Digital Preservation Policies in Bulgaria and Turkey

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Abstract

The goal of the paper is to evaluate the achievements and problems in the implementation of the digital preservation policies in Bulgaria and Turkey. The cultural institutions in the both countries preserved very rare and valuable documents from the common historical background, which meet the interest of researchers, educators and wide public. Based on descriptive and comparative approach, this paper will show the commonalities and differences in the situation of presentation of cultural heritage on digital environment in Bulgaria and Turkey. Major common problems observed are listed as lack of national strategies, authorized aggregators, standards and coordination on digitization processes.

Keywords: Cultural heritage, digitization, libraries, archives and museums, national digitization policy, Bulgaria, Turkey

Introduction

Digitization, conservation and socialization of cultural heritage are usually performed within the established national cultural policy and is implemented with collective effort and coordination of interdisciplinary expertise and organizational structures.

The main goal of the paper is to evaluate the achievements and problems in the implementation of the digital preservation policies in Bulgaria and Turkey. The cultural institutions in both countries preserved very rare and valuable documents from the common historical background, which meet the interest of researchers, educators and wide public. Based on descriptive and comparative approach, this paper will show the commonalities and differences in the situation of digitization processes in Bulgaria and Turkey.

Digitization in Bulgaria – achievements and problems

The establishment of the Bulgarian national and cultural identity as a part of the European cultural space requires the realization of a national cultural policy, in particular a national strategy for digitization. The issue of digital preservation, access, promotion, socialization and wide use of Bulgarian

cultural and scientific heritage in virtual environment is of national importance and is a commitment of Bulgaria as a member of the European Union.

LIS and cultural community dialogue for establishment of Digital Preservation Policy

In the period 2009 – 2014 the library, cultural and scientific communities put some serious efforts to impose this important issue on the agenda of the Bulgarian society and government. Here we are going to summarize the main initiatives and forums that helped to define the problems and to look for the solutions applicable on the national level.

The Bulgarian Library and Information Association (BLIA) has an important role. It organized a national conference on "Libraries and Cultural Heritage" (2009) and round table "Bulgarian Digital Library – Models and Approaches" (2013). In 2013 the discussions focus on the project "National Strategy and Program for preservation of literary cultural heritage in libraries and access to it", developed by recognized experts in the field (National 2013).

An active initiator of professional discussions with the participation of representatives from the Europeana Foundation is the Public Library "Pencho Slaveikov" in Varna. The forums they organized are: Conference on "European Digital Library – modern approaches and national cultural preservation and development policy" (March 2010), National forum "Transfiguration of the BG-space" (March 2013), Open forum "Europeana – a window to European culture – united in diversity" (April 2014).

In 2011, the first public-private initiative for digitization was created, called Bulgariana, which transformed to the Bulgariana Association on February 2014 (Bulgariana 2014). Bulgariana is an initiative for virtual preservation and presentation of the Bulgarian cultural heritage, technical aggregator to Europeana, and a network of Bulgarian organizations and private people, who deal with activities related to the Bulgarian cultural heritage (Damova 2013).

In the period 2009 – 2012 under the patronage of the Bulgarian Member of the European Parliament Emil Stoyanov four consecutive meetings took place in Plovdiv and one of them in the European Parliament in Brussels, focused on the presentation of the Bulgarian cultural and historical heritage in the digital environment and the Bulgarian participation with digital content in Europeana. As a result of these meetings three memorandums were prepared and deposited on the attention of the Bulgarian government for the necessity concrete steps to be taken for the acceptance and implementation of the project of National Strategy for Digitization and for the provision of regular and stable financial support for digitization processes in the cultural institutions.

In July 2012 a National Council for Digitization of cultural and historical heritage was established at the National Charity Fund "13th Centuries Bulgaria". Experts from different cultural, educational and scientific institutions are among its members. The main objective of the National Council is the development of a National Plan for digitization of the cultural, historical and scientific heritage of Bulgaria. After a public discussion this plan is expected to be submitted to the government so it can take political and financial decisions for creating a centralized, coordinated policy for national funding of the digitization.

Review of the digitization activities in Bulgaria

Despite the many and different initiatives conducted in the five year period (2009 - 2014), today is still missing a government commitment, approved strategy and target funding for digitization of the Bulgarian cultural heritage, unfortunately. The merits for the results are of single institutions or networks of

government and private organizations. Digitization projects carried out according to European technology standards are financed mainly with external support (European Union Funds, funding under the Bulgarian-Korean cultural cooperation (Bulgariana) and private sectors).

The summarized picture of the Bulgarian cultural institutions, which participate in European projects, connected to the development of Europeana, is the following: National Library "St. St. Cyril and Methodius" (TELPlus, European Digital Library, IMPACT); Public Library "Pencho Slaveikov", Varna (Europeana Local since 2008, Europeana Awareness, LoCloud); Central Library of Bulgarian Academy of Science (Michael, Athena and Athena Plus, Linked Heritage, DM2E); National Archaeological Institute with Museum at Bulgarian Academy of Science (CARARE since 2012), Initiative Bulgariana – Ontotext (Europeana since 2011), Library of New Bulgarian University (DART Europe), National Academic Library and Information System Foundation (Europeana Photography since 2012) etc.

At the moment the Bulgarian content in Europeana achieved between 50 000-100 000 materials which is less than 2 % from the total content of the portal. The typology and characteristics of materials are the following: texts from print sources (XIX and XX century); pictures (scenic pictures of settlements, pictures of eminent historical persons; photos of events); documents, related to the development of the Bulgarian state and nation and for the establishment and activities of the national institutions including cultural and educational sector; sound files (traditional Bulgarian music); different type of materials about tangible and intangible cultural heritage (movies, symbols, monuments and monumental places, rituals etc.). This content is neither not enough nor close to the desired representativeness of the rich Bulgarian cultural heritage in the digital environment. There are missing materials about the whole historical periods such as Prehistory, Antiquity, Middle Ages and Early Modernism. Exceptionally low quantity of materials is representing the paragons of the Bulgarian art, literature and architecture as well as the masterpieces of the manuscripts. There are missing representative collections related to the Bulgarian authors, artists and cultural phenomenons. *The conclusion is that we are far from the representation in the digital European space of meaningful cultural context which is inherent for Bulgaria in historical and ethno-confessional plan. The task to be outlined the national priorities for presentation of the cultural content from and for Bulgaria in Europeana is really urgent.*

The positive result which is reached through professional debates, is the advent of technological partnerships in the digitization processes. There are created some partnership networks and technological infrastructures. The Public Library "Pencho Slaveikov" is collaborating with other public libraries from the towns Russe, Stara Zagora and Haskovo for the presentation of local digital content in Europeana Local. For their contribution to the Europeana Photography Project, the National Academic Library and Information System Foundation (NALIS) work with wide network of libraries, archives, museums, NGOs and private persons. The Central Library of Bulgarian Academy of Science has established productive partnership with the Public Library "Petko R. Slaveikov" in Veliko Tarnovo and with the cultural institutes at the Sofia metropolitan municipality. Bulgariana has developed partnership network which consists of 200 Bulgarian cultural and scientific organizations from all over the country. In Bulgaria there are initiatives for common work of the institutions from the GLAM sector - galleries, libraries, archives and museums. As an example is the digital library with collections of cultural institutions from Plovdiv. It is collaborative initiative with the participation of the National Library 'Ivan Vazov', the State Archive, the Regional Historical Museum and the City Art Gallery in Plovdiv (Digital, 2014).

The Public Library "Pencho Slaveikov", Varna, the National Library "St. St. Cyril and Methodius" and Bulgariana act as aggregators of Bulgarian cultural heritage content to Europeana. But in Bulgaria is still *missing official recognized national aggregator and national established institutional infrastructure* for aggregation of the Bulgarian cultural heritage to Europeana. The mission and national responsible functions of the National Library "St. St. Cyril and Methodius" are premising it as a logical leader, but

it still doesn`t take this role. The Public Library "Pencho Slaveikov", Varna is the institution with longest experience in the fruitful collaboration with Europeana and it offers its consultation and expert support to the cultural institutions in the country, but it couldn`t execute the role of the national aggregator. One possible resolution of this problem is offered by Bulgariana Association. As M. Damova declare, that much like Europeana, Bulgariana is positioned as a technological infrastructure, organizational backbone, and a community of proselytes and revered experts, a center encouraging creativity, educating and promoting virtual preservation and presentation of Bulgarian cultural heritage, participating in international initiatives, a central point for preservation and presentation of Bulgarian cultural heritage to the world, an institution with governmental support, keeping pace with all modern trends and best practices for handling cultural heritage information in the virtual space, a contributor in the world wide process of creating conditions for raising a better next generation and building a better society in the future as a whole (Damova 2013).

The described situation is outlining the main problems of the digitization processes in Bulgaria:

- Lack of official approved National programme for digitization of the Bulgarian cultural-historical and literary heritage;
- Lack of outlined national priorities for presentation of the cultural content from and for Bulgaria in Europeana;
- Lack of stable financial support of the digitization processes;
- Lack of a National aggregator and national established institutional infrastructure for aggregation of the Bulgarian cultural heritage to Europeana;
- Lack of union catalog and/or database for the existing digital collections;
- Lack of working communication and partnership between the Bulgarian institutions which are responsible for the digitization from GLAM sector.

Recommendations

We could conclude that the professional society in Bulgaria has amass experience and creates mechanisms: for improvement of the communication and partnership between the institutions engaged in the digitization of materials from the public sector; for harmonizing the processes of integration of the Bulgarian content in Europeana; for giving opportunity for education of library specialists and many other problems but without government engagement and funding we continue to be far from the desired results and worthy presentation of the Bulgarian cultural heritage in the united European digital space. The European Commision has recommended to Bulgaria to participate in Europeana with more than 267 000 sites till 2015. On the other hand is the obligation of the country as a member state to contribute actively in the realization of the priorities of the Digital Agenda for Europe (DAE), one of the main flagship initiatives under Europe 2020, the EU's strategy to deliver smart sustainable and inclusive growth.

Some possible decision that we suggest is the development of the advocacy campaign with the participation of all interested parties with the main goal to engage the next government (October 2014) with the approval and realization of national programme for digitization of the cultural heritage of Bulgaria. It should be created conditions the National Council for Digitization of cultural and historical heritage and the project for "National Strategy and Program for preservation of literary cultural heritage in libraries and access to it" – to go from project phase and desired vision to real actions and realization.

Overview of Digitization Efforts in Turkey

Digitization projects is one of the protection attempts of countries in order to maintain their cultures. Analogously to other countries, digitization projects are realized by cultural memory institutions in Turkey. These institutions can be listed as the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the National Library, university and public libraries and the General Directorate of State Archives. It is also stated that description and cataloging of print materials is the starting point of digitization activities in Turkey the starting point of these attempts (Bilgi, 2010). These activities were followed by transferring print materials into a digital environment. On the other hand, it is also possible to list digitization attempts in following paragraphs.

The first attempt at digitization efforts in Turkey was The Union Catalogue of Turkish Manuscripts (TÜYATOK) Project. It started in the 1970s and continued until 2000 by the National Library. The main aim of the project is to describe manuscripts by determining description procedures and provide a list of manuscripts in order to increase their accessibility and visibility via online platforms (Odabaş, Odabaş, & Polat, 2008; Milli Kütüphane, 2011a).

Following the TUYATOK project, academic and research libraries started to digitize and describe their collections that are mainly based on manuscripts. At this point, cataloging and digitization project that was carried out by Ankara University Library in 1998 can be shown as an example project (Örs, Tuzcu, & Hekimoğlu, 2006). Additionally, another project that was carried out by İstanbul University Library of Rare Works is also based on manuscripts (Konya, 2010). Moving from this point it is possible to say that universities that possess manuscripts in their collections are known to be carrying out digitization efforts (Odabaş, Odabaş, & Polat, 2008). LIS departments are also other contributors of digitization projects. As an example, it is possible to present the electronic thesis and dissertation (ETD) project carried out by the Hacettepe University Department of Information Management (Şahin, 2010; Tonta, et al, 2006). Moreover, another ETD project that is based on description of LIS thesis and dissertations in Turkey was carried out in a PhD course, namely known as Digital Libraries, offered by Hacettepe University, Department of Information Management in 2013. The main aim of the project is to increase accessibility and visibility of Turkish LIS thesis and dissertations in the light of metadata descriptions.

National Library of Turkey is also has transferred 25,200 volumes of manuscripts out of 26,700 into a digital environment via a project began in 2004 (Milli Kütüphane, 2011b).

Public libraries is another cultural memory institutions that preserve cultural heritage works as well as increasing accessibility of them. It is expressed that digitization efforts have been conducted in 28 public libraries in cities and districts which have manuscripts in their collections. As a result of these attempts, more than 167,000 works have been digitized (Açıkgöz, 2010; Yılmaz, 2011).

As cultural memory institutions, archives are another stakeholder of the sector. In this context, it is seen that there are more than nine million digital materials in the General Directorate of State Archives (Yılmaz, 2011). Furthermore, it is known that similar studies are carried out by the General Directorate of Land Registry and Cadastre.

As for international digitization activities, many projects were carried out by LIS departments, National Library and Ministry of Culture and Tourism. In this context description fields of 50,000 cultural items were transferred into European Digital Library within the scope of AccessIT (Accelerate the Circulation of Culture Through Exchange of Skills in Information Technology) Project whose institutional owner on behalf of Turkey is the Hacettepe University Department of Information Management (Yılmaz, 2011). Plus, a distance education certificate programme about digitization was carried out within the scope of the project in order to increase awareness of information professionals. On the other hand, National Library of Turkey contributed to Europeana collection by sharing metadata of their newspaper

collection. Beside these efforts, INDICATE project, another EU 7th Framework Cultural Program Project, was carried out by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism with the aim of developing electronic infrastructure and coordinate cultural heritage researches, and developing policies for digitization and preservation of cultural heritage (INDICATE Project, 2012). Moreover, LoCloud (Local Content in Europeana Cloud) Project began in 2013 with the aim of increasing digitized materials of small and medium scaled cultural memory institutions and Turkey represented via Hacettepe University Department of Information Management and Vehbi Koç Ankara Research Center (Yılmaz, Külcü, Ünal ve Çakmak, 2013, s.67). Apart from the projects, scientific events were organized on digitization and the principles that might guide the digitization approaches in Turkey were negotiated. On the other hand, reports and scholarly papers have been published in order to seeking digitization approaches in Turkey (Küçük & Soydal, 2003; Odabaş, Odabaş, & Polat, 2008; PULMANWeb, 2003; Açıkgöz, 2010; Atılgan, 2001). In this context, digitization issues were negotiated in "Workshop on Standards and Collaboration in Digitization of Information Resources" in February 25-27, 2010. Beyond this event UNESCO Turkey National Commission organized another workshop on Turkey in World Memory and requirements for digitization approaches are determined in the scope of the workshop by the digitization and digital humanities group in March 18, 2013 (UNESCO Türkiye Millî Komisyonu, 2013). Last but not least, in March 28, 2013 a workshop about digitization of rare books were carried out by Metropolitan Municipality of Istanbul Atatürk Library and Digitization working group was established in May 17, 2013 (Sayısallaştırma Çalışma Grubu, 2013). Plus, it is also seen that a study group, informatics in art and culture study group, related to Horizon 2020 was founded within the scope of increasing awareness about national digital libraries.

Problems in Digitization Approaches

There are also some problems in digitization approaches in Turkey as well as other countries. These problems were determined and discussed in workshops, study groups and published scholarly papers. At this point studies that pointing out the problems in digitization projects have an effect on making up the deficiencies (Yılmaz, 2011; Odabaş, Odabaş, & Polat, 2008). Among the subjects of the studies, lacks of digitization policies were identified as the real problem (Özbağ, 2010; Yılmaz, 2011). Beyond this major problem, the essential problems related to digitization efforts in Turkey can be listed as follows (Odabaş, Odabaş, & Polat, 2008; Bilgi, 2010; Yılmaz, 2011; Çakmak & Yılmaz, 2012):

- Conducting projects and institutional studies independently and unaware of each other,
- Personnel skills and competencies,
- Budget and funding problems,
- Lack of national standards,
- Lack of terminological unity in defining sources in projects,
- Ambiguities in copyright for cultural memory institutions and lack of a definition for information sources in the related regulations,
- Lack of an union catalogue of digitized materials,
- Lack of a collective platform for all cultural memory institutions,
- Lack of a supreme board having authority over digitization practices.

Review of Digitization Approaches in Turkey and Recommendations

It is seen that digitization efforts carried out by cultural memory institutions have reached a new dimension with the effects of technological developments. In this regard, although Digitization of library resources are subject of forefront activities in recent years, it wouldn't be wrong to say that there are outstanding efforts carried out by cultural memory institutions. In this framework, it is known that non-book materials are transferred into a digital environment as a result of the digitization activities are realized in museums and studies conducted in the fields of archeology, art history, architecture and various arts (Özbağ, 2010). Additionally, it is pointed out in scientific events and legal regulations that preservation of original materials and rare books and manuscripts are priority elements of digitization efforts carried out within the scope of libraries (Bilgi, 2010). In parallel with this expression, analytic studies conducted in Turkey are also confirm that preservation issues are evaluated as more important than access in contrast to similar studies in the literature. Based on this information, recommendations related to digitization approaches in Turkey can be listed as follows;

- Initiatives and efforts should be made in order to raise awareness of institutions about digitization approaches, standards and digitization project management;
- Digitization policies that contain detailed approaches about every single point of digitization and digital collections should be established at institutional and national levels;
- Accessibility of digitized materials should be considered more than previous approaches.
- An authority institution which can play a leading role for digitization processes should be determined.

Conclusions

Both countries have a valuable cultural heritage assets with the effect of sharing culture approximately five centuries through the history. It is seen that initiatives related to digitization and digital preservation issues in both of the countries were carried out in the same period. Moving from this point, it is also possible to say that scientific events and papers are major indicators for both countries in order to describe problems and roles of cultural memory institutions about reflection of cultural heritage assets. It is also remarkable fact that both countries are involved in many international projects that provide support in terms of digitization process, record transmission and metadata mapping, developing policies for infrastructure facilities, etc. In parallel with the common developments and initiatives, the presented reviews of the situation about digitization process in Bulgaria and Turkey show very common problems and discussing matters as well. We could conclude that in both countries have following issues about digital preservation and digitization;

- Lack of national strategy of digitization of cultural heritage,
- Lack of standardized institutional infrastructure,
- Lack of an authority institution about standards and quality of digitization project management and state financial support.

These issues are also main obstacles which not allow to be implemented the effective long-term digitization policy.

The academic and professional community in Bulgaria and Turkey must provide active advocacy campaigns for engagement of stakeholders in this important issue. It is clear that successful strategic

management in digitization in it three main stages: digital conversion, management of digital information sources and offering services based on digital collections – could not provide on national level without appropriate programme and financial support.

In the on-going discussion which initiate IFLA about the five top level trends which will play a key role in shaping our future information ecosystem, the librarians community in every country made their own analyses trying to answer the question how libraries will fit into a changing society and made their plans for future development (IFLA, 2013). The implementation of effective digitization policy in Bulgaria and Turkey is obviously task in these strategies and visions. In this connection, we could recommend to be enriched the professional contacts and exchange of experience and best practices between professionals from GLAM sector, academic and research community in these neighboring countries. There are a lot of possibilities for join projects and for collaboration in academic and life-long learning education which could be used productive.

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