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Traditional Means of Transportation: From Traditional to Digital Literacy

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Abstract

The paper aims at presenting a project which has been initiated by “Lucian Blaga” University of Sibiu, and carried out through the University Library during the months of April – November 2016, being co-financed by the Local Council and City Hall through “The Cultural Agenda 2016”. Entitled Traditional means of transportation – from the preservation of the heritage to its promotion: digitization between necessity and challenge, the project aims to evaluate the cultural heritage regarding the means of transportation used in Sibiu. The final results of the project consist of a Digital Library, traveling exhibitions showing digital photos and other outcomes of the project as well as a three lingual booklet (Romanian, German and English) which deals about the history, evolution and diversity of the traditional means of transportation also uploaded in the Digital Library. Being a project carried out through the University Library, its final goal is to encourage e-learning and to guide and help students, MA and PhD candidates as well as other categories of readers in their work, thanks to the digital literacy.

Keywords: *means of transportation; Sibiu; heritage; digital library; elearning; digital literacy*

Introduction

This paper is written as a result of the project entitled “*Traditional means of transportation – from the preservation of the heritage to its promotion: digitization between necessity and challenge*”, which aimed at the valorization of the cultural heritage regarding the means of transportation used in Sibiu town, Romania. The project has been initiated by “Lucian Blaga” University of Sibiu, carried out through the University’s Library during the months of April – November 2016, being co-financed by the Local Council and City Hall through “*The Cultural Agenda 2016*”.

Firstly, we would like to provide some information about the University library, secondly, we will focus on means of transportation, and, thirdly, we will make a step further, from the means of transportation to the means of recreation.

The University Library plays an active role in enhancing the academic achievements of professors and students. It has the role to create, organize, develop and host cultural-scientific collections of publications from Romania and abroad on all types of documentary supports and to create the necessary informational background necessary to the educational and the research activities. A recent study has shown that the majority of the library users are students (over 50%). Most accesses to the virtual and offline resources of the library are taking place during the academic year. In 58% of the cases, the digital information represents more than 60% of the final results of the documentation process. In order to enhance the quality of the library services we have designed an exploratory study aimed to assess the impact of the digital library on student learning behaviour. We started in our research from the results of a former study aimed to investigate the behavioural profile of our students. It is well known that education is in a deep crisis. Students are less motivated, with a low interest/curiosity to find out what is new in the study domain; they are prone to the copy/paste effect. This is happening in a context that should benefit to the intellectual development of the student: innovating learning environments, digital libraries, collaborative environments, virtual worlds.

There is also the reverse of the medal: an increasing information flow, excessive use of social networks and digital communication media, all driving to time fragmentation, lost of the ability to connect to real people and a decrease in creativity. Learning and working in a digital world can raise many conflicts: a distorting understanding of *sharing* and intellectual property rights due to web philosophy and misleading, false information due to the unchecked quality of what is uploaded on the net (the “*It is good for it is on the web*” and “*It is true for it is on the web*” syndromes). (1) Taking all these into account, the ULBS Library is trying to develop user-centred services, to clarify and disseminate terminology and to redefine / rediscover the role of the librarian. There are many definitions of a digital library. What is common to all definitions is the use of new technologies, of digital collections, and the online access to services and resources. The main goal of a university library is to support research and education and it is relevant to ask ourselves if and how the introduction of digital libraries is improving these activities. One of the questions we have asked ourselves was how the digital library is affecting the learning style of the student. (2)

Means of Transportation

Talking about our project, “*Traditional means of transportation – from the preservation of the heritage to its promotion: digitization between necessity and challenge*”, with reference to the Sibiu municipality, we had in view the valorization of transportation, that is, of one of the four pillars of civilization: *the nourishment, the house, the clothing and the transportation*, by creating a dedicated website, *Digital Library available on the internet*, a few itinerant exhibitions with digital materials, as well as by conducting an ample study elaborating an extended essay concerning the history, evolution and diversity of the means of transportation.

A reference point for our project is the publication at the end of the 18th century, of a *Calendar of Sibiu for the year 1790*, entitled “*Hermannstadt im Jahre 1790*” (“the City of Sibiu in the year 1790”), a genuine city guide *ante litteram*, published by the editor and librarian Martin Hochmeister. From the abundance of information of this calendar, we bear in mind just the dates regarding the means of transportation. Therefore, from the heading “*The Usual Arrivals of Mail in Transylvania*”: the mail coach, the so-called “*diligent*” arrives once a month in Sibiu from Vienna, through Buda and Timișoara and it takes not only passengers, but also money and jewelry and other dispatches. Its usual stop in Sibiu is, depending on the circumstances, for two, three, even four days, and in the summer as long as eight days, and after which it is going back again through Timișoara to Buda. The passengers are paying for every station, 30 Kr[eutzer] during the summer and 45 Kr[eutzer] during winter, and they may carry with them luggage weighting up to 50 pounds [1 pound = 0,5 kg]. (3)

The Omnibus: in general the dictionaries are in agreement in specifying that the term omnibus (Romanian pl. *omnibuze* and the old form *omnibusuri* – Dex online) has a Latin origin, meaning, initially “*to all/everyone– sol lucet omnibus*”, “the sun lights everyone” (Petronius, *Satyricon*, 99) – and, with reference to transportation devices, it is about a vehicle, initially pulled by horses, meant to transport persons. In an initial phase, the omnibus was a kind of carriage with several seats, similar to a mail coach, which served for common transportation of travelers on fixed routes, either inside some big cities, or in between two close places. In time, the electrically driven omnibus will replace the one pulled by horses. The idea to introduce in Sibiu and towards Rășinari of an electrically driven means of transportation belonged to the journalist, politician and economist Carl Wolf (1849-1929), who, in the lecture entitled “*The Electric Tram Hermannstadt – Dumbrava Forest – Rășinari*”, sustained on June 6, 1893 within the “*Electrical Exhibition*”, gave arguments for his statement. However, on objective accounts, the project was delayed. The discussion was continued in 1904, only that, meanwhile, a more economical solution appeared, more precisely, the one of an omnibus without railways, wherefore the investments were lower, and the profitability was higher. (4) Therefore, Sibiu was the first Transylvanian town that would experience this type of means of transportation, the inauguration having taken place on August 3, 1904, the event being depicted by the local press.

It shall relatively soon be given up, more precisely on October 17 of the same year (5), from reasons which, likewise, we can find in the daily press: “*On the date of October 15, the wagon no. 2 of the electric omnibus it was thrown off of the asphalted*

and wet roadway of Sporerstreet (Gen. Magheru street today) in the building corner of the State Gymnasium (Gheorghe Lazar today) from the Reissenfels street (Gh. Lazar street today). Because of this accident, which, aside from the deterioration of the wagon and a mild hand injury of the tram driver, had no other consequences, but which could have caused a disaster. [...] The Electrical Enterprise has decided, for the time being, the suspension of the electric omnibus circulation". (6)

The omnibus failure has determined its replacement with the electrical tram, inaugurated on September 8, 1905 on the route Railway Station – Sub Arini Park. (7) Having a capacity of 16 places seated and 14 places standing, the trams were equipped with two 25 horsepower engines, generating a speed of 10 km/h. Regarding the tram's speed, there was a joke going about. It was telling that, next to a tram station, the tram driver told an acquaintance: *"climb up and come with us! Thank you, but I cannot. I'm in a hurry!"* – came the answer. (8) In 1964, after more than three decades of activity, the line from Lower Town was dissolved, and on March 31, 1970, after almost seven decades, the Upper Town line is renounced as well

The Trolley Bus – the omnibus' "grandchild" – is an electric vehicle for public transportation, which has, in large, the characteristics of a bus, only that it is propelled by one or more electrical engines, and the necessary power of the engine function is provided by two aerial lines of contact. During the years 1981-1982, the municipality achieved, in collaboration with The Institute of Research and Design Timișoara, *"The Study of General Traffic in Sibiu Municipality"*, and the conclusions they reached were favorable to trolley bus introduction *"for taking over the flows of travelers"*. On the date of August 17, 1983, the first blue trolley buses were coming out in probation on the arteries of the municipality. This way, Sibiu adheres to the important cities that were benefiting by the trolley bus public transportation: Bucharest, Timișoara, Brașov, Cluj-Napoca. The first lines, T1 Cemetery – Railway Station and T2 Mihai Viteazu Boulevard – Railway Station, have been brought to service on August 19. (9) The network extension has known more phases over the course of the years 1985, 1987 and 1989. (10) From the Sibiu newspapers on April 10, 2009, we learn that *"after 26 years of activity, the trolley buses from Sibiu will be dissolved on November 15, this year"*. The local counselors had elected the liquidation of all trolley bus lines and their replacement with buses, because of the precarious technical condition of the fleet due to being over twenty years old and the high mileage. (11)

The *automobile* history begins in 1796, together with the creation of the vehicle with steam engine, which could transport persons on board. In 1806, appear those equipped with internal combustion engines, engines that were working with liquid fuel, and around the year 1900, appear the vehicles with electrical engine. The first model running on steam may be considered to have been realized around the year 1672 by the Flemish Jesuit monk Ferdinand Verbiest. That was a kind of toy for the emperor of China, so unable to transport passengers. Instead, on January 29, 1986, the world had the occasion to celebrate something very remarkable: the automobile was 100 year old. For Sibiu, the day of July 6, 1899 is important, because on this date it is recorded the apparition of the first automobile in town. (12) This is how the event is depicted in press: *"After the telegraphic notice, the engineer Klein from Brașov arrived yesterday afternoon with his elegant carriage with motor [...] offering to inhabitants the possibility to admire*

the vehicle of the future [...] The news was spread with the celerity of lightning, and the numerous audience was headed for the parking place, to see from close range the strange phantasm [...] The average speed is 40 km/h, so higher than the average speed of a train for persons passenger train, and on the flat and good streets the speed of 50 km/h may even be exceeded [...] It cannot be denied that the price of this impeccable vehicle, 4000 fl [florin], is very high for our financial situation, but it must be taken into account that it makes a saving of two horses and a coachman. The vehicle owner may be right when he states that in only five years, Sibiu will be under the sign of the engine". (13)

Means of Recreation

When one is switching from the means of transportation to those of recreation he/she has to make a selection. In this respect, we choose to select two different means of recreation, *bicycle* and *skates*, or, in other terms, *cycling* and *skating*.

At all times the people of Sibiu had a disposition for exercise, for amusement and means of recreation, and this disposition was manifested throughout the entire year. The photographic images are the witnesses of both the bicycle rides in town or in the surroundings as well as by boat on the mirror of the lake of Sibiu's Dumbrava. The hibernal scenes with skaters, skiers, and sleds do not lack either.

Locally, the day of January 20, 1896 was a memorable one, because a velocipede, which was bought by an officer from Paris with 400 Fr., made a splash on the streets of Sibiu. (14) Since, on April 21, 1886, the *Bicyclist Club* was founded, it is another proof that this sport has been successful in our town. Moreover, in the year 1897 was born the bicyclist association "*Șoimii*" ("Die Falken") with its seat in the Big Square no. 38. (15)

In Sibiu, the art of skating, has been cultivated, as well, and the perfume of the time travels up to us through some writings of talent: "*Under the white brilliant light of the huge electrical lamps, the graceful teenager girl slides with speed on the smooth surface of the ice, on her shining "Jaksons" [Jackson AN], while the military brass band sings waltz music. These rhythmic movements of the gracious girl skaters offer a nice image, especially in the magical center of the circle; only the privileged masters from both sexes are accepted, hurrying in the exercise of their high art. Around them less talented mortals are moving, and "the ice little fleas" spin around unhindered in all directions [...]. To these, it is added the pavilion in a very good taste, with its coatroom pleasantly heated, the educated attendants dressed in livery, the ice surface well prepared – it is known the fact that we had successfully studied in the sports world of certain big cities situated more to the west of us*".

After describing the situation from the beginning of the 20th century, the author goes back in history picturing winter sports as they were practiced two generations ago: "*Does the teenage girl really know how did her grandparents have fun on ice half of century ago? Hard to believe, reason for which she shall be briefly told what the situation was in the 50's of the previous century, to realize the great transformations that happened in the meantime. Then, there was neither skating association nor skating ring. The Cibin River was flowing near the town only that it had more water and in that time, it was terribly cold. The teenager boys on skates, since at that time the beautiful sex was not practicing this sport, had, upstream and downstream of the two bridges of the Cibin*

River, their free skating ring, which, when the snow or other impediments were impeding the formation of ice, was helped by volunteers by evening flooding.

Only towards the end of 60's it was set up, on the vast lake, upstream from the dam from Sub Arini, a surface of ice. The studious youth was undertaking, upstream the Cibin River up to Turnisor, and more downstream, through Gușterița and Bungard, admirable Viking travels. The ice holes were simply jumped over or avoided. The skates in those times were attached to the feet through some cross tightened belts, and some will remember the feet pain provoked by that method.

Then there were organized celebrations, the so-called the days of sledging, which were carefully organized, the girls from the dance courses being ceremoniously invited, together with their mothers. Three or four sleds of the Coetus [students associations from the German high schools AN] taken with the prefect's approval [leading function in the Coetus] from their holding place [...]. Young and less young ones representatives of the beautiful sex were taken out in the sleds by gallant teenage men, until dark, the closing usually being done with tea and dance in one of the hospitable bourgeois houses. Sometimes, in the evenings, rides with sleds pulled by horses and illuminated with torches were organized. Those rides, which are no longer practiced today, were beloved hibernal amusements of townspeople, they still having horses and carts in those times.

The change in this patriarchal institution came at the end of the 60's, along with Halifax skates, which, due to their wise design, allowed a better attachment and, at the same time, the execution of freer, more artistic movements on ice. Until then, the supreme art of skating consisted in back sliding and jumps. Great was the wonder when Dr. Gustav Linder presented for the first time in Sibiu the art of figure skating. What big progress has been registered in the manner of skating, from Merkur to Jakson, and what perfection has witnessed the art of skating, but especially what spreading has known this nice and healthy winter sport, recommended with warmth in schools as an exceptional means of body development!" (16)

"It is appropriate for the above text to be completed with some more precise data as well. Thus, on January 13, 1860, the city magistrate disposes the flooding of a lawn from Sub Arini Park to be used as skating ring, then, on December 13, 1876, the Skaters Association is founded. A year later, on December 23, the skate ring from Schewisgasse/Victoriei Boulevard, near Brunnenmeisterhof is opened. Skiers shall not lack either from Sibiu scenery, since they are seen for the first time on December 6, 1892 in the area of Calea Poplacii/Poplaker Heide." (17)

Conclusion

The project highlighted the importance of means of transportation in local history. Transportation should be regarded as a multi-modal, multidisciplinary field that requires the efforts of people from various backgrounds. It is considered that throughout history, the means of transportation were significant during the peace and war time, while the means of recreation played a great role especially in peace times.

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