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EXTERNAL DIGITAL ACTIVITY OF MUSEUMS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: THE CASE OF LITHUANIAN ART MUSEUMS

Summary. The COVID-19 pandemic forced the world to a halt. In order to ensure the health and safety of society, many facilities had to transfer their functionality to the digital sphere, or at least enhance their digital capabilities. Museums were no exception – the inability to allow visitors to gather in person at exhibitions meant that communication with the audience as well as educational activities had to develop through digital forms. Between spring and autumn of 2020, a study was carried out examining the external digital activities of major Lithuanian art museums during quarantine, and indicators of public interest in content published by museums on main channels such as websites and social networks. The aim of the research was to identify the main challenges faced by the large Lithuanian art museums in concentrating their activities in virtual spaces, and to determine the causes of these challenges. Based on the data collected through monitoring the virtual published content of Lithuanian major art museums, together with interviews with museum staff and external experts, the study's conclusions of the study are presented at the end.

Keywords: pandemic, art museums, digital content, external digital activities, audience, digital literacy.

INTRODUCTION

The activity of museums in the virtual space became particularly relevant in 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to a study by the International Council of Museums (ICOM) into the impact of the pandemic period on museum activity, during the first wave of virus (spring of 2020), 95 per cent of the world museums had temporarily closed physical exhibition spaces (ICOM, 2020).¹ ICOM further reported that the number of museums closed during the second wave of COVID-19 was lower, due to the uneven spread of the virus across the world's continents.

These limitations on activity in physical spaces caused museums to begin to use digital content, with more intensive posting on internet sites to maintain connection with visitors. Given this rapid growth of digital activity, museums had to face challenges.

This study looks at Lithuanian museums' external digital activity – and its problems – during the COVID-19 pandemic. Two major motives determined the selection of this subject: its relevance in the context of the unprecedented pandemic, which led to an increase in museum digital activity; and the aim to identify what tools Lithuanian art museums had for the development of external digital activity, and what major challenges ensued.

Moreover, although related academic studies have been conducted on the topic – such as Skopas & Mejerytė-Narkevičienė's Application of Virtual Reality in Lithuanian Museums, 2024, and Laužikas & Bagužaitė-Talačkienė's Experience of the Lithuanian and Latvian Museum Sector during COVID-19 Restrictions and the Potential of Museums to Attract Regional Audiences, 2021 – no research has been carried out on the external digital communication of art museums, specifically

comparing the three major art museums in Lithuania and analysing its impact on public engagement with museum activities.

The major Lithuanian art museums – the Lithuanian national museum of art (LNDM), the National M. K. Čiurlionis art museum (NČDM) and the MO museum – have been selected for analysis in the present study. The first two of these museums have the status of a national museum, while the MO museum is the biggest private art museum in Lithuania.

The study begins by raising the following hypothesis: during the pandemic, the external digital activity of Lithuanian and foreign art museums, as well as the application of digital tools for maintaining contact with audiences, became more intense. The main challenge that museums faced in both the local and international contexts was the lack of digital literacy among museum personnel.

Consequently, the purpose of the study is to confirm or to refute the hypothesis by investigating the external digital activity of Lithuanian art museums during the pandemic and comparing it with the international context, including any associated problems.²

The article is divided into two main sections, each of which is intended to fulfil the purpose of the study. The first part provides a global review of museum activity during the pandemic. The second part describes an empirical investigation based on the material presented in the first part. The study data, collected using qualitative analysis methods such as case studies, observations and semi-structured interviews, are presented and analysed.

Data collected in the empirical investigation and comparison of the Lithuanian case with the global context confirm the initial hypothesis – Lithuanian art museums intensified external digital activity during the pandemic using the same tools as foreign museums; however, a lack of digital literacy among personnel was also observed. Despite this, the results of the study revealed that Lithuanian art

museums have not experienced a shortage of digital content. In fact, local art museums are renowned for their abundance of digitalised content, which they could utilise more effectively if their employees were more digitally literate.

ACTIVITY OF MUSEUMS IN THE VIRTUAL SPACE DURING COVID-19

From September to November 2020, ICOM carried out a study to identify the scope of problems for museum activity caused by COVID-19. A Network of European Museum Organisations (NEMO) study was also carried out for the same purpose at around the same time. The results of the ICOM study present data collected from museums on all continents (except Antarctica). During the implementation of the study, it became clear that the loss of financial resources was one of the main problems caused by the pandemic. According to the NEMO study, 75 per cent of participating museums indicated that their financial losses during the pandemic amounted to between 1,000 and 30,000 euros per week.³

In addition to reduction of financial income, museums also experienced a change in their employees' activity profile, driven by the significant growth of museum activity in the digital space. The closure of physical exhibition spaces caused museums to focus more on their online presence and communications with customers. During the pandemic, 93 per cent of European museums intensified or started at least one digital service.⁴ It has been observed that more than 55 per cent of museum employees worldwide worked part time with digital content during the pandemic. More than 20 per cent of people working in museums with digital content worked full time.⁵ Slightly more than 40 per cent of European museums changed the responsibilities of some of their employees to reflect the development of digital activity.⁶

In spring 2020, ICOM developed a recommended activity package for establishing or maintaining a connection with visitors in the digital space, taking

into account the transfer of museum activity from the real to the virtual world, and the aspiration of museums to remain relevant to the public. The main recommendations were to actively publish museum content; increase accessibility to museum collections; organise virtual tours presenting exhibitions and behind-the-scenes content; and actively involve the virtual audience by initiating contests on social networks.

Examining the data from the ICOM and NEMO studies, it becomes clear that the most frequently used tools in the virtual activity of museums were those presented by ICOM in the recommendations noted earlier. Globally, the use of network podcasts or virtual educational programmes in museums' digital activity increased by almost 50 per cent.⁷ Slightly more than 40 per cent of European museums indicated that they became more active on social networking platforms during quarantine. According to NEMO's data on frequency of use of social networking, 75 per cent of European museums stated that the Facebook social network was the most effective platform for developing digital activity and engaging audiences.⁸

Statistical data show direct broadcasting to be in second place after Facebook: during quarantine, more than 21 per cent of European museums started to use direct broadcasting more often than before. The third most common activity in the increased usage of digital tools by European museums was the publishing of digital collections on internet platforms.⁹

PROBLEMS OF MUSEUM ACTIVITY IN VIRTUAL SPACE DURING COVID-19

Despite the fact that many museums during the COVID-19 pandemic started more active work in the virtual space, and one third of European museums dedicated additional financial and/or other resources for development of digital activity, some problematic aspects have been identified in the context of digital tool usage. First of all, ICOM notes that the majority of museums are

inadequately prepared to develop digital activity in the context of future crises, and look for original ways to involve the audience in the virtual space. Museum employees lack the digital literacy skills and/or technical means to develop quality digital activities.¹⁰ This is also supported by NEMO data. Based on that data, it appears that almost 40 per cent of museums did not monitor virtual visitor flows and satisfaction levels with digital activities due to a lack of resources or skills. This highlights the need for strategies and methods to measure digital participation.

The following data, presented by the European NEMO and ICOM, provide global relevance to the study Carvalho and Matos conducted in Portugal on the problems of the need for increasing digital literacy. When describing the Mu.SA project, which is dedicated to identifying digital competencies and job roles, Carvalho and Matos highlight several key issues that have significant influence on the lack of digital literacy among museum employees:

1. A fragmented approach to raising the digital literacy competence of museum employees.
2. The lack of young professionals in museums.
3. The low percentage of employees having education in museology or in information technologies and communication.
4. The lack of academic disciplines that integrate museology and information technologies.¹¹

Taking into account the lack of digital literacy among museum employees, Carvalho and Matos designate four job roles that could positively influence the management of digital content in museums: manager of digital strategy; curator of digital collections; developer of interactive digital experience; and manager of the digital community.¹² In addition to possible job roles in museums, the authors present the "Digital Transformation Decalogue", developed during the Mu.SA project, comprising a list of recommended actions to improve the quality of digital processes. The Digital Transformation Decalogue suggests the following actions: development of strong leadership; development of trust in digital processes by all museum personnel; constant development of museum employees'

skills; understanding the audience's needs and developing significant experiences; development of soft skills in the same way as development of specific digital literacy skills; learning from colleagues and audience members; support for the digitisation of museum archives and collections; movement towards an open attitude; development of a safe environment for experiments and mistakes that may be made during such experiments; and strengthening internal and external cooperation.¹³

The need for improving digital literacy skills is substantiated by the fact that, based on recent study data, the level of quality of the visitor experience in visiting a museum website depends on several factors: quality of the information presented, system quality, relevance of the website, website general usefulness and museum image.¹⁴ The level of satisfaction of virtual visitors with other digital activities of a museum would probably depend on the same or similar factors. The totality of those factors substantiates the complexity of working with digital content. To make the development of museum activities in the digital space more effective it would be useful to examine digital literacy, new or renewed disciplines and employee confidence in digital processes.

Based on ICOM's data, nearly 80 per cent of museums worldwide intend to reconsider their digital strategy in the light of advantages and challenges related to working with digital content that emerged during the pandemic. Almost 75 per cent of museums intended to increase their virtual offerings once the pandemic was over. More than half of museums intend to improve their employees' digital literacy skills, and more than 43 per cent indicated that they intend to increase financial resources for the development and support of digital activities. Almost 30 per cent of museums are ready to hire new professionals to contribute to quality digitalisation processes.¹⁵ The challenges of integrating information technology into museum activity have been encountered since the 1970s,¹⁶ and this problem became more obvious during the pandemic. Evaluating results of the described studies it can be concluded that the pandemic prompted

museums to pay greater attention to activity in digital space.

CASE STUDY OF LITHUANIAN ART MUSEUMS

The investigation used case study methodology. The following qualitative investigation methods were selected: content analysis, participant observation, and semi-structured interviews. In spring 2020, when the first quarantine was declared in Lithuania, museums stopped their activity in physical spaces and their internet and social networking activity was monitored. This monitoring of museum activity on virtual platforms continued when the first quarantine was over and the second started in the autumn of 2020.¹⁷ NČDM, LDNM and the MO museum participated in the study. It should be noted that NČDM and LDNM comprise different divisions: while the two museums consist of separate structural divisions functioning in different facilities and focusing on different types of collections, they are nonetheless part of the same legal institution. The research focused on the external digital engagement of all institutional divisions, with monitoring of all their online activity. Ten semi-structured interviews were conducted during the study, aiming to thoroughly analyse the peculiarities of the usage of digital content and the problems encountered in museums' external digital activity. The interviewees were representatives of the museum administration and external museology professionals who participated in the study. Some interviews were conducted in face-to-face meetings, while others took place remotely, taking into account contact restriction recommendations by Lithuania's Ministry of Health Protection.¹⁸ A detailed content analysis of the observed online activity of Lithuanian art museums, and the comprehensive semi-structured interviews, provided the opportunity to delve deeply into the specifics of development and publication of digital content in museums during the pandemic, and to formulate final conclusions, which are presented in the further part of the study.

ACTIVITY OF LITHUANIAN ART MUSEUMS IN VIRTUAL SPACE PRIOR TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

During implementation of the study, it was observed that all participating Lithuanian art museums one way or another were using information technologies and digital content in their external activity before the pandemic. LNDM, NČDM and the MO museum maintained active sites on social networks of Facebook and Instagram before the pandemic started.¹⁹ All three museums that participated in the study also had their own channels on the YouTube platform prior to the pandemic; of the three, the MO museum was the most active channel user on this platform. Both LNDM and NČDM began to use their YouTube channels more actively when the pandemic began.²⁰

All museums that participated in the study had active websites before the pandemic, and used information technologies to digitalise collections

and develop digital content databases. Notably, at the pre-pandemic beginning of 2020, virtual tours of 25 Lithuanian museums were presented on the Lithuanian Integral Museum Information System (LIMIS) website, which includes: the Vilnius Art Gallery; the Museum of Clocks; the Amber Museum of Palanga; the P. Domšaitis Gallery; the NDG; and the V. Kasiulis Art Museum. The MO museum is not included in the virtual tour list developed by LIMIS. Nevertheless, before the first quarantine began, the MO museum developed a virtual tour of one of its exhibitions, “The Emergence of Species: DNA of the 90s”. It was the only participating museum in the study to publish developed digital content on the Spotify music platform, where playlists created for museum exhibitions were presented. The table below summarises the virtual platforms used by the participating museums to publish external digital content prior to the start of the pandemic.

Table 1

Museum	External Digital Content Publicity Channels						
	Facebook	Instagram	YouTube	Spotify	Virtual tours	Website	Internet shop
LNDM	Used actively	Used actively	Started to use more actively when the pandemic began	Did not use	Had (developed by LIMIS)	Used	Did not use
NČDM	Used actively	Used actively	Started to use more actively when the pandemic began	Did not use	Had (developed by LIMIS)	Used	Did not use
MO museum	Used actively	Used actively	Used actively	Used	Used (developed independently)	Used	Used

ACTIVITY OF LITHUANIAN ART MUSEUMS IN VIRTUAL SPACE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

When the pandemic began, the museums participating in this study were seen to increase their online activity: initiatives of individual museum divisions (in the case of NČDM and LNDM) as well as those combining all divisions, were recorded on social networks.

The participating museums presented initiatives and projects that stand out in the context of this study. In the case of LNDM, the museum presented two large scale projects to the public in cooperation with national broadcaster LRT, combining all the museum’s divisions. The first project was “Live paintings. Museum in your home”. During the project, participants were invited to look closely at 40 18th–20th century works selected from LNDM

collection, recreate the subject of a selected work of art and share their creation with the project organisers. The second project was “30 works, 30 creators, 30 weeks”. For this project, 30 Lithuanian creators were invited to select from the museum a work of art that was close to their heart, and be filmed in a short video explaining why they had chosen the piece.²¹

For their part, divisions of NČDM organised virtual lessons for pupils of years 1–12. One division – the house-museum of L. Truikys and M. Rakauskaitė – offered the opportunity of a paid virtual meeting, notable for the museum’s decision to make a charge for it. Another NČDM division – the historic presidency of Republic of Lithuania, which has its own channel – started to actively share visual content. The division presented a newly-created remote animated audio guide “Histories of a palace” both on its channel and through a specially created website.²² A further significant digital event during the pandemic was the opening of the NČDM internet shop.

The MO museum implemented several new digital projects, some of which were included in the digital activity development plan in 2022, but brought forward by the quarantine. One of these projects was “MO Conversations”, in which open visual thinking classes were conducted remotely. Another digital project, “MOlympics”, was implemented in cooperation with the national broadcaster LRT, giving participants the opportunity to check and expand their knowledge about art.

The MO museum had planned to start a blog in 2022, diversifying its use of Spotify by hosting podcasts related to culture and art. However, due to quarantine constraints in 2020, the project was brought forward. Also notable is that during the second quarantine the MO museum began to organise paid virtual excursions.

To identify virtual visitor activity to the participating museums, study researchers monitored postings in social networks. Most attention was paid to the number of posting reviews and reactions to postings, and how numbers changed.²³ During the study, postings in social networks prior to the pandemic, during the first quarantine (spring of 2020) and the second quarantine (last months of 2020), were reviewed. To learn whether audience interest in the virtual content of museums was growing during those three periods, researchers calculated the average of the number of reactions to postings on Facebook and Instagram by randomly selected museums. In the calculation, the average 10 postings from each of the three periods were selected, as characterised by the different amount of reaction to them. In all cases, the number of reactions to postings was totalled and divided by 10. Before starting to calculate the average, it was anticipated that a growing number of reviews or reactions to postings would mean a growing interest in museums’ external digital activity, and its effectiveness.

After completion of the study, a consistently growing number of reactions to museums’ postings was observed on Facebook and Instagram. The average number of reactions to Instagram postings of LNDM and NČDM during the second quarantine doubled as compared with postings before the first quarantine. In the case of the MO museum, the average number of reactions grew by more than 100.²⁴

A significant increase in the average number of reactions to Facebook posts was also observed in all three museums. LNDM indicators increased the most on this social network. The tables below present the average number of reactions to posts on Facebook and Instagram.

Table 2

INSTAGRAM		
PRIOR TO QUARANTINE		
MO museum	NČDM	LNDM
132.4	19.5	26.9
DURING THE FIRST QUARANTINE		
MO museum	NČDM	LNDM
191.2	33.7	25.5
DURING THE SECOND QUARANTINE		
MO museum	NČDM	LNDM
255.3	45.2	58

Table 3

FACEBOOK		
BEFORE QUARANTINE		
MO museum	NČDM	LNDM
117.4	28	28.3
DURING THE FIRST QUARANTINE		
MO museum	NČDM	LNDM
142.1	41.3	43.2
DURING THE SECOND QUARANTINE		
MO museum	NČDM	LNDM
166.2	52.2	70.1

A significant increase in the average reaction to postings is evident on the Facebook websites of the main museums (NČDM and LNDM). No significant changes on the Facebook pages of divisions of these museums were observed during the quarantine. Based on these data it can be concluded that attention increased only to entries posted on main museum Facebook pages, but not on pages of museum divisions.

The material collected during the study suggests that participating museums followed ICOM recommendations for online activity as presented in the theoretical part of this article. Study results also reveal that Facebook was the most often used online tool of Lithuanian art museums. According to the study data, the Mo museum used the largest number of virtual platforms for digital activity.²⁵

LITHUANIAN ART MUSEUMS' PROBLEMS OF ONLINE ACTIVITY DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Based on interview data, it was found that museums did not face a shortage of digital resources. Museum representatives' observations were supplemented by the insights of representatives from

the Memory Institution Policy Group at the Lithuanian Ministry of Culture. Rather than undertaking rapid digitalisation, quarantine pushed museums to assess the digitalised information prior to the pandemic and look for new methods, or intensify the use of existing methods, of publishing digital information. Respondents positively assessed the increased use of social networks, which significantly affected museum visibility and the attraction of new audiences during the pandemic. However, the external museology expert noted that the methods used by museums for publishing information were not always expedient. According to the expert, when placing information in the virtual space, the audience's informational behaviour and what they are prepared for should be the first consideration, rather than what the museum wants to make public.

Representatives of museums noted that one of the greatest challenges was the incredibly rapidly growing need for development of digital activity, for which museums were not prepared; in many cases, museums were not sure about the format of digital activities or tools that would guarantee the effectiveness of external digital activity.

During the study it was observed that the museums' online activity had increased rapidly because they could not develop activities in physical spaces, and a greater number of employees were contributing to the development and publication of digital activities. After the first quarantine period, and before the second began, some museum employees returned to routine work, which was not always related to development of external digital content.

An external museology expert notes that the digital literacy of museums should improve with the generational change of museum staff. However, the expert believes that integrating individual specialists into museum activities would be only partially effective. The development of digital content depends on the efforts of many people working in a museum, therefore the digital competencies of all individuals working in a museum should be consistently enhanced.

Based on information provided by representatives of the Memory Institution Policy Group of the Lithuanian Ministry of Culture, and a museum representative, the LIMIS study is being carried out in cooperation with Estonian and Swedish specialists. The study aims to prepare a questionnaire to help identify the digital literacy of people working in museums, and the most desired digital skills. Later, teaching material will be prepared for training, taking into account the collected findings. The Ministry of Culture also intends to focus on the improvement of employee competencies, in line with the improvement of digital literacy skills as part of the Lithuanian National Progress Plan.²⁶

Notably, digital activity dropped when museums re-opened their physical spaces. This could be assessed in two ways: taking into account the observation of a museum representative, interest in the museum's publicised content decreased over time due to the congested digital services market. On the other hand, this reveals the need for a sustainable strategy for the digital activities of museums. A quality digital strategy would reduce the likelihood of content published by museums contributing to digital pollution.

Despite the difficulties of working with digital content during the pandemic, all museums and divisional representatives that participated in the study, the external museology experts, and representatives of governmental and ministry groups noted that abrupt transfer of activities into virtual space had a positive impact. It was also observed that, once the pandemic was over, excursions for schoolchildren from other cities could be conducted remotely. There was an improvement in the understanding of information technologies and the need for digital content among museum employees, and their digital work skills have also improved. Museum representatives have noted the increased interest in museum activities by the younger generation. Representatives of the Group of Policy of Institutions of Memory of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania noted that, due to active digital initiatives, museum digital content has become an important component not only for tourism development, but also for the education and research sectors, thus enabling museums to use their social potential more effectively. According to the study participants, the COVID-19 pandemic prompted museums to pay more attention to digital activities than before.

CONCLUSIONS

In response to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, museums significantly increased their activity in the virtual space. The major Lithuanian art museums that participated in the study promptly turned their attention to developing and supporting online activity. The activities of the study participants conformed with the ICOM recommendations for the development of virtual activity and the maintenance of virtual connections with audiences, which were presented at the beginning of the pandemic. Social media, namely Facebook, Instagram, social networks, the YouTube platform and websites which were previously used for publicising content and communicating with visitors, began to be employed more actively during the pandemic. The MO museum also increased activity through its Spotify online music channel.

Notably, when Lithuanian art museums closed their physical spaces and transferred activities to virtual platforms, they did not encounter a lack of digital content intended for publication and communication with visitors. Representatives of participating museums noted that the pandemic pushed them to pay more attention to digital content developed prior to the pandemic, and to the possibilities of using this content for external digital activities. These findings suggest that the digitalisation of museum objects and activities in Lithuania was already happening. The pandemic revealed that problematic aspect is not the lack of digital information available at museums, but the lack of ways by which the available digitalised content can be effectively utilised to increase the economic and social potential of cultural heritage.

The main problems that museums encountered with digital activities during the pandemic were the lack of finances, technical resources and digital skills. Some of the museums that participated in the study noted that they did not have enough technical resources to abruptly transfer their activities into the virtual space, and insufficient financial resources had been budgeted for the development of digital activities. During the study it was observed that most museums and their divisions needed higher digital competency. Many activities were organised without certainty, not knowing what level of effectiveness could be achieved or how this could be improved, or how to present activities that would not contribute to digital pollution. This may have been affected by the absence of a sustainable strategy for digital activity. Some participating museums raised the issue of the need for new museum specialists. The need for human and time resources dedicated to guarantee the quality of digital activities is justified by the fact that, when museums reopened their physical spaces, employees returned to routine activities and paid less attention to activities in the virtual space.

Experts and museum field investigators who participated in the study noted the emerging problem of a lack of digital literacy. According to them, it became obvious during the pandemic that

museums that had participated in the study before the pandemic had digitised a large amount of content, which they started to actively publish in the virtual space after the general quarantine came into effect. However, they believe that the content published in the virtual space has not always been effective. This was due to a lack of digital competencies, which was exacerbated by a shortage of young specialists knowledgeable in museums, communication, and information technologies. It was noted that the museums' cooperating in the unanimous development and publication of digital content in the virtual space could contribute to the more sustainable and effective development of virtual museum activity.

Despite the challenges that arose, the Lithuanian art museums that participated in the study saw some positive effects caused by the pandemic with regard to the development of museum activity. First of all, museum and divisional representatives noted an increase in attention paid to museum activity in the digital space, and a greater appreciation by museum employees of the possibilities of virtual activity. The pandemic and consequent quarantines revealed the need for active work both in physical museum spaces and on virtual platforms. The benefits of virtual lessons and excursions have been recognised, and it is intended that they should continue after the pandemic as sustainable educational tools. According to representatives of the art museums who participated in the study, the pandemic led to a more active involvement of young audiences in museum activities. The research results support the initial hypothesis proposed at the beginning of study: the external digital activity of Lithuanian and foreign art museums, as well as their use of ICOM recommendations for applying digital tools for maintaining audience contact, increased during the pandemic. The main challenge that museums faced in both local and international contexts was the lack of digital literacy among museum personnel.

The study analysed the digital activity practices of Lithuanian art museums during the COVID-19 pandemic. To delve qualitatively into the

effectiveness of museums' external activity during the pandemic. Or to study the future development of digital competencies in Lithuanian art museums, it would be expedient to conduct another study including users of museum digital content. Involving digital content users in the study would help to better understand users' informational behaviour, and establish whether the external digital activity carried out by Lithuanian art museums is an effective match for it. Such a study would also be justified by the newly emerging audience of digital content users. It is likely that the characteristics of this audience and their motivation to use museums' digital content differ from those of individuals who visit physical exhibitions.

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- ⁸ Op. cit., NEMO, 7.
- ⁹ Ibid., 7.
- ¹⁰ Op. cit., ICOM, 9.
- ¹¹ Ana Carvalho and Alexander Matos, “Museum Professionals in a Digital World: Insights from a Case Study in Portugal. Museum International,” *Special issue: Museums in a Digital World* 70 (1–2) (2017), 34–47, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/muse.12191>
- ¹² Ibid., 6.
- ¹³ Ibid., 12.
- ¹⁴ Qiong Dang and Katia Segers, “A Comparative Analysis of Visitor Satisfaction in the Digital Museum,” *INTERIN* 25 (1) (2020), 83–100, DOI: 10.35168/19805276. UTP.interin.2020.Vol25.N1
- ¹⁵ Op. cit. ICOM, 16.
- ¹⁶ Ross Parry, *Recoding the Museum. Digital Heritage and the Technologies of Change* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 166.
- ¹⁷ Making and maintaining connection of museums with visitors by informing, educating and sharing cultural as well as art content with them in virtual space is considered in the context of the present study to be external digital activity.
- ¹⁸ Interviews were conducted with representatives of the MO Museum, the Lithuanian National Museum of Art (LNDM), the M. K. Čiurlionis National Museum of Art (NČDM), representatives of the Memory Institutions Policy Group of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania, as well as an external museology expert. Almost all interviews were conducted remotely due to the COVID-19 restrictions in place at the time. Responses to the questions were provided in writing. The questions were sent to the participants via email, and their answers were collected and analyzed throughout the duration of the study. An interview with representatives of the Memory Institutions Policy Group of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania took place via a video call on the MS Teams platform on 18 November 2020. An interview with a representative of one of the museum's divisions was conducted by telephone on 20 August 2020. An interview with an external museology expert was held in person in Vilnius on 24 August 2020.
- ¹⁹ It should be noted that all NČDM and LNDM divisions (except for Museum of applied art, Vytautas Kasiulis art museum and Vilnius art gallery) have their individual accounts in Facebook. Meanwhile in Instagram NČDM and LNDM have one account each that combines all divisions of the museum. In Instagram only house-museum of Galaunė (a division of NČDM) and National art gallery (a division of LNDM) have separate accounts. Accounts of Historic presidency of the Republic of Lithuania (a division of NČDM) and Domšaitis gallery (a division of LNDM) have been noticed in the mentioned social network, but they are inactive – there is no single posted entry in these accounts, therefore it is difficult to identify whether accounts were created before COVID-19 pandemic or when the pandemic broke out.
- ²⁰ NČDM and LNDM have in Youtube as well as in Instagram a channel that combines all divisions. Speaking of LNDM, there is a separate NDG channel in Youtube platform, but it is not actively supported.

Notes

- ¹ “Museum, museum professionals and COVID-19: follow-up surveys,” *International Council of Museums*, 3, reviewed on 21 January 2021, https://icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/FINAL-EN_Follow-up-survey.pdf
- ² Making and maintaining connection of museums with visitors by informing, educating and sharing cultural as well as art content with them in virtual space is considered in the context of the present study to be external digital activity.
- ³ Follow-up survey on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on museums in Europe”. Final report. *Network of European Museum Organisations*, 2. Accessed accessed on 21 January 2021, https://www.networkofeuropeanmuseumorganisations.org/fileadmin/Dateien/public/NEMO_documents/NEMO_COVID19_FollowUpReport_11.1.2021.pdf
- ⁴ Ibid., 3.
- ⁵ Op. cit., ICOM, 5.
- ⁶ Ibid., 5.
- ⁷ Ibid., 6.

²¹ The project “The Artist Project” that has been implemented since 2015 by New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art has become inspiration of this project.

²² The mentioned audio guide “Histories of a palace” is a part of the project “Development of digital services of National M. K. Čiurlionis museum”, which has been implemented by NČDM.

²³ Clicks on heart symbols in Instagram and selection of emotion icons (thumb up, laughing, crying, concerned and angry faces) in Facebook are considered as reactions to social network postings.

²⁴ Significant increase of reactions to postings is illustrated by LNDM account in Instagram, in which the same visualization (“Fun friends” by Vincentas Smauskas) was posted in March and at the beginning of January. In March the said posting received 35 reactions, in January – 71.

²⁵ MO museum operated in Facebook, Instagram and the Internet platform of listening to the music Spotify, it presented museum’s blog, posted material in Youtube visual platform, cooperated with the national

broadcaster LRT. LNDM used the same platforms for activity development, except for listening to the music on the Internet platform Spotify and creation of a blog. NČDM used Facebook, Instagram, Youtube visual platform to develop virtual activity. All museums used remote communication platforms for virtual excursions as well for organisation and implementation of internal work.

²⁶ During implementation of this program (2021–2030) Ministry of Economics and Innovations of Republic of Lithuania is responsible for preparation of a program for development of digitalization in Lithuania. The Ministry of Culture of Republic of Lithuania contributing to the formation of the said program has set a goal – to more effectively use economic potential of cultural heritage. To achieve this goal two measures are required: update and modernize technological systems as well as focus on development of new cultural products with the help of the readily available digitalized content. Digital literacy is particularly important for maintaining quality work with new and/or modernized systems as well as for developing new cultural products.

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MUZIEJŲ IŠORINĖ SKAITMENINĖ VEIKLA PER COVID-19 PANDEMIJĄ: LIETUVOS MENO MUZIEJŲ ATVEJIS

Santrauka

COVID-19 pandemija privertė pasaulį sustoti. Siekiant užtikrinti visuomenės sveikatos apsaugą, daugelis skirtingų veiklos sektorių savo funkcijas perkėlė į virtualią erdvę arba joje sustiprino. Muziejai netapo išimtimi – negalėdami priimti lankytojų fizinėse ekspozicijų erdvėse, komunikaciją su auditorija bei edukacines veiklas ėmė aktyviau plėtoti skaitmeniniu formatu. 2020 metų pavasario–rudens laikotarpiu buvo atliktas tyrimas apie didžiųjų Lietuvos meno muziejų išorinę skaitmeninę veiklą per karantiną ir visuomenės susidomėjimo rodiklius muziejų publikuotu turiniu pagrindiniuose kanaluose: internetinėse svetainėse, socialiniuose tinkluose. Tyrimo metu buvo siekiama identifikuoti pagrindinius iššūkius, su kuriais susidūrė didieji Lietuvos meno muziejai, sutelkdami vykdomą veiklą į virtualią erdvę, bei kilusių iššūkių priežastingumą. Remiantis duomenimis, kurie buvo surinkti įgyvendinus Lietuvos didžiųjų meno muziejų virtualaus publikuojamo turinio stebėseną ir atlikus interviu su muziejų darbuotojais bei išoriniais ekspertais, tyrimo pabaigoje pristatomos išvados, apibendrinančios tyrimo rezultatus.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: pandemija, meno muziejai, skaitmeninis turinys, išorinė skaitmeninė veikla, auditorija, skaitmeninis raštingumas.

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