

PRESENTATIONS OF BULGARIAN INSTITUTIONS

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

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Abstract: Digitisation as an opportunity for Bulgarian National Archives to fulfill its functions as a heritage Institution and a government agency according to the new standards.

Keywords: Bulgarian National Archives, information technologies development, digitization strategy

Information Environment and Functions of the National Archives

The influence of the information technologies development on the institutional policy and current practices of the Bulgarian National Archives is determined by several factors:

- specific role of the Archives as a heritage institution on the one hand and as a government agency on the other;
- character and amount of users' requests;
- value, nature, physical condition and size of holdings;
- technological, financial and personal resources available to the Institution;
- availability of computer equipment to different kind of users;
- the laws in force.

The centralized system of Bulgarian National Archives was founded in 1951. It is composed of Central State Archives, Central Military Archives and 27 Regional State Archives all of them under the authority of the General Department of Archives at the Council of Ministers. Since 1960 the Institution has been member of the International Council on Archives.

In general, the holdings encompass records created by institutions, organizations, economical, political and cultural bodies and persons in the period from the Liberation of Bulgaria in 1878 till nowadays. Manuscripts from the age of Ottoman empire are preserved as well. Traditional textual records based on paper prevail, but we hold also architectural blueprints, engineering documents, photographic materials, cartographic archives, records on leather, motion pictures, audiotapes. The total size of collection is approximately 61000 linear meters.

As an archival heritage organization the National Archives has statutory functions of acquisition, preservation and use of archival records. By these functions it facilitates the inclusion of the historical records into contemporary cultural context.

On the other hand, as an Institution responsible for the management of the State archival fonds, the Archives exercises jurisdiction over provenances' records management and preservation and play a decisive role in identifying the records which will be part of the archival holdings in the future. Therefore, as the amount of records in electronic form produced in provenances' current practices increases, the responsibility of the Archives to establish standards for their management and transfer becomes obvious.

In the new information environment the traditional forms of reference service proved to be unsatisfactory to meet the new standards for access to relevant information. Outreach programs in conventional form as documentary publications based on paper, documentary exhibitions, motion pictures are also insufficient to attract wider audience and to encourage use of archival records. The researchers' requirements for faster and easier access increase; the circle of potential users with access to the Internet is wider; new standards for efficiency of public services emerge; necessity of new forms of collaboration between heritage organizations becomes evident. On the other hand we are obliged to prevent further deterioration of damaged or endangered originals without restricting the users' access to their content.

Digital technology is necessary for Bulgarian National Archives to accomplish its engagements to the establishment of electronic Government. According to the official government program we are obliged to provide access to records stored on electronic medium through the Internet. Archival records in our stacks are based on paper for the most part, but as a public administration we will be obliged to provide online access to some of them regardless of the medium. In addition, as mentioned above, the number of records produced in or converted to electronic form increases and we have to be ready for their acquisition, preservation and communication. To meet these challenges we have to elaborate a digitisation strategy.

Current Situation

Today we are at the very beginning on this way. We have no long-term digitisation program or defined policy. Our first occasional attempts have been made mainly for the purposes of popularization. In 2003 Central Military Archives published on CD a documentary collection "The independence of Bulgaria and Bulgarian army". Now General Department of Archives intends to digitise the archives of the former Bulgarian communist party. The success of this first integral project will be of great importance for our future digitisation enterprises.

Perspectives

Several opportunities offered by digital technology are especially attractive for us:

1. Digitisation of high demand and most valued records.

We could produce digital copies of certain archival groups and records according to criteria of archival value, high use and physical condition and make them available on CD or through the Internet according to the laws in force.

2. Digitisation on demand.

Another form is to provide the researchers with online access to digital images on individual requests. After loading these images, they will be available to all researchers under specified conditions. We could start this on the basis of conventional requests, but this service will be more effective after providing online information about our collection.

3. Digitisation of records published in traditional form.

We have produced many documentary publications and reference books in traditional form. Since the work of compilation and description of documents has already been completed, their content has been Word formatted and related finding aids have been produced, it will not be difficult to transform some of these publications into electronic form on CD. They will consist of scanned images of documents and related texts in appropriate format. Thus we will combine the possibility to view the records in their original form with readability and searchability of their formatted content. This is especially important in the occasions where the original text is faded or illegible.

4. Multimedia publications composed of digital images of records, explanatory texts, motion pictures, studies.

Benefits

The profits provided by digital technology for the needs of access to archives are indubitable. Conversion of records in digital format is important also for the purposes of archival preservation. Although digitised copies should not be considered as the only conversion form for long-term preservation due to problems of "future proofing" or compatibility and authenticity, they allow to reduce handling of threatened originals. Possibility to provide faster and easier access to relevant information in different form for different audience will encourage the researchers to use the copies instead of paper records. The potential of digital form for access could be combined with long-term preservation measures in a balanced strategy.

Problems

To clear the way for successful digitisation projects we have to overcome some difficulties of technical, legal and financial character.

1. The text of many highly valuable historic manuscripts has faded and the contrast has weakened. To guarantee readability of such documents in digital form we have to face specific requirements for reproduction and description quality.

2. Due to the nature of paper archives some widespread systems as feeder scanners and flat bed scanners are unsuitable.

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