

Academic Review

**by Prof. Georgeta Nazarska, Ph.D.,
ULSIT, Sofia**

**for the dissertation of Vessela Vasileva Georgieva on ‘*Digitalization as a
Factor for the Development of Museums*’,**

submitted at the Faculty of Philosophy of the ‘*St. Kliment Ohridski*’ Sofia
University for obtaining a Ph.D. degree into 3.5. Professional Field, ‘*Information
and Search Systems*’ Doctoral Program

1. Procedure for the defense of the Ph.D thesis

According to Order RD 38-102/19.02.2024 of the Rector of the Sofia University, I was elected as a member of scientific jury for review of Vessela Vasileva Georgieva's dissertation on ‘*Digitalization as a factor for the development of museums*’, which was completed under the scientific supervision of Prof. Ivanka Mavrodieva, D.Sc.

Vessela Georgieva obtained her Bachelor's degree in Library and Information Studies (2018) and her Master's degree in Cultural Heritage Management and Socialization (2019) at the Sofia University. She was a part-time lecturer of ‘*Museology*’ and ‘*Project Management*’, and from 2022 she is working at the Institute of Mathematics and Informatics at the BAS. In 2020, she was enrolled at the Department of Library Studies, Scientific Information and Cultural Policy at the Faculty of Philosophy of the Sofia University as a full-time doctoral student in 3.5. Professional Field, ‘*Information and Search Systems*’ Doctoral Program. In December 2023, after successfully completing training according to her individual

curriculum, she was awarded with the right to defend the doctorate thesis, and her dissertation work was discussed and directed to a scientific jury.

The provided documents give me reason to assert that the procedure has so far strictly followed the Regulation for the Application of the Development of the Academic Staff in Bulgaria Law, that the minimum national requirements of 80 points have been met and that all declarations for the absence of plagiarism are available.

2. Overview of the dissertation work, abstract and publications

The dissertation volume consists of 251 pages, structured as Introduction, three chapters, Conclusion, Bibliography and Appendix (with tables and data on the survey conducted and a glossary of key concepts). The layout follows BDS ISO 7144:2011.

The dissertation is dedicated to a current and significant problem for cultural institutions around the world - the digitalization of their work in the conditions of a global technological revolution. The author studies museums in particular and specifically the inclusion of Bulgarian museums in this process. She chooses the interdisciplinary perspective of museology and information sciences and sets herself ambitious tasks aimed at assessing the current situation and at outlining the opportunities and threats that digitization creates for the educational, promotion, research and communication function of museums.

The dissertation is structured in three chapters, two theoretical and one empirical. The first one is dedicated to museums, with introducing of basic concepts, observation of their typology, main functions and relationship with tourism. The Second Chapter deals with digitalization in normative and technological aspects, raising the issues of digital access and digital inequalities.

In Chapter Three, the doctoral student motivates and formulates a methodology for her own qualitative empirical study and analyzes its results. It was personally conducted by her in 2020-2023 and based on well-established concepts in information technology and in the new museology. Although it has not representative, it contains convincing conclusions. This chapter directly corresponds to the Appendix, where all the documentation of the study is attached. Overall, it is a good evidence for author's abilities to apply methods from different sciences and to conduct large-scale field research.

Using the methods of analysis of the content of museum websites and a mixed-type survey distributed by e-mail, in the Third Chapter Vessela Georgieva proves that digitalization is currently a real challenge for the Bulgarian museum network, which prevents it from developing currently with similar institutions abroad. According to the survey, in the Bulgarian museums digitization is not a management priority, it is perceived as a means for popularization, preservation of cultural values and facilitation of internal document circulation, but not as a tool for PR and marketing, facilitating public access to museum collections or attracting diverse audiences. The reasons for this are listed and commented on by the author, namely: unqualified, unmotivated and non-initiative staff, incl. low competence of the principals, scarce technical, material and financial resources, lack of an adequate normative framework, ignorance and reluctance to study foreign experience, etc. In this sense, museum digitization in Bulgaria is at an initial stage and is characterized by sporadicity, self-activity, limitation and poor results.

I find these conclusions correct and important, describing a situation requiring immediate action by the competent authorities. At the same time, however, I believe

that they would be even more convincing if a comparison of museum digitization in our country with another country or region was made.

The dissertation is the result of the author's independent work, which has complied with all scientific ethical standards. There are no elements of plagiarism in the text. The abstract accurately represents the content of the doctorate and is compiled according to the established national standard.

The dissertation work has been approved in three conferences and through three publications. Printed in book collections in Bulgarian, they completely follow the topic, reflect essential parts of the doctorate and carry the necessary 30 points according to the minimum national requirements for the Ph.D. degree.

3. Critical Notes and Recommendations

Vessela Georgieva successfully coped with the challenges during the almost 3-year pandemic restrictions, which coincided with the period of preparation of her dissertation and made it really difficult to conduct the empirical study and to access to scientific resources. It seems to me that the doctorate would have benefited from drawing on more secondary sources and commenting on them in detail in the Introduction, as is the academic tradition.

Conclusion

'Digitalization as a factor for the development of museums' is an author's, original and skillfully prepared study and possesses the scientific contributions required and claimed by its author.

Therefore, I give my **positive assessment** of it and propose to the respected scientific jury to award Vessela Vasileva Georgieva Ph.D. degree in the 3.5. Professional Field, *'Information and Search Systems'* Doctoral Program.

Sofia, March 31st, 2024

Signature:.....

(Prof. Georgeta Nazarska, Ph.D.)