Hungary

Iván Rónai
Ministry of Cultural Heritage

Policy

In Hungary an Information Society Strategy has been worked out, in which culture is among the main development objectives and constitutes an important substrategy. According to this Cultural Strategy for the Information Society the major priority areas are the following:
- preservation of cultural heritage by digitisation;
- improving accessibility to digitised cultural contents;
- encouraging the creation of new digital cultural works and products;
- enhancing the synergic effects of cultural and creative industries upon the economy and on social cohesion.

In order to achieve these strategic goals a digital contents development framework called NDA (National Digital Data collection) is being established, which makes the utilization of Hungary's data resources and cultural riches more efficient. Furthermore, NDA is meant to provide easy access to the cultural heritage that Hungary will bring about with when acceding to the EU.

The aim of NDA is to provide participants with the necessary infrastructure, common universal standards and visibility for cultural and public contents, as well as easy access for those interested.

The initial and primary task of NDA is the integration of the various cultural contents and data of public institutions. Participation in NDA is voluntary and it embraces libraries, archives, museums, film, radio and television archives or institutions, news agency archives, and owners and holders of other public data. NDA is basically a coordinating body helping participants with uniform description rules (universal meta-database system) and standards, common search interface, and with training and advisory services. The institutions that want to become a member of NDA must agree to apply the required rules and standards for the digitised contents they produce.

Background

As a result of a previous program launched by the Ministry of Culture in 1998 considerable development has taken place in the informatisation of cultural institutions. Along with the improvement of the telematic infrastructure of libraries, museums, archives and other cultural institutions a few digitisation projects have been successfully accomplished. In a 2003 survey conducted for 1355 cultural institutions 73 reported that they were performing or preparing to accomplish digitisation projects. In 2003 an additional questionnaire was sent out to 620 public collection institutions, of which 24 informed about digitisation projects.

Ministries involved

In 2002 the Ministry for Informatics and Telecommunication (http://www.ihm.hu) was set up, which is responsible – among others – to take action to enable citizens to exercise their fundamental human right of access to information; it shall take action by providing state-of-the-art information facilities and opportunity to prepare society at large, to employ new means and methods in everyday life, communication, the economy, education, healthcare, transport, public services and public administration to implement the knowledge-based information society.
The tasks of the Ministry include:

a) the development of a uniform and comprehensive government strategy in relation to information society;

b) the co-ordination and supervision of in-country and international technological activities within his competence.

The Ministry of Cultural Heritage (http://www.nkom.hu) is responsible – among others – for the protection and preservation of the national and universal cultural heritage, for its scientific exploration and for its availability for everyone. As digitisation serves each of the three above responsibilities, the Ministry of Cultural Heritage plays a decisive role in the emerging knowledge society.

The Ministry of Education is responsible for matters regarding primary and secondary general education, universities and colleges, scientific research and adult education. The institutions under its supervision are important creators and users of digitised contents. The ministry supports the national academic information infrastructure development program, which hosts the network for academic institutions and for a great number of public collections. It sponsors a school network program, which brings IT tools and contents into secondary and elementary schools.
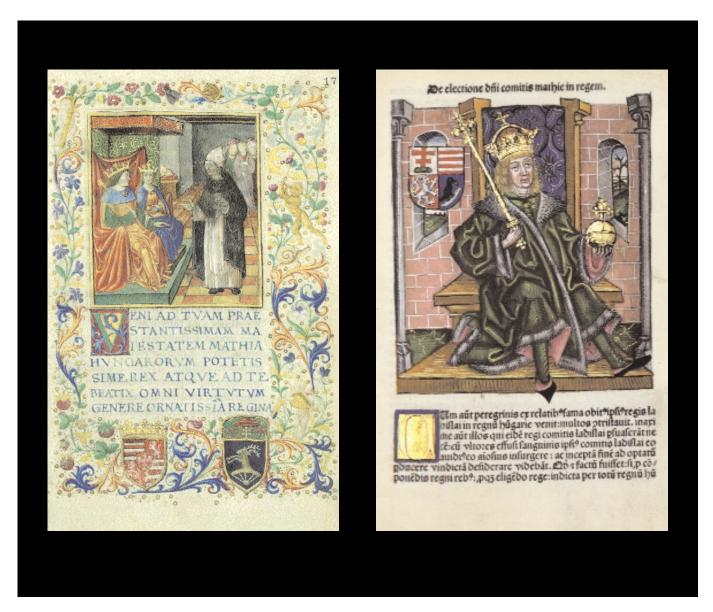
The major public institutions

The key actors in digitising cultural contents are the national libraries, the main university libraries and a few municipal (and/or regional) libraries, the Hungarian Film Archive (http://www.filmintezet.hu), the National Archives (http://www.natarch.hu), and the major museums: the Hungarian National Museum (http://www.hnm.hu), the National Gallery (http://www.mng.hu), the Museum of Fine Arts

(http://www.szepmuveszeti.hu), the Museum for Natural Sciences (http://www.nhmus.hu), the two museums for ethnography (http://www.hem.hu and http://www.sznm.hu) and others (http://www.museum.hu).

The Széchényi Library (http://www.oszk.hu) plays a leading role in providing digital services for other libraries and for the general public, as well. A great part of its holdings is accessible through an online catalogue on the Internet and the library is currently carrying out a retrospective catalogue conversion project.

The library continued to fulfil its task in the field of electronic publications: to store, register and make available all types of electronic documents received as deposit copies, and to manage and make available the electronic documents created through the complex digitisation activity in the library.

The Széchényi Library can take pride to have produced the digital version of the 35 Corvinas held by the library.

The Széchényi Library provides electronic library services called MEK (http://www.elib.hu). MEK collects resources concerning Hungary or the Central European region, in the fields of culture, education and academic research. The collection consists of text-based resources, but does not exclude other formats such as maps, sheet music etc.

The Hungarian Electronic Library also collects periodicals and journals, and links to other relevant resources, services and documents concerning libraries.

Acquisitions of MEK in 2002	662 documents
MEK's collection consists of totally	4652 documents
Visitors of the MEK's Website in 2002:	1 810 680

National Széchényi Library
Cod. Lat. 249 Ransanus, Petrus: Epitoma rerum Hungaricarum,
between 1490-1492.
Naples, Parchment

National Széchényi Library
Inc. 1143 - Thuróczi János: Chronica Hungarorum, 1488
Theobald Feger, Erhard Ratdolt.
Augsburg, Parchment

Sources of accession:
• documents found on the Internet
• documents sent by the author
• documents offered by the author and digitised
  with own devices
• electronic documents sent by publishing companies
• works digitised by volunteers

At the end of 1997 a digital library named John von Neumann Digital Library http://www.neumann-haz.hu was founded. The aim of this institute is entirely original; it differs in many ways from the objectives of the other public collections in the Hungarian library system.
In the temporary absence of a traditional library collection and an adequate reader-reception space, the institute is able to afford to focus all its efforts on the creation, and registration of electronic documents. The activities include:
• participation in the digitisation of the Hungarian
  cultural heritage;
• creation, storing and supply of long-lasting digital
  documents based on the latest technology;
• development of methodical and content-related
  issues connected to digital library duties;
• construction and permanent maintenance
  of a meta-database;
• activities of research;
• participation in professional education
  and postgraduate studies.
In 2002 the site registered 3.628.128 visits.
The main services provided by the John von Neumann Digital Library are:

WebKat.hu
Building the online catalogue of Hungarian Internet sources. Number of documents held at the end of October 2003 exceeds 200 thousand

Digital Literary Academy
The online database of Hungarian contemporary literature
More then 26 thousand works held, yearly growth over 8,000 poems, novels, short stories

Bibliotheca Hungarica Internetiana
Digitisation and publication of texts on the Web.
Number of documents: over 20 thousand, annual growth: 4,500 texts.
Providing access to the works of Classic Hungarian Poets and Contemporary Hungarian Writers

Museums and archives in Hungary have just started digitisation of their holdings, often in the framework of ad hoc projects. The National Audiovisual Archive (NAVA) will be soon established. A feasibility study has been made stating that the preservation of the national audiovisual heritage is of utmost importance. An act on legal deposit of broadcast programs is planned, which will be the basic source of "documents" to be digitised and preserved. A legal deposit already exists for cinema films, and the documents are collected by the Hungarian National Film Archive (http://www.filmintezet.hu).

Cultural portals

At the moment no integrated cultural portal – like e.g. Kulturnet in Denmark – exists in Hungary. Early 2004 a new portal called Kultura.hu will be launched under the auspices of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage.
The Hungarian Culture Homepage (http://www.port.hu/kultura) was created to maintain a database on the Internet to help establish cultural relations. At present they have data from 2,500 cultural organisations in Hungary. A portal

National Széchényi Library
Cod. Lat. 424 - Graduale. Pars II.
between 1480-1488
Parchment

of the network of Hungarian cultural institutions
(`http://www.mmhir.hu`) declared its aim
to comprehensively inform the visitor
"about everything in connection with culture, education
and entertainment in Hungary." The biggest cultural
programs site is `http://www.est.hu`, which
offers online information on cultural programs
nationwide. For theatre makers and goers the portal
`http://www.theateronline.hu`
offers valuable information.

Coordination of national networks

Presently no formal network for the coordination
of digitisation exists in Hungary. The above mentioned
NDA is planned to function as a coordinating body.

European and international cooperation

Hungarian cultural institutions and public collections
play an active role in international cooperation.
An example is the project Bibliotheca Corviniana Digitalis
that will be carried out by a consortium of Italian,
French, Polish libraries lead by the National Széchényi
Library and hopefully supported by Culture2000.

Benchmarking

The benchmarking model has not been distributed yet.

Inventories and resource discovery

This year a survey has been conducted to make
an inventory on digitisation projects. Because of a low
response ratio, the survey had to be repeated.
The result will come out in early 2004.

Metadata and interoperability

There are no standards or national guidelines in use
at present. In the framework of NDA a description
system will be worked out to ensure interoperability.

Good practices

There are some projects that demonstrate good
practice. The site `http://www.museum.hu`
is worth mentioning, which provides useful information
both for museum professionals and the public at large.
The Web site of the Open-air Ethnographic Museum
(`http://www.sznm.hu`) is one of the best museum
sites concerning design and content.

The Digital Literary Academy is the exclusive right holder
of digital publication rights of the most important
contemporary writers and poets of Hungary. The group
of literary authors get a flat payment for the copyright
of their digitised works. In 2002 the Digital Literary
Academy took pride, when they learned that one of their
members Imre Kertesz was awarded with the literary
Nobel prize and the e-books of his works were
immediately available.

Competence centres

No formally appointed competence centres exist
in Hungary. Each institution performing digitisation
has special competences in digitising its own material.

*Nel Segno del Corvo :
Libri e miniature della bibliotheca
di Mattia Corvino re d'Ungheria
(1443 -1490),*
Modena, 2002