

**Marija Živković**  
Ethnographic Museum  
Zagreb  
Croatia  
mzivkovic@emz.hr

Received: February 11, 2009  
Accepted: February 26, 2009

## Digitizing the Photo Library of the Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb

The photo library of the Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb is an exceptionally valuable document of ethnographic heritage. Founded back in the early years of the Museum's operation, during 1990s it collected 62,289 photographs from Croatia and Europe, shot on different media (glass, film, paper), as the photographic technology progressed. This mostly includes works by Museum's employees, created on their many field researches, but also as the result of their museological work (photographs of museum items and exhibits). The photo library is being systematically enriched with works by famous Croatian photographers, such as Franjo and Rudolf Mosinger, Ivan Standl, Tošo Dabac, as well as other less known photographers and photo amateurs. The oldest photographs in the photo library date from 1895, shot by photo amateur and famous Croatian archeologist Josip Brunšmid. They show women from Levanjska Varoš, outside Đakovo, wearing folk costumes. Apart from folk costumes, the photographs also feature other themes from the traditional life, such as annual and everyday customs, habitation, construction, economy, and crafts and trades.

Shots from field researches created in the first decades of the Museum's operation are the most valuable part of the photo library. They preserved the image of life of the Croatian countryside from the first half of the 20th century, which makes this visual memory a valuable part of the cultural heritage. Credit for this goes to curators Vladimir Tkalčić, Milovan Gavazzi and Božidar Širola, who introduced the use of modern technical aids in the museum practice – photo and video camera, and phonograph. Milovan Gavazzi was the video camera pioneer in Croatian ethnology. Also, together with Širola, he recorded folk music on the field with a phonograph. Photography expert Vladimir Tkalčić was the organizer of most field research on which camera was the essential tool. They systematically covered different parts of Croatia: Međimurje, Primorje, Turopolje, Posavina, Pokuplje, Slavonia etc. The most common motif on the photographs is everyday life - women washing clothes by the creek, vil-

lage children playing, a church procession, or interior of a *zadruga* house. Today, these photographs tell an interesting story of past times and the work of the first Croatian ethnologists and their impressive knowledge of photography, which was at the time much more demanding than it is today.

Due to their exceptional cultural and historical value, these materials are especially useful in scientific work and research, but also attract a considerable public attention. Since they were mostly recorded on glass plates that are liable to biological and chemical damage, as well as a great danger of breaking, the Ethnographic Museum in 2008 started to digitize these materials in order to protect them. It joined the national project called the Croatian Cultural Heritage, launched by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia in order to digitize the archives, library and museum materials. Digital recording of negatives on glass plates is done by the central photo laboratory of the Croatian State Archives. A digital copy (102MB in size) is made and stored in the TIFF format, a generally accepted permanent archiving format. JPEG format derivatives (116KB in size), suitable for online presentation, are made from the TIFF format. A photo saved in the JPEG format is uploaded to a multimedia application for computer processing of museum documentation M++. Contents of every photograph are processed through about thirty headings and a classification of terms that define the theme of the photo is made, to make the search easier. At the same time, the Museum digitizes (paper) photographs, because it has the equipment required for processing such materials.

1,560 photographs and 1,050 glass negatives have been digitized to this day, and the project continues until all the photo materials have been digitized. The aim of digitization is the protection of the materials - allowing users to access digital copies instead of originals, which are this way preserved. Furthermore, digitization allows for posting digital copies online, which creates the possibility of distant access to the materials and thus supports museological objectives - accessibility, education, scientific work and research. Additionally, online presentation enables feedback from users and researchers, which expands knowledge of these valuable materials.

*Translated by Ivona Grgurinović*