

Accessibility and Dissemination of the Cultural Heritage in a Museum Library: Case Study in the National Archaeological Museum (Spain)

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Abstract

The bibliographic heritage held by GLAM (Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums) institutions is an invaluable source for research, culture and education. This paper aims to share a museum library project plan – which was designed in the framework of a state research project – to increase the visibility, accessibility and dissemination of the bibliographic heritage of the National Archaeological Museum Library through the generation of virtual exhibitions. The research project, which will be implemented and com-

pleted in 2023, was based on three main research questions and its design was divided into three phases: planning, implementation and closure.

The proposal is quite innovative in the field of Spanish heritage both for being undertaken in a Spanish state museum library and for being supported and funded in 2021 by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation in the call ‘R+D+i Oriented to the Challenges of Society’. The project design also includes the general objectives, information on the research team, phases and the dissemination and communication strategies. The proposal will allow us to understand further the role of multidisciplinary work teams in these kinds of projects and the effects of combining the use of technologies with the bibliographic collections held at cultural institutions. Once future phases have been completed it is anticipated that the results and lessons learned will be shared.

Keywords: Museum libraries; special libraries; state-level institutions; National Archaeological Museum; Spain

1. Literature Review

Documentary and Bibliographic Heritage is an integral part of Spanish Historical Heritage (Law 16/1985), which is included in Title VII in direct relation to Archives, Libraries and Museums. The inclusion of bibliographic heritage in the aforementioned Spanish law recognises its importance at a state level together with “immovable and movable objects of artistic, historical, paleontological, archaeological, ethnographic, scientific or technical interest” and “archaeological sites and areas, as well as natural sites, gardens and parks, which have artistic, historical or anthropological value” (Law16/1985, Preliminary Title, article 1.2). In this context, the so-called GLAM (Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums) cultural institutions – including libraries, archives, non-commercial galleries, and museums – have rich collections whose preservation and accessibility must be guaranteed. The creation of European digital content has therefore been a determining factor in achieving this through the publication of European recommendations and guidelines to make the collections and information resources of these institutions accessible in digital format. In this regard, the first key milestone was the publication of the Digital Agenda for Europe (European Commission, 2010), which was a flagship initiative of the Europe 2020 Strategy for the development of a Digital Single Market to enable the free movement of goods, people, services, capital and seamless access to goods and services online for citizens and businesses.

Mention should also be made of the creation of Europeana – the digital library, archive, and museum of the European Union –, the publication of the report *The New Renaissance* (Niggeman et al., 2011) and the Recommendation of 27 October 2011 on the digitisation and online accessibility of cultural material and digital preservation (2011/711/EU) (European Commission, 2011). In the latter case, the aim was to increase the online accessibility of the European cultural heritage, to engage citizens and to foster the development of creative industries (European Commission, 2011). The results of its latest review were reflected in the report *Cultural heritage: digitisation, online accessibility, and digital preservation* (European Commission, 2018b), which has been a key factor in establishing the current policies and identifying trends and challenges on which to base the present research work.

As a result, many GLAM institutions have increased digitisation initiatives as a way to turn cultural and bibliographic heritage into a raw material for the digital economy and Europe's cultural and creative industries, which account for 3% of the world Union's GDP (European Commission, 2018a), as well as a substrate to stimulate innovation in other sectors. The strategic lines for the digitisation of cultural and bibliographic heritage are focused on the quality of digital heritage (European Commission, 2018b) by including end-user-oriented content.

In relation to the Digital Single Market, there has been a shift in focus in the European Commission's strategies (European Commission, 2015; European Commission, 2018b; European Commission, 2019; Europeana, 2020), which conceive digitisation from a more complex and holistic perspective. Specifically, the strategies refer to the dissemination and accessibility, new ways of enjoying cultural content through experiential approaches, knowledge creation, preservation, use and reuse of cultural heritage.

After analysing all these publications, it has been concluded that the implementation of European digitisation and dissemination strategies requires that cultural institutions have to formulate, plan and develop projects for the dissemination and availability of their collections. In this way, citizens are enabled to enjoy cultural content, constantly adapting to the demands of a changing society, especially in the face of the health and social crisis caused by the COVID-19 global pandemic.

In Spain, the implementation of these European strategies for the dissemination of bibliographic collections has been carried out through the creation of virtual

libraries – including the Virtual Library of Bibliographic Heritage¹, the Virtual Library of Historical Press² or the Hispanic Digital Library³– and virtual exhibitions, which constitute a fundamental tool for the educational sector. However, these types of resources and services lie within the state sphere, in national and university libraries, as they have the economic and material resources for their implementation. Expobus is an illustrative case of the adoption of digital tools for the dissemination of the libraries of the University of Seville, highlighting the virtual exhibitions implemented with Omeka (Mensaque Urbano, 2017). Alcaraz Martínez (2012) was responsible for explaining the process of installation, creation of digital objects, metadata configuration, tagging and interface of this open-source software for GLAM institutions.

In the Spanish context, it is also evident that many art libraries are disadvantaged in terms of adopting dissemination strategies due to their lack of financial and material resources as well as qualified staff. Furthermore, Steele considers that “any effort towards marketing and promotions must start with a clear marketing plan, one with a strategic vision at its core, and which takes into account your library or organisation’s strategic plan” (2018, p. 4). Steele complemented this consideration by stating that “it is necessary for each individual library to discover what is effective, depending on their unique circumstances” (2018, p. 33).

The lack of financial, material, and human resources in special libraries have a negative impact on the dissemination of their bibliographic collections and on their limited social projection, despite being “centres which, although characterised by their heterogeneity, stand out for the richness, variety and specificity of their collections, in many cases of great heritage value” (Technical Commission of Special Libraries Cooperation, 2021, p. 2).

In this context, the Technical Commission of Specialised Libraries of the Council for Library Cooperation has created an interactive Map of Specialised Libraries⁴ in Spain by means of georeferencing and a directory of library networks with the intention of making this group of special libraries visible on the basis of a thematic classification of these libraries. In parallel, the IFLA Art Libraries Section is developing a Wikipedia page as a directory of the main art libraries (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, n.d).

An illustrative case of virtual exhibitions in the field of special libraries was the research project developed by the IDEA Lab Research Group with

the collections of the Central Military Library entitled ‘La Primera Vuelta al Mundo y la Música’ (The First Trip Around the World) to commemorate the fifth centenary of the first round-the-world trip (Figure 1).

Museum libraries are one of the main types of special GLAM libraries. It is estimated that there are 218 museum and archaeological libraries in Spain (<http://directoriobibliotecas.mcu.es/>). It is worth highlighting the creation of a Network of State Libraries known as the BIMUS Network, whose union catalogue is made up of the individual catalogues of the 16 state libraries directly managed by the Spanish Ministry of Culture and Sport and the individual catalogues of the libraries of the following museums: the National Museum of Theatre, the Prado Museum and the Queen Sofía National Art Museum Centre (<https://www.culturaydeporte.gob.es/cultura/areas/museos/mc/bimus/quienes-somos.html>). These 16 Spanish museum libraries were analysed and it was concluded that the creation of library networks is a “key factor for the development, dissemination and management of special libraries” (Cobo-Serrano et al., 2021, p. 481). These libraries constitute a “large and interesting group that provides an important service for research, teaching and access to quality and interesting information” (Technical Commission of Special Libraries Cooperation, 2017, p. 7). Progressively, “the

Fig. 1: Virtual exhibition ‘La primera vuelta al mundo y la música’. Source: www.expoidealab.com.



importance of the library within the museum is being recognised as is, consequently, the need for true library specialists” (Hernández, 1997, p. 287), since “museum libraries see themselves as part of an information environment at their museum” (Wateren, 1999, p. 197).

In view of the approaches set out in the literature review, challenges of the research project can be summarised as follows:

- The digitisation and dissemination of heritage require a multidisciplinary approach in which cultural institutions meet resources, experiences and agents (such as stakeholders or partners).
- The quality of digitised material is progressively increasing with the publication of technical guidelines or quality standards (European Commission, 2018b).
- Two thirds of EU Member States concentrate competences to facilitate digitisation by centralising resources, reducing costs, formulating processes and sharing experiences and good practices.
- Two thirds of EU Member States promote the preservation of digitised cultural heritage in the public domain.
- EU Member States are committed to the re-use of digitised heritage (European Commission, 2018b).

2. Objectives

This paper presents a museum library project plan which belongs to a Spanish state research project to increase the visibility, accessibility and dissemination of the bibliographic heritage of the National Archaeological Museum Library through the generation of virtual exhibitions.

3. Research Design

The state research project (2021–2023) was divided into the following phases and sub-phases:

- i. Design and planning phase (Timeline: 2021):
 - a. *Literature review*. European strategies for the digitization of cultural heritage were analysed as well as a global review of the scientific literature.

- b. *Identification of dissemination tools.* Online dissemination tools used by the National Library of Spain and university libraries were identified and evaluated in the context of making bibliographic heritage online.
 - c. *Software analysis and selection.* Based on software used to create virtual exhibitions, Omeka was selected for its technical features.
 - d. *GLAM Laboratory selection.* The library of the National Archaeological Museum was chosen as a project hub because of:
 - Being one the most important special libraries in Archaeology, History, Numismatics and Museology in Spain.
 - Being the biggest state museum library in BIMUS network.
 - e. *Project funding.* Research calls funded by universities, regional-level institutions and state-level institutions were analysed. For the purpose of this project, the call for grants for R&D&I (Research & Development & Innovation) projects – within the framework of the State Programme Oriented to the Challenges of Society – was selected as the most suitable option. After submitting a scientific-technical report (project design), the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation and the Spanish State Research Agency approved the project proposal whose resolution was published in June 2021.
- ii. Implementation and control phase (Timeline: 2022–2023). In this phase, metadata assignment, programming and digital objects settings are key activities to make virtual exhibitions available online. Additionally, the creation of a scalable, multilingual, permanent and interoperable platform is planned to become a data provider unit to Hispana, which is the content aggregator to Europeana in Spain.
 - iii. Closure phase (Timeline: 2023): Evaluation and impact measurement of the virtual exhibitions.

4. Results

As the project is currently in the implementation phase, results only refer to the GLAM Laboratory and the project design, which has delivered the project plan described here. Once future phases have been completed it is anticipated that the results and lessons learned will be shared.

4.1. The Library of the National Archaeological Museum (Spain): New GLAM Laboratory

The beginnings of the Library of the National Archaeological Museum date back practically to the creation of the Museum itself, by Royal Decree of 20 March 1867, as attested by some files in its Historical Archive, dated 1869, on the acquisition of bibliographic collections. The birth of the Library allowed it to “support the documentation and research work being carried out in museums” (Chumillas Zamora et al., 2010) and to bear witness to the history of its collection, the growth of which can be found in the Library’s Register Books, the first work recorded being dated 23 December 1894 (Figure 2).

Among the Library’s main collections are the holdings of the Museum of Antiquities of the National Library, the Museum of Natural Sciences, the Special School of Diplomacy, the Prince Alfonso Academy, the Commissariat of Archaeological Excavations and the acquisition of the personal libraries of prominent archaeologists (Ballano Aguilar et al., 1997). Currently, the Library’s collection totals more than 150,000 items, including periodicals (78,200 items), monographs (57,000 items), offprints (8,000), antiquarian collections (1,200), reference works (3,000) and other materials. The Library’s

Fig. 2: First Register Book of the Library of the National Archaeological Museum.

		Años - 1895 - 94		
<i>Fecha de ingreso.</i>	<i>Autor.</i>	<i>Título.</i>	<i>Forma.</i>	<i>Cuanto.</i>
23	Diciembre 1893	99 fotografías de la Exposición Hist ^{ca} Europea (Copias de la Real Casa)	Impresión	Impresión
		id. id. id. (Copias del Museo Arqueológico Nacional)	id.	id.
		Catálogo de la Exposición Histórica Europea 1893-94. 2 ^{da} ed.	id.	id.
		Apuntes de la Exposición Histórica Europea. Cuad. 9, 10 y 11.	id.	id.
30		100 fotografías de la Exposición Hist ^{ca} Europea (Series objeto repuestas)	id.	id.
	Palermo (Pietro A.)	Autografiado y pocas copias	1 en 15	Impresión del autor.
	id.	Los Héroes	id.	id.
	id.	El Cristianismo en la antigua civilización pagana	id.	id.
	id.	El Paraiso y sus mias cartas de d. Miguel Coladós	id.	id.
	id.	La Roma pagana en la historia universal	id.	id.
	id.	Regencia municipal de las Villas de Aragón	id.	id.
	id.	Individuos paganos y su arte en la Exp ^{ta} Hist ^{ca} Europea	id.	id.
	id.	Los paganos y el Paraiso	id.	id.
9	enero 1894	50 facsimiles de documentos autografiados y pocas copias de personas reales y personajes célebres presentados en la Exp ^{ta} Universal de París de 1875. Faltan los nº 8º y 5º.	id.	Impresión (los que faltan con carta de Maria Stuart a Felipe II y del Imperador Leopoldo a Carlos III)
20		Apuntes del Sr. D. Pedro A. Palermo.	id.	id.

Fig. 3: Rooms of the Library in the National Archaeological Museum (Spain).



holdings can be consulted in the BIMUS Union Catalogue, which includes the individual catalogues of 19 Spanish museum libraries.

The remodelling of the National Archaeological Museum has improved the Library's facilities, increasing the space for the collections housed, which currently exceed 150,000 items. The last remodelling of the Museum (2008–2014) had a significant impact on the Library, as it involved a change of location within the institution and, therefore, a comprehensive reorganisation in library terms (Pérez Cáceres, 2014).

Although the Museum was reopened in 2014, the Library remained closed for several years. It was in June 2019 when the Library reopened its doors to meet the needs of teachers, researchers and students specialising in the Museum's subject areas (Archaeology, History, Art, Numismatics, Egyptology and Museology) (Figure 3).

The library services offered are as follows:

- In-library loans. The collections are only loaned in the Reading Room.
- Bibliographic information and reference. A service offered in person, by telephone or virtual means.
- Access to the Library catalogue, which is integrated in the BIMUS union catalogue.
- Interlibrary Loans and Document Delivery Service, which is aimed exclusively at Museum staff.
- Exchange of publications. The Library currently exchanges publications with 116 institutions.
- External internships. The Library hosts internships for university students to carry out their academic internships for 300 hours.
- Desiderata. The Library tries to acquire publications requested by users in order to increase its collections.

The main dissemination activities of the Library of the National Archaeological Museum include:

- On-site guided tours.
- Threads on the Museum's social networks about digital publications.
- Virtual bookcrossing with more than 50 Spanish museum libraries.
- Loaning of bibliographic collections for temporary exhibitions, which can be held both in the National Archaeological Museum and in other national and international institutions.
- Participation in teaching innovation projects to establish synergies with the university community, collaborating in the applicability of academic content in actual professional contexts (libraries).
- Research, development, and innovation projects. Significantly and notably in the field of special libraries, the Library of the National Archaeological Museum is participating as a pilot scenario in the research project 'Cultural and bibliographic heritage in the GLAM (Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums) context: virtual exhibitions as agents of dissemination and reuse', awarded in September 2021 and detailed below.

4.2. R&D&I in the Library of the National Archaeological Museum: Cultural and bibliographic heritage in the GLAM context

4.2.1. Project Funding Context

On an annual basis, the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation publishes the call for grants for R&D&I projects within the framework of the State Programme for R&D&I Oriented to the Challenges of Society. In this context, the project "*El patrimonio cultural y bibliográfico en el contexto GLAM (Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums): las exposiciones virtuales como agentes de difusión y reutilización*" was presented at the 2020 call, being awarded in September 2021 for its achievement in the period 2021–2023. Specifically, the project is part of the State Programme for R&D&I Oriented to the Challenges of Society, Call for «R&D&I Projects», «Research Challenges» Modality, which will be monitored scientifically and technically by the State Research Agency.

4.2.2. Research Questions

For the purpose of the state research project, we formulated the following questions:

- i. How can the preservation of the bibliographic heritage of GLAM institutions be balanced with its dissemination?
- ii. Is it possible to use and reuse the knowledge generated?
- iii. Is it possible to design, plan and develop cultural dissemination tools (such as virtual exhibition platforms) that link the analogue and digital bibliographic heritage held at GLAM institutions?

4.2.3. Project Objectives

Given the scarcity of dissemination strategies to make the bibliographic heritage of museums visible, the collaborative research project between the IDEA Lab research group (The Complutense University of Madrid, Spain) and the Library of the National Archaeological Museum (Spain) is focused on generating virtual exhibitions as dissemination and reuse tools by connecting the National Archaeological Museum collections with the bibliographic holdings of its Library.

Concerning the general objectives, the state research project aims:

- i. To plan, design and generate virtual exhibitions that connect physical collections of the National Archaeological Museum with the bibliographic collections of its Library.
- ii. To generate standardised content (datasets) from the virtual collections to make them accessible, interoperable and reusable for publishers as well as to integrate the virtual exhibitions into Europeana.
- iii. To explore and define impact measurement tools of the virtual exhibitions in the educational, cultural, or social sector.

4.2.4. Project Outcomes: Strengths and Opportunities

By analysing internal factors, some project strengths are expected:

- To improve the visibility of the Library of the National Archaeological Museum.

- To increase the dissemination of the bibliographic heritage of the Library of the National Archaeological Museum.
- To increase the social and cultural impact of the Library of the National Archaeological Museum.
- To generate a collaborative case study between the IDEA Lab Research Group (UCM) and the Library of the National Archaeological Museum.

In relation to external factors, the main opportunities of the state research project refer:

- To connect cultural heritage institutions with the educational cultural, and social environment.
- To promote equal access to the bibliographic heritage hold at GLAM institutions in the digital environment.
- To use new dissemination tools at special libraries through the implementation of virtual exhibitions.
- To make the bibliographic heritage of special libraries visible (see Figure 4).
- To recognise the role of the library in facilitating access to culture and knowledge.

Fig. 4: Bibliographic record of the National Archaeological Museum Library, digitised in the Virtual Library of Bibliographic Heritage.



4.2.5. Project Team

Another key focus of the project was the configuration of the team, which has an interdisciplinary and inter-institutional approach. The team consists of 17 members (12 women and 5 men):

- Graduates in different areas and disciplines: Library Science and Documentation, History of Art, Law, Information Sciences, Medicine, Philology and Translation and Interpreting.
- Academic, university and professional institutions:
 - Members coming from the professional sphere, carrying out their activity in public sector institutions:
 - National Archaeological Museum (Library).
 - Sub-Directorate General of Library Coordination (Library Projects Area).
 - Ministry of the Presidency, Relations with Parliament and Democratic Memory (Directorate General of Democratic Memory).
 - Teaching and research staff from Spanish universities:
 - Complutense University of Madrid.
 - University of Saragossa.
 - University of Extremadura.
 - Teaching and research staff from European universities:
 - University of La Sapienza.

4.2.6. Dissemination and Communication Plans

Regarding the dissemination plan, the aim is to increase the visibility of the libraries, their professionals, services and collections. In this line, Williams (2018, p. 1205) states that museum librarians “seek to plan future activities and prioritise resources’ and that ‘they look to maintain or increase the visibility, utilisation, reach and relevance of their libraries’”. In the framework of the present research project, the dissemination plan includes: scientific publication in impact journals, monographic scientific publication, publication in Open Access, participation in Spanish conferences (e.g. BIMUS conferences) and participation in international conferences (such as the *International Society for Knowledge Organization* or the *Annual International Conference on Library and Information Science*).

Finally, the communication plan sets out the channels through which the implemented activities are communicated. These channels are:

- Dissemination through social networks, which have been divided into four blocks:
 - Academic social networks.
 - Stakeholder social networks.
 - Social networks of professional associations. At the international level, we can cite the SLA (The Special Libraries Association) and, at the Spanish level, the ANABAD (Spanish Federation of Associations of Archivists, Librarians, Archaeologists, Museologists and Documentalists) stands out.
 - Networks of special libraries. A clear example is the BIMUS (Museum Libraries Network).
- Dissemination through distribution lists:
 - General outreach scope: IBERIA (professional forum for the UK education and research community); LIS-PROFESSION (forum for Information and Documentation professionals in the UK); EDICIC (Information Science professionals from Latin America, the Caribbean and the Iberian Peninsula).
 - Special outreach: IFLAART (Art Libraries Section discussion forum) or MUSAS (Libraries and Museum Documentation Centres).

5. A Few Reflections

Increasingly, projects and studies on heritage are being implemented and carried out in different thematic areas, and the cultural sector is on the rise to promote and make visible the bibliographic heritage of its cultural institutions. In this sense, state digitisation campaigns, digital humanities projects and calls for research and innovation programmes contribute to making bibliographic heritage visible through mobile devices.

Concerning the configuration of the project team, some practical implications highlight the importance of mixing interdisciplinary and inter-institutional approaches. From a Library Science and professional perspective, the proposal could be an example of good practices to be replicated in other GLAM institutions by combining the use of technologies with the bibliographic

collections of cultural institutions. From a social perspective, citizens will benefit from this project as it combines the visibility of the bibliographic heritage of the National Archaeological Museum with the dissemination of its content in the digital environment through virtual exhibitions. Additionally, the research project contributes to the education system through the interweaving of museum and library collections.

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Notes

¹ Virtual Library of Bibliographic Heritage available at: <https://bvpb.mcu.es>.

² Virtual Library of Historical Press available at: <https://prensahistorica.mcu.es>.

³ Hispanic Digital Library available at: <http://bibliotecadigitalhispanica.bne.es>.

⁴ Interactive map of Specialised Libraries available at: <https://www.ccbiblio.es/estructura-del-consejo/comisiones-tecnicas-de-cooperacion/bibliotecas-especializadas/portal-bibliotecas-especializadas/mapa-de-bibliotecas-especializadas/>.