the sale of publications, were no longer sufficient. Relations with the Belgian government also began to deteriorate in this politically and financially unstable period. With the integration in 1920 of all Otlet and La Fontaine's projects to create the Palais Mondial or Mundaneum in the Palais du Cinquantenaire, the fate of all was linked. Thus when the Belgian authorities closed the Palais Mondial in 1934, access to all of its repertoires and collections was denied to Otlet and his collaborators. This event mobilized international bibliographical opinion. Although the French and Swiss national offices of the IIB indicated that they were prepared to take it in, its center henceforth was to be the Hague in association with its Dutch national member, NIDER (Nederlandsch Instituut voor Documentatie en Registratuur, Netherlands Institute for Documentation and Filing). The Science Museum library in England, whose librarian S. C. Bradford was active in the British section of the IIB, the British Society for International Bibliography, undertook to elaborate the science and technology sections of the RBU. But for Paul Otlet and Henri La Fontaine, all of these initiatives were problematic, and they resisted them. Their institutions formed conceptually and physically an integrated whole: for them, The Palais Mondial must not be dismantled.

The RBU and the other collections in the Mundaneum remained closed up in the Palais du Cinquantenaire until 1941 when they were turned out by the occupying German authorities. Set up in new quarters in the Parc Léopold, a provisional arrangement Otlet had rather forlornly hoped, the Mundaneum resumed a much reduced life. Despite these difficulties, the motivation and ideals of Otlet were never compromised, and he continued his work in the relocated Mundaneum until he died in 1944. After his death, two colleagues carried on this work. Georges Lorphèvre as a very young man had joined Otlet as his secretary. André Colet helped to organize the work of Les Amis du Palais Mondial (Friends of the Palais Mondial). Lorphèvre, Colet, and the Friends of the Palais Mondial helped keep alive both the memory of Otlet and La Fontaine but also, before and after Otlet's death, organized various educational programs in association with the Mundaneum and worked with great devotion in the its collections. Its situation in the Parc Léopold, however, became ever more precarious

until 1972 when a series of dislocations of the collections occurred as they were packed up and moved several times from place to place in Brussels. Finally, in 1993, they were given accommodation in Mons in a new archive/museum itself called Mundaneum to make explicit its link to Otlet's Mundaneum. The Card cabinets of the RBU, entrusted to the Royal Library in 1980 following the formal dissolution of the OIB, were placed in the museum walls of the Mundaneum in 1998 as part of the *mise en scène* or scenography of its museum.

### RBU—UNIVERSAL BIBLIOGRAPHIC REPERTORY

The Universal Bibliographic Repertory (Répertoire bibliographique universel—RBU) was in its time perhaps the most important work of the International Office and Institute of Bibliography: first, because it gave the initial propulsion to the work of the institution, then because of the size that it attained and the success that this represented. By 1934, nearly 16 million cards had been collected and classified in the RBU. The RBU was organized to respond to two basic questions, What works have been written by this or that author? and What has been written on this or that subject? Because it was universal in its scope, it was to provide responses without restrictions of time, place, or language.

The elaboration of a work of this size, complexity, and international scope required the adoption of standards both with regard to bibliographical cards and to their arrangement in card cabinets. A format of 12.5 x 7.5 cm was adopted for the bibliographical cards, essentially the 3 x 5 inch format of the American catalogue card. Bibliographical rules defined what information was to be placed on the card (author, publisher, date of publication, notes about the item, subjects, and so on) and where and how it was to be represented on the card (abbreviations, punctuation, order of elements).

The problem of the subject arrangement of the cards was met by the Universal Decimal Classification. The systematic tables of the classification gave each subject, often minutely specified, a number. Cards were organized according to these numbers. To help users find their way in large subject files, colored divisionary cards, with a protruding lip (or tab) marked the major divisions of the classification.

The cards were arranged in card cabinets which had been designed to provide optimal convenience for the physical consultation of the Repertory. The cards of the RBU had a hole at the bottom through which a metal rod was passed to hold the cards in place. A block of wood was also placed inside the drawers and could be shifted along the metal rod in order to make sure the cards were kept upright if a drawer were not completely filled. The triangular form of this block let cards be tilted to facilitate reading. The card cabinets varied in height and could have up to seventy-two drawers. A pullout shelf on which drawers could be rested during consultation was provided at chest level. Wheels gave mobility

to the cabinets, allowing them to be moved about easily to fit the configuration of the different spaces where they might need to be housed.

The Universal Bibliographic Repertory was not a single repertory or dictionary catalogue of the kind found in American public libraries. It was divided. The author or name file was identified by the letter N. The subject file was identified by the letter A and provided information on publications that deal with a particular subject. Besides these principal files was a file for periodical titles (NR), a file for book titles (NT), and also an administrative file (K). The last is now a source of essential information on the activities of the IIB. Everything was listed on cards in this file: letters received, information about the management of the staff, publications, the inventory of collections. It is the source for some of the only information now available on the Collective Library of Learned Associations (*Bibliothèque collective des sociétés savantes*—see below) for which there are few archives in the Mundaneum. File K has provided a list of the affiliated societies and of the catalogues of their libraries.

Since 1998, some of the filing cabinets for the RBU have been used as a design feature for the Museum part of the Mundaneum in Mons. But we now realize that they have a special archival interest today too. The recent discovery in these cabinets of various card drawers with entries related to the management and organization of OIB-IIB activities (essentially File K) has emphasized the fundamental role the Repertory played in the affairs of the Institute.

### UDC—UNIVERSAL DECIMAL CLASSIFICATION

The Universal Decimal Classification (*Classification décimale universelle*) derives from the Decimal Classification developed by Melvil Dewey, one of the founders and later presidents of the American Library Association. It was first published in 1876 and over the years has had many uses and developments in the United States. Paul Otlet and Henri La Fontaine glimpsed in this classification the solution of one of their major requirements for the RBU. While the bibliographical cards of the repertory for authors were filed in alphabetical order by author name, those for the subject repertory had to be classified by the subject treated in the work. Classification requires that words or phrases be found that exactly express the subject or subjects that each book or article deals with. But the choice of these words can vary widely according to who is analyzing the publication: one person, for example, might classify a work under “automobiles” while another might classify it under “cars.” These terms, varying even within a single language, must also be translated into different languages. Limited only to words, a classification could not hope to become universal in scope or available for international use.

For Otlet and La Fontaine, the UDC was able to overcome this linguistic problem by translating words into the universal language of numbers. A classification number was created to correspond to each subject and the number would be the

same no matter the country in which it is used or the language involved. In French, in English, or in German, a work on the natural sciences would always be indexed under the classification number 5.

The principle of the UDC was simple: all of human knowledge was divided into 10 classes to which the numbers 0 to 9 were given. Each class was divided into 10 groups, each group included 10 divisions and each division 10 subdivisions. The UDC was not rigid. To express developments in a subject, for example, a number could be continuously subdivided so that what was new could be given its own place in the classification of that subject. Unlike the American classification, in the UDC the decimal point could be used after the first or second digit of a classification number.

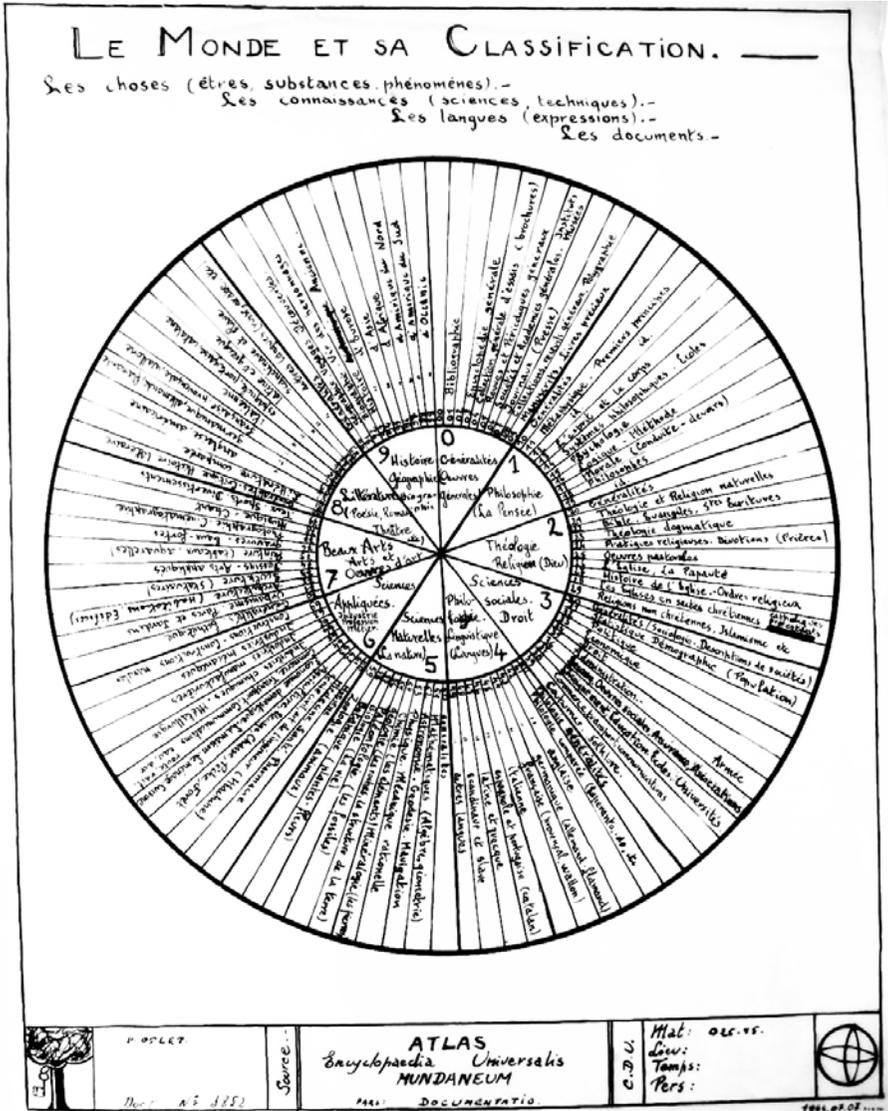
Moreover Otlet suggested that classification numbers could be combined to create compound numbers to express complex subjects: 31:66 refers to a work on *statistics* (31) *of the chemical industries* (66). This subject may have been dealt with in relation to a certain place and time. Thus 31:66 (44) “18” designates a work on the statistics (31) *of the chemical industries* (66) *in France* (44) *in the 19th century* (“18”=1800-1899). These combinations could be completed by subdivisions related to form of the publication (encyclopedia, treatise, and so on) and by the language of the document. Later classification theorists have described as facets these common subdivisions of relation, time, place, form, and language. Combined with classification numbers they provided for great flexibility in expressing subjects and of course can make possible the creation of millions of classification numbers.

While both Otlet and La Fontaine worked together on most aspects of the development of the classification, Paul Otlet was especially concerned with the elaboration of the new mechanisms that they were introducing into the classification. He was also concentrated on developing the international cooperation by means of which the tables were gradually elaborated in ever greater detail. Henri La Fontaine undertook a major role in the actual preparation of the work for publication.

A preliminary French edition of the abridged tables was published by the IIB in 1897 with the title *Classification décimale—Tables générales abrégées* (Decimal Classification: General Abridged Tables). This small publication of 73 pages comprised an introduction to the classification, an account of the common subdivisions, listed the basic tables of subjects ordered according to the UDC, and provided a brief alphabetical index that gave for each word the classification number corresponding to it. The complete edition of the UDC appeared in 1905 as part of the *Manuel du Répertoire Bibliographique Universel* (Handbook of the Universal Bibliographic Repertory). This was over 2000 pages in length, and 1800 pages were devoted to the subject tables.

There have been numerous developments in the UDC in the decades that have followed the first full edition. A number of editions have been published in

English, French, and many other languages, even in Esperanto. By means of the collaboration of enormous numbers of specialists throughout the world, the classification has continued to reflect the technological and scientific advances in all fields of knowledge. It is still being maintained, and versions in several languages continue to be published.



Illus. 5: The World and its Classification: Things (beings, substances, phenomena); Knowledge (the sciences, technologies); Languages (expression); Documents (Paul Oulet—another version of this image is dated 1944.07.07; Atlas: Encyclopedia Universalis Mundaneum)

## PART III: TOWARDS THE DIVERSIFICATION OF THE SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE

La Documentation et ses parties		
But. Fonction. Travaux et opérations de la Documentation	B Eléments	C Ensemble des éléments
<p><u>Les Etudes en général.</u> Intro. Services de la Documentation du travail intellectuel, autres que les livres et la Documentation</p>		
<p><u>Établissement des Publications</u> Rédacteur Auteur Multiplication</p>		
<p><u>Collectionnement des Publications</u> Bibliothèque</p>		
<p><u>Catalogue et description.</u> Bibliographie</p>		
<p><u>Analyse (Abstrait)</u> Contenu Jugement, Critiques</p>		
<p><u>Encyclopédie Documentaire</u> Redistribution d'unités Matérielles</p>		
<p><u>Codification et synthèse</u> Combinaison et fusion d'unités Intellectuelles</p>		
<p><u>La Documentation Administrative</u> Archives</p>		
<p><u>La Muséographie Documentaire</u></p>		
<p><u>Utilisation diverse pour l'Etude</u> Conclu- sion Docu- mentaire Lectures, Consultations</p>		

**Illus. 6: The Components of Documentation**

[A.] Aim, function, tasks and operations of documentation; B. Elements; C. Unification of elements

*In our minds we can envision the day when scientific publications, as a result of a coherent classification and the extreme divisibility of all of its elements, will be more and more integrated with other publications. At that time each substantive piece of information in its particular format will be no more than a part, a chapter, even a simple paragraph in the Universal Book created from day to day and constituting a vast documentary encyclopedia appropriate to our magnificent twentieth century.*

—Paul Otlet

The documentary encyclopedia, undertaken at Paul Otlet's initiative, aimed to bring together all the media of information. The idea was to broaden the traditional conception of encyclopedia and to put it more in tune with the times.

To centralize information no matter the medium in which it appeared—this was what the documentary encyclopedia was all about in that it encompassed information represented not only by books but by journals, newspapers, pamphlets, posters, postcards, photographic glass plates, and instructional media—everything and anything “informative.” The UDC was intended to provide a new kind of arrangement for and access to this new kind of multi-media encyclopedia.

In traditional academic and library circles, the book had long been the preferred tool for disseminating information. Observing the extraordinary growth of science, the increasing difficulties that had arisen in bringing its discoveries to the attention of the public at large, and the great burden of the costs of traditional publication, Otlet suggested that a “continuous” encyclopedia should be developed that could be constantly updated and into which could be integrated various media of information in such a way as to provide access to the totality of available information.

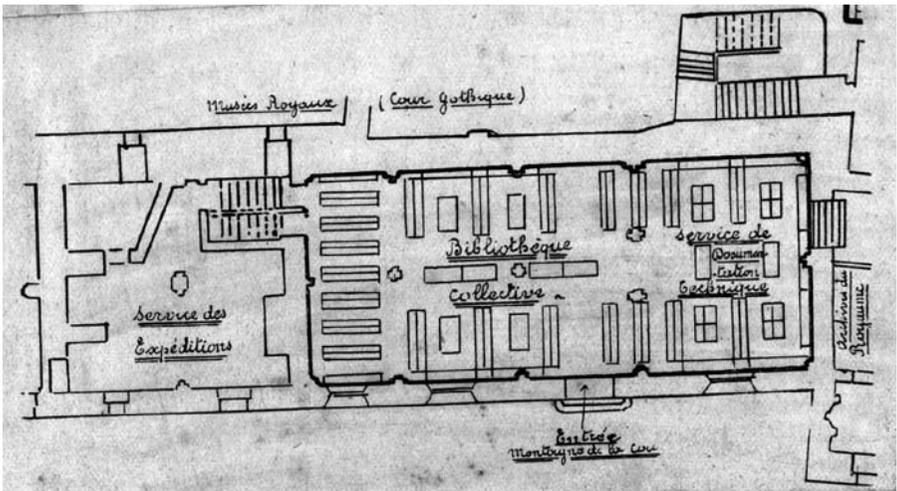
Gradually this documentary unit was structured conceptually into what became distinct areas of activity within the OIB representing different information formats:

- Le Répertoire iconographique universel (Universal Iconographic Repertory) within the Institut international de photographie
- La Bibliothèque collective des sociétés savantes (the Collective Library of Learned Societies)
- Le Répertoire universel de documentation (the Universal Repertory of Documentation)
- Le Musée de la presse (Newspaper Museum)
- Le Musée du livre (Museum of the Book)
- L'Atlas universel or Encyclopedia Universalis Mundaneum.

The UDC was regarded as the ideal tool for the classification of all the information involved, no matter the medium in which it appeared.

#### THE UNIVERSAL ICONOGRAPHIC REPERTORY AND THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF PHOTOGRAPHY

The department for images of the Mundaneum originated as the Institut international de photographie—IIP. This was created in 1905 at the instigation of Ernest de Potter. An amateur photographer and passionate collector, de Potter



**Illus. 7: Aspects of the International Office of Bibliography in central Brussels in 1907.**

The Collective Library of Learned Associations, the Universal Bibliographic Repertory, the International Institute of Photography, and plan of the first premises of the library, the service of technical documentation, and Dispatch Service

offered his services to Otlet and La Fontaine to develop at the OIB a section for collecting documentary images. He donated all of his own collections—glass plates, photographs, postcards, and posters—to this section. This was the beginning of the Universal Iconographic Repertory, documentary files comprised solely of images covering all subjects and arranged by the UDC. The aim of the IIP was to bring together visual knowledge available most importantly through the medium of photography. Documentation by image thus complemented documentation by text. In addition to the Universal Iconographic Repertory, the IIP contained a special library and a “Bibliographical Repertory on the Photographic Sciences” (a card catalogue of publications and articles related to photography). Associated now with the IIB, the *Revue Belge de Photographie* (Belgian Photographic Review), which had been edited by Ernest de Potter since 1896, changed its name to *Revue Internationale de Photographie*.

Interest in images was not solely the province of the IIP. Other institutions of this type had been created at this time such as the Musée des photographies documentaires (Museum of Documentary Photographs) in Paris in 1893 and the Musée suisse des photographies documentaires (Swiss Museum of Documentary Photographs) in Geneva in 1903. In the meetings of international congresses on photography, discussions had taken place on issues such as the role of the photograph as a documentary and historical resource, the creation of photographic archives, legal deposit for photographs, and the preservation of images in their different media.

The new Brussels-based Institut international de photographie received a great deal of attention at the Congrès international de photographie in Marseilles in 1906. Here, Otlet and Ernest de Potter as the Institute’s representatives agreed to undertake the difficult task of creating a universal catalogue along the lines of the Universal Iconographic Repertory of all the existing collections of documentary photographs. The IIP disappeared as a separate unit within the OIB in 1921. Its collections became the Iconographic Section of the Mundaneum. It is important to emphasize, however, that the Mundaneum today is one of the rare institutions to have preserved its photographic collections in their original state. They are still available. In effect, the museums in Paris and Geneva disappeared not long after the Marseilles Congress of Photography in 1906. What they contained was absorbed into larger and more important collections, and all that now testifies to their activities are their inventory books.

## THE COLLECTIVE LIBRARY OF LEARNED ASSOCIATIONS

The project of a universal library became one of Otlet’s major preoccupations in this early period of the life of the IIB-OIB. In effect, of what use is a reference in a bibliography without a library and its books and periodicals to provide the substance of the reference? A library was undeniably the logical complement of the Universal Bibliographical Repertory. In the IIB-OIB, it took the distinctive

form of the Collective Library of Learned Associations which was formally created in 1906. This eventually brought together the libraries of over sixty scholarly societies located in Brussels. Developed as a form of intellectual cooperative, the library maintained the autonomy of each society's collection while centralizing its catalogue and collections in one place. "The Collective Library is thus synonymous with the grouping together of scholarly societies working with the Institute of Bibliography to encourage the progress of documentary organization and to create access in common to their collections." Each association dealt with its own area of interest and arranged for the classification of its books according to the UDC. Each catalogue, created according to a common structure recommended by the International Institute of Bibliography, thus provided access to the different components of a large library essentially universal in its scope.

The Collective Library implied the centralization of services, the development of common inventories, and the possibility of publishing a common catalogue. The aim was to increase the potential for the diffusion of the knowledge specific to each participating society. The Library also housed an information service based on a collection of documents on Belgian organizations active in the areas of the sciences, literature, and the arts. The substantial *Annuaire de la Belgique scientifique, artistique et littéraire* (Yearbook of Scientific, Artistic and Literary Belgium) published in 1908 synthesized the information thus collected. Finally, the development of a union catalogue of Belgian libraries, begun in 1902 and continued until the outbreak of War, completed this deeply considered approach to libraries that had begun with Otlet and La Fontaine's bibliographic research.

## THE UNIVERSAL REPERTORY OF DOCUMENTATION

*As scientific output becomes more intense, publications multiply and so do the number of people who can or should have access to the thousands and thousands of pieces of information in books, journals and newspapers. The necessary consequence: these enormous masses of documents must be made more and more accessible to the public at large.*

—Paul Otlet

This observation of Otlet's led him to envisage in the Universal Repertory of Documentation, a new tool for the collection and provision of access to information. In form, the Universal Repertory of Documentation adopted the system of the RBU. Its cards provided systematically the following information: author, country, subject, date. The substantive item, the source of information, such as a newspaper clipping or a brochure or offprint, was then where appropriate attached to this descriptive card or placed in standardized folders to create what in English and American public libraries were called Vertical Files.

The format of this new kind of encyclopedia allowed for flexibility and growth. Each of its elements, the items from which it was constituted, was separate from

the others. Otlet considered this method to be superior to that of traditional encyclopedias with their many volumes because it allowed rapid updating and diffusion of its contents. The Universal Repertory of Documentation, which was formally created in 1907, comprised three distinct parts which corresponded generally to different modes of arrangement. Biographical files related to personalities. Thematic or subject files were classified according to the UDC. Finally, geographical files were organized by country subdivided by regions and cities. The aim, however, was to capture material related to the entire universe of knowledge.

### THE INTERNATIONAL NEWSPAPER MUSEUM

Collect an example, “preferably the first and last issues as though collecting the initial profession of faith and the last cry of those who disappear carried off by the torment of ideas”—here in brief was the philosophy behind the section of the documentary encyclopedia dedicated to the press, the gathering together of a worldwide collection of specimens of periodicals and newspapers.

The International Museum of the Press was set up in December 1907. A long-discussed project of the Union de la presse périodique belge (Belgian Union of the Periodical Press), Otlet took it in hand when he became Vice President of the Union in 1906 (he became President in 1908). The Museum was set up in connection with the IIB and with the collaboration of the Cercle des collectionneurs des journaux (Collectors of Newspapers Club). The Museum followed a traditional museological approach in exhibiting specimens that had been obtained from around the world.

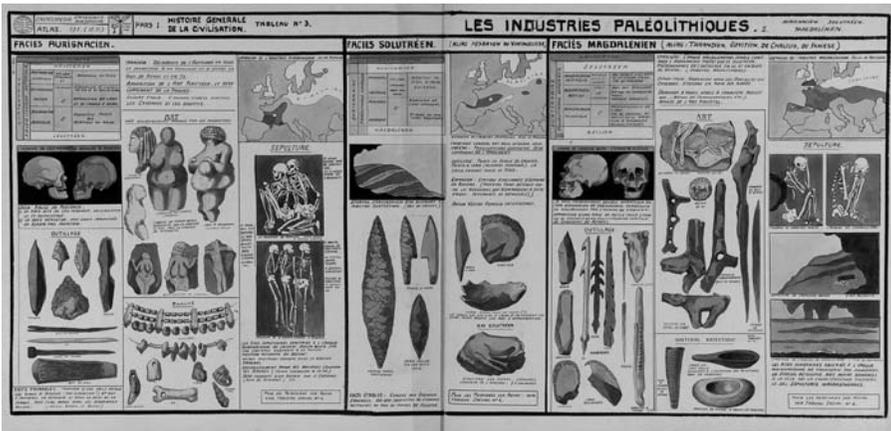
The broader aims of the MIP were set out in detail in the *Notice-catalogue* of the International Institute of Bibliography. A major aspect of the Museum’s mission, in addition to collecting specimens of contemporary newspapers and periodicals, was described as: “The International newspaper museum has especially among its concerns the creation of a collection as complete as possible of works on the Press as well as forming a complete collection of older periodicals and newspapers, especially those before the nineteenth century. This collection has been catalogued. It now comprises bibliographies and yearbooks related to the press, works on the history of newspapers and periodicals, and historical volumes that contain contributions to the history of the press, legislation, copyright and intellectual freedom (*liberté d’écrire*).”

### THE MUSEUM OF THE BOOK

The Musée du livre originated in discussions at the turn of the century within a number of Belgian typographic and book-trade organizations. Under Otlet’s leadership, a Museum of the Book was officially created in 1906 and affiliated at its height more than forty organizations concerned with all technical and professional aspects of printing and the industries of the book trades generally.

Otlet became its very active President and remained so for over twenty years. The Museum expressed Otlet's continuing interest in "the book" as both a technological and intellectual phenomenon. The Museum was officially associated with the Office international de bibliographie, though housed separately in its own building, the Maison du livre. The aim of the Museum was to contribute to the public recognition and better organization of everything related to the production and distribution of books and information more generally. It also aimed to be an intellectual center for study of the history of the book, its technologies, and its social and intellectual roles. It was notably involved in discussions leading to the creation of the first Ministry of Arts and Letters in Belgium. The Maison du Livre, situated in the heart of Brussels, was the site of meetings, lectures, salons, fairs and exhibitions, and a regular cycle of classes for an École du livre (School of the Book) organized by the Musée du livre.

### THE UNIVERSAL ATLAS OR ENCYCLOPEDIA UNIVERSALIS MUNDANEUM



**Illus. 8: Encyclopedia Universalis Mundaneum, "Paleolithic Industries"**

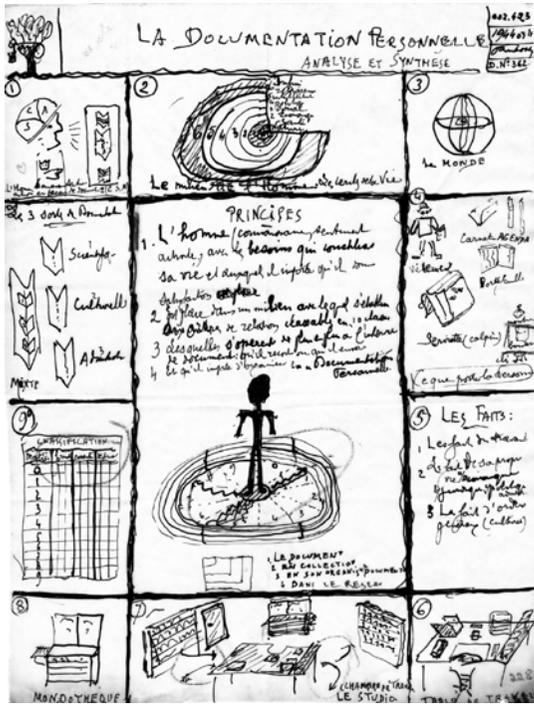
This is in one of the plates in the only completed volume of the EUM. The volume consists of 20 beautifully illustrated plates in colour on heavy paper. Each plate is 134x 64 cm (approx. 54 x 25 inches), folded in the middle for inclusion in a portfolio. Sources used in compiling each plate are given on the back of the plate. The folder for this series of plates is entitled: General Prehistory: I. Prehistory in Europe (synthesis), II. Prehistory in the Orient (synthesis), III. Analytical plates, IV. Reconstitutions and Interpretations (dated 1926).

Elaborated from 1920 in the context of the integrated institutes of the Palais Mondial, the Universal Atlas was an illustrated encyclopedia made up of separate plates. Each plate was devoted to the presentation of schemas, tables, and illustrations of various kinds related to a specific subject (Otlet consistently used the term "atlas" in this sense). Each plate synthesized elements collected

from various sources of information: bibliographic cards, books, newspapers, documentary files. The general format of individual plates for the Atlas was standardized at 64 by 67 centimetres (approx 25 x 26 inches). A standard also governed the utilization of the space of each plate so that each piece of information had its own cell: the title, an explanatory text, the date, sources of documentation, the signature of the compiler. The most important cell was at the center, and its subject was presented in the form of black and white or colored drawings, photographs, diagrams, or maps. Some of the completed plates, such as the double plates for Prehistory illustrated here, complex and visually arresting, can actually be considered works of art.

The plates were organized according to the UDC in four special series or sub-Atlases: The Sciences and the different kinds of occupations, History, Geography, and International Life. The plates were intended to have three kinds of use. First, as a whole they constituted a visual Universal Encyclopedia. Next, each plate considered independently could become a documentary complement to various museums or other exhibitions. And finally, they could be used in support of education. In this connection, Paul Otlet and Anne Oderfeld undertook to create in parallel an Atlas of Universal Civilization designed exclusively for educational purposes. The plates for this Atlas were of a smaller format and were intended to be easy to handle in class. This project was supported by the Commission internationale du matériel didactique (International Commission on Teaching Materials) of the International Bureau for Education in Geneva.

To facilitate their dissemination, the plates of the Atlas could be reproduced in several formats. It was possible to obtain a copy of the plates by hand: a matter of examples created by request and rather expensively. Reproductions could also be made by copying according to the heliogravure process which allowed for a large print run. These reproductions were then colored by hand. Photography was also used to produce a copy on paper or as a slide for projection. The plates could also be microfilmed as part of the *Encyclopedia Microphotica*. In all more than eight thousand different panels and several hundred films were created in connection with the Encyclopedia Universalis Mundaneum. Otlet continued to experiment with images for what was known as the EUM until the last days of his life, and there remain in the Mundaneum an extraordinary range and quantity of drawings in various stages of development from scribbles to professionally prepared plates illustrating the struggles in his thinking about how to organize and visualize knowledge.

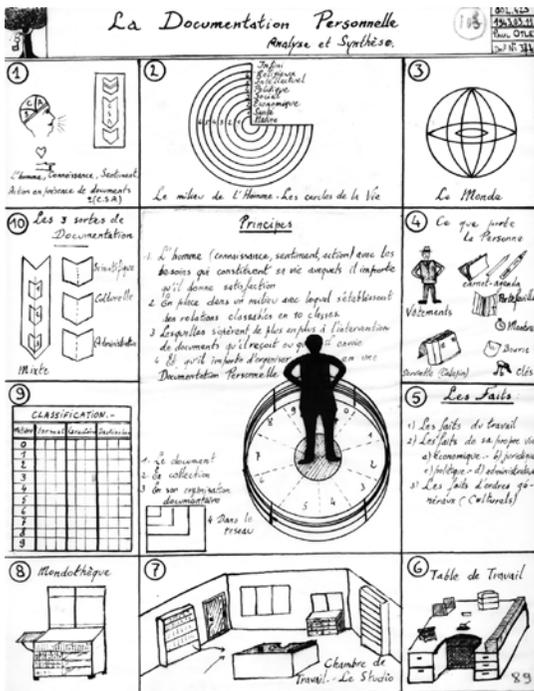


Illus. 9: Personal Documentation: Analysis and Synthesis

A sketch by Otlet and fair copy by someone else for the EUM

Border Notes:

1. Man, Knowledge, Feeling, action with documents;
2. A person's milieu;
3. The circles of life;
4. What a person carries;
5. Information-i) about work; ii) about the circumstances of the individual's life-economic, legal, political, admin; iii) general information (cultural);
6. Work desk;
7. Work Room—the Studio;
9. Classification;
10. the Kinds of documentation (scientific, cultural, administrative).



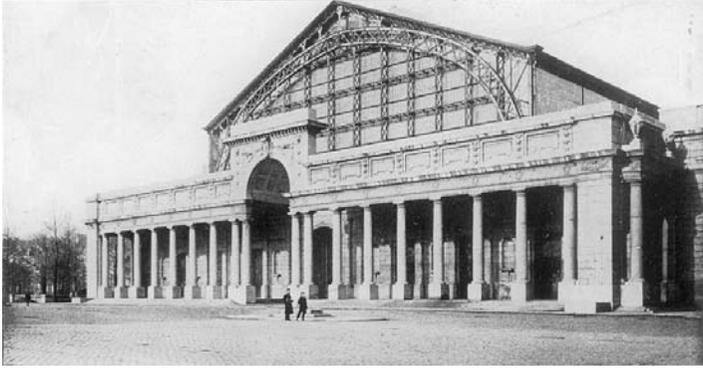
Center Notes—Principes:

1. Man (knowledge, feeling, action) and the needs of life that must be met;
  2. Placed in a milieu of relationships in 10 classes;
  3. Which are increasingly managed by means of documents that he has or needs;
  4. And that is it important to organize into a personal documentation system (i—the document; ii—in a collection; iii—in his own documentary organization; iv—in the network).
- (Note that Otlet's sketch is dated 1944.03.11, and the other 1943.03.11—one date is presumably an error.)

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## PART IV: INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN DOCUMENTATION AT THE INTERNATIONAL CENTER



**Illus. 10: The façade of the Palais Mondial (Palais du Cinquantenaire)**

After ten years of existence, the organizations that had been created in the course of the development of the International Institute of Bibliography were of different kinds. The Universal Book that Otlet discussed was represented in these organizations and was made up of books, newspapers, images, and other forms of “documents.” Gradually he had come to believe that knowledge was everywhere and its formats extremely diverse—and the Universal Decimal Classification was the means universally to decode and organize it.

According to Otlet and La Fontaine, international harmony was to be built on the basis of intellectual cooperation. After the devastation of the First World War, they believed working for intellectual cooperation would open up an international cultural dialogue that must eventually lead to a lasting peace. At the national level, the experience of the Collective Library of Learned Societies and related activities in the OIB seemed to support this idea. For Otlet, the international level was the next step towards creating an ideal worldwide society. Having set up the International office and Institute of Bibliography, Otlet and La Fontaine then organized the Union of International Associations, founded the Palais Mondial or Mundaneum with its museologically innovative International Museum, and worked towards conceptualizing and attempting to secure a physical form for a Cité mondiale or World City.

## UIA —THE UNION OF INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

In 1907, the two men created the Office central des associations internationales (Central Office of International Associations) and embarked upon a comprehensive survey of international associations throughout the world. With the collaboration of Alfred Fried of the International Institute for Peace in Monaco, which had already been publishing a very limited yearbook devoted to the international associations, in 1909 they issued the first of two massive *Annuaire de la Vie Internationale* (Yearbooks of International Life) which incorporated much of the information derived from their survey of the associations.

This new international venture was a private initiative independent of governments and official diplomacy. Its connection to the pacifist cause was clear. The two colleagues decided that they needed to create a dramatic occasion of great magnitude to bring attention to the work of the Central Office of International Associations and to find ways of further developing it. The initial step took place on the occasion of the Universal Exhibition or World's Fair of 1910 in Brussels, where they convened the first Congrès mondial des associations internationales (World Congress of International Associations). This took place from the 9th to the 11th of May, and one of its outcomes was the transformation of the Central Office of International Associations into a headquarters for a Union of International Associations.

The UIA was extremely active before the War, and briefly from 1912 until the War had financial support from the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace which had been set up in 1910. In 1910, the UIA published a second *Annuaire de la Vie Internationale*, almost twice as large as its already substantial predecessor. It created the periodical *La Vie Internationale* and held another world congress of the associations in 1913; it too was even larger than its predecessor of 1910. The proceedings of both congresses were published. This extraordinarily comprehensive set of documents are an indispensable resource for anyone interested in international organizations and the phenomenon of international organization itself before the First World War. After the War, the UIA was the first nongovernmental international association whose legal existence received the official recognition of a state, in this instance Belgium, following the passage of a 1919 Belgian law endowing such organizations with "personnification civile."

Otlet and La Fontaine had tried to bring to the attention of the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 the importance of ensuring that the League of Nations, which was to be one of the main outcomes of the peace treaty, should assume responsibility for international intellectual cooperation. At the first General Assembly of the League, La Fontaine, a member of the official Belgian delegation, had in that context again raised the matter of intellectual cooperation generally. And as the young League of Nations got underway, Otlet and La Fontaine

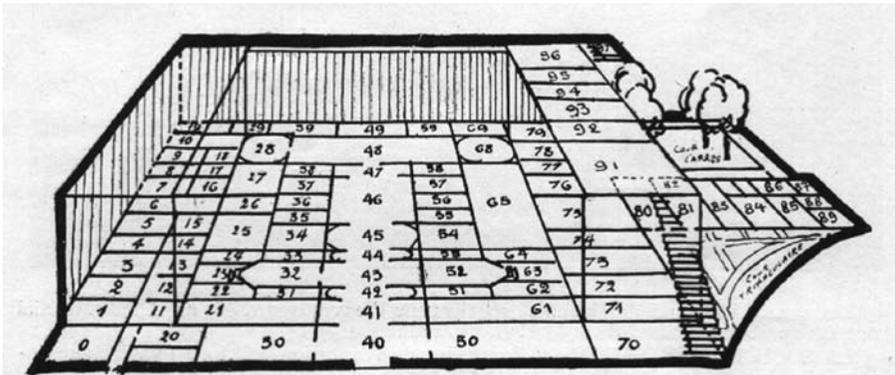
sought to have it adopt the UIA as its technical organization for intellectual cooperation. Their ambitions for the UIA and Mundaneum within the League were dashed in 1925 when a new organization, the International Institute for Intellectual Cooperation, was set up in Paris with French government support. This organization would provide a conceptual basis for the creation of UNESCO after the Second World War. Otlet and La Fontaine's work for international intellectual cooperation within and outside the League has led some to see them as among the spiritual fathers of UNESCO.

For a brief period, however, the relationship between the UIA and the League of Nations was close. In an unsettled international political context, the credibility of the one automatically reflected on the other. But the UIA experienced much uncertainty, and the relationship especially of the IIB with the League's agencies for international intellectual cooperation quickly became complex, constrained, and difficult. For a number of years in its own way and with very modest means, the UIA continued to undertake aspects of its pre-War work. It was involved at least nominally in the organization of international meetings, with the creation of the International University in the Palais Mondial and with Otlet's project for a world city. After a long dormant period during the 1930s, the UIA was revived after the Second World War and continues to exist as a major source of information on international organizations, publishing among other things the multivolume *World Yearbook of International Associations*, now available digitally.

### THE INTERNATIONAL MUSEUM, THE WORLD PALACE, MUNDANEUM

The idea of forming an International Museum originated during the World's Fair of Brussels in 1910. Numerous international conferences were held in association with this exhibition. To complement them and especially the World Congress of International Associations, Otlet and La Fontaine arranged an exhibition at the Palais du Cinquantenaire in Brussels that allowed each international association to contribute displays that would in a sense allow it to introduce itself to the other organizations and to the public and to inform them of the evolution of its work.

At the end of the World Congress, a resolution was adopted that the exhibition be maintained permanently and be transformed into an International Museum. The idea was that the services and organizations that had been created by the various congresses meeting in Brussels would be consolidated in the museum which would also be supported by the international associations that already had their headquarters in Brussels.



DISTRIBUTION DES SALLES

1. Administration et Offices des Associations Internationales : Salles 1 à 18.
2. Congrès Internationaux, grand auditoire et salle de réception : Salles 28, 43, 48, 68.
3. Institut International de Bibliographie : Salles 7 à 9; 46 et 47.
4. Bibliothèque Internationale : Salles 51 à 54; 61 à 65.
5. Encyclopédie documentaire : Salles 35 à 37.
6. Musée International : Salles 21 à 33; 50; 70 à 99.
7. Université Internationale : Salles 19, 29, 38, 39, 49, 58, 59.
8. Services auxiliaires, Hall d'entrée, indicateur des services : Salles 40 et 41; Postes et Télégraphes : Salle 30; Restaurant, fumoir : Salles 98 et 99. Librairie des Associations : étage, aile droite.

### Illus. 11: Floor plan of the Palais Mondial

1. Administration and the offices of the international associations: rooms 1–18; 2. International congresses; large auditorium and reception room: Rooms 28, 43, 48, 68; 3. International Institute of Bibliography: Rooms 7–9; 46 and 47; 4. International Library: Rooms 51–54, 61–65; 5. Documentary Encyclopedia: Rooms 35–37; 6. International Museum: Rooms 21–33, 50, 70–99; 7. International University: Rooms 19, 20, 38, 39, 40, 58, 59; 8. Auxiliary Services: Entry hall and service indicator: Rooms 40 and 41; Post and Telegraph: Room 30; Restaurant and smoking room: Rooms 98 and 99; Association bookshop: right-hand aisle first floor

Two committees were set up. The Belgian committee was charged with finding a location that could accommodate the International Museum. The idea was to preserve one of the buildings that had been constructed on the World's Fair Solbosch site in Brussels. These were destined otherwise for destruction at the end of the Fair. The aim of the international committee formed by participants in the World Congress of International Associations was to encourage the governments of the various countries and the international associations that had displayed objects and documents at the Universal Exhibition to deposit them in the Museum.



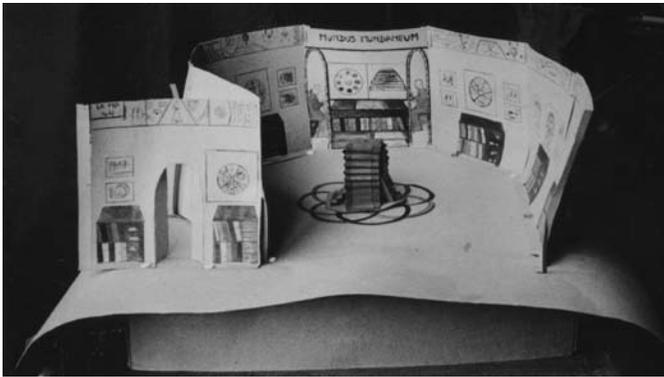
**Illus. 12: Group with marquette or “plan indicateur” for the Palais Mondial**  
(Otlet in the middle at rear; at left, an assistant of Otlet’s, André Colet [PM 1927?])



**Illus. 13: Group in the Central Hall of the Palais Mondial on the occasion of the 1927 Quinzaine Internationale**



**Illus. 14: The Microphotography Gallery, Palais Mondial about 1912**



1. Cardboard model of Mundus Mundaneum (above the entryway in the left panel is the notation *Le Moi* (the Self); around the ceiling fringes are various recurrent symbols of elements of the Mundaneum)



2. The Telegraph & Telephone Section



3. The Aviation Section

**Illus. 15: Reproductions of exhibits in the International Museum**

In the evening of the 14th of August 1910, a violent fire destroyed much of the Solbosch Exhibition Park and delayed the creation of the International Museum. Eventually the Government provided housing for the Museum in the Palais du Cinquantaire. The management of the Museum was assigned to the UIA, and the museum collections were associated with those of the International Office and Institute of Bibliography.

In 1912, when it was still only in the process of formation, the International Museum occupied 16 rooms of the Cinquantaire and exhibited at least three thousand items and tableaux. Information was presented not only by isolated objects, of which there were of course a great many, but also synthetically by means of a huge number of supplementary dioramas, diagrams, maquettes, photographs, and drawings. The Museum had a two-part program: to serve as a window onto the international associations which were seeking to become better known, and to offer support for education by dealing with the whole of knowledge from an international point of view. The Museum was organized into three parts: International Organizations, National Sections (which formed a geographical museum for the major countries and dealt with such matters as territory, industry, and history), and Comparative Sections which were devoted to branches of knowledge. The larger aim was that the museum would assemble international collections both of objects and other forms of informative media to illustrate in some integrated way all of our knowledge of the world.

From the moment of its limited installation in the Cinquantaire, the Central Office of International Associations, which henceforth was simply called the Union of International Associations, kept demanding additional space. The Museum's collections of objects and documents increased rapidly as the processes of international cooperation sponsored by the UIA developed. In 1920, the government decided to grant it a hundred rooms in the Left Wing of the Palais du Cinquantaire. All of Otlet and La Fontaine's projects—the Union of International Associations, the International Museum, the International Institute and Office of Bibliography and the repertories and collections associated with them, the International Library, and new services that were designed to support the international congresses—were all installed in the Cinquantaire to form the Palais Mondial (World Palace), later designated by Otlet, the Mundaneum. A series of activities such as guided tours and lectures designed to publicize and encourage use of the collections and services of the Palais Mondial were immediately undertaken. In 1920, the first of what were widely publicized as *Quinzaines internationales* (International Fortnights) was created. The first session of the *Université internationale*, in effect a high-powered summer school with recognition initially from the League of Nations, also took place. Though they were intended to be annual, the *Quinzaines internationales* were organized subsequently only for 1921, 1922, and 1927.

The locations in the Cinquantenaire that had been put at the disposition of the Museum remained the property of the State. In 1924, the government reclaimed some of the rooms occupied by the Palais Mondial for a Rubber Exhibition. In the face of Paul Otlet's refusal to accede to the government's request to vacate the premises, gardeners were assigned to remove the collections. The result was catastrophic: it would take two years to return everything to its place.

Confronted with these difficulties, Paul Otlet envisaged the possibility of installing the Palais Mondial abroad. He conceptualized the Mundaneum in ways that became ever more grandiose: "It is a matter of reconstituting the Palais Mondial on a broader foundation, every force being brought to bear to erect the Mundaneum, a monument to Intelligence, which will be at once an International Museum, an International Library and an International University, the whole created by the Union of International Associations. It is a matter of creating a summary of the world and to ensure that through the power of its integration such a creation will facilitate and accelerate the evolution of the World towards a superior state of unified collaboration."

Despite intense activity, the situation of the Palais Mondial–Mundaneum continued to deteriorate. On June 1, 1934, after several warnings, the Palais Mondial was finally closed by order of the government on the pretext of carrying out extension work for the entire Cinquantenaire building. Otlet and his collaborators protested by briefly setting up their secretariat on the steps of the building leading into the Palais Mondial. Press releases were sent out. National and international collaborators were mobilized. Nothing happened! They had to accept that the locations within which so much work had taken place had to be abandoned. Henceforth a provisional secretariat for the Mundaneum was set up in Paul Otlet's own house in the rue Fétis. The collections in the Mundaneum remained closed, and only national authorities on request were given access to them.

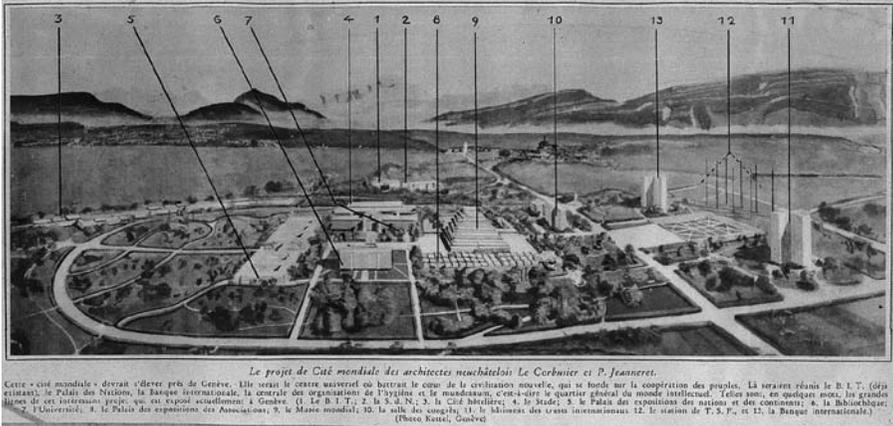
Hard though conditions now were, work was actually continued. Cards continued to be prepared; publications were exchanged; Otlet's treatises on documentation and world organization were published in 1934 and 1935 respectively; and the last volume of a new edition of the UDC had appeared in 1933 with subsequent revisions under continual and systematic discussion and development. Documentary film programs, exhibitions on various subjects, and lecture series, including a course on documentation, were regularly presented in various Brussels locations throughout this entire period under the nominal aegis of the Palais Mondial and the UIA. The work was supported by a group who had formed themselves into a legal entity designated *Les Amis du Palais Mondial* (Friends of the Palais Mondial), and special programs were arranged for children, *Les Jeunes Amis du Palais Mondial*.

In 1941, the Germans, seeking to occupy the space in the Palais du Cinquantenaire, in which the collections had remained for so long immured, demanded their removal. Everything except a vast quantity of files on the international associations, which were transferred to Germany because they were assumed to have propaganda value for the German war effort, and some tons of periodicals, which were simply destroyed, was transferred to the Parc Léopold to a wing of the Institut Pasteur. Many of the museum objects could not be set up in these new locations for lack of space but also because of their fragility. The aircraft frames, for example that had been hung in the Aviation gallery in the Cinquantenaire were taken away by a scrap-metal dealer. Nevertheless in these new quarters, again designated Mundaneum, some of the educational activities of the Mundaneum as they had been developing in the Cinquantenaire almost a decade before were once again taken up, although tentatively and imperfectly. Attempts were made to set up, add to, and consult the repertoires, though some of the cabinets had been dispersed to other locations. Numerous lecture series by Otlet and others were scheduled (he lectured on matters of world affairs and documentation even in the year of his death), and various programs of documentary films were shown. Indeed the work of the Amis du Palais Mondial under the leadership of Georges Lorphèvre actually continued until 1972 when the Mundaneum in the Parc Léopold was itself closed.

Moved from the Parc Léopold in 1972, first to the Chaussée de Louvain and again several years later when they were installed in the Avenue Rogier, the collections were again given rough treatment. Quantities of documents were lost, destroyed, or stolen in each move. In fact, not one of the thousands of objects contained in the hundred galleries of the Cinquantenaire has survived into the present, not a single maquette, not a single telegraph machine, not a single flag, though there are many photographs of the exhibition rooms.

Nevertheless the Universal Bibliographic Repertory, the International Library, the Documentary Archives, the image collections, and the collection associated with the Museum of the Press are preserved in the Mundaeum in Mons. An important collection of photographs and glass negatives gives some idea of the extent of the International Museum. The cards of the recently discovered parts of the RBU provide information on the origin and richness of the items that had been collected. The personal papers of Otlet and La Fontaine form an enormous documentary archive for their work in all of its extraordinary variety.

## PART V: THE ULTIMATE DREAM: THE WORLD CITY



**Illus. 16. Project of a World City by the architects from Neuchâtel Le Corbusier and P. Jeanneret.**

“This ‘World City’ should be built near Geneva. It will be the universal center in which the heart of the new civilization will beat on the basis of cooperation between the peoples. It will bring together the already existing International Labor Office, the Palace of Nations, the International Bank, the offices of the Health organization and the Mundaneum, that is to say it will be a headquarters center for the intellectual world. Such are, in a few words, the major outlines of this interesting project which is being exhibited at the moment in Geneva.”

1. The I.L.O.; 2. The L(eague) of N(ations); 3. The hotel area; 4. The Stadium; 5. The National and Continental Exhibition Center; 6. The Library; 7. The University; 8. The exhibition center for the associations; 9. The world museum; 10. The conference building; 11. The building for international trusts; 12. Wireless telegraph facility; 13. International Bank (from *L'Illustré*, Lausanne, 12 Septembre 1929)

The idea of a Cité mondiale or World City, a World International Knowledge Center for Peace, had been germinating in Paul Otlet’s mind for some time before 1910. The concept for him goes back to the Hague Peace Conference of 1899 and was the fruit of long maturation. Having concentrated on the bibliographic card and the decimal classification, the book, the image, the Palais Mondial, Otlet now dreamed of creating an ideal architectural instantiation of his projects in their entirety. The goal did not change: it was always a matter of encouraging the spread of peace by collecting and sharing knowledge. Thus the primary objective of the World City was that it should become a practical instrument that could help achieve universal harmony by promoting progress. Political institutions, international associations, universities, and libraries would take their place within the City beside a reconceptualized Mundaneum.

Clearly, the project was ambitious! Under the pencil of the sculptor Hendrik Andersen and the architect Ernest Hébrard, the idea of a world city had taken the form of a neoclassical city that would be a World Center for Communications. The two men had been working on their project, which was similar to Otlet's, for several years before contact was established with Otlet in 1911. What Andersen envisaged excited Otlet and La Fontaine and generated an extensive correspondence. Hendrik Andersen imagined setting up his World City in different places around the world, from Paris to Rome by way of Constantinople and Cairo. Anderson had arranged for the publication in 1913 of a huge, luxurious volume setting out his plans. His idea was to use the volume to introduce the project to politicians and others in the hope of inducing someone to offer him a location that could become extra-territorialized or independent of a state.

After the First World War, the plans of Hendrik Andersen and Ernest Hébrard seemed outdated, too redolent of a nineteenth century *fin de siècle* mood. Yet urgent international political upheavals seemed to be crying out for a renewal of the pacifist ideal that had animated so much discussion before the War. A moment of general awareness that the question of peace should be treated in an international way, as illustrated by the recent creation of a League of Nations, seemed to Otlet propitious for reconsidering the concept of a World City. Reviewing his own project, he began to look for an architect who would be able to capture this new state of affairs. He found his ideal partner in the person of the great modernist architect Le Corbusier, who was revolutionizing the foundations of architecture. Le Corbusier was immediately sympathetic to Otlet's ideas and towards the end of the 1920s agreed to work on the project of the World City.

Le Corbusier's new architectural and design vocabulary based on line and purified forms radically transformed the initial project. At the center, dominating the city, was a monumental pyramid of seven terraces, inspired by the ziggurats of Mesopotamia. This was to house the collections of the Palais Mondial–Mundaneum. Placed up 85 meters, the entrance required visitors to take an initiatory path climbing a stairway towards the sacred paths of knowledge. Inspired by the galleries of the Palais Mondial, Otlet was suggesting that the visitor begin by an encounter with the history of humanity.

All of the world's intellectual, economic, and political institutions, including a World Bank, would be assembled around the pyramid. An airport and a residential quarter were attached to the city to facilitate the movement and reception of visitors. The building was to be constructed on the shores of Lake Léman in Geneva, which Le Corbusier described as particularly suitable: "The relief map shows this sort of acropolis as dominating the lake, commanding the town to the left and the upper part of the Lake to the right, circled on three horizons by the majestic crown of the mountains... Here truly is an ideal

place for a city dedicated to the work of the mind.” Despite the determination of the two men to see the World City set up as a neighborhood in Geneva, the Swiss authorities cast an evil eye on what they called a “Vatican City.” Paul Otlet turned once more to Belgium.



Delineavit: Igor Platounoff.

**LE MUNDANEUM :**

Et alors survint le Déluge : des guerres, des crises, des révolutions. Les Hommes furent arrachés de la grande édification, celle-ci arrachée elle même du sol où elle avait jeté ses fondements.  
 Pour en sauver l'essentiel il fallut l'Arche, "Navis Mundaneum"  
 — Maintenant elle surnage les flots déchainés; elle vogue à pleine voile vers le Soleil — le Soleil qui déjà embrase le vaste horizon de tous ses feux.

1938.12.

Paul OTLET.



Delineavit: Igor Platounoff.

**LE MUNDANEUM :**

Sur la montagne des Livres — expression de la Réalité totale toujours cherchée, toujours produite par l'Humanité, depuis des millénaires et en tous lieux — s'élèvent en degrés les Instituts des cinq types qui le constituent : Musée, Bibliothèque, Université, Association, Laboratoire. Du Monde il veut donner une intelligible et désirable représentation, et, pour telle fin, il appelle à coopérer les Associations Internationales, en qui les nationales et les locales sont fédérées.

Puisse les rayons du Mundaneum aider à amplifier et à élever la Vie, la Science et la Civilisation Universelle.

1938.12.

Paul OTLET.

**Illus. 17: The Mundaneum (© Igor Platounoff)**

The Mundaneum: And now falls the deluge: wars, crises, revolutions. Men are torn from their great temple as it is itself torn from the soil in which lay its foundations. To save what is essential from it, an ark is necessary, the Navis Mundaneum. It now floats across the raging waves; it makes it way in full sail towards the sun, the sun that is already embracing the vast horizon with all its fire. (Paul Otlet, 1938.12)

The Mundaneum: On the mountain of books—expression of that totality of reality always sought, always produced by Humanity over the millennia and in all places—there rise up the five kinds of institutes from which it is constituted: Museum, Library, University, Association, Laboratory. It seeks to provide an intelligible, desirable representation of the world and for this purpose it appeals for the cooperation of the international associations in which national and local associations are federated. May the rays of the Mundaneum help amplify and advance Life, Knowledge and Universal Civilisation. (Paul Otlet 1938.12)

From Tervuren to Antwerp by way of Brussels, contacts and meetings multiplied to create Otlet's city, though there was some gradual loss of impetus. Nevertheless, the idea caught the imagination of a variety of architects interested in planning new urban developments of which it was a kind of idealized instance. Between 1930 and 1944, one after another well-known architects such as Victor Bourgeois, Huib Hoste, Maurice Heymans, and Stanislas Jasinski studied the project with the view especially of setting up the city as a new urban quarter in the loop of the left bank of the river at Antwerp, then being considered for redevelopment. Obsessed by this project, Otlet in vain addressed his requests to the powers of the day to help him realize it, and he would continue to dream of it until his death in 1944.

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## PART VI: THE HERITAGE OF THIS DOCUMENTARY ADVENTURE

Within the Mundaneum in Mons are kept many of the surviving archives of the ventures described above. The archival collections can be described as covering a number of broad areas or themes, additions to several of which are still being actively sought. Of particular importance are extensive collections of images in various formats.

### OTLET AND LA FONTAINE

There are at least one thousand boxes of the papers of Paul Otlet in the Mundaneum. They have been organized into the following large series: private life (notable here are the diaries that Otlet kept systematically and in detail from his twelfth to his twenty-first year, and then in fragmentary form until he was in his early thirties), business affairs, notably the Westende project, IIB-FID, UDC, Union of International Associations, Cité mondiale, Musée International, and Encyclopedia Universalis Mundaneum. In the Otlet papers are of course many documents related to the work of La Fontaine with which Otlet was associated.

There are more than three hundred archive boxes of Henri la Fontaine papers. They cover all aspects of his life and career as a senator in the Belgian Parliament, his many international activities that lead to his Nobel Peace Prize in 1913 but which continued throughout the rest of his life (such as his Presidency of the International Peace Bureau and his work in the early years of the League of Nations), his work as a lawyer in Brussels, his many cultural activities, and not least his life as a Free Mason. They also contain material related to the development in association with Paul Otlet of the IIB, the Mundaneum, and a range of other ventures on which the two men cooperated.

### PACIFISM

The foundation of the International Office of Bibliography and the Mundaneum were strongly influenced by an ideology of pacifism. The personal papers of the founders reveal that they and all of their institutions were committed to this central goal. After the First World War, the Union of International Associations developed an intense preoccupation in relation to the League of Nations. The indexing of the UIA archives in the Mundaneum throws special light on the discourse for a new peaceful world order within official and unofficial meetings. The desire to participate in the work for peace is revealing. Lecture-debates sponsored by the UIA and in the context of the Palais Mondial or Mundaneum increased in

the period between the wars. The several meetings of the International University became platforms for discussions of internationalism. The view offered by the sources in the Mundaneum thus helps complete the picture offered by the sources preserved at the headquarters of the League of Nations (at Geneva), the International Institute for Intellectual Cooperation (at UNESCO in Paris), and the United Nations (New York).

Today one of the specializations of the Center for Archives in the Mundaneum is the preservation of documents on the general theme of pacifism. The acquisition at the end of the twentieth century of various collections and personal archives, among which are the papers of Jean Van Lierde and Hem Day, allow a very broad approach to be taken at both the national and international levels within the Mundaneum to this subject. The archives of the Comité national d'action pour la paix et le développement (National Action Committee for Peace and Development) also adds to the subject. These diverse collections representing different periods reveal a profound mutation in pacifist ideology. Opposed to War at the end of the nineteenth century, Pacifism at the end of the twentieth century was more focused on stopping the arms race. The collection comprises sixty linear metres, and the network of pacifists can be studied in depth because of the variety and extent of the sources that have been preserved. The Mundaneum continues to be interested in the growth of its archives and collections in this domain.

## FEMINISM

Women had no political existence at the end of the nineteenth century: they did not have the right to vote and were often excluded from the debates on its extension. Even when professional career paths slowly became available to them, access to certain professions remained closed. It is these battles that characterize the feminism of this period.

Léonie la Fontaine, Henri La Fontaine's sister, was an active member of the Ligue belge du droit des femmes (Belgian League for Women's Rights) when the Marie Popelin affair blew up. In 1910, Léonie La Fontaine had participated in the creation at the OIB of the Office central de documentation féminine in association with the Conseil International des Femmes. Its aim was to collect documentation specifically on women and their demands. After the death of Léonie La Fontaine in 1949, other archives assembled by her were added to this specialized documentary collection.

When the feminist collections in the Mundaneum were inventoried in 1998, the archives of the Conseil national des femmes belges (CNFB—National Council of Belgian Women) were discovered, of which Léonie La Fontaine had been president from 1913-1919. The period covered by the documents, however, extends from the period before the First World War to the 1970s. It comple-

ments the collection preserved at the Centre d'archives et de recherche en histoire des femmes de Bruxelles (CARHIF—Brussels Center for Archives and Research into the History of Women).

In the 1990s, Luce Haurier, a documentalist at the European Commission, offered to the Mundaneum her collection of feminist documentation that had been gathered over the course of her long career. The period covered is essentially the decades of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. These papers reveal that new themes were now on the feminist agenda: contraception and unemployment constituted the preoccupations of a generation that had been the victim of economic and social upheavals.

The Feminist archives preserved in the Mundaneum thus cover a long period: from the end of the nineteenth century with the creation of the Belgian League for Women's Rights to the 1980s and the Belgian abortion debates. The evolution of the debate on the rights of women can as a result be examined across an exceptional collection of documents. The feminist collection covers 28 metres and comprises 222 archive boxes. An inventory was completed in 1998.

## ANARCHISM

Liberty is the foundation of anarchism. The word, freely interpreted by each anarchist who redefines its limits, covers a certain number of common realities. Opposition to all signs of authority is a constant that is expressed in different ways in different periods: opposition to morality, to politics, to religion, to the army. An exhibition devoted to anarchism at the Mundaneum in 2005 was able to detail the extent in the nineteenth century of this highly developed movement.

Anarchism first appeared at the Palais Mondial–Mundaneum between the wars in the form of certain collaborators of the Mundaneum who were sympathetic to the idea. Georges Lophèvre, the secretary to and spiritual son of Paul Otlet, and Hem Day (Marcel Dieu) were its principal representatives. Their work in the institution led them to preserve documents on this theme. Later, Walter Théodore Glineur, Jean Van Lierde, and Léo Campion added to the anarchist collections at the Mundaneum. They express a pacifist militancy which makes it difficult to maintain a clear distinction between what counts as pacifism or anarchism.

All of these contributions have led to the creation of an important original collection. It is not generally in the nature of this ideological movement for its records to endure: its primary objective lies in action. Thus, preserving archives on this subject is particularly rare. The collection comprises 58 linear metres and 450 archive boxes. A preliminary inventory has been available since 2005, though the Mundaneum has still to finish inventorying the individual collections.

## WORLD'S FAIRS

World's Fairs were very much of concern to Paul Otlet and Henri La Fontaine. These fairs offered a special occasion for the display of their bibliographical work to the world. In 1900, at the Paris Exhibition, 28 card filing cabinets, publications, and other bibliographic material were exhibited in the Palais des Congrès and won a gold medal. And as we have seen above, Otlet and La Fontaine had been deeply involved with the Brussels Exhibition of 1910. Otlet also participated in various ways in other International Exhibitions and Worlds Fairs in Belgium such as that of Brussels in 1897, Liège in 1905, and Ghent in 1913. Given this interest in World's Fairs, it seemed natural that a collection on these events should exist at the Mundaneum.

One assumes that the original documents in the collection were gathered together by the two men in the course of their actual participation in various Fairs or Exhibitions. It could be that these documents were intended to form a specialized documentary section in the IIB-OIB. Whatever the case, there is a notable collection on this subject at the Mundaneum reaching beyond the lifetimes of Otlet and La Fontaine. From London in 1862 to Montreal in 1967, more than a century of the history of World's Fairs is preserved in its archives. Of course there is more information on some exhibitions than on others. This fact is explained in part by the closeness of the links that Paul Otlet and Henri La Fontaine had with them on the one hand and by the sometimes remote and for Otlet and la Fontaine inaccessible geographical location of the exhibition sites on the other hand.

The World's Fair Collection does not contain all the relevant documents in the Mundaneum on the subject. The personal papers of Otlet and La Fontaine contain interesting archives on the organization of exhibitions. Moreover the Iconographic Repertory, the International Museum of the Press, and the Documentary Archives also contain important material related to this subject as mentioned below.

## THE ICONOGRAPHIC COLLECTIONS

Today the designation *Institut international de photographie* is no longer in use in the Mundaneum. The present Iconographic Department or Universal Iconographic Repertory is made up of collections of posters, postcards, glass negatives, and documentary image files.

### *POSTERS*

This collection comprises about fifteen thousand items, principally European political and cultural posters dating from the end of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. However it is not unusual to find an older or more recent item, and even items published in Asia or Africa.

Because of their great number and rarity, the following deserve special mention: European and Belgian election posters, propaganda posters from the Second World War, tourist and cinema publicity posters, posters for the World's Fairs, and the posters published by railway and transport companies.

### *POSTCARDS*

Comprising about two hundred thousand items, this collection covers the period from the end of the nineteenth century to the 1950s. The classification and listing of this collection is being undertaken specifically in relation to the iconographic content of the cards. The main aim is to make a list of the cities and themes illustrated by them and to link them to the other collections of the Mundaneum. A special collection of about two thousand items is devoted to universal and international exhibitions since the 1897 Brussels Exhibition.

### *GLASS NEGATIVES*

Bringing together fifteen thousand items dating from 1900 to 1950, this collection contains two kinds of glass plates. First are glass negatives that were intended for photographic printing on paper. These are essentially geographic views illustrating the continents. Second are slides intended for projection, the forerunners of flexible transparencies, what were called "projections lumineuse." They were designed to illustrate a lecture or course, and the International Office of Bibliography offered a service of providing such slides on demand to various lecturers. The subjects are very diverse, ranging from the history of art to polar expeditions, from excavations in Egypt to the secret of making eye glasses by way of Scouting and not forgetting geography.

Specific collections bear on such themes as the Belgian coast and World's Fairs. Yet others offer views of the galleries of the International Institute of Bibliography and of the Palais Mondial.

### *THE MUSEUM OF THE BOOK (MUSÉE DU LIVRE)*

The Mundaneum preserves hundreds of documents that retrace the history of the Museum of the Book. The collection is composed of illustrated periodicals as well as art plates for some posters. Exceptionally for the period, the plates, always at the edge of graphic innovation, are an extraordinary expression of the different illustrative techniques developed during the first half of the twentieth century. Numerous artists collaborated in these diverse publications, notably the painters Frank Brangwyn and Edmond Van Offel.

In 2006, an exhibition and a preliminary inventory enabled us to study the collection, the history of the association for the Musée du livre, and to determine the role played in it by Paul Otlet.

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