# VIRTUAL EXPOSITIONS MODELING IN THE BULGARIAN FOLKLORE

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*Abstract: In this paper we discuss the process of virtual exposition modeling for the folklore domain. Two folklore information systems are chosen as a source of the content – the Bulgarian folklore digital libraries and the Bulgarian folklore artery. They include specimens of different folklore narrative types (songs, rituals, faith, knowledge, proverbs, magic, etc.) and their audio-visual documentation. The purpose of the virtual expositions modeling is combining attractive, but difficult-to-collect objects that present completely the socium occupation, traditions and life in concrete (but not only) village (folklore region, area, etc.). It is important to present objects with different origin, for example juxtaposing available fund materials for the beginning of 20th century for one rite and this rite 100 year after. This approach will join the past with the present of the corresponding folklore objects and will present the Bulgarian folklore culture as vital and dynamically developing one.*

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*ACM Classification Keywords: H.1 Models and Principles, H.3.7 Digital Libraries – Collection, Dissemination, System issues*

## Introduction

Virtual expositions (VE) (also called exhibitions) for cultural heritage entail the bringing together of unlikely assemblages of people, things, ideas, texts, spaces, and different media. Curators, designers, artists, anthropologists, sponsors, visitors, artworks, artifacts, antiquities, machines, installations, display cases, spotlights, photographs, moving images, catalogues, promotional materials, object labels, audio tours, gallery guides – we might say that these constitute the apparatus of the exhibition experiment [Basu et al., 2007]

Virtual expositions modeling requires a big team work of specialists, clear idea, rich content repositories offering variety of objects and knowledge, design vision and technological infrastructure for exposition publishing. When we plan to create a temporary or permanent (thematic) exhibition of folk objects the team faces a series of non-trivial problem because of the specificity of ethnological knowledge and its hardly defined and fuzzy boundaries including types of folklore objects (tangible and intangible) and its complex structure.

In order to simplify the process of virtual exhibitions creation for the folklore domain several factors have to be considered: targeted applications and user groups, content repositories and its components, attractiveness and innovation of the exposition idea, relation with non-trivial facts, events, etc.

In this paper we discuss the process of VE modeling for the folklore domain. Two folklore information systems are chosen as a source of the content – the Bulgarian folklore digital libraries (http://folknow.math.bas.bg) and the Bulgarian folklore artery (http://folkartery.math.bas.bg) [Pavlov et al., 2011][Paneva-Marinova et al., 2010]. They are developed during the project "Knowledge Technologies for Creation of Digital Presentation and Significant

Repositories of Folklore Heritage"[1] project aiming to keep digital specimens from the Funds of the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies with Ethnographic Museum at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

The Bulgarian folklore digital library is a gallery of artefacts and knowledge for Bulgarian culture, art and folklore that will present a relatively limited number of specimens of different folklore narrative types (songs, rituals, faith, knowledge, proverbs, magic, etc.) and their audio-visual documentation. Until now, the Bulgarian folklore is always shown partially only with text, sound or image, but the authors' demand is for joint unities of words, music and motions. This possibility can be provided by contemporary multimedia environments. The ambitions of the authors are the demonstration of unique music dialects from different local folklore areas and advanced approaches for folklore content prescription representation through authentic sounds, videos, and photos of live rituals. Parts of the Bulgarian folklore specimens are presented from asynchronous point of view; other will be in their diachrony – unique materials, saved for years. Another task is the different record technique demonstration – inquiry, interview, inclusive observation, etc.  It gives many ideas for virtual expositions and expects a wide range of potential users – professionals and scientists, non-professionals, connoisseurs and viewers, etc. [Paneva et al., 2007].

## The Virtual Exposition Idea

When we speak about virtual exposition it is important to distinguish this concept from the digital collection. The difference between an exposition and a collection is that an exposition has a tight connection between its idea, objects, and script that ties them all together. It is this tight connection that is vital; otherwise, a virtual exhibition will "amount to little more than disorganized and decontextualized digital collections" [Silver, 1997].

As a key concept for one exposition is its idea. In defining the idea, we have to think about the different effects that we wish the exposition to create. Five types of effects that we may wish to consider are:

- Aesthetic: organized around the beauty of the objects

- Emotive: designed to illicit an emotion in the viewer

- Evocative: designed to create an atmosphere

- Didactic: constructed to teach about something specific

- Entertaining: presented just for fun

An aesthetic exposition is one that exists purely for the sake of presenting beautiful objects. Emotive exhibits exist primarily to elicit an emotion in the viewer. The purpose of an evocative exposition is to create a specific atmosphere for the viewer. Though it is hoped that the viewer will learn something from an exposition (be it virtual or gallery based), in some cases the exposition will have a specific didactic focus. Whether an exposition's purpose is to teach or to be a purely aesthetic experience, in nearly every case there is a level of pure

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[1] The "Knowledge Technologies for Creation of Digital Presentation and Significant Repositories of Folklore Heritage" is a national research project of the Institute of Mathematics and Informatics, supported by National Science Fund of the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science under grant No IO-03/2006. Its main goal is to build a multimedia digital library with a set of various objects/collections (homogeneous and heterogeneous), selected from the fund of the Institute for Folklore of the Bulgarian Academy of Science. This research aims to correspond to the European and world requirements for such activities, and to be consistent with the specifics of the presented artefacts [Bogdanova et al., 2006].

entertainment. In many ways, it is the element of entertainment that separates an exhibition from a textbook or a lecture on Bulgarian folklore and ethnography. No doubt the objects of the Bulgarian folklore culture kept in the Bulgarian folklore digital libraries provides the abilities for reproducing these effects. For example, the collection "Goldsmiths and Jewels" represents the work of Bulgarian masters and from 18th to the early 20th century. The variety of jewels is correlated to the development of traditional Bulgarian costumes in different parts of the ethnic area. Bulgarian traditional jewels are made of similar materials and similar techniques of workmanship. Regional specific features and differences could be observed in shapes, ornaments and patterns. Casting, forging, hammering out, filigree, granulation are the traditional techniques applied by Bulgarian goldsmiths. Masters apply also enamel, engraving, hemstitch, mounting of stained glass, semiprecious stones and engraved mother-of-pearl plates.

The idea, or concept, behind an exhibition is what will set it apart from a random collection of objects. A few general topics for which every library or archive can find materials around which to build an online exhibition include the following:

- Anniversaries of births, deaths, or significant events in people's lives
- Notable events in the life of an institution or region
- Specific materials from certain collections or subcollections
- Themes built around materials in the collection
- Treasures
- Work done by various departments of the library, archives, or other units or departments of the parent institution
- Odd and unusual [Kalfatovic, 2002]

Each of these areas can be tailored and focused to reflect the strengths of an individual library or archive. We may look at different examples of the exhibitions in the National Ethnographic museum in Sofia (http://www.eim-bas.com/museum.php?p=exhibitions&l=en): "Jubilee Exhibition of the Artist Evgenia Lepavtsova" had dedicated 50 years of her life to ethnography with her unique ethnographic picture, drawings and illustrations (anniversary), "The Holy Path – the Life of Bulgarian Jews", jointly exhibition with the Museum of Sofia, Central State Archives, the Museum at Sofia Synagogue was dedicated to the 50th anniversary of Israel state (notable events), "Bulgarian Folk Costumes" (specific materials from certain collections or subcollections), "Treasured for the Generations", etc.

Moreover, when we prepare a Bulgarian folklore exposition it is important to have in mind that objects included could be as simple as complex. Example of a complex folklore object is CFO A1_146_2-14, an interview containing information of the catholic community in the village of Oresh, Svishtov region, northern Bulgaria (see figure 1) [Paneva-Marinova et al., 2010]. The emphasis in the interview is on the ritual, festival, and everyday life in the village, on the popular beliefs and knowledge. Every one of these folklore object types also has several sub-categories, depicted on figure 1.
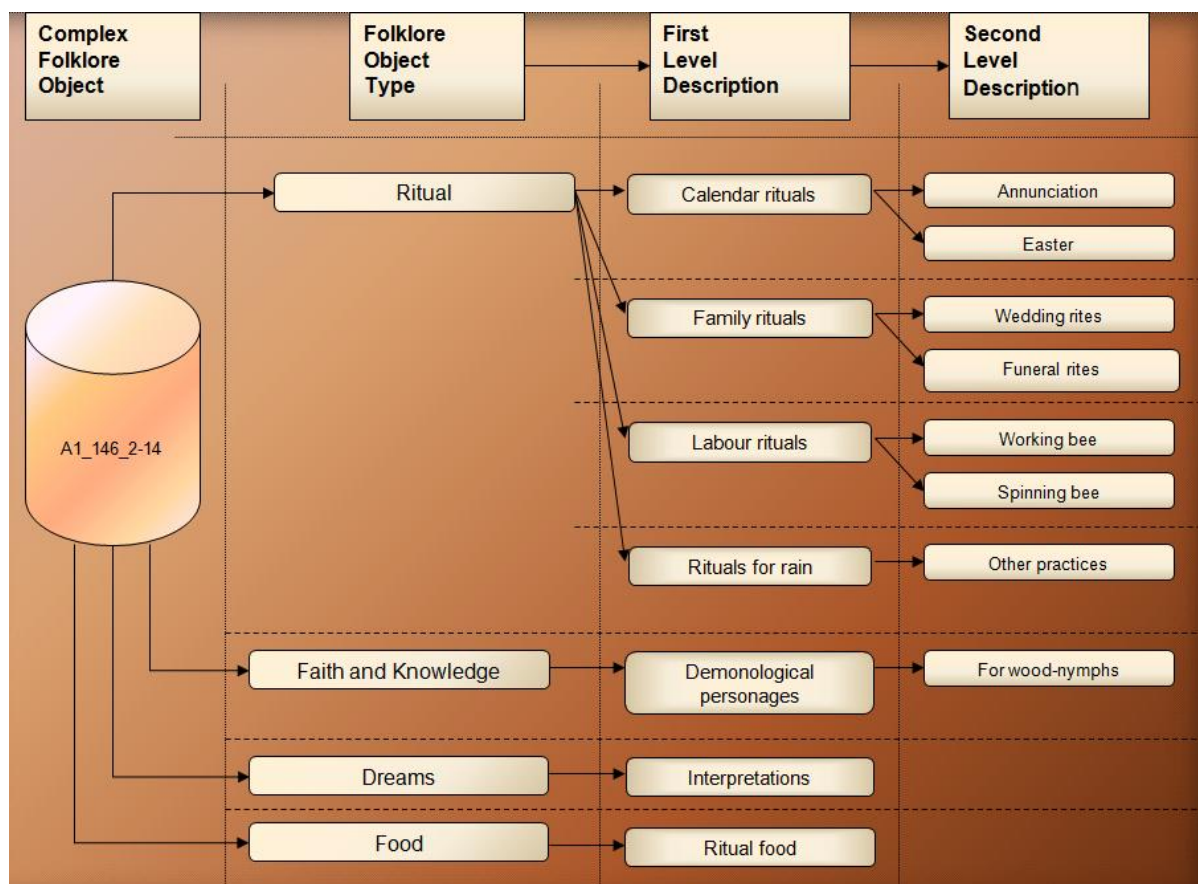
Figure 1:  Example of a complex folklore object

## The Virtual Exposition Planning Process

The exposition planning process is composed of a number of distinct steps:

- Preparation of the exposition proposal

- Proposal evaluation

- Selection of objects

- Drafting of the script

- Preparation of objects

- Exhibition design and Web creation

- Final editing

- Additions, changes, corrections

As with gallery exhibitions, there are numerous possibilities for organizing your idea and objects. Among these possibilities are:

- Object-oriented organization
- Systematic organization
- Thematic organization
- Organization by material type
- Organization by multiple schemes

As a typical object-oriented exposition in Bulgarian ethnology and folklore could be specified "the magic mask". The systematic organization of "Bulgarian folk costumes" exhibition follows the idea of presentation of different materials, techniques, regional specifics, etc. An interesting idea for thematic organization is the show of Christian images and symbols in traditional Bulgarian jewellery. Organization by material type of the objects - cooper, wood, clay, etc., gives possibility not only for separate, but for parallel expositions on the base of motifs, techniques, etc.

Important steps are selecting and preparing of the objects. Most likely reasons for selecting an object for exhibition are that, in the opinion of the curator, the object is intrinsically of interest, or information about it is considered of value to the visitor, or the object has a contribution to make to a more general story which the visitor is to be told [Belcher, 1991]

## Virtual Expositions Management

The virtual expositions management will cover the basic processes on creating, preview, update and close exposition [Paneva-Marinova et al. 2011] (see Figure 2). The process will be executed using the digitized content and artifacts from the Bulgarian folklore portal (connected to the Bulgarian folklore digital library).
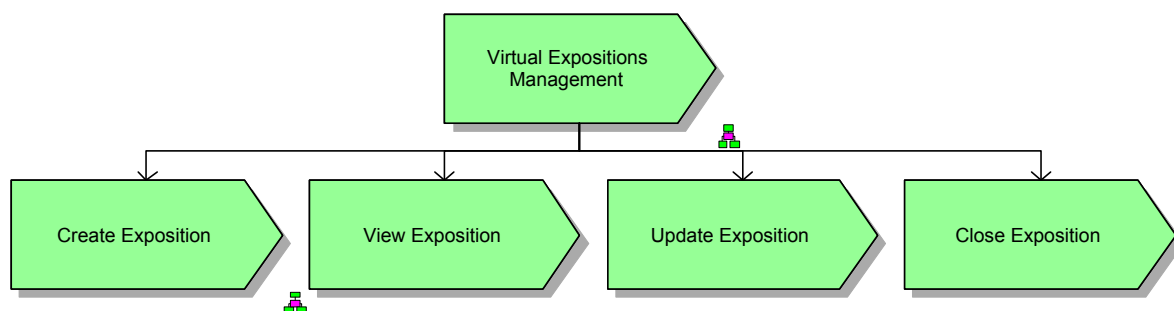


Figure 2: VACD of the virtual expositions management process

Figure 3 depicts an EPC diagram of the "Virtual expositions management" process. It shows the control flow structure of the process as a chain of events and functions. The functions present the actions and the tasks that must be implemented as a part of a business process, e.g., discussion of a proposal, build an exposition query, etc. Usually the functions add extra value to the process. The functions have input resources (e.g., documents),

create output results (e.g., the "launch exposition" function creates an exposition) and could spend a resource (e.g., human). The events constitute the changing state of the world after the execution of a process, e.g., a query created, exposition objects selected, etc. The events described the situation before and after an action are executed. The functions are linked to events by logical connections. In this way the control flow is defined [Davis, 2001].
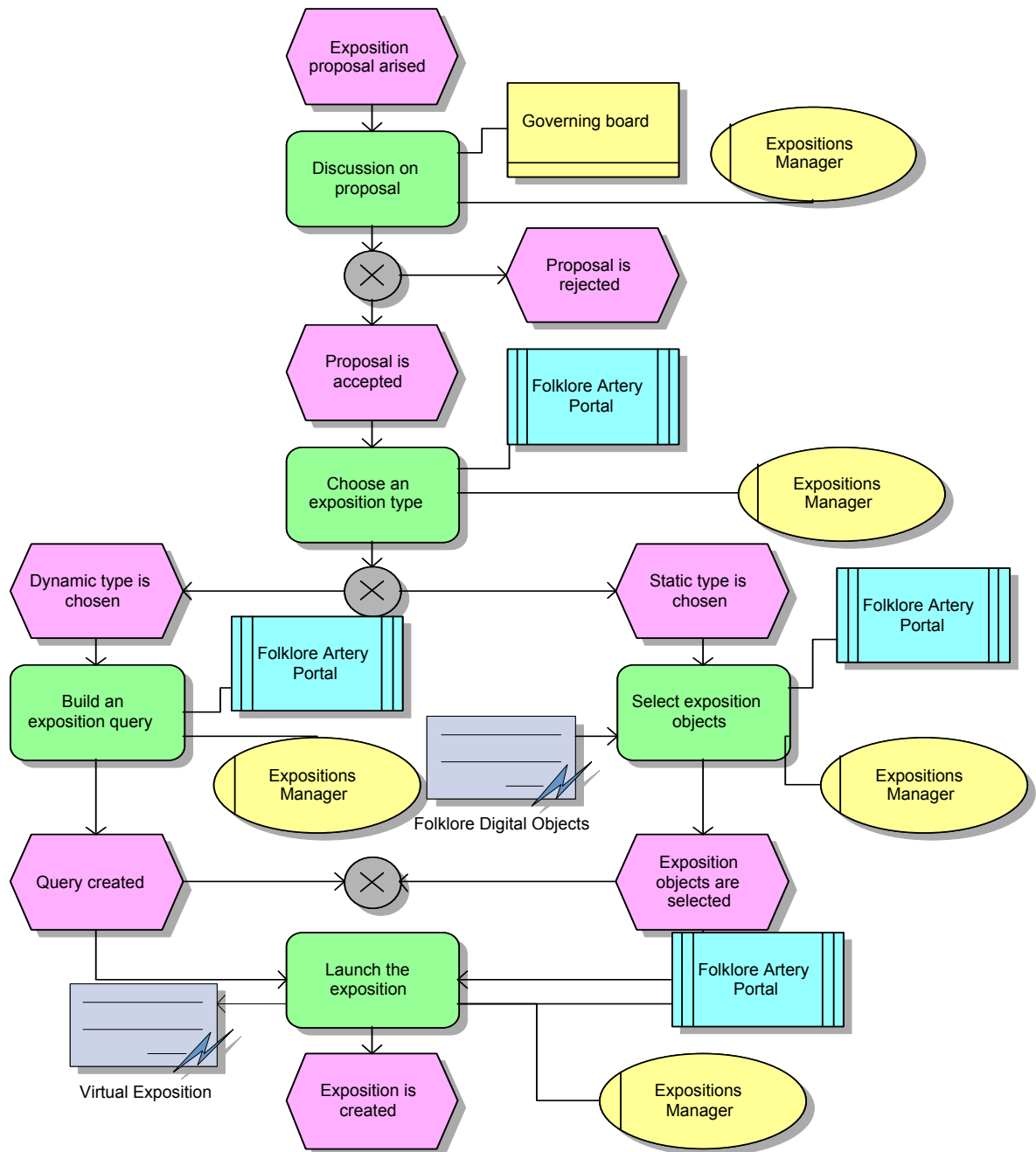
Figure 3: EPC diagram of the virtual expositions management process

## Conclusion and Future Work

Nowadays, online exhibitions are a regular offering from the cultural institutions. They have also become an almost necessary adjunct to traditional physical exhibitions, offering a continuing life to the ideas presented. Additionally, we are seeing an increasing number of virtual-only exhibitions in which memory institutions are using the traditional notions of the exhibition as springboards to create interesting, instructive, and fun exhibitions that will never see visitors walking through them. The benefits of online exhibitions are many and include the abilities to showcase objects that could never be on view in a gallery space due to their fragility and value or to present life human traditions, far less expensive than a festival organization, to exhibit collection of objects, changeable in time (for example VE of Bulgarian folklore calendar rituals, presented through photos, films, sketches, technologies description, etc., the exhibitions of Easter eggs occurs two weeks before Easter; Christmas rituals, songs, labels – in December, etc.). As we move to provide increased access to folklore collections in the form of online exhibitions, it is important to remember why we are creating expositions. The purpose of the virtual expositions modeling is combining attractive, but difficult-to-collect objects that present completely the socium occupation, traditions and life in concrete (but not only) village (folklore region, area, etc.). It is important to present objects with different origin, for example juxtaposing available fund materials for the beginning of 20th century for one rite and this rite 100 year after. This approach will join the past with the present of the corresponding folklore objects and will present the Bulgarian folklore culture as vital and dynamically developing one.

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