

Openly Available Resource for the Management and Promotion of Museum Exhibits:

The Case of Greek Museums with Folk Exhibits

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ABSTRACT

This article describes ongoing work on the design of an online application to support standardized classification of collections of folk exhibits and contribute to the collections' management and promotion. The rationale behind this is the normalization of comparable and multilingual controlled terminologies and their parallelization with recognized schemata. The approach relies on the identification of the real needs of Greek museums, as depicted in the organization of their collections and the identification and exploitation of the terminological apparatus provided by the Greek language that expresses widely held conceptualizations serving museums as handy organization pathways. Results will contribute to the issue of openly available online resources by freely offering the collection (circa 600 terms) to interested parties and to the general public. From this point of view, the emphasis is mainly on term disambiguation and classification. The proposed application aspires to serve as a point of reference both for managing and for promoting cultural heritage in the field of tourism.

KEYWORDS

Art and Cultural Marketing, Art and Culture in Tourism, Heritage and Museum Management in the Digital Era, Resource Management

1. INTRODUCTION: EXPLORING ONLINE GREEK MUSEUMS WITH FOLK EXHIBITS

1.1. The Hypothesis

The increasing online presence of Greek museums results in the accumulation of digital material that is available over the web; one wonders, however, whether the outcome is indeed helpful to users – be them professionals or members of the general public – or it simply contributes to the acknowledged “pathology of information overload” (Koltay, 2017). Information overload has long been identified as being presented with “too much information” in numerous aspects and processes of management (Eppler & Mengis, 2004). As both the contents and presentation methods of online Greek museums is rather diverse, the hypothesis formed was that the required information on the contents of the museums would not be easy to locate in the plethora of websites. This hypothesis was based on the assumption

DOI: 10.4018/IJCMHS.2019010103

Table 1. Sample museums¹

Full name	Acronym	Location	URL
Museum of Cretan Ethnology	MCE	Heraklion, Crete (Southern Greece)	http://www.cretanethnologymuseum.gr/imke/html/en/index_en.html
Historical - Folklore and Natural History Museum of Kozani	FMK	Kozani (Northern Greece)	http://www.mouseio-kozanis.gr/component/option,com_frontpage/Itemid,34/lang,en/
Korgialeneio Historical and Folklore Museum	KFM	Argostoli, Kefalonia (Western Greece)	www.corgialenios.gr

that each museum would use its own classification system, which would inevitably result to lack of interoperability between different museum systems due to two problems: (1) Different conceptual density of the documentation adopted by each museum, namely whether an adequate set of categories is used for classifying cultural heritage ensuring that cultural objects are visible to different queries, and (2) Different organization of the terminologies used for cultural object documentation. As effective retrieval of information is vital to both managing and promoting any type of collection, we proposed that, provided our hypothesis was true, solving the problem of information retrieval would necessarily facilitate museum management and promotion (Tzompanaki & Doerr, 2012).

Below, we continue by discussing the methodology that the team followed (1.2) as well as the findings along with their analysis (1.3). In Section 2 we present the state of the art on standards related with museum documentation. In Section 3 we present the web editor we have developed to support and accommodate the resource we are developing in order to help solve the information retrieval problem we identify in Section 1. We conclude on the future of this enterprise in Section 4.

2. METHODOLOGY

In order to test our hypothesis, we decided to consider a small sample of Greek museums with online presence and compare the way they present their contents to the public. In addition, we chose to concentrate on museums with folk exhibits that contain more region-specific exhibits and information because we felt that their promotion could contribute to the improvement of the economic and social life of small places. Another reason motivating this choice was that these types of institutions do not usually have the means to develop the technology infrastructure that would allow them to manage and present their collections in the most effective way possible. Furthermore, as we wanted our sample to be small and easy to control but, at the same time, be as representative as possible, the three museums we eventually selected (presented in Table 1) represented three distinctively different geographic regions of both mainland and island Greece (see Figure 1).

With this small-scale research, we first hope to identify the real needs of Greek museums, as these are depicted in the organization of their online collections. Next, we plan to identify and exploit the terminological apparatus provided by the Greek language, which expresses widely held conceptualizations that serve museums as convenient organization pathways. To this end, we draw on our experience regarding the organization and presentation of digital collections of museums and art galleries, but also of libraries and archives, and on the development of multilingual terminological and conceptually organized lexical resources with the use of state-of-the-art technology (i.e. ontological/dedicated editors) (Mouroutsou, Markantonatou, & Papavasiliou, 2015; Markantonatou, Minos, Tzortzi, & Pavlidis, 2016; Markantonatou, Minos, & Pavlidis, 2017; Markantonatou, 2016).

New technologies require standardized multilingual documentation of cultural assets in order to ensure sound cataloguing that entails the following: (1) Reliable retrieval of information from the museum databases: this is important for collection management and promotion, for instance in

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