The digital Photo library project at the National library of Tunisia: failure reasons and the path success

مشروع رقمنة مكتبة الصور بدار الكتب الوطنيّة بتونس: أسباب الفشل وسبل النجاح

MADANI Emna
University of Manouba
Higher Institute of Documentation - Manouba, Tunisia.
Doctor in heritage sciences
teacher at the Higher Institute of Documentation
Permanent member of the Research Unit "Digital Library and Heritage".
madani_emna@yahoo.fr **Head of the Periodical Department of the National Library**

Abstract

The photographic library of the National Library of Tunisia is a unique fund with varying size. It is considered as a "treasure" of the country's history and living memory. However, this fund remains particularly fragile and is likely to disappear and its preservation is a big challenge.

In this study, we expose the experiment of digitalization of the photographic heritage of the National library of Tunisia and highlight the different problems which prevented the launching of the digital photographic library. Then, we make some suggestions in order to reconsider the photographic digitalization of the fund at the National Library of Tunisia

Keywords: *Photographic heritage, Digitalization, Digital photographic library, digital backup, National Library of Tunisia*

ملخص

تمثل مكتبة الصور بدار الكتب الوطنيّة بتونس رصيدا ذو خصوصيّة، بأحجام مختلفة، حيث تعتبر "كنز" يعكس تاريخنا وذاكرتنا. ورغم أهميته، مازال هذا الرصيد هشّا ويوشك على الإضمحلال، الأمر الذي ألزم رفع التحدي من أجل الحفاظ عليه.

لكن يبدو أنّ عمليّة الحفظ نفسها تطرح إشكالا، وهو ما سنتعرض إليه من خلال تجربة دار الكتب الوطنيّة في رقمنة هذا التراث المصوّر، مع تناول جملة العراقيل التي حالت دون نجاح المكتبة الصور الرقميّة، مع تقديم اقتراحات من أجل إعادة التفكير في رقمنة رصيد مكتبة الصور بدار الكتب الوطنيّة بتونس.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تراث مكتبة الصور، الرقمنة، مكتبة الصور الرقميّة، الحفظ الرقمي، دار الكتب الوطنيّة بتونس.

1. Introduction:

To be present in the information society is conditioned by a policy of digitalization of the various types of patrimonial collections and by making them available to users.

It is in this direction, we will explore the migration from the analogical photographic library towards the digital library; and we will take the case of one of the patrimonial funds of the National library of Tunisia, which are the collections of the photographic libraries.

The photographic library of the National library of Tunisia is a unique fund. It represents both the history and the culture of Tunisia. Although this fund illustrates and enriches our memory, it remains particularly fragile and lacks sufficient indication. For this reason, the challenge of preserving this heritage invites us to act.

In fact, the challenge is twofold - to preserve these contents of information and to keep them accessible to users who need to have remote access to this fund.

This particularly complex challenge puts to us in the obligation to ask the following question: Could the success of the process of digitalization of the photographic heritage be accomplished with the existence of a range of scientific and technical failures?

Through this article, we will try to present this fund, and highlight the ambitious attempts of the National library of Tunisia to save and provide a virtual access to its visual fund. We will also depict the various causes and problems which prevent online access to this fund.

I. THE PROJECT OF THE DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHIC LIBRARY AT THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF TUNISIA

The photographic library of the National library of Tunisia is a small cell which carries a work related to cultural activities, organized politics, like the centenaries of famous people. It is primarily founded on the basis of the fund of the Ministry of Culture located at the National Library.

This funds is characterized by its wealth and its variety, with a wide geographic and historic coverage that counts more than 85000 visual documents:

Type of Support	Colored Black and white	Format	Volume of the fund
Slides Slide. Duplicate	Colored	24x36 24x36	=2000
Films	Colored Black and white	6x6 4x36	=57312 =16.629
Enlarged	Colored Black and white	middle (20x30-0x40-50x60)	=700
Boards	Colored Black and white	6x6 36x24	=7500
Photographs	Colored Black and white	Various formats	unspecified
Postcards	Colored Black and white	15x9	=1102

The classification references are generally based on a set of themes and geographical classification under topics such as "archaeology", "national movement", "Cinematographic Days of Carthage", "Theatrical Days of Carthage", "architecture and urban planning", "Tunisian personalities", "Music", "Crafts industry", "painters' exhibitions" as well as presentations organized by the Library.

The conditions of storage are very often inappropriate and even disastrous. This visual heritage is gathered in a room which lacks ventilation, with very high temperature in summer and very low temperature in winter.

The boards are arranged in rusted steel drawers. The films are stored in steel boxes and the slides in wooden drawers. The postcards are piled up in archives boxes as well as a large number of photos.

In order to meet this situation, the National Library of Tunisia proceeded to the digitalization of this photographic heritage. The objective is twofold: its conservation and providing remote access of this fund to users. Thus, the first project for installation of a digital photographic library was launched.

1. Photographic digitalization of the funds

Since 2009, a digitalization campaign was lunched and made it possible to digitize approximately 6000 photographs representative of the diversity of the funds (cards, photographs,…). Stressing the value of these virtual collections continues within the framework of the defined programs of digitalization, but also according to the needs of the library for iconographic reproduction.

The digitalization of the photographic library required a set of devices: A Scanner HP 5590 accompanied by an adapter, a Nikon camera without memory card reader, and a camera in bad condition.

To ensure the operation of the cell, one personal staff was added to the team of the photographic library, which was composed of a technician of photography and two documentalists who ensure the technical task of image processing, a multimedia technician for the digitalization of the phototypes, a worker responsible for the collection of the notes and their images. He was responsible for saving them on the server and linking them to the data base management system.

The photo cell currently functions with two people who make the various processing stages of the iconographic storage device.

2. Problems of the digital photographic library of the National Library of Tunisia

In spite of all efforts during five years and the digitalization of 6000 photographs, the project has not come into existence yet. So, no remote access to the photographs is available. Consultation is only on the spot in the reading room of the library.

Generally speaking, these problems can be partly due to the staff of the National library:

- The Structuring and documentary description
- Segmentation[1]and visual extraction
- Conceptual and terminological structuring
- Representation of the documents and their metadata,
- Reading tools and appropriation (Bachimont, B., 1998).

In addition, the managers of the photographic library of the National library did not think of the question of right[1]. In order to ensure a legal use of the documents, they must be analyzed legally. What types of rights does the document require? Whose permission is required?

A wide range of rights falls down documents: copyrights, property rights, rights of use of the image and of the people represented (Massignon, V., 2002, p111).

To overcome these obstacles in the first attempt to set up the digital photographic library, it is necessary to reconsider the digitalization of the photographic library by putting focusing on the scientific and technical challenges of this process.

II. RECONSIDERING THE DIGITALIZATION OF THE PHOTOGRAPHIC LIBRARY OF THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF TUNISIA: SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL CHALLENGES:

The components to be taken into account at the time of setting up a digitalization program are multiple and many questions need to be answered. Highlighting the collections through a bank of digital photographs indeed requires to define the objectives of such a program, desired contents (Debreux, J-B, 1999.), potential uses of these data, targeted public, processing standards and conservation conditions…

To build a digital photographic library thus implies a coherent vision of all these elements, especially in the production phase. The architecture of the project makes it possible to go beyond the simple logic of production by putting the digitized collections in the center of an editorial policy, by putting the image databases in a network, both at the level of services provided by the National library as well as through its portal[2].

1. The policy of digitalization and documentary treatment

Two aspects are to be treated in any project: the policy of digitalization and documentary processing.

The digitalization of the collections represents the migration of the physical collections into an immaterial aspect, from real towards virtual, from text towards hypertext… This made it possible to have a digital library, which has to create and constitute a collection starting from the following two criteria:

Intellectual criteria: this criteria allows to find sets of themes, chronologies, cultural contexts relating to the visual fund.

Functional criteria: this criteria is based on the selection of the photographs that we think are rare or difficult to access because of their preservation constraints.

With two other preconditions to be taken into consideration: to defined the objectives and be clear on legal aspects in order to ensure a good digitalization policy. Thus, before starting the digitalization process, some questions need to be addressd to ensure the success of the project:

- Which documents we have to digitize?
- Under which format we need to store our digitized documents?
- How to locate information?
- Who will do the work?
- What are the financial, material and human resources necessary for the project?

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[1] - The only signs of the respect of the right are the Bibliographic indication of the photographer's name and an electronic stamp on the photo which mentions the name of the national library of Tunisia

[2] - The National Library of Tunisia has chosen for the moment the diffusion in local networks

That imposes the implementation of the following stages: First stage: the digitalization of a photographic library could not take place without considering the technical, financial and human consequences of the project.

Second stage: define the system from different perspectives documentary, exploitation, management.

Third stage: determine an implementation plan that will describe the stages and the steps of the selected approach (Comment informatiser une photothèque , 1984, pp10-11).

Then, it is necessary to choose sectors of image processing to be able to digitize these documents, either by companies which will be in charge of the order or by the company which owns the collection of photographs (Kattnig, C., 2003) , which is the National library of Tunisia.

Concerning the documentary processing which allows direct access to the image, it is necessary to apply the AFNOR NZ44-077 1997 standard of catalographic description (Blum, C., 2009). In similar vein, indexing[3], also seems important to provide the essential elements (Blum, C., 2009).

Classifications always exist and are often accompanied by complementary lists which will highlight form, genre or the connotation of the image.

The legend must be precise. It must bring a certain number of additional information to those directly given by the image such as the date, identification of the principal elements represented in the image whether they are human, geographical, scientific…

Similarly, any photo must carry information on the service provider in order to define the identity of the photographic library, as well as on the document itself by stating the reference of the photography, taking into account the importance of necessary elements "obligatory elements" such as the name of the author, copyrights.

These elements need to be legible and have to appear on the photographs or slides. They are, if possible, announced by the formula "obligatory elements" in order to allow the user of the photograph to respect this obligation, as well as the "recommended obligatory elements" which would remain to the user certain characteristics related to the use of a photograph such as the limited use, copyright of the photograph (Gérer une photothèque , 1994, p17).

2. Migration of the data and modes of communication

As we address the technical and scientific challenges the digitalization project of the photographic library of the National Library of Tunisia has to cope with, it is necessary to think of the factors which influence the survival and the integrity of the visual information during its migration from analogical to the digital form: the storage format, the way of handling the documents and their storage conditions, and the longevity of the formats (Supports audiovisuels et numériques, 2010) : TIFF, JPEG, etc. In addition, the metadata must be integrated into the document which must contain all necessary technical information such as the level of compression, the size of the files, the number of pixels, the formats, etc…

Taking into consideration these specificities would allow a wide online diffusion of the photographic fund through the Internet, and to ensure an opened access, it is necessary to make sure that the electronic documents can be accessible only through their electronic addresses, in other words, digital contents are exploitable only through one index which gives access to it (Bachimont, B. 1998).

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[3] - Visual content must be paraphrased verbatim to refer to a given interpretation and practice. All documentary practices of the visual must therefore include a textual rewriting of the image to make it possible to access it

It is in this direction that the specialists in documentation of the National Library of Tunisia will try to launch again the digitalization project of the photographic library in order to overcome the various problems and give not only internal virtual access but also online access to users, which imposes the provision of tools to assist users in the form of:

- ✓ Guided, expert and free research working modes.
- ✓ Develop classifications for online search.
- ✓ A special attention for the treatment and the posting of the legend (C. Kattnig, C., 2003).

It is also necessary to take into account the general terms of communication, which define the relationship between the photographic library and its users, by specifying the obligations and the responsibilities for each one.

III. CONCLUSION

The Tunisian historical photographic fund has proved particularly difficult to grasp.
To achieve this, library tools and digital technology applications appear as solutions that respect the image in its own form, while ensuring reduced storage and remote access, which would enhance this fund and to get him out of anonymity, by relaunching his activity and the prestige of the library again.
But to succeed in the project of digitization of photographic collections at the Tunisian National Library, and to guarantee its durability, it is necessary to take into account certain specific techniques of conservation and normative diffusion, in view of the fact that, it is a work which requires a great implication because of the many aspects to be treated.

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