

DIGITALIZATION POSSIBLE – MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS IN BULGARIAN LIBRARIES

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Abstract

The aim of the paper is to systematize the main achievements regarding the digitalization of the cultural heritage in Bulgaria and to highlight the problems and recommendations for the continued integration of the Bulgarian cultural heritage in the pan-European context. The study is focused on six projects, split into two categories – initiated by Bulgarian institutions and participation in global initiatives. The idea is to show the overall progress in the development of Bulgarian libraries, and not to compare the importance of different projects. It is time to show some good examples and practices, which strengthened the place of Bulgarian specialists on the European and world stage: Projects BGo046 “Digitization and preservation of the written heritage of Bulgaria” and “Manuscripts and documentary monuments from the Bulgarian lands XIII – XVIII c.”; Project “Varna Digital Library”; Project “Digital cultural and historical heritage of The Municipality of Plovdiv”; IMPACT project; TELPlus project.

The results achieved in these projects are an important example of progress in the perception of digitalization as a key method for preserving cultural heritage. The specificity of this process in the modern information society requires reconsideration of some important issues regarding copyright and preparation of well informed specialists. This is why the report also presents a short description of the academic discipline “Digitalization and Copyright” in University of Library Studies and Information Technologies (ULSIT) in order to show how important it is to integrate knowledge about the problems and achievements of the modern information society in the educational system.

Keywords: cultural heritage, digitalization, library, project, LIS academic education, Bulgaria

INTRODUCTION

Preservation of cultural heritage is one of the current issues in the modern library world. Institutions and specialists face a number of challenges in building a unified system for its digitalization. In the last two decades, the international United Nations Organization for Science, Education and Culture - UNESCO, takes the initiative to create and implement various policies to ensure the survival of the identity of diversity of cultures. Following the European strategies in the field of culture heritage and successful practices worldwide, Bulgarian cultural institutions initiate and engage in work on a number of digitalization projects. In this report, selected projects that have achieved publicity for their implementation and with contribute to the storage and provision of access to digitized collections with Bulgarian cultural heritage are considered. The presented projects show that the Bulgarian institutions are successfully accumulating the European experience.

METHODOLOGY

To emphasize the achievements in Bulgaria, the report presents six projects divided into two categories - initiated by Bulgarian institutions and global projects in which Bulgarian libraries participate. The study shows some good practices and emphasizes their importance as a basis for future work:

- Projects BGo046 “Digitization and preservation of the written heritage of Bulgaria” and “Manuscripts and documentary monuments from the Bulgarian lands XIII – XVIII c.”
- Project “Varna Digital Library”
- Project “Digital cultural and historical heritage of The Municipality of Plovdiv”
- IMPACT project
- TELPlus project

In order to show the connection between academic education and professional practice, the academic course “Digitalization and Copyright”, taught at University of Library Studies and Information Technologies (ULSIT), is also presented in the report. This is an example of good practice for building the necessary knowledge and skills in the field of digitalization in the training of students in library and information sciences.

RESULTS

Initiatives and projects for digitalization accomplished by Bulgarian institutions

Projects BGo046 “Digitization and preservation of the written heritage of Bulgaria” and “Manuscripts and documentary monuments from the Bulgarian lands XIII – XVIII c.”

In 2009, the National Library “St. St. Cyril and Methodius” launched the project BGo046 “Digitalization and preserving the written heritage of Bulgaria”, implemented with the financial support of Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway through the Financial Mechanism of the European Economic Area (EEA FM). Within this project a modern Digital Center for Manuscripts, Books and Periodicals and a National Register of Published Books in Bulgaria (Books in print) were established. The digitized documents on the project can be found on the National Library’s website (www.nationallibrary.bg), in the section “Digital Library”, sub-sections: The Bulgarian Fourteenth Century; Sijills; United Bulgaria. All digitized documents are provided with detailed metadata in Bulgarian, and some of them are also presented in English.

The collection “Bulgarian XIV century” contains 24 documents (nearly 4400 pages). It is no coincidence that the fourteenth century is known as the “Second Golden Age” of Bulgarian literature. The collection presents manuscripts that show unique achievements in the original development of the Bulgarian manuscript book. Using their bilingual metadata, digitized documents can also be searched on the Europeana portal.

The Sijills Collection of the Oriental Department at the library includes a total of 185 bodies, a small part of which contain several leaves, and others - over 300 leaves. The largest number of sijills are from Vidin - a total of 73, followed by those from Sofia - 55, Ruse - 42, Dobrich - 9, Silistra - 5, and Targovishte - 1.

The “United Bulgaria” collection consists editions, published between 1879 and 1940 in the country and abroad. These are the voices of several generations of Bulgarians on the topic of the historical, ethnic, religious and cultural right of political unity of the regions of Thrace, Macedonia, Moesia and Dobrudja. The topic has been among the dominant ones in the periodical press for the decades, between the decisions of the Berlin Congress and the signing of the Craiova Agreement. The following editions have been digitized in this collection: “St. Clement’s Library”, “News”, “Debar”, “Dennitsa”, “Macedonia”, “Macedonian-Edirne Courier”, “Rodna Dobrudja”, “Free Speech”, “United Bulgaria” and others. It contains about 800 records and the titles in the section are 25.

Project “Manuscripts and Written Monuments from the Bulgarian Lands during the XIII – XVIII Centuries” is a scientific research project, financed by the Bulgarian National Science Fund and funded on a competitive basis in 2008. The main objective of the project is related to the

research of written monuments from XIII – XVIII centuries via study of the analytical inventory of Slavic manuscripts from the Ecclesiastical Historical and Archival Institute of the Patriarchate of Bulgaria. The collection has not been fully inventoried through scientific methods, and the new inventory invalidates to a great extent earlier observations and conclusions. The main activities are: documenting and widening access to the unique collection through digitalization and presentation of the written monuments on the Internet as well as presentation of valuable manuscripts of the Ottoman Empire from the 15th century, stored in the Oriental Department of the St. St. Cyril and Methodius National Library (there aren't many valuable sources of information on the early era of Ottoman conquest and the establishment of new governance). During the implementation of the first stage of the project all the tasks set have been fulfilled. A total of 127 written monuments from the XIII – XVIII centuries have been inventoried – manuscripts from the Ecclesiastical Historical and Archival Institute of the Patriarchate of Bulgaria. A physical description of the manuscripts has been made; they have been dated; the script has been analysed; their content has been fully disclosed, unknown texts have been published; the binding and decoration of the manuscripts have been inventoried. A bibliography and a special archive have been collected. A list of the most endangered written monuments has been made. The inventory has been edited and prepared for publishing. 1755 files have been digitally photographed. Eight manuscripts have been fully digitized. The materials are provided with metadata and they are published in the Digital Library.

The project proved to be of scientific significance: as a result, the manuscripts were inventoried for scientific use, new translations and translations of already existing texts were found, analysed and published. It contributes to the protection of the literary heritage as well as to the cleaning, restoration and proper preservation of one of the most valuable Bulgarian medieval manuscript collections. The project is of practical significance too – it gives access to all users and allows the collection to be used for different purposes.

The second stage of the project includes the following main tasks: Continue restoration of manuscripts in extremely bad condition; Continue digitising of manuscripts and the addition of metadata to the digital images; Continue young scientists research: conduct detailed studies of the bindings and metal fittings in terms of technology and art historical analysis, prepare and present an exhibition entitled "The Etropole School" and its Catalogue; Organise a scientific conference "The Etropole Literary School and the Cultural Life in the XVII Century in the Bulgarian Lands" (National Library St. St. Cyril and Methodius, 2010).

Varna Digital Library

"Varna Digital Library" started in 2008 with the participation of the "Pencho Slaveykov" Regional Library in the project "EuropeanaLocal", which provides access to stored collections in regional and local libraries, museums and archives; improves digital interoperability content and makes it accessible through the portal Europeana. "Varna Digital Library" presents different documents - photographs from the end of the XIX - XX century, postal cards, photos of faces, of events, of buildings – emblematic for Varna and the region, as well as periodicals published after 1880 in Varna and possession of the library and cultural institutions of the city. The digitized collection unites both - digitized documents and analytical metadata descriptions of the objects. At this stage the digital collection "Varna Periodicals" includes 187 titles with time range 1880-1944, and the digital collection "Postal cards and photographs from Varna XIX - XX century" includes 2500 items with a time range 1850-1944 (Varna Digital Library, 2008).

Through Europeana, the digitalized image of Varna is "exported" to the "European exhibition area". The continuation of the idea is for Varna to be presented in certain chronological frameworks and with the documentary evidence of the time - the content of the Varna periodicals from the respective period. The ultimate goal is to create a more complete, semantically integrated product, expanding the geography of presentation of the cultural and

historical heritage of the city of Varna and the region, and the preservation of the significant historical past as specifics and diversity. The library is reorienting from a restrictive mode of use of its unique collection to unlimited access to digitized documents, regardless of time and place of search. The digitalization of the materials and their publication on the global network makes it possible to use them as part of the world cultural heritage, accessible to all citizens in the framework of their education, work or leisure, with guaranteed safety of the original (Varna Digital Library, 2008).

National Library "Ivan Vazov", Plovdiv

The project "Digital cultural and historical heritage of The Municipality of Plovdiv" (2015-2018) is funded by Program BGo8 "Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Arts", Financial Mechanism of the European Economic Area. It has as its main goal the digitalization of movable and immovable cultural and historical heritage from the funds of the most important cultural institutions on the territory of the Municipality of Plovdiv – "Ivan Vazov" National Library, Regional History Museum - Plovdiv, Regional Ethnographic Museum, Regional Archaeological Museum, Municipal Ancient Plovdiv Institute and City Art Gallery - Plovdiv. This project is an example of good practice of cooperation on a project for digitalization between the institutions of the so-called GLAM sector (Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums). In the process of project implementation, there are 50,000 digitized units of the cultural heritage of Plovdiv, located in the funds of the institutions, partners of the project (books, works of art, exhibits, etc.). Two centers for digitalization have been built (in "Ivan Vazov" National Library and on "Tsanko Lavrenov" Street № 10 in the Old Town of Plovdiv), as well as four mobile stations (National Library Ivan Vazov, Plovdiv, 2015).

Bulgarian libraries already have serious experience in terms of knowledge and project management competencies. However, for many of the libraries in the country, starting a project initiative, opening an appropriate donor program and succeeding in the project cycle are still a challenge and a novelty (Todorova, 2014, p. 165-176).

K. Ivanova (2019) from Regional Library "P. R. Slaveykov" – Veliko Tarnovo, pointed some good topics in regards to the digitalization initiatives in Bulgarian libraries as a conclusion of her report "New trends in the digitalization of written heritage in related cultural institutions":

Professionals in this field need to actively seek dialogue with each other, especially when the collections they have are similar, in order to avoid duplication of scanned documents.

Digitalization requires in-depth analysis and must be in line with pre-established goals.

This process is a basic and necessary way to promote the dissemination of unique content and its protection.

Without digitalization, rare and valuable collections can remain forever unknown (Ivanova, 2019).

Participation of Bulgarian libraries in global projects

TELPlus Project

TELplus is a project funded by the European Commission under the eContentplus program, in the field of Digital Libraries. Its overall goal is to strengthen, expand and improve the European Digital Library (online portal providing access to electronic resources of the National Libraries of Europe). The European Digital Library is attended by 48 National libraries from all EU and European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries and it is the organizational structure that lays the foundation of the portal Europeana (European Digital Library, Museum and Archive). Since Bulgaria became member of the European Union in 2007, the National Library has been involved in the TELPlus project (the European Commission's eContentPlus Programme),

coordinated by the Office of the European Library (KB, The European Library Office). TELPlus Project is a targeted library project supported by CENL. The European Library is a service run by the National Library of the Netherlands on behalf of CENL, which receives funding from the European Commission at various stages (TELPlus Project, 2009).

The participation of the National Library "St. St. Cyril and Methodius" in TELplus in the period 2007- 2009 allows to fund research on different storage methods and accessibility to the cultural heritage of our country, as well as in terms of the integration of Bulgarian collections and databases to European and world standards (National Library St. St. Cyril and Methodius, 2010).

IMPACT Project

Another project funded by the European Commission is IMPACT (Improving access to text). This is a project funded by the European Commission which aims to significantly improve access to historical text and remove the obstacles standing in the way of the massive digitalization of European cultural heritage. The project is funded under the Seventh Framework Programme of the European Commission. The participating countries are: Austria, Bulgaria, Great Britain, Germany, Greece, Israel, Russia, Slovenia, France, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic. The National Library of the Netherlands is the coordinator of the project. Most of the countries have two participating institutions: an institution developing the project and a partner providing resources. The Bulgarian participants in the project are the Institute for Parallel Processing at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and the National Library "St. St. Cyril and Methodius". The project objective at the impact level is to overcome the obstacles to the creation of a European digital library and the difficulties encountered in the digitalization process in Europe so far. As part of its vision for the initiative i2010 European Digital Library, the EU proposed an ambitious plan for projects related to mass digitalization in order to transform the European printed heritage into accessible digital resources.

The National Library "St. St. Cyril and Methodius", together with the partners, participated in both phases of the project in the period 2008 - 2011. About 5,000 digital images were selected from the National Library funds, which go through a GT process to create metadata for each image, containing a description of the symbols, the positions of the segments of the image, etc. An important contribution of the project is the selection of old printed books, the scanning of parts of them and the recognition of obsolete symbols (National Library St. St. Cyril and Methodius, 2010).

Academic discipline "Digitalization and Copyright" in ULSIT

The academic course "Digitalization and Copyright" is a part of the innovative training of students at University of Library Studies and Information Technologies (ULSIT), designed by lecturer T. Todorova. Today, information specialists are faced with increasingly complex issues related to intellectual property, in particular copyright and related rights, as compared to the recent and distant past. This results from new challenges facing the profession: application of information and communications technologies (ICT); working with diverse formats and new intellectual property objects (databases, multimedia products, computer software, sound recordings, etc.); transition to consortia acquisition, sharing and provision of access to electronic information resources; creation of digital collections; cooperation in respect of remote and mobile learning and for the creation of institutional repositories; provision of opportunities for open access to various works of intellectual work and a number of others. Developing high levels of copyright literacy (knowledge, skills and behaviours) and the ability to implement institutional copyright policy is essential for LIS (Library and Information Science) and cultural heritage professionals. The course "Digitalization and Copyright" addresses the importance of copyright literacy in terms of digitalization and providing access to digital

content. The proposed learning content is based on: findings from a multinational survey on copyright literacy of specialists from libraries and other cultural institutions (2013-2015); summary of the activities of the International Copyright Literacy Group (ICLG) in the period 2012-2020; and review of the current documents such as IFLA Statement On Copyright Education and Copyright Literacy (2018) and Copyright in the Digital Single Market Directive (EU) 2019/790 of the European Parliament and of the Council (2019) (Todorova, 2020, p. 03-14).

The thematic scope of the course is divided into two modules: 1st, Digitalization of cultural heritage - projects, achievements and copyright aspects and 2nd, Libraries, archives and museums, copyright and consumers. It is necessary in order to coordinate efforts and facilitate access to the digital content to proceed to the creation of a National strategy for digitalization of the cultural heritage of Bulgaria (Todorova, 2010, p. 82).

Training in this discipline addresses some important aspects of the dynamically changing information ecosystem:

Information Literacy and Copyright Literacy among students and professionals;

Updates in the copyright laws in the Bulgarian and European context;

The trends for the creation of a single legal framework with regard to digitalization, intellectual property and access to information for all (Todorova, 2017, p. 13-38).

Students acquire knowledge and competencies to develop and implement projects for digitalization and copyright policy in cultural institutions.

CONCLUSION

There are still some obstacles to the success of the initiatives for the digitalization of cultural heritage, such as differences in implementation methods; the risks of using inappropriate technologies; the challenges facing the need for long-term storage; consistency and perseverance in the process of protection of the Intellectual Property Rights. To overcome that, A. Ignatova (2019) appealed to the establishment of a permanent forum for coordination in the member states of the European Union in order to consult and support the digitalization policies and programs and to develop mechanisms for advertising and promoting the good experience (Ignatova, 2009).

The projects, initiatives and good practices presented in this report are a kind of proof of the adaptability of Bulgarian professionals to the global digital environment, for the positive impact of cooperation at the international level and for the importance of modernization in the education system as a fundamental for bringing a new generation of librarians.

In conclusion, it is important to note the current discussion on the Draft of the Strategy for the Bulgarian Culture in the period 2019-2029. For several years, Bulgarian librarians have conducted a number of campaigns, projects, discussions and initiatives, appealing for the preparation of such a document. It affects almost all the problems of modern cultural institutions, and the 10-year period implies the correct prioritization of goals. The need for state support in the construction of future modern cultural and educational institutions was felt a decade ago. Now, we still have many challenges ahead of us, but solid foundations have been laid.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The report is a part of research project "Information Portal for Archival-Documentary Heritage of the Bulgarian Revival" (2018-2023), financed by National Science Fund of the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science, Contract № КП-06-Н 25/2,13.12.2018.

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