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SYNERGY BETWEEN ANALOGUE AND DIGITAL FORMATS IN THE SPACE OF CULTURAL HERITAGE (ON THE EXAMPLE OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA)

Abstract: The article considers the necessity to present to the public and protect for the future generations physical artefacts and intangible assets of any group or society. Synergy between analogue and digital formats may be a possible answer how to build new layers in the reconstruction of the past. In the digital age the value of many cultural institutions lies increasingly in their role as mediators between networks that produce culture and impart meaning.

Key words: physical artefacts, analogue formats, digital formats, digital age

1. Introduction

Today, perhaps more than at any point in the human history we live in an age where human power can be magnified through technology. Technology enables us to address a larger audience in one day than our great grand parents, just a few centuries ago, ever had a chance to speak to in their entire lifetime. This amazing, almost magical power is embodied in information and communication technology. However, our grand parents have produced such beautiful physical artefacts and intangible assets that we (actually all generations through time and history) have an obligation to present them to the public and protect them for the future generations. The Republic of Croatia is a country of unique natural and cultural treasures. In its journey through time and space, its history linked the resources of diverse shapes to create its visual, textual, musical and artistic cultural identity. To show this exceptionally valuable corpus of Croatian culture and heritage it is important to determine the cultural origins and contacts among different cultures as well as the place of the Croatian cultural heritage in the heritage of the world.

A proper framework at a national level is an important basis for development and realisation of individual and comprehensive digitisation programs. It is important that a state body, such as a Ministry of Culture, determines a strong digital policy for the cultural heritage on a national level. Without that support it would be very hard for experts from libraries, museums and archives to sit together around the table with the same aims. Moreover, it is important that the Ministry of Culture (or another state body) is the founder of digitisation policy and that it secures a position in the state budget for digitisation of cultural heritage. This paper will present the Croatian model with several examples of digitisation projects.

2. Analogue or digital? Both!

The 'Pearl of the Adriatic', situated on the Dalmatian coast, Dubrovnik became an important Mediterranean sea power from the 13th century onwards. Although severely damaged by an earthquake in 1667, Dubrovnik managed to preserve its beautiful Gothic, Renaissance and

Baroque churches, monasteries, palaces and fountains. Damaged again in the 1990s by armed conflict, it is now the focus of a major restoration programme co-ordinated by UNESCO.



Figure 1. Dubrovnik restoration programme

Looking at digitisation as both technological and social development we must know that digital technology also plays an important role in the development of networks between people and organisations especially when it comes to the exchange of knowledge and information. In the digital age the value of many cultural institutions lies increasingly in their role as mediators between networks that produce culture and impart meaning. Until now their primary roles were to collect, catalogue and provide access to their analogue collections. Digital technologies and the Internet are opening doors to new forms of expressions; changing the roles played by cultural institutions and placing the audience and users increasingly centre stage.

“Access to successful digital surrogates often encourages people to wish to consult the original. This impacts staff in many different ways with more calls, letters, and requests for publications or reproductions of the materials, and added reference service is necessary.” (de Stefano, 2000, p. 13). “High-quality surrogates must be created in order to satisfy the users’ needs, or they will need to go back and consult the original.” (de Stefano, p.21-22).¹

If formal preservation programmes for traditional materials include regular allocation of resources for preservation, is this also possible in the digital world? Do we have the energy, knowledge, funds? Do we have professional and political competence for that?

Is it possible to take advantage of the synergy between analogue and digital formats? Is synergy possible for all formats of cultural heritage? What about visual, audio, olfactory applications? Is it possible to accomplish preventive measures to arrest deterioration of materials, remedial measures to restore the usability of materials?

¹ Cited from McKay, Sally. *Digitization in an Archival Environment*, Electronic Journal of Academic and Special Librarianship http://southernlibrarianship.icaap.org/content/v04n01/Mckay_s01.htm (2011-12-17)

„Digitisation contributes to the conservation and preservation of the heritage and scientific resources; it creates new educational opportunities; it can be used to encourage tourism; and it provides ways of improving access by the citizens to their patrimony“²

3. The exhibition and culturological project (Slavonia, Baranya and Syrmia)

Like stacking scattered stones, lifting the beams on the ceiling, reconstructing homes, the national cultural exhibition or digitisation projects that have been implemented by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia in the last few years are characterized by devoted research activities, providing the most comprehensive review of selected regional items of objects of cultural heritage, by creating its own heritage cartographic scale and showing its inscription on the map of global and especially cultural circles. In identification of objects the experts from different fields of the humanities create separate data bases. In that process they determine the state of objects and needs for preservation or restoration. And this is done on a regular basis. In digitisation projects we often solve questions such as cataloguing, preservation, etc. which are basically also found when dealing with analogue formats. So, digitisation provides answers to the operation level of analogue resources projects.



Figure 2. Actual and virtual exhibition Slavonia, Baranya and Syrmia: the Origins of European Civilisation

Slavonia, Baranya and Syrmia: the Origins of European Civilisation – the exhibition and culturological project presented in 2009 in the Klovčevići Dvori Gallery, organised immediately after the previous and very successful exhibition realised after the same model – Dalmatian Zagora: an Unknown Land, has shown the exceptionally valuable corpus of Croatian

² DigiCULT (2003) *Europe: Creating cooperation for digitization*. www.cordis.lu/ist/ka3/digicult/eeurope-overview.htm (2011-11-20)

culture, built out of historical layers of culturally burdened spaces between the rivers Danube, Drava and Sava.

The exhibition has shown, and the publications have proved, that this was, so far the most complete cultural and historical overview of that special cultural space, and that it provided an utterly new insight and evaluation of that surprising space, rich both in nature and heritage.

Such an exhibition project as well as any other exhibition project in a specific exhibition space is limited with regard to time and space. Once the lights that illuminated the exhibits are turned off, the exhibition is stored in the memory of those who worked on it and those who visited it to satisfy their interest in a particular topic. Digitisation of cultural heritage, the process by which we protect and make available valuable archive, museum, library and all other heritage materials, both immovable as well as movable heritage, represents a measure by which we extend the duration of such heritage materials and extensive national cultural and exhibition projects. The exhibition which extends beyond its physical closure is a basis for further upgrading and subsequent networking based on the collected material, and offers the possibility of virtual search by time, topic or some other data element.

4. The Croatian Apoxyomenos

As it was already stressed, digital technologies and the Internet are opening doors to new forms of expressions, changing the roles played by cultural institutions and placing the audience and user increasingly centre stage. The story of Croatian Apoxyomenos is another illustrative example.



Figure 3. The story of Apoxyomenos

The ancient bronze statue of Apoxyomenos, the figure of a young athlete (height 192 cm), was found in 1996 by a Belgian tourist, René Wouters, under the sea off the little island of

Vele Orjule, near Lošinj in Croatia. The statue was lying on a sandy seabed, stuck between two rocks, at a depth of approximately 45 m.

In 1998, this find of incalculable value was reported to the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia. The Ministry took over the coordination of the project, which envisaged systematic submarine archaeological exploration, the raising of the statue and its conservation-restoration. But before the beginning of the investigation, in spring 1999 the Croatian Minister of Culture, for security reasons, decided that the statue ought to be raised at once, to forestall unlawful diving operations at the site.

The raising action involved experts from the Ministry of Culture and the Archaeological Museum in Zadar, as well as Special Police and professional divers.

The statue was finally brought to the surface on April 27 1999, and during June that year, extensive underwater investigations were carried out at the site, in quest of any other valuable finds there might be.

Immediately after the raising, a team of experts examined the statue, and gamma-graphic imaging was carried out to provide a better picture of the state of preservation of the statue.

The Croatian Apoxyomenos has been travelling physically all around Europe during the last years as a national exhibition. Beside that, one can always see it on the portal www.kultura.hr

5. Newspapers as the memory of the past

Newspapers as a memory of the past show us that any cultural heritage material, whether it is in analogue or digital format should emerge to constitute an important resource for research, education and new content creation.

In addition to separate digitisation projects realised in various heritage institutions in Croatia, the development of a cooperative portal that is the central point for search and access to digitised historic newspapers and journals in Croatia, realised by the National and University Library in Zagreb, is one of the many systems planned for different kinds of resources.



Figure 4. Portal Historic Croatian newspapers and journals



Figure 5 Digitised local newspapers on the portal Croatian Cultural Heritage

6. Conclusion

The creation of a digital image of an analogue original can provide access to users, but digitisation is also a means of creating resources that can have a purpose in the future. Providing access to digital material from many different sources and places can facilitate building new layers in the reconstruction of the past. In the community which is interested to open such questions we must share the knowledge through scientific and professional meetings (workshops, training and expert meetings to scientific excellence). The answers are in dissemination and expanded communication activities; cooperation between policy makers, stakeholders, researchers and academics, producers, curators and restorers in the field in cultural heritage. The answer for Croatia is to take up the National Programme of Digitisation of Cultural Heritage. The National Programme for Digitisation of Cultural Heritage was set up in 2005, and its establishment was presented at the Regional Meeting on digitisation of cultural heritage in Ohrid 2005. The situation was clear – we were completely aware of the fact that the success of a national strategy depends on the ability to clearly define our objects: what, why and how to digitise. Today the Croatian National Strategy is defined, the pilot stage of the national project “Croatian Cultural Heritage” has been completed and evaluated. The conclusion is to follow it up with forceful and comprehensive digitisation of immovable heritage. We are thinking about the responsibility for a continuous maintenance of the programme and preparing our holdings and objects for inclusion to Europeana. The Ministry of Culture as well as the National and University Library in Zagreb, the Museum Documentation Centre and Croatian State Archives saw their challenge to examine the myths of the national identity and its importance in a world where globalization is the watchword and they had to decide what was their role in the contemporary era and their position in relation to the protection and presentation of Croatian cultural heritage.

The National Programme of Digitisation of Cultural Heritage is focused to promote and support a systematic and standardised approach to digitisation of holdings in cultural in-

stitutions, to design and provide cultural contents and services through digital copies, and to apply information technology in the protection, processing and use of the holdings. The programme is focused on the development of long-term digitisation policies and the enhancement of institutional, technological, professional and organisational capacity and infrastructure considered necessary for programme implementation and for the management of specific digitisation projects.

Every year the digitisation of cultural heritage is changing the ways in which the holdings or collections are used and accessed. Many materials which are thought difficult and challenging for digitisation, such as scarce, fragile and ephemeral materials as well as the moving images, audio materials or, examples of materials of intangible heritage, can be digitised safely with the development of new technology.

Digital materials can be made available to a broader audience than when it concerns only those who have the resources or ability to travel to see analogue collections, and access can be expanded to non-traditional audiences too. But without analogue materials, in the greatest number of cases, we cannot have digital ones either.

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