ENTANGLED HISTORIES OF FEMINIST ADVOCACIES IN THE INTERWAR BALKANS AND CENTRAL EUROPE

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FROM ARCHIVAL MATERIAL TO ARCHIVAL INTERLINKED DATA: DOCUMENTING THE HISTORY OF FEMINISM WITH THE "SYNTHESIS" SYSTEM

Synthesis-Core is an information system for the scientific, administrative and collaborative documentation of cultural entities, which is configured based on specific use cases and needs. It is web-based, multilingual, and focuses on semantic interoperability. It enables data exchange between computer systems with unambiguous/shared meaning by making use of a standard model for data representation, namely the formal ontology CIDOC CRM (ISO 21127:2014). The aim is the production of sustainable data of high value and long-term validity that can be reused beyond a particular research project. Technically, it utilises XML technology and a multi-layer architecture, offering flexibility in terms of versioning, workflow management and data model extension. The system has been widely used in different contexts, including cultural heritage / archaeology [1] and history of art [2].

In Synthesis-Core users create and document entities belonging to a set of pre-configured entity types. Each entity type has its own data structure (documentation schema), carefully designed to be fully compatible with CIDOC CRM (i.e. a direct mapping between a schema and CIDOC CRM can be defined). A documentation schema is XML-based and contains a set of fields organised in a hierarchical (tree-like) structure. The leaves in this tree-like structure are the documentation fields into which users enter data. Each documentation field is assigned to one of the following data types: link to other entity, link to a vocabulary term, link to a thesaurus term (exploiting the thesaurus management system THEMAS), unformatted free text, formatted free text, link to a web resource (URL), number, time expression (with support of historical time expressions, such as 'ca. 1920', 'early 16th century', etc.), location coordinates (by selecting a point or polygon on a map), location ID (TGN or Geonames), digital file(s).

In the context of FE.P.I.B., the following entity types have been currently configured that allow documenting information about the collected archival material and bibliography: i) archival document, ii) article in journals/newspapers, iii) old book, iv) visual material, v) bibliography, vi) library/archive, vii) fonds/collection, viii) journal/newspaper, ix) personage, x) location. Figure 1 shows the home page of Synthesis-Core, as configured for the case of FE.P.I.B., while Figure 2 shows a part of the documentation card of an entity belonging to the entity type archival document, which corresponds to a letter from Margery Corbett Ashby to Avra Theodoropoulou (of 23/08/1927).

Other system functionalities include map visualisation (for entities that have a relation to a location), versioning of the documented data, documentation in multiple languages, support of different user roles (system administrator, agency/group administrator, editor, guest), data export (in XML or RDF, as well as in PDF or DOCX based on predefined templates), and advanced entity search (within or across entity types).

The system configuration is still under development. Currently, we are in the process of designing the documentation schemas of the remaining entities of interest, in particular national organisations, regional-international associations, and conferences/meetings. In parallel, the research team (consisting of ten researchers) has started documenting information about the collected archival material, bibliography, and personage. The current number of documented entities per entity type is the following: 98 archival documents, 645 articles, 36 old books, 16 visual material items, 182 bibliographical item, 18 libraries/archives, 16 fonds/collections, 45 journals/newspapers, 106 personages, 14 locations.

References:

[1] C. Bekiari et al., “Building comprehensive management systems for cultural-historical information”, CAA, Archaeopress, Oxford, 2014.
[2] P. Fafalios et al., “Towards semantic interoperability in historical research: documenting research data and knowledge with synthesis,” ISWC, *Springer*, 2021.