

# Online Catalogue – Relics from the Bulgarian Museums and the Unification of Bulgaria in 1885

Maria Karadecheva

Regional History Museum in Plovdiv  
m.karadecheva@gmail.com

**Abstract.** The goal of the online catalogue “Relics from the Bulgarian museums and the Unification of Bulgaria in 1885” (<http://muzeini-relikvi.net>) is simple – to connect museums from across the country and inspire them to collect and upload different cultural relics (in this case – relics from the Unification of Bulgaria). The idea behind this is to engage them in a culture of sharing and participating in common initiatives, where, for example, a curator from Varna will be able to see that some of the artifacts he or she needs for an exhibition are in Karlovo or Plovdiv.

**Keywords:** Museum Assets, Catalogue, Unification of Bulgaria

## 1 Introduction

In September 1903 Dimitar Marinov – an educated man, founder and first director of the Museum of Ethnography in Sofia, wrote to Ivan Shishmanov, the Minister for Education: “...*work of collecting and preserving will be done by means of photography and phonography, for everything that has survived from the Old times until the present day and represents the national characteristics and peculiarities of the people's way of life, will be kept safe.*”

## 2 Why is Digitalization Important? Short Overview

Today, 100 years later, we, the museum experts, continue to care deeply for our work of collecting and preserving the cultural values. But the dynamic time in which we live today poses new questions and demands towards our profession. The process of digitalizing museum's funds has been an important and debated topic for many years. It's main issues are **financial, technological and organizational**. The digitalization of cultural and historical heritage does not aim to replace or compete with the traditional forms of access – either through a permanent exhibition or through an event. Its aim is to simultaneously create digital content of great value, which should be accessible to all citizens, including disadvantaged people. This digitalization can be used in other sectors as well – science, education, research, tourism, media, etc. It is a very power-

ful tool for engaging the younger generation by presenting the cultural and historical heritage in a more appealing manner.

### **3 The Benefits of Digitalization**

By digitizing part of their collections, the museums could use them as educational projects (not just for viewing, but working as well), thus strengthening the connections between museums and educational institutions. The new technologies for digital preservation and digitalization of cultural and historical heritage are ensuring the safe-keeping, the quick and efficient access to these assets and the opportunity for promoting movable and immovable monuments through data bases. The latter could also be used as valuable information when creating new catalogues.

### **4 Regional History Museum of Plovdiv's 2010 Online Catalogue**

In 2010 RHM Plovdiv created the “Relics from the Unification of Bulgaria, 1885, preserved in Bulgarian museums” catalogue as an attempt for systematic and scientific categorization of artifacts. One of the goals was to introduce the results of this work and the valuable exponents from Bulgarian museums to a broader audience via internet – with rich photographs and detailed information. Future plans include video materials as well.

This experience resulted in a successful partnership between the history museums from Plovdiv, Sofia, Varna, Veliko Tarnovo, Vidin, Kazanlak, Karlovo, Kotel, Pazardzhik, Perushtitza, Smolyan and Harmanli. These institutions presented a detailed account with 120 photographs of artifacts, divided in ten categories:

- Clothing;
- Weapons;
- Medals and military crosses;
- Stamps and seals;
- Flags;
- Personal belongings;
- Photos;
- Documents;
- Works of art;
- Others.

Each exponent of the catalogue comes with a data card and gives information of the artifacts' 1. Name; 2. Material; 3. Size; 4. Style of production; 5. Description; 6. Previous owner; 7. Author; 8. Current location.

The catalogue could be browsed by:

1. Choosing a specific city and museum from an interactive map

## 2. Choosing a specific category

The partnering museums are presented by a short information card which includes a photograph of the museum, related addresses, telephone numbers and websites. Different categories are included on the side of the card, for example Works of art and Photographs, as is the case with the Veliko Tarnovo history museum:



**Fig. 1.** Regional History Museum in Veliko Tarnovo, 2, Nikola Pokolo, Str., tel. 062/ 623772, 636954, Web-address: [www.museumvt.com](http://www.museumvt.com)

The catalogue is designed to be used not just by museum experts for a quick and efficient access to information (where can they find a specific item, what does it look like and how is it preserved). Its target audience also consists of scientists, researchers, teachers and professors from high-schools and universities. The current content description scheme has been presented in the tradition of the museum documentation process used in Bulgaria which is different from other formats, such as the Dublin Core and CIDOC CRM.

The short-term plans for the online catalogue include 350 new professional photographs of seals and stamps from the collection of the Regional History Museum in Plovdiv to be uploaded in the next year. Long-term plans and ideas revolve around achieving a higher level of coordination between the museums involved in the project – when an object is received in one museum, it should be digitalized and made available for all the other museums to use.

In conclusion, I should say that in my view the museum experts who took part in the work process (collecting artifacts, taking new photographs and detailed accounts for them) could encourage the institutions they represent to use information technologies in their daily work more efficiently, and more importantly they can substantially increase the volume of information resources available for use by a much broader audience – local and/or foreign.