

THE THIRD EUROPEAN SUMMER SCHOOL IN DIGITAL HUMANITIES “CULTURE AND TECHNOLOGY” – ONE PARTICIPANT’S EXPERIENCE

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A few months ago, at the beginning of my voluntary work at University library “Svetozar Marković”, I was writing an article about digital humanities for Wikipedia portal. I couldn’t even imagine that in a very short period of time I would be given an opportunity to get familiar with this field more closely. In this paper I want to describe the unforgettable experience from the third European Summer School in Digital Humanities¹, which was held from the 23rd to the 31st July 2012 in Leipzig, Germany.

In May Mr Adam Sofronijević, Head of The Development and System Administration, Book Digitization and Cultural Activities Department,

informed me about a web site with information about summer school in digital humanities. He advised me to apply and try to become one of the students of that school. Searching the website, I found out that the first European Summer School in Digital Humanities was held in late July 2009. I was pleasantly surprised to find out that the only participant from Serbia in that year’s school was Marija Stikovic, librarian from Central library “Vuk Karadzic” in Prijepolje. While I was reading her paper published in journal *Infotheca*² in which she presented her experience from the first summer school, I was given additional motivation to apply.

1 http://www.culingtec.uni-leipzig.de/ESU_C_T/ (accessed 18.10.2012))

2 Stikovic, Marija. 2010. The first European Summer School “Culture & Technology. *Infotheca* 11(1): 59-63.

For application for the school, it was necessary to make an account on the website ConfTool³. Besides basic information, it was required to submit curriculum vitae and motivation letter written in English. Volkswagen Foundation provided scholarship for which all of the applicants could apply. Scholarship covered travel costs to Leipzig, accommodation and food expenses. My colleague Biljana Lazić was also interested in attending summer school and we decided to apply. We were very impatient for results of candidate selection process and we were checking our e-mails several times a day waiting for reply from school organizers.

Fifteen days after we had sent our applications, the reply arrived. We were both accepted and both granted scholarship! Volkswagen Foundation scholarship didn't cover registration costs. Thanks to the apprehension of the management of the University library “Svetozar Marković” these costs were covered. Our preparation for travel finally began. That meant that we had to buy plane ticket, provide health insurance and organize our journey. Even before arriving to Germany, school organizers made good impression on me, because they replied to our e-mails as soon as possible. They answered to all kinds of our questions, which helped us to organize our journey in the best way. At the same time, they were organizing everything that was needed for our stay in Germany. We finally got a chance to meet our hosts at participant's registration, which was reserved for the day that we arrived at Leipzig.

The welcome dinner was organized on the first evening of our arrival at Leipzig, when participants got a chance to meet each other. Eighty-one participant of the school, both students and teachers, came from Hungary, Spain, Poland, Germany, Italy, Canada, The United States, The Netherlands, Great Britain, France, Ireland, Ser-

bia, Mexico, Latvia, Portugal, Israel, Sri Lanka, Austria, India, Thailand, Lithuania, Finland, Lebanon and Burkina Faso. The only person coming from Serbia, besides Biljana and me, was Toma Tasovac, director of the Belgrade Digital Humanities Center. He had already attended this summer school and gave us some useful advice.

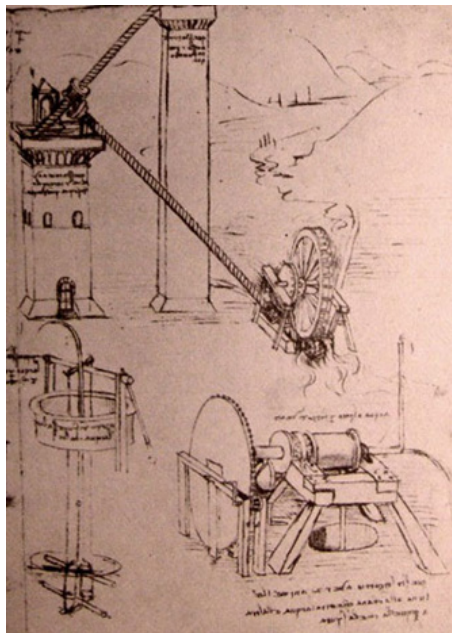
The people I met came from all over the world and from different language speaking countries, and they also have very different education. Among them there are professors of languages, computer scientists, librarians, linguists and engineers. Some of them are MA or PhD students and others work as teachers or researchers in one of the world's famous universities or institutes. All these people gathered in Leipzig in order to promote and develop field of digital humanities. This relatively new field is located at the intersection between computer science and social sciences, and in that way connects people from different professions.

Dr Elisabeth Burr, professor of French, Francophone and Italian Linguistics at University of Leipzig, officially opened summer school on July 23rd. Professor Burr used this occasion to welcome all participants and pointed out that the aim of this school is to provide students, researchers and academics in the field of digital humanities, information science and engineering an opportunity to meet each other and exchange ideas, hoping that some of them will grow into great projects. She also pointed out that lecturers of the summer school are eminent world professors and experts in their field. She presented each of them.

The program of the summer school, which lasted for nine days, was very intensive. Working day consisted of several sessions that included lectures, workshops, project presentations and panel discussions. The official working language of the school was English. Although, the fact that participants came from different countries, caused that languages such as German, Spanish,

³ <https://www.conftool.net/esu2012/> (accessed 27.09.2012)

French and Italian were spoken in informal conversation during breaks.



Design of Leonardo da Vinci flying machine – the summer school logo

Working day started at 9 a.m. Morning session consisted of two 90-minute classes of different workshops. Applicants who applied for summer school could choose one or more workshops. Organizers then placed each participant in one of the workshops, depending on their knowledge, experience and interests.

Offered workshops from whom the applicants could choose were:

- *Computing Methods applied to DH: XML Markup and Document Structuring* (**lecturer** Alejandro Bia, Universidad Miguel Hernández, Elche, Spain)
- *Query in Text Corpora* (**lecturer** Andreas Witt, Institut für Deutsche Sprache; Mannheim, Germany)
- *Stylometry: Computer-Assisted Analysis of Literary Texts* (**lecturers** Jan Rybicki, Uniwersytet Jagielloński, Kraków, Po-

land and Maciej Eder, Uniwersytet Pedagogiczny, Kraków, Poland)

- *Art history and the critical analysis of digital corpora* (**lecturer** Élisabeth Doulikaridou, Université de Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, Paris, France)
- *Interdisciplinary approaches to the study of multimodal human-human / human-machine communication* (**lecturer** Laszlo Hunyadi, Debreceni Egyetem / University of Debrecen, Hungary)
- *Large Project Planning, Funding, and Management* (**lecture** Lynne Siemens, University of Victoria, Canada)

I attended course *Computing Methods applied to DH: XML Markup and Document Structuring* together with eleven other participants. Course was led by Dr Alejandro Bia, professor of Mathematics, Statistics and Computer science at the University Miguel Hernández, in Elche, Spain. The aim of this course was to enable students to gain knowledge about text encoding using XML and TEI, to learn about the basics of document structure and to work with a set of XML encoding. Despite these topics, areas such as digital libraries, electronic books and digital preservation were discussed during the course.

Text encoding and structure of XML document were not unknown to me. I learned a lot about this subject during my studies at Library and Information Science Department at Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade. Attendance of this course was an opportunity to refresh my knowledge through practical exercises, as well to find out more about field of digitization.



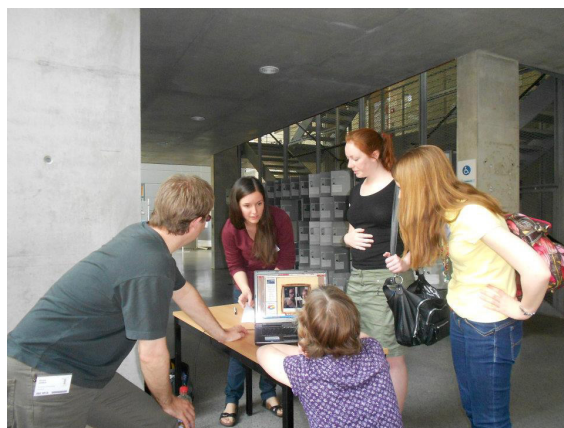
Workshop presentation - *Computing Methods applied to DH: XML Markup and Document Structuring*

After workshops and lunch break, we attended afternoon sessions, which included lectures and project presentations. Every afternoon we had the opportunity to get to know the latest developments in the digital humanities and to hear about first-hand experience in the implementation of major projects.

Professor Laszlo Hunyadi from the University of Debrecen in Hungary presented the project “Theory and Practice of multimodal communication between man and machine,” with special emphasis on the linguistic characteristics of communication. In his lecture Prof. Hunyadi spoke about observation and analysis of facial movements, hand and body types as well as multimodal approach to the study of the complex and multi-faceted nature of the communication. We learned that information obtained by this approach can be used for better understanding of interaction between man and machine.

Dot Porter from the University Indiana in the United States gave a lecture entitled “Medievalists’ use of digital resources and the implications for digital resource developers”, where she talked about the increased use of resources in electronic form in the work of researchers with an interest in middle Ages.

Besides teachers and lecturers, students also had the opportunity to present their projects. At the poster session my colleague Biljana Lazic presented project called “Multimedia document: Cult radio programs”⁴, the work of students from the Library and Information Science Department at Faculty of Philology in Belgrade. Summer school participants showed their interest and proposed cooperation for this project. They were pleasantly surprised by the fact that this is student’s project. Andreas Witt, from the Institute for German Language at Mannheim, advised us to try to expand the project and colleagues from the United States proposed to use multimedia document in teaching Serbian as foreign language.



Project presentation “Multimedia document: Cult Radio Programs”

Two panel discussions were held during summer school. The first one was “Virtual Humanities Research Infrastructures in the (Digital) Humanities”. The conversation was led by Prof. Dr Elisabeth Burr, Volker Boehlke, Gerhard Lauer,

4 Lazic, Biljana and Poklopic, Jelica. 2011. Multimedia document: Cult programs – an Insight Into the Status of the Archives of Radio Stations in Serbia. *Infotheka* 12 (2): 52-57.

Julianne Nyhan, Christof Schöck and Dr Ray Siemens. This discussion was about direction in which research virtual network should be directed, so that they could be effectively used in the field of digital humanities.

On other discussion called “Towards networking schools in the field of digital humanities”, they discussed prospects of development of summer schools in digital humanities. Dr Ray Siemens, professor from the Institute for the Summer School in Digital Humanities at the University of Victoria, Dr James Cummings from the University of Oxford and Professor Dr Elizabeth Burr, host of the summer school in Leipzig, talked about past experiences and future plans to organize summer and winter schools in this area. On this occasion, it was stressed that the aim of holding such schools is to promote digital humanities and the integration of the humanities, computer science and engineering.

On the fifth day a whole-day excursion was organized. We first visited famous building-museum called Bauhaus. This building used to be school of architecture and applied arts, and today it is a museum dedicated to the development of modern industrial products. After tour through Bauhaus, we visited “the city of iron” – Ferropolis, which is actually an open-air museum and contains the machinery for ore mining that were used in the mid 20th century. This place is used for holding musical events. At this point, we listened to a lecture of Nicoletta Calzolari from Institute for computing linguistics in Pisa, Italy, called *The FLaReNet Strategic Language Resource Agenda – Recommendations and Future Prospects*. Lecture was about linguistic technologies that support the challenges of multilingualism and information and communication technologies in the future.

Although school program was very intensive and there was not much time for extra curricular activities, organizers managed to provide us visit to the Leipzig University library Albertina, as

well as to the National museum of book and writing. There we had the opportunity to see its latest permanent exhibition “Signs-Books-Networks: From Cuneiform to Binary Code”.

Staying in Leipzig and attending summer school was a great experience for me and I have wonderful memories of it. It allowed me to become more familiar with the area of digital humanities and to learn from eminent experts who have a great experience. This motivated me to plan to continue to work and evolve in this field in the future. I had the opportunity to meet many people from various European and non-European countries, from whom I heard interesting experiences and ideas. I stayed in touch with a lot of them. I have refreshed my knowledge of English and Spanish language and learned a little bit of German. I came back to Belgrade with positive impressions from the summer school, Leipzig, Germany and the people I met.

On the website of European Summer School in Digital Humanities the date for holding of the next summer school is already announced. Apply for it! You cannot lose anything, and memorable experience is what you will inevitably get.

References

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