

I The National Museum in Warsaw Participates in the Partage Plus Project

The international, two-year Partage Plus – Digitising and Enabling Art Nouveau for Europeana project¹ ended in March 2014. Its funding came from the European Commission’s ICT Policy Support Programme (ICT PSP) of the Competitiveness and Innovation Support Programme (CIP). Twenty-five institutions, museums, libraries and documentation and research centres in 17 member countries of the European Union, took part in it.² The British organization Collections Trust served as the project’s coordinator and administrator. The National Museum in Warsaw was the only Polish public museum participating in it; also taking part were the private Wojciech Weiss Museum Foundation in Krakow and the International Center for Information Management Systems and Services in Toruń.

The main goal of Partage Plus was to digitize and share on the Europeana website (www.europeana.eu) 75,000 European works of art of the Art Nouveau period (1890–1914). The National Museum in Warsaw pledged to provide descriptions of 5,000 items, which made it one of the seven largest partners in the consortium.

As we summarize the outcomes of this project, we need to remember that people often wrongly associate the digitization of art collections solely with their technological and visual aspects: digitally reproducing and archiving works of art. This ignores another important aspect of digitization, namely, the creation of informative and descriptive textual layers (metadata). The publication on the Internet of such a large number of diverse relics stored and researched in nearly one hundred collections across Europe (some of the project’s participants also collected data submitted by smaller institutions)³ was a major challenge for information technology. The scale of this project is considerable, if one remembers that the institutions included in Partage Plus vary in their practices and in the degree of advancement of the technologies they use and the standards and formats of metadata.⁴ It was necessary to create multilingual, hierarchic and controlled vocabularies of terminology in order to make the data processed in this heterogenic group cohesive and easy to locate. The project’s other important goal, guided by specialists from the Bildarchiv Foto Marburg, was to develop and include extensive thesauruses of: 1. types of objects, 2. materials, 3. artistic techniques, 4. Art Nouveau terminology, 5. artists (personal and

¹ Partage Plus website [online], [retrieved: 18 March 2014], at: <<http://www.partage-plus.eu/>>.

² The full list of participants can be found at: *Partners* [online], [retrieved: 18 March 2014], at: <<http://www.partage-plus.eu/en/contents/2,Partners>>.

³ E.g., the Museum of Arts and Crafts in Zagreb collected data from 80 smaller museums, galleries and private collections in Croatia.

⁴ See Nikolaos Simou, Katie Smith, Gordon McKenna, *Metadata production and delivery plan, and report on aggregation set up* [online], [retrieved: 18 March 2014], at: <<http://www.partage-plus.eu/en/servefile?id=31>>.

corporate names headings) and 6. artists' roles. Linking headings to the thesauruses that are recommended for digital cultural heritage resources, Art & Architecture Thesaurus (AAT) and the Union List of Artist Names (ULAN), and the headings collected in the global service Virtual International Authority File (VIAF), have made it possible to systematize the specialized terminology in 16 languages⁵ to guarantee that research would yield the same results regardless of the language in which the search is conducted, which is not yet possible with Europeana's other collections. The new vocabularies of thousands of entries would at the same time make it possible to limit significantly the risk of ambiguous or redundant concepts appearing in the descriptions of historical objects. It is the intention of this project's authors to make them available on the Internet in the public domain to be used for research and publications. The National Museum in Warsaw contributed to the project's vocabulary component by translating the thesauruses into Polish, adding its own headings (the names of Polish artists, local concepts such as Young Poland, Zakopane style or oilcloth engraving). It also expanded and corrected headings written by non-Polish partners (for instance in spelling, the dates of artists' births and deaths, and activities), guaranteeing the presence and promotion of Polish cultural heritage internationally.

In order to address the challenge of coordinating the diverse pieces of information to be included in Europeana and making it uniform, the group adopted the LIDO metadata scheme, which was created in 2010 under ICOM's auspices with museums in mind.⁶ The initial records of the different institutions' exhibits, many of them differently structured, were mapped for LIDO⁷ and then converted to the EDM model⁸ with the Internet MINT platform,⁹ from which Europeana collected them.

The use of three-dimensional modelling for antiquities gave rise to widespread interest (3D). A specialized laser scanner was used to create virtual spatial models of 2,000 objects: sculptures, furniture, ceramics and glass, gold pieces and jewellery, fashion accessories and articles of everyday use. A representative of Steinbichler Optotechnik GmbH, charged with implementing this part of the project, spent a week at the National Museum in Warsaw (7–15 May 2013) making three-dimensional scans of more than 90 hand-picked art works (including Karol Tichy's furniture, sculptures by Bolesław Biegas, Konstanty Laszczka's ceramics), which were published as interactive PDF files after a labour-intensive post-production, which consisted of applying textures on mathematical spatial models.¹⁰

⁵ Ibid., p. 37.

⁶ LIDO, Lightweight Information Describing Objects [online], [retrieved: 18 March 2014], at: <<http://network.icom.museum/cidoc/working-groups/data-harvesting-and-interchange/what-is-lido/>>.

⁷ In the case of the National Museum in Warsaw, for technical reasons mapping for the LIDO scheme required additionally using a set of the XSLT style sheets, which was developed by the project coordinator, Dr Piotr Kopszak; see Piotr Kopszak, *Mona na Lido: próba wstępnego zmapowania modelu danych MNW* [online], [retrieved: 18 March 2014], at: <<http://jbc.bj.uj.edu.pl/dlibra/doccontent?id=218089&from=FBC>>. Discrepancies between forms of headings used in Partage Plus vocabularies and those recommended by the best practices adopted by the National Museum in Warsaw were also a significant problem. It was resolved by mapping the headings used by the National Museum in Warsaw to those used in Partage Plus vocabularies.

⁸ EDM, Europeana Data Model, was the data model imposed during the aggregation of data for Europeana. See *Europeana Data Model (EDM) Documentation* [online], [retrieved: 18 March 2014], at: <<http://pro.europeana.eu/edm-documentation>>.

⁹ MINT, Metadata Interoperability Services, see *Introduction to MINT* [online], [retrieved: 18 March 2014], at: <<http://mint.image.ece.ntua.gr/redmine/projects/mint/wiki/Introduction>>.

¹⁰ *Partage Plus – prezentacje 3D*, Cyfrowe Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie [online], [retrieved: 18 March 2014], at: <<http://cyfrowe.mnw.art.pl/dmuseion/showcasedescription?dirids=150>>.

A team of 47 specialists – art historians and experts in various fields from a dozen collections and from the Digitization and Visual Documentation Department, the photographic and reprographic laboratory, conservators, promotion specialists and museum support staff implemented Partage Plus at the National Museum in Warsaw. The results of their work may now be explored at the Digital National Museum in Warsaw¹¹ or on the Europeana website, where they are included in the associated, complementary collections of works from the same period.

It is noteworthy that the pieces of art thus presented are not only that are well known and on view in galleries. Our museum mostly researched items from study collections and warehouses. Many, for example the collection of European Art Nouveau ex libris and Henryk Nowodworski's satirical illustrations, were published for the first time. The Partage Plus resources from Warsaw include pieces from the Department of Prints and Drawings (c. 3,000 items, including pastels and bookplates, the Collection of Post-1914 Polish Art (over 1,200 paintings) and the Iconography and Photography Collections (over 300 pieces, including photographs and catalogues of Warsaw and Paris fashion houses). The Decorative Art Collection has made available an almost equally numerous, heterogeneous assortment of furniture, silverware, glassware, ceramics and textiles. They include standard works of the era such as a chair by Carl Bugatti, Tiffany's silver vases and Carl Fabergé's brooches. The valuable set of Art Nouveau coins from the Coins and Medals Collection deserves special attention too.

Our museum's goal was not only to display its collections, but also to publicize Polish art. Standing out as the largest of the monographic sets that were made available is a collection of 1,100 works, sketchbooks and drawings by Ferdynand Ruszczyc. The works of Feliks Jabłczyński, Leon Wyczółkowski, Józef Pankiewicz, Stanisław Wyspiański (including 50 sheets from his *Herbarium* sketchbook), Jan Rembowski, Józef Mehoffer, Feliks Stanisław Jasiński, Zofia Stankiewiczówna and Olga Boznańska form another sizeable collection. The variety and richness of the European art that is presented can be seen, for example, in the portfolio of original prints published by *La Maison Moderne* and entitled *Germinal*, which includes works by artists such as Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Maurice Denis, Pierre Bonnard and Félix Vallotton, which are rare in Poland. The Warsaw collection also includes project drawings by Alphonse Mucha and posters by Théophile Steinlen.

The project was not limited to the Internet. It also included educational and popularizing initiatives put on in traditional public spaces. In June 2013 the National Museum joined the other 14 European institutions involved in celebrating the annual Art Nouveau World Day, organizing a series of lectures, meetings with curators and children's workshops. The main motif of the Warsaw events was the first public presentation of a drawing by Antoni Kamieński, *Portrait of Konstanty Laszcza*, only newly purchased for the collection.

In the course of the programme, museum staff also took part in organizing the following international and national conferences and scholarly seminars: *The Vernacular Revival and the Universal Language of Visual Form* (Institute of Art History of the Jagiellonian University, 17–18 September 2012), *Wielość w jedności. Techniki wkleśtodruku w Polsce po 1900 roku* [Multiplicity in unity. Post-1900 intaglio techniques in Poland] (The Leon Wyczółkowski Regional Museum in Bydgoszcz, 18 October 2012), *O miejsce książki w historii sztuki* [The book in art history] (Jagiellonian Library, Jagiellonian University, Jan Matejko Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow,

¹¹ *Partage Plus*, Digital National Museum in Warsaw [online], [retrieved: 18 March 2014], at: <<http://cyfrowe.mnw.art.pl/dmuseion/showcasedescription?dirids=134>>.

5–7 December 2012), *Biblioteka cyfrowa dziś a wyzwania jutra* [The digital library today and tomorrow's challenges] (Jagiellonian Library, 24–25 January 2013), *Wyjazdy za sztuką. Nadzieje, zyski i straty artystów XIX i XX wieku* [Searching for art. Artists' hopes, gains and losses in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries] (Institute of Art History of the Catholic University of Lublin, 21–23 March 2013 in Kazimierz on the Vistula).

The project created an interdisciplinary team and a structure for close cooperation between museum specialists, art historians and conservators, information science specialists and computer specialists to meet the challenges of the scale, range and time pressure of the project's principal goals. The 25 partner institutions' co-ordinators met several times in training workshops, working meetings and scholarly conferences. The Museum of Applied Arts (Magyar Iparművészeti Múzeum) in Budapest hosted the kick-off meeting on 21–23 March 2012. Meetings devoted to the LIDO scheme took place in July and December 2012 at the Athens Polytechnic. The first plenary meeting of the coordinators, combined with an international academic conference on *The new bourgeois taste*, took place in Rome on 21–23 March 2013. There, Dr Piotr Kopszak, the National Museum in Warsaw coordinator of the project, presented the works that our museum had identified for digitization, and he gave a presentation on the work of Feliks Jabłczyński. At the conference, Kopszak gave a paper on *The Past in Pre-Raphaelite and Young Poland's Art*. Two months later, on 26–27 June, a working meeting, which discussed the quality of the metadata and the progress of the 3D scans, took place in Aveiro, Portugal. Towards the end of the Partage Plus project, on 25–27 February 2014, the National Museum in Warsaw hosted two meetings that concluded the project: a plenary session of all the coordinators and an international interdisciplinary academic conference on *Fin de siècle odnaleziony. Mozaika przelomu wieków: artyści, zjawiska, stowarzyszenia, działania* [The fin de siècle rediscovered. A mosaic of the turn of the century: artists, events, associations and activities].

The opportunity to take part in Partage Plus was a valuable and inspiring experience for the National Museum in Warsaw. It spurred a renewed interest in researching turn-of-the-century art, verifying and reorganizing earlier findings, and discovering the value of works that museum studies had omitted. Today, the humanities are still interested in fin de siècle art and culture. Favouring new research are open borders, the exponential growth and accessibility of information, especially with the help of the digital resources of museums, libraries, archives and academia. Taking part in this international project has helped the National Museum in Warsaw both to make valuable professional contacts and to step up work and implement modern standards in digitization.

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