Digital and Virtual Exhibitions - A Glance at the Situation in Croatia

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Introduction
In a period of information overload and of habituation to an extremely rapid consumption of diverse content it is especially important to make an effort to introduce cultural content in a new and dynamic way. In this sense, it is necessary to maximize the opportunities offered by new technologies. First, it is necessary to reject the fear of death of the “physical” museum, because it will not happen, and certainly not as a result of the use of digital content. Encounter with a work of art in real life is a special experience, incomparable with virtual viewing of objects. However, modern society is largely constituted of individuals who have no intention of spending their time visiting museums, because they are used to receiving information quickly and dynamically, a feature that a traditional museum does not offer. It would be a challenge to produce digital content that will create interest as well as subtly educate those individuals. Leaving aside the question of whether this content will encourage the individual to visit the museum (which many people still consider the main objective), we might instead focus on the promotion and dissemination of knowledge. Digital and multimedia content can be useful to a wide spectrum of people - from experts and art lovers to chance visitors - so it should be produced while bearing this in mind.

Situation in Croatia
Although the first CD-ROM with museum content in Croatia was published back in 1998, this practice did not take root. A lot of museums in Croatia do not even have a website, and the concept “virtual exhibition” is often misrepresented as a regular image gallery of a particular exhibition. In practice, the exhibitions are photographed primarily for the purpose of documentation. These photographs are later shaped into galleries, which are sometimes called virtual exhibitions, although these are actually documentary pictures, without any additional information. The instances of video recordings are even rarer but none of these can be considered to be an “exhibition”, since they do not contain metadata and do not allow any interaction, but only provide a linear and static view of the exhibition. Of course, there are exceptions. The virtual exhibition of Zbirka Richter / The Richter Collection (http://richter.mdc.hr/hr/vr/) is technically superbly executed - it enables an interactive, three-dimensional tour of the area by moving the mouse, but we still need to search for information about the artwork outside the movie, i.e. outside the virtual exhibition.

In general, it seems that the term “virtual (digital) exhibition” is not well understood, so it sometimes even refers to digital collections. The number and quality of digital collections in Croatia have increased significantly in recent years. One can find particularly fine examples in databases made by the company ArhivPRO (e.g. Digitalna zbirka Hrvatske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti / Digital Collection of the Croatian Academy of Arts and Sciences).
A lot of museums in Croatia do not even have a website, and the concept "virtual exhibition" is often misrepresented as a regular image gallery of a particular exhibition. In practice, the exhibitions are photographed primarily for the purpose of documentation. (http://dizbi.hazu.hr/), Digitalizirana zagrebačka baština / Digitalized Zagreb Heritage (http://kgzdbz.arhibipro.hr/), MUO – Partage Plus - http://partage.muohr/). However, it is clear that a database differs from an exhibition, both in the material and in the virtual world. While a database consists of a mere set of objects, in the exhibition these objects have to be linked together by a common trait, an interdisciplinary topic, a concept, an idea, an anniversary, a special event, or a physical person. In other words, they must form a story that a digital exhibition needs to convey.

Several fine digital exhibitions and workshops had been made, but most of them are no longer available online, which is a great omission, and it is not in accordance with one of the major advantages of digital content – that it remains accessible over time, since it is not limited to the duration of the actual event. There are of course several active examples, but unfortunately they constitute an exception. It is interesting that some of the best examples were not based on real exhibitions (or made in cooperation with cultural institutions). Virtualni svijet Ivana Krsitelja Rangera / Virtual World of Ivan Krsiteli Ranger - www.kr-ranger.net/index.php - (Janko Belaj and Marija Mirkovic, 2003 – 2008) is a site offering two digital exhibitions that represent a large part of the oeuvre of this fresco painter, with photographs and detailed information. These are the works that could not be presented together in one place; therefore digital exhibition served as the ideal medium. Pablo Picasso – Proslava osamdesetog rođendana / Pablo Picasso – Celebrating Eightieth Birthday - http://dizbi.hazu.hr/picasso (Archive for Fine Arts, HAZU, 2013) is an interesting digital exhibition on documents, texts and photographs gathered on the journey of the art historian Vesna Barbić, during which she attended Picasso’s birthday celebration. Avanture Vite i Nade / Adventures of Vito and Nada - www.msu.hr/vito-i-nada/data/hr/index.html (Museum of Contemporary Art, 2008) is a quality animated interactive application for children that in an engaging manner allows viewing The Richter Collection in a non-linear, arbitrary manner and thereby teaches art.
Museum of Arts and Crafts has so far released three CDs, all three as the material supporting the exhibitions: "Historicism in Croatia / Historizam u Hrvatskoj" / "Nouveau in Croatia and Art Déco u unajeost u Hrvatskoj između dva rata / Art Déco and Art in Croatia between the Two Wars." The first two contain only images of the exhibited objects and a text of the catalogue that accompanied the exhibition, so in terms of complexity they are the most basic virtual exhibitions. The Art Déco CD-ROM is much more complex, offering a virtual tour of the exhibition, showing the exhibition's actual arrangements and reconstructing a real visit as much as possible. The CD is also enhanced by audio and text information. However, our most sophisticated digital exhibition is still a work in progress.

MOVIO & the Museum of Arts and Crafts
The Museum of Arts and Crafts in Zagreb participates in the project AthenaPlus, whose goal is to upgrade the terminology and enhance the Europeana search engine. At the same time there is a great emphasis on re-use of content and the development of tools and applications that support new possibilities of presenting cultural heritage. As part of the project, the MOVIO tool for creating online digital exhibitions is in the process of development and several partners are testing the tool. The Museum of Arts and Crafts is working on a digital exhibition entitled "A Century of the Wristwatch." This is actually the first "real" digital exhibition of our institution – the exhibition whose main goal is not only the promotion of an actual event and is not mere documentation of an existing exhibition, but approaches the exhibits individually by connecting them into a meaningful story, resulting in a product that is autonomous, with a goal to promote and disseminate knowledge. The exhibition is based on the material used for the corresponding temporary exhibition, held at the museum this year, which itself contained certain digital content. For instance, "The Watchmaker Application - http://pmilovac.url.ph/clock/" (Nataša Cvrlić, Jelena Markić Glavaš, Petra Milovac, 2014) is an interactive application that provides the experience of digitally assembling wristwatch movement components. It attracted the attention of the visitors, while subtly educating and developing an interest in an almost forgotten, rare skill of watchmaking, part of our non-material heritage.

Multimedia contents from the actual exhibition are included in the digital one, but they constitute only a small part of it. The digital exhibition made by using the MOVIO tool offers a much broader context and makes accessible an amount of documents and items much greater than what any material exhibition could ever manage to display. Apart from the objects from the museum’s Clocks and Watchs Collection, the digital exhibition includes other watches, especially those relevant to technical improvements or innovations in design, with an aim to create a more comprehensive picture of wristwatch development in the past 100 years.
Some of the functionalities that MOVIO offers enabled the display of wristwatches in different contexts and in multiple connections that would create confusion if they were shown at the real exhibition. The tool offers an array of different page types which provide the opportunity to organize the content in a diverse and non-monotonous way and therefore make the final exhibition interesting to explore. For example, photographs can be arranged in various galleries, texts can contain hyperlinks, videos can be added, etc. One should also mention several page types – those which have proven to be very useful for our exhibition. Using the Timeline Page we managed to present connections between ladies' watch design and women's fashion, simultaneously explaining the change of styles. The Google Maps Page Type allowed us to create the Watchmaker Manufacturers Map – we simply added the markers (points of interest) which are then displayed in the Google Map. Markers do not contain only names of the manufacturers, but also additional information about them. The Image Hotspot Page Type allows linking of sections of an image, some additional information or some links to other pages. We used it to demonstrate differences between movement components of different watch types (watch with manual winding, electronic watch). MOVIO automatically generates the sidebar menu in the front end, and to make the structure even clearer there is the Sitemap Page Type, which allows automatic creation of the page containing detailed content structure of the Exhibition page. This feature makes it easy for users to navigate the site.

The most advanced back-end feature is The Ontology Builder – a tool for creating conceptualized maps for resource navigation. Instead of a flat structure, with the Ontology builder it is possible to create complex thematic paths.

Furthermore, a significant feature of MOVIO is multilingualism. From the very start our exhibition was being developed in two languages: English and Croatian. This aspect is very important because it makes it possible for the exhibition to be visited by users from all over the world, by those who may not be able to visit the actual exhibition. MOVIO automatically manages multilingualism, which means that once the exhibition is made in one language, one only has to translate the texts – everything else is automatically arranged. It is possible to add an unlimited number of new languages.

Generally, MOVIO is a user friendly tool which requires no knowledge of programming so various experts can create a digital story based on the content in their field of study, without the necessary and continuous intervention of a programmer. The so-called “back-end” has an adapted interface which is very clear and easy to use. In the back-end the author of the exhibition determines what and how to display in the front-end – the user interface. One can say that MOVIO is a tool for creating online sites, but especially for sites that are thoroughly adapted for digital exhibitions because they contain almost all features the curator can wish for.
A Century of the Wristwatch
Wristwatches from the Museum of Arts and Crafts Collection

- A CENTURY OF THE WRISTWATCH, MU
  11 JUNE - 17 AUGUST 2014
- VARI - PRODUCTION-BEESING
- TECHNICAL INNOVATIONS
- DIGITAL TIME DISPLAY
- WATCHES WITH SPECIAL FUNCTIONS
- WATCHES BEHIND THE IRON CURTAIN
- LUXURY WATCHES
- WATCH CONCEPT
- ARTS
- WATCHMAKER MANUFACTURERS MAP
- MOVEMENT ELEMENTS
- INFORMATION APHATION
- ONTOLOGY
- TEXT ENTRY - DOCUMENT

World War I
The beginning of mass production of wristwatches

Technical innovation
Development of automatic, electronic, mechanical, electronic and analogue watches

Digital electronic watches
Latest high-technology and luxurious digital watches

Analog and digital watches
Chronographs, alarm wristwatches, sport watches

World watches made in the Soviet Union

Ladies' watches
Evolution of watch design from traditional ladies' watches to modern designs

Watch concept
How the Swiss watch industry developed

Athena
Watchmaker's design evolution

Digital exhibition
A Century of the Wristwatch
Conclusion
Although one might think that it makes no sense to discuss the usefulness of virtual and digital content in promoting heritage and knowledge, it seems that (in Croatia) there still exists a certain reluctance. Online availability of their collection can cause the fear of losing visitors. Such thinking is outdated and extremely selfish. As humanists and scientists, we should think about the welfare of people and knowledge, and in this sense the digital exhibition is a medium that offers many advantages. Although the quantity and quality of digital exhibitions in Croatia is not commendable, considerable progress is evident in the last few years. This topic is being increasingly discussed at seminars, and an increasing number of institutions is opening their “digital doors”.

We hope that progress will accelerate in the future, because of — among other things — tools like MOVIO. The Museum of Arts and Crafts is trying to maximize the opportunities provided by new technologies and to keep pace with global developments. European projects and international co-operation in general are opening our eyes to a much wider view, and the exchange of experience and joint effort will surely result in a change for the better.

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