

Chapter XV

Posting Articles about Excavations in Electronic Forums

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents how forums can expand authors' or speakers' ability to reach new audiences with their lecture series, conferences and workshops. Focused on archaeological purposes, this chapter aims to show how learning communities could support knowledge by mixing different electronic media of communication.

Defining as an electronic journal (e-journal) one which is distributed to some or all of its primary subscribers in electronic form and as a paper journal (p-journal) one that is distributed exclusively in paper form (Kling & Covi, 1995), we can quickly understand that the number of e-journals is growing rapidly, including fields purely theoretical, such as archaeology. Although debate swirls around questions of copyright (see chapter 13), peer review, and publishing costs, individual

authors are taking action in this arena by posting their articles to personal or institutional Web pages and to disciplinary repositories.

Electronically enhanced forums provide more sources of information and communication, but also alter the ways that people speak and interact. As a result of the audience's scale-up in size, space and time, the informal give and take between speakers and listeners becomes more difficult. On the other hand, people reading an article may privately revise sections to enhance their comprehension, while in a face-to-face meeting they may have to ask questions.

To this direction, this chapter firstly describes the problem of designing a system to support archaeological knowledge, shows the way that this problem could be solved and proposes SEE-ArchWeb as a system for posting hypermedia articles.

“BALKANIZATION” AS A CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL REALITY

Having taken its name from the fragmentary and divisive nature of the 20th century Balkans, the geopolitical term “balkanization” has come to refer to any region or society with internal turmoil or divisions. At the same time, it is being used to express the divergence over time of languages.

In both cases, “balkanization” is an indisputable reality nowadays and reflects current relationships among nations. In this sense, although the unification process of the EU is believed to be a given today, problems such as the downgrading of less widespread languages such as Balkan languages and dialects still remain unsolved, mostly due to the predominance of English, French or German in the scientific, political, economical and commercial world. Indicatively, there are nine officially acknowledged languages today in the Balkans, whose even existence is ignored by the majority of EU citizens. Some have no apparent relation to the other. Whatever the case is, the Balkans have to and will survive this “Babel,” together with all European Union states. Maintaining a country’s language is a multilateral case and duty of nations nowadays; it also concerns a place’s culture and its specific characteristics and lifestyle, which differentiate it from other nations. It has to do with ethnic identity and understanding of one’s existence over time.

It is exactly at this point where one could wonder how this notion of “balkanization” links to the scientific world and more specifically to the field of archaeology; the answer lies on a variety of levels. Despite the turmoil that shattered political stability in the Balkans, there is an indisputable linking factor which binds Balkan countries, a common point of reference: their past. The rich historical background and traditions in the Balkans are of great value and this is confirmed by the discovery of significant archaeological findings. However, political and economical circumstances

have hindered and undermined the spreading of their heritage.

Therefore, it is an urgent need to design a system that focuses exactly on supporting this aim and helping publish these countries’ history and culture. The implementation of such a scientific forum, fostering multilingual projects and equally promoting them comprises an effort toward this direction; to equate “balkanization” with the need for sustenance of different ethnic groups and societies. This system has to regard “balkanization” as a positive challenge: to show the potential of this term for the establishment of democratic processes, starting from the scientific world.

DESIGNING A SYSTEM TO SUPPORT ARCHAEOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE

The idea of creating an exhibition with visual content of archaeological findings from all around the globe, displaying full size pictures and copies of important Balkan artefacts, currently, located in foreign museums, seems that should take less time and money than actually gathering the artefacts and exhibiting them. In fact, a global exhibition with artefacts from different sites is considered impossible, as today’s museums are very reluctant in transporting and exhibiting artefacts into others’ exhibitions. Moreover, this transportation process would raise some threats to the artefacts (imagine the case where a truck transporting some of those valuables had an accident). Finally, some artefacts require special environmental circumstances in order to be kept and exhibited to the public.

An exhibition of photographs overcomes the bureaucracy issue and the dangers of transportation, as a simple gather and display of some photos of artefacts should not be so difficult. However, there are some other obstacles that should be taken

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