

LITHUANIAN CULTURAL HERITAGE DIGITISATION PROJECTS

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The possibilities of co-operation between memory institutions – libraries, museums and archives on the basis of the Integrated Virtual Library Information System are examined in this presentation.

The National Library of Lithuania has received the support from EU Structural Funds for the creation of the Integrated Virtual Library Information System.

The selection criteria of objects of the Lithuanian cultural heritage to be digitized are highlighted here as well as the collections and documents selected for digitization during the project implementation period 2005-2007 are reviewed in this presentation.

Introduction

The positive interest regarding the co-operation between museums, libraries and archives was initiated in 1998 during the implementation of the 5th EU Framework Program on Scientific Studies.

The new direction of cultural policy, “Digital Heritage and Cultural Content” aimed at the initiatives of culture digitization, has emerged in one part of this program called “Technologies of Information Society”.

The above mentioned programs have been a huge benefit to libraries, museums and archives since they promoted the co-operation between the institutions by preparing international projects, receiving a financial support for their implementation and solving a number of problems concerning the management, long-term preservation and distribution of cultural heritage.

Cultural heritage is included into the implementation processes of strategies formulated by Lisbon Council in 2000. The strategy implementation vehicles are reflected in the strategic plans on electronic Europe - eEurope 2002 and eEurope 2005, which cover the following:

- organisation of co-operation between the memory institutions and their integration into the information and culture policy;
- preparation of projects on digitization of cultural heritage and their implementation by establishing unified systems and promoting co-operation with business partners;
- distribution of cultural heritage by using information and communication technologies.

Although the long-term preservation of cultural heritage is covered by the strategic program of the *Lithuanian Long-term Development Strategy of State and the Provisions of the Lithuanian Cultural Policy* [1, 2], the mentioned documents do not include the

issues concerning the co-operation between memory institutions during the process of digitization of cultural heritage and organisation of its distribution within the information medium of eEurope. During the period of 2003-2004 the Lithuanian National Library carried out some planning activities in parallel with fulfilment of its functions on the long-term preservation of published cultural heritage and aiming to pay the attention of state institutions to the demand for integration into the medium of European electronic content. As a result, 13,3 million litas were received from EU Structural funds for the digitization and access of cultural heritage, and the draft of the concept of cultural heritage digitization and access was prepared.

The main beneficiary of the project is Martynas Mazvydas National Library of Lithuania. Lithuanian Art Museum and Archives Department of Lithuania are the project partners. The implementation of the project will be carried out in 2005-2007.

This presentation reviews the possibilities of co-operation between Lithuanian Memory Institutions during the digitization of the Lithuanian cultural heritage on the basis of a virtual library.

The virtual library - the basis of co-operation between the memory institutions.

1. Demand for the national program of cultural heritage digitization.

The birth of digital technologies, in general, has changed the processes of storage, preservation, control and distribution of cultural heritage. In parallel, the role of memory institutions – libraries, museums and archives, has altered as well.

Cultural heritage, in general, is divided into tangible and intangible cultural properties, while the intangible cultural heritage consists of psychic and verbal cultural values. The tangible cultural values include movable and immovable cultural properties.

According to the *Law on the Protection of the Movable Cultural Properties of the Republic of Lithuania* [3], the movable cultural values are defined as the movable material production of society and human activity that have been created 50 years ago or earlier and has been representing a huge cultural value.

Author's literary works, songs, fairy-tales, sagas, customs, traditions and spectacles are defined as the immaterial or spiritual cultural heritage.

According to the data presented in article by N. Kligiene [4] approximately 70 Internet sites from Lithuania contain the examples of cultural heritage.

The digitized exhibits are presented in the sites of museums providing a greater possibility and easier access for remote users to get acquainted with the object of cultural heritage available in various museums of the country.

The site of the Lithuanian Archives Department, (www.archives.lt), also contains a virtual library where the Digest of Lithuanian Archive Funds is currently under reconstruction but the document search system is operating.

Also, the examples of digitized published documents may be found in the sites of the libraries of Lithuanian Academy of Sciences, www.mab.lt, Vilnius University, www.mb.vu.lt, and M. Mazvydas National Library of Lithuania, www.lnb.lt.

Although, a number of memory institutions – libraries, museums, archives, have been recently implementing different activities of cultural heritage digitization and presentation in Internet, their actions have not been co-ordinated yet in the country, therefore, they are mostly accidental and dependant on various subjective reasons and opportunities. Meanwhile, such activities must be implemented purposefully in accordance with the *Lund Principles* [5] and *Lund Strategic Plan* [6] in order to secure:

- The creation of the unified digital information environment of Lithuanian cultural heritage by the memory institutions and other authority bodies responsible for the cultural heritage;
- The digitization and distribution of the Lithuanian cultural heritage on the basis of the unified virtual library system;
- The formation of an efficient infrastructure of the digitization of Lithuanian cultural heritage to warrant the obligation of the memory institutions – libraries, museums, archives and others responsible bodies for the preservation of the cultural heritage, to pursue the constant activity of long-term digitization of the cultural heritage.

The following tendencies have become the basis of the concept on the digitization of and access to the Lithuanian cultural heritage. The programmes created on the basis of this concept will become very important normative acts for memory institutions in digitization and access of cultural heritage. The concept of the digitization and access of the Lithuanian cultural heritage is a very significant document that changes the viewpoint of the memory institutions regarding the co-operation in order to allow the optimal possibilities for the long-term preservation and distribution of the national cultural heritage.

2. “Creation of the Lithuanian Integrated Virtual Library Information System” project.

The Lithuanian M. Mazvydas National Library of Lithuania carried out the projection activities in 2003-2004 in order to establish further perspective of the LIBIS development and insure the implementation of library’s main functions as a memory institution.

In parallel with the above mentioned concept of the cultural heritage digitization the experts of the National Library of Lithuania have been preparing the project of the “Creation of Virtual Environment of Lithuanian Integrated Library Information System” (2004) covering the digitization of the old and rare documents as well as the access to them.

The results of this project were employed during the preparation of the feasibility study of the “Creation of Integrated Virtual Library Information System” (2004) prepared by the Italian company “A.R.S. Progetti S.r.l.” by which the Lithuanian experts were chosen. Apart from the feasibility and project documentation were prepared as well. The support from the EU Structural Funds for the implementation of the project “Creation of Integrated Virtual Library Information System” was received in 2005, in accordance with the 3rd priority’s 3rd measure, “The Development of Information Services and Infrastructure” of the *Single Programming Document approved by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania* in 2004 (Lietuvos zinios, 2004, No. 123-4486) [7].

At the beginning of 2005 13,3 million Litas (about 4 million Euros) from EU Structural Funds were received for the project “Creation of Integrated Virtual Library Information System”.

The project “Creation of Integrated Virtual Library Information System” aims at forming a solid network of libraries, museums and archives by digitizing the cultural heritage and making it available through the public and free access interfaces to all users in Lithuania and world-wide.

The basis for the creation of the Integrated Virtual Library is the Lithuanian Integrated Library Information System (LIBIS) which consists of the Local Automated Information Systems (LAN) of 75 Lithuanian research and public libraries and local subsystems. The main local subsystems operating within the LIBIS are the Union Catalogue, the National Bibliographic Databank and the Archive of Electronic Resources.

The main beneficiary of the project, Martynas Mazvydas National Library of Lithuania, represents the only beneficiary of this project. The project has a Project Management Group consisting from a project leader, accountant and 3 coordinators.

The main objective of the Integrated Virtual Library Information System is a very close connection with the *Concept of the Digitization of Cultural Heritage of Lithuania* in order to ensure the interactive and free of charge usage of the objects deposited in the memory institutions – libraries, museums and archives for the users from Lithuanian and worldwide.

The specific objectives of the project are the following:

- To create of the databank of digital cultural heritage of memory institutions;
- To provide users with e-services of virtual libraries on the grounds of the created databank.

The main criteria of published cultural heritage selection for digitization based on the recommendations of *Minerva* and *Minerva Plus* programs and the tradition of Lithuanian press history are the following:

- the historical period any document was published or compiled;
- the language of a document;

- the rarity and uniqueness of a document (the number of extant copies);
- the content and scientific value of a document;
- the physical state of a document.

The list of collections intended for digitization was compiled during the period of project implementation on the basis of the assessments of the Lithuanian press and book history and the periodization of the old Lithuanian book as well as the criteria defined in the *Minerva* and *Minerva Plus* programs. The objects selected for digitization include a number of books dated 1547-1863; the documents of the Press Ban period (1864-1904); the Lithuanian books in Latin of XVI – XVII c.; the Lithuanian books in Polish of XVII-XVIII c.; Lithuanian foreign press released until 1940s; legal acts and other formal documents of the Republic of Lithuania of the inter-war period (1918-1940). The total number of pages the NLL has intended to digitize is 3 327 654.

According to the value of the objects stored in the archives and their importance to the society the church registers of birth, marriage and death of the Roman Catholic Church dated 1599-1930. 36 document collections compiled of 1382 files stored in the State Historical Archives of Lithuania were selected for digitization on the basis of the formulated criteria.

Apart from this amount manuscripts and archival documents reflecting the identity of Lithuanian social layers and communities, i.e. parchments, documents from Synod Collection of Lithuanian Evangelical Lutherans (1413-1438), the collection of historical acts of the Lithuania Minor, etc., will be digitized as well. The total number of pages the archives have intended for digitization is 180 000.

In accordance with the importance and physical state of the documents stored in museums the works of graphics, watercolours and folk graphics, photo negatives, positives, and slides displaying the exhibits of historical and artistic photography will be digitized. A number of maps, paintings, drawings, objects of bionistics and sfragistics, textile items and pictorial works will be digitized as well. The total number of pages and objects to be digitized by the museums is 98 000.

The overall number of pages and objects to be digitized during the implementation period (30 months) of the project is 3 605 654.

In order to obtain the most efficient access to the documents stored in IVLIS the following tasks will be solved:

- creation of the engine of efficient access to digital documents;
- guaranteeing the bibliographic control of digitized objects, that has already been materialized with the help of operating LIBIS National Bibliographic Data Bank module;
- preparation of a copyright protection engine.

Having implemented the project “Creation of Integrated Virtual Library Information System” the digitizing centres will function in the National Library, the Lithuanian Art

Museum and the Central State Archive. These centres will provide new services in respect of quality.

After 30 of months of project 2699167 pages will be recognized as omni-textual and 906487 as images which will be entered into the database and presented to the users via Internet by means of created documents search system (a portal of virtual library).

The main server containing the digital cultural heritage will have a link with currently widely used LIBIS catalogue, www.libis.lt, allowing the users to get the full-text of a digitized object through the bibliographic record.

The documents digitized by the Lithuanian Archives will have a link with the Digest of Lithuanian Archival Fund, www.archyvai.lt.

The images digitized by the Lithuanian Art Museum will have a link with the Integrated Information System of the museums called LIMIS.

The IVBIS architecture was built in accordance with the benefits of NCSTRL (Network Computer Science Technical Reference Library) model. IVBIS is created as an allocated system that controls its central and local information in local servers of Museums and Archives.

However, the scheme of cultural heritage digitization and its management formed in the framework of this project will alter when the general national program will be created where the management engine of this process will finally be defined.

The Creation of IVBIS Management System requires taking the following steps:

- formation of IVBIS maintenance and development group;
- establishment of digitization subdivisions.

According to the order passed by Directors of all member institutions the Digitization subdivisions will be established in the Lithuanian National Library (22 employees).

In 2005 some additional funding was allocated for the NLL from the State Budget for salary fund of 22 employees.

The Working Group in the Lithuanian Archives Department will include 11 persons funded from the Lithuanian State archival system. 7 persons will be appointed from the present staff to work in the project (3 from the Lithuanian State Historical Archive and 4 from the Lithuanian Central State Archive).

The Working Group of Digitizing Centre in the Art Museum will include 20 employees. Some additional funding has been requested from the budget for the establishment of 5 new positions. Only the managers of the project will be funded from the EU money.

The benefits of the project:

1. The project of “Creation of Integrated Virtual Library Information System” has brought the problems of the long-term preservation of national cultural heritage by digitization, the demand of national viewpoint regarding the management of cultural heritage and the benefits of memory institutions integration into the European electronic content space to state’s notice.
2. The creation of **Integrated Virtual Library Information System** will allow to develop the relationship between the national memory institutions on the grounds of the uniform objectives and tasks, work flows, information databases and standardization.
3. The implementation of the project will allow rendering new e-services, to prepare requirements for the unified form for presentation and exchange of information in the Internet.

After the implementation of this project **the accessibility and continuation of cultural heritage** will be secured:

- electronic resources data bank of libraries, archives and museums will be created the virtual services of which will be available to the users from Lithuania and abroad;
- currently available electronic services of public sector useful for the majority of Lithuanian residents will be updated and upgraded, and the quality of public sector electronic services will be improved;
- the access to the digital full-text documents stored in public libraries, archives and museums will be guaranteed as access to the digital catalogues of documents will function, document retrieval engine will operate and possibility to order a document will be secured;
- open and free of charge access to the virtual library information system will provide equal possibilities for all users regardless their sex, age or place of residence;

Also **the abundance and variety of digital documents** will be guaranteed because of the following factors:

- over 3 million 605 thousand pages of original manuscripts, newspapers, old books, metrics, chronicles and other especially valuable and historically important documents will be digitized;

Lithuanian cultural heritage will be preserved, and the original documents will be passed on to the upcoming generations. Residents will have no necessity to go to museums, archives and libraries in order to familiarize with very valuable documents and literary works because they will be accessible through virtual library.

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