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Designing an OER Course in the Field of Written Heritage Preservation – Importance of Content Adaptation

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Introduction

Written heritage preservation education has an important significance in educating information professionals in libraries, archives, and museums, i.e., LAM institutions. This community is faced with multiple challenges of selecting, collecting, processing, interpreting, preserving, evaluating, and presenting collections which can be found in their care. It is possible to ascertain, even from this basic description, that preservation presents an integral part of all the activities performed in LAM institutions. Written heritage preservation is a complex field that requires a certain level of proficiency from information professionals. Disseminating the theoretical and practical knowledge to future information professionals, as well as to the staff of the LAM institutions, provides them with vital skills and knowledge necessary for performing everyday activities pertaining to preservation. Today, the ever-changing technological environment allows for the use of new tools as a means of easily accessible educational materials - such as Open Educational Resources (OER). The purpose of this paper is to cluster the knowledge in the field of written heritage preservation with an emphasis on their implementation in the OER according to proficiency levels and Bloom's taxonomy.

Theoretical framework

To be able to create the OER specific for written heritage preservation education, it is necessary to understand the main concepts of preservation in general. By defining the term preservation in a broad sense, it includes administrative, and personnel matters essential for preservation and collection care - including the storage and preservation of stored materials, personnel policies and procedures, techniques, and methods of preserving materials and the information they contain (Krtalić, Hasenay 2011). This general definition outlines the main issues that are of consequence for efficient preservation in LAM institutions. Furthering the understanding of the term preservation, it is possible to contextualize it in different levels. *Strategic level* corresponds to activities planned

on a national or international level, and as such they include planning and suggesting different projects and initiatives concerning preservation, as well as organization of preservation educational programmes. *Technical level* of preservation refers to the methods and techniques applied to preserve various materials, but also to the research of their possible deterioration factors. Lastly, the *operational level* includes activities with which information professionals deal with daily, for example handling the collections, collection care, etc. (Hasenay, Krtalić and Šimunić 2011). These levels, together with the definition of preservation, allow for a more detailed comprehension of the complexity of the activities which fall under the umbrella of the term preservation. These activities require a holistic approach that needs to include quality management of preservation. Authors Krtalić and Hasenay (2011) proposed the comprehensive model of written heritage preservation management which highlights the importance of harmonizing the preservation with the aspects within which a certain institution functions. The proposed comprehensive written heritage preservation management model includes five key aspects: *strategic and theoretical aspect, economic and legal aspect, material and operational aspect, cultural and social aspect,* and the *educational aspect.* Efficient and purposeful preservation needs to consider the topics in all aspects thereby putting the emphasis on prioritizing activities and determining the most appropriate aspect that will be a starting point for implementing efficient preservation measures. Often, educational aspect is considered as the fitting first step of the preservation management process which needs to consider the importance of staff training for regular and, if necessary, specific preservation activities, as well as the inclusion of knowledge on the preservation materials in the education curricula of information professionals (Krtalić, Hasenay and Aparac Jelušić 2011). Educating future and current professionals in the field of preservation presents a challenge as it requires a broad perspective which will encompass all the above-described activities. Another challenge that information and communication technology imposed on education in general, as well as education in the field of preservation, is the use of new tools and online learning environments. It is necessary to be aware of the different needs of the users of these online materials, their proficiency levels and skill sets, but also which content to present as well as the way in which it will be presented. OERs and online materials have become increasingly popular because of their availability, simple use and convenience which allows for them be a viable tool for preservation education.

Open Educational Resources (OER)

OERs can be easily defined as technology-enabled, freely available educational resources that can be accessed by interested users whether they are teachers, students, or other interested parties for non-commercial purposes (Butcher, Neil, Kanwar, Asha, and Uvalić-Trumbić, Stamenka 2011; Pawlowski, Jan M, Bick, Markus 2012). This term includes different forms of educational resources that can vary from learning resources or objects which were created

specifically for educational purposes, such as multimedia or simulations, textbooks and articles, software tools, Open Educational Practices (OEP), which include instructional designs, for example curricula, lesson plans etc., to sources which are freely available, but have no learning context and can instead serve as accompaniment to some lessons or different openly and freely available resources (Pawlowski, Jan M, Bick, Markus 2012). One of the characteristics of OERs is, as it can already be seen, that they are freely/openly available, which implies that anyone at any time can use them however they like. It is important to emphasize that they are not in the public domain because they are usually protected by an open license. One of the better-known and used open licenses is the Creative Commons which gives the authors of openly available materials the ability to share their work in a manner they see appropriate – allow the reuse or distribution, copying the resources or changing them without asking for permission etc. (Butcher, Neil, Kanwar, Asha, and Uvalić-Trumbić, Stamenka 2011). Considering these open licenses and permissions they grant, Wiley (2014) proposes the 5R activities which would allow for the OERs and their content to remain open. These activities refer to the permissions for the users to *retain* (download and copy), *reuse* (content usage in different ways), *revise* (adapt the content to users' needs), *remix* (combine the content with different open content) and *redistribute* (sharing the copies of original content) (Wiley 2014; Green 2017).

Having all of this in mind, it is necessary to mention that these educational resources need to be accessible to the users in the long-term. Here it is possible to raise the question of the sustainability of OER repositories which refers to the possibility of a certain project or initiative to continue achieving its goals. It is not only a technological or financial issue, but also the issue of coping with the challenges of producing and using the content (Wiley 2007). It is important to point out that the initiatives that have the goal of creating a sustainable OER environment need to bear in mind the needs of the end user of the content, their different learning styles and levels of proficiency including the outcomes of the educational resources that are being created. One such initiative is the DECriS Erasmus+ project[1] which aims to create quality digital educational content, to optimise already created OERs in the field of information science and create a completely new OER in the field of preservation (DECriS Erasmus+ project). The creation of this new OER requires thorough consideration of content, as well as the ways in which this content will be presented all the while having the intended users in mind.

Methodological framework for OER Design

Considering the concepts within which the term preservation is observed and interpreted, authors propose the creation of the framework that will provide the basis for the creation of OER in the

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[1] The main coordinator of the DECriS Erasmus+ project is the Department of Information Sciences of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Osijek, Croatia.

field of preservation. The methodological framework will be based on content areas clustered by applying the criteria of proficiency levels - (1) basic / fundamental, (2) intermediate and (3) advanced. They can be combined with the comprehensive preservation management model, mainly with its 5 key aspects which detail the main content areas concerning preservation issues in LAM institutions. It is assumed that each aspect has various content that can be categorized in proficiency levels mentioned above. This will provide the possibility of creating a kind of "knowledge/content base" for preservation education from which OERs can be created. It is important to be able to present this content efficiently, sustainably, and purposefully. Keeping in mind the desired outcomes of OERs, authors of educational resources can be guided by Bloom's taxonomy and its six elements - remember, understand, apply, analyse, evaluate, and create. These elements can provide essential insight into creating the content for educational resources by gradually guiding the intended user through lessons or other materials. (Picciano 2021). Namely, it should be emphasized that one of the main challenges is to appropriately showcase the content, meaning that it is necessary to avoid simple representation of complex content, as well as representing the simple content in a complicated way. Methodological framework enables the successful implementation of content in OER according to its complexity as well as its efficient design.

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