Improving visibility to archival collections: content enrichment and digital access to the archive of the National Theatre of Northern Greece

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Abstract. The National Theater of Norther Greece collection held by Historical Archives of Macedonia is used as a paradigm of an archival collection records enrichment program using Prown's model for item study and University of Calgary's model for Digital Collection Process in compliance with IFLA's Guidelines for Digitization Projects in order to increase the collection's access and its understanding in terms of cultural history.
Keywords. Digital archival collections, Archival records enrichment, Archival collections access increasement, National Theater of Northern Greece, Historical Archives of Macedonia.

1. Introduction

All archival services aim at maintaining the collective memory of a community (state, country etc.) along with the opportunity for scientists to study them and extract results for a given period of time, place, group The General State Archives (hereby GSA), with branches in the capital of every prefecture , target at making records of historical or empirical significance broadly available to the public (general or of specific interests) by disseminating digital surrogates of the existing collections over the Internet. The collection of the National Theater of Norther Greece held by Historical Archives of Macedonia[1] (hereby HAM) is

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[1] Historical Archives of Macedonia is a peripheral agency of General State Archives under the auspices of Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs. Its main aim is the custody, preservation, collection, classification and documentation of the archival material within its area of supervision, namely the Prefecture of Thessaloniki. The ultimate object is the access to the held archival wealth from the public and the

a paradigm of the GSA service effort to achieve value creation by access and conceptual representation increasement of the collection through the implementation of a large digitation and record enrichment program.

2. Rational of the collection the material at hand, its significance and the reasons for its promotion

The collection selected for this project was that of National Theater of Northern Greece (NTNG[2]), held by HAM. The reason we considered this specific collection as a perfect candidate for the project relies on the content of the collection, its time span and the potentials for enrichment because, unfortunately, it did not had both the recognition and/or the promotion it deserved over the years of its presence in the HAM.

The collection contains mainly material –posters and programs— from plays which were presented by the NTNG covering the period from 1967 to 1987. This time span is notably important because it covers the harsh cultural years of Junta (1967-1974), when censorship, the persecution and exile of communist and/or leftist artists was enacted and controlled by the central military government. Also, it covers the first 10 years of restoration of democracy in Greece (1974-1987). This social and political background provides a perfect canvas for studying this collection beyond and over its obviousness, meaning that it will be worthy to establish whether the political circumstances were reflected to plays selected and the actors employed by NTNG administration.The content consists of 12 posters and 138 programs from theatrical plays hosted by NTNG and very few from other theater companies, that bestirred themselves in Thessaloniki, classified in to three (3) archival entities.

Particularly, the first file includes 55 subfiles with programs and other material of NTNG's productions from 1967 to 1981. For the period between 1967 to 1974, 9 plays were presented including writers such as Molière, Rostand, Shakespeare, Sophocles. Continuing with the period of democracy restoration (1974-1980), there were 38 plays taking a more liberal turn including writers such as Brertolt Brecht, Henrik Ibsen, Tennessee Williams, Evgueni Schwartz, August Strindberg ancient comedies from Aristophanes and Seneka and operas such as Bellini's "Norma" and Puccini's "Tosca". Also, there were presented plays from contemporary Greek authors such as Pavlos Matessis, Georgios Souris and Zoe Karelle. Finally, the first year of socialist governance (1981) 8 items is included with plays from writers such as Molière, Miguel de Cervantes,

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researchers by adopting versatile ways of dissemination (Historical Archives of Macedonia, n.d.).

[2]The NTNG was founded in 1961 and is situated in Thessaloniki, whereas is currently Greece largest theatrical organization, comprising of 5 winter venues, 2 open air theatres, children and youth stage, drama school, workshops and many more (Ntng.gr, 2010).

George Bernard Shaw's as well as classic Gree kauthors such as Aristophane and Demetrius Koromilas.

The second file is being comprised by 50 subfiles all dated from 1981 to 1985, the period of the socialist government. The variety and diversity of repertoire is evident expanding from ancient drama and comedy such as Aeschylus, Euripides and Aristophanes to classic European and Greek authors as Shakespeare, Molière, Chekhov, Federico Garcia Lorca and Michael Chourmouzis. Also, the repertoire included contemporary plays from both foreigners and Greek authors such BrertoltBrecht, John Osborne, Milan Kundera, Tennessee Williams, John Priestley, Kostas Mourselas, Demetres Kechaides and Demetres Ioannopoulos.

The third, and final, archival entity includes 33 items covering two major periods; the first one covering the years between 1965 – 1976 with plays mainly from Greek authors such as Nikos Dadinopoulos, Napoleon Eleftheriou, Alekos Sakellarios, Demetrius Psathas, Kostas Pretenteris, Kostas Patantzis, George Katsampis and so on. At second period, the years between 1980 – 1987, we notice a turn to a more intellectual repertoire including tradegies from Euripides as well as a costume exhibition from performances by Aristophanes's plays and a ballet performance from Daniel Lommel.

The above brief reference to the plays could lead to a general conclusion on the socio-political conditions influencing the selection process. The first years of NTNG's operation, the repertoire was restricted mainly to plays from Greek writers, usually familiar to the audience and with low-budget production requirements. As NTNG was being established as the theatrical lighthouse for Northern Greece, the production became more demanding by expanding the repertoire to include iconic plays from acknowledged writers, Greek and foreigners, as well as ancient dramaturgy and opera. A special mention must be made on the Junta period, when the military regime imposed –directly or indirectly—a direction towards a more classic repertoire avoiding the references to the socio-political context or to a repertoire that denoted the patriotism, obedience and despotic regimes/reigns. On the contrary, the NTNG started to flourish after 1974, and especially after 1981, when plays with strong social, political and economical orientation, which decried the wrong doings of society and political system, were included. At this period many denounced artists of the previous era appeared on the NTNG's stage, many of which became leading actors of Greek theatre during the coming years.

3. Technical issues concerning the organization of the collection
The collection was acquired/bought from an antiquarian in November 1999 as a means to preserve a part from the city's cultural history. The first phase of the collection processing included the surface cleanencing of the material and its

classification under the principle of provenance[3], which resulted the material to be divide into three archival entities —or files—, whilst at the second phase a public print catalogue was created in order to assist researchers to their searches. The three files were further parted into subfiles; each one corresponding to a specific play containing primarily the program of the play, which was distributed during the performances, and any other relevant accompanying material. The program booklets had more or less similar layout while containing some introductory and descriptory details on the author, the story and its socio-economic context as well as for the specific production and the actors and the other contributors.

The last phase of the collection's archival documentation and access process was enacted in 2014. Firstly the collection was digitized in high resolution, colored, both in tiff and jpeg format of digital reproductions, and secondly electronic records, reaching down to the "item" level, were created in order to document the items to "@rxeiomnimon" management system. Both the physical archive and the digital reproductions are open to public during the HAM's opening hours; even though preferably the access is restricted to the digital reproduction for preservation reasons. The concluding phase will be to upload the digital reproductions to the corresponding records at "@rxeiomnimon" system and thence to be accessible via General State Archives portal "arxeiomnimon.gak.gr"[4].

4. Taking an archival collection a step further in terms of promotion and usage by understanding it

The archival collections, perceived as instruments of representation, and at the same time, as official systems of a series of scientific hypotheses, embody the notion of the construction of a meaning as part of the conscious production and organization of histories-stories. In this notion, every archival service receives items barring a set of values (originality, historic significance, rarity) but at the same time it creates value for these items too (Pearce, 1998). So, the archival service has to act as a test field of several forms of representation for its collections that surpass the logic of serial narration along with the role of the service being a state mechanism. In order the users of the archival collections to acquire spherical understanding of the items should be presented in grid of parameters such economic, political, cultural and scientific conditions by the time of their creation. Several models for representing this grid have been developed. Panofsky (1972) stated for the first time that the interpretative process can be represented in a diagram. Panofsky divided the study of

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3Principle of provenance or archival bond dictates that records of different origins (provenance) be kept separate to preserve their context.

[4] General State Archives portal "@rxeiomnimon" "*...is an integrated application software [that] allow[s] navigation through the archival collections originating from 37 agencies of the General State Archives all over Greece as well as searching for and accessing specific documents online*"(Arxeiomnimon.gak.gr, 2008).

exhibited art in three phases, these phases are all preoccupied with a different level of meaning. According to Panofsky the meaning of art can be divided in a number of separate forms (Meijer, 2011) and it can be separated into three levels (as shown in Figure 1) with each level using different tools of interpretation and aiming at different principals of item's interpretation (as shown in Figure 2):

- First level ('primary' or 'natural') – this is the interpretation of meaning through the familiar. Factual descriptions of the visible and the expressional connotations that derive from the visual are encompassed in this level. We are able to immediately bring meaning to the work by associating it with our own personal practical experiences.
- Second level ('secondary' or 'conventional')– this level involves a deeper understanding of the actions or facts presented in the first level. A prior knowledge of concepts and conventional meaning allows the artistic motifs and visual codes in the image to communicate more and in turn we are able to recognize the events taking place in the image.
- Third level ('intrinsic')– unlike the previous two levels, this level communicates things that the creator of the image may not have consciously been thinking about. Through what we know of the world and linking the objects or codes in the work, this level allows us to reveal the underlying "basic attitude of a nation, a period, a class, a religious or philosophical persuasion – unconsciously qualified by one personality and condensed into one work" (Chan, n.d.).

In 1974, E. McClung Fleming proposed his model for the study of items (as shown in Figure 3.). This model, uses two conceptual tools - a five-fold classification of an item's properties , its history, material, construction, design and function, and a set of four operations to be performed on these properties in association with supplementary information.

OBJECT OF INTERPRETATION	ACT OF INTERPRETATION
I—*Primary* or *natural* subject matter— (A) factual, (B) expressional—, constituting the world of artistic motifs.	*Pre-iconographical description* (and pseudo-formal analysis).
II—*Secondary* or *conventional* subject matter, constituting the world of *images, stories* and *allegories*.	*Iconographical analysis* in the narrower sense of the word.
III—*Intrinsic meaning* or *content*, constituting the world of 'symbolical' *values*.	*Iconographical interpretation* in a deeper sense (*Iconographical synthesis*).

Figure 1: Panofsky's model for the interpretation of art (Pandofsky, 1972, p. 14)

EQUIPMENT FOR INTERPRETATION	CONTROLLING PRINCIPLE OF INTERPRETATION	
Practical experience (familiarity with *objects* and *events*).	History of *style* (insight into the manner in which, under varying historical conditions, *objects* and *events* were expressed by *forms*).	
Knowledge of literary sources (familiarity with specific *themes* and *concepts*).	History of *types* (insight into the manner in which, under varying historical conditions, specific *themes* or *concepts* were expressed by *objects* and *events*).	*HISTORY OF TRADITION*
Synthetic intuition (familiarity with the *essential tendencies of the human mind*), conditioned by personal psychology and '*Weltanschauung*.'	History of *cultural symptoms* or '*symbols*' in general (insight into the manner in which, under varying historical conditions, *essential tendencies of the human mind* were expressed by specific *themes* and *concepts*).	

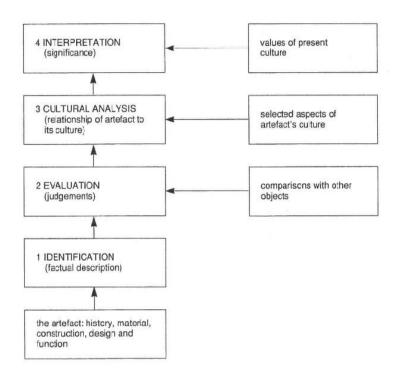**Figure 2: Panofsky's tools and interpretation principals of an item (Pandofsky, 1972, p. 15)**

Figure 3: Fleming's model for item study (Pearce, 1998, p. 127)

In 1982, Prown introduces the term "material culture" as the study through artifacts of the beliefs-values, ideas, attitudes, and assumptions of a particular community or society at a given time. Material culture is singular as a mode of cultural investigation in its use of objects as primary data, but in its scholarly purposes it can be considered a branch of cultural history or cultural anthropology. Material culture as a study is based upon the obvious fact that the existence of a man-made object is concrete evidence of the presence of a human intelligence operating at the time of fabrication. Material is a word we associate with base and pragmatic things; culture is a word we associate with lofty, intellectual, abstract things. Prown continues by stating that the most promising mode of classifying the items of a collection is by function and proposes a list arranged in a sequence of categories that progresses from the more decorative (or aesthetic) to the more utilitarian. Art (paintings, drawings, prints, sculpture, photography), Diversions (books, toys, games, meals, theatrical performances), Adornment (jewelry, clothing, hairstyles, cosmetics, tattooing, other alterations of the body), Modifications of the landscape (architecture, town planning, agriculture, mining), Applied arts (furniture, furnishings, receptacles), Devices (machines, vehicles, scientific instruments, musical instruments, implements) (Prown, 1982, p. 3). Prown continues by explaining why items must be

investigated in the quest for a society's systems of belief. He states that there are aspects of mind in items complement, supplement or contradiction and that we can learn from them more than from the traditional literacy or behavioral sciences. Prown's model can schematically be presented as shown in Figure 4.
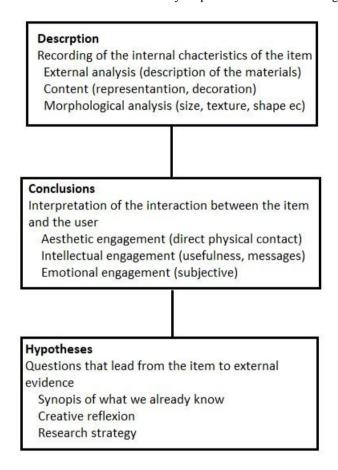
Descrption
Recording of the internal chacteristics of the item
External analysis (description of the materials)
Content (representantion, decoration)
Morphological analysis (size, texture, shape ec)

Conclusions
Interpretation of the interaction between the item and the user
Aesthetic engagement (direct physical contact)
Intellectual engagement (usefulness, messages)
Emotional engagement (subjective)

Hypotheses
Questions that lead from the item to external evidence
Synopis of what we already know
Creative reflexion
Research strategy

Figure 4: Prown's model for item study (Pearce, 1992, App. 1.6)

Under the approbation that all archival collections have three things in common: a) there are up of items that they all refer to selected lumps of the physical world, to which cultural value has been ascribed, b) they all come from the past, c) they have been assembled with some degree of intention by an owner who believed that the whole was more than the sum of its parts. Experience has shown that all models are subject to adjustments and that the use of one model does not automatically exclude the use of another at the same time. So each archival service can use whatever model suits its needs as is or by alternating it.

In the case of the NTNG, Prown's model was selected as the collection had the characteristics described under the category Diversions of the model.

5. Archiving and describing a collection in terms of exposure improvement and scientific study exploitation under a specific framework: working with the NTNG collection

The primer function of an archival service is to collect, preserve, describe and offer its collections to public use in terms of maintaining the collective memory of a community (state, country etc.) along with the opportunity for scientists to study them and extract results for a given period of time, place, group etc. The HAM and its parental organization the GSwere founded by the Greek government to materialize this operation. All the years of their operation they aim in proving to the public (general and more focus on research) their collections and resources in an organized and documented way. One of the opportunities identified for the NTNG collection, as Comerford (2013) states, was *"to be able to provide a realistic content exploration and document examination experience for end users, providing the compatible level of content manipulation and visual resolution that one would experience if examining the actual item"* at HAM. As stated by IFLA (2002) *"...the key point is to evaluate the contribution that increased access could make to a defined user community. If the institution planning a digitization project is a private one, it is normal for it to focus on specific needs and to target a specific user group. If however a public institution is involved, it will probably have to satisfy a larger population and more diverse demands...there can be several reasons for increasing accessibility: enhancement of access to a defined stock of research material, creation of a single point of access to documentation from different institutions concerning a special subject, implementation of the "virtual re-unification" of collections and holdings from a single original location or creator now widely scattered (see also Virtual Collections below), support for democratic considerations by making public records more widely accessible, extending the availability of material in support of educational and outreach projects"* (p.11).

Archives have more autonomy than libraries because they have unique collections with their own population of users. Some institutions have integrated archival processing and technical services, but even so, a significant shift to metadata standardization from "artisanal archival approaches" has been occurring. Archivists do not have the tradition of creating authority records and sharing identifiers for the same entity as is common among librarians. Archivists tend to use the information found in collections, while librarians focus on "preferred" form found in publications. Some differences also arise from the technology used; for example, common archival software does not connect authority records to collection descriptions, a major hindrance to data integration while the contextual information that archivists provide for personal and organizational entities would enrich the information provided in authority files. Issues also arise from the items themselves such as in the cases of digitally born items that bare no physical carrier (primary source of information for archivists).

The answer to these problems could be found in the relevant description standards developed (and used) by librarians such as RDA (Resource Description and Access), FRBR (Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records and FRAD (Functional Requirements for Authority Data) concept models. Another solution could be the usage a DAM (Digital Assets Management) system (eg. Omeka). All these require quite an effort (personnel time to reenter all collections and items to a new system) and a lot of money to be invested (hardware and software purchase). A more economic and less time and effort consuming approach could be the enrichment of the already existing archive records. In Figure 5 we see an example of the already existing record of the NTNG in HAM.
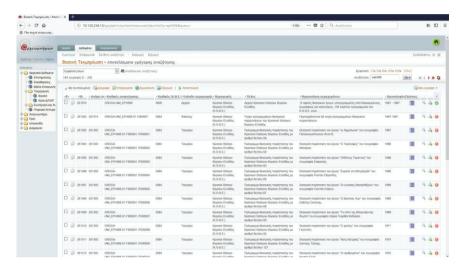

Figure 5: NTNG record in Arxeiomnimon (Source: HAM local database)

As we can note, the record consists only of the HAM's acquired physical items. In order for these items to be enriched to the level that they would be able to provide more spherical information in terms of scientific study, quite a few additions should be done. Most records contain items such as the performance poster and the program. These items in terms of cultural history and investigation of a particular community or society at a given time provide limited information. On the other hand, in terms of facilitating context and audience anticipation, fostering a culture of constructive critical enquiry between arts organizations, artists and audiences and communities is the least possible.

The way to overcome these problems is by creating and adding subordinating items to existing records that would provide more pieces of information. Such items could be the text of the play, curriculum vitae of the writer/composer/actors, writer's ergography, press clippings about the

performance, photographs of the performance and the cast etc. The University of Calgary (2017) proposed a methodology-model for record enrichment construction which when applied can produce exits of archival collections in terms of Prown's model as shown in Figure 6:
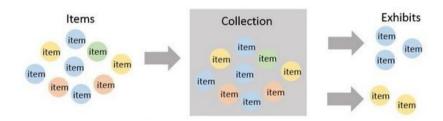

Figure 6: University of Calgary model for Digital Collection Process

University of Calgary's model fulfills the requirements of IFLA guidelines for increasing access and Prown's model in all of its three elements (description, conclusion, hypothesis). In order to produce enriched records for the NTNG collection, the design of the combined models application took place and its graphic representation is presented in Figure 7.
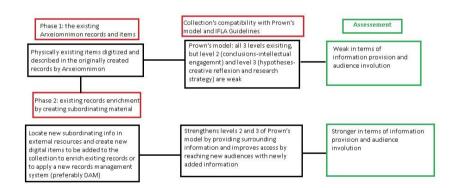

Figure 7: Graphic representation of the combined models

Retrieving additional information, creating more digital items and finally embedding these items to the exiting records is assumed to be a quite time and effort consuming procedure in terms of infrastructure and man labor for any archival service. On the other hand, in the case of HAM going from Arxeiomnimon to another record and collection management system (such as a DAM) was not an option due to its governing and operational status (branch of a central governmental service). The proposed method for handling the collection

was an only way option. The work was organized in three phases: 1) subordinating information retrieval from external resources (texts, photos, press clippings, bios etc), 2) material digitization in appropriate formats and new items creation, 3) new items embedment in the existing records. At present, the collection is available only in its physical form and its digital version is closed for the public. Phase 2 is taking place (all material gathered in phase 1 is being processed). Upon the completion of phases 2 and 3 the collection will be available in electronic form again to the public.

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