# Digitization of Literary Heritage in the Bulgarian Libraries: Facing Problems and Challenges

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**Abstract.** Paper deals with the current issues and challenges before digitization of literary heritage in the Bulgarian libraries. Main problems are outlined. Socialization of digitized heritage is commented.

**Keywords:** libraries, digitization, literary heritage

## 1    Digitization of Bulgarian Libraries: Facing Problems and Challenges

The topic for the digitalization of literary heritage, stored in Bulgarian libraries, is extremely popular. It stands in front of library professionals from the beginning of the 21st century, and it is discussed at a number of their forums [1] [9-11]. The interest in the topic is determined by the ability to develop libraries, high-tech provided, with useful activity and able to generate revenues from national and international projects. However, the debate about the digitization of literary heritage in libraries has shifted to a discussion of its external features, rather than its core problems.

Digitization of literary heritage in libraries is ongoing, it simultaneously socializes literary heritage and creates experience of libraries for further action. The most significant results are achieved in the digitization of printed books, published in 1806-1878. A joint project of Kyustendil, Plovdiv, Shoumen and Razgrad Regional Libraries may be outlined. Significant steps have been taken to digitize visual sources as old photographs. This project is made by the Varna Regional Library. Digitization of manuscripts from 9th-18th century is launched within the framework of international projects. The National Library has initiated a national project to digitize the literary heritage (manuscripts, books, drawings, periodicals, photographs, albums, etc.) [3] [5].

Along with what has been achieved, there are several important issues that need to be rationalized and resolved.

First, the priorities for future digitization have to be identified and ranked. We think they are at least four: local, priorities for consortia of libraries, national, and international [6].

Second, it must be determined to whom digitized materials are directed. Currently, a significant part of them affects a limited number of users or researchers. Good

examples are old manuscripts that require knowledge in paleography and in ancient languages [8].

Third, it has to be decided what to do after digitization of literary heritage - whether it will be inventoried, where it will deposit, etc. [12].

Fourth, the digitization needs providing of resources and infrastructure: to coordinate work; to plan activities (including the state level); to develop criteria and indicators; to distinguish library collections from the literary heritage etc. [4].

Digitization of literary heritage in libraries is important for: preserving and facilitating access to collections of manuscripts, documents, rare and valuable books; for its promotion at home and abroad to attract readers in libraries; for promotion of cultural tourism and various European projects.

## 2     Socialization of Digitized Literary Heritage in Bulgarian Libraries: Facing Problems and Challenges

Intensive digitization of book heritage conducted by the Bulgarian libraries since 2005 is related to the issue of socialization of the already stored documents, manuscripts and books.

On the one hand, free access to digital resources put into circulation a lot of unknown and unexplored historical sources. They are a valuable basis for research, especially in social history, micro history, history of women, etc. Digitization facilitates scientific work of historians, cultural anthropologists, and ethnologists; it shortens the road to research documents, increasing their awareness, enabling them to conduct interdisciplinary research, cutting their costs and labor. Digitized documents can be examined using statistical methods and through ICT, can be transformed into databases, can be issued quicker and cheaper. Once digitized, paper documents can be used by readers in the public libraries and the Web. Digitized documents would make the library an attractive place for information; literary heritage can influence on the citizens' intellect and identity; library services can be a good source for their own funding [1] [7].

On the other hand, we can not ignore problems.

First, the digitalization of libraries gives priority to the paper sources as manuscripts and rare and valuable books. Documentary, visual materials and periodicals have very small proportion yet. Paper sources are mainly in Bulgarian; those in other languages are ignored. The emphasis is put on time before 1878, while modern and contemporary history of Bulgaria is partially affected [5] [10].

Second, access to digitized materials is primarily via the Internet (web pages of the libraries or the EUROPEANA), many based in libraries where there are no separate rooms and lack the necessary equipment. Libraries rarely offer services as searching, printing, scanning, and recording; they are extremely expensive and blocked the access of users, especially scientists. Access to digital resources the Web is also problematic for the users, sometimes it is limited by time or number of files, sometimes size of files makes it impossible to be downloaded [9].

Third, much of the digitized materials do not contain detailed descriptions (material, dating, identifying the author, participants, location, etc.). This hindered these documents to be cited in scientific publications and to be included in various publications (paper or electronic) [11].

Fourth, a small part of the digitized documents are integrated into national or international databases. They are socialized mainly through their own websites and it does not allow comparative search and comparison. This makes them problematic socialization in a broader sense [2].

Fifth, despite the fact that digital resources are available for almost half a decade; they very rarely used and quoted in the latest historical research. Historians continue to serve with traditional sources, such as ignoring the opportunity to study only as visual sources. Few citizens have used digital resources of libraries as an alternative to traditional, mostly because they do not come into place [8].

## 3    Conclusion

At the present a diverse experience in the field of digitizing of Bulgarian cultural heritage is existed. Some ideas, programs and research projects have been circulating; few good practices can be viewed. They form the basis for further research and practical works.

Among the positive experience it should be noted finding specific individual workspaces for some libraries and adaptation of technology.

Previous work in various areas of digitization indicates good opportunities for cooperation between institutions in terms of resources and professionals.

By now the digitization of Bulgarian cultural heritage corresponds to the major European trends and it is comparable to the countries of South East Europe.

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