Hundreds of Megabytes of Petticoat: A Digital Cross-section of the Object Culture of the Ethnic Germans in Hungary

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Introduction

Digital content and online presence, similarly to other walks of life, are becoming more and more important in science, culture, and in preserving our traditions. Our project, aiming at digitizing the material of the folk houses of German nationality in Hungary, is rooted in the recognition of this. Online presence opens up the way for an extensive and diverse social utilization of local collections. The major partners of the programme are the National Self-Government of the Hungarian Germans (Magyarországi Németek Országos Önkormányzata) and the expert team of the digital publication and collection management system, MúzeumDigitár.

Minorities in Hungary

The Germans are the second largest, and perhaps the most organized national minority of Hungary. The preservation and presentation of their cultural heritage is a priority for them, apart from a pronounced policy of remembrance, minority education inside and outside school, and international relationship building. More than five hundred cultural associations and other organized communities are involved in various ways in cultivating the mother tongue, preserving traditions, and strengthening the German identity. The more than a hundred and twenty local museum collections and folk houses constitute a significant part of the palette. Material and pictorial relics of the German minority can be found in the exhibition spaces of the folk houses. Several institutions offer pedagogical museum activities for pre-schoolers and pupils, trying to familiarize them with folk and peasant culture, which is becoming more and more remote from their world.

Notwithstanding the significant efforts, we may say that a renewal, both in form and content, is highly needed in the preservation of the German nationality's traditions and the management of its cultural heritage, since existing forums and messages reach young people to an increasingly lower extent, while addressing the youth successfully is vital for the preservation of the traditions and the survival of the community. Solving the problem is a long-term strategic task, where digital technology and the online spaces will certainly play an important role. The initiative presented above points to the same direction. The collections of German folk houses, and sometimes the institutions themselves, used to be completely invisible in the online space before the beginning of the project. The exhibitions, the results of the selfless work of the local patriots, were often created

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at significant cost and reached only few people, and the new generations of "digital natives" had hardly any access to them.

German cultural heritage digitization project

In 2014, the head of the digital photo archive, Krisztián Fonyódi, expressed the goal of rendering the most important objects of these nationality collections visible in the virtual collections as well. Fonyódi, who himself was born in a family of German nationality from Budafok, started to implement the idea together with a team of experts from the fields of museology and cultural heritage protection. The coordinator of the German nationality folk houses, Gabriella Jaszmann, helped with the selection of the participating local historical collections. The work of digitization started in six institutions in the first year (Budaörs, Dunaharaszti, Himesháza, Somberek, Császártöltés, Vecsés). The 100 most important objects of each collection were se-

Fig. 1. Countryhouse in Ceglédbercel





Fig. 2. Ceglédbercel, interior of the kictchen



lected (objects of everyday use, traditional costumes, archive photos, etc.) in the first phase. The processing started afterwards, in collaboration with the colleagues in the folk houses. The digitization campaign was accompanied by workshop-like trainings. The management of the collections had the opportunity to learn how to take photos of the three-dimensional objects for the purposes of web publication, how to upload the data of the photos and objects into the collection management system of Múzeum-Digitár, and how to publish the finished records on the web. The unconcealed aim of the project was that the colleagues in the folk houses, once in possession of both the new knowledge and the software, would extend the number of virtual museum objects on their own. In addition, the hope for connecting younger and older generations through the new type of activity, that is, "digital preservation of the traditions", was also formulated. While the older can contribute to the success of the project by their memories and an understanding of the objects, the young can provide support by handling the technology (camera and collection management software). An inter-generational dialogue may come into being, and the cultural heritage transfer takes place as an inseparable part of the joint work. If this has happened even in a few cases, the result is significant, since there are few examples of similar cooperation of different age groups in other forums for the preservation of nationality traditions.

An important conclusion of the work in its fourth year is that judging the necessity of digitization in the cases of small folk houses is far from being as evident as in the cases of urban museum environments. The experts, enthusiastic about modern info communication solutions, have sometimes had difficulties to convince the heads of folk houses about the importance of making their collections visible in the online space, as well. While the digitization has not continued as a self-motivated activity, the processing and the publication of the hundred most important objects have been carried out in each of these cases, as well, enriching the online database of the Germans in Hungary in this way. Of course, the organizers of the workshops have had a lot of positive experiences: heartfelt openness and lively interest accompanied their work. The introduction of Múzeum-Digitár brought about new opportunities and work methods in these institutions. The user-friendly collection management and publication software not only enabled the "invasion" of online space, but also contributed to the "dynamization" of the collections. An inventory and a revision of the collections started jointly in several folk houses, and printed publications have been

created from the digital photo files in order to popularize the collections[1].

Cultural heritage in education

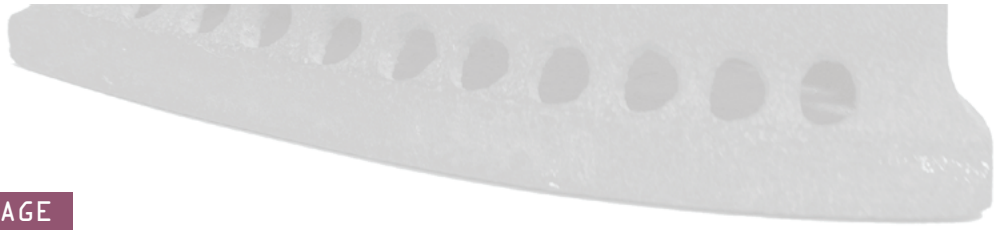
The records created in the past four years offer various possibilities of further utilization. The model project entitled Digital Narratives for the German Nationality Education (Digitális narratívák a német nemzetiségi oktatás számára) (2017–2018) is an example of the incorporation of digitized museum objects into the educational processes with the help of innovative solutions.

Traditional object culture and awareness of the peasant way of life and customs in the 19th and 20th centuries through the former are important elements in the German nationality curriculum in Hungary. The folk houses preserve a wealth of knowledge and material suitable for presentations in connection to the topic, which is now partly available in digital form, as well. An appropriate intermediary tool is needed in order that the education benefit from the knowledge and the object corpus. This time the tool is the newly-developed software of MúzeumDigitár, called Themator, which enables the organization of the material published in the system into spectacular thematic presentations.

Within the framework of the model project, three narratives have been created, which are directly connected to the course books on minority studies/ethnography (*Schatztruhe*, *Omas Fotoalbum*), conforming to the requirements of the National Curriculum. The stories told along the objects serve to complement and deepen the curricula of different age groups. Though the language levels and the vocabulary differ, the first practical experiences show that the stories can also be used successfully in age groups other than the default age group. The first story (*Mausi auf Schatzsuche*) is for second-year pupils. The main character is the little mouse known from the course book, who gets acquainted with some typical objects of everyday use and furnishings during a visit to the kitchen of a peasant house. The aim is to show, name and get to know the objects. The second story (*Resi hat Heimweh*) is connected to the curriculum of the sixth grade. We visit the spaces of a German peasant house and courtyard through the dream of a homesick girl who moves to town to be in service. The aim is not only to name the objects, but also find out about how to use them. Children can get informed on the division of labour within the family and the daily



Fig. 3. Somberek, interior of the room



and weekly routine of the jobs around the house. The third story (*Schwabenmodel gesucht!*) is for the seventh graders, and its topic is the traditional costume of Germans in Hungary. Two neighbour girls put on the clothes of older girls and adults secretly. At the same time, they have conversations on materials, forms, the meanings of colours, and the occasions to wear them[2].

Owing to the prepared digital materials, the objects and knowledge preserved in folk houses reach the younger generations through a medium that they are familiar with, and the pedagogues have a tool that is useable in various formal and informal learning situations (presentation at school; individual processing at home; group work/ online task; museum pedagogy, etc.). The project was headed by János Bednárik from MúzeumDigitár, who, in order to obtain a genuine and useable outcome, collaborated with Mária Frey, a teacher in Koch Valéria Education Centre in Pécs and co-author of the course books referred to. The coordinator of the German nationality folk houses, Gabriella Jaszmann, was responsible for the museum pedagogical aspects during the work.

Conclusion

The achievements of our projects to digitize the material of the German folk houses and further utilize the records created are unique in Hungary, both in quality and quantity. A digital catalogue will be published on the web in 2018, which includes more than 1500 records from 25 German folk houses in Hungary, and the exemplary study materials created on the basis of this database are in conformity with the new learning methods of the 21st century. Our programme had been financed by the Embassy of Germany in Budapest from 2014 to 2016 entirely, and the National Self-Government of the Hungarian Ger-



Fig. 4. Bakonynána, charcoal iron

mans (Magyarországi Németek Országos Önkormányzata) has contributed to the costs since 2017. The initiatives have been supported professionally by the Department of Public Collections of the Ministry of Human Capacities since the beginning, while the technical partner has been the MúzeumDigitár collection management system. Our projects comply with the directive of the Public Collection Digitization Strategy (Közgyűjteményi Digitalizációs Stratégia), adopted by a government decision, on the broad social utilization of cultural heritage preserved in public collections. We believe that the museums, including the smallest ones (that is, the folk houses), must transform themselves from guardians of knowledge into the primary sharers of knowle

is professional and conscious digitization and thematic publishing of the records created.

References

1 The up-to-date results of the digitization of German folk houses in Hungary can be viewed in the system of MúzeumDigitár on the following link: https://hu.museum-digital.de/portal/

2 The three materials are available on the following links: 1) https://www.museum-digital.de/hu/themator/ausgabe/showthema.php?m_tid=7&tid=7&exhibition_view; 2) https://www.museum-digital.de/hu/themator/ausgabe/showthema.php?m_tid=13&tid=13&exhibition_view; 3) https://www.museum-digital.de/hu/themator/ausgabe/showthema.php?m_tid=1&tid=1&exhibition_view



Fig. 5. Slippers from Harta