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PUBLIC COLLECTION DIGITIZATION STRATEGY OF HUNGARY AND ITS IMPACT TO THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF HUNGARY

Abstract

The author would like to present a more detailed view of digitization strategy of the Hungarian government, its archival sector policy and the National Database Program. Through this, I think it will be possible to capture the current impact of social transformation on our archival system, showing the Hungarian case. Publishing their materials digitally, public collections can develop the users access to the collections, both qualitatively and quantitatively. Full access to collections, which independent of location, increases the social advantages. The implementation of the Public Collection Digitization Strategy not only transforms the self-image of public collections, but also transforms their social perception.

Keywords: digitization strategy, public collection, Hungary, National Archives of Hungary, digital collection

STRATEGIA DI DIGITALIZZAZIONE DELLA COLLEZIONI PUBBLICA DI UNGHERIA E SUO IMPATTO SULL'ARCHIVIO NAZIONALE DI UNGHERIA

Abstract

L'autore desidera presentare una visione più dettagliata della strategia di digitalizzazione del governo ungherese, della sua politica settoriale d'archivio e del programma Database Nazionale. Tramite ciò, penso che sarà possibile cogliere l'impatto attuale della trasformazione sociale sul nostro sistema di archiviazione, mostrando il caso ungherese. Pubblicando i loro materiali digitalmente, le collezioni pubbliche possono sviluppare l'accesso alle collezioni degli utenti, sia qualitativamente che quantitativamente. Il pieno accesso alle collezioni, indipendentemente dalla posizione, aumenta i vantaggi sociali. L'implementazione della Strategia di Digitalizzazione della Collezione Pubblica non solo trasforma l'immagine di sé delle collezioni pubbliche, ma trasforma anche la loro percezione sociale.

Parole chiave: strategia di digitalizzazione, collezione pubblica, Ungheria, Archivio Nazionale, collezione digitale

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MADŽARSKA STRATEGIJA DIGITALIZACIJE JAVNE ZBIRKE IN VPLIV SLEDNJE NA NACIONALNI ARHIV MADŽARSKE

Izveček

Ator želi predstaviti bolj podroben pogled na strategijo digitalizacije, ki jo je sprejela madžarska vlada, politiko arhivskega sektorja in nacionalni program zbirke podatkov. S prikazom madžarskega primera bo poskusil zajeti, kako se družbena preobrazba trenutno odraža na arhivskem sistemu. Z digitalno objavo gradiva se uporabnikom omogoča bolj kakovosten dostop do zbirke, kot tudi do večje količine gradiva. Prost dostop do zbirk neodvisno od lokacije povečuje družbeno prednost. Izvajanje strategije digitalizacije javnih zbirk spreminja samopodobo javnih zbirk, predvsem pa spreminja njihovo družbeno dožemanje.

Ključne besede: strategija digitalizacije, javna zbirka, Madžarska, Državni arhiv Madžarske, digitalna zbirka

MAGYARORSZÁG KÖZGYŰJTEMÉNYI DIGITALIZÁCIÓS STRATÉGIÁJA ÉS ANNAK HATÁSA A NEMZETI LEVÉLTÁRRÁ

Absztrakt

Tanulmányomban célom a magyar kormányzat digitalizációs stratégiájának, annak levéltártudományi hatásának és a Nemzeti Adattár Program részletes bemutatása. Úgy gondolom, hogy mindezekén keresztül lehetőségünk van megragadni a társadalmi átalakulás levéltártudományra gyakorolt hatásait, a magyar példát kiemelve. Gyűjteményeik digitális publikálásával a közgyűjtemények képesek lehetnek a felhasználói hozzáférések mind kvalitatív, mind kvantitív irányú fejlesztésére. A gyűjteményekhez történő, földrajzi helytől független teljes hozzáférések növelhetik a gyűjtemények által biztosított társadalmi előnyöket. A Közgyűjteményi Digitalizálási Stratégia megvalósítása és gyakorlatba ültetése nem csak a közgyűjtemények önképét, de társadalmi beágyazottságukat és elfogadottságukat is megváltoztatja majd.

Kulcsszavak: digitalizációs stratégia, közgyűjtemény, Magyarország, Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár, digitális gyűjtemény

1. INTRODUCTION

The social and governmental expectations of public collections and archives, as well as the role of archives (see Szekely 2017 about the digital transition of archives) have changed radically in the last decade. We can see that there is a need, the taxpayers want to monitor the operation of large national collections and their so-called usefulness (I think this issue alone could worth a European or regional comparative research) in an increasingly active and growing pace. As a result, collection managers and senior colleagues are facing challenges in an environment that is increasingly competitive, plus see that the financial sources of cultural sector are shrinking. We can safely say that competition between public collections has begun for the sake of users and citizens.

In my paper I would like to present a more detailed view of digitization strategy of the Hungarian government, its archival sector policy and the National Database Program. Through this, I think it will be possible to capture the current impact of social transformation on our archival system, showing the Hungarian case. Among other things, the program strives to balance and entrust national aggregators whether they choose mass or slow digitization projects (Prescott and Hughes 2018). An example of slow digitization project is the Corvina exhibition of the National Széchényi Library for example (NSZL).

2. CASE STUDIES FROM INTERNATIONAL SCENE

It is hard to find that a specific national program involves all public collections in a given country. However there are several examples of coordination of digitization programs in Europe.

Some are:

- based on national strategies or plans
- based on nationally funded programs
- based on industry-specific plans
- based on ministry or priority institutional plans
- based on regional plans
- based on different institutional strategies and initiatives

In 2013, the German Digital Library meeting decided that a national digitalisation plan is ineffective, so they give the decision to the institutions hands to plan digitization in their own. France has been at the forefront of digitizing cultural heritage since it launched Gallica in 1997. The Czech Republic operates a central register system for public collections: the Czech Central Cultural Heritage Registry.

I have found the initiative of Canadian government (NHDS). They produced a strategic document for the preservation of the entire national heritage. Although this initiative would also like to get closer to the widest possible digitization of memory institutions through supported projects. According to the latest information of October 2018, 21 supported projects started work.

Recognized the recommendations of the Royal Society of Canada, the statement of the Council of Canadian Academies, in the next 10 years they would like to digitize 90% of all published heritage before 1917 and 50% of all monographs published before 1940, all scientific journals published by and theses accepted by Canadian universities before 2000, all microfilm from memory institutions, elected audio and audio-visual recordings, selected archival fonds and finding aids, all historical maps, all archival material of genealogical interest.

In Sweden, Digisam, a coordination secretariat for cultural heritage, has been established to assist national heritage institutions in the development of digitization strategies (Toller, Halling and Källman 2014).

In New Zealand, digitizing cultural heritage is a part of New Zealand's Digital Content Strategy. Digital New Zealand (NLNZ) was created within the New Zealand National Library. DigitalNZ serves as a central hub for content about the country, like Europeana.

We have no knowledge of any other comprehensive strategy on national heritage. In the United Kingdom, calls were made for this in 2005, but those were unsuccessful (Bültmann 2005). However the National Archives has Digital Strategy (TNA 2017).

3. HUNGARIAN INITIATIVES

An excellent example of the digital unification of the Hungarian cultural heritage is the Bibliotheca Corviniana Digitalis program (2001-2004), which virtually restored the former library of King Matthias, the Bibliotheca Corviniana with pieces from different countries acquired through history. In addition to virtual reconstruction, the project aimed at the scientific processing of the library, the publication of the results on the Internet and the promotion of the library (NSZL).

Launched in 2015, the Hungaricana project has evolved into a leading public collection provider in one year (LHP). The portal created by the collaboration of the Parliamentary Library, the Budapest City Archives and the Arcanum Data Base Ltd. currently brings together the digital content of about 150 public collections and collaborators. It is primarily intended to share and distribute content generated by the digitization supports of a cultural agency of the Hungarian government. On this site we can find about 5 million images and 7 million OCR pages, and the website is used by 2.2 million visitors per year, which is a huge amount compared to other member states published statistics.

In November 2013, the Cultural Public Employment Program launched its largest initiative in the field of culture, involving thousands of partners. The goal was to create and operate a community network that increases both the knowledge and the cohesive power of the local communities. By providing a skilled workforce, cultural public works support the main policy objective of the cultural government, the provision of cultural basic care, which seeks to eliminate territorial inequalities. Its most important social message is community development, which contributes to the initiation and strengthening of the processes of cultural life. The program has a clear positive message, both with regard to the attitude and work of the outsourced workers and its organizational shaping effect. It contributes effectively to the initiation and strengthening of the processes of cultural life.

The issues of archival digitization appeared in the Medium-Term Information Technology Strategy of Archives (2006-2010). In 2009, a joint service of the digital content of county archives was launched at the Hungarian Archives Portal in coordination with the Budapest City Archives.

Lessons learned from previous strategies and national programs. One of the most important findings of a quantitative and qualitative summary is that digitizing the entire collection could not be a goal. The materials to be digitized should be selected taking into account different specialties per sector.

As part of their core aim, the institutions considered their digitization because of preservation and conservation issues, which in many cases also had a publishing outcome. The digitization of contents that was specifically intended for publication, and served wider user needs, was realized through external, mainly applicational funding. In this way, more successful, but in many cases separated, insular content was created. Funding was provided through national and EU funding sources, which can be considered a fundamentally successful concept, as institutions have become interested in developing and implementing projects, such as inter-institutional ones.

4. DIGITAL STRATEGY OF THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF HUNGARY

Digitization and online access to cultural content transformed the traditional archival model, create new users with more often new demands, while opened a new opportunity for cultural heritage to citizens, science, education and creative industries. The aim of the National Archives of Hungary is to provide the broadest access to more than 300 kilometers of documents stored in the archives, which covers the history of Hungary from the 12th century to the present. Dissemination of documents stored in a variety of forms, parchment, paper, sound, microfilm and film on digital media serves both the purposes of modern, so called 'service archives' and the preservation of the original record.

Undoubtedly, one and a half decades of digitization have been one of the central activities of European public collections. Despite the size of the investments and the amount of content generated, only one-third of the collections have a strategy that underpins their digitization activities.

In order to meet their basic goals, the digitization programs need to be economically feasible and sustainable over long term. The National Archives of Hungary has different standpoints and aspects.

The Content:

The preferences of those who carry out historical research on a regular basis or at least for a larger work has to be taken into account. There is another important aspect of permanence and continuity, as there are customer service tasks that flood the archives: eg. proof of work in the GDR or claims for different kinds of compensation.

The Collection Management:

The aim is to digitize only complete and closed description units (see German phrase „Verzeichnungseinheit“), complement the previously fragmented digitally compiled sets of records. The digitization of the entire file should not be in the absolute sense, but at the designated level.

The Institution:

Digitization of documents linked to the implementation of the Public Education Concept and the Scientific Plan of the Archive is a priority. The National Archives of Hungary, as a national public collection and the largest archive in the country, feels an increased responsibility for supporting the digitization activities of other underprivileged archives. When designing digitization projects, attention should be paid to the financial-economic aspects too.

5. IMPACT OF PUBLIC COLLECTION DIGITIZATION STRATEGY ON THE ARCHIVAL SECTOR (2017-2025)

The Public Collection Digitization Strategy (see PCDS) developed by the government according to the aims of the Digital Nation Development Program. The Strategy itself tightly connected to the Digital Welfare Program but not the same as the National Archive's digitization strategy. The PCDS as a main national strategy of course has a great impact on the National Archive's own digitization strategy.

What does Public Collection Digitization Strategy (DWP 2017) designate for the archival industry? In case of the archives, the most important part of the collections the medieval diplomas; city, county and council protocols; maps, plans and photos (eg minutes of the Council of Ministers, MDP / MSZMP Leading Board Minutes from the age of socialism, Capital Records of Capital Board / County Councils from the middle ages and from 17-19th centuries, University Management Board Minutes, Church Archives, Church Records, Church Visit Minutes, Episcopal Circulars).

Before we take a deeper and more detailed dive into the strategy aims, see the results of different institutional digitization programs since 2003.

Sector	Amounts
Libraries	32 466 documents
Archives	16,2 million pages
Museums	1,2 million objects
Archive of movies*	745 movies
Archive of public television	132 400 objects (discs, tapes)

Compared to the beginning of 2003 (since we have exact statistics), only a small part of documents suitable for digitization were digitized in all public collection sectors.

According to the strategy, the goal is to bring the digitized amounts of public collections close to 50% by 2020 compared to the total amount to be digitized, which is 250 million pages. Not all individual documents need to be digitized. In order to serve users, content packages that meet the needs of each user group should be clearly defined such as: for those involved in public education, for those in higher education, teachers and trainers, for researchers, for the public education community, all Hungarian citizens and those interested in Hungarian cultural heritage.

Attention should be paid to the digitization and then content delivery of audiovisual heritage preserved in certain public collections and other archives on the basis of the assessment. The objectives of the strategy is implemented on the basis of the individual sectoral aggregators, however, due to the service-oriented approach of the strategy, in order to maximize the desired result, the coordination of the sectoral aggregators is crucial and essential.

The Public Collection Digitization Strategy is a document with more than 60 pages, and of course I have no possibility here to describe it in detail, but I think it is important to present the main points and its focus. Although public collections have play an important role in preserving, processing, publishing and interpreting national and civilization values, these collections can only become competitive by producing up-to-date, innovative and frequently updated contents. The material published with state-of-the-art technology can become a credible, professionally guaranteed source for new types of education, so its role could be greater for both educators and students.

Aims of the first phase of the strategy implementation by 2020 are that the proportion of digitized materials in public collections increase close to 50% of the totally required digitalization. The number of users using content collections for public collections is increasing in magnitude. It is very important that existing or emerging digital content should be available on a common search interface (the sub-project called NAP). According to the Digital Education Strategy's target system, the number of usable digital materials based on public collection content will increase by 40%. Public collections contribute to digital literacy training for an increasing number of citizens. Public collection content will provide additional information to help you work at home, provide high-quality recreation, get to know the domestic and cross-border tourist destinations.

In the second phase of implementation until 2025 the content delivery of audiovisual archives becomes complete, WEB harvesting service works within the Carpathian Basin, and the digitized stock of public collections reaches the desired level set by the industry aggregators.

The overall objective of the PCDS is to reflect the content-oriented approach of public collections, to determine the provided content based on the knowledge of user needs and to plan its usability so that it could help the potential user to achieve specific goals, whether they are recreational, educational, or economical.

Public collections become the guardians of cultural heritage, the number one, authentic, source-value dividers of cultural heritage. Digitization should be a tool for people to gain access to knowledge that improves their individual life situation. Improve the quality of life of users of digital cultural content. A main goal is to have access to information, access to digitally accessible cultural content at any time, and to increase their knowledge. Improve user comfort is goal too, to provide content that is relevant and easy to access for the user. The interdependence of education and public collection content can be perceived. Improve the quality of citizens' digital competences, thereby increasing the proportion of the population participating in online education and adult education. Skills in the digital world means a more competitive workforce, a more demanding consumer, in order to prepare Hungarian citizens to use new opportunities through skills development, training and motivation.

The continuous renewal of public collections depends on the extent of their social utilization. This demand requires a new approach, which implies the obligation to digitize all the core activities with this. By strengthening the core business of the institutions, the quality and quantity of content delivery can be improved.

It is important to note that digitalisation regarding to conservational and preservational tasks remains an important question. The digitization of publishing should not restrict digitization for conservation purposes. It is not an aim that basic tasks to be competed, but the integration of public collections into the digital ecosystem. When implementing the PCDS, the user considerations becomes a reality only if the relevant public collections are aware of the needs of each user target group. Defining them is an important prerequisite for implementing the strategy.

The analyzes carried out during the preparation of the PCDS confirmed that the individual public collections use different databases and record systems, which makes it difficult to find related content. The most important barrier is the lack of a single, easy-to-use data logging system and an online search engine based on it. This will be complemented by the establishment of the National Data Warehouse Project (see NDWP), as a registry and public collection search system. The essence of the system is that the collaborating institutions continue to handle, organize, process and make their collections accessible. The NDWP is not a content placement but a search engine, so the management of content rights remains with the individual institutions.

In order to provide a user-oriented content service, it is essential to ensure networked collaboration and, consequently, to dynamize public collections. In this process, the Public Collection Digitization College has a decisive role as a cross-sectoral working group. The working group, which links the sectors (library, archive, museum, audio-visual archives), acts as an advisory and proposing body for the minister responsible for culture, and can be defined as a kind of professional forum for existing industry aggregators. Its main task is to coordinate, monitor and ensure the interoperability of the PCDS. As a result of its tasks, it can act as a two-tier board, which must also be involved in issuing recommendations, tendering and application processes.

Because of the fact that the activities have different characteristics, not only a central national aggregator, but separate aggregators are needed to promote operability.

6. AGGREGATE TASKS AND GOAL

- Participation in the development of sectoral recommendations;
- Elaboration of a methodological guide for digitization
- Co-operation in the archiving tasks
- Conducting surveys on the digitization capacity of individual institutions;
- Developing institutional cooperation models;
- Suggesting the creation of regional digitization workshops on the basis of the completed surveys and the possible involvement of market players;
- Promoting international cooperation (digital exchange);
- Coordination of institutional, inter-institutional project plans;
- Evaluation of completed projects;
- Prepare a progress report for the College.

How these main goals can be achievable?

The PCDS says that:

1. Through institutional concepts

In accordance with the proposals of the national aggregates, sectoral strategies and the National Data Warehouse, a medium-term institutional digitalisation strategy is expected at institutional level. In addition to creating new content, the strategy should also provide guidance for reviewing existing contents. In order to implement the strategy, the priority is to organizing the collections' registers into online databases not just in order to compare thematically related elements of the collections but to avoid duplications and overlaps in the further digitization.

2. Through digitization

The process of digitization is based on the cooperation model and recommendation developed by the industry aggregators. Non-unique public collection content, such as printed books should be digitized in the best condition / quality copy regardless of the place of custody. Collaboration between institutions also provides a solution for performing restoration processes. The preparation and restoration of documents and works of art is an integral part of digitalisation, which can occur before or after digitization, depending on the nature of the document and the technology used.

3. Through archiving

The long-term, professional archiving of the digital files, objects and metadata is basically an institutional task, but in the absence of appropriate technology, most of the Hungarian institutions are unable to comply. PCDS says that a cost effective solution can provide a public collection archive service as a governmental task.

4. Through maintenance

It is essential to finance continuous technical maintenance, software updates and so-called "support".

7. CONCLUSION

The collections must be made available in digital services to a wider range of users than ever before. With the implementation of the Public Collection Digitization Strategy, new opportunities could open up for public collections in the knowledge-based society. With the tools of digitization, the task of preservation is also renewed. The digital copy relieves the original one and has a better chance get to the user. However it is obvious that the need for a new approaches, the positive inspirations of the changed social environment also address public collections and make them responsive. The traditional image of public collections is complemented by new tasks generated by the information society. The public collections have a bright and fruitful future in this environment.

Through digital publishing, public collections can develop access to their own collections, both qualitatively and quantitatively. Full access to collections, which independent of location, increases the social advantages. The implementation of the PCDS not only transforms the self-image of public collections, but also transforms their social perception. They can indeed become PUBLIC collections.

In order to widen the access to public collections, it is necessary to become the nation's cultural information centers in the future. The current transformation of cultural sector, the informative function should be strengthened alongside the preservation role of "archives". The integration of services should be implemented in cultural memory institutions. The achieve of these goals could be the most important step towards to the unification of national and international cultural traditions and to cultural equality.

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SUMMARY

The social and governmental expectations of public collections and archives, as well as the role of archives (it is enough to see Szekely, 2017 about the digital transition of archives) have changed radically in the last decade. We can see that there is a need, the taxpayers wants to monitor the operation of large national collections and their so-called usefulness (I think this issue alone could worth a European or regional comparative research) in an increasingly active and growing pace. As a result, collection managers and senior colleagues are facing challenges in an environment that is increasingly competitive, plus see that the financial sources of cultural sector are shrinking.

In order to widen the access to public collections, it is necessary to become the nation's cultural information centers in the digital future. The current transformation of cultural sector, the informative function should be strengthened alongside the preservation role of "archives". The integration of services should be implemented in cultural memory institutions. The achieve of these goals could be the most important step towards to the unification of national and international cultural traditions and to cultural equality.

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