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PROBLEMS REGARDING THE APPLICATION OF INTERNET IN THE HISTORICAL RESEARCH

Abstract: The text consists of two different parts – theoretical and practical one. Theoretical part implies several problems regarding the application of Internet during the historical research: its significance and its positive sides, various problems a historian encounters during the course of such applications, its prospects in the future, etc. On the other hand, practical part of this text comprises the review of a number of various Internet sites significant for medieval history as well as those important for the modern history. Information about the contents and language are also given along with addresses of these sites.

Key words: historical research, internet, problems, solutions, citation, digitization.

Preface

The text consists of two different parts – theoretical and practical one. Theoretical part implies several problems regarding the application of the Internet during the historical research. The main purpose of this text is to point to the key problems and offer their possible solutions. At this time, there is no need to speak about the advantages of using the Internet. Everybody knows that the most important advantages of using the Internet in any research areas are:

- It accelerates the research
- It enables the access to the greater number of data
- It increases the quality of the research

I. Theoretical part

Some of the problems of using the Internet in historical research are:

Citation. The question of the citation is of crucial importance in the historical research because only through the critical apparatus it is possible to check out the facts and data, to which the author in his work is calling upon. In the printed works there, that is the usual standard, established in historical science. However, this standard does not exist in digitized works or narrative sources on the Internet. This fact, produce the serious problem of different possibilities. The address, the data of the last update, the name of the author, the title of the work, and the year of the printed version, if there is one and brackets are used in the different places or they don't even exists, are quoted. Specific

problem is also the pagination (often, the author is calling upon the single line from somebody's work or source. On the Internet page could be long like a book itself, article or the source). This problem causes numerous researchers not only from the field of history but also from closely related social sciences, to think that the data from the Internet could not be quoted properly.

Credibility of the data taken from the internet pages. The question of the information's credibility, concerning the facts in historical science, is essentially the question if one could give his full confidence to the certain information or not. The same question stays, if we are talking about the sources quoted from the Internet. This is also the question of the provenience of the Internet page, and possibility to compare it with printed version of the same source.

Small number of internet pages of the national scientific institutions containing primary sources and scientific studies. The third problem is that there are few internet pages of the national scientific institutions containing primary sources and scientific studies. Some of the institutes are, by our criteria and looking from our point of view, advanced, like for example, The National library of Serbia. Crucial problem is the absence of domestic internet sites, which can offer scientific results in digital form, which is far from large needs of researchers.

Lack of connection and communication with scientific institutions in other countries and the financial difficulties in obtaining the licenses for researchers. This problem derives from the question of cooperation, exchange of primary sources and the difficulties to raise enough funds for payment of the licenses. There is also a formal problem of lack in proper legal procedure, connected with the cooperation. On the other hand, there are some procedures which must be followed, in order to fulfil the necessary forms of registration and usage of different information bases.

Inadequate internet and computer skills of future historians, essential for their further development as researches. Final problem to which we want to point to is inadequate knowledge and skills of the future historians, needed in dealing with internet and computer, represents the problem even nowadays. However, in the very near future, it may become a serious obstacle, possibly producing permanent damage, by slowing or even stopping historians in their researches.

Some of possible solutions of these problems are:

Adjustment of citation rules with the universal standards. Solving the problem of the citation demands both the research of the universal standards concerning the presentation in digital form, and coordination in defining these standards. At the end of this article You can find an appendix with links to different Internet pages devoted to this issue.

Our recommendation is that the citation of a web-page should consist of following elements: author's last name, first name and (or) Initial(s), title of the document (in italic), title of complete work [if applicable], version or file number [if applicable], the name of the Internet site, the date of update [if different from access date], protocol and address, access path or directories and date of access (citation).

The citation of printing version of the document in digital format should also contain: Edition, Issue designation (for serials), publisher, place and date of publication, Standard number (e.g. ISBN, ISSN).

The problem, in both cases mentioned above, which still waits to be solved is the citation of a page number.

Verification of data credibility. Checking data credibility could be solved by making a difference between the sites that belong to the scientific institutions (archives, libraries, faculties, establishments etc.), from those which are insignificant. However when there is no printed version of narrative source, one should be very careful, for one can not be a hundred percent sure, that it isn't forgery, especially if the site isn't a representative one.

Further development of internet pages of the national scientific institutions in order to increase their quality and quantity. To solve the problem of small number of internet sites containing primary sources, as well as other scientific studies in digital form, it is essential to create and attach them on server in use. This server should be one that supports the large amount of data in digital form. The new studies should also be put on the internet and old ones that do not already exist there, should be digitized as soon as possible. These servers should be in local connection in order to be accessible for all researches, which are interested in its usage. In order to ensure the usage of the historical sources in digital format, further advancement in the field of digitization is a need and a necessity.

Digitization of primary sources and engagement of greater number of institutions and researchers in this process. Digitization of primary sources and engagement of greater number of institutions and researchers in this process is the solution for the lack of connection and communication with scientific institutions in other countries and the financial difficulties in obtaining the licenses for researchers. The involvement of the far greater number of institutions in the process of digitization requires some sort of a national project initiated at the state level. In this intended project many researchers from different institutions would be included. This way is the most efficient recipe to preserve the national heritage too. The question of finances, as the crucial problem of this project, has no answer as yet.

Cooperation with scientific institutions in other countries and financing of licenses. Solving the problem of non-connection with the scientific institutions abroad need established cooperation with those. In addition, the creation of national database could help to enhance the exchange with other international institutions. The question of licenses could be much simplified this way.

Organizing computer courses for students of history in order to improve their knowledge of Internet use. To solve the problem of future historians, unskilled for the internet and computers use, it is necessary to organize the courses for students. These courses already exist not only in the world, but also in the countries in our neighbourhood. In the University of Zagreb, there is the course, which is concerned with the application of the Internet during the historical research. This course should be also arranged at the Faculty of philosophy in Belgrade as the part of the course named

the Introduction in historical studies, and its goal would be to point to the citation principles, advanced search, and sites which enable on-line studying and researching.

2. Practical part

While in the first, theoretical part, we pointed to the problems, which often appear during internet use in the historical research, in the second, practical section, we shall present here a number of various internet sites, which characteristics show above mentioned problems, as well as the possibilities which internet allows. These sites are significant for medieval history as well as for the history of the period extending from the French revolution until the First World War. Information about the contents and language are also given along with addresses of these sites.

<u>Encyclopaedias</u>

The Catholic Encyclopaedia   http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/

This site is based upon the printed version of Catholic Encyclopaedia. This printed edition is from 1914. The transfer of data existing in printed edition of this encyclopaedia in digital form began in 1997. Today this site has nearly 12.000 articles from different research areas.

<u>The Middle Ages</u>

Internet Medieval Sourcebook   http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/sbook2.html

Internet Medieval Sourcebook has a large number of data taken from the sources. In addition, in some site sections, one could find various sources in the language of the original document, translations in English, and the native language of this site. With every source there is very detail information about it. One of the advantages is fact that this site contains numerous data from different branches of history, like history of religion, literature, arts, law, sex and gender etc.

Patrologia Latina Database   http://pld.chadwyck.co.uk/

This site is representative example of the site, which is both very important and inaccessible for our historians. Its content can not be used without previous registration. That applies the necessity of significant financial support, which considering our science conditions is not easy to provide for. For one scientist this problem is big enough, especially considering the fact, that this site contains large number of significant data for science research.

Willkommen im Mittelalter!   http://www.tu-harburg.de/~vbp/docs/medi.html

The site dedicated to the special questions about medieval German history, and contains numerous data from different branches of history, like history of religion, literature, arts,

law, sex and gender etc. It's also contains links to music, images, games. Because of this it's an example of a good site for students teaching. And of course it is in German.

Modern European History

The British Empire http://www.britishempire.co.uk/

At its peak, the British Empire was the largest formal empire that the world had ever known. As such, its power and influence stretched all over the globe, shaping it in all manner of ways. This site is dedicated to analyzing the history of the British Empire: the triumphs, the humiliations, the good that it brought and the bad that it inflicted. For better or worse the British Empire had a massive impact on the history of the world. It is for this reason that this site tries to bring to life the peoples, cultures, adventures and domination that made the Empire such a powerful institution.

Deutsches Reich http://www.deutsche-kaiserreich.de/

This site primarily deals with the history of the German Empire in the period extending from its formation in 1871 until the end of the First World War in 1918. But it also contains an overview of the German colonies, the ships of the imperial navy, the *Kronländer* of the Habsburg Monarchy, the cantons of the Swiss confederation and the Principality of Liechtenstein in contemporary postcards and texts. It contains very large amount of information as to the problems it deals with. There are texts, chronologies, maps, illustrations, heraldic symbols, contemporary photographs, postcards, graphics and even hymns, not only of German Empire, but also of every state it consisted of.

World War 1 Document Archive http://www.lib.byu.edu/~rdh/wwi/

World War 1 Document Archive offers shining example of the site with complete works of interest for a historian, such as diaries, memoirs, conventions, treaties, official papers, personal reminiscences, the works devoted to special topics etc. This archive of primary documents from World War I has been assembled by volunteers of the World War I Military History List (WWI-L). The archive is international in focus and intends to present in one location primary documents concerning the Great War.

Historical Geography

University of Texas at Ostin http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/historical/index.html

This site contains numerous maps in different resolutions, on which states and societies are presented during their historical development. Beside the historical maps, this site also contains geographical maps of high quality, and as well as the above mentioned sites it offers different links to the sites which is concerned with similar themes.

The History Department at the United States Military Academy at West Point
http://www.dean.usma.edu/history/web03/atlases/atlas%20home.htm

In 1938 the predecessors of what is today The Department of History at the United States Military Academy began developing a series of campaign atlases to aid in teaching cadets a course entitled, "History of the Military Art". Since then, the Department has produced six atlases and nearly one thousand maps, encompassing not only America's wars but global conflicts as well. In keeping abreast with today's technology, the Department of History is providing these maps on the World Wide Web.

Atlas-Historique.net – Ressources cartographiques et historiques
http://www.atlas-historique.net/accueil.html

Atlas-historique.net has an ambition to offer to the French-speaking surfers of the Internet reference marks useful for the comprehension of the history of the contemporary world (of 1815 to our days) and of the geopolitical situation of the current world through a particular medium, located between the image and the text – the cartography. Atlas-historique.net is divided into four sections, that is four periods: 1815–1914, 1914–1945, 1945–1989, 1989–2002.

Other Internet sites useful for historical research:

The "Middle" centuries of western civilization revolution
http://www.omnibusol.com/medieval.html
On this site, you could see information about history of the period extending from Byzantium to the French revolution. It contains various links. Some of them lead you to the pictures of cathedrals, towns, castles.

Decameron Web http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian_Studies/dweb/dweb.shtml

It's named after most popular book of Giovani Boccaccio, medieval writer, and contains some parts of it, pictures, etc. Moreover, it contains many things regarding the history of medieval everyday life.

The online medieval and classical Library http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/OMACL/

It contains a large collection of Medieval and Classical texts. Some of them are in the original language, and other are translated in English.

Byzantine and medieval links index http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/medweb/

This page attempts to track all Byzantine sources on the Internet, and all significant entry points for medieval studies.

Napoleon.org http://www.napoleon.org/en/home.asp

One of the best sites dedicated to the study of the civil, military, social and artistic achievements of the First and Second French Empires.

The History.Net http://www.thehistorynet.com/

The History.Net features articles and resources on world and American history, including eyewitness accounts, interviews, historic homes, and military history.

Solving Problems through Force http://www.geocities.com/veldes1/

This site is devoted to Austria-Hungary during World War I. It contains biographies of the Empire's leaders, notes on individual soldiers, essays, maps, and more.

World Statesmen http://www.worldstatesmen.org/

This site represents an attempt at a comprehensive and accurate list of the heads of state and heads of government for all countries and territories, going back to about 1700.

The Ottoman Khalifas http://www.naqshbandi.org/ottomans/

It contains history, official ranks, and biographies of Ottoman sultans and caliphs.
It covers the history, military, and arts of the Ottoman Empire from the late 13th century to 1923. It is also in Turkish.

Appendix

Here is a list of links to different Internet pages devoted to the question of the citation:

http://www.apastyle.org/electext.html
http://www.h-net.org/about/citation/general.html
http://www.thuto.org/ubh/web/cite.htm#contents
http://library.uww.edu/GUIDES/citeweb.htm
http://www.library.ubc.ca/hss/citelso.html
http://www.collectionscanada.ca/iso/tc46sc9/index.htm
http://www.ifla.org/I/training/citation/citing.htm
http://www.columbia.edu/cu/cup/cgos/idx_basic.html
http://cas.memphis.edu/~mcrouse/elcite.html
http://nippur.irb.hr/hrv/vrz/citiranje.html
http://nippur.irb.hr/hrv/edukacija/citiranje.html
http://www.mla.org/publications/style/style_faq/style_faq4

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