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# PROJECT PAPER INDEX BY SESSION

## Data Acquisition and Remote Sensing in Cultural Heritage I

The Impact of GPS Tagging on Image Based Documentation and 3D Reconstruction of Cultural Assets . . . . .	1
<i>G. Pomaska</i>	
The Importance of Considering Atmospheric Correction in the Preprocessing of Satellite Remote Sensing Data Intended for the Management and Detection of Cultural Sites: A Case Study of The Cyprus Area . . . . .	9
<i>D. G. Hadjimitsis, K. Themistocleous</i>	
The Harris Matrix Composer – A New Tool to Manage Archaeological Stratigraphy . . . . .	13
<i>C. Traxler, W. Neubauer</i>	
Comprehensive Low-Cost Documentation of Built Heritage Using Social Networks, Open Source Software and Rich Internet Applications . . . . .	21
<i>R. Fazal</i>	

## Digital Libraries

Planning of a Metric Historical and Documental Archive for the Realization of a City's Cultural Portal . . . . .	31
<i>M. D. Costantino, M. G. Angelini, G. Caprino</i>	
Web Archive Switzerland Collecting and Archiving Websites at the Swiss National Library . . . . .	39
<i>B. Signori</i>	
Biodiversity Heritage Library: Building a Digital Open Access Library for Biodiversity Literature. . . . .	45
<i>G. Higley</i>	

## Data Acquisition and Remote Sensing in Cultural Heritage II

A Multi-Resolution Methodology for Archeological Survey: The Pompeii Forum . . . . .	51
<i>G. Guidi, F. Remondino, M. Russo, A. Rizzi, F. Voltolini, F. Menna, F. Fassi, S. Ercoli, M. E. Masci, B. Benedetti</i>	
Integrated Digital Technologies to Support Restoration Sites: A New Approach Towards a Standard Procedure . . . . .	60
<i>F. Chiabrando, F. Nex, D. Piatti, F. Rinaudo</i>	
The Importance and Challenges of E-Documentation for the Conservation Field . . . . .	68
<i>V. Lysandrou, G. Stylianou</i>	
3D Digital Documentation for the Restoration of Cultural Heritage. The Experience of the Old City of Aleppo Rehabilitation Project . . . . .	74
<i>M. A. Núñez, F. Buill, J. Regot, A. Mesa</i>	
Recording and Documentation of Archaeological and Architectural Fragments Using Automated Stereo Photogrammetry . . . . .	79
<i>F. Henze, H. Burwitz, G. Siedler</i>	
The Legacy of Colonial Buildings in Khulna City - An Approach to Digital Documentation . . . . .	86
<i>H. Rahaman</i>	
Exploiting the Contemporary Topcon Imaging Total Station for Cultural Heritage Recording . . . . .	91
<i>A. Barakou, A. Georgopoulos, G. Pantazis</i>	
Mobile Lidar Mapping For Urban Data Capture . . . . .	95
<i>N. Haala, M. Peter, A. Cefalu, J. Kremer</i>	

## Digital Archives Online

Integration, Management and Preservation of Archaeological Digital Resources in the Era of Interoperability and Digital Libraries: The New Information System for the Superintendence of Naples and Pompeii . . . . .	103
<i>B. Benedetti, M. E. Masci, R. Cesana, A. Vecchi</i>	
Joining Italian Information System for National Archives: The Case of Rimini . . . . .	110
<i>G. Braschi</i>	
Online Access to Digital Collections – Design and Use of Museum Databases . . . . .	116
<i>I. Gil Fuentetaja, M. Economou</i>	
Collection Description in the European Information Landscape: Michael the Multilingual Inventory of Cultural Heritage in Europe . . . . .	121
<i>K. Fernie, G. De Francesco</i>	

Nestor – The German Network of Expertise in Digital Long-Term Preservation . . . . .	129
<i>N. Schumann</i>	
Digitization, Documentation and Dissemination of Dimitrios Kaslas' Archive . . . . .	132
<i>A. Kapaniaris, D. Economou, D. Charitos</i>	
Escidoc – A Service Infrastructure for Cultural Heritage Content . . . . .	138
<i>N. Bulatovic, U. Tschida, A. Gros</i>	
<b>CH Digital Documentation and Communication</b>	
A Web Based Gis for the Byzantine Churches of Cyprus . . . . .	147
<i>A. Agapiou, A. Georgopoulos, M. Ioannides, C. Ioannidis</i>	
Lessons Learned from Cultural Heritage Digitisation Projects in Crete . . . . .	152
<i>E. Maravelakis, M. Andrianakis, K. Psarakis, N. Bolanakis, G. Tzatzanis, N. Bilalis, A. Antoniadis</i>	
A Multimedia Application for Exploitation and Virtual Fruition of Ancient Archaeological Artifacts: The Experience of the 2nd Century Roman Balteus of Aosta . . . . .	157
<i>P. Salonia, T. Leti Messina, A. Marcolongo, A. Pozzi, S. Scolastico</i>	
Multimedia for Learning About Pre-Columbian Weavings in a Recreational Environment . . . . .	164
<i>D. Aracena-Pizarro, Y. Paredes-Orellana, J. Córdova-Gonzalez</i>	
<b>ICT</b>	
Tools for a Digital Reading of Andrea Palladio's I Quattro Libri Dell'architettura . . . . .	175
<i>S. Baldissini, G. Beltrami, M. Gaiani</i>	
Multispectral Acquisition and Analysis of Ancient Documents . . . . .	184
<i>F. Kleber, M. Lettner, M. Diem, M. C. Vill, R. Sablatnig, H. Miklas, M. Gau</i>	
Systemisation of Knowledge for the Conservation and Cultural Development of Piedmont's Mosaic Heritage . . . . .	192
<i>C. Coscia, E. Fregonara, A. Mainardi, U. Zich</i>	
Enrich: An Econtentplus Project for Creation of a European Digital Library of Manuscripts . . . . .	201
<i>A. Knoll, S. Psohlavec, T. Psohlavec, Z. Uhliř</i>	
<b>CH Digital Representations</b>	
Standards, Metadata, Ontologies: Culturaitalia Towards the Semantic Web . . . . .	209
<i>I. Buonazia, M. E. Masci, D. Merlitti, K. Ben Hamida, S. Di Giorgio</i>	
Multifunctional Encoding System for Assessment of Movable Cultural Heritage . . . . .	216
<i>V. Tornari, E. Bernikola, W. Osten, R. M. Groves, G. Marc, G. M. Hustinx, E. Kouloumpi, S. Hackney</i>	
3D Modeling and Semantic Classification of Archaeological Finds for Management and Visualization in 3D Archaeological Databases . . . . .	221
<i>A. M. Manferdini, F. Remondino, S. Baldissini, M. Gaiani, B. Benedetti</i>	
Standards and Guidelines for Quality Digital Cultural Three-Dimensional Content Creation . . . . .	229
<i>G. De Francesco, A. D'Andrea</i>	
Toponyms as Horizontal Layer in Documenting and Listing Cultural Items . . . . .	234
<i>G. I. Stassinopoulos</i>	
A Versatile Workflow for 3D Reconstructions and Modelling of Cultural Heritage Sites Based on Open Source Software . . . . .	238
<i>A. Koutsoudis, F. Arnaoutoglou, G. Pavlidis, D. Tsiafakis, C. Chamzas</i>	
Processing Cultural Heritage in Liguria: A Case Study Ingood Practice . . . . .	245
<i>E. Calandra, G. De Francesco, M. T. Natale</i>	
VENUS (Virtual Exploration of Underwater Sites) Two years of interdisciplinary collaboration . . . . .	250
<i>F. Alcala, A. Alcocer, F. Alves, K. Bale, J. Bateman, A. Caiti, M. Casenove, J. C. Chambelland, P. Chapman, G. Conte, O. Curé, P. Drap, A. Durand, K. Edmundson, L. Gambella, P. Gambogi, F. Gauch, K. Hanke, M. Haydar, J. Hue1, R. Jeansoulin, S. Jeffrey, L. Long, V. Loureiro, M. Maïdi, O. Papini, G. Pachoud, A. Pascoal, J. Richards, D. Roussel, D. Scaradozzi, L. Sebastiao, E. Seguin, J. Seinturier, M. Serayet, E. Wurbel, S. M. Zanoli</i>	
<b>Virtual Reality Applications in Cultural Heritage</b>	
Virtual Reality Technology in Museums: An Immersive Exhibit in the "Museo Leonardiano" . . . . .	261
<i>P. Fiamma, N. Adamo-Villani</i>	
The Development of an e-Museum for Contemporary Arts . . . . .	268
<i>P. Patias, Y. Chrysantou, S. Sylaiou, Ch. Georgiadis, D. M. Michail, S. Stylianidis</i>	

A Web-Based Virtual Museum Application . . . . .	275
<i>T. Kunkel, M. Averkiou, Y. Chrysanthou</i>	
Remote Virtual Access to 3D Photogrammetry: e-Vmv Virtual Museum of the Villa Reale in Monza . . . . .	278
<i>B. Raffaella, C. Branka, F. Francesco, D. Oreni</i>	
<b>Cultural Heritage Resource Information Systems</b>	
Come Back to the Fair . . . . .	289
<i>L. C. Walters, C. E. Hughes, E. Smith</i>	
The Communication Model of the Anthropology Museum:	
Case of Multimedia Informational-Exposition Complex of the St.-Petersburg Kunstkamera . . . . .	294
<i>T. G. Bogomazova, J. A. Kupina</i>	
Designing Interoperable Museum Information Systems . . . . .	297
<i>D. Gavrilis, G. Tsakonas, Ch. Papatheodorou</i>	
A Dynamic Workflow Management Framework for Digital Heritage and Technology Enhanced Learning . . . . .	303
<i>A. Al-Barakati, M. Z. Patoli, M. Gkion, W. Zhang, N. Beloff, P. Newbury, M. White</i>	
<b>Image Analysis</b>	
Extraction of Numeric Data from Multilingual Archaeological Papers . . . . .	311
<i>H. Paijmans</i>	
Video Active – European Television Heritage Online . . . . .	317
<i>J. Oomen, V. Tzouvaras, A. Hecht</i>	
Modeling Virtual Soundscapes:	
Recreating The 1950s West Oakland 7th Street within a Multi-User Virtual Environment . . . . .	322
<i>G. Kinayoglu</i>	
Focus K3D: Promoting the Use of Knowledge Intensive 3D Media . . . . .	329
<i>B. Falcidieno, M. Pitikakis, M. Spanguolo, M. Vavalis, C. Houstis</i>	
Abstand: Distance Visualization for Geometric Analysis . . . . .	334
<i>T. Ullrich, V. Settgast, D. W. Fellner</i>	
Image-Based Classification of Ancient Coins . . . . .	341
<i>M. Kampel, K. Vondrovec, M. Zaharieva, S. Zam banini</i>	
Experimenting Timelines for Artefacts Analysis: From Time Distribution to Information Visualisation . . . . .	349
<i>J. Y. Blaise, I. Dudek</i>	
X-Ray Ct: A Powerful Analysis Tool for Assessing the Internal Structure	
of Valuable Objects and for Constructing a 3D Database . . . . .	357
<i>J. Dewanckele, V. Cnudde, J. Vlassenbroeck, M. Dierick, Y. De Witte,</i>	
<i>D. Van Loo, M. Boone, K. Pieters, L. Van Hoorebeke, B. Masschaele, P. Jacobs</i>	
<b>ICT in Museums</b>	
Cross-Media and Ubiquitous Learning Applications on Top of Iconographic Digital Library . . . . .	367
<i>D. Paneva-Marinova, L. Pavlova-Draganova, R. Pavlova, M. Sendova</i>	
A Mobile Explorer for the Historical City of Salzburg . . . . .	372
<i>P. Costa, J. Pereira, A. Strasser, M. Strasser, T. Strasser</i>	
The Divine Project: Interactive Visitor Access to Archive	
and Scientific Multimedia Via Networked Hand-Held Computers And Mobile Devices . . . . .	380
<i>R. Pillay, G. Aitken, D. Pitzalis, J-L. Coudrot, D. Nicholson</i>	
<b>VR and 3D Modeling</b>	
Digital Ocean: a National Project for the Creation	
and Distribution of Multimedia Content for Underwater Sites . . . . .	389
<i>A. Dinis, N. Fies, N. Cheaib, S. Otmane, M. Mallem, A. Nisan, J. M. Boi, C. Noel, C. Viala</i>	
The Reconstruction of the Archaeological Landscape through Virtual Reality Applications:	
a Discussion about Methodology . . . . .	397
<i>L. Vico, V. Vassallo</i>	
Detailed 3D Reconstruction of the Great Inscription of Gortyna, Crete:	
Acquisition, Registration and Visualization of Multiresolution Data . . . . .	404
<i>F. Remondino, S. Girardi, L. Gonzo, F. Nicolis</i>	
The Search for the Lost Garden of the Court of the Lions: Re-Animation of a Heritage Landscape . . . . .	413
<i>M. Ma, N. Pollock-Ellwand</i>	

Digital Ravenna. Exploring the Town Three-Dimensionally . . . . .	419
<i>L. Cipriani, M. Ballabeni</i>	
Digital Delphi: The 3D Virtual Reconstruction of the Hellenistic Plunge Bath at Delphi . . . . .	427
<i>A. A. Gill, A. R. Flaten</i>	
The River and the Desert Multi Media as Strategy to Expand a Public Space . . . . .	431
<i>G. Riether</i>	
Memory of the Silk Road – The Digital Silk Road Project . . . . .	437
<i>K. Ono, A. Kitamoto, M. Onishi, E. Andaroodi, Y. Nishimura, M. R. Matini</i>	

## CROSS-MEDIA AND UBIQUITOUS LEARNING APPLICATIONS ON TOP OF ICONOGRAPHIC DIGITAL LIBRARY

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**KEY WORDS:** Digital Libraries, Ubiquitous Learning, Iconography

### ABSTRACT:

Today there are a large number of digital archives, libraries and museums with rich digital collections representing the European cultural and historical heritage. The new challenge shifts from having access to resources to making an effective use of them and avoiding information overload. A possible answer to this challenge is the approach, promoted by the LOGOS project *Knowledge-on-demand for Ubiquitous Learning*. In the frames of this project a learning platform has been developed in which the objects from large-scale repositories of digitized texts, graphics, audio and video materials are being transformed into learning content, taking into account possibilities for cross-media delivery among others. This has proved to be of a great importance when dealing with distributed artifacts. The present paper describes the process of transformation of the digital objects into learning content for the development of various coursewares. For this purpose the authors are using a specific learning scenario, viz. *Access-on-Demand for Studying East-Christian Culture and Art* developed on the basis of the LOGOS Authoring studio and the content of its knowledge repository *Virtual Encyclopedia of Bulgarian Iconography*.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

In an attempt to answer the need for presentation and preservation of the Bulgarian iconography, a team from the Institute of Mathematics and Informatics has developed a multimedia digital library called *Virtual Encyclopedia of Bulgarian Iconography* (<http://mdl.cc.bas.bg>). It was designed so as to provide wide accessibility and popularization of the works of the Bulgarian iconographers, and moreover to enable future precise restoration of the icons at risk.

The team having developed this digital library was involved in the European project LOGOS *Knowledge-on-Demand for Ubiquitous Learning*. The main objective of the project – to contribute to the adequate enhancing and facilitating the knowledge building during eLearning processes, presupposed the existence of large-scale repositories of digitized information and tools for their transformation into learning content. This made it natural to use the already developed *Virtual Encyclopedia of Bulgarian Iconography* as one of the knowledge repositories of the LOGOS platform. The present paper deals with the process of development of courseware on the basis of the information from the *Virtual Encyclopedia* starting with a short description of the digital library itself, then explaining the process of its transformation into LOGOS ontology and at the end – tracing the steps for the development of courseware objects.

### 2. THE VIRTUAL ENCYCLOPEDIA OF BULGARIAN ICONOGRAPHY

Up till now the digital library *Virtual Encyclopedia of Bulgarian Iconography* includes approximately one thousand digitized images of Bulgarian iconography by various artists, historical periods and schools. The digital objects are grouped into thematic collections according to their topics. For each object special detailed descriptions are created. They include

data about the title, the artist, the period of creation of the work, the school, the dimensions, the technique, the base material, the category, the location, the author (biographic data), comments, etc. An important part of the digital library is the one with the descriptions of iconographic techniques and significant iconographic schools – works and biographies of well-known Bulgarian iconographic artists. A glossary of important terms is also included. The works presented in the library originate from the twelfth to the beginning of twentieth centuries. Amongst them specimens from the following schools and regions of Bulgaria are included: Bansko-Razlog iconographic school, Triavna iconographic school, Samokov iconographic school, icons from Veliko Turnovo, Sozopol, Rila Monastery, Arbanassi, etc.

This digital library contains diverse hypertext-organized collections of information (digital objects such as text, images, and media objects) to be used by many different users. Its main characteristics (e.g. ability to share information, new forms and formats for information presentation, easy information update, accessibility from anywhere, at any time, services available for searching, selecting, grouping and presenting digital information, extracted from a number of locations) are of a great importance for the access-on-demand learning. Using these services depends on the user's preferences, needs and wishes, i.e. there is personalization available, contemporary methods and tools for digital information protection and preservation, ability to use different types of computer equipment and software, etc. (Pavlov and Paneva, 2005).

In the past digital libraries were isolated and monolithic systems limited to access to content of a single provider. The development of the technologies during the last years provides new functionalities and advanced services to contemporary digital libraries such as specialized services for multi-layer and personalized search, context-based search, relevance feedback, resource and collection management, metadata management, learning content personalization and context awareness, content

indexation, semantic annotation of digital resources and collection, etc.

In order that digital libraries could be used efficiently as a source of knowledge in the eLearning specific features and principles are to be formulated. Here follow some examples.

- Digital libraries are expected to provide knowledge resources to the end user on-demand.
- Furthermore, they should provide tools and technologies in support of indexing, cataloguing, retrieving, aggregating, and creatively exploiting different textual, non-textual and complex objects and resources.
- In addition, the new eLearning trends require the implementation of tools for personalized preference-based access to digital libraries. Thus the data presented to the user would be reduced significantly as a result of filtering, extracting and aggregating digital objects in accordance with his/her preferences
- The objects in the digital libraries should be segmented, annotated and semantically indexed so that metadata attached to them could include semantic descriptions based on appropriate domain ontologies.
- The metadata should be written by means of standard description languages and stored in an appropriate metadata repository. The management services should enable a content-search on various parameters including efficient retrieval based on Boolean and similarity queries. It is important that any approach would facilitate the retrieval rather than force the user to search across the entire resource.
- Moreover, digital libraries should establish protocols, standards and formats most appropriate for the use and the assembly of distributed digital libraries and their resources (cf. Pavlov and Paneva, 2006).

### 3. THE ONTOLOGY OF BULGARIAN ICONOGRAPHICAL OBJECTS

As already mentioned, the digital library *Virtual Encyclopedia of Bulgarian Iconography* had to be transformed into domain ontology so as to be used as a learning content inside the LOGOS Authoring Studio. This ontology was named *Bulgarian Iconographical Objects*. In the hierarchy of data models of LOGOS architecture the digital objects are media objects accompanied by identification, technical and semantic metadata. Learning objects are (combinations of) digital objects, complemented by educational metadata (Marinchev et al., 2007). Courseware objects integrate learning objects according to schemes of learning experiences (Arapi et al., 2007). Authors of learning materials have access to digital archives. They search for appropriate digital objects, and combine them in learning objects and further – in courseware objects using the services of the LOGOS Authoring Studio. The aim of offering an easy access to digital archives determines the requirements to the *Bulgarian Iconographical Objects* ontology and its development process.

The *Bulgarian Iconographical Objects* ontology was implemented by means of the Ontology Management Tool of the LOGOS Authoring Studio called CoGui (see: <http://gforge.lirmm.fr/projects/cogui>) and was developed in the Montpellier Laboratory of Computer Science, Robotics, and Microelectronics. CoGui provides functionality to create and maintain multilingual vocabularies of concept types and relation

types and also functionality for posing constraints, rules, fact graphs, prototypical graphs, pattern graphs, etc.

During the creation of the *Bulgarian Iconographical Objects* ontology the concepts and properties of CIDOC ontology were observed. Parts of them were used in our ontology, other parts were transformed in order to fit for the iconography domain, and several concepts did not belong to the CIDOC Conceptual Reference Model ontology.

The chosen digital library architecture is a hypermedia digital library. The resources are digital objects of different formats – text, graphics, and other media. They are structured in a hypermedia manner, i.e., some digital objects point to other ones. In this way the user can navigate quickly, in a non-linear fashion, within areas of related topics, using the hyperlinks. In this stage the *Search* service aids the visitors in finding a certain object by the following criteria: icon title, author, period, type, school, region and location. The search can be conducted by one or by more criteria. Our current development provides personalized and context-based search (Paneva et al., 2005, Pavlov et al., 2005, Pavlova-Draganova et al., 2006).

The LOGOS project addresses innovative development of the main components of the learning processes – resources, services, communication spaces. It aims at achieving new functionality of the learning communication spaces by integrated web, digital television and mobile technologies, supporting cross-media learning content. New eLearning management systems based on this integration are orientated towards an improvement and an extension of the learning services within new consistent pedagogical scenarios. The use of annotated and adequately structured knowledge from digital archives enables lecturers/authors to participate in *open source* content development from massive, dynamically growing learning resources (LOGOS).

### 4. ACCESS-ON-DEMAND FOR STUDYING EAST-CHRISTIAN CULTURE AND ART

The various project teams, from eight partner countries, generated future usage scenarios related to different user groups, contexts and topics. Scenarios are used in systems design to describe typical or important uses of the system as narratives or stories. They are designed to give designers, developers, users and managers a shared understanding of the purpose of the system and the ways it will be of use in practice (Pemberton et al., 2007).

The scenario we are going to present here is *Access-on-demand for studying East-Christian culture and art*, developed by the team of IMI. It is created according to several learning situations and communication channels. It involved a wide range of users both attached and unattached to formal educational programs. The scenario has several variants and for each of them the following characteristics are specified: learning background (topic area), learning situation, link to curriculum, learning setting i.e. support, place, time, devices used, learner background (age range, role and occupation, motivation type, etc.), planned learning activities, types of material accessed, specific objectives, learning approach, interactive functions needed/used by learner glossary, etc. (Pavlov and Paneva, 2006).



## 5. LOGOS AUTHORIZING PROCESS

From a user's point of view, one could imagine various authoring scenarios for courseware development for Learners using content residing at external archives. The simplest and straightforward scenario presented here is the bottom-up scenario, starting with the creation of *media objects*. This overall scenario is depicted in Figure 1.

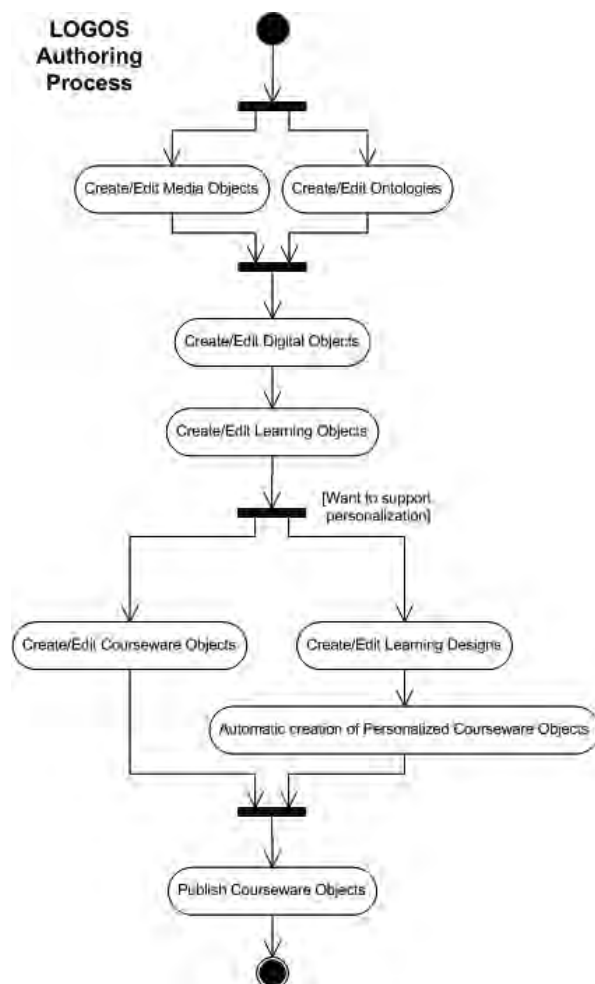


Figure 1: The overall authoring process in LOGOS

The editing process starts with building *media objects* and *ontologies* which form the basis of *digital objects* to be used further to create higher level objects (e.g. *learning objects* and *courseware objects*). Creating *media objects* and *ontologies* can take place in parallel.

The next step in the LOGOS authoring process is the creation of *digital objects*. This activity essentially consist in attaching appropriate metadata to the available *media objects* (or to parts of them) in order to include semantic annotations based on the available *ontologies*.

One can further create *learning objects* as collections of related *digital objects* that can be used to accomplish a specific learning objective. Such collections are further enriched by the *learning object metadata* (LOM).

The usage of *learning objects* in order to create *courseware objects* represents the next step in the process. It can be done in two approaches:

- One can statically create *courseware objects* by defining hierarchies of *learning objects* and by specifying their sequencing and presentation characteristics. (This is the most straightforward option.)
- If one wants to support personalization appropriate *learning designs* should be defined first. These are abstract training scenarios capturing the pedagogical characteristics of a training process for a certain subject without direct reference to the *learning objects* available for implementation of this training process.

The binding of training activities with the *learning objects* is done by an automatic mechanism enabling the creation of personalized *courseware objects* based on information about the user characteristics (this information can be extracted from a *learner profile*). The output of this automatic process represents *courseware objects* similar to the ones created manually in the case of static *courseware creation*.

The final activity in the authoring process is the publishing of *courseware objects* ready to be used by the *learners* by means of different devices (PCs, mobile devices, digital TV). Publishing a *courseware object* essentially means to decide on how the content will be presented to the end-user and what devices will be supported (Pavlova-Draganova et al., 2007).

Let us illustrate the static approach for the development of a courseware object entitled *Leading Bulgarian iconographic schools – style and achievements of the Bansko-Razlog iconographic school*. We used the *Courseware objects editor* to create the courseware objects by defining a hierarchy of the following *learning objects* (LO):

- LO1: Introduction to Bansko-Razlog iconographic school;
- LO2: Famous iconographic characters painted by iconographers from Bansko-Razlog iconographic school;
- LO3: Famous iconographic scenes painted by iconographers from Bansko-Razlog iconographic school;
- LO4: Saint Nicholas painted by iconographers from Bansko-Razlog iconographic school and other famous iconographic schools;
- LO5: *The Nativity of Christ* scene painted by iconographers from Bansko-Razlog iconographic school and other famous iconographic schools.

As it can be seen the *learning objects* follow the natural steps of the learning process: introduction to the iconographic school as a whole, presentation of the images of characters famous for this iconographic school, presentation of iconographical scenes representative of this iconographic school, and orientation between the various styles of representation of one and the same scene or character in the different iconographic schools.

All the *learning objects* are being managed in the *learning objects repository*. They are built on top of digital objects and enriched by *learning metadata*.

To develop the *learning objects* of *Leading Bulgarian iconographic schools – style and achievements of the Bansko-Razlog iconographic school* courseware object we used the *Description tool for learning objects*. By means of this tool we created *learning metadata* for digital objects and combinations

of such objects. For this purpose we used some *digital objects* (DO), viz.

- LO1:
  - DO1 – School description (shows several specimens created by famous iconographers from the Bansko-Razlog iconographic school);
  - DO2 – Representative specimens' demonstration
- LO2:
  - DO1 – *The Holy Mother of God* (The Virgin Hodegetria) character by D. Molerov, Bansko-Razlog iconographic school;
  - DO2 – *The Blessing Christ* character by unknown iconographer, Bansko-Razlog iconographic school;
  - DO3 – *Saint John the Forerunner* character by unknown iconographer, Bansko-Razlog iconographic school (Figure 1);
  - DO4 – *Saint Archangel Michael* character by I. Terziev, Bansko-Razlog iconographic school;
  - DO5 – *Saint George* character by unknown iconographer, Bansko-Razlog iconographic school;
  - DO6 – *Saint Dimiter* character by D. Sirleshtov, K. Marunchev, Bansko-Razlog iconographic school.



Figure 1: *Saint John the Forerunner* character by unknown iconographer, Bansko-Razlog iconographic school

- LO3:
  - DO1 – *The Holy Forty Martyrs* scene by unknown iconographer, Bansko-Razlog iconographic school;
  - DO2 – *The Ascension of the Prophet Elijah* scene by unknown iconographer, Bansko-Razlog iconographic school;
  - DO3 – *The Elevation of the Venerable Cross* scene by D. Sirleshtov, K. Marunchev, Bansko-Razlog iconographic school;
  - DO4 – *The Ascension into Heaven of Christ* scene by D. Molerov, Bansko-Razlog iconographic school.
- LO4:
  - DO1 – *Saint Nicholas* character by D. Molerov, Bansko-Razlog iconographic school (Figure 2);

- DO2 – *Saint Nicholas* character by Ch. Dimitrov, Samokov iconographic school;
- DO3 – *Saint Nicholas* by D. Zograph from Sozopol, Strandja iconographic school;
- DO4 – *Saint Nicholas* by S. Tsanyov, Tryavna iconographic school

- LO5:
  - DO1 – *The Nativity of Christ* scene by T. Vishanov, Bansko-Razlog iconographic school (Figure 3);
  - DO2 – *The Nativity of Christ* scene by unknown iconographer, Strandja iconographic school;
  - DO3 – *The Nativity of Christ* scene by unknown iconographer, Tryavna iconographic school.



Figure 3: *The Nativity of Christ* by T. Vishanov, Bansko-Razlog iconographic school

All the *digital objects* are managed in the *Digital objects repository*. They are created on top of *media objects* or parts of them, annotated and indexed with administrative and semantic metadata. As far as the *media objects* are concerned, they are being managed in the *Media server*. They are coming from external content archives – in our case the *Virtual Encyclopedia of Bulgarian Iconography*.

We have presented in a nut shell the experience of our team in transforming a digital library into a knowledge repository. During our joint work in the context of the LOGOS project we gained a deeper understanding of the new opportunities the digital libraries offer as a learning resource.

An experimental testing of such scenarios is currently being carried out among university lecturers and students and the analysis of the results will be available in the nearest future.

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