

3. Rapid succession of innovations of hardware and software requires regular measures for the safe migration of digital conversion form to preserve readability of information in new system environments.

4. National Archives provides the users with authenticated copies of documents to be used as legal instruments. If we are expected to provide online access to them, we have to solve some problems of authenticity and privacy.

5. An effective digitisation program requires financial and technical resources not available to the Archives in isolation. If we intend to develop such program instead of occasional digitisation trials, we have to establish long-term partnership with other organizations concerned with the cultural heritage.

If we are to continue to fulfill our functions according to the new standards and to provide services relevant to the new information environment, we cannot afford to ignore the possibilities offered by digital technology.

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THE ROLE OF THE NATIONAL LIBRARY IN PRESERVING NATIONAL WRITTEN HERITAGE

Elissaveta Moussakova and Alexandra Dipchikova

***Abstract:** The first part presented at the meeting by A. Dipchikova is a brief report of the role of the National library as an institution in collecting, preserving and making accessible the national written heritage. Problems of digitization are examined from the point of view of the existing experience in cataloguing. Special attention is paid to the history and the significance of international standards, the experience in the field of development and maintenance of authority files on national and international level as well as in markup languages. Possibilities of using MARC and XML in the library are discussed. The second part presented here by E. Moussakova is giving an overview of the latest activities of the Library in the sphere of digitisation of the old Slavic manuscripts which are component of the national cultural heritage. It is pointed out that the current work is rather limited within the scope of preparation of metadata than being focused on digital products.*

***Keywords:** National Library, Slavic manuscripts, digitization, preservation*

The Role of the National Library in Preserving the National Written Heritage

The aim of my presentation is to draw attention to the SS. Cyril and Methodius National Library as an institution closely related to the problems debated here by virtue of its main tasks and functions. Generally when defining the typology of national libraries, they are seen as such as they are a depository of national publications, they are the treasury of the written memory of the country and because frequently they are the coordinators of common activities of various institutions, directed towards the preservation of the cultural heritage. The classical concept of the national library includes the basic functions of collecting the national written heritage (printed matter and manuscripts), its preservation for the future generations and provision of the widest access to it for its contemporaries.

In order to meet these responsibilities, the National Library, collects current editions under the provisions of the Legal Deposit Law. At the same time, the library works to enrich its collections of manuscripts, old printed books, archival units which reach the library through donations and new acquisitions. Through the national library the government carries out its responsibility for the preservation of the national written heritage.

However, the active preservation of the collections of the library and provision of access to them to the general public and researchers is not only connected with their physical conservation and service organization, but also through the building up of bibliographic information and its dissemination.

The SS. Cyril and Methodius National Library has 125 years history. Throughout this period it has been the

leading institution entrusted with the preservation of the written heritage of the Bulgarian nation. The collections are organized and kept in the Archive of Bulgarian Literature. The SS. Cyril and Methodius National Library is the largest depository of manuscripts and old printed books in the country, while the Bulgarian Historical Archive keeps documents connected with the history and culture of Bulgaria from the Revival period to the First World War. The National Bibliography is prepared and published by the SS. Cyril and Methodius National Library.

In this way the library aims at assuming a leading role among other libraries and institutions engaged in the literary heritage. Today, after the decentralization of the library system of the country, this role is realized through functions with a multiplication effect on the system (for instance central cataloguing and the distribution of machine readable bibliographic records through the Internet) or participation in joint activities.

The absence of a common policy of successive governments in the field of librarianship has caused difficulties in determining Library's own strategy. The SS. Cyril and Methodius National Library has been forced to maintain its principal activities only under the conditions of a defined and limited budget. The outcome of this situation has for the time being been the preparation of projects funded partially or entirely by NGOs or international programmes. Over the last years the National Library has prepared several projects for the creation of electronic bibliographic information. This is the place to mention Bulgarian books 1878-1992 (a bibliographic database constituting the national bibliography over 115 years), the Bibliographical database of Bulgarian old printed books 1806-1878 project and the Authority files for the names of Bulgarian authors 1878.

These projects, some of which are completed and others in the course of completion show that the library has acquired some experience in the creation and organization of metadata. In the development of its bibliographic and cataloguing practice over the years, the National Library has followed the existing international standards. The problems of digitalization which were debated at this forum are frequently close to this practice and we believe it would be possible in future some of them to have an analogical solution.

This is why I would like to outline several fields where the experience of cataloguers in libraries could be useful.

Above all, I would like to mention the successful practice of international coordination of rules and standards in the field of bibliographical description which has been practiced for almost half a century. The program for Universal Bibliographic Control, devised and disseminated by UNESCO envisages a wide exchange of metadata of publishers' production from various countries and is the basis of continuing efforts in this respect. The increasingly successful attempts for coordination in exchange formats for machine readable bibliographic records are in the same line. The problems of the presentation of given names in bibliographic databases have an international significance. The national libraries of the separate countries, together with the Bulgarian National Library are working on special databases presenting the names of national authors in all their variety and in this way facilitate the global use of databases through the net. The long use of the use of the MARC markup language and the recent possibilities for the transfer of MARC to XML provide conditions for the coordination of an enormous amount of existing bibliographic information with metadata necessary in the process of digitalization of documents on paper carriers.

These examples show the necessity of processes of digitalization especially in the realization of projects on a national scale to be coordinated not only from the point of view of organization but also taking into account the experience acquired in related activities.

Special Collections in the National Library, Sofia

The Slavic Collection of Manuscripts

The special collections at SS. Cyril and Methodius National Library, making a specific component of the national cultural heritage, are organized mostly within the Center for Manuscripts and Documents at the Library. These are the Slavic, Greek (plus other European languages), and Oriental (Arabic, Persian, Turkish) manuscripts, Slavic Old Printed books, Bulgarian Old Printed Books (1806–1878), rare and precious books, Oriental printed books, Ottoman archives, Bulgarian historical archive, and a rich collection of old photographs. Other collections like musical editions, maps and graphics are in charge of a separate department.

The National Library represents the largest repository of Slavic manuscripts in Bulgaria. It comprises about 1500 items dating from between eleventh and nineteenth centuries, most of which are already registered in five descriptive catalogues [Conev, 1910; Conev, 1923; Stojanov, Kodov, 1964; Stojanov, Kodov, 1971; Hristova, Karadzova, Vutova, 1996]. A Union catalogue of Bulgarian manuscripts from the eleventh to the eighteenth

century kept in Bulgaria has been published in 1982 by a team of Library researchers [Hristova, Karadzova, Ikonomova, 1982].

The focus of my presentation is the Slavic manuscript collection managed by the Department of Manuscripts and Old Printed books. In a nutshell, our activities in digitisation of manuscript heritage are still limited within the sphere of preparation of metadata. It means that our efforts are mainly spent on discussing, giving expertise and participating in projects related with electronic descriptions of medieval manuscripts rather than on producing digital editions. However, some experience in digitising has been acquired, with the CD "Unique Balkan Manuscripts" issued in 1994, on which images of Gospels, Gospel Lectionaries and Qur'ans from the Library have been put. The total number is 1030 images taken from Greek, Bulgarian, Serbian, Walachian and Moldavian, and Oriental manuscripts, each supplied with short description. While the selection aimed at showing to a broader audience interesting samples of medieval illustration, illumination and art of writing, some of the reproduced texts were chosen by certain symptomatic features as to make the electronic tool useful for textological studies. For its time this was the first product of its kind in the country and the quality of the images was very satisfactory. A recent product of the Library is the "Guide to the Special Collections in the National Library", a CD edited last year as part of the program for celebrating the 125th Anniversary of the Library, in which pages of well-known manuscripts have been included.

The Projects

More important and adequate to the purpose of this kick-off meeting is the question what is the Library's latest work in the sphere of presentation and preservation of its valuable Slavic manuscript collection. To answer it I would like to make you acquainted with our already realised projects, what I partly did, current projects, and projects in plan.

Among the finished projects it is worth to mention the participation of the Department of Manuscripts and Old Printed Books in two important initiatives. The first one was the Library project for Retroconversion of the Bulgarian Printed Books, of which the Retroconversion of the Old Printed Books became the conclusive element. With the financial support of the Open Society Foundation and using – and, actually developing and adapting – the standard ISBD (A) within ISIS, the process was completed last year. At the moment a full revision of the records is being carried out, to be followed by building the database and making it available through the website of the Library. The second project was started as cooperation between the Library and the Institute of Mathematics and Informatics at BAS with the aim to apply on Slavic material the standard for electronic descriptions of medieval manuscripts, offered by the international group MASTER. The task of the Library, recognised as associated member of the group, was to prepare test descriptions of manuscripts from our collection, done on the base of sixteen codices in three different modes: short description following the model of the Union catalogue, more developed description on the level demonstrated by the Descriptive catalogues, and finally, very detailed description not made so far by other specialists. Unfortunately, some circumstances beyond our responsibility prevented putting the records on the Internet so the results, even if reported at a meeting of MASTER in Copenhagen in 2000, remained unknown to the specialists. Approaching its conclusion is the international project under the auspices of the Department of Medieval Studies at the Central European University in Budapest and the National Széchényi Library, Hungary for describing the Slavic manuscripts kept there. The electronic tool on which the team agreed was the MASTER standard but for the purpose, the DTD had to be reworked since it proved its incompatibility with some peculiarities of the Slavic manuscripts and also with the tradition of the already printed catalogues [Cleminson 2003]. In order to furnish the catalogue with illustrations, one or more digital images were taken out of each manuscript.

On the border between the accomplished and still running, the Budapest project is similar in its final goal to a current project envisaging the electronic issue of the Union catalogue of Bulgarian manuscripts. In its essence it is a retroconversion which the National library planned to do in yet another cooperation with the Institute of Mathematics and Informatics, represented by the group lead by Dr. Milena Dobрева. The descriptions of the manuscripts will be in an electronic format developed from the MASTER standard and adapted to reflect the structure and content of the Union catalogue. Our expectations are that once finished, the catalogue will become available on Internet through the portal of the National Library. If successful, this will be the first electronically accessed catalogue of medieval manuscripts in Bulgaria.

Among the future projects I will rank first the Digital Enina Apostle, which is a project actually started and then

interrupted, due to some technical problems. Another project aiming at educational purposes, but still in gestation, is a Digital Paleographic Album of the Thirteenth Century Hands and Scripts documented by codices kept in the National Library.

An important aspect of the projects are the partnerships on which the Library relies for realisation of its plans. Here the Institute of Mathematics and Informatics, headed by Prof. Dr. Stefan Dodunekov, must be mentioned as our main partner, both institutions being bound by a signed agreement for cooperation. The duties are divided in such a way that the Institute undertakes the "technical" part, having the high quality equipment while the Library participates with the "intellectual" capacity of its cataloguers and paleographers. To effectuate the project of the Electronic Union Catalogue, originally a demand of the Director of the Library Prof. Dr. Borjana Hristova, the team of M. Dobreva is putting the data from the printed catalogue into the electronic format and the records are to be checked and revised by the employees of the Manuscript Department. A similar distribution of roles is suggested for the Digital Enina Apostle, an intriguing and provocative project of digitising the earliest Slavic codex extant in Bulgaria, which, even if restored, is in fragile condition. Another partnership, also institutionally supported, is the one with the Department of Old Bulgarian literature at the Institute of Literature, to whose project of creating an electronic repertory of Old Slavic texts the Manuscript Department is giving consultation mostly on issues concerning manuscript illumination and marginal notes. During the work on the Széchenyi catalogue a successful partnership was established by the Hungarian and Bulgarian National Libraries of which the first undertook the digitisation of the folios selected from the manuscripts.

Whatever future activity in the domain of digitisation of old manuscripts is envisaged, it is always determined by two priorities of the Library – preservation of and access to its special collections. Therefore a prospective thinking ought to consider first of all the endangered volumes and fragments. Related to the issue is a question, perhaps a minor one, which I shall leave open not only before the present audience but perhaps to the librarians to come to the Library: what to do with the incomplete and low quality microfilm stock? Should we microfilm anew the whole collection or should we, in a long term project, digitize each manuscript, to answer the demands of the modern information society?

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