



Tourist Information in Libraries – Source to Improve Access to Objects of Cultural Heritage

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Research Article

ARTICLE INFORMATION

Article history:

Received 19 October 2016

Received in revised form 04 November 2016

Accepted 20 November 2016

Available online 25 November 2016

Journal of Balkan Libraries Union

Vol. 4, No. 2, pp. 23-27, 2016.

ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this article is to examine how the tourist information which is able to provide Sofia City library helps citizens to improve their knowledge about cultural heritage objects in the capital and their desire to visit them. While writing the article we used a combination of methods of work: study of the literature on the subject from print and electronic sources of information; methods of analysis and synthesis; method of monitoring the work at the City Library; visiting museums; analysis of Bulgarian and US websites for tourist information. During the working process three research questions are answered: who are the users of tourist information; what are the types of library and other sources where emblematic objects of Sofia cultural heritage are presented and what tourist information is available to the citizens of the capital.

Keywords: Sofia City Library, Tourist information sources, reference services, Heritage objects, Regional information.

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I. Introduction

Possessor of the cultural heritage from seven great civilizations, Bulgaria occupies the third place in Europe - after Greece and Italy - in number and variety of identified monuments. There are in Sofia more than 1,400 cultural monuments, 840 from which are located in the central part of the city. At the same time 150 of them are of national importance (Municipal Development Plan of Sofia Municipality 2014-2020). At the outskirts of Sofia is located the Boyana Church, included in the World Heritage List of UNESCO. "The Grandmothers from Bistritsa" – singers of folk songs are in the list of the world's masterpieces of intangible cultural heritage.

The existence in the capital of so many significant monuments is a precondition for the development of cultural tourism. In the city centre is revealed, preserved and exposed the archaeological complex of ancient Serdica. This undoubtedly makes the capital attractive and appealing to the tourists. It opens many and varied opportunities to create tourist routes that are consistent both for massive demand and in the same time for specialized search tourism products for high-end users.

The cultural heritage objects in Sofia are in good condition. This is a necessary but not sufficient condition

for the development of cultural tourism. When we talk about tourism we need to know that this is primarily practical activity, which has a complex character. It includes conditions for overnight stay, for livelihood, for transport and other services.

One of the conditions for development of tourism, incl. cultural tourism is to dispose of sufficiently developed transport infrastructure at site (airport, railway station, highways, to ensure smooth travel of tourists to the appropriate destination).

Experience has shown that often cultural tourism is not the only reason for tourist travel. As far as foreign tourists are concerned and part of the Bulgarian tourists the combination of business and congress tourism with cultural tourism prevails. In the near future it is expected that cultural tourism will be reconciled with sports tourism.

Everything said so far it is evident that the travel information that different groups or individual tourists are looking for is not limited to the cultural monuments, museums or archaeological reserves. They also look for information on how to travel from one village to another, the organization of transport in the capital, the conditions for accommodation and living. The services of libraries are in competition with the available information at the Bulgarian and foreign tourist sites, where oral and printed

promotional materials for various cultural heritage sites is provided to tourists from tourist information offices and promotional activities of museums.

II. Objectives of the Study

The main purpose of this article is to examine how the tourist information that the library is able to provide helps citizens to improve their access to sites of cultural heritage in the capital. The study was conducted, based on the information available at Sofia City Library - the largest public library in Sofia.

The following tasks connected to the objective are:

1. To identify the meaning of "cultural heritage";
2. To find out who are the potential users of tourist information
3. To study the way of presentation of symbolic objects of cultural heritage in Sofia in information sources at Sofia City Library and those, which are outside the library.

Subject of the study were sources of information on landmark heritage sites in the capital - the frescoes of the Boyana Church; Temple- monument "Alexander Nevski", collections at the National Archaeological Museum, National Ethnographic Museum, National Art Museum and other galleries.

III. Research Questions

Enclosed are the following research questions:

1. Who are the potential users of tourist information?
2. What types of sources are presented regarding emblematic objects of cultural heritage in Sofia City Library and elsewhere?
3. What kind of tourist information about cultural heritage sites in Sofia provides Sofia City Library to citizens?

IV. Literature Review

During the study of the literature it has been found that aspects of the theme are directly or indirectly subject in various types of materials. Definition of cultural heritage is in the legislative documents, encyclopaedias (electronic or traditional) and in dictionaries. We find definitions for monuments and definitions for museums and galleries as guardians of cultural heritage. Very useful information in terms of the prospects for developing cultural tourism sites in Sofia is part of the strategic plans that support the development of cultural tourism in Sofia. Besides in hard copy the librarian can find them when browsing Internet. Most important of them are: Strategic plan for the development of cultural tourism in Bulgaria(2009); National Strategy for Development of Culture (2011); Strategy for the Development of Culture Sofia (2014 - 2020) and the Municipal Development Plan of Sofia Municipality (2014-2020); Conception for the leading the Museums in the capital (2010).

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In order to examine the information about the cultural heritage in Sofia series of publications in the press have been reviewed; articles in collections, which are located in regional studies department of Sofia City Library, leaflets with brief information, distributed to tourists at the tourist information centre in Sofia. Useful tourist information incl. cultural heritage was found at tourist sites, both Bulgarian and foreign. Information about the collections of museums we found both in the museum and on their websites.

V. Research Methodology

For the purposes of the article were used a combination of methods of work: study of the literature on the subject in print and electronic sources of information; use of methods of analysis and synthesis; visit to museums, events of "European Night of Museums"; the Information tourist office in the subway to the Sofia University "St. Ohridski ", we analysed also Bulgarian and US websites for tourist information.

In order to identify the concept of cultural heritage legal texts, dictionaries and encyclopaedias have been consulted. In the attempt to understand the state of the cultural heritage of the city strategic plans for the development of cultural tourism in Bulgaria have been explored; Strategic plans for developing Sofia Municipality and the concept for museums. For orientation in the results achieved in the field of cultural tourism were used press releases from Sofia Municipality and representatives of the tourism industry. Study of American tourist websites has been conducted. Evaluation of foreign tourists at sites of cultural tourism in Sofia, travel advice and a lot of practical tourist information were examined.

In order to understand what kind of local tourist information about cultural heritage sites in Sofia can be provided to the citizens Sofia City Library the following departments were visited: reference, regional studies department, "Art", children, library Loan for adult readers. Methods used were interviews with librarians, information search on the topic in the respective departments and method of monitoring of library services.

VI. Findings, Analysis and Discussion

Before answering the research queries we assume as working following definition of the term "cultural heritage": It is considered that under Heritage we

understand when movables, monuments or intangible objects can be defined as representing cultural value, which is important for the history of a nation. Therefore it can be concluded that the concepts of cultural heritage and cultural value are identical. In the Cultural Heritage Act of Bulgaria, effective from 10.04.2009, are listed the types of objects of cultural heritage.

In the classification of cultural values it is correct to say that they are not of one and same level of value. The most valuable part of the cultural heritage of a nation is included in the World Heritage List of UNESCO. Seven cultural and two natural sites from Bulgaria are recognized as unique sites with world significance. In Sofia this is Boyana Church. Next in rank tangible or intangible cultural heritage is of national importance. In Sofia there are 150 such monuments. The remaining objects with cultural value registered in each country are with local significance. All selected sites, representing the subject of this study are of national importance and one is included in the World Heritage List of UNESCO.

Outstanding role in presenting the immovable cultural values before audience play the museums and galleries. There are many definitions of the functions of museums and galleries that result from generalized views of museum specialists and / or legislative authorities in individual countries. General in all of them is the listing of the main tasks of museums in respect of immovable cultural values, on the one hand and mandate their socializing on the other. We believe that the most appropriate definition is given by the International Council of Museums (ICOM) for the institution of museum adopted in 2007.: "The museum is a permanent non-profit institution, in the service of the society and its development, open to the public, which collects, conserves, explores, communicates and shows both tangible and intangible heritage of Human and his environment, used for education, research and entertainment". Similar characteristic of museums as an institution is given in Art. 24 of the Law on Cultural Heritage of Bulgaria. The law also lays down the 4 obligatory conditions that must be met by any museum. The most important among them are the museum to have fund of cultural values; have suitable buildings; have secured a suitable source of funding and has qualified specialists. The subjects selected for analysis satisfy these requirements.

Who are the potential users of tourist information?

To understand what the potential users of tourist information are we studied some classifications of the types of tourists and their characteristic searches at the places they visit. From the viewpoint of the study subjects of interest are two classifications of tourists, made in the article Behavioural models in Tourism (2008). According to the first one in the tourist sector the tourists are separated into groups depending on their solvency and searches. The first group includes tourists from low and medium low level. They prefer to travel in groups and use package services. As a rule, they do not take additional trips to explore the places they visit.

In the second group are included tourists from medium or medium-high class. Even if traveling in a group, once they arrived at a destination they seek to move alone. They seek emotions and have money to receive them. In

terms of cultural tourism these are the most common users of it. They like to get acquainted with the culture, gastronomy and customs of the places they visit. The third group includes tourists from high level who seek luxury and specialized services. This might be golf, skiing, hunting, fishing or other (Behavioural patterns in tourism, 2008).

The second ranking of tourists is according to the type of activity that they perform during the break. According to it the tourists are four types - family, traditional, modern and postmodern (Behavioural patterns in tourism, 2008). From the standpoint of cultural tourism the most promising are the postmodern tourists. The other types of tourists leave little of their time for intellectual activities and museums. The Postmodern tourist is the one who travels for adventure. This tourist travels most. He enjoys holidays in different places and at different times of the year. He doesn't stand still. During his vacation he carries out activities that he likes the most. This is a tourist with a map in his hand visiting a village where he meets up with its sights. Among postmodern tourists predominate young people who are looking for web sites and destinations and prepare their own routes (Behavioural patterns in tourism, 2008).

From the brief review of the definitions of cultural tourism and the types of tourists who are interested in cultural and historical sites and / or events located in Sofia there are three main groups of tourists: a) from Sofia b) from the country c) from other countries . These are tourists from medium or medium-high class according to the first classification or postmodern tourists according to the second. The reasons for acquainting tourists with cultural and historical sites and / or events in Sofia may vary. This can be done within a specially organized cognitive trip for students from Sofia and the country. This may be an accompanying congress or symposium program to familiarize participants with the sightseeing's of Sofia. This may be a manifestation of personal interest in events such as festivals, concerts, exhibitions.

In terms of their age, occupation and reason for seeking information about Cultural & Historical objects in Sofia the users are too diverse. These are students from the capital schools that examine literature on a particular subject by request of the teacher. These are teachers who are looking for additional information on the material they teach, as well as in connection to the organization of extracurricular visits to specific Cultural & Historical objects. These are tour operators and tour guides that aim to diversify their routes prepared for the visiting of our or foreign tourists in the capital. These are guides in museums seeking further information at the Sofia City Library to make much more interesting lectures to visitors of museums. These are journalists who reflect what is happening in the capital. Among users of tourist information are also organizers of international congresses, conferences, seminars organizing visits to Cultural & Historical objects for foreign participants in the meetings. Last but not least these are citizens who seek information about Cultural & Historical objects before or after having visited them.

What types of sources are presented about emblematic objects of cultural heritage in Sofia City Library and elsewhere?

Information about significant cultural heritage sites in Sofia City Library are presented mainly as printed sources. They are monographs and albums that are in the departments - "Art", regional studies and a in a section for adults. Their demand is facilitated by an electronic catalogue. Another group of sources are guides, which are also reflected in the catalogue. The third group of sources is reference sources - dictionaries and encyclopedias.

Special attention deserves two electronic databases that reveal articles from periodicals or thematic compendiums. The first-one has as subject of analysis publications from various sectors and themes where citations of articles related to organization of tourism can be found. The second database contains annotated descriptions of materials about Sofia. One can found there interesting materials about the history and the development of cultural heritage sites in Sofia. The articles themselves are in the regional studies department of the library. In it, users can familiarize themselves also with maps and other illustrative materials.

Outside of the library enquirers of the topic can find both printed and electronic sources. These sources are located at different places. Publications can be found in other libraries - national, university and scientific, museums, schools. Each of them is with specific access rules, but the common is that they are public, which means that the available information is free to external employees. Exception is the new policy of our National Library, which recently allowed the admission of readers students aged 14 years old.

Outside of the libraries there is useful information located also at travel companies that organize trips for students or seniors from the country in Sofia. Tourist Centre publishes and distributes free of charge several maps and brochures about the landmarks in Sofia. The information in them is extremely laconic and it makes sense only as a guide to the location of objects, but not as information for them.

Amongst the electronic sources of information should be outlined the materials from the electronic encyclopaedias, from blogs, from websites of museums, from tourist information sites and from various databases. The analysis of this information shows that it is not only in Bulgarian language, which makes it extremely valuable for the foreign tourists who plan to visit Sofia.

What kind of tourist information about cultural heritage sites in Sofia provides for the citizens Sofia City Library?

Observations on customer service at the Sofia City Library show that most often librarians provide information as a consequence of reference questions. To give an answer librarians use the electronic catalogue for books and two databases, which include descriptions of articles. Furthermore, they are using reference books. If the users wish to seek information from the Internet librarians help them with advice how to do it faster.

The largest share of library services to readers is secured by the department "Regional Studies", where all materials for Sofia are collected, as well as in the reference department, where the most experienced librarians are concentrated. The nature of the information provided to users is very diverse and depends on the question asked. In case of insufficient material on a

subject librarians check what additional information is available in other libraries or museums and orient the users to them.

The materials which are given to the users are mainly printed. They are books, articles or albums on demand covering cultural and historical sites themes. In some cases there is collaboration between the Sofia City Library and other museums in the capital. This collaboration is seeing during the settlement of exhibitions marking the Day of Sofia - September 17, when museums provide to the library copies of original documents. In such exhibitions are included documents from the State Archives. In this way the organized by Sofia City Library exhibitions are enriched and become more interesting for the audience.

VII. Conclusion and Recommendation

From what has been said so far it can be concluded that information on cultural and historical sites in Sofia that the City Library offers its users diverse and of good quality of services. Thanks to the system of electronic catalogues book search becomes faster. For the users' convenience there is a specially developed database with descriptions of the articles. During their search for information users are supported by experienced librarians.

The library has the largest in Bulgaria automated database with regional studies topics. It is possible to search by various subject headings, for example - by surnames of author or by the name of the person, mentioned in the publication. This allows quick and precise searching. Moreover, regional studies department has a variety of sources, including - monographs, albums, jubilee collections, articles from newspapers or magazines, maps, postcards.

As a good practice should be noted the cooperation between Sofia City Library and certain museums for arranging exhibitions on the occasion of the Day of Sofia - 17 September. Even it would be better if this could happen not only once a year but every month. Exhibitions could show the diversity of materials that Sofia City Library has for a particular object of cultural heritage supplemented by copies of documents from archives and museums. Thus the library would contribute to the greatest extent in motivating the public to visit these sites.

City Library could be more active in establishing fruitful cooperation with the Tourist Information Centre. On one hand at Sofia City Library can be distributed for free to reader's materials from this centre. On the other hand, the library could provide the tourist centre with more complete and more interesting information on particular cultural and historical sites. Similar is the situation and the possibilities for cooperation with the creators of Bulgarian tourist sites. On one hand the website of the library may have a link to them. On the other hand, the City Library could provide information to enrich and improve the articles in them. There could be a support for the selection of the entries in these sites, and in their layout, which so far is not good.

All activities suggested above will help the citizens of the capital and the country to become more informed about the cultural and historical heritage of the city. As

result based on the information received, they might visit more frequently the cultural heritage sites.

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