

Partner Projects of “Ivan Vazov” Public Library – Plovdiv on Digitization of Cultural and Historical Heritage

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Abstract. Digitization offers excellent opportunities for the preservation and safe-keeping of valuable library collections. The article recounts the first coordinated attempts of “Ivan Vazov” Public Library – Plovdiv at digitizing some of its treasured collections such as manuscripts, early printed books and archives through partner projects and revealing them to the world community.

Keywords: digitization, projects, library collections, union catalogue

1 Introduction

A splendid opportunity to preserve library holdings is the setting up of good digital collections that can be available to users at any time and without the limitations applied to the use of original documents. In recent years a number of Bulgarian libraries focused their efforts on digitizing their valuable collections on their own or through participation in various national and international projects. The strategic aim of those programs is to preserve the cultural and historic heritage of our country by developing digitization processes and setting up a National Digital Library as part of the Electronic Library of Europe. That involves preservation and safe-guarding of significant national written monuments by means of modern methods and technologies that provide opportunities for quick and effective user access to digital resources in support of education, research, culture, etc.

2 Projects

In 2006 the library began purposeful and continuous digitization of its significant and valuable collections. A considerable array of electronic full-text databases has been accumulated through participation in various projects together with other libraries and software specialists.

Interesting and noteworthy are the following projects:

1. A project financed by the Research Fund of the Ministry of Education and Science /MES/, together with three other regional public libraries – Veliko Turnovo,

Kyustendil and Turgovishte, for establishment of a “Regional library network for preservation of rare and valuable collections by the use of new and effective methods”. A **Union Catalogue of early printed books and rare and valuable editions** was compiled for the first time in Bulgaria. The project for the digitization continues to the present. The project is open to include partners from the institutions who have unique, rare and valuable editions. We have request from organisations who indicated interest in participating in this project.

Currently, the Union Catalogue contains 2 522 descriptions including all special features of the editions such as donation, extant ex libris, autographs, notes in manuscript, dedications, physical characteristics, electronic images of covers, title pages, bibliographic descriptions from various sources. The rare and valuable editions of the Plovdiv library have also annotations in English. The Union Catalogue of rare and valuable collections and full-text databases for the Revival period and early printed library collections came as a result of the necessity to find efficient ways of preserving, safe-guarding and promoting the unique holdings of Bulgarian libraries.

The Union Catalogue provides links to the following digital files:

- Full text of 34 entries;
- Images from 246 entries;
- Covers of 1668 entries;
- Ex libris and autographs of 41 entries;
- Notes for concrete copies of 5 entries;
- Bibliographic descriptions from bibliographic sources by M. Stoyanov, V. Pogorelov and Al. Teodorov-Balan.

The Union Catalogue is installed on the WEB server of Veliko Turnovo Public Library and is accessible through i-Lib software. Both software products provide opportunities for:

- entering full bibliographic descriptions of incunabula, rare and valuable editions in accordance with international standards;
- search by each word from the information entered and use of Boolean operators AND, OR and NOT;
- insertion of various digital images by way of illustrating the edition – covers, ex libris, autographs and full texts.

The Union Catalogue can be seen at <http://ilib.libraryvt.com>. The contract we concluded as executers with MES as a contracting authority was fulfilled successfully in the period 2006-2008.

2. Again with financing from the Research Fund of the Ministry of Education and Science and in consortium with Sofia City Library, “P. R. Slaveikov” Public Library – Veliko Turnovo and “P. K. Yavorov” Public Library – Bourgas and with help from our Softlib partners, we work on a project entitled “Union Catalogue of Bulgarian Periodicals prior to 1944. Digital Collection” – Regina PI. The Plovdiv library has the most complete collection of periodicals from that period and a great

part of the Revival Period press, the entire East Roumelian press and a number of daily periodicals from the early 20th c. have been digitized by now and made available in the world net. The project advanced in an interesting way. According to it, libraries had to digitize a total of 150 000 pages and, despite the corrected financial resources, the task has already been fulfilled. The total cost of the project is BGL 449 123 and as a result of it the complete files of 124 periodicals from the period 1844–1944 (about 164 000 pages) will be presented full-text in the world net. The project was fulfilled in the period 2008–2011 and is accessible on a server of Sofia City Library at <http://reginapi.ilib.libsofia.bg>.

3. The European project EMBARK (Enhance Manuscriptorium through BAlkan Recovered Knowledge) started in September 2010 and organized in a consortium representatives of the National Library of the Czech Republic, the Institute of Bulgarian Language, Sofia, Bulgaria, “Ivan Vazov” Public Library Plovdiv, Bulgaria, and the National Library of Serbia. The project aimed at including specimens of the manuscript and documentary heritage from the Balkan region in the Manuscriptorium digital library on the one hand, and support for the professional mobility of specialists from the partner organizations with a view to exchanging experience in the field of digital technologies applied to work with written cultural content. Manuscriptorium is a European digital library of written documentary, cultural and historical heritage which provides access to shared resources of cultural institutions from countries within and out of the European Union. Over 5 million images are continually accessible in the world net at <http://www.manuscriptorium.com>.

4. PROJECT FOR DIGITIZATION of the Archives collection. Personal archives constitute a major part of the historical archives in the Special Collections department. Most of them are donations for the library. Some have been specially handed over after the death of their founders, in accordance with their wills. Of exceptional value are the archives of Nikolay Pavlovich, Joakim Gruev and Georgi Gruev. Nikolay Pavlovich is an eminent painter, one of the most famous Bulgarian portrait and graphic artists. He is the founder of history painting in our country. He took an active part in public and political life and was a very public-spirited man of art. The Nikolay Pavlovich archive (315 arch. un., 1100 doc., 1878 l.) was acquired by the library in 1923, 1925, 1951 from the artist’s nephew. The materials are in Bulgarian, but there are also letters in German, French, Russian and Turkish. The materials of biographical nature are of particular value - applications, certificates, membership cards, notebooks, passports, lists, autobiographical notes, information about his father Hristaki Pavlovich.

Joakim Gruev’s archive was donated to the library in 1938 by his son, Salcho Yoakimov Gruev. The materials are in Bulgarian, French, Russian and Turkish. A large number of the archival documents reflect Joakim Gruev’s activity as teacher and education organizer – letters, reports, programs, rules, regulations. The archive contains also documents concerning members of his family, such as letters, certificates, postcards, notebooks, etc.

The **Georgi Gruev** archive (957 arch. un., 1372 doc., 9331 l.) was acquired by the library in 1938. With few exceptions, the documents are well preserved. Among them there are interesting materials on the history of education and the national and religious struggles such as: the Statute of the Bulgarian community in Constantinople, draft statutes of the Bulgarian Exarchate church government, minute-books of the Bishopric Council, financial statements, Exarchate budgets and accounts.

The project is part of a joint initiative for digitization of personal archives suggested by Prof. Vallino from Italy and enables us to reveal part of the library's archival riches.

5. A new project is being elaborated now on a regional level, involving various cultural institutions with their holdings and collections, to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Balkan War. It was initiated by "Ivan Vazov" Public Library in partnership with the Regional Museum of History, the City Art Gallery, the State Archive and the Plovdiv branch of the Institute of Mathematics and Informatics of the Bulgarian Academy of Science.

In conclusion, we can state that our library's priority for the present and for its development in the future is participation and work on the introduction of new technologies and services in its activities.