

Integrated Project “Voluntary And Involuntary Siberians” And Its Perspectives

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Abstract: *the article describes the practical experience of creating a museum exhibition space aimed at the active participation of the museum exhibition audience in its (Internet portal "Sibiriyaki free and neolian"), its "real" segment (functioning and development, the "virtual" segment of this is analyzed in multiplicative effects and prospects of this project. The conclusion is made about the analysis of the preferences of the audiences and the formation of conditions for the realization of these preferences, as the space of the same exhibition in Tomsk oblast museum), a promising platform for the development of the communications system of the local regional museum.*

Key words: *exhibition space, exhibition activities, museum communication and museum audiences preferences.*

Modern historical and local history museums (as well as museums of other profiles) become more often self-identified as the institutes of informational and cultural transit, i.e. they consider themselves not only as storages of cultural values presented as the subjects of movable cultural heritage, but they are also considered as compilers of these values taking a special place in the system of their social circulation.

The special place mentioned above is practically defined by its function of a mediator. Taking some ideal model the museums are considered as communicators between information producers more or less presenting the cultural values and its end users. Depending on the field-specific priority of the museum one can consider artists and art experts, men of letters and literary scholars, natural scientists and popularizers of scientific and engineering sciences as information producers. Information producers of historical and local history museums are scientists of history and local historians. End users in any case can be presented by different audience not being professional producers and compilers of such information.

Producers and users of culturally significant information rarely communicate directly. More often they need the institutes providing their communication exchange; so museums traditionally function as such institutes. Along with that, the situation is changing: primarily, due to information and communication technologies development which creates lots of new opportunities on setting up the direct connections between the two groups of agents of cultural production. Thus it seriously devaluates the position of the third agent – special-purpose compiler presented also by professional cultural institutions, libraries and museums in particular.

It all occurs in rather important external context that can be characterized in short as coincidence of several tendencies in the field of cultural information circulation. These tendencies contribute to the real, as well as projected growth of total interest to this information from the side of all the agents of its social circulation system. The tendencies are as follows:

- growth of interest to the civil society institutions from the side of multiple social forces, including the ones that could be key holders of valuable resources of the cultural sector – stakeholders [1];
- in this regard, - growth of attention to the experience of civil public construction, and thus to the basic platform of this experience, i.e. to the local history;
- penetration of local and even individual issues into research discourse of historical studies; reference to these issues is aimed at formation and strengthening of collective (corporate, professional) identities at micro level up to separate organizations and establishments [2], consideration of these issues from detailed micro-historical, local history, ethnic and other aspects [3];
- marked state query for cultural policy and educational practical training that was absent for a long time even at the level of basic national culture legislation [2];
- not quite clear but quite visible perspectives of cultural transformations connected with the respond to the evident crisis of “global” development projects [3].

Therefore, growth of cultural information caused by the cumulative effect of these tendencies can be considered as a factor of formation of “additional demand” for this information. And this provides its professional compilers the opportunity to get back and strengthen their positions in the system of cultural and information circulation changed due to modern technological challenges. However successful use of this opportunity depends on the fact if compilers (museums in particular) are able to create new opportunities on their own basis both for cultural information producers and for its users. We believe that the mentioned “additional demand” in all its manifestations is the basic prerequisite for the necessary cultural capitalization of field-related organizations of cultural sector [4].

This observation formed the basis of the given project; the experience of project implementation is considered by authors as comparatively successful local try to build the mentioned opportunity by the efforts of regional museum, also with a definite perspective to spread the obtained experience.

In 2013 Tomsk Regional Museum of Local Lore (further the Museum) won the grant “Changing museum in the changing world”, financed by Vladimir Potanin Foundation with the project “Voluntary and involuntary Siberians” (nomination “Technologies of museum exposition”).

The initial project intention was the idea of presenting within the Museum of important, different and multidimensional historical issue – migration into Siberia in XVII – first half of XX century, voluntary migrations and practices of involuntary migrations to Siberia.

The project presents a complex of events aimed at revealing the family stories of the people from Siberian regions (primarily of Tomsk Region) with their further concentration, systematization and inclusion into different formats of museum communication in exposition space of Tomsk Regional Museum of Local Lore. The project is aimed at creating the space for presentation of the migration history into Siberia with involvement of family memories of Siberians currently living here. The space is created by means and resources of the Museum with broadening and developing the museum audience by attracting the owners of personal and family information and establishing external communications of the Museum by means of projects generated in the space. To achieve this goal the following objectives have been set and solved:

- developing subject-related internet-portal “Voluntary and involuntary Siberians” (www.сибиряки.онлайн), giving each user the opportunity to place their family history with obligatory pre-moderation of research assistant of the Museum. This portal is a “virtual” sector of the above mentioned space and it allows creating distant communications of Tomsk Regional Museum of Local Lore with the audience – owners of family memory;

- organizing exposition enabling to connect “out-of-museum”, online segment of museum presentation of migration to Siberia with traditional exposition halls; mapping a route into the museum for multiple publishers of family stories and vice versa for exposition visitors – into the society of these publishers at the internet-portal.

The structure of internet portal contains two main sections. The section “Library” gives opportunity to publish various materials reflecting different contexts of the topic of migration to Siberia. This section contains six headings. The heading “FAQ” contains supporting materials (historical and biographical background, glossaries, questionnaires) that can help website visitors to find what they need, to build and present their own story. The heading “Studies” presents monographs, articles, materials of ethnographic expeditions, devoted to social, economic, political, ethnographic and other aspects of migration to Siberia, the history of separate settlements. For the moment this paper was been written (January 2017) the heading included 61 research documents. The heading “Documents” presents written, photographic sources and artifacts, such as photos from museum funds and archive of Tomsk Regional Museum of Local Lore, family archives and collections of antiquities. By the time this paper was being written the heading included 64 pieces of material, including the lists of names of migrants from different settlements, documents of land arrangement, documents on granting benefits for migrants, documents of segregation into farmsteads and plots of land according to Stolypin land reform, farm petitions and other documents. The heading “Journalism” contains press releases on events connected with the implementation of the project “Voluntary and involuntary Siberians”, materials from mass media that are subject to the given topic. Popular materials in history of migratory villages, everyday life of migrants, their personal biographies, works of pupils and students of Tomsk Region in regional natural history, connected with stories of their families and settlements are placed in the heading “Popular scientific information”. The heading “General fiction” contains works of G.M. Markov, V.I. Belov, V.A. Kolykhalov, N.D. Teleshov devoted to the issues discussed in the project, as well as audio visual materials of the projects “Voices of Siberians”, presenting individual and family stories of Siberians – the ancestors of migrants presented as video clips made with participation of state-owned TV and radio company “Tomsk”.

The section “Stories” allows internet users publishing online the subject-related data on the project “Voluntary and involuntary Siberians”; users define themselves which data they consider to be important (with preliminary moderation of museum research assistants). For the time this article was being written the headline “History” contained 438 materials, including:

- stories of individual families written by their family members, close people or interviewers – the museum workers. Their authors try to record genealogical trees of these families, places of living before migration to Siberia, circumstances of their appearance in the region, tell about occupations, daily life of ancestors, important family events. These stories often contain the elements of family legend, sometimes authors do not refer to family archives but appeal to oral stories of their parents, senior relatives and people they know. Among storytellers there are people of different ages, genders, occupations, ethnic and confession affiliation, and classes. Ethnic affiliation is presented by Russians, Poles, Lithuanians, Belarusians, Latvians, Estonians, Ukrainians, Jews, Udmurts, Germans, and Tatars. The materials given at the internet portal report on the families declaring their peasant, Cossack, merchant and even noble origin;

- stories of settlements – villages, rural areas, etc, existing and extinct, the ones that the fortunes of story-tellers are connected with. Some story tellers are residents of these settlements; some are immigrants or their descendants. There are stories of voluntary migrants and of exiled ones. The stories describe the nature around these settlements, occupations and work of people, communications with external world, household, way of life, leisure, food, significant events in life of settlements, family and some individuals living there. One can also find the data on people who left these settlements for some reasons.

- stories on individuals – separate people (relatives, friends, acquaintances). Some of the stories are told from the first person, in a format of interview with museum workers. These are people from different settlements, of different ages, ethnic affiliation, confession, with different biographies. The stories report on the facts of their biography, memories on the family, work, labours, important dates, and some other events which the story teller considers as worth mentioning.

- stories on the events, processes influencing the fortunes of story tellers and/or their relatives and close people. Thus, there are materials on “commemorative” events, telling about the events being significant for the whole society: The First World War, Great Patriotic War, defarming, deportations, there are also stories on the vents of local “individual” scale, e.g. one story is devoted to school where the story teller studied.

- the history of enterprises is presented in a small amount (up to the present time), e.g. there is some material devoted to evacuation of Radio Engineering Factory in Tomsk during Great Patriotic War.

The stories are published on the portal as text materials and video clips. There is an opportunity to search and classify the stories by surnames, periods of migrations, geographical objects, and keywords. Authors of stories have a chance to add and update their materials and website visitors can comment them.

Chronology of stories covers the period from XVII to the first half of XX century. Geography of stories covers four regions of Russian Federation: Tomsk Region (including the towns Tomsk, Seversk, Asinovo Region, Verkhneketsky Region, Kozhevnikovo Region, Molchanovsky Region, Tomsky Region, Parabel Region, Chainsky Region, Shegarsky Region), Altai Krai, Kemerovo Region, Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug – Yugra.

Exposition “Voluntary and involuntary Siberians” is a real “offline” sector of designed space to present the topic of migrations to Siberia. This exposition hall can work both in stationary mode (exposition hall of Tomsk Regional Museum of Local Lore), and in portable mode. The exposition has been developed as “environmental” – its authors wanted not just to show items connected with migration but to show self-sufficient “embodied” value and simulate the atmosphere of migrations to Siberia and provide the visitor opportunity to look into the world where possibly their family members could also be. Thus, among the exposition materials one can find quite large amount of copy able materials and remakes. The center of the exposition is presented by assembled and transformable copy of “Stolypin” carriage with installed audio visual equipment and technology enabling to feel the motion effect and atmosphere of its passengers’ micro environment. Authentic subjects from funds of the Museum are also presented, such as utensils, dishes, clothes, shoes, icons, etc. Exposition is intended to motivate its visitors to update their individual and family memories, appealing to their family archives and relics, to join the society of publishers of family stories at the internet portal “Voluntary and involuntary Siberians”. On the other hand, it functions as a center of attraction for publishers of family stories who did not attend event of the Museum before.

Long standing partners of the project are Association of Cultural Managers of Russia, Museum of History of the Town Seversk, state-owned TV and radio company “Tomsk”, Seversk Military School, the Union of Writers of Russia, Office for Cultural Affairs, Tourism and Sports of Surgut Region, Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug – Yugra. The list of project partners demonstrates a tendency to broadening the total period of its implementation. The project allowed significant stimulation of the museum interaction with mass media, and this cooperation also helps to attract new people to the project and broaden the audience.

Museum considers the project “Voluntary and involuntary Siberians” as one of the priority instruments to increase its own public influence, meaning the influence mentioned by K. Khudson: sustainability, meaning adequacy to economic and political situation in the own country, accordance to real but not imaginary expectations of own audience, and having scientific basis for product popularization [4. p. 169].

The approach that lies in the basis of museum and communication infrastructure within the project “Voluntary and involuntary Siberians” enables:

- for researchers (representatives of official academic, university and cultural society) to publish freely their materials, to suggest and realize results presentation, including the use of reference and illustrative possibilities of profile museum items and collections, and to find direct attention of involved in the project audience.

- to get information on the project subject straight from the source and in popular format, to obtain the opportunity to publish their own family information (in the form of family stories in texts and video clips of interviews, in the way that is still not well developed but being very popular); thus they act not only as passive consumers of cultural information but also as its producers with systematic and professional moderator support from the side of project team;

- for the museum to find full-scale position of a mediator between these two agents of cultural process, to realize the potential of its competences in this mediation, to receive social success as a “project multiplication” (the project “Voluntary and involuntary Siberians” lied the basis for three new projects and that is not the final number), also as attraction of new audience, new partners, media attention and growing public recognition.

We consider that the experience of the given project, approach to building museum communications which are in demand now, can be also broadened for other important topics and other museums. Currently we set the objective of “technologization” of the mentioned approach which implies analysis, definite description and development of adaptation mechanisms of our experience to communicative practices of our colleagues in other museums. For them we try to develop and suggest something like museum franchise enabling to launch such open communicative spaces on their basis (with our consultative and technological support) or (at least) to exhibit their archive funds and information resources in our space. Currently we are ready to offer:

- consultations (in the form of seminars, workshops, distance communications) on preparation and publication of family stories as texts and interviews. Such experience has been implemented with museums in Surgut Region of Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug – Yugra, where Tomsk Regional Museum of Local Lore spent several events in 2015-2016 invited by Office for Cultural Affairs, Tourism and Sport of Administration of Surgut Region and supported by local museums. Another event of such kind has been held at the end of 2016 for the museums of the whole Autonomous Okrug in Khanty-Mansiysk, in the Museum of Geology, Oil and Gas;

- publications of subject-related materials on the basis of our portal. Such experience has been tested with users from Altai Krai, Kemerovo Region, in 2016 Sytominsky School Museum of Local Lore from Surgut Region Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug – Yugra joined us in 2016;

- exhibitions and presentations of important but not exhibited before museum fund resources – personal items and collections, memorial funds and collections of family relics. This format is considered as a perspective practice of museum fund updating as a resource to define the basic format for strategic development of a museum.

Perspective goal is development and suggestion of technological package enabling to launch the processes to create open museum and communicative spaces in any museum considering its own profile, objectives and plans, relevant topic of communication and exact personnel and financial capabilities.

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