

MUNICIPAL LIBRARIES: Digitization as a means of preserving and rescuing archival material and books. Ways to manage and avoid material damage.

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Abstract

Municipal Libraries have a significant number of rare and valuable publications as well as unique archival material. Until recently, the rarity of this material imposed on its management a series of prohibitions that made research difficult. The adoption of digital technology in the field of Closed Collections has come to change the data and facilitate research, simulating it to a large extent with that of open access collections. The digitization and electronic cataloging of these books was deemed necessary, not only because it contributed to the substantial, albeit virtual, enrichment of the electronic catalog of the Municipal Libraries, but also because it digitally saved an extremely distressed printed material of maximum importance.

Keywords: digitization, maintenance, rescue, archival material, digitization management, material damage prevention, preservation, conservation.

Introduction

Municipal Libraries have always been a meeting point of all those values (cultural, educational and social) that connect the citizen with the community, knowledge and ultimately information. Changes in the field of information are now underway and the field of new technologies is developing dynamically. Nowadays, libraries face constant challenges, which are related to the fluid state of technology, the flexible behavior of users and the complex demands of society. Libraries are called upon to meet the demands of the times resulting from the technological changes of the last fifteen years. These changes are a means of increasing the degree of cohesion of libraries with the served public and the wider society. The conclusion is obvious. The role of librarian becomes more complex and demanding. Changes are a given. It seeks to shake off introverted logic through constant communication friction with users and close monitoring of developments. In an effort to meet the demands for a modern and dynamic role of the Municipal Library in the local community, the community of librarians and information scientists working in them is called upon to embark on new strategic planning trends, such as digitization and registration in an electronic database of free access of the important material that belongs to the possession of the Municipal Libraries with the aim of preservation and promotion through the digitization of their special and rare collections.

Until recently, the rarity of this material imposed on its management a series of prohibitions that made research difficult. The adoption of digital technology in the field of Closed Collections has come to change the data and facilitate research, simulating it to a large extent with that of open access collections. The creation of digital databases aims to serve users regardless of space and time constraints, contributing to the promotion and preservation of this material. It is estimated that in the local communities in which libraries operate, there is material with a high historical and not only value, which could be more easily accessible through digitization. Therefore, the development, in the Municipal Library, of know-how for the creation and management of digital inventory, will have benefits that may extend beyond the boundaries of the Library itself. The distribution of cultural products through an organized database equipped with the appropriate support tools and dynamic search, contributes to the promotion of the cultural heritage of the community and ultimately of our country in the international community by enriching the internet with cultural products in the Greek language.

Information technology in the Services of the Municipal Libraries

Municipal Libraries have developed significantly in recent years. Their collections and audiences are constantly growing, while playing an increasingly important role in both the local and the wider community. The use of new technologies for the purpose of promotion and access to their material is constantly increasing, in order for libraries to harmonize and support the modern society of lifelong learning. One of the most widespread modern activities of

libraries is that of digitization, which is called to meet their growing needs to ensure access to knowledge, something that was traditionally achieved through contact with the collections themselves. But as the demands for quick and easy access continue to grow, the need for material both on-premises and online is growing. Digitization aims to help meet these requirements.

The Municipal Library is a peculiarity. It comes in direct contact with the local communities, addresses all its members not a part of it, listens to their needs and can contribute the most to their development. Through the knowledge and capabilities it provides, it can bring together people with common problems and interests, entertain and strengthen their creative imagination with a variety of activities, but also provide access to services related to the technological explosion of our time. After all, the Municipal Library is a place that is culturally rooted, as a reliable source of free and open access and exchange of information, in the local community (Jaeger & Burnett, 2005 in Bertot, et al., 2011). Today, when technology has given unprecedented access to libraries around the world and competition is now a given and multifaceted, it pushes Municipal Libraries to respond to the use of new technologies, in order to target the appropriate audience that is interested and expand. We live in an age of information storms and the terrifying possibilities of the internet. Libraries need to keep up with the new data and realize that their role has become more complex, as they have to communicate with the public and listen to their wishes and needs, without discrimination, strengthening social cohesion and providing to all, without exception, sources relevant to their interests. In the Municipal Libraries the era of digitization brought new means of presentation / use of their material and at the same time dissemination / rescue of valuable and unique collections, such as Electronic public access catalog, Electronic Magazines, Electronic Books. In addition, to the confirmed positive perspective of the use of digital technology by libraries is added the creation of Digital Collections¹ that arose from the urgent need to save the cultural heritage of communities, groups or individuals. With digitization, the original item is protected from damage from close use, a quality copy is reproduced in perpetuity, it is easier to manage and edit, it is assisted by texts and files that explain it and its use is extended in various formats, depending the needs of each researcher / user (Gavrilis et al., 2004).

¹ The 43 Greek Digital Libraries. Source: <https://www.openbook.gr/libraries/>
Indicatively we mention the Public Libraries of Livadia <http://ebooks.liblivadia.gr/liblivadia/>
-- Municipal Library of Serres <http://ebooks.serrelib.gr/serrelib/>
- and Municipal Library of Veria <http://medusa.libver.gr/jspui/>
- the Vikelaia Municipal Library <https://www.heraklion.gr/vikelaiia/istorika-egrafaa/history.html>

From time to time, questions were asked about the rescue of rare material. The aim was to position librarians³ on issues related to maintenance, preservation of archival material and books, such as: whether a Municipal Library should invest in maintenance, the factors that complicate the maintenance work, policies and priorities for maintenance in prudential maintenance, human resource training and contingency management.

It has been proven that the type of collections of Municipal Libraries is an important field of research, as the nature and age of the collections are a factor that is taken into account when choosing material for maintenance and digitization. As the percentage of libraries in possession of historical material is significant, their requirements for mainly preventive and invasive maintenance work remain. This means that the Municipal Libraries in most of them, with some exceptions, do not have maintenance services and even more, organized maintenance laboratories. An additional important parameter that plays a key role in setting up maintenance workshops is the resources available. Usually most Municipal Libraries do not have an annual budget to meet their needs and are generally covered, when the need arises, by the general budget. An additional obstacle that is considered an obstacle to the creation of a well-organized maintenance workshop as well as support for its maintenance, in addition to the very high cost of interventions (man-hours) and the lack of space and workshops, is the employment of specialized conservators of rare material. However, as the number of employees with the appropriate qualifications ranges from minimal to zero, at least for most Municipal Libraries, the need related to the knowledge of basic issues of preventive maintenance of collections, is left to the professionalism of their employees. In any case, as preventive maintenance is considered the cornerstone for the rescue and longevity of books and documents, it is necessary for Library staff to be informed and trained on

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Last Access 28/03/2022

³Indicatively, we mention: 2nd Panhellenic Conference of Municipal Libraries "We Think Nationally We Act Locally". 4 & 5 December 2009 in the Municipality of Maroussi. The theme of the Conference was defined based on the conclusions of the 1st Panhellenic Conference of Municipal Libraries. Among the topics of interest were the presentations on topics such as: "Municipal libraries to highlight, promote and utilize the cultural resources of local communities, by developing and managing a common platform for hosting and distributing digital or digitized material for participation in the Europeana program: "To develop modern IT and networking infrastructure in the municipal libraries of Greece" Source:

<https://lekkythos.library.ucy.ac.cy/bitstream/handle/10797/12407/22teuxos015.pdf?sequence=1>, etc.

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maintenance issues. So far, this can be achieved either with training seminars of the National Center for Public Administration and Local Government, through the Training Institute⁴, but also conferences, workshops by specific Organizations, Associations or University institutions where they have in their field the Maintenance (ICOM-CC, IIC, ICCROM, SAETTE, etc.). These actions aim at training and raising awareness on maintenance issues. The sub-objectives concern the provision of specialized knowledge and the cultivation of skills related to the planning and organization of integrated interventions for the preservation and rescuing of the cultural product / stock.

1. Material handling during digitization. Installation-storage

Digitization is now a crucial factor in the survival and preservation of: 1) the valuable information contained in images, photographs, works of art, books, newspapers, drawings, maps, posters, manuscripts, cinematography projects, etc., 2) To strengthen the role of cultural property, since the relevant information can be found more easily and in combination with different sources and be available for research, study, education, etc., 3) the promotion (which also contributes significantly to the aforementioned support) of cultural goods, via the Internet, but also in the production of electronic publications for education and culture, the production of printed material (e.g. books and posters) and other presentations/events and 4) economic development through the promotion of cultural goods and the utilization of cultural content in vast markets, such as Education, Entertainment and Tourism. Therefore, the design, preparation and treatment of rare material during digitization plays an important role in protecting, rescuing and long-term preserving it from potential mishandling of staff. For the above reasons, it is very important⁵:

1. The work of handling and transfer of the archival material to be supervised by a conservator of works of art where he specializes in organic materials.
2. Before transport and handling, the responsible maintainer must have grouped the material in different categories such as (good condition, moderate, poor, etc.). This way he will know which are the most sensitive and which are not (Choulis, 1998).
3. The staff who will handle the archival material should wear surgical gloves to avoid grease from the hands or any other deposits, as well as to have removed

⁴ Source: [Κατάλογος Προγραμμάτων – ΕΚΔΔΑ \(ekdd.gr\)](http://ekdd.gr)

Last Access 18/01/22

⁵ See also: "Guide to good practice for digitizing and long-term preservation of cultural content in Europe and horizontal good practice software (Using benchmarking) nationally and internationally"

Source:

http://digitization.hpclab.ceid.upatras.gr/Odhgos_kalwn_praktikwn1.0.pdf

Last Access: 10/02/22

any jewelry so as not to invite any abrasions or tears on the surface of the materials. (Stasinou, (2003).

4. If the object is very sensitive then the conservator should carry it supporting its structure. He is also responsible for handling and selecting a point for digitization.

5. Often during the process of turning pages, cracked or torn pages are often at risk of further tearing. In this case, a temporary correction or fixing must be preceded by the responsible maintainer. Great care should also be taken on the backs of books where there may be material loss or tears.

6. During the movements, a metal trolley can be used to transport the objects more safely.

7. Archival material, photographs and books should not be stacked on top of each other, nor should a large number be transferred from the cabinets (Iona, 2013).

8. The selected book or file to be digitized may rest on a surface where there will be antacid cardboard or antacid paper before handling it. This way the object does not come into contact with acidic materials or other deposits.

9. If during the digitization the person in charge notices infestation of the material by microorganisms then the object should be isolated from the other collection and treated in a maintenance laboratory. In addition, if during the digitization metal elements are observed to have been used on the material e.g. staples, pins etc. should be carefully removed so as not to cause future damage (transport of corrosion products) to the paper structure.

10. After the completion of the digitization of the material follows its placement and storage according to the international standards of document storage.

The classification and storage of archival material must be followed by the proper rearrangement and arrangement of the physical material of documents, files in a safe and functional way (Derrida, 1996).

It is internationally accepted that the safest means of storing items are the archival antioxidant boxes (made according to the dimensions of the book or archive) and the antacid envelopes and are transported in its cabinet. The acidity contained in commonly available materials, envelopes, folders and other graphic material make them unsuitable and dangerous for the long-term storage of archival material and therefore it is important to choose special means certified for archival use. There is a wide variety of types of boxes and envelopes or special cases for photographic material and documents that cover the majority of items of evidence.

Depending on the groupings and sequences that have resulted from the file sort, folders, subfolders, document separator sheets and boxes can be used. The choice of appropriate storage media should be made based on the size of the material, its sensitivity but also its functionality, since it can be material with regular use.

Safeguards are important to bear the distinctive features of their classification, such as the file number or the order in which they belong, to facilitate the search for evidence within them and to reduce the need for unnecessary treatment. The boxes, in turn, are finally placed on the shelves, cabinets or storage drawers,

following their sorting order, in which it is also necessary to indicate their number and location so that the file corresponds to the storage location. The position number of each item is finally recorded in its description in the Inventory field to allow immediate search of items.

2. Preservation of digital content

An important goal of any digitization project is to protect and secure access to the digital content that has been created. Troubleshooting it is necessary to troubleshoot issues such as outdated file types and outdated storage media. Digital content, however, is also at risk of natural disasters, environmental factors and human intervention. In the event that this happens, it is a good idea to have a disaster plan. Long-term preservation of the digital copy and its metadata prevents duplication of the digitization, thus helping to protect sensitive originals and avoid investing extra money and time for the same purpose. This issue has been of concern to the international community and has been the subject of research in recent years, but no clear solution has been found so far.

The choice of storage media for digital objects is considered particularly important, since the digitization projects aim at the long-term preservation of their digital collections. Wrong choices in this particular subject are likely to condemn a work to obscurity. Generally, one or more of the following types of storage media were used to store digital items:

- Optical Storage Media (CD and DVD)
- Direct Attached Storage
- Arrays of RAID disks
- Network storage (SAN, NAS)

At this point we should point out that, regardless of their type, the storage media that will be finally selected will become obsolete within a few years. It is foreseen that in the next five years it will be necessary to move to new storage media. As a result, rapid developments in the field of storage media in recent years have greatly affected and continue to affect digitization projects. It is generally an issue in which research continues, as they are constantly emerging with greater capacity and more potential.

2.1. Security and disaster management issues. Long-term maintenance

The security of digital objects is a crucial factor for the success of a digitization project. Digital content is threatened by natural disasters, environmental factors and human intervention. For this reason it is good to take Measures that minimize the above risks. For example:

- Make backup copies immediately after the digital copy is made and repeat this process at regular intervals.

- Storing the backups in the storage area of the digital objects, but also in another place that is at a safe distance from the first one, so that they remain unaffected by natural or human disasters that may affect the digital copies.
 - It is a good idea to minimize the risk of damage from fire or flooding and to avoid magnetic fields near the magnetic media.
 - The accompanying material of the project that is not in digital format (instructions for use, manuals, etc.) should also be stored in appropriate conditions.
 - Control access to the storage of digital objects.
 - It is good to have specific policies and procedures for recovery after a disaster.
- What is required for digitization is now the long-term preservation of digital copies, such as the ability to retrieve and use digital collections regardless of the rapid change of technological and organizational infrastructure. The main issues of long-term conservation are:
1. Ensuring the physical reliability of image files, their metadata and access programs in the collection.
 2. Ensuring continuous use of the digital collection.
 3. Maintaining the security of the collection.

However, in order to achieve some degree of long-term preservation of the digital collection, it is good to take into account parameters such as identifying the data to be preserved, adopting principles for file type and storage media, storing data in, switch to new file types, update data, and implement organizational strategies.

2.2. Staff training

In most digitization projects there is a need for staff training, as it is unlikely that all those employed in the project will have significant experience from older projects. Usually training is about two different subjects: technology and prototype management. For these reasons, it is essential that the issue of staff training is not treated with indifference. It is also a good idea to ensure that staff training needs are identified during the design phase and recorded so that their satisfaction can proceed at the appropriate time. Staff can acquire some knowledge through practical training, such as the use of digitizing devices and training on the management of prototypes before the corresponding stage of the digitization life cycle. It is preferable to have a small group of well-trained people who will work exclusively for the project, rather than a large number of employees who will be employed occasionally. Finally, it is proposed to train staff in quality control issues, so that they can perform these. Therefore, possible indifference in the training of the staff that will be employed on the project can lead to accidents and problems from the very beginning of the project. The same side effects can be caused by the replacement of employees who have gained some experience, by young people. For this reason it is recommended that the project work exclusively for a small group of people who will have the appropriate knowledge. In addition, frequent changes to the project workgroup cost time and money, as the training process for new staff requires repetition.

The time invested in staff training at the beginning of the project is offset by increased productivity and reduced problems during the project inspections, following the correct procedure⁶.

3. The importance of creating digital inventory and rescuing rare material in order to be available to the user

The material is replicated in libraries for a variety of reasons, such as serving researchers, the academic community, delivering material to the general public, publishing material, and digitally preserving rare editions and archival material. The reproduction of the contents of books, manuscripts, images, engravings, photographs and other objects can be done by various established techniques, such as photocopying, microphotography and conventional photography or by digitization (digital photography, scanning) (Adcock, 1998; Dobrusina et al. , 2011).

To facilitate their study / research, users often request from the collections of the libraries they visit, copies of the material they study. The amount of material they can request is usually subject to restrictions and has a token cost. Copies are usually made by library staff, but when it comes to photocopies, users are often self-serving, mainly due to lack of staff. In both cases the material suffers, because while the staff knows and applies good practices, the same does not apply to users. The result is books with broken backs and significant damage. However, with the prevalence of digital technologies, the difficulties and problems have almost been eliminated, because the digitization:

- Allows easy, fast and controlled copying of the same quality as the original digital copy at minimal cost (internet)
- Does not require large storage spaces
- It seems to be cheaper
- Allows scalable application
- Can be used under certain conditions for the preservation of the material⁷.

In conclusion, we would say that the introduction of digital technology in the field of Public Libraries is an important tool for their development, as they will implement a series of innovations and national importance, for the Greek reality, technological services and actions. The main goal is to redefine the vision, mission and goals of the Public Library, to strengthen its role in relation to the needs of the local community in urban and rural areas and to set priorities, in accordance with the strategic plans for the short-term and its long-term action in the field of monitoring, creating, organizing, managing, rescuing, evaluating and

⁶Source:

http://digitization.hpclab.ceid.upatras.gr/Odhgos_kalwn_praktikwn1.0.pdf

Last Access: 10/02/22

⁷ Karydis, Kouloumpi, Sakellariou, 2013

identifying opportunities to improve its collections and services. The creation of a digital inventory in the operation of the Public Libraries will offer targeted, digital content of the bibliographic databases of their collections in any form and will facilitate the distribution of resources both regionally and nationally and internationally, while at the same time contributing to the cooperation between Public Libraries and other categories of libraries or community organizations and especially educational community organizations or school libraries (if any) using the latest technologies. The creation of digital stock a) will ensure the recording, preservation and dissemination of the intellectual local cultural heritage of the country which remains unused b) will be enabled by the citizens of local communities and the country, the educational community and every interested. In addition, the project will enable the development of a series of specialized applications with new technologies and the development of modern IT and networking infrastructure in the Public Libraries of Greece that will support information and enhance training, education and Lifelong learning. Learning in relation to the sciences of technology.

3. a. Forming an attractive hyperlink for Closed Collections

However, the introduction of digitization in the field of Rare Books will not only contribute to a substantially more friendly reader service system. The list of prohibitions set out above also includes one that prohibits readers from accessing the libraries of Closed Collections. In the Municipal Libraries, in contrast to the open access collections, in which the reader is free to walk around the shelves, to draw from them whatever arouses his curiosity and thus to compose his personal opinion on its value, in the Indoor Collections, in the space where the library stores its treasures, the reader, for reasons of material protection, must remain formally and virtually excluded. Thus, although the aim of the Closed Collections was to highlight the museum and cultural value of the libraries they hold, by displaying their material, these treasures remained inaccessible, displayed at best - again only selectively - at anniversary events and exhibitions.

The introduction of digital technology was decisive in this area as well, as it allowed the above ban to be eased, without being overturned. The result was to create a hyperlink on the website of each Library where by digitizing sometimes title pages, sometimes dedications, sometimes engravings from the most valuable works of these collections, the individual history of each library was reconstructed, publicly promoting both themselves and their creators. In this way, although the abbot still forbids the reader any physical access to the libraries, a series of virtual tours was created allowing each user of the Library's online services to visit each of these closed collections unhindered and to admire, from a distance, their most valuable specimens, without putting them at the slightest risk. This ongoing online exhibition highlights the museum value of their material in the best way possible, attracting a much larger number of visitors.

3. b. Dissemination of rare books via the Internet

Finally, it is worth noting that the Internet creates new possibilities for high quality services in the way we display and preserve our cultural heritage through digitization. It is the online platform that makes digital books / manuscripts produced with T&T⁸ technology accessible to the general public, educational institutions and professionals. The platform includes various facilities such as Search functions, samples, news, training areas, downloads. It acts as a virtual meeting point where different groups of users can discuss topics of common interest in the field of rare books / manuscripts⁹.

With the adoption of such a program by a Municipal Library, it is certain that it will expand the public and the recipients of its services, a fact that will help it regain its rightful place in the local community. By distributing, through the World Wide Web, digital copies of rare and valuable material, it will be able to provide its readers with the enjoyment of virtually flipping through its rarest books, making it possible, mainly financially, to access this valuable material (books), engravings, etc.) and above all, to contribute to the dissemination / disposal of our cultural heritage.

Conclusions

In summary, we must emphasize that the introduction of digital technology will be a crucial tool for the Closed Collections of Municipal Libraries which:

⁸ The Swedish company Touch and Turn (TT) with 6 other European players from 5 different countries. The project "Mediation of rare books over the internet" aims to disseminate and make available Europe's cultural heritage. Its purpose is with the use of current digital technology to make possible, mainly financially, the access of rare and valuable material (books, engravings, etc.) by a wider audience. More information is available on the Touch and Turn website: <http://www.touchandturn.com>

⁹ Indicative example: The energy of the Library of the University of Crete, which concerns the promotion of its rare and valuable material. He collaborated with the Swedish company Touch and Turn and with 6 other European organizations from 5 different countries, in the framework of the project "Dissemination of rare books via the Internet", with funding from the European Union. As a result, it is able to provide its readers with the pleasure of flipping through three of its rarest books: 1) Mattheus Merian, *Das lange bestrittene Kønigreich Kandia*, Frankfurt 1670, 2) Nicolas de Nicolay, *Le navigation! et viaggi, fatti nella Turchia, Beveria* 1580, 3) Thomaso Porcacchi, *L 'isole piu famose del mondo, Padua* 1620. Source: <https://www.lib.uoc.gr/info/absrv/rare/rnet/?lang=en>
Last Access 16/01/22

- I. Contributes significantly to the modernization of their services by improving the benefits to their users.
- II. Supports the effort to create a digital collection for rare books.
- III. Disseminates the rare material of the Libraries digitally.
- IV. It supports the effort to promote rare material on the Internet, by creating a series of virtual tours of the collections of important scholars, rare historical documents and archives that Libraries hold and keep intact.
- V. Finally, it provides all of us with the most economical means of accessing and disseminating our cultural property.

Instead of an epilogue

The dynamic role of the Digital Library

Libraries began to integrate digital technologies and platforms into their spaces from the late 1990s onwards. And while this may have changed the interior design of the library only in the last decade or so, these technologies have begun to fundamentally influence them as media hubs, reinventing themselves around the technologies through which information is encoded, organized and are accessed. In their more recent history as an institution, their need for technological innovation is now understood as intertwined with their need for social invention. After all, Municipal Libraries have always met the changing needs and aspirations of the societies they serve. In this way, they are now part of the social infrastructure through which technology is integrated into social life (Wajcman 2002, Wyatt et al., 2018). As a result, the Municipal Library has become a significant civic asset in addressing the opportunities and challenges of an emerging digital culture. They are places that can accommodate the expectations, practices and pleasures of a new generation of users. And they are increasingly making themselves the hubs of innovation, supporting the activity and skills needed to thrive in a digital future.

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