

## **ROBERTO DE MATTEI**

**MR. DE MATTEI:** Thank you to my friend Bruce Cole and to all the staff of the National Endowment for the Humanities. It is with great pleasure that I here convey to you all the CNR salutation at this opening of the conference on using new technologies to explore cultural heritage.

The presence here of so many scholars and researchers of such high standing, which have been called together by the excellent work of the national endowment is a warranty, I believe, of assured success for this important initiative.

As for me, first of all I would like to underline the fact that is thanks to the new technologies that we can separate the phase of conservation of cultural heritage from that of its valorization and fruition. Access control of the actual cultural heritage is always conditioned by the paramount necessity to protect the archaeological, architectural, or urban assets, which one wants to provide fruition of.

The passage from the material to the digital level, which can be obtained by using new technologies is what permits us to separate these two functions. Valorization thus becomes a process that reassembles the complex network of relations which make cultural heritage valuable and meaningful in the first place.

The second point I would like to touch upon is closely related to the first and that is the possibility which new technologies afford us of including into the same space a cultural heritage which in the real world is physically spread into a variety of places like libraries, archives, museums and also archaeological, urban, and environmental sites, or places which are geographically far from each other.

This virtual space represents a dimension outside the material and as a consequence, one with no borders. A space which is therefore not hierarchical but open and neutral. It is a new space and also a new time which can be interpreted by those with the necessary knowledge of the technologies involved according to paradigms and categories.

It is, in fact, a technological instrument which requires a stronger logical and conceptual system to be firmly into place behind it in order to be utilized to its best. And this brings me to my conclusion.

The third point I would like to address here today is that new technologies are sometimes accused of dehumanizing the world and causing a dispersion of historical memory. But if all the conceptual categories are strong enough, through them we can reassemble our system knowledge and put together in a unifying frame human sciences and hard sciences thus overcoming the rift that it is one of the main causes of the fragmentation of knowledge and consequent loss of values which sadly characterize our time.

Finally, let me wish you all success in this conference and we look forward to our next conference in Rome next spring. Thank you.