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CULTURAL HERITAGE IN SOCIAL MEDIA

Museum of Photography

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract

The research Cultural Heritage in Social Media: Museum of Photography deals with a new form of displaying and preserving cultural heritage in the 21st century by using social media tools. This paper is an analysis of a Romanian cultural heritage blog, Museum of Photography, which contains documentary photography from the end of the 19th century until 1990's as well as other types of photographs related to the interests' of Alex Galmeanu – the owner of Museum of Photography.

The aim of this research is to demonstrate that cultural heritage exists outside the boundaries of formal institutions, namely museums, thus showing that the meaning of the word "museum" is expanding and that the public can be successfully involved in online heritage projects. Furthermore it offers a new insight on the environment where cultural heritage is encountered, how cultural heritage infiltrated in social media, how people respond to this phenomenon and what possible future outcomes this might have. The main research question is: how is cultural heritage represented in social media and what implications does this representation have on community and heritage itself?

The research method is qualitative-ethnographic which enables the researcher to offer a general understanding of the way in which cultural heritage is represented in social media through blogging. In addition, the research uses a case study for a closer analysis of this new phenomenon, offering as examples for analysis blog posts and comments. All the text quotes from the blog are translated from Romanian to English with further explanations regarding the cultural context. Moreover, a questionnaire is also sent to readers of Museum of Photography asking for their opinions on the blog and its content and offering additional information about its public.

Museum of Photography was proven to be a successful way of preserving and displaying cultural heritage outside formal institutions and a proof that cultural heritage can also be displayed online due to people's interest and enthusiasm for their own past. This blog sustains the idea that cultural heritage can be presented under a popular, unrestricted, free form and proves that a "museum" is not only a physical institution but a concept that is further developed with great results.

The problems encountered with this research were the negative aspects of displaying cultural heritage online, namely data inaccuracy due to the fact that Museum of Photography is an amateur project, disrespectful remarks encountered in the blog comments as well as issues of long-term preservation.

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract
Tutkimus Cultural Heritage in Social Media: Museum of Photography käsittelee uusia tapoja esitellä ja säilyttää kulttuuriperintöä 2000-luvulla käyttäen sosiaalisen median työkaluja. Tämä paperi on Romanian kulttuuriperintö blogin analyysi, nimittäin Museum of Photography, jossa on dokumenttivalokuvia 1800-luvun lopusta 1990-luvun alkuun sekä muita valokuvia liittyen Alex Galmeanun kiinostukset – joka on myös Museum of Photography:n omistaja.

Tutkimuksen tavoitteet on osoittaa, että kulttuuriperintö on olemassa virallisten instituutioiden rajojen ulkopuolella, nimittäin museot, mikä osoittaa, että sana "museo" laajenee ja että yleisö voi osallistua menestyksellisesti kulttuuriperintö projekteihin verkossa. Lisäksi, se tarjoaa uutta tietoa ympäristöstä, jossa kulttuuriperintö löydetään, miten kulttuuriperintö on soluttautunut sosiaaliseen mediaan, miten ihmiset vastaavat tähän ilmiöön ja mitä mahdollisia tulevaisuuden tuloksia tällä voi olla. Tutkimuksen pääkysymys on: miten kulttuuriperintöä edustetaan sosiaaliseen mediaan ja mitä seurauksia tällä edustuksella on yhteisölle ja kulttuuriperinnölle?

Tutkimusstrategia on laadullinen-etnografinen, jonka avulla tutkija tarjoaa yleisen käsityksen, miten kulttuuriperintö on edustettuna sosiaaliseen mediaan bloggaamisen kautta. Lisäksi tutkimuksessa käytetään tapaustutkimusta uuden ilmiön tarkempaan analyysiin. Tapaustutkimus tarjoaa esimerkkeinä blogikirjoituksia ja kommentteja analyysille. Kaikki tekstilainaukset blogista ovat kääntäneet romaniasta englantiin ja ne sisältävät lisäselvityksiä kulttuuriseen kontekstiin. Lisäksi kysely lähetettiin myös Museum of Photography:n lukijoille, jossa pyydetään heidän mielipidettä blogista ja blogin sisällöstä ja antaa lisätietoa Museum of Photography:n yleisöstä.

Museum of Photography osoitettiin onnistuneeksi keinoksi säilyttää ja näyttää kulttuuriperintöä virallisten laitosten ulkopuolelta ja todiste siitä, että kulttuuriperintö voi olla näkyvissä myös verkossa, johtuen ihmisten kiinnostuksesta ja innostuksesta omasta menneisyydestään. Tämä blogi ylläpitää ajatusta, että kulttuuriperintöä voi esitellä vapaamuotoisesti ja myös todistaa, että "museo" ei ole vain fyysinen laitos, mutta käsite, jota on edelleen kehitetty hyvin tuloksin.

Ongelmia tässä tutkimuksessa olivat negatiiviset puolet kun kulttuuriperintöä näytetään verkossa, eli datan epätarkkuus johtuen siitä, että Museum of Photography on amatööri projekti, epäkunnioittavia huomautuksia blogin kommenteissa ja kysymykset pitkäaikaisesta säilyttämisestä.

Asiasanat – Keywords cultural heritage, social media, blogging, virtual museum, community, online heritage project
Säilytyspaikka – Depository Jyväskylän yliopisto, Taiteiden ja kulttuurin tutkimuksen laitos
Muita tietoja – Additional information

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1. Introduction

The present thesis intends to deal with a new concept which emerged recently and which is backed up by the evolution of the internet and especially the Web 2.0, namely how cultural heritage is represented in social media. The concept is still in its incipient phase and it took a great deal of research to define it and highlight the most important features as well as the future of such concept. The areas of research, as it is an interdisciplinary thesis, are well defined and rich in information but the final product, the concept I intend to present, and on which the interdisciplinary theory is applied, is still in an incipient phase. And that is because it is not very popular yet and little has been written or at least mentioned about it. This thesis is interdisciplinary because two different fields merge in order to help the description and analysis of the concept of heritage blogging. Cultural heritage is a broad field and according to UNESCO its definition develops frequently and "the concept of heritage in our time accordingly is an open one, reflecting living culture every bit as much as that of the past"[1]. To mention a more strict definition according to Jokilehto "cultural heritage may be defined as the entire corpus of material signs - either artistic or symbolic - handed on by the past to each culture and, therefore, to the whole of humankind" (Jokilehto 1990: 4). Social media is according to Ron Jones "a category of online media where people are talking, participating, sharing, networking, and bookmarking online"[2].

The main aim of this thesis is to present a new emerging trend in social media namely collecting and exhibiting cultural heritage online. Since the online world is wide and one cannot possibly deal with all forms of online cultural heritage I chose a certain online format which in my opinion is innovative and representative for exhibiting cultural heritage online. The case I am going to talk about in this thesis is a private blog which collects and exhibits documentary photography of the Romanian capital, Bucharest as well as other subjects related directly to old photography. The blog is called Muzeul de Fotografie[3] in Romanian but throughout the thesis I will refer to it as Museum of Photography. The blog is owned and maintained by Alex Galmeanu, a Romanian photographer which also owns his own blog[4] dedicated to his personal work which is also related to photography. Museum of Photography was founded in February 2006 and it continues its activity

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[1] http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL_ID=2185&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html [accessed 29.09.2011]

[2] Susan Ward. Social Media Definition. http://sbinfocanada.about.com/od/socialmedia/g/socialmedia.htm [accessed 29.09.2011]

[3] http://www.muzeuldefotografie.ro/

[4] http://www.alexgalmeanu.com/

up to the present with regular posts and a growing community of followers as its Facebook page shows. Not only do the readers compliment Alex Galmeanu's initiative with every occasion as reply to his posts but the project has drawn attention to Romanian cultural media and it has appeared in a number of cultural publications. When people talk about the blog they do not refer to it with the term "blog" but they call it "museum". A reader even congratulates Alex for one of his posts: "Congratulations for this museum!"[5] The photos of Museum of Photography will be dealt with from the point of view of their content, namely their value as cultural heritage/historical artifacts and not their aesthetical value. This thesis will also attempt to decompose and re-explain the concept of museum in the 21st century in relation with social media trends. In addition I will also focus on the most important features of social media namely participation and collaboration as well as enlightening the fact that with the rise of Web 2.0 the public becomes the author and use the theory of "convergence culture" of the media theorist Henry Jenkins. Moreover, I will refer to the concept of cultural heritage and what does that mean in a broader context with emphasis on the fact that cultural heritage belongs to the public. Also I intend to introduce cultural heritage in the context of collaboration and participation in order to define this new trend in cultural heritage blogging.

My intention springs from three reasons: first cultural heritage is mainly seen as the primary business of museums and I intend to demonstrate that it is not only a museum thing but a general area and it can be quite successful when the public is involved; the concept of museum tends to diversify as time goes by although at core remains a traditional institution – that does not mean that other forms and meanings of "museum" should be ignored and third blogging is seen in a limited context although it is a very popular trend in social media. And here I mean the fact that blogging is only discussed in terms of journalism, broadcasting media, news as well as personal blogs or other popular blogging themes. I have not seen yet discussions in the cultural heritage industry which deal with this new trend. There is plenty of literature dealing with the digitalization of museums and here I can mention the introduction of digital technologies in museums, museums using the World Wide Web (having web pages, blogs, having account on Facebook, Twitter and other forms of social media) or museums building their own virtual replica on the internet. There is also an incipient research done on virtual museums and the number of studies increases with time as such type of museum becomes more popular.

However this research will not be dealing with the type of museum that we encounter on a daily basis and here I refer to the traditional museum, the museum which already creates an

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[5] Galmeanu, Alex. Zona Cauzasi, demolari în 1985, Muzeul de Fotografie, entry July 26, 2009
http://www.muzeuldefotografie.ro/2009/07/zona-cauzasi-demolari-in-1985/ [accessed 8.03.2012]

image in our minds the moment we hear the word: the institution where one goes to look at objects nicely placed in window cases. That is why I found difficult to find suitable sources in order to theorize this phenomenon as there is nothing yet published to describe a museum which is neither physical nor somehow virtual. Museum of Photography does not fit exactly into one museum type, it does not have the defined features we find nowadays in museological theory but it has a bit of every museum type mentioned above. In this sense I cannot put this case under one category but the research aims to present and study a new form of displaying cultural heritage.

The following chapter will deal with the research methods which are to be used in this paper and which will help to built the research and answer the questions presented in the introduction. The third chapter will familiarize the reader with the background studies in this field, namely how digital technology made its way into museums nowadays, giving as example The Craft Museum of Finland and two case studies which are similar to Museum of Photography. Chapter four provides the theory regarding blogging, Web 2.0 and collective intelligence which is necessary for understanding Museum of Photography as a social media environment. The concept of wisdom of crowds and collective intelligence will be tackled with when referring to the community of Museum of Photography. Chapter five will introduce the case study providing details about its history and contents as well as its Facebook page. Futhermore, the concept of cultural heritage will be discussed in relation to the content of Museum of Photography with examples from the blog posts and comments. Chapter six will refer to another aspect of Museum of Photography: collecting which stands as a pre-requisite for the concept of museum which is attributed to it. It will be shown again by using illustrative examples from the blog, how collections are made online, what are the reasons behind Museum of Photography's existence and the way Museum of Photography works as an online collective collection. In chapter seven it will be explained the concept of museum including definition, a short history and it will be applied to Museum of Photography based on the data from the previous two chapters about cultural heritage and collecting. Furthermore, an opinion on the concept of museum related to Museum of Photography will be provided from the readers' point of view. Last of the chapters will deal with the community of Museum of Photography, emphasizing on the aspects of crowdsourcing, collective memory and nostalgia as well as trolls and spam.

Cultural heritage has always been a part of humanity no matter the environment and how it is preserved and exhibited. This thesis intends to offer a new insight on the environment where cultural heritage is encountered, how cultural heritage infiltrated in social media, how people respond to this phenomenon and what possible future outcomes this might have. The main research

question is: how is cultural heritage represented in social media and what implications does this representation have on community and heritage itself? The side questions which spring from the main one and which help the research being more specific are: why do we have this blog (Museum of Photography) or exactly this kind of representation? What is the aim of this blog? Does it want to make a change regarding heritage? Does it have any future implications? This paper will try to answer these questions and shed light on a new form of displaying cultural heritage online.

2. Research methods

Because of the fact that it is an interdisciplinary topic as well as complex I choose multiple research methods in order to conduct my research project.

The main research method is qualitative-ethnographic research. Since it is widely applicable and it works for almost any type of humanistic research which explores the subject of research as an overall. "Qualitative research enables you to increase the overall understanding of the quality, characteristics and meanings of your research object or topic"[6] which is specifically my intention with this research. Namely I wish to offer a general understanding of the new way in which cultural heritage is represented in social media with the help of a social media tool – the blog. The qualitative research goes very well applied with a case study for an in-depth analysis and understanding of the case. This research is actually based on a case study in order to demonstrate the fact that there are new ways of displaying cultural heritage besides the known existing ones. I also intend to demonstrate why and how this phenomenon appeared and what its implications in the community of followers are. The data collected according to the qualitative methods will be observations gathered from the blog (posts, comments, discussions, photographic material) as well as outside the blog (interviews related to the blog, Facebook). The knowledge I intend to collect with regard to Museum of Photography is not going to be used in order to change its format in any way but instead it is going to be used to find out the circumstances in which this blog was created, namely why and for whom/what and to back up my theory of a new heritage representational model.

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[6] University of Jyväskylä. Faculty of Humanities. Mapping Research Methods, Qualitative Research.
https://koppa.jyu.fi/avoimet/hum/menetelmapolkuja/en/methodmap/strategies/qualitative-research [accessed 14.09.2011]

Furthermore I will make use of theoretical texts as a backup for the concepts aimed to sustain the blog's purpose. Qualitative research implies that there is a certain degree of participation so that the researcher can make observation and take notes in order to come to a conclusion. This type of research implies that the researcher should be an insider of a certain group for a better observation. In my case the blog is a Romanian one, most of the texts and links are in Romanian, it deals with Romanian cultural heritage and it has Romanian readers. It is easier for a native to research something familiar in terms of culture and language because they are automatically part of that group even though I am not an active commenter on the blog but merely an observer. In terms of accessibility, the blog is freely accessible for everybody, it is not protected by a password and it has no age limit for accessing it. In case readers wish to leave a comment all they have to do is leave their name, email and the comment or if they wish to submit photographic material they have to contact the blog's owner. However, only the author has the right to publish or modify the blog's content, view its private settings and accept/moderate comments.

Since social media is a field where audiences are involved, a part of the research will be carried on the people who are involved in the blog community. First the main research will be carried on the content of the blog and the author's intentions for establishing Museum of Photography also involving the audience as part of the project. In this research, the people who contribute keeping Museum of Photography alive play a very important role as I want to demonstrate new features of representing cultural heritage and that is of participation and collaboration of the public and how they organize their memories by collective remembering. Through using the method of ethnographic research I intend to study the blog community and their actions in the process of building collective cultural heritage. My standpoint as a researcher will be as an outsider, not from the cultural point of view, but from that of cultural emotional involvement as I need to keep an objective stand in order to make observations and draw accurate conclusions regarding this phenomenon. The research questions will be answered on the basis of the results I will get from the observations I make on Museum of Photography. I consider the ethnographical method a suitable one for my study as observation is an important part of my research. The observational method is suitable for observing the blog and its community in order to explain the occurrence of cultural heritage in social media. Since blogging is an activity which requires the involvement of a community for building up information, it is crucial to research that community in order to understand the purpose and implications of Museum of Photography as a cultural heritage product. Besides, the observations will also focus on the generated content which is very important in analyzing how cultural heritage is produced by a community in a virtual social space.

As part of the research method I will use the case study which I choose due to the broadness of the research area. The representation of cultural heritage in social media is a complex area because there are many phenomena going on and social media means many environments available on Web 2.0. By choosing a specific blog I narrow down the area of research and focus my study only on one important example. I chose a social media format which brings something new to the cultural heritage concept in order to observe and explore this novelty and present it to the public as another form of organizing our memories. Museum of Photography was the perfect choice in my opinion not only because of its innovative idea and interesting content but also because of the community.

To be more specific about the type of case study, Museum of Photography is an instrumental case study namely it "is examined mainly to provide insight into an issue"[7] meant to show as mentioned earlier how cultural heritage is presented in social media. Moreover it was easy for me as researcher of a certain community to be part of it, not in terms of activity on the blog itself but in terms of belonging to a group namely being a Romanian who has also lived in Bucharest for a while. Furthermore, the blog is easily accessible, it is not personal so I do not need special permission for studying it, I do not have to log in to view it or to make comments. The ethical issues related to this case study are clarified by an excerpt from the blog itself where Alex Galmeanu clearly specifies the author's rights and the regulations regarding the use of the blog content: "This material can be used freely for any kind of purposes with the exception of commercial purpose. The only requirement is mentioning the source"[8]. Concerning technical issues, it has never happened to me to have problems with opening the blog's links (for example broken links or inaccessible posts). There is though the danger of not being able to access it if there are technical problems or the author decides suddenly to shut the blog. My study case is available for observation only if one has computer and internet connection. The quality of the images on the blog is very good but if wished to be seen accurately a high resolution screen is needed. In my case it was not crucial to have a high quality screen since I do not analyze the photos in detail. A normal computer screen is enough for a close analysis of the photographs.

Due to the fact that the blog has a significant amount of material I decided to select only parts of it to introduce in my research. The blog also includes samples of general photography for example international and contemporary photography of other photographers or of Alex Galmeanu's exhibitions as well as other exhibitions in general. This kind of material will not be

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[7] Silverman, David. *Doing Qualitative Research*. 2nd ed. London: Sage Publications, 2005. Print.
[8] Alex Galmeanu, Amintiri din Bucuresti, Muzeul de Fotografie, entry January 17, 2010 [accessed 17.11.2011]

included in my research. The material selected from this blog will deal with Romanian cultural heritage, namely historical events that marked Romanian identity, documentary photography of old Bucharest and other historical places from Romania as well as portrait photography. The samples I will use for my research are easily noticeable from the blog tags as they are represented by enlarged words: Bucharest, Alex Galmeanu's collection, communism, history, rare images, Romania. The samples I am choosing to carry my research on are collectively acknowledged to be part of Romanian cultural heritage as it is stated in Brainwash: "Most of the photos exhibited on the blog represent real visual documents with historical value"[9] People's comments are further sampled regarding the relevance of the topic I am addressing. As examples for my thesis I will choose only comments which are considered to contribute to the findings in my research. I am mainly interested in people's reactions and responses to this type of cultural heritage format as well as their contribution to it, be it material (picture and info submission) or personal (memories, thoughts, feelings, experiences).

In addition, to the observations carried on the content of the blog and its community, I also distributed a questionnaire related to the content of Museum of Photography. The questionnaire's purpose was to find out people's opinions about Museum of Photography in terms of its photographic as well as informative content. Because Museum of Photography is aimed at a broad public, it would be interesting and at the same time useful, regarding its' future implications, to find out what do readers think about it. The questions were aimed at a broad public, age and profession was just optional information; the aim was collecting opinions from all group ages and a various professional background in order to get a full picture of Museum of Photography's readers. The only limitation regarding the subjects is the fact that they must live or have lived in Romania as Museum of Photography is a Romanian blog, most of the information is in Romanian and locals would have a better understanding of national heritage. I did not set any limitation on the region though, so readers from all parts of Romania, not only Bucharest, could answer the questionnaire. The questionnaire was assembled during November-December 2011 and sent in January 2012. The results were collected under a period of three months, January-March 2012. The questionnaires were sent personally through email as an attached document and the answers were also received through email. On the whole, I received twenty-five answered questionnaires. The background and age of the subjects vary, for example the age span was between early 20's and up to 50's, however the educational background was linear meaning that all of the respondents had a university degree

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[9] Laura, Racz. Muzeul de Fotografie. Brainwash. 5 April 2010. http://brainwash.ro/2010/04/muzeul-de-fotografie/
[accessed 19.11.2011]

or were current students. As mentioned, the age and educational background offered an idea about the average reader of Museum of Photography but was not directly relevant to the content related information. The results of this questionnaire will be used as additional information in chapter seven and in the conclusion, namely sustaining the idea that Museum of Photography is a museum and what are the future implications of such cultural initiative.

The research methods mentioned above are reliable and suitable for this type of research which involves a case study. However, the results and conclusions of this study cannot be generalized to other similar cases due to the fact that this case study is limited and does not reflect all cultural heritage resources which are made available online. Due the broadness of the subject, such a case study can be analyzed by focusing on different aspects. This research is limited by the fact that Museum of Photography is analyzed with reference to its content as cultural heritage and its readers as a cultural heritage community. The findings of this research can be applied to similar cases; however, further research in this area needs to be done in order to have a complete overall picture of how cultural heritage is presented in online environments which are not owned by a cultural institution.

3. Background studies

There has been a lot of talk recently in the traditional media as well as on the World Wide Web about museums entering the digital era under various forms. For example many museums digitalize their collections for various reasons, for example due to preservation concerns, keeping them updated with the help of new technologies or making them easier available to the public. Besides that, almost every museum has a webpage. The bigger the museum, the better it is promoted online. Plenty of museums have besides their webpage, a blog written by professionals, and sometimes even the public[10] can contribute with their own ideas; they also own Facebook, Twitter, Flickr accounts or other forms of social media. Moreover, there are museums which host virtual versions of their exhibitions which might be different than the physical one but with the main purpose of attracting visitors and improving their image in the highly competitive world of online heritage. One of the main reasons museums took this digital turn is because of the public. If once the stress fell on the object, the museum being an object-centered institution, now the stress falls on the public thus the museum becoming a public oriented institution. Obviously one can also mention the shift from an industrial society to an information society; almost everything nowadays is linked through technology and museums are no exception. Even if they are regarded as traditional institutions, museums must also make the big technological step in order to keep up with development and modernization.

3.1 The face of the new media museum – The Craft Museum of Finland

To show practically what I mean by the physical museum blending with the virtual one I will provide an example from the local museums of Jyväskylä. I will take as example The Craft Museum of Finland/Suomen käsityön museo[11] which has almost all the social media services I mentioned above. First I would like to mention that all the info about the museum is on the respective webpage; everything a visitor would like to know from its history, visit hours, collections, exhibition to museum facilities. The page is updated regularly and the layout makes it easy for visitors to surf and to find what information they need. Besides, one can follow the museum on

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[10] Sörmlands Museum. http://seniorbloggen.blogg.se/ and http://youthhood.blogg.se/ [accessed 20.11.2011]
[11] The Craft Museum of Finland/Suomen käsityön museo http://www.craftmuseum.fi/index.htm [accessed 20.11.2011]

Facebook and be up to date with its news if they click on the Facebook logo which can be found at contact information on the left side of the page. Below I will provide an image with the museum front webpage. In addition the museum offers the possibility of sharing the news with other social spaces by using the Share button at the bottom of the webpage. As mentioned with regard to virtual exhibitions The Craft Museum of Finland holds also virtual exhibitions[12] for online visitors who are curious about the theme or just want to check out the museum. An important observation is that the virtual exhibitions are found mostly online, the museum having on physical display other kind of resources although sometimes they have it both on display and in virtual format. That was the case of "Lämmöllä - Hyväntekeväisyyskäsitöitä 2010-2011" which was both on display at the museum and it can be also found online http://www.craftmuseum.fi/lammolla/

Figure 1. The Craft Museum of Finland front webpage. Taken 13.09.2011.

Another important aspect of the museum is that it has its own blog, a trend which is increasing in the museum world and which definitely helps to an improved communication with the

12 The Craft Museum of Finland/Suomen käsityön museo http://www.craftmuseum.fi/verkkonayttelyt.htm [accessed 21.11.2011]

public. The Craft Museum of Finland is one of the museums with its own blog written and maintained by the museum's staff. The blog which can be found at this address http://www3.jkl.fi/blogit/craft/ was launched in April 2011 and has very few entries being in its incipient stage but nevertheless it offers an insight on the "behind the scenes" for the curious online visitor and it surely helps in promoting the museum's image.

Figure 2. The Craft Museum of Finland Facebook page. Taken 13.09.2011.

3.2 Digital technology as every day part of museum environment

This is just one example of media museum or a museum which is highly involved with the new Internet technologies of information dissemination. I chose this example to show how physical museums are involved with social media to one extent. And the example of The Craft Museum of Finland is far from being the only one. "Several museums initially published on the Internet only textual records of their databases, a significant step for improving access to their holdings,

particularly for researchers and specialists. Since the 1990s, an increasing number of museums are providing Web access to collections information in multimedia form, thus creating a rich resource that can be also used for educational purposes" (Museum Informatics, 2008: 146) with this the author referring to the public. Nowadays museums not only have technology inserted in their physical space but they already took a great space online. "The modern museum offers visitors many ways of interacting with exhibits, from hands-on interactive that help visitors learn basic science principles in children's museums, to touch screen computer displays that encourage visitors to delve more deeply into the background and context of important works in art museums" (Museum Informatics, 2008: 131). This is all done in order to allow the public more accessibility to museum resources and create a more "intimate bond" with the visitor. In the essay *Interactive Technologies*, Paul F. Marty mentions a certain barrier which "placed artificial restrictions on the abilities of museum visitors to interact with museum artifacts" (Museum Informatics, 2008: 131). Within the context of the physical museum the removing of boundaries is due to advances in interactivity which "have even helped remove the physical boundaries that separate 'inside the museum' from 'outside the museum', with the result that the line between online and in house offerings blurs to create the 'museum without walls'" (Museum Informatics, 2008: 132). Marty moves his observations further on online museums noticing that this type of modern museum offers access to all kind of resources (behind the scenes, in the galleries, online etc.) and its main focus is on interactivity and meeting the needs of the visitors namely serving the public. "In case of online museums, for instance, the removal of these barriers can result in interactive so transparent that visitors may not be aware of a separate physical museum identity, or that certain physical barriers between artifact and access even exist. As these barriers are blurred or otherwise removed, many new ways of reaching museum users become available" (Museum Informatics, 2008: 132). He also mentions the virtual museum and the benefits such institution brings to the public:

> The virtual museum, for instance, has the ability to offer many new experiences to new audiences. Visitors physically unable to come to a particular museum are frequently able to experience some of the museum's offerings online, no matter where in the world they may be, as long as they have access to an Internet connection. Visitors planning visits to a particular museum can prepare for their trip by downloading information resources such as highlights of the museum's collections or driving and parking directions. Online access to museum resources can even be

targeted for specific users, attracting a wider variety of visitors by offering resources specifically tailored for their interests (Bowen & Filippini-Fantoni, 2004). [13]

By referring to the trend of museums to present themselves online the authors imply strongly the fact that this phenomenon is increasing due and for the public "By integrating online resources with in-house experiences, museum can offer visitors the ability to create personalized museum visits, tailored to each person's individual needs" (Museum Informatics, 2008: 132).

These changes in museum environment are not arbitrary and they did not occur overnight in a closed context. Society itself is evolving and the museum is part of it, therefore it has to evolve too in order to keep the pace with the new demands. "This is the world of our post-industrial society – dominated by technology, with pervasive media and advertising industries, and instantaneous electronic communications; a society with a pluralistic culture in which the boundaries between high art and man culture have broken down" (F. Cameron, 2007: 50). Technology has infiltrated in every aspect of human life and culture which is part of our identity has blended with the new technological and communicational demands of modern society. In the book *eCulture* Alfred M. Ronchi makes a very interesting statement about technology, culture and identity which proves my point that nowadays in order to have a successful outcome as cultural human beings one must accept information and communication technology as part of their identity.

> Information and communication technology (ICT) is an engine of growth and change for the world economy. If this technology is to be harnessed to enhance democratic principles, it must contribute to the creation and enrichment of an educated, informed citizenry; it must incorporate the accumulated knowledge and creativity of the past; and it must anticipate and enhance creativity for the future.
>
> In this context, it is essential that ICT embrace a cultural agenda. Development effectiveness depends to a great extent on "solutions" that resonate with a community's sense of identity and culture creates that sense of identity. Culture encompasses human knowledge, values, beliefs, behaviors, customs, language, ideas, codes, institutions, heritage, rituals, and creative expression all of which constitute essential signposts for understanding who we are and what we do. If advances in health, commerce, education, and economic growth are to be implemented and sustained, understanding culture is critical (M. Ronchi, 2009: 15).

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[13] Quoted in Marty, F. Paul and Katherine Burton Jones. Museum informatics : people, information, and technology in museums. New York : Routledge, cop. 2008. Print.

Nowadays there is plenty of literature which talks about museums in the digital age from different perspectives. But most of the time the digital version of a museum is in close link with the original institution. When talking about social media in the museum space it mostly revolves around the actual museum. This cultural institution has been researched for a long time now with regard to the digital world and everyone understands that in order to evolve and keep the pace with the modern society a museum has to adopt what digitalization brings. Museums entering the digital age is not only a sociological phenomenon but from the point of view of museological theory "the context of a cultural artifact was more important than the item itself" (Sylaiou, 2009: 1).

Virtual museums are also based on an institutional driven idea – that of collecting and displaying – as the whole concept of museums is. But virtual museums are more about accessibility and attracting the viewer "They have made the content and context of museum collections more accessible and attractive to the wide public and have enriched the museum experience" (Sylaiou, 2009: 1). The article *Virtual museums, a survey and some issues for consideration* states that there is not yet an official number of virtual museums worldwide but they are estimated to be around thousands and the number is increasing rapidly (Sylaiou, 2009: 1). The spread of virtual museums, even if they are linked to a physical institution or not, tends to increase and become more popular.

My case study is related to the concept of virtual museum though there are many discrepancies between Museum of Photography and a real museum. The following chapters will deal more with some of those differences by pointing out features which are traditionally related to the blog format. The aim with this chapter is to give an overall view of the digital trend in museums in order to create a base for my case study which is derived from this trend and to show that digitalization is not a new phenomenon in the cultural heritage industry but it has quite a long history behind.

3.3 Previous case studies

I mentioned earlier that Museum of Photography is among the few cases of blogs which gather and share cultural heritage with online audiences. Although sharing cultural heritage through blogging is not that common Museum of Photography is definitely not a singular case. When I started to think about this innovative idea I did not have in mind a certain concept for it. But lately I have discovered a case study, on a subject similar to Museum of Photography. The article is written by Stephen Ho and it is called *Blogging as Popular History Making, Blogs as Public History: A Singapore Case Study*. The article talks about how past plays an important role in people's lives and

they like to be actively engaged with the past by "popular history making" (Ho, 2007: 1). There are surveys done among American, Australian and Canadian citizens who reveal that in general the common person cannot participate in broad projects of history making since this area is usually reserved to scholars. But nowadays with the help of new media and new technologies the public gains "a much louder and more public voice" (Ho, 2007: 2) when it comes to its heritage. The main idea of the article is showing how people organize, make available and discuss their heritage with the help of blogging thus breaking away from the monopoly of traditional cultural institutions and traditional media. The emergence of such trend is set in the political, economical and social environment of contemporary Singapore. The author acknowledges that there is a trend to blog the past among the citizens of Singapore. The article looks at two case studies: *Good Morning Yesterday* – a blog written by 53 year old Lam Chun See who shares his memories from Singapore in 1960s and 1970s and Yesterday.sg – a website owned by Museum Roundtable and the National Heritage Board which hosts blog entries from various persons on the topic of Singapore memories. These cases are a bit older than Museum of Photography (2005, respectively 2006) which demonstrates that the trend of heritage blogging is not new.

The second case is a master thesis from University of Jyväskylä, *Museum24: Collaborative Writing as a Method in Local Cultural Heritage Preservation*. The thesis is actually a project which "assembles a virtual museum for the Jämsä region from regional sources by using collaborative writing as a tool to involve citizens in collecting and publishing local heritage" (Ojala 2008: 2) as the abstract states. Museum24 is a project which started in 2002 and which encourages the public to come with their own heritage resources in order to build up their museum and share it with the rest of online visitors. The main aim is the same in Museum of Photography but the format is different: Museum24 is a website while Museum of Photography is a blog. Nevertheless because Museum24 is part of the heritage online phenomenon and community collaboration I find it suitable as a representative example of how people organize and show their memories online. Although it is not part of social media, Museum24 enforces the fact people show a growing interest in their cultural heritage outside the traditional institutions.

4. Blogs, Web 2.0 and collective intelligence

The aim of the fourth chapter is to define the concept of blog, Web 2.0 and collective intelligence in order to offer a basic understanding of the format and basic characteristics of Museum of Photography. To understand how Museum of Photography works at a technical as well as conceptual level I need to clarify how blogs and Web 2.0 work as well as the phenomenon of collective intelligence which is tightly bound to the first two. Firstly I will offer a short definition and history of blogs relying on Jill Rettberg's book *Blogging*. Secondly I will provide a description of blogs and how blogs work based on screenshots of Museum of Photography. Finally I will relate the concept of blog to the one of Web 2.0 sustained by O'Reilly theory of what is Web 2.0 and define the features of Web 2.0: wisdom of crowds and collective intelligence which will also be further referred to in chapter eight: The community of Museum of Photography.

4.1 Where are blogs coming from?

Nowadays there are many ways of displaying culture and they are continually increasing with the development of Web 2.0, a tool which offers the audiences the possibility of interactivity and participation. "One of the main characteristics of Web 2.0 is an increased level of interaction between users and the Web and among users themselves." (M. Ronchi, 2009: 193). Blogs are included in Web 2.0 as they offer the possibility of information sharing, collaboration and interoperability. The term of "blog" was used for the first time in 1997, referring to a website and is a contraction of the words Web and log.[14] In the book *Blogging*, Rettberg states that "the word log is taken from nautical navigation, and originally referred to a chronological record of events during a sea journey: tracking speed, weather, course and so on. The name originally comes from the practice of measuring speed by throwing a log attached to a rope overboard and counting how many knots in the rope passed through a sailor's hands in thirty seconds. Readings from the log would be then entered into the logbook. Today, other information is also entered into the logbook. Weblogs have retained the chronological organization of the ship's logbook, although their content is less ordered and less systematic that the conventional logbook. The implicit transfer of the navigation metaphor to the Web is fitting, as people in the nineties tended to talk about navigating the Web". As the author states there are plenty of definitions for the word blog and even the definition given

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[14] Rettberg, Jill Walker. Blogging. UK: Polity Press, 2008. Print.

by Wikipedia has been changed from 2001 to 2007 by hundreds of users according to Rettberg. The author herself even wrote a definition of "weblog" for *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory* "a weblog is a frequently updated Web site consisting of dated entries arranged in reverse chronological order so the most recent post appears first".[15] Taken into account the fact that web 2.0 is developing and with it implicitly the blogs, there is no doubt that the definition will not stay the same in time. But the important thing is that there is a concept of "weblog" and a definition to give the user an idea about this type of interactive tool.

Blogs emerged in a short period of time as one might have seen once with the development of Web 2.0 but in fact looking deeper into the history of writing and communication, blogs have a long tradition behind. That product that we have nowadays is a result of a tradition which extends as far as the invention of writing; blogs can be said to be the great-children of print and an advanced result of the people's desire to communicate. "Blogs and the social publishing and communication forms that have developed on the Web are part of this larger picture of communication and publishing through the ages. They allow more dialogue than the pre-digital written word, and allow even cheaper and more extensive distribution than print or broadcasting. Blogs can be seen as belonging to the post-Gutenberg era, a time after the dominance of print and of mass media. They use technologies first imagined by visionaries of hypertext, but are more social than even these visionaries imagined" (Rettberg, 2008: 56).

The blogs are of many types and they treat many subjects. As the number of blogs increased significantly in the past years and they became more popular it is likely with a simple search to find a blog which suits your own interests or even create one of your own according to your field of interest. The blogs extend from professional blogs, based on a certain theme, written by experts in a certain field to personal blogs written by people who express their opinions on certain matters or just write diary-like entries from their personal life. Having this data in mind, one can notice the advantage of Web 2.0 which gave everyone the possibility to express themselves with just one click on "Publish" button or as Rebecca Blood stated in 2000: "The promise of the Web was that everyone could publish, that a thousand voices could flourish, communicate, connect. The truth was that only those people who knew how to code a Web page could make their voices heard. Blogger, Pitas, and all the rest have given people with little or no knowledge of HTML the

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[15] Quoted in Rettberg, Jill Walker. Blogging. UK: Polity Press, 2008. Print.

ability to publish on the Web: to pontificate, remember, dream, and argue in public, as easily as they send an instant message".[16]

By tracing the main characteristics of a blog and going back in time to see how this tool has developed and turned into the product that we now have, I would like to introduce one of the blog types which I would like to analyze thoroughly throughout my thesis, paying attention to its particular features, structure, development, influence and purpose. Last but not the least I would like to emphasize on the blog's connection with other social media tools, on its community and interactivity between the users. The kind of blog I am going to study has a typical blog format as the standard definition of a blog shows with chronological entries, regular posts, comments and a blog owner who started it. But there are, however, some differences which make it less personal and more theme oriented offering it a more degree of objectivity than for example a personal online diary or journal.

4.2 What is a blog? – A brief description

A short description on what blogs are, including features and usability, is given by Alfredo M. Ronchi in his book eCulture. He classifies the blogs under the *Advanced Online Services* of the Web 2.0 and includes them as part of the services offered by the new web feature which as mentioned above is also recognized by Ronchi as having an "increased level of interaction between users and the Web and among users themselves".

"A blog is a website where entries are made in journal style and displayed in a reverse chronological order" (M. Ronchi, 2009: 193). That can be obviously seen if one takes a look at Museum of Photography front page on the right under the "Archives" headline. There it can be seen that the older the posts can be found at the bottom of the column which is made of month, year and the number of posts the author made in the respective month. In addition, if one clicks on a certain month the posts also appear in chronological order; the newest post will always be shown first. Probably this is one of the most distinctive features of a blog and it cannot be mistaken with a webpage. The content of blogs varies a lot depending on the author. There are many blogs which deal with particular subjects such as politics, food, fashion but at the same time others function as online diaries in which random people write their daily activities or personal thoughts. The blog

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[16] Ibid., 15

search engine Technorati.com which was launched in 2003 became to count over 70 million of blogs in April 2007 (Sifry 2007)[17] and it is also estimated an increase of 120.000 blogs worldwide every day.
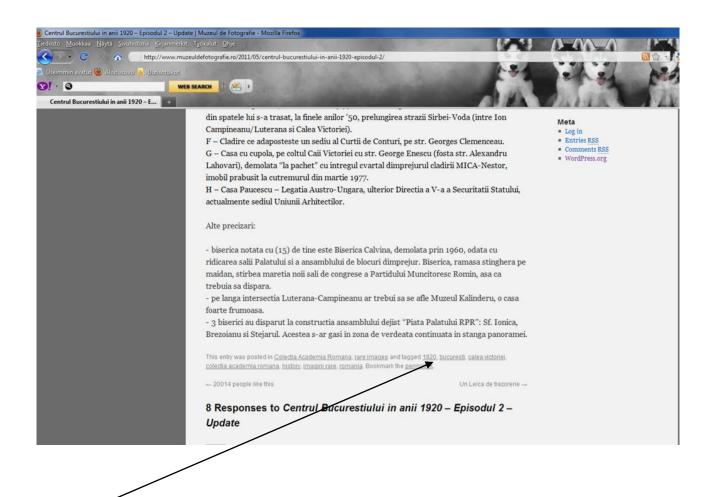
Museum of Photography is not a personal blog but a thematic one. At first glance the main theme is documentary photography but analyzing the content into depth will prove that it is more than just documentary photography but a cultural heritage blog. However the in-depth analysis will be dealt with in the forthcoming chapters. Blogs are mainly textual although recently there have appeared hybrid blogs which combine text, photos, videos and music. Museum of Photography is a hybrid blog combining photography with text although the primary focus would be that of a photoblog, as every post contains one or several photos with the accompanying text. Concerning how blogs are created Ronchi states that "A variety of systems are used to create and maintain blogs. There are web applications dedicated to blog creation and management, which eliminate the need for bloggers (users that create and manage blogs) to be experienced programmers" (M. Ronchi, 2009: 193). For example, with blogging platforms such as Wordpress and Blogger, any person without programming skills can have their own blog although there are advanced users who "developed custom blogging systems from scratch server-side software, and often implement membership management and password-protected areas" (M. Ronchi, 2009: 193). Museum of Photography is not a creation of an advanced programmer; it is a usual blog which is powered by Wordpress. To show the features of a blog in detail I will exemplify with some screenshots of a blog post from Museum of Photography.

[17] Sifry, David. The State of the Live Web. 5 April 2007. http://www.sifry.com/alerts/archives/000493.html [accessed 18.11.2010]

Permalink or the URL of the full article   The title of the post

The post date (when the post was published)   The body (the content of the post)

Figure 3. Museum of Photography screenshot. Taken 29.09.2011

din spatele lui s-a trasat, la finele anilor '50, prelungirea strazii Sirbei-Voda (intre Ion Campineanu/Luterana si Calea Victoriei).

F – Cladire ce adaposteste un sediu al Curtii de Conturi, pe str. Georges Clemenceau.

G – Casa cu cupola, pe coltul Caii Victoriei cu str. George Enescu (fosta str. Alexandru Lahovari), demolata "la pachet" cu intregul cvartal dimprejurul cladirii MICA-Nestor, imobil prabusit la cutremurul din martie 1977.

H – Casa Paucescu – Legatia Austro-Ungara, ulterior Directia a V-a a Securitatii Statului, actualmente sediul Uniunii Arhitectilor.

Alte precizari:

- biserica notata cu (15) de tine este Biserica Calvina, demolata prin 1960, odata cu ridicarea salii Palatului si a ansamblului de blocuri dimprejur. Biserica, ramasa stinghera pe maidan, stirbea maretia noii sali de congrese a Partidului Muncitoresc Romin, asa ca trebuia sa dispara.
- pe langa intersectia Luterana-Campineanu ar trebui sa se afle Muzeul Kalinderu, o casa foarte frumoasa.
- 3 biserici au disparut la constructia ansamblului dejist "Piata Palatului RPR": Sf. Ionica, Brezoianu si Stejarul. Acestea s-ar gasi in zona de verdeata continuata in stanga panoramei.

This entry was posted in Colectia Academia Romana, rare images and tagged 1920, bucuresti, calea victoriei, colectia academia romana, history, imagini rare, romania. Bookmark the permalink.

← 20014 people like this   Un Leica de trezorerie →

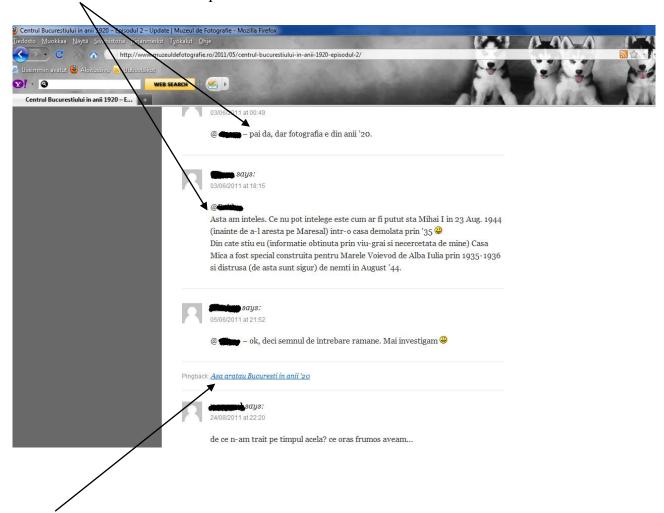## 8 Responses to *Centrul Bucurestiului in anii 1920 – Episodul 2 – Update*

Categories (tags): a list with terms which show what the entry is about (keywords) and they are helpful when searching for a particular category.

This entry was posted in Colectia Academia Romana, rare images and tagged 1920, bucuresti, calea victoriei, colectia academia romana, history, imagini rare, romania. Bookmark the permalink.

Figure 4&5. Museum of Photography screenshot. Taken 29.09.2011

Comments and polling/rating: readers are providing feedback about the posts or just engage into discussion on the theme of the post.

Trackback and/or pingback know also as links to other sites/blogs that refer to the post

Figure 6. Museum of Photography screenshot. Taken 29.09.2011

4.3 Blogs as part of Web 2.0

There is complicated to offer a full definition of what is Web 2.0 including features and characteristics as this in not the main aim of this chapter but instead it would be relevant to provide a description of one of the features of Web 2.0 for a better understanding of the concept and of the aim of this paper. In an article *What is Web 2.0* published on O'Reilly Media there is a sub-chapter called *Blogging and the Wisdom of Crowds*. The part discussing blogging is relevant for what the concept means for Web 2.0 and it describes its main features in comparison with Web 1.0 and

websites. I will make a short summary of the article including relevant quotations as I consider it a good example for illustrating participation in the virtual space and introducing my case study.

One of the main differences proposed by O'Reilly in the chart illustrating the differences between Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 is the passage from personal websites to blogging [18] and later in the article stating that "One of the most highly touted features of the Web 2.0 era is the rise of blogging [...] At its most basic, a blog is just a personal home page in diary format. But as Rich Skrenta notes, the chronological organization of a blog 'seems like a trivial difference, but it drives an entirely different delivery, advertising and value chain'". [19] The main difference between a webpage and a blog is interactivity and participation meaning that a blog will allow the readers to comment and even start chatting in the comment section, in this way leading to discussions, a feature web pages lack. As it will be noticed in my example I intend to choose for illustrating reader interactivity, the blog has some extra interactivity features a webpage does not have. Moreover, there are a couple of main differences which I would like to point out. First of all, the blogs have a special technology which "allows someone to link not just to a page, but to subscribe to it, with notification every time that page changes"[20], namely RSS[21]. Secondly, another noticeable difference between web pages and weblogs are the permalinks (permanent links) "a URL that links to a specific news story or Web posting. Permalinks are most commonly used for blogs, which are frequently changed and updated. They give a specific Web address to each posting, allowing blog entries to be bookmarked by visitors or linked to from other websites".[22] Referring to interactivity, Tom Coates mentions in the article *On Permalinks and Paradigms* that with the help of permalinks blogs are not only publishing platforms but conversational spaces and permalinks are an "attempt to build bridges between weblogs"[23] Moreover, besides permalinks and RSS, the blogs have trackbacks which help users not only to "subscribe to each others' sites, and easily link to individual comments on a page, but also [...] see when anyone else links to their pages, and can respond, either with reciprocal links, or by adding comments".[24]

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[18] O'Reilly, Tim. *What is Web 2.0. Design Patterns and Business Models for the Next Generation of Software.* 9 September 2005. http://oreilly.com/web2/archive/what-is-web-20.html [accessed 18.10.2010]

[19] Ibid., 18

[20] Ibid., 18.

[21] Pilgrim, Mike. O'Reilly Xml.com. What is RSS. 18 Dec. 2002. http://www.xml.com/pub/a/2002/12/18/dive-into-xml.html [accessed 18.10.2010]

[22] TechTerms.com. Permalink, 2012. http://www.techterms.com/definition/permalink [accessed 18.10.2010]

[23] Coates, Tom. On Permalinks and Paradigms. 11 June 2003. http://www.plasticbag.org/archives/2003/06/on_permalinks_and_paradigms/ [accessed 18.10.2010]

[24] Ibid., 23.

To sum up, the three main features which make the difference between a webpage and a blog, namely RSS, permalink and trackbacks are tools which specifically allow interaction for the users making the blogs one of the Web 2.0 tools just because visitors can connect between them in a way Web 1.0 did not allow, they can create their content and share it easily with others and overall they are given much more freedom regarding publishing, opinion and communication.

4.4 Wisdom of crowds and collective intelligence as features of Web 2.0

The main feature of the Web 2.0 namely that of crowds interacting online in order to provide content and its result has been referred to as the intelligence of the masses.

A reference to the intelligence of the masses is made by James Surowiecki upon mentioning that "large groups of people are smarter than an elite few, no matter how brilliant – better at solving problems, fostering innovation, coming to wise decisions, even predicting the future" [25] and naming this kind of intelligence "wisdom of crowds". However, not only that the masses become more powerful in expressing their opinion and sharing content with the help of blogs but they also create their own media becoming what Dan Gilmore calls "we, the media"[26] "a world in which 'the former audience', not a few people in a back room, decides what's important".[27] Through this, the audiences not only contribute with the content but they also create their own content using interactivity and build a system of virtual knowledge useful not only for the active users but also the passive ones. Blogs, nevertheless, are one of the most important features of web 2.0 with a high potential of developing one of the key concepts of web 2.0:"users add value".[28]

However the media theoretician Henry Jenkins mentions that there is a difference between Surowiecki's "wisdom of the crowds" and Pierre Levin's notion of "collective intelligence". Namely Surowiecki means that the wisdom of crowds emerges when a large number of people each enter their own calculations without influencing each other's findings"[29] and "Levy's

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[25] Surowiecki, James. The Wisdom of Crowds, 2004. http://www.randomhouse.com/features/wisdomofcrowds/ [accessed 19.10.2010]

[26] Gillmor, Dan. We the Media. Grassroots Journalism by the People, for the People. US: O'Reilly Media, 2004. http://wethemedia.oreilly.com/ [accessed 19.10.2010]

[27] Ibid., 18

[28] Ibid., 18

[29] Jenkins, Henry. Collective Intelligence vs. The Wisdom of Crowds. Confessions of an Aca-Fan. The official blog of Henry Jenkins. 26 Nov. 2006. http://www.henryjenkins.org/2006/11/collective_intelligence_vs_the.html [accessed 30.09.2011]

model focuses on the kinds of deliberative process that occurs in online communities as participants share information, correct and evaluate each other's findings, and arrive at a consensus understanding"[30]. Originally both notions were used in game studies but they can be applied in the same measures to blog and especially to Museum of Photography where the owner of the blog is not a professional but an amateur and by posting his collection of historical photos he also tries to give accurate information about the location of the buildings in the photographs or to comment the surroundings and the people who appear in the photos for a better clarification of the photographic content and for offering more information to his readers. In this respect Museum of Photography would somehow fail to harness the wisdom of the crowds because "it needs to be decentralized, so that no one at the top is dictating the crowd's answer"[31] whereas the blog is owned and updated by a single person who already has the monopoly on the initial information. The readers can come up with new information on the basis of what Alex Galmeanu has written, they can add extra information or they can contribute with new knowledge if the author does not know anything about the content of the pictures. However, the blog receives donations from other collectors who come with their own information about their collections but still there is always a person who dictates.

In a broader context, and here I refer to traditional institutions such museums, this type of blog belongs to the category mentioned by Surowiecki because in a formal context (museums) such information would be rejected or seen as invalid or false. Even the author of Museum of Photography states that this is not a formal or academic project. This kind of "wisdom of the crowds" approach might be inaccurate as Raph Koster mentions "people influence each other […] you'll start to get inaccuracies"[32] that is why the main reason heritage blogging is in its incipient phase and has not drawn the attention of formal heritage institutions. People come up with information, sometimes inaccurate and they can be wrong. Museum of Photography is embedding both notions of "wisdom of the crowds" and "collective intelligence" leaning more to the collective intelligence concept as the whole project is not only the author's but also participants'. Without the people who contribute with photographs and information, the posts would stop abruptly after a period of time and Museum of Photography would cease to exist. But the blog has survived from 2006 up to the present with regular posts which proves that people are interested. "Wisdom of the crowds" works when referred to Museum of Photography but applied in an opened context, meaning not only social media but the heritage industry. Collective intelligence is how the collaboration concept of Web 2.0 applies on Museum of Photography. The blog space is a host for

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[30] Ibid., 29
[31] Ibid., 29
[32] Ibid., 29

knowledge production "where nobody knows everything, everyone knows something, and what any given member knows is accessible to any other member upon request on an ad hoc basis"[33]. The Web 2.0 is helping information dissemination in an era where we are overloaded with rapid emerging content. It is almost impossible to keep up the pace with the amount of information we are bombarded with everyday. As Henry Jenkins mentions, collective intelligence is a tool which makes significant amount of information available to a large public "None of us can know everything; each of us knows something; we can put the pieces together if we pool our resources and combine our skills"[34] As I mentioned in a previous chapter one of the reasons Museum of Photography was born was because the society lacked a real photography museum and people were eager to share their collections and memories. Collective intelligence is not about gathering information anymore in this context but it is about building an identity.

This chapter was intended to provide an explanation of the new environment in which cultural heritage emerged. It is important to understand what blogs are, their history and the platform which sustains them in order to understand the features of Museum of Photography and how it emerged and developed.

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[33] Ibid., 29

[34] Jenkins, Henry. Welcome to Convergence Culture. Confessions of an Aca-Fan. The official blog of Henry Jenkins. 19 June 2006. http://www.henryjenkins.org/2006/06/welcome_to_convergence_culture.html [accessed 30.09.2011]

5. The heritage of Museum of Photography

This chapter's purpose is to introduce my case study and discuss its cultural heritage. I will provide a short history of the blog, some information about Alex Galmeanu – the blog's owner and some of his statements about this project, its purposes and its uses. Next I will discuss briefly the contents of the blog, namely what kind of photographs the blog contains and what do they mean for Romanian cultural heritage by quoting a cultural magazine which published an article about Museum of Photography. Furthermore I will make a short reference to the blog's first post, the language the content is published in as well as post frequency and the readers. There will also be a mention about Museum of Photography's page on Facebook which emphasize its growth in popularity. In addition to the presentation of the study case, there will also be a discussion and analysis of the cultural heritage on the blog referring to the photos, what they stand for, as well as the comments. I will also provide a close analysis of the types of heritage in Museum of Photography with relevant examples from the blog posts and comments. The aim of this chapter is to familiarize the reader with my study case and to set it as a starting point for my research.

5.1 Museum of Photography

The blog I am going to analyze and discuss throughout this thesis is a Romanian blog called "Muzeul de Fotografie". Translated into English it means Museum of Photography which collects and displays rare, old photography from the beginning of the 20th century, mainly photos of the old Romanian capital – Bucharest but also Romania in general and even international photography. In the "About" section is a brief description of the blog and its purposes. "Muzeuldefotografie.ro is built out of passion for photography. It is not a real museum. It is not about an academic formula or an official approach but an initiative derived from the growing interest related to subjects regarding old photography and photography in general. We intend to gather and display images and information related especially to Romanian photography not excluding though international photography".[35] The author of the blog, the Romanian photographer Alex Galmeanu, does not practice blogging as a profession but he is one of the most known Romanian photographers who collaborates with different magazines and also has its own projects – such as Project 112[36] or

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[35] Galmeanu, Alex. Despre Muzeul de Fotografie, Muzeul de Fotografie. http://www.muzeuldefotografie.ro/despre-muzeuldefotografiero/ [accessed 21.11.2010]
[36] Galmeanu, Alex. Project 112. http://wn.com/Alex_Galmeanu__Project_112 [accessed 21.11.2010]

People I know[37] as well as his own blog about his projects[38]. In an interview for the Romanian newspaper *Observatorul Cultural* he described his blog muzeuldefotografie.ro as follows: "it appeared naturally. I don't think that is a special idea but rather necessary. What I do is just a drop in the ocean. I am displaying my (very modest) collection of old photography and inviting other people to do the same. It is not an academic way of exhibiting; it is not a real museum. It is a hint, a whisper to the ones who have the power and necessary resources to make a real museum".[39] As the author stated the blog comprises mostly of his personal collection of old photography but there are also contributors who wish to share their collections; for them there is a special section of the blog called "How can you help?". Besides there are many ways to contribute not only by offering for display old photographs but also writing articles related to the topic of photography, donating money for helping the project to purchase photos and for publishing it, spreading the word – here the author encourages the visitors to be a part of building up the fame of the museum by publishing the link of the blog on their personal blogs or websites; or using the material on the blog with the mentioning of the source. And last but not the least visitors are encouraged to comment on the posts and for any questions or proposals they can write using the blog's contact address office@muzeuldefotografie.ro. All the proposals made in the section "How can you help" encourages visitor participation and interaction as it will be shown later on through the comments of the visitors who help each other decode the photographs; a certain way of providing information about them implying a good knowledge of history, especially concerning the region of old Bucharest otherwise the pictures being less meaningful.

A short summary of the content of the blog would be that Museum of Photography exhibits in the first place the Romanian capital Bucharest in different ages: starting with the beginning of the 20th century, then the World Wars, and the communist era. Besides, there are also exhibited anonymous photos or worldwide famous photos which are already set as symbols of universal photography. As the author advises other publications to spread the word, there are some cultural sites which already wrote about his blog such as brainwash.ro an online Romanian cultural publication which states about Museum of Photography: "Most of the photos exhibited on the blog represent real visual documents with historical value".[40] In addition, the article empowers the idea

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[37] Galmeanu, Alex. People I Know. http://www.slideshare.net/aditaciobanu/people-i-know-photography-by-alex-galmeanu-nx-power-lite [accessed 21.11.2010]

[38] http://blog.alexgalmeanu.com/

[39] Draghia, Ovidiu. Ne trebuie un Muzeu al Fotografiei. Observator Cultural. Oct. 2009. http://www.observatorcultural.ro/Ne-trebuie-un-Muzeu-al-Fotografiei*articleID_22684-articles_details.html [accessed 25.11.2010]

[40] Ibid.,9

that the initiative of the blog could be an obvious hint for a real museum since the photos are part of the Romanian cultural heritage. "I consider, given the fact that during the communist regime, most of the historical monuments were lost, it is absolutely necessary to do as much as we can in order to reconstitute them and offer them to the community, be it in images, words or any kind of historical documents. A photograph has the same historical value as a document, managing to depict the many aspects of time in which it was taken: from clothing and architecture to traditions and social, cultural and political realities. Also, it shouldn't be neglected the contribution of Romanian photographers to the world photographic heritage; here I refer to photographers such as Brassai, Franz Mandy, Ferenc Veress or Carol Pop de Szatmari".[41] The idea that this blog is a hint to the authorities to take into consideration the opening of a real museum of Romanian photography is also reinforced by this article: "It would be necessary the opening of a real museum of Romanian photography, but as regarding the authorities, the ones who could actually decide upon such initiatives, this is not a priority. Until something happens regarding this issue, I invite you to visit Museum of Photography, an initiative which, I mention again, deserves to be appreciated and popularized".[42]

Museum of Photography was created on 22nd of February 2006 with two posts published in the same day. The first post is "old Bucharest view" which shows a picture with an old church, Holy Friday Church which was demolished under the communist regime and the second is a series of "very rare private pictures of one of the most important European diplomats before the Second World War: Nicolae Titulescu".[43] Here is a screenshot with one of the first posts of Museum of Photography:

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[41] Ibid.,9
[42] Ibid.,9
[43] Galmeanu, Alex. Nicolae Titulescu's private images, Muzeul de Fotografie, entry February 22, 2006. http://www.muzeuldefotografie.ro/2006/02/nicolae-titulescus-private-images/ [accessed 26.11.2010]

old bucharest view

Posted on 22/02/2006 by alex_galmeanu

For those who know Bucharest well enough, this must be a very interesting picture. This is Sfanta Vineri Square with Sfanta Vineri Church (Holy Friday Church) on the left, demolished by the Romanian dictator Ceausescu in 19.06.1987(this day it is a Friday like the name of the church). The place was located at the crossroads of Calea Calarasilor Street and Sfanta Vineri Street. Right now there is a wide boulevard, a shopping Mall, two Gas Stations and residential apartments. The picture is made by Laurentiu Galmeanu (http://www.laurentiu.go.ro) in the winter of 1986. And it is, as far as I know, the last picture of this church before it was destroyed.

This entry was posted in Colectia Alex Galmeanu, rare images and tagged 1986, bucuresti, colectia alex galmeanu, comunism, history, imagini rare, romania. Bookmark the permalink.

Nicolae Titulescu's private images →

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- June 2008 (2)
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- December 2007 (2)
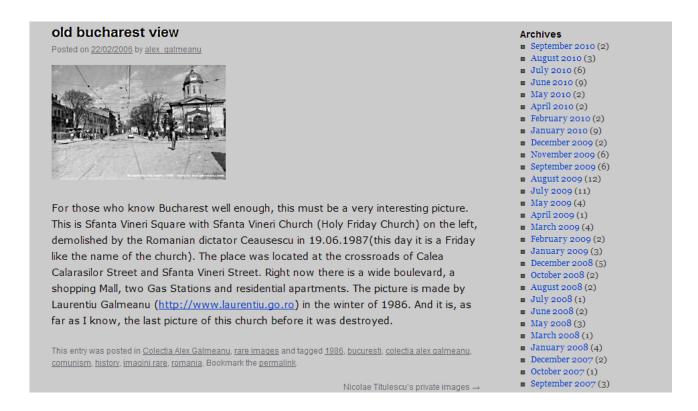- October 2007 (1)
- September 2007 (3)

Figure 7. Museum of Photography. Old Bucharest View. Taken 22.10.2010

The language used in the first posts is English although the blog is bilingual; some posts are in English, some in Romanian with Romanian being the predominant language. The comments are also in Romanian, occasionally some readers post comments in English. In the first year, blog posts are in English with rarely any posts in Romanian but in the beginning of 2007 the posts' language starts to be mixed. Also, from May 2007 onwards the main language switches from English to Romanian and it continues that way up to the present with few posts in English. The language is a very important tool of communicating when it comes to cultural heritage as it can disseminate information not only locally but also globally. Photography is in most cases speaking for itself but the text which accompanies the photographs on the blog should not be put on a secondary place since it is an important way in understanding better the photographs themselves and a widely spoken language is necessary as the blog does not deal only with Romanian documentary photography but also international photography and in most of the cases it displays photographs which are very well known and had a significant impact worldwide.

Being a blog which deals with documentary photography, it does not have plenty of posts every month and sometimes there are months with no posts depending on the materials which are available to the author for publishing; the most active month of the blog up to present was

August 2009 which summed up twelve posts. There is also a wide range of readers who write on the topics published expressing their opinions mostly and encouraging the initiative but also there are people who comment on the photos adding more information if they happen to know the place where the photo was taken or even the circumstances or the persons. Most photos being from the old Bucharest there are plenty of nostalgic people expressing not only their knowledge regarding the photographs but also their feelings and experiences related to those times which add a plus of value to the attached photographs.

5.2 From a modest initiative to almost 15.000 fans – Museum of Photography on Facebook

Not only did the cultural magazines dedicate articles to this initiative of displaying documentary photography on a blog under the significant name of "museum" which I consider original and meaningful but the social networking sites were also useful tools in promoting and sustaining it, making its popularity grow every day. On the right side of the blog there is a section called "Become a friend", a familiar invitation to the readers and visitors to join the group dedicated to Museum of Photography on Facebook. There are also posts placed in the category "not especially on topic" which keep track of the growing number of visitors who join the group of the virtual museum as well as the time when Museum of Photography opened its own Facebook page. I would like to present a short historic about the blog and its start on Facebook by mentioning the time when the Facebook page was set up for it, namely on the 26th of August 2009. The announcement says simply: "Museum of Photography has Facebook page. Feel free to join us"[44] accompanied by link in the text so the visitors can easily join it.

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[44] Galmeanu, Alex. Muzeul de Fotografie are pagina pe Facebook, Muzeul de Fotografie, entry August 26, 2009. http://www.muzeuldefotografie.ro/2009/08/muzeul-de-fotografie-are-pagina-pe-facebook/ [accessed 12.10.2010]

Figure 8. Museum of Photography. Museum of Photography has Facebook page. Taken 24.10.2010

The popularity of Museum of Photography on Facebook grew rapidly from 4000 fans in January 2010 to 8000 in May 2010, reaching over 10.000 likes by July 2010. "10774 People Like This. I know that hardly two months have passed since the last announcement on this topic but we cannot help underline a nice round number. Muzeuldefotografie.ro has more than 10000 friends on Facebook! Thank you!".[45] Nowadays Museum of Photography's Facebook group consists of almost 15.000 friends. At this moment[46], Museum of Photography has 14.834 Facebook friends. If we are to consider the beginnings, one might say that the number of people, who like the initiative, is increasing more rapidly. In conclusion, by following the people who join Museum of Photography on Facebook, it can be noticed that this initiative grows more popular in time with the help of Facebook.

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[45]Galmeanu, Alex. 10774 people like this, Muzeul de Fotografie, entry July 10, 2010. http://www.muzeuldefotografie.ro/2010/07/10774-people-like-this/ [accessed 12.10.2010]

[46] 12. Oct. 2010

Figure 9. Museum of Photography's Facebook page. Taken 24.10.2010

But does this mean that everybody is a faithful visitor? In my opinion it is not necessarily to be a faithful visitor and the purpose of establishing a Facebook page for Museum of Photography might be far from this intention. However, there are other plenty useful purposes why Museum of Photography has its own page on Facebook. First, Facebook is a tool in helping the popularity of the virtual museum to grow as its author stated in his primary intentions when he first opened the blog, by "spreading the word". As Facebook is one of the most popular social networks nowadays with 500 million users[47], setting up an own page of the blog was an excellent opportunity to promote it. In this way, people can follow the news on the blog, the latest posts or announcements directly on Facebook and go to the blog where they can comment and interact with the content. Through Facebook, Museum of Photography can keep the visitors updated more efficiently than just by letting them access the blog whenever they remember, unless they are subscribed for a feed which in this case allows them to view updates directly from Internet Explorer or other programs that use the Common Feed List. In addition, the popularity is increased with the help of community itself – friends can see the blog from their friends or the fans can forward the

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[47] Wikipedia – the free encyclopedia. Facebook, last updated 11 May 2012. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Facebook [accessed 12.10. 2010]

links from Museum of Photography on their wall or on their friends' wall as a reading recommendation.

A question which rises up from Facebook interaction of the blog with its visitors is that: if visitors interact on Facebook, is not the purpose of the Museum of Photography diminished in this regard? The question would seem somehow similar to the one regarding a real museum and a virtual museum: If Museum of Photography exists as a blog which displays its collections then why the need of a real museum? There is a certain need of all the media here as they work in order to help one another, not to exclude themselves. Facebook is rather a tool for growing the blog's popularity and visits than a killer of the blog's main purpose. In order for the one to see the full news, one has to visit the blog and as concerning interaction with regard to the content one has to use the blog and to use the possibilities offered there for contact or content contribution. General impressions can be posted both on the blog and on Facebook but to get to more serious matters as content production or contribution one has to use exclusively the blog. As a brief answer to this question, Facebook is just a tool for advertising not a replacement, a way of getting Museum of Photography more visitors and contributors and making it popular, as it was the initial intention of its author.

5.3 Cultural heritage in Museum of Photography

In the previous sections I gave overall information about the contents of Museum of Photography: basic information about Alex Galmeanu – the blog's author, when the blog was created, what are its contents, the languages it uses and its popularity on Facebook. In this section I would like to give more details regarding the heritage of Museum of Photography stressing on the part which refers to old Bucharest. It is important to delimitate a certain community for example Bucharest's (ex)-inhabitants/enthusiasts for a closer look in the following chapters. Other blog posts which deal with other places from Romania will also be taken into consideration for analysis as well as portrait photographs. I will also discuss what kind of heritage does Museum of Photography hold (tangible/intangible) with representative examples from the blog.

To start with, the concept of cultural heritage will be defined briefly. "From a purely legal point of view, we can consider anything realized by human beings more than fifty years ago to be potentially protected" according to Ronchi (M. Ronchi, 2009: 16). This is a simple definition which indicates clearly that Museum of Photography deals with cultural heritage. A great deal of

the photos are over fifty years old and what they represent is part of the broad definition of heritage. In the thesis's introduction I quoted Jokilehto reference to definition of cultural heritage given by UNESCO in Draft Medium Term Plan 1990-1995 namely "cultural heritage may be defined as the entire corpus of material signs - either artistic or symbolic - handed on by the past to each culture and, therefore, to the whole of humankind" (Jokilehto 1990: 4). Furthermore I will also provide the simple definition of Oxford Dictionary regarding heritage "property that is or may be inherited; an inheritance; valued objects and qualities such as historic buildings and cultural traditions that have been passed down from previous generations; denoting or relating to things of special architectural, historical, or natural value that are preserved for the nation".[48]

As resulted from these three definitions cultural heritage means that an object is protected and considered of value if it has a certain age, it is an object of the past, it is passed down to next generations and it has certain artistic and symbolic value for a community. At first glance it seems that the heritage of Museum of Photography are the photographs themselves but taking a better look into its contents one might notice that Museum of Photography goes beyond simple photos. Museum of Photography is holding peoples' heritage. People are discussing the photographs in terms of their historical and cultural value not photographic quality or techniques although such topics might come up occasionally. Photography is only the tool through which cultural heritage is displayed. The blog has the "museum atmosphere" by presenting people, events, and buildings with the help of photography used as a means for heritage production. "Heritage is produced through objects, images, events, and representations; these are the displays of heritage. Since the original experiences of the past are irretrievable, we can only grasp them through remains".[49] The photos are the main methods of building up the past of a city with a rich history – Bucharest, and give life to memories related to places, people, buildings or events.

The heritage of Museum of Photography is not formal, as it would be in a cultural heritage institution because it is presented by ordinary people who have no training in a related field. This is an important aspect of this blog which breaks away from the formal boundaries of an institution and gives the public a chance to have a say about their local and national heritage. Hoelscher mentions in his article *Heritage* that "a half a century ago, heritage connoted heredity and the transferal of possessions, today it includes roots, identity, and the sense of place and belonging". The heritage of the blog is not about documentary photography as mentioned above but about the

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[48] http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/heritage
[49] Hoelscher, Steven. *Heritage. A Companion to Museum Studies*. Ed. Sharon Macdonald. UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2011. 198-218. Print.

empowerment of Romanian community regarding their national identity and values. Hence the heritage is not objectified anymore, it becomes "the value of the past that we distinguish in the present in order to be able to preserve it for the future".[50] People are given the chance to express freely in matters of history, they can add their opinions, discuss memories, ideas, places with others alike without any formal boundaries or institutional restrictions. Museum of Photography gives cultural heritage freedom of expression through the people who are the creators of its heritage. The blog represents itself the idea that cultural heritage can be presented under a popular, unrestricted, free form. Further in his article, Hoelscher mentions that over the past four decades there has been a growing interest in cultural heritage. The forms in which heritage is preserved are extended and what is seen today as heritage is "inconceivably more democratic than early ones, offering more points of access to 'ordinary people' and a wider form of belonging". The article states that nowadays the reasons for the growing heritage trend are numerous; each community has its own reasons for protecting of what is considered heritage.

5.4 Tangible and intangible cultural heritage

Cultural heritage is also classified into groups of different relevance for its content. In the following sections I will emphasize on two groups which are common in Museum of Photography, namely tangible/intangible heritage and personal/collective heritage. By showing the typology of heritage on the blog with representative examples I intend to offer a better overview and understanding of what the blog is about, sustain and enforce the idea that Museum of Photography is a social space with and about cultural heritage.

Before presenting samples of tangible and intangible heritage from Museum of Photography I would like to start with a definition of tangible and intangible heritage.

"A tangible heritage is one that can be stored and physically touched. This includes items produced by the cultural group such as traditional clothing, utensils (such as beadwork, water vessels), or vehicles (such as the ox wagon). Tangible heritages include great monuments such as temples, pyramids, and public monuments. Though

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[50] Maroevic, Ivo. *The Phenomenon of Cultural Heritage and the Definition of a Unit Material*. Nordisk Museologi. 2 (1998): 135-142. Print.

a tangible heritage can perish, it is generally more obvious how it can be conserved than intangible heritages that are at greater risk and can be lost for all time".[51]

"The term 'intangible cultural heritage' refers to the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, and skills—as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated with them—that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognise as being part of their cultural heritage". (Ronchi, 2009: 19)

Museum of Photography contains both kinds of cultural heritage: tangible and intangible. However, the most obvious is the tangible cultural heritage which is the easiest to identify at first glance through photos, texts and the representations the photographs contain i.e. buildings, places, objects, people. The intangible cultural heritage might not be so transparent at first glance but if one looks better at the texts, the photos and the comments one might notice that intangible heritage is built with the help of people's memories and the photographic content. One of the major merits of the photographs is that they successfully embed both tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

The tangible cultural heritage is mainly comprised of the photographs from Alex's personal collection or other people's collections which are sent to be published on the blog. Besides that, the photographs are historical documents of buildings, events, people or objects. For example, the blog contains several pictures of Bucharest's architecture from various historical periods beginning with 1865 and continuing up to our present days. Usually more recent photos are used to compare old parts of the city and to identify buildings. The amount of photos increases chronologically; Museum of Photography has more material from World War II than from World War I (nineteen posts, respectively seven). The amount of photos starts to increase after 1900; there are only two posts from 1865.

To illustrate an example of tangible heritage from Museum of Photography I choose a blog post from September 2009[52] containing a photo of Elisabeta Boulevard in 1918 submitted by one of the frequent commentators Raiden, who also has his own blog with posts occasionally dealing with Bucharest's architectural heritage.[53] The photo shows a part of the boulevard and a building that used to be Bucharest's City Hall but as the city was under German occupation at that

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[51] http://www.sanculture.org.za/defn_tang%20cultural%20heritage.htm [accessed 10.11.2011]

[52] Galmeanu, Alex. Bulevardul Elisabeta în 1918, Muzeul de Fotografie, entry September 08, 2009 http://www.muzeuldefotografie.ro/2009/09/bulevardul-elisabeta-in-1918/ [accessed 11.11. 2011]

[53] Rezistenta urbana. Blog de atitudine, 2007 http://www.rezistenta.net/ [accessed 11.11.2011]

time, the City Hall was turned into the German Army's quarters. The tangible heritage represented by photo is obvious and it consists of the Bucharest City Hall and the panoramic view of the boulevard in that time. One of the comments even adds that the building got another floor after World War II: "the photo shows how the building looked like before another floor was added to it after World War II" [08/09/2009 at 01:06].

Figure 10. Museum of Photography. Elisabeta Boulevard in 1918. Taken 20.10.2011

The intangible heritage of Museum of Photography consists of people's memories which are related to certain events as well as photographic content showing different activities that are representative for a certain group of people or time. A significant amount of intangible heritage is to be found in the posts tagged "communism" as well as under the tags representing the years which correspond to the communist era, respectively from 1950 onwards. The posts have also a significant amount of comments since the generations of the communist era are in their adulthood now and the subject is sensitive for the ones who have lived those times.

An example which contains both photo representing people's habits in the past and text explaining their behavior is a post called "to stand in a queue philosophy" [54] which illustrates people standing in a queue outside a funeral service shop. The photo is explained briefly by the author "The queue, this was the big philosophy of the Romanian communism. It was an ordinary thing for everybody to stand in a queue for something those days […] something simple usually like

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[54]Galmeanu, Alex. to stand in a queue philosophy, Muzeul de Fotografie, entry November 27, 2006
http://www.muzeuldefotografie.ro/2006/02/to-stand-in-a-queue-phylosophy/ [accessed 14. 11. 2011]

toilet paper, bread and eggs, water, sugar, etc."[55] The comments following the post reinforce the idea that queues were a routine in the late communist period which was marked by product shortages.

However, Museum of Photography has many comments made by the readers regarding the lifestyle and living habits of a certain period. To illustrate this statement I chose a post[56] about an article published in the German magazine Der Spiegel which discusses the Soviet policy in the Eastern Bloc countries. The factor that starts the comments is not the article itself but the cover of the magazine which symbolically depicts important Soviet symbols like Lenin's statue and Casa Scanteii powerfully contrasting with the modern youngsters posing on motorcycles. Some of the people think that the group of youngsters on the magazine's cover is fake because they look too modern and fashionable for the year 1964 "I believe that the cover is counterfeit. I was 11-12 years old back then but I don't remember that young people behaved so casually" [08/08/2010 at 12:18]. Another comment contradicts it stating that "They were Romanians although they don't seem to be. I was in high school at that time, there weren't such clothes on the market but we were all looking at the west and despite the restrictions we still got a magazine; besides the tourists at the seaside, we were informed regarding fashion and I don't know if they still exist today, but the dressmakers were working wonders with any piece of cloth. So especially during the summers when complicated clothes weren't needed, we looked civilized. We combed our hair and we used make-up (what we had, mostly nothing) having examples from magazines, movies or tourists. That doesn't mean that we rolled in wealth, on the contrary, our efforts to look decently were pathetic but it was the only way to give more color to our lives" [05/06/2010 at 22:17]. The intangible heritage generated from this discussion refers to youngsters' way of life in the communist time especially to elements of fashion and it is generated by people's memories. As further noticed from other user's comments the memories which are constructing intangible heritage are subjective. Depending on the people's social status the hardships of the communist period are remembered differently thus creating a diverse picture of those times.

For example another user mentions that "In communist Romania were 2 distinctive societies" [17/06/2010 at 04:48]. He adds that he read the memories of Vladimir Tismaneanu[57] who

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[55] Ibid., 54.

[56] Galmeanu, Alex. Reportaj Der Spiegel despre Romania anului 1964, Muzeul de Fotografie, entry June 05, 2010 http://www.muzeuldefotografie.ro/2010/06/reportaj-der-spiegel-despre-romania-anului-1964/ [accessed 14.11.2011]

[57] Romanian and American political scientist, political analyst, sociologist, and professor at the University of Maryland, College Park http://www.theinteramerican.org/about-us/fellows/279-vladimir-tismneanu.html [accessed 14.11.2011]

belonged to the high Romanian society and lived a life above the average of Westerners even. "I remember how amused young Vladimir Tismaneanu and his friends were in front of a shoe shop window from Bucharest; cheap shoes for the working class; very ugly, extremely ugly compared to the shoes they were wearing. For such young people, the latest music or fashion was as familiar as for many young Westerners" [17/06/2010 at 04:48]. The discussion continues on the same subject, namely memories related to good versus bad lifestyle around 1964, with many references to the political leaders of that time but also to the moral standards of society. A user compares the society nowadays with the society back then regarding moral behavior in public and mentions: "[…] if I was together with a girl in public and I dared to hold her closely, older people would call me a hooligan. I don't even want to talk about what would have happened if I kissed her in public [16/07/2010 at 18:17]. In connection to the political leaders, users discuss about the two delimited periods of communism which arise from the fact that Romanians split the communist era into two: the good one and the bad one. Even from the discussion generated by the group of youngsters on Der Spiegel cover, people remember that communist era was not all bad despite the fact that most people like to stress on its bad side. This good/bad division it is triggered by Nicolae Ceausescu's coming to power in 1965: "[…] in 1964 I was 20 years old and I can say that Romanians had everything they needed. The disaster started one year later when the bastard became president. In 1967 it was issued the decree interdicting abortions; in 1971 he visited China and from that moment on the tragedy of this poor nation started" [16/07/2010 at 18:17].

As noticed from the above statement the memories and the feelings related to those times are very strong in the people who experienced them. However, this personal vibes of the comments build up the heritage that we do not see in the walls of the buildings, in people's photographic portraits or in historical facts that are related to the photos. The intangible heritage is build through people memories and feelings. Even if the picture depicts a typical queue from communist Bucharest it would say little if people would not add their personal experience to it. In conclusion, the intangible heritage of Museum of Photography is build by both photographic symbolism and collective memory. The intangible heritage of Museum of Photography is recorded in writing. It this way the data it is safeguarded through "identification, documentation […] preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, transmission […] as well as the revitalization of the various aspects of this heritage" (Ronchi, 2009: 20).

5.5 Personal and collective cultural heritage

Besides tangible and intangible cultural heritage, the second classification which is representative for Museum of Photography as well as for its community is personal and collective cultural heritage. Heritage is inextricably linked to people but in the case of this second classification, community as well as the individual plays a very important role. Personal and collective heritage are both an expression of identity. Museum of Photography contains both of them although the process of displaying cultural heritage in a virtual space transforms the personal heritage into collective heritage most of the times. The concepts of personal and collective heritage are important to be mentioned as they are defined by the community of the blog and they are representative features of such virtual spaces which involve informal heritage communities. Personal and collective cultural heritage can exist only if a heritage community exists. Museum of Photography, besides the fact that it is an independent virtual institution, it exists because a heritage community makes its existence possible. "A heritage community consists of people who value specific aspects of cultural heritage which they wish, within the framework of public action, to sustain and transmit to future generations".[58]

Museum of Photography started as a personal project in which Alex Galmeanu published his personal collection of photos online. So, personal heritage consisted of his or his family's photo collection which he decided to share with a virtual community interested in photography or Romanian cultural heritage. The section of the blog "How can you help" invites other individual photo collectors or owners to share their personal collection, to write for the blog, to read and comment and to forward the information. This section of the blog was actually what made it a collaborative project although the initiative was taken by Alex Galmeanu. By inviting other people to contribute he ensured the longevity of Museum of Photography and also offered the possibility of collective heritage production. The individuals who contribute actively to the development of Museum of Photography's content are acknowledged by doing so by the blog owner. For example, in the blog tags the names of the collections are accompanied by the owner's name and besides Alex Galmeanu's collection, one can also notice Cristian Malide's collection, who is one of the prolific contributors of the blog. Of course, there are other contributors to the blog but hence their contribution resumes to a few photographs, their name and rights on the photos is mentioned in the posts where the photos appear. For copyright reasons all the photos in Museum of Photography are watermarked with **www.muzeuldefotografie.ro**, however if the photos are

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[58] Quoted in Pauliina Kinanen. Museologia tänään. Helsinki: Suomen museoliitto, 2007. Print.

donated by another person, the name of the person will appear near the original watermark or it will be mentioned in the blog post.

An example is the post *S. Korn bought from the market*[59] where Alex is posting two photo portraits made in Bucharest by an Austrian photographer S. Korn. The original post consisted only of these two photographs but later in the comments a user mentions: "You won't believe it but I have 3 different photos with this man from your post…All of them Korn" [19/08/2009 at 23:52] to which Alex replies: "I can believe it. it would be interesting to add them to my post. can you scan them?" [22/08/2009 at 09:25]. Later on the post has an update with the photos of Marius Toader added to it. The same goes with the blog post *Family album*[60] where there is a series of photos with a family dated around 1920's, who poses in their yard. The photos are made available by a user Veniamin Micu, who is mentioned in the blog post.

The examples above are of active contributors who give photographic material in order for the museum to continue its existence. The photos of the directly active contributors are part of their personal collections namely their personal heritage. By sending them to Museum of Photography, the photos become public, everybody is entitled to comment and have an opinion about them which makes them part of the collective heritage. The content of the photos arise memories, feelings, opinions in the virtual public, some of the photos are considered to depict national symbols and are recognized by people which belong to a certain category (Romanians, Bucharest inhabitants etc.). By sharing them with other users and by making their historical value recognized collectively, the photographic content becomes collective heritage, namely it does not stand as a singular symbol for a person but the heritage community acknowledges the content as being a common symbol of their identity. The contribution of Museum of Photography's virtual community is also formally called oral history, in other words „how people make sense of their past, how they connect individual experience and its social context and how the past becomes part of the present, and how people use it to interpret their lives and the world around them"[61] although it is usually applied in formal institutions which use it as an additional tool for presenting cultural heritage. The use of oral history in Museum of Photography works spontaneously since there is no authority to censor people's memories, for example leave out controversial ones and accept only what it is deemed to be suited for the blog. Outside the virtual world museums are already using

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[59]Galmeanu, Alex. S. Korn cumparat de la piata, Muzeul de Fotografie, entry August 15, 2009
http://www.muzeuldefotografie.ro/2009/08/s-korn-cumparat-de-la-piata/ [accessed 13. 12. 2011]
[60]Galmeanu, Alex. Album de familie, Muzeul de Fotografie, entry August 15, 2011
http://www.muzeuldefotografie.ro/2011/08/album-de-familie/ [accessed 13.12.2011]
[61] Frisch, Michael. *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990. Print. Quoted in Oral History and Public Memories.

people and their memories to create exhibitions be it by material means or oral history as National Museum of History from Romania did with the interactive exhibition *My Youth in the Communist Age* [62], where people were invited to contribute with objects which bear the specific of the communist age; or *70's – 80's. Our Youth.*[63], an exhibition about the people whose youth was marked by the 70's and 80's and by the specific activities of that time. The museum made available a special notebook for visitors where they can write their memories from that time.

Museum of Photography's exclusive personal heritage is represented though not by the photographic material but by the people's personal memories. The photographic material triggers many comments and a part of them are people's memories which are arose by images. Usually these images are strongly related to people's personal experiences, they capture the essence of a feeling lived somewhere in the past. In this case photographs can be compared to the famous madeleine episode of Marcel Proust.[64] Personal memories are triggered by a photo or a series of photos which has certain significance for a reader. In this case, the reader's remembrances are triggered by involuntary memory which "result from the cuing of memories by sensory experiences that are a peripheral feature of the actual memory content" (Mace, 2007: 114). More specifically involuntary memory is a process of the brain which evokes memories without conscious mental effort or "as instances in which memories come to mind spontaneously, unintentionally, automatically, without effort" (Mace, 2007: 13). Involuntary memory can be triggered by any object or a situation one comes in contact with on a daily basis and in the case of the readers it is based on visual sensory experiences namely the sight of the photos triggers involuntary memory. Photographs though represent the strongest factors which are involved in the process of involuntary memory in Museum of Photography and as a result in the production of cultural heritage. Personal heritage involving reader's memories is equivalent to intangible heritage, the concept discussed earlier; the readers are discussing the photos and with the help of the representations, they rebuild the past and offer other readers an idea, although subjective, of how life and things were back then.

Most of the personal cultural heritage of Museum of Photography consists of people's memories from the communist time. As mentioned above – a time which is still vivid and controversial in people's memories. The readers remember personal experiences as well as life in

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[62] http://www.facebook.com/#!/notes/mnir/proiect-interactiv-vino-al%C4%83turi-de-noi-expo-tinere%C5%A3ea-mea-%C3%AEn-comunism/470882591606 [accessed 20.02.2012]

[63] http://www.mnir.ro/ro/Evenimente/Eveniment.aspx?IDEveniment=128 [accessed 20.02.2012]

[64] In volume one of the book In Search of Lost Time, Swann's Way, the narrator tastes once a madeleine cake dipped in tea which brings him a nostalgic memory of his childhood.

general as it was in that time. As an example I will choose the blog post *1986, Bucharest*[65] which depicts photos with the Romanian capital from 1986, just three years before the abolition of the communist regime. One of the readers posts two long comments related to the pictures in which he evokes personal memories from his childhood and how life was around year 1986. I will make a summary of his comments and provide some excerpts. The reader starts remembering some of the disastrous events that happened back then: the Chernobyl disaster, an earthquake and the way he and his family managed to overcome those unfortunate events. Then he goes on mentioning the hardships following the poverty with which communist Romania was struggling at that time including the effort to buy food and other products necessary for the daily life. He mentions some of the existing product brands and how some people managed to import goods from outside the country as well as people who were slightly better than others due to the fact that they had external ties. Along with the survival efforts, people were also trying to keep in contact with the outside world regarding fashion, media and entertainment. He also gives very interesting information about the construction works that were done in Bucharest at that time.

> "As far as I remember the Chernobyl and the earthquake, both in august. […] A neighbor, who was physicist, came with a Geiger-Mueller device and it was obvious that in the room, near the window were three times more particles per second than in the opposite side of the room, which was over the normal value anyway. In 1986 Bucharest was in its darkest period as far as I know. There were lots of demolitions; a grey-brownish slime of mud was covering the streets. The busses were crowded with passengers hanging from the doors. The external debt was being paid and the food was hard to get. One had to wait in long queues in front (or behind) a shop. Even the kids and teenagers became experts in queuing. The gas was being scarce and there were all the time cars which were being pushed (in order not to start the engine) by different individuals, usually by retired people. […] Danube-Black Sea Canal was being finished. Rombac 111 was being made. Steaua was winning the Champions League and the national championship from Mexico was broadcasted by the Bulgarians late at night. […] It was the time of movie evenings; you paid 25 lei and you saw 3-4 movies (Chuck Norris, Madonna, Richard Gere) and you had a Pepsi bought from the restaurant, 12 in a pack. If it wasn't Pepsi, then bem-bem or Bricofor. […] People used to put in their glass-cases among their trinkets empty bottles of

[65]Galmeanu, Alex. 1986, Bucureşti, Muzeul de Fotografie, entry February 11, 2009
http://www.muzeuldefotografie.ro/2009/02/1986-bucuresti/ [accessed 14.12.2011]

Coca-Cola and whiskey as a sign of occidentalisation. […] some ugly and grey times which brought unhappiness, worries for the future and continuous frustrations […] although those times had their own charm. […]" [21/02/2009 at 03:59]

"The Mill's Lake from Crangasi was build for controlling the river's (Dambovita) flow. In Crangasi were made many demolitions at that time and there were built blocks of flats with 10 floors, the new Grant Bridge, Lujerului passage (where a 10 floor block of flats was demolished by being cut into slices) and finally some subway's main line. Where Crangasi park is nowadays it used to be a cemetery. It was said that during its contruction, parts of human remains were being exacavated. [...] In the 80's the fashion was inspired by BreakDance style or other urban American groups [...]" [21/02/2009 at 04:43].

Later on another reader expresses his nostalgia and leaves a long comment as response to the reader above. He mentions that he lived fourteen years in the communist era and adds some details to the post of the first reader, for example reffering to the contruction sites and the food products which remained symbols of the communist time even nowadays among nostalgics:

„[...] he forgot to mention Sport ice-cream with vanilla and chocolate and the famous wafer. Juice from automatic machines or bags, chewing gum (that type which crumbled in your mouth), bricofor or the ,potato' cakes which we threw after trolley buses [...] [23/03/2009 at 10:19].

He continues with his memories from 1989, when comunism was abolished:

„I remember that i was queuing for bread in Muncii Square [...] lots of people were rushing to the center [...] to take part in what it was called later the Romanian revolution. ,Come with us, come with us' the crowd was shouting, determined to change something. I went along with it some hundred of meters without realizing what i'm doing. Finally my grandma managed to get me out of there [...] [23/03/2009 at 10:19].

His memories evoke other memories which are expressed by the first reader mentioned above. He replies back describing his experience of the Romanian revolution from 1989:

„When the revolution started i was home with my brother. It was a sunny day. [...] We were home and the TV was on. [...] TVR was broadcasting something: the

demonstration from Sfatului Square. As in a dream, i realized that the broadcasting was being interrupted by certain songs which were banned, as far as i know. [...] Suddenly i heard the national hymn; and i told my brother: look out, there is something fishy going on here. [...] our parents, who were at work, managed to call us and told us not to go out. [...] As time went by and evening came, more and more shootings were heard far away (we lived in Drumul Taberei). After a bullet entered a neighbour's kitchen and hit the fridge and after another hit one of our flower pots, we decided to take refuge in a room which had no connection to the street; with the TV on, following what was happening. I was only 15 [...]" [27/03/2009 at 04:17].

These are one of the few examples of how people remember and express their memories in a virtual space with the help of the comment section. The examples mentioned here are one of the many that can be found in Museum of Photography. The readers are sharing their experiences and thoughts, which are evoked by the photos and by doing so, they offer others the further possibility to share and discuss their own memories. Personal cultural heritage as expressed in the readers' comments is like a snowball: it gets bigger and bigger with the contribution of each reader as the examples above demonstrate. Moreover, personal cultural heritage, although is subjective and when confronted with other opinions might bear traces of inaccuracy, is still a valuable source for other readers to learn about the past. As a personal remark, i enjoyed to look at the photos from the post *1986, Bucharest*; it was interesting to see how Romanian capital looked like the year i was born but much more interesting for me were the comments made by the two readers which gave me the bigger picture of how 1986 was like for two ordinary teenagers living in Bucharest. Their comments had a more significant impact on me than any history book or museum exhibition dealing with the communist theme.

Personal heritage is significant due to the subjectivity it bears; the commenters show a side of cultural heritage one cannot find in a formal institution. Personal cultural heritage is a central point of building collective heritage because each personal experience offers symbolical significance to the photos from the blog, embedding them with meanings drawn from the folks' conscience. Personal and collective heritage are one of the main characteristics of such virtual spaces which deal with heritage production and invite non-professionals to participate and contribute to content creation. As seen above from formal institutions' programmes, the visitor plays an important role when it comes to attribute meaning to objects in an exhibition by using personal memories and an increasing number of museums use visitors as help in accomplishing this

task. However Museum of Photography relies mostly on people's capacity of contribution and of content creation.

This chapter defines and analyses the concept of cultural heritage applied to Museum of Photography's content as well as defines and mentions four types of cultural heritage found on the blog: tangible, intangible, personal and collective cultural heritage and the way they are produced. By pointing out what cultural heritage is and showing that Museum of Photography's content deals with cultural heritage i intended to demonstrate that formal institutions such as museums are not the only ones where cultural heritage is present. Virtual spaces such as this blog can also contain valuable information which most of the time is inexistent in a formal institution. Besides the cultural heritage aspect i pointed out that the blog's community plays an important role in the development of its content and assuring the blog's existence. The role of the virtual community in relation to cultural heritage will be further discussed in chapter eight.

6. Displaying personal collections online

This chapter will talk about the reasons behind Museum of Photography's existence, why is it necessary to have this blog and the principles on which this blog is founded. Mainly it will be discussed the process that brought Museum of Photography into existence, namely collecting, and its social implications in the virtual community. Such analysis is necessary as it relates to the fact that the blog it is called a "museum" therefore one of its functions is collecting and to show that such contemporary and successful initiative exists, develops and can make a change through a process that is considered very complex and that has an old tradition behind. The collection of Museum of Photography will be discussed and analyzed taking into account its modern environment namely being a digital collection in a social media space.

6.1 What is a collection?

Taking into consideration the broad literature on collections and collecting one might find numerous and complex definitions explaining what a collection is. As Susan Pearce puts it "[…] collecting is too complex and too human an activity to be dealt with summarily by way of definitions" (Pearce, 1992: 50). However, Durost outlines broadly what a collection is, although the literature of collecting abounds of definitions. (Pearce, 1995: 20):

> A collection is basically determined by the nature of the value assigned to the objects, or ideas possessed. If the predominant value of an object or idea for the person possessing it is intrinsic, i.e., if it is valued primarily for use, or purpose, or aesthetically pleasing quality, or other value inherent in the object or accruing to it by whatever circumstances of custom, training, or habit, it is not a collection. If the predominant value is representative or representational, i.e., if said object or idea is valued chiefly for the relation it bears to some other object or idea, or objects, or ideas, such as being one of a series, part of a whole, a specimen of a class, then it is the subject of a collection.

This definition implies that a collection is bound together by certain similarities, common factors which make it obvious that certain objects belong to a category, shortly put it "is a group of objects, brought together with intention and sharing a common identity of some kind, which is regarded by its owner as, in some sense, special or set apart" (Pearce, 1995: 159). In the case of Museum of Photography, the photos are the entities which stand for collection objects and which are part of the same category: photography. However, this classification is broad but upon a closer look at the content of the blog the reader will realize that Museum of Photography deals specifically with documentary photography although there are other posts which do not necessarily conform to these criteria of classification. I also mentioned in the methodology chapter that I will be dealing mostly with photos from Bucharest and Romania because the photographic material on the blog tends to be quite broad and this thesis needs a specific focus. Besides that, the photos related to Bucharest and Romania, are the most prevalent ones and they tend to dominate the collection, a fact which can also be seen from the blog's tag section.

6.2 A short history of collecting

In order to understand better the concept of collecting I will provide a brief history of this activity. Collecting has an old and vast history which is recorded not only in books on this theme but also in other publications which deal with human history. Collecting is a part of human life; it is bound to human nature, its environment and its traditions from ancient times and under various forms. Collectors and collections are different from personal reasons to themes and if one wishes to comprehend a certain collection he/she has to study it in close connection to its collector and the social environment in which the collection occurred or it is placed.

Collecting has roughly appeared during ancient times with the accumulation of material goods in graves, hoards and shrines which represent plenty of the archaeological material nowadays and which some of it end up in museums under the form of organized collections. Later on, the tradition of collecting moved to Greece and Rome and it was found usually in "temples and town councils as well as by private individuals and families" (Pearce, 1995: 94) usually denoting social status and wealth. As Susan Pearce points out further in the book *On collecting: an investigation into collecting in the European tradition*, during 1500 – 1700 the interest in collecting grew and "collecting became a passion" (Pearce, 1995: 109). During this time the collections gained names such as "cabinet of curiosities" or "cabinet of rarities" in English; "studio, galleria and

museo" (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992: 88) in Italy and in German – Wunderkammer/Kunstkammer. This period is also known as the starting point of the collection types which will be later found in museums and such forms of collection organizing will be at the basis of the modern museum, a concept which was introduced by Lorenzo de Medici and his court to describe a collection and the concept of museum would be associated with collections well into the eighteen century. (Pearce, 1995: 105). Moving on to the mid-eighteen century, collecting gets a new side with the rise of Industrial Revolution. So collecting becomes more of a "consumerist tendency" (Pearce, 1995: 123). Selection and classification of collections becomes more complex "collecting had come to fall naturally firstly into the broad distinction between *artificialia* and *naturalia*, and then into the finer distinctions between art, interpreted as pictures and sculpture both modern and classical, historical, material, and natural specimens from the three worlds of animal, vegetable and mineral. But by 1700 the gaze was no longer trained upon resemblances between the rare and strange as a way of explaining the nature of the universe, rather it was concentrated upon measurement and distinction, and upon notions of classification as the explanatory paradigm […]"(Pearce, 1995: 123).

During the 19th century, which was marked by the Romantic movement, "public collections, on show in their palaces of culture, are part of the European mainstream […] state museums and their collecting emerge at the same time as the phase of that late-eighteen-century and nineteenth century free-market economy which it is useful to call mature capitalism" (Pearce, 1995: 139). Collecting and collections take a new turn, a new meaning and purpose […] romantic collections seen by gaslight became the material stuff of nationalism and the exotic elements in the older (and newer) collections became nationalism's support and foil, while their new importance was intellectually justified partly by the effort to treat the material as if it were part of natural science, and partly by newer notions about context and community […]" (Pearce, 1995: 124). At the same time the museum is defined as the institutions we know nowadays and whose collections turned them into "formally built and dedicated institutions to which the general public was allowed entry" (Pearce, 1995: 124). Not only that collections are seen as formal material of museums but once with the rise of market capitalism and following an increasing trend in consumerism, collections also become a part of popular culture. Besides being collectors, citizens were turned into owners whose collections would turn them into members of a certain social class. "The mature phase of market capitalism naturally went hand in hand with the mature phase of public collection and display, in which spiritual, intellectual and property values are united, the educated middle classes confirmed in proprietorship and the state assured" (Pearce, 1995: 139).

Collecting nowadays is referred at as post-modern collecting and it implies a shift from the relation collector-object that used to be in the past. Collecting now happens more than ever "as post-modernist capitalism and its cultural freedoms opens up more and more material to the collecting gaze" (Pearce, 1995: 149) and the reasons behind collecting change as the individuals' priorities and relation to material goods undergo transformations. Collecting has become freer and more accessible but people "are using this freedom in traditional ways in the aggressive accumulation of goods, in the cherishing of material relationships and in individual assertions of sense and meaning" (Pearce, 1995: 149). The activity which once used to be reserved for the wealthy became in time more accessible: "Material things – artistic, natural, historical, technological frivolous, serious, dead or alive, sublime or trivial – occupy a place of unusual importance in our twenty-first-century lives. Not only do we create and use material objects on a scale never seen before, we also study them intensively and collect them passionately" (Thompson, 2002: 1).

In terms of photography collecting, Penelope Dixon has a short article *A Short History of Photograph Collecting* in which describes briefly how photography collecting commenced together with a couple of instructions for photography collectors. She states that "The collecting of photographs was practically simultaneous with the invention of photography. [...]People became obsessed with capturing their own likenesses. A popular past-time in the mid 19th century was the exchange of carte-de-visites. People collected cartes of their friends and family and put them into albums, much like children exchanging school pictures today." [66] The habit of collecting photos became more popular with time and if they could not afford to take their own photos, people would buy them. Later on during the 20th century the interest in vintage photography grew and the photo market got invaded by an increasing number of photography collectors. Even Museum of Photography has some photos which were purchased from the market by Alex Galmeanu.

As noticed from this short history of collecting, collections have a rich past and tradition behind which developed in time but basically a collection is an organized gathering of objects. The meaning and purpose of a collection though can be understood and analyzed if one takes into account many aspects of the society in which collecting occurs such as social, cultural, political and economical. The collection of Museum of Photography is analyzed taking into account the aspects mentioned earlier and besides, the fact that the photographic collection is an online collection. The collection of Museum of Photography can be classified under post-modern

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[66] Dixon, Penelope, A Short History of Photograph Collecting
http://www.photogravure.com/resources/texts_pdfs/Collecting_Dixon.pdf [accessed March 30, 2012]

collecting as this concept together with the concept of museum gathers new meanings when placed in the context of social media.

6.3 Why a Museum of Photography?

In an interview for a Romanian cultural magazine "Observator Cultural" Alex Galmeanu shares his views on the necessity of such initiative, about his blog in general, photography and the old Bucharest. The intentions of Alex Galmeanu are modest as himself states, he does not want to create something big, a real museum because that is the local authorities' concern but he surely wants to make a difference by posting his modest collection online and inviting other people to do the same through his blog. When asked where he got the idea from, Alex Galmeanu mentions: "Muzeuldefotografie.ro appeared naturally. I don't think that it is a special idea but rather necessary. What I do is just a drop in the ocean. I exhibit my collection (a very modest one) of old photography and invite as many people as possible to do the same. It's not an academic format; it's not a museum so to speak. It's an insinuation, a whisper to the ones who have the power to make a real museum"[67] So, Alex Galmeanu is just a passionate collector of documentary photography who is eager to share his collection with a large public and he also encourages collectors alike or people who possess old photographs to join his blog.

There is also the implication that the authorities who could build a real museum, a physical counterpart for Alex's idea need somebody who can come up with the idea and necessary material for the collections. Currently there is not such museum in Romania although Bucharest has its own historical museum[68] which displays archeological findings from 150.000 B.C up to the modern days. The reasons why a museum of Romanian documentary photography does not exist are plenty, the most important being the financial reason. In the interview there is a question related to the sites which promote old Bucharest and in what way do they influence the local authorities when it comes to endangered monuments.[69] Alex's view is optimistic although he does not rely on authorities to do something significant about it. "I don't think that the authorities noticed these kinds of sites, I can't remember any action they have taken on this basis. The blogosphere doesn't have too much power, at least not yet. But in the end an avalanche starts with a simple vibration.

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[67] Ibid.,39
[68] http://www.muzeulbucurestiului.ro/main.html [accessed 8.02.2012]
[69] Galmeanu, Alex. Monumentele istorice din Romania, Muzeul de Fotografie, entry March 17, 2009
http://www.muzeuldefotografie.ro/2009/03/monumentele-istorice-din-romania/ [accessed 8.02.2012]

The monuments must be preserved; it is a necessity. People who live in Bucharest start to understand it. There are more and more voices who protest. It is strange though that the ones who defend Bucharest are young people. Bucharest's old inhabitants show an unnatural indifference"[70].

Alex Galmeanu wants to make a difference on how cultural heritage is protected. By using social media he hopes that the people who really have the power to protect cultural heritage would notice his blog and take suitable measures. Museum of Photography is a proof that common people care about and protect their heritage even when the persons entitled to do so show no interest because of various reasons; reasons which maybe are beyond of controlling in a certain context. It is easy said that a real Museum of Photography could be build but one has to take into consideration a large variety of factors which influence indirectly the complexity of such project. This format is a proof that people are gaining more power through social media to make their voices heard in a field where until now only officials had a say. Museum of Photography is not only a request to protect tangible Romanian heritage but it is itself a way of preserving and protecting heritage. Some of the photos exposed might not be extraordinary or bear aesthetic value but they do have meaning, value, represent ideas, events, facts and circumstances in the eyes of the visitors who appreciate them. Although Alex Galmeanu states that it is not a "real museum" the argument whether it is real or not could be further extended. But shortly put the blog has the initial intention of a museum: collecting, preserving, and displaying which does not make its name only a metaphor. Museum of Photography is a museum – but a museum under another format and its collection is born out of passion for photography, love and nostalgia for the past of Bucharest and a desire for change.

6.4 Museum of Photography as an online collective collection

The person responsible for the photographic collection of Museum of Photography is Alex Galmeanu who is also the blog's owner and author and as mentioned earlier he intended to share his personal collection of documentary photography with a wide public. His collection is mostly comprised of his father's photos as well as photos he acquired from various sources over the time. His initiative was a start for other people who own photographic collections to send them to Alex's blog and in this way having them published and shared with a wide public. If one takes a look at the

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[70] Ibid.,39

blog tags, one might notice that there are several collections from several people/institutions, for example: Alex Galmeanu's collection, Romanian academy's collection, Cristian Malide's collection. These are one of the tags who specify the person/institution which contributed to the blog. Moreover, there is a section named "Categories" where there are more collections mentioned like Museum of Photography's collection and Theodor Ulieriu-Rostas' collection. However, the contributors are not all included in the tags. Their photos can be seen from the blog posts accompanied by a note from Galmeanu including the person's name which appears near the photo's watermark or it is mentioned in the blog post.

6.4.1 About the collector

Collections are in most part subjective or they start from a subjective desire of the collector.[71] This means that a certain person has a passion or hobby for a specific subject or for certain types of objects. In the case of Museum of Photography, Alex Galmeanu started as a photographer. Actually, Galmeanu is a famous Romanian photographer working for well known magazines, companies and television such as Cosmopolitan, Reader's Digest, Forbes NY, L'Oreal, Getty Images, Sony Music etc. as well as having his own local and international exhibitions.[72] So, Galmeanu's passion for documentary photography is derived from his profession, and his decision to start Museum of Photography was his willingness to share his personal photography collection and to start a collaborative project for photography lovers and not only, in which to bring together rare documentary photography. The collection of Museum of Photography appeared out of a personal initiative but in time this initiative took a collaborative turn and by inviting other collectors to share their material online, Museum of Photography became a collective collection. The common factor that binds the photos together as a collective collection is not only that they are part of the same category but the fact that they bear the same symbolical significance for the collector and the readers.

6.4.2 What does Museum of Photography collect?

Museum of Photography is defined by its author as a blog which collects rare, old and famous photographs; photographs that once made an impact on the viewers and they continue to amaze the

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[71] Pearce, Susan. *On collecting: an investigation into collecting in the European tradition*. Oxon: Routledge, 1995. Print.
[72] http://www.alexgalmeanu.com/

contemporary visitors of the blog even nowadays. Some of the old photos might have been ordinary at the time they were taken but in time they gained value as witnesses of past events and valuable historical documents that speak upon sight. Not only time but also the process of collecting itself turned the photos from mere objects into pieces of heritage (Pearce, 1992). Nowadays the personal collection of Alex Galmeanu and his contributors attracts many curious visitors and produces many comments which contain admiration towards such a project, memories, nostalgia and even useful information that is worth of archiving. Most of the photographs are considered rare also due to the time factor and the fact that many documents of the respective time were lost. Besides, dealing with old photos one would not only notice their content and the circumstances in which they were taken but also the photographic technique, the methods used back then in photography and even trace the development of photographic practices.

Speaking about the historical content, the photos uploaded on Museum of Photography go back to the second half of the 19th century, namely 1865, although under that tag there are only two posts and the materials presented are quite few consisting of a piece of panoramic photography and some engravings.[73] Thus concluding that the blog has also other forms of visual representation not only photography. The great part of photographic material in Museum of Photography is comprised of photos from the 20th century namely starting with 1900 and ending with 1989. Although the year itself is not present in the tag section of the blog, there is a separate post which includes pictures of the Romanian revolution which took place in 1989 called "Twenty" (symbolizing the celebration of twenty years since the revolution).[74] Historically speaking the most recent photographs on the blog are over 20 years old and their value is represented both chronologically and historically in terms of the events represented. Referring to the quality of the content in terms of collection, the photos are acknowledged to be rare[75], a feature which is related to their age as not many photos on the researched subject from 20th respectively 19th century were preserved and taking photographs was not a popular activity like now because of equipment expense and accessibility. Other qualities of the photos are historical association – the photos are linked to culturally recognized events or to a broad historical phase, and the knowledge they embed in terms of historical events.

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[73] Galmeanu, Alex. 1865, Muzeul de Fotografie, entry June 01, 2011 http://www.muzeuldefotografie.ro/tag/1865/ [accessed 8.02.2012]

[74] Galmeanu, Alex. Douazeci, Muzeul de Fotografie, entry December 21, 2009 http://www.muzeuldefotografie.ro/2009/12/douazeci/ [accessed 8.02.2012]

[75] Note: there is a tag called "rare images" which contains most of the photos with historical theme.

In terms of content Museum of Photography is diversified, exhibiting not only photography in terms of visual material but also engravings and an interview. However, the main focus of the research is based on the photographic material since it is predominant and produces most of the information on the blog. The photos on the blog are divided into two main categories which can be also noticed from the blog's "category" section: documentary photography and photography which is not necessarily on the subject or in other words off-topic: exhibitions and projects of Alex Galmeanu or other exhibitions, celebrity photos, international photos, links to other sites which contain photography or information about Romanian cultural heritage. In terms of collecting Museum of Photography can be classified as a documentary photography blog since most of the photos are older than twenty years and they bear collective significance for the blog's community and its readers. However, it can be noticed that Alex Galmeanu also posts about photography in general and his personal projects, linking Museum of Photography to his personal blog with the help of "Blogroll" – a feature which enables the blogger to link his blog to other blogs of similar interest or thematic. At first sight Museum of Photography can have a mixed theme when talking about the content of photos and at the beginning of this research I had to do a closer analysis of the content in order to see the primary purpose of the blog which is Romanian documentary photography of different places and sometimes people. So leaving aside the off-topic subjects of the blog I will focus on the content of the documentary photography's collection.

Museum of Photography's documentary collection is not a single collection, meaning that it does not have only one collector but it is a collective effort which involves the help of several people and their material. As mentioned previously, Alex Galmeanu invites other people to contribute to Museum of Photography and several collections are born which are mentioned in the "Categories" section: Romanian Academy's collection, Alex Galmeanu's collection, Cristian Malide's collection, Museum of Photography's collection and Theodor Ulieriu-Rostas' collection. From this collective effort not only a significant amount of documentary photography emerges but at the same time the content of the photos contribute with information to the material collection. In other words the collection does not consist only of images but of what those images mean and the information they produce along with people's memories and thoughts. One of the main categories that the photos represent is architecture especially the architecture of old Bucharest. Due to the fact that the Romanian capital has played as a character in both world wars and a communist regime, its architecture has undergone major changes which are documented now with the help of the photos.

An illustrative example is represented by the photos which depict demolished buildings. According to historical documents there were several demolitions during the 1980's

which aimed to destroy historical and cultural heritage.[76] During the communist regime there was a significant number of buildings, especially churches which were demolished according to the regime's ideologies which did not consider churches a part of cultural heritage. The premise on which the demolition campaign started was the 1977 earthquake. Assuming that the structure of most historical buildings was weakened, demolition orders were issued and a significant part of built heritage was taken down. It was estimated that a number of over 40.000 constructions were demolished including houses, monuments, cultural edifices, monasteries and churches.[77] The real reason though behind the demolitions was a new architectural plan for Bucharest which was intended to modernize and change the city according to Nicolae Ceausescu's plan. Museum of Photography has several pictures that captured the demolitions of churches and other buildings. An example of demolished building is in the post "old Bucharest view"[78] which depicts Sfanta Vineri church. The photo is made by Alex's brother, Laurentiu Galmeanu and it is accompanied by the following text:

> For those who know Bucharest well enough, this must be a very interesting picture. This is Sfanta Vineri Square with Sfanta Vineri Church (Holy Friday Church) on the left, demolished by the Romanian dictator Ceausescu in 19.06.1987(this day it is a Friday like the name of the church). The place was located at the crossroads of Calea Calarasilor Street and Sfanta Vineri Street. Right now there is a wide boulevard, a shopping Mall, two Gas Stations and residential apartments. The picture is made by Laurentiu Galmeanu (http://www.laurentiu.go.ro) in the winter of 1986. And it is, as far as I know, the last picture of this church before it was destroyed.

Another post on the subject of demolition is "Cauzasi area – demolitions in 1985".[79] The set of photos belong to Cristian Malide who sent them to Museum of Photography and they represent various stages of building demolitions that were taking place in Bucharest during 1985. The original fact about these photos is that some of them were made shortly before the buildings were demolished thus managing to preserve a piece of their memory together with the atmosphere of 1985 in Bucharest. The photo content does not depict only the buildings which are being or will

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[76] Catalan, Gabriel. Distrugerea patrimoniului arhitectural mozaic din Bucuresti în timpul demolarilor ceausiste, 2010 Projekt 36, Bern. http://projekt36.ch/op/Text-Catalan_RO_2.pdf [accessed 5.02.2012]

[77] Ungureanu, Ionut. Historia.ro. Bisericile ajunse sub lama buldozerelor regimului communist. 2011 http://historia.ro/exclusiv_web/general/articol/bisericile-ajunse-lama-buldozerelor-regimului-comunist# [5.02.2012]

[78] Galmeanu, Alex. Old Bucharest view, Muzeul de Fotografie, entry February 22, 2006 http://www.muzeuldefotografie.ro/2006/02/old-bucharest-view/ [accessed 6.02.2012]

[79] Galmeanu, Alex. Zona Cauzasi, demolari în 1985, Muzeul de Fotografie, entry July 26, 2009 http://www.muzeuldefotografie.ro/2009/07/zona-cauzasi-demolari-in-1985/ [accessed February 6.02.2012]

be demolished but also the demolishing work in process; in the second picture one can notice the clusters of debris and the symbolical bulldozer against a sunset background in the very first picture of the post. Here is a bread shop on Vacaresti Street; a street which was completely demolished shortly after the photo was taken.

Figure 11. Museum of Photography. Cauzasi area – demolitions in 1985. Taken 27.02.2012

I chose these particular examples to illustrate some of the content of what Museum of Photography collects in order to strengthen the idea that the blog is not a mere gathering of documentary photography but the photos become much more than some pieces of a family album once they are shared online. The collection is actually a piece of the past that does not exist anymore like in the case of the demolished Sfanta Vineri Church or Cauzasi area. They symbolize bits of memory which are still alive in the mind of many locals. So, Museum of Photography collects not only the visual representation of parts of Bucharest but it also collects the memories that come with the images. This way of collecting beyond the physical objects confers value to the blog and to its content. "A collection is basically determined by the nature of the value assigned to the objects, or ideas possessed. […] If the predominant value is representative or representational, i.e. if said object or idea is valued chiefly for the relation it bears to some other object or idea, or objects, or ideas, such as being one of a series, part of a whole, a specimen of a class, then it is the subject of a collection" (Durost, 1932: 10). The collection of Museum of Photography has thus representational value, the photos are valued for the ideas they express, for what they represent and

for the meaning they have. This collection does not only explain the past but it helps people remember and it enhances social interaction. In this case, collecting is not just an automatic process but it "seems to operate in that obscure zone between cultural ideas of value and the deepest levels of individual personality […]" (Pearce, 1992: 35).

6.4.3 How does Museum of Photography collect?

Like any other collection, Museum of Photography is based on a process of collecting and organizing its collections. The process of collecting is very complex and it differs regarding the type of collection, for example institutional collecting versus individual collecting. However, Museum of Photography's collecting process resembles both types of collecting to a certain extent. The main difference is that the collection is displayed in a virtual space thus making it dual: virtual and material collection as the photos exist as material objects but they are also saved in a virtual space. Regarding the duality of the collection's nature and the type of collection, Museum of Photography is claimed to resemble the institutional collecting as its collection is available to the public and the contributions are from several collectors. However, Galmeanu's private photography collection is deemed to be individual since the material photos are not displayed to the public in a physical space. The difference between institutional and individual collecting in the case of Museum of Photography is given by digitalization and virtual space.

Museum of Photography started as a personal collection. Alex Galmeanu makes use of his family photos as material for the blog although the photographic content is not personal, representing family members or events. Instead, the photos are objective; they represent general events with historical content, buildings, panoramas and random people. Galmeanu's initiative to share photos from his family album established the basis of an online collection which turned personal material into cultural heritage with the acknowledgement of a community. The collection needed continuity, so Alex Galmeanu invited other collectors or individuals who own documentary photography to share them with the rest of the community sending them to office@muzeuldefotografie.ro or donating money for photography acquisition. The blog has a section named "How can you help?" – "This website is a private initiative and any help is necessary. There are several methods to support us".[80] Among these methods are listed: contribute, write donate, spread the word, visit and comment. The most necessary method regarding the blog's photographic content is contribute: "Old photos, family photos, documentary photography, art

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[80]Galmeanu, Alex. Cum poti ajuta, Muzeul de Fotografie http://www.muzeuldefotografie.ro/cum-poti-ajuta/ [accessed February 7, 2012]

photos or any other images similar to the ones published on this site are more than welcome. You can donate them or make them available for publishing. Many photos which have been already published were discovered in personal photo albums, it is a pity that they remain hidden to the public. You can also propose acquisition methods for special materials."[81] Museum of Photography started as a private initiative but it continues with the help of people who are willing to share their photos. Unlike private collections which are usually gathered by one individual, Museum of Photography is a private initiative but the material uploaded on the blog is a collective effort. Alex Galmeanu notifies the contributor either by creating a category or a tag with his/her photos, mentioning the contributor in the post which accompanies the photos or marking the photos with the contributor's name. Figure 11 is an example of a marked photo with the blog address and the name of the contributor in the upper left corner, from the post "Cauzasi area – demolitions in 1985".[82] In the same post Alex Galmeanu is inviting people to contribute "I remind you that the power of this site consists of your contributions. Until now we have found many remarkable photos in family albums; it's a pity they remain there. We could all enjoy them."

After a close observation of Museum of Photography I was able to determine the sources of the blog collection which are as mentioned earlier: the author and the contributors. Alex Galmeanu mentions in many posts that he found the photos in his family archive, some of them being taken by his father and brother. Galmeanu's father is mentioned in several posts as the source of the photos: in the post from 29th of January 2007 he mentions "I found these pictures in my father archive." On 17th of August 2009 – "I was amazed when I found these images. They were shot by my dad." His brother also plays an important role in the existence of the published photographic material; his contribution is referred to in some of the post for example on 10th of August and 21st of December 2009: "The panorama is made of six frames which are probably taken by my brother, Laurentiu Galmeanu. I found the negatives in the family's archive, unfortunately they are not dated."; "Muzeuldefotografie.ro waited for this occasion to present you some of the photos taken by Laurentiu Galmeanu on 21st of December". On several occasions, he also mentions his family archive: "I was searching through my family's archive and I found some images taken in 1984" [posted on 07/10/2007 by alex_galmeanu]; "I found the image above in the family's archive" [posted on 21/07/2009 by alex_galmeanu]; "I had a bit of spare time and searched through the family's negatives. The results were unexpected; I found an important document photo" [posted on 02/08/2009 by alex_galmeanu]. To add to his collection, Alex Galmeanu also purchases photos

[81] Ibid., 80

[82] Galmeanu, Alex. Zona Cauzasi, demolari în 1985, Muzeul de Fotografie, entry July 26, 2009
http://www.muzeuldefotografie.ro/2009/07/zona-cauzasi-demolari-in-1985/ [accessed 7.02.2012]

from the market. In the post from 8th of June 2008 he states that he bought the photos from a market stall; on 21st of July 2009 Alex reveals the source of a photo representing an unknown woman "I bought it from the market with 20 lei"[83] and on 15th of August 2009 he adds some more market purchased photos to his collection "S. Korn bought from the market".

Besides his personal archive and the contributors who are more active on Museum of Photography, there are also readers who remain anonymous or their names are just mentioned in the text accompanying the photos. In the post from 13th of December 2007, Alex states that he "lately received an important collection of photos, most of them being older than one century"; on 1st of January 2008 he "just received two images of Bucharest from 1941" and on 1st of May 2008 – "I received lately another interesting photo of Bucharest from 1920's[…]" and on 18th of October 2008 Alex receives an original photo and "the one who sent it affirms that it was taken in the 30's" but he does not mention the contributor's name. Museum of Photography has also contributors who are not mentioned in the tags or categories of the blog since they do not contribute on a regular basis but they are mentioned in the blog's posts such as on 11th of February 2009 where Alex mentioned that he "found some images that might have been taken in 1986 with the help of Mr. Florin Niculescu". An interesting set of photos was send by Mrs. Luiza Gheorghiu and which constitutes the material for the posts from 13th respectively 18th of November 2009 and where Alex proposes us "a study of a set of photos representing women's portraits from 1880-1900 with the courtesy of Mrs. Luiza Gheorghiu whom I thank for the support". An unusual discovery which added material to Museum of Photography's collection was made by Cristian Stan. His family moved in an apartment in Bucharest in 1978 and in 1990 they found under the linoleum in the hallway some photos dating from 1918-1941.[84]

Museum of Photography has also links related to other sites which contain documentary photography and are similar to the blog's theme adding to its material and information. Alex Galmeanu posts some of the photos on Museum of Photography along with mentioning the source. For example, on a post from 1st of August 2006 "Bucharest under heavy bombing", Alex mentions that he "found these images on the net. All the images are of what's identified as 'bomb fall plot' photos" along with adding a link to the end of the post from where the pictures were taken. Alex Galmeanu has also posts with links to his personal blog: the post "After 52 years…" contains a series of comparative images with Bucharest fifty-two years ago and Bucharest nowadays and

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[83] leu = Romanian currency.
[84]Galmeanu, Alex. Comoara de sub pres, Muzeul de Fotografie, entry November 9, 2009
http://www.muzeuldefotografie.ro/2009/11/comoara-de-sub-pres/ [accessed 7.02.2012]

external links to his personal blog http://blog.alexgalmeanu.com/ with more photos related to the posted subject. A comprehensive link to the Romanian National Archives and The Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes in Romania is posted on 13th of December 2008 which contains "a large collection of official and propagandistic images from the communist period". This is not the only case of connecting the blog with other sites that have documentary photography. One category of the blog is the collection of the Romanian Academy. Some posts related to it were made on 31st of May 2011 and 1st of July 2011 that depict Bucharest in the year 1864 and 1920, and where Alex is thanking to the curator Emanuel Badescu for the help. Additionally, in July respectively September 2010 with the help of the same curator, Alex publishes a set of aerial photography from 1920's.

As I mentioned earlier, Museum of Photography is a double collection since the photographs exist both as material and virtual objects. An interesting feature of Museum of Photography as virtual collection is the way it is organized which differs in respect to a traditional photo collection which would be perhaps preserved in a photo album. In chapter three of this thesis, *Blogs, Web 2.0 and collective intelligence* I mentioned the characteristics of a blog and what makes it different from other virtual environments. The features which are specific to a blog turns Museum of Photography into a easy way to store, organize and preserve collected material as well as view and follow its content. The posts appear in chronological order and the collected material is labeled with the help of tags and categories which makes it easy for readers to find something they might have a particular interest in. In addition to the tags and categories, there is also a "Search" option, above the Archives, meant for an easier navigation of the blog's content. Besides, the posts are archived starting with the newest and ending with the oldest post in the blog section "Archives" situated on the right side of the page and mentioning the month and year when posts were made. Furthermore, features of blog posts are very informative regarding the material content as they are accompanied by the exact date when the post was made, the author of the post, the categories and tags specific to the respective photo and the text which might contain external links to other similar resources. For transferring the photos on the blog Alex usually scans them and uploads them in JPEG format which can be opened separately and increased by clicking on them. He mentions scanning his photos on the post *First Romanian photographers*: "All weekend I looked at them, studied them and scanned them […] what would Szathmari say if he knew that his photos would be scanned and posted on a blog after 130 years".[85] Alex makes a mention about the resolution of one

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[85]Galmeanu, Alex. Primii fotografi din Romania, Muzeul de Fotografie, entry December 13, 2007
http://www.muzeuldefotografie.ro/2007/12/primii-fotografi-din-romania/ [accessed 9.02.2012]

of his photos posted in *The Bucharest of Cuza* that "This way we have the chance to see how the capital looked in 1864 at almost 90 megapixels!"[86] In the post he also inserts the photo to be viewed by zooming it, thus offering an excellent image quality that offers the possibility to see details of the photo. For the high quality image, Alex Galmeanu uses Zoom.it which is "a free service for viewing and sharing high-resolution imagery. You give us the link to any image on the web, and we give you a beautiful new way to experience it — along with a nice short URL". [87] He also used zoom.it in comparing similar pictures in *Bucharest 1985-2011*[88], offering the readers two shots of a part of Bucharest at an interval of twenty-six years. The digital collection of Museum of Photography, besides the fact that it is very well organized regarding the classification and additional information, has also the advantage that it preserves the old photos from deterioration by saving them into another format which offers better visual quality to the viewer than perhaps the actual photos.

In this chapter I focused on the aspect of collecting in Museum of Photography and analyzed it by taking into account its features as an online collection. By defining what a collection means and mentioning a short history of collecting, I proceeded to state the reasons behind Museum of Photography's existence and to discuss the particularities of Museum of Photography as an online collective collection. As it can be concluded from this chapter, Museum of Photography, even if it is not a traditional collection, where material objects are lined on the shelves, it definitely bears the main characteristics of a collection: it has a collector, contributors, similar objects, a thematic, value which is offered by collective acknowledgement of the readers and nevertheless the intrinsic, historical nature of what the photos represent. The digital features of the collection, which are related to the blog format such as display, preservation, organization, accessibility and community interaction, prove the fact that collections can and do exist outside the boundaries of traditional collecting norms. The present chapter serves as a link to the next chapter, which will discuss the concept of museum with reference to Museum of Photography.

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[86]Galmeanu, Alex. Bucurestiul lui Cuza, Muzeul de Fotografie, entry June 1, 2011 http://www.muzeuldefotografie.ro/2011/07/bucurestiul-lui-cuza/ [accessed 9.02.2012]
[87] Zoom.it. About Zoom.it http://zoom.it/pages/about/ [accessed 9.02.2012]
[88]Galmeanu, Alex. Bucuresti 1985 – 2011, Muzeul de Fotografie, entry November 4, 2011 http://www.muzeuldefotografie.ro/2011/11/bucuresti-1985-2011/ [accessed 9.02.2012]

7. Concept of museum in Museum of Photography

„Anyone who sets out to talk about museums is instantly faced with the task of trying to figure out just what creature this is. It is a nearly unique peculiarity. A hospital is a hospital. A library is a library. A rose is a rose. But a museum is Colonial Williamsburg, Mrs. Wilkerson's Figure Bottle Museum, the Museum of Modern Art, the Sea Lion Caves, the American Museum of Natural History, the Barton Museum of Whiskey History, the Cloisters, and Noell's Art Chimpanzee Farm and Gorilla Show".[89] As noticed from this quotation as well as glancing at the role of museums nowadays, one might notice that the museum as a concept has changed significantly because in the first place the museum does not have a fixed relation with what it represents. In this section, I will provide an explanation of the concept of museum applied to Museum of Photography. Alex Galmeanu referred to Museum of Photography as "an initiative which came naturally due to the interest in old photography and photography in general"; he mentions that it is not a "real museum".[90] But what is a "real museum"? Can it be that in the 21st century the concept of museum broadened so much that it surpasses the boundaries of a physical institution? "The word 'museum' has little if any meaning the way it used today. Actually one cannot define it because it acquired so many connotations" (Low, 2004:31). It is important to classify Museum of Photography as a museum because that would be a step forward in representing cultural heritage in a different environment than that of a physical institution and it would keep developing the concept of museum beyond the formal traditional institution. Museum is a concept of change and it would be fair to offer it the possibility of development outside a defined physical space and pre-established rules.

7.1 Definition of a museum

"[…] we are no longer sure what the museum institution is. The boundaries between institutions and among different forms of action are dimmed, blurred unsteady. There is an evident, quite dramatic convergence of culture, leisure,

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[89] Quoted in Schweibenz, Werner. Das virtuelle Museum. Überlegungen zum Begriff und Wesen des Museums im Internet. 1998 http://www.mai-tagung.de/maitagung+2001/schweibenz.pdf [accessed 28.02.2012]

[90] Galmeanu, Alex. Despre Muzeul de Fotografie. http://www.muzeuldefotografie.ro/despre-muzeuldefotografiero/ [accessed 12.03.2012]

business, education. Nature is turned into museums, libraries mount exhibitions, department stores are opening museums, the entertainment business has entered the museum field and museums behave like entertainers" (Šola, 1997).

Tomislav Sola introduces a very broad vision of the museum and its perpetual changing role in the modern society which will be further used in this chapter but as a start I would like to begin with the analysis of the concept of museum applied to Museum of Photography and I would like to provide two formal definitions of museum, respectively of a virtual museum. One of the many definitions of museum which has changed over time is offered by the International Council of Museums (ICOM):

> A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment.[91]

According to ICOM, the definition has been last time revised in 2007, as the original definition has evolved since 1964 in accordance with the society's development and the changes that took place in the museum community. Taking a closer look to the definition of museums it can be noticed that it does not refer to a certain type of institution so it can be understood that the institution in question could be a physical or a virtual one.

A more specific definition is offered by the federal government in the Museum and Library Services Act:

> A public or private nonprofit agency or institution organized on a permanent basis for essentially educational or aesthetic purposes, which, utilizing a professional staff, owns or utilizes tangible objects, cares for them, and exhibits them to the public on a regular basis.[92]

This definition though leaves aside the intangible heritage and implies that a museum is run and taken care of by professional staff. If one looks further for museum definitions, one can find different variations adding or leaving something aside usually in reference to the type of heritage, the staff and the purposes of the museum. But there is a certain fact which is present in all

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[91] ICOM. Definition of Museum. http://icom.museum/who-we-are/the-vision/museum-definition.html [accessed 14.03.2012]

[92] American Association of Museums. What is a museum? http://www.aam-us.org/aboutmuseums/whatis.cfm [accessed 14.03.2012]

definitions and references to what a museum is: cultural heritage. A museum is founded on the idea that it has to protect and promote cultural heritage.

In chapter five I attempted to define what cultural heritage is and to prove that Museum of Photography is a heritage blog by giving examples of tangible and intangible heritage which can be found in the blog posts. The conclusion was that Museum of Photography preserves and displays Romanian cultural heritage from its various stages starting with the end of the 19th century up to the 1990's. In addition, tangible as well as intangible cultural heritage can be found on the blog: the former being represented mainly by photos and texts; and the latter, which is less transparent, by people's memories and visual content of the photographic material. The other aspects of museum definition can be applicable to a certain extent on Museum of Photography although there are some features which might be debatable as for example utilizing professional staff. The owner of Museum of Photography is definitely working in the photography business being himself a professional photographer but when it comes to the historical aspect of the photos, he states that he is an amateur, often asking the public for more accurate historical details regarding the events, buildings and people depicted in the photos.

The definitions above are a result of what museum means nowadays through the lenses of professionals and a large public but the concept of museum was not statutory. This means that it has a long history behind and it developed diachronically in accordance with the changes in society and with the development of culture. The product that we have nowadays and bears the name of museum is a result of centuries of development and it would be unfair to limit its boundaries now in the 21st century when the technological era is in its full development.

7.2 A brief history of museums

The concept of museum has developed in time and it is crucial to understand where the concept of museum comes from in order to understand why I claim Museum of Photography is a museum despite the fact that it does not fit into the traditional concept we are used with and which was formed roughly during the 18th century.

According to an article "The story behind the world's oldest museum, built by a Babylonian princess 2,500 years ago"[93], the first museum ever acknowledged was actually a collection of artifacts from different places and periods carefully organized and labeled and it belonged to Princess Ennigaldi, the daughter of King Nabonidus, the last king of the Neo-Babylonian Empire. However, the word museum has classical origins, from Greek mouseion, "seat of the Muses", and it was a philosophical institution or a place of contemplation while the Roman word museum was attributed to places of philosophical discussion. The classical records show the existence of private and public collections in ancient Greece which were the forerunners of future galleries and museums. There were no art collections but a centre of scientific, cultural and art activities, large libraries, research laboratories, lecture rooms and classrooms and in fact it was a culture and science centre. It also had a botanical garden and a zoo. It was meant for the study of literature, history and astronomy. So, in the beginning the use of the word museum was not to designate what we now understand when we use it but instead had a meaning of learning institution, a prototype university rather than an institution to preserve and interpret material aspects of the heritage. "The history of museums is clearly not only the history of institutions but the history of social processes that lead to collecting, evaluating and preserving items and conveying ideas conserved in them. It is the history of the various types and facets of collections that later became museums and the history of various activities intended for public presentation. It is also the history of the concept and meaning of the word museum, that does not mean the same today as it did previously, nor did it always have the same significance as it does today" (Maroevic, 1998: 24). In the Roman age there was a great interest in collecting works of art and highly sophisticated level of aesthetic and art evaluation. The Roman period was also of great importance for the history of museums and museum activities. Continuing with Middle Ages, the museum was greatly influenced by the beliefs of the time and the actions of Christianity on the medieval man who was "stripped of the dimension of the past" (Bazin 1967: 29)[94]. Christianity removed the need for a collective memory except involving Bible, Christ and his followers. During the Renaissance period the past buried by Christianity revived and for the first time collections were called museums. It was used to describe the collection of Lorenzo de' Medici in Florence, but the term conveyed the concept of comprehensiveness rather than denoting a building. In the 17th century, collections and museums played a part in culture and education and the meaning of the word museum was mainly used to

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[93]Wilkins, Alasdair. The story behind the world's oldest museum, built by a Babylonian princess 2,500 years ago. io9. 25.05.2011 http://io9.com/5805358/the-story-behind-the-worlds-oldest-museum-built-by-a-babylonian-princess-2500-years-ago [accessed 16.03.2012]
[94] Quoted in Maroevic, Ivo. Introduction to Museology: the European Approach. Trans. Intertext, Zagreb. München: Verlag Dr. Christian Müller-Straten, 1998. Print.

describe collections of curiosities, in the 18th century they became public institutions (Bazin 1967:80) and the idea of an institution called a museum and founded to preserve and display a collection to the public was well established.

Use of the word museum during the 19th and most of the 20th century denoted a building housing cultural material to which the public had access. Later, as museums continued to respond to the societies that created them, the emphasis on the building itself became less dominant. Open-air museums, comprising a series of buildings preserved as objects, and ecomuseums, involving the interpretation of all aspects of an outdoor environment, provide examples of this. In addition, so-called virtual museums exist in electronic form on the Internet. Although virtual museums provide interesting opportunities for and bring certain benefits to existing museums, they remain dependent upon the collection, preservation, and interpretation of material things by the real museum.[95]

As it can be noticed from the above short history of museums, the meaning was gained through centuries and it had the contribution of society that constructed the signification between signifier and signified[96]. It can also be noted that the signification was quite different at certain stages in time due to society's usage of this cultural institution and their perception on what they meant. Regarding the interpretation and consideration of the signs that are presented to individuals on a daily basis, the important thing to remember when discussing the relationship between the signifier (what is displayed) and the signified (the concept provoked) is that these signifiers are already loaded with meaning – they are not sterile and arbitrarily chosen. As seen above, what people call a museum is not merely the building or the space perceived under this name but with it comes a whole history and several concepts attributed to it during time. So, what society perceives now as "institutions of preserving the past" is not a concept arbitrarily chosen to denote the meaning of museum but society "worked" in time so this concept could gain the meaning it has now.

7.3 What is a virtual museum?

As I mentioned above, the concept of museum changed in time by gaining new meanings in accordance with society's development and what people made of the museum institution in general,

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[95] History of museums. Encyclopædia Britannica. 2009. Encyclopædia Britannica Online. 22 Nov. 2009 http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/1426125/history-of-museums. [accessed 16.03.2012]
[96] With reference to Ferdinand de Saussure's theory of the signifier and signified.

namely the functions that were associated primarily with the concept of museum. At the end of the 20th century though, a new kind of museum made its appearance, whose existence was made possible by the development of computer technology and the Internet. This was to be named "virtual museum" because its existence is not defined by a physical space.

The concept of virtual museum was first time used by Tsichritzis and Gibbs in their paper *Virtual Museum and Virtual Realities* in 1991[97] and it referred to a museum constructed for a virtual landscape and functioning as a service rather than a location.[98] However, the definition of a virtual museum is not yet well established as the one for a physical museum due to the fact that the concept of virtual museum is still under development as it is the technology which makes it available. The early term of museum "without walls" was coined by Malraux who used it with reference to an environment for the presentation of photography and art.[99] Only later on, the term museum without walls was to be used in relation to a virtual museum. Nowadays, due to the broadness of the term "virtual museum" one can find it under various names such as: electronic museum, digital museum, online museum, hypermedia museum, meta-museum, web museum, cyberspace museum.[100] The types of virtual museums we find on the Internet according to a study[101] made on virtual museums are:

- homepages of museum and cultural institutions closely referred to a physical museum, museums' web sites;
- online exhibitions;
- sites with some virtual reconstruction of some specific topics;
- networks of museums putting their collection together
- inventories and databases related to items stored in the museums.

Two relevant definitions of what a virtual museum are provided by Lewis (1996):

> "a collection of digitally recorded images, sound files, text documents and other data of historical, scientific, or cultural interest that are accessed through electronic media.

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[97] F-MU.S.EU.M. Beyond the Traditional Museum. Character, Profile and Extent of European Virtual Museums. 2008. http://www.europeanvirtualmuseum.net/documenti/research_1.pdf [accessed 27.02.2012]

[98] Tsichritzis, Dennis and Gibbs, Simon. *Virtual museums and virtual realities*. 1991, p. 18. quoted in Definition and prospects of the Virtual museum http://home.student.uu.se/eliv7000/virtual_museums.pdf [accessed 27.02.2012]

[99] Malraux, André. The voices of silence. 1953. quoted in in Definition and prospects of the Virtual museum http://home.student.uu.se/eliv7000/virtual_museums.pdf [accessed 27.02.2012]

[100] Ibid., 97

[101] Ibid., 97

A virtual museum does not house actual objects and therefore lacks the permanence and unique qualities of a museum in the institutional definition of the term".[102]

and Schweibenz, who considers a virtual museum "a logically related collection of digital objects composed in a variety of media, and, because of its capacity to provide connectedness and various points of access, it lends itself to transcending traditional methods of communicating and interacting with the visitors being flexible toward their needs and interests; it has no real place or space, its objects and the related information can be disseminated all over the world". [103]

Virtual museums are usually considered to be a complementary tool of physical museums such as their web pages which contain information about the physical museum and sometimes virtual exhibitions hosted by the main museum with informative and educational purposes as well as promoting a museum's resources online for future visitors or visitors who might not have the possibility to visit the museum due to various factors such as geographical distance. As shown in section two – *Background studies*, the dual nature of a museum is constituted by the institution and its new media counterpart, namely what is presented online. Rarely, does one find in this age a physical museum which does not have online information and resources. Besides the virtual resources, museums have also incorporated a diverse amount of digital technology into their physical space to promote their already existing resources and enhance visitor interaction. The concept of virtual museum is indeed very strongly related to its physical counterpart as an extended tool for helping the physical museum in its basic tasks of collecting, displaying, preserving and acting as additional help in information dissemination.

But can a virtual museum exist independently of its physical counterpart? What if there is no physical counterpart to start with? In this respect Museum of Photography poses a challenge both to the concept of museum and the one of virtual museum. Can a documentary photography blog which is created by an enthusiast and its community be a museum?

7.4 Is Museum of Photography a museum?

By applying the definitions provided above as a support for analysis of the features of Museum of Photography, I intend to show that the blog can be considered a museum as the name suggests

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[102] Id. 95 (Britannica Online, Article Section, 1996)

[103] Schweibenz, Werner. Das virtuelle Museum. Überlegungen zum Begriff und Wesen des Museums im Internet. 1998 http://www.mai-tagung.de/maitagung+2001/schweibenz.pdf [accessed 28.02.2012]

although it is not a formal institution and it does not hold an official format like professional websites build specially for virtual museums. The idea of Museum of Photography as museum is not that of a professional institution but of people's organization in preserving and displaying cultural heritage.

„Information on the collections can now be moved around the museum space itself, and can also be made available in other collections across the world or down the road. The space of the museum and the space of the object are no longer as they were"(Hooper-Greenhill 1992: 202). History of museums showed that the museum of antiquity does not equal the modern museum and that is because of social changes in perception of what cultural heritage is nowadays and how we preserve it. The museum space changed from a closed environment aimed at elites to a more social atmosphere which allows its resources to be made easily available to a wide public. The format of the museum nowadays is a product of a combination of several institutions. Edward P. Alexander states that the museum is a hybrid institution which has the characteristics of many institutions together like school, theater, royal palace, cathedral, and library. "In the family of social institutions invented by man, the place of the museum is not rigidly fixed. It is pliant and can develop in many directions, or sometimes move simultaneously in several directions" (Alexander, 1982: 14).

Tomislav Sola has a broader understanding of what museum means. He affirms that a museum should not be bound to a physical institution because museum is a concept. "Museum is not a place, it is a relationship between past and present, between what we have been and what we want to be. It cannot be isolated and limited to an institution and distributed to the masses. A museum is an idea, and yet it is a form – a form of relationship".[104] Sola introduces the term "heritology" when referring to "total heritage" a concept attributed outside the formal institutions which are the study area of museology and divides museums into two types: traditional and reformed museums. (Sola, 1997). "The first category stands for traditional, taxonomic, second wave museums. The second category stands for the new, reformed museums, museums of development, museums of time and space, all hybrid forms within the area of heritage care, the third wave museums" (Sola, 1997: 36). He expands the idea further, talking about a "new museum" and how its boundaries can be expanded out of the institutional field thus creating a "total museum". A total museum will not need limiting definitions because it would be a concept, not an institution.

According to Sola's theory, Museum of Photography can be considered a museum since it creates a relationship between past and present involving nostalgia by displaying old photos

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[104] Sola, Tomislav. *What theory? What heritage?*. Nordisk Museology. 2 (2005): 3-16. Print.

and gathering readers willing to share their memories with an audience. The relationship in Museum of Photography is built on a multilevel, not only involving the past and the present but the heritage and the community, some elements which are present in the institutional museums as well. As for categorizing it, Museum of Photography would stand in the third wave museums as it is a hybrid form. Museum of Photography embeds the characteristics of a museum in the sense that it acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits tangible and intangible heritage of humanity, it is open to the public and is a social institution which is aimed at a community. Furthermore, the concept of virtual museum can be applied when referring to Museum of Photography because it is also a broad term with several meanings. Virtual museums, as mentioned earlier, do not even have an established definition, they are found under various forms in the digital environment. Basically, Museum of Photography is a blog that represents the medium through which cultural heritage and the photographic collection is displayed; the blog is just a medium for materializing the concept of museum. It is accessible only with the help of computer and an internet connection. Even though, Museum of Photography is one of the rare internet specimens which has no relation with a physical institution, it is created out of passion, it is an amateur project and it uses a format which is easy to use and accessible to a wide public because social media and blogging seems to be a hot topic at the moment, is nevertheless a cultural product of Web 2.0.

In the previous chapters, five respectively six, I already mentioned that Museum of Photography houses important aspects of Romanian tangible and intangible cultural heritage which is not available in an institutional museum and I provided an insight on the collection and the process of collecting of Museum of Photography. These two aspects related to cultural heritage and collecting are also two very important features of institutional/virtual museums. Museum of Photography provides both of these aspects thus earning its quality of "museum" even if the medium used to display its resources is a blog. However, Museum of Photography fits perfectly into Lewis' definition of virtual museum:

> "a collection of digitally recorded images, sound files, text documents and other data of historical, scientific, or cultural interest that are accessed through electronic media. A virtual museum does not house actual objects and therefore lacks the permanence and unique qualities of a museum in the institutional definition of the term".[105]

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[105] Ibid., 9 (Britannica Online, Article Section, 1996)

It is indeed a collection of digitalized historical photos, texts and other data (provided by the readers) of historical and cultural interest which is accessed with the help of electronic media. It does not have the qualities of a physical museum as it lacks the materiality of actual objects, but nevertheless it has several features, which brings it closer to a physical institution.

A feature of Museum of Photography which is also encountered in institutional museums is that of object interpretation. The photographs are always accompanied by a text which offers an explanation of the photo, a guess about it or it just invites the readers to add their own explanation and thoughts. An example is the post *Help needed – Looking for a building – Update!*[106]*,* where Alex posts some photos of a building and invites the readers to comment and find where the building is located and what does it represent. The posts gathered thirty-one comments including people's opinions on the location of the building, when the photo was taken, as well as historical facts about the building. The blog has also several other posts which invites the readers to identify the places, buildings or persons in the photos.

Even though Museum of Photography seems more the product of a collective effort, it still bears the one-to-many feature of the institutional museum. The blog is created, maintained and taken care of by an author who, by analogy with an institution, represents the museum staff. Alex Galmeanu accomplishes the role of director, curator, and administrator at the same time.

The readers or the visitors are allowed to comment, express their opinions, thoughts on the exhibits that Alex Galmeanu uploads for them. Although he accepts that other readers can also be contributors to Museum of Photography content, he is the one who takes care of the overall layout and the information that is presented to the public. Besides the photographic content, the author takes care of the discussion and the comments on the blog. As in any virtual space which deals with a certain subject, there is always somebody who moderates the comments and takes care of the general atmosphere of the discussion. Bad language, insults, and other kinds of disrespectful and derogatory remarks are discouraged and most likely they will not be published. As noticed from the reader's posts, spam is also discouraged and the author often explains why a comment made by a certain reader has not been posted. In general, blogs offer the option to accept the comments he or she considers suitable for the context. Sometimes it might take a while until a comment is approved; depending on how fast the author approves them. Blogs do have the option to automatically approve

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[106]Galmeanu, Alex. Help needed – Looking for a building – Update!, Muzeul de Fotografie, entry November 14, 2010 http://www.muzeuldefotografie.ro/2010/11/help-needed-se-cauta-cladire/ [accessed 7.03.2012]

comments, filter them taking into consideration certain criteria (language, links) or keep them pending until the author approves them.

In this respect, Museum of Photography resembles a traditional museum as its content seems democratic and open for interpretation but what is up for interpretation consists of what the author decides that it should be published. Moreover, not every comment is accepted if it contains disrespectful language. Although the behavior allowed in Museum of Photography respects the guidelines of civilized online behavior, it is more open-minded and not tied to academic boundaries as some institutions require. The feeling of reader acceptance in Museum of Photography is given by the relaxed atmosphere of a discussion board. People with different backgrounds are allowed to express their opinions freely and share their memories knowing that their contribution will be accepted and their information will be taken into consideration, read by other people and even contribute to collective knowledge production. The high degree of participation and contribution is one of the positive aspects of Museum of Photography as a virtual museum.

7.4.1 Readers' thoughts on the concept of museum

As mentioned previously, Alex Galmeanu thinks that Museum of Photography is not a real museum but a cultural initiative. In this respect I tried to find out what readers think about Museum of Photography as a museum by using a questionnaire in which one of the questions was "Do you think that Museum of Photography is a 'museum' even if it is not represented under a traditional format?" The questionnaire was distributed via email to people of different ages and professional backgrounds who although occasionally read posts on Museum of Photography, are not faithful followers of its content and do not contribute actively to discussions or with photographic material. From an average of twenty-five answers, only one mentioned that Museum of Photography is not a museum but just a blog. The rest of respondents were in favor of the use of the term "museum" related to Museum of Photography's content.

The majority of the responses, besides the fact that they were in favor of the concept of museum, they also specified that Museum of Photography is a virtual museum. Some of the subjects even pointed out that it is definitely a virtual museum but not in the sense of an institution and it should not be compared to a physical museum. However, some of them mentioned that Museum of Photography is a real museum even if it is online because it is designed as a space

where one meets different things than in everyday life; because it offers a connection with the past. The past as a link between the virtual space and the concept of museum was mentioned by several subjects as well as the fact that Museum of Photography deals with history, historical information and documents and that is why it deserves the name of museum. The majority of the subjects also mentioned the fact that besides the photos, Museum of Photography offers very useful information, an aspect which often lacks in physical museums. Although, it was also added by some that it still does not offer the genuine experience of visiting the physical space. There was one person though, who stated that the concept does not matter as long as the information stands for its quality and that the concept of museum nowadays seems a bit old-fashioned if one is to think of the new ways of digitally displaying collections.

In my opinion, this question related to Museum of Photography as a museum was important for random readers in order to draw a steadier conclusion besides the theory and Galmeanu's affirmation about his project. It is very important to know what the readers think because they play a significant role in Museum of Photography's existence. Because of the readers' interest in the information offered, Museum of Photography continues to exist and to provide cultural content for those who are interested and who consider it more than just a blog.

In conclusion, Museum of Photography challenges the concept of "museum" and even if it is presented under the virtual format of a blog, it still bears the features of a virtual museum, at least. Museums have a long and rich history behind which shows the fact that the concept of museum was understood differently at various stages of museums' development. Museum of Photography is a ramification of the whole museum concept and a proof of the developing nature of museums. A museum is not something static but dynamic and social; it develops according to people's needs for protecting their cultural heritage and memories. Museum is not about a fixed format it "is about values inherited and passed on" (Sola, 2005). The emphasis on museum nowadays is not that of a building but of a "process of posing questions of our identity" (Rautavuoma, 2001). The book *Museum and Popular Culture* provides a clear insight on the relation between the concept of museum and media: "The concept of museum as 'an institution' is providing hopelessly restrictive when in real life the boundary between 'museum' and 'not museum' is crumbling before our eyes…If the 'museum' is not an institution containing objects but instead the context for interaction between artefacts and people, then we must be aware that this interaction is now taking place outside the institution, not just in printed books and in the street but in many media" (Moore, 1997:28-29). With this being said, Museum of Photography is not only a virtual space which meets the features of a museum but a "place for inquiry into the memories of the past,

a forum for consideration of the present and a site from which to inspire, instruct and inform" (Weil, 2002:111). In my opinion, it is slightly unfair to mention that Museum of Photography is not a real museum because upon a closer analysis it revealed that its features can be accounted for the concept. "The answer, then, to our question, 'What is a museum?' is not to be found in words but in the nature of the institutions themselves" (Low, 2004:31).

8. The community of Museum of Photography

The previous chapters of this thesis focused on the format and content of Museum of Photography. The present chapter intends to pay attention to the community of Museum of Photography, namely its contributors, be it material donors or commentators. Focusing on Museum of Photography's community is important because of two aspects. First, it shows how the mechanism of an online heritage community works and second, it would point out the positive and negative aspects of displaying cultural heritage in a virtual space. In order to analyze the community of Museum of Photography, I intend to use the concepts of crowdsourcing, collective memory and nostalgia, as well as trolling and spamming. The concepts of crowdsourcing, trolling and spamming are a part of the everyday online environment and Museum of Photography is no exception, given the fact that its format is a blog which is open to an online public. Collective memory and nostalgia are two concepts from the field of social sciences which are well tight to memory organizations, in general with reference to museums. As mentioned earlier in this paper, Museum of Photography is an online form of memory organization which shares documentary photography, thus its affiliated community uses collective memory and nostalgia for sharing their memories, thoughts and past experiences which are triggered by historical images.

To start with, although Museum of Photography is an individual blog which is taken care of by one person, the content is also submitted by enthusiasts under the form of donations and the comments left by readers constitute a good source of information for a large public. In this respect Museum of Photography can be said to form a community of amateur contributors which enrich its content with both images and text. The concept of community is broad and "it may well be defined simply in the eye and mind of the beholder or participant" (Kavanagh 1990: 68).[107] To be more precise, Museum of Photography is a virtual community created "when individuals meet in online interactional environments, bond together as a group, perceive a sense of shared identity, and

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[107] Quoted in Watson Sheila, Museums and their Communities.

maintain cooperative social ties over time" (Shepherd, 2001: 201). One can further define communities based on many criteria such as location, identities, interests, exclusion from other communities, shared historical and cultural experiences etc. (Watson, 2007). Based on these criteria, Museum of Photography is a mixed community, meaning that its participants have different interests and come from different backgrounds. However, the main interest of Museum of Photography's community is cultural heritage which makes the blog fall under the shared historical and cultural experiences category. The community does also express an interest in photography although the photos' main purpose is to generate comments related to personal experiences or historical knowledge. As for the location, Museum of Photography usually posts old photographs of or from Bucharest and sometimes images of other places are taken into consideration. But in general, the ones who are most active in the comment section when it comes to old Bucharest photography are past or present inhabitants of Bucharest. The community of Museum of Photography can be actually summed up to a certain location: Romania; and the participants are gravitating around the posts of the blog as the nucleus of information, contributing with their own knowledge and thus generating new information in addition to what is provided to them by Alex Galmeanu.

8.1 Crowdsourcing in Museum of Photography

This part of the thesis will define the concept of crowdsourcing and provide examples of crowdsourcing in Museum of Photography based on the material provided for the blog as well as the readers' comments and contributions to certain posts. The post selected as example was carefully chosen in order to illustrate a typical example of community crowdsourcing in Museum of Photography. The post chosen as example is Alex Galmeanu's request for help to locate a building. It is published in November 2010 and it contains photos with an old building from Bucharest.

Before starting analyzing the crowdsourcing methods and examples in Museum of Photography I would like to introduce the concept of crowdsourcing for a better understanding of the phenomenon. Crowdsourcing is a fairly new term, coined by Jeff Howe and Mark Robinson in the June 2006 issue of *Wired* magazine[108] and which is used mostly with reference to online spaces. Lately, crowdsourcing has been used extensively in cultural heritage projects started by libraries,

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[108] Howe, Jeff. The Rise of Crowdsourcing. Wired. 14 June 2006
http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/14.06/crowds.html?pg=2&topic=crowds&topic_set= [accessed 23.04.2012]

archives, museums and galleries as a recent research[109] on the subject states. Howe defines crowdsourcing as following:

> "[…]crowdsourcing represents the act of a company or institution taking a function once performed by employees and outsourcing it to an undefined (and generally large) network of people in the form of an open call. This can take the form of peer-production (when the job is performed collaboratively), but is also often undertaken by sole individuals. The crucial prerequisite is the use of the open call format and the large network of potential laborers".[110]

Basically crowdsourcing is a collaborative process in which the power of the crowds is the most important and the final product of such collaborative work is user-generated content. Most of the online user-generated content comes from the enthusiasm of people and it is not necessarily professional. Most of the people contributing to crowdsourcing projects are volunteers which might be simply interested in certain subject and do not have the boundaries that formal institutions usually impose to their public. "Crowdsourcing is not merely a web 2.0 buzzword, but is instead a strategic model to attract an interested, motivated crowd of individuals capable of providing solutions superior in quality and quantity to those that even traditional forms of business can."[111]

Mostly crowdsourcing is referred to as a practice mostly used by institutions and usually governed by an expert, who makes use of user-generated content in order to add data to a project. And there is a growing trend over the past twenty years that has showed "considerable practical and theoretical interest in the relationship between heritage sites and communities" (Stuedahl, 2011) as now heritage institutions are the ones initiating projects in favor of community involvement. But besides the heritage institutions, which encourage community involvement, there are also such projects which are totally undertaken by amateurs such as Museum of Photography. Even though Alex Galmeanu is a professional photographer and has the necessary knowledge about the domain of photography, he is not a historian and cannot provide accurately historical data that concerns the photos' content. Museum of Photography is an independent crowdsourcing project which emerged from passion for photography and from the need of a Romanian museum of

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[109] Aroyo, Lora and Johan Oomen. *Crowdsourcing in the Cultural Heritage Domain:Opportunities and Challenges*. USA: C&T '11 Proceedings of the 5th International Conference on Communities and Technologies, 2011. http://www.cs.vu.nl/~marieke/OomenAroyoCT2011.pdf [accessed 23.04.2012]

[110] Ibid., 108

[111] Brabham, C. Daren. *Crowdsourcing as a Model for Problem Solving. An Introduction and Cases*. USA: University of Utah, 2008. http://www.clickadvisor.com/downloads/Brabham_Crowdsourcing_Problem_Solving.pdf [accessed 23.04.2012]

photography which does not exist as a physical institution. Since the blog needed the material to continue, Alex invited other readers to contribute with photographic material. According to Oomen and Aroyo's paper, *Crowdsourcing in the Cultural Heritage Domain*, this type of crowdsourcing that implies collecting material is called complementing collection and it is an "active pursuit of additional objects to be included in a (Web) exhibit or collection". Alex Galmeanu states clearly in the blog's section *How can you help?* that any contribution, be it photographic material, text or even comment is welcome for the survival of this initiative. The contributors' efforts can be seen from the blog's section tags and categories which have the contributors' own names as labels as well as from the photos in the posts which bear the watermark of the contributor or as an alternative, their names are also mentioned in the blog posts.

The second type of crowdsourcing that can be noticed in Museum of Photography is contextualization which means "adding contextual knowledge to objects, e.g. by telling stories or writing articles/wiki pages with contextual data".[112] Museum of Photography "aims to place objects in a meaningful context"[113] with the help of comments from various readers that might possess useful knowledge about the photos. Under another aspect, contextualization can be also referred to as wisdom of the crowds or collective intelligence, terms used by Surowiecki (2004) and Pierre Lévy (1997), to describe "a perfect technology capable of aggregating millions of disparate, independent ideas"[114] in order to find solution to a problem or to create new content. However, as mentioned in chapter four, Museum of Photography's type of crowdsourcing leans more towards collective intelligence than wisdom of the crowds, since collective intelligence is a concept which implies that readers contribute and at the same time they influence and comment each other's findings acting more as a problem-solving community than just passive material contributors. Museums of Photography's blog format is allowing the readers to participate due to its Web 2.0 features which facilitates peer participation and gives readers the possibility to interact with each other in an informal, non-institutional governed environment.

The post which is going to be discussed asks for help in order to identify an apparently unknown building from Bucharest and it also has a second part posted in February 2011, which presents similar content. The entry *Help needed – we need to identify a building – Update!*[115] shows three images with a random building from Bucharest, tagged as 1920, 1930, rare images, Bucharest

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[112] Ibid.,109
[113] Ibid.,109
[114] Ibid.,111
[115] Galmeanu, Alex. Help needed – Se cauta cladire – Update! Muzeul de Fotografie, entry November 14, 2010
http://www.muzeuldefotografie.ro/2010/11/help-needed-se-cauta-cladire/ [accessed 24.04.2012]

and it is followed by the text "A friend asked me for help. I also ask you to help me. We need the location of the building from these photos so any kind of help from you is welcome. All I know is that the photos are made in Bucharest, perhaps during the inter-war period. I don't think that the building exists anymore". Later on there is also an update with two photos submitted by a reader, which depict the same building in the present day. So, in his initial post Alex Galmeanu was wrong when he thought that the building does not exist anymore. There are thirty-two responses at this post and finally, even if there are some posts not directly related to the subject, the readers manage to find the exact location of the building adding explanations and also the year when the original photos were taken. The readers start guessing the location of the building by taking as reference points the sign on the front of the building which represents a tailor's shop: "according to the telephone book from 1937, this was on Bratianu Street, no. 7" [14/11/2010 at 14:54]. Later, the same reader adds "I also looked in the SOCEC year book from 1925. Weintraub S-sor & Irimia Weisberg appear on Carol Street, 54" [14/11/2010 at 15:48] which is followed by a link of the year book's page where the information was found. At the same time, other two users come up with new street names based on the surroundings of the building. But the most relevant answer and at the same time the one which comes with the answer regarding the building's location is an active user on Museum of Photography who has an impressive knowledge about Bucharest's architecture. He mentions that "the building in question is located at the intersection of the streets Filitti (right) and Tonitza (left), near Natiunilor Unite Square, back then known as Senatului Square. In fact, near the buildings on the left it can be noticed Adriatica-Trieste block of flats which was under construction, so the photos are taken in the 20's. Hope this helps" [14/11/2010 at 18:34]. Then he makes a correction in his previous comment "the building under construction is Agricola-Fonciera block of flats. Referring to the building you are asking about, it lost a bit from its charm due to its missing ornament on the upper corner (perhaps because of the earthquakes from 1940/1977)" [14/11/2010 at 18:46]. Later on he adds more information about the second and third photo "in the second photo the building faces Nicolae Tonitza Street and it was taken from the yard of the house that used to be across the street. Nowadays it is impossible to take the same photo as on the same place a block of flats is being built. In the third photo the building faces Ion C. Filitti Street; it can also be photographed nowadays from the sidewalk" [15/11/2010 at 00:41]. After this prompt clarification, other readers are commenting the building's surroundings with referral to other buildings in the vicinity which were built recently or which were demolished, as well as the name of the streets which changed, hence the error of the first readers who identified the wrong street names and generated confusion. One of the contributor mentions even the architect of the building: "architect Toma T. Socolescu, one of the best of the inter-war period" [24/12/2010 at 16:47]. A clear

description of the building's surrounding and history is offered by a reader who mentions that he lives nearby. "In C4b photo, on the left it is Brancoveanu Street (back then M. Pherekyde, nowadays Tonitza) named this way because once it used to unite the French Street with Brancoveanu Palace (then Senatului Square, nowadays Gioconda block). Also on the left, behind Tilman house, you can see Vlasto house, which also exists nowadays and after that […] Agricola-Fonciera block of flats under construction. On the right, C. Filitti street and in the background Ignatz Hertz bookshop, which no longer exists today, on Victoriei Street, nearby Vacarescu-Bellu-Prager house. C4a photo shows Tilman building as seen from Brancoveanu Street, from the empty place that was next to Adriatica-Trieste which was just built. On this empty place, CEC employees' pension house was built between 1936-39" [20/11/2010 at 10:32]. One of the comments is made by Alex's friend, who initially asked him for help in finding the location of the building, and who is thanking for the help received "I thank everybody for the answers, I am very excited that we could identify this building which I thought vanished" [14/11/2010 at 23:54].

This is one of the many examples of crowdsourcing in Museum of Photography, where people gather to find lost buildings and discuss their history. This entry has another part posted on February 2011 *Building wanted – part two*[116] and Alex mentions that "after a first episode which was successful, we try to identify other old buildings from Bucharest. So we need your help once again. Any piece of information about the buildings in these photos is welcome". There are twenty-two replies to this post in which readers try to do their best and come up with solutions but unfortunately only two buildings out of four are identified and occasionally readers mistake the name of the streets due to the fact that they have changed throughout history and they do not match anymore with the new maps of Bucharest.

Generally, the readers do an impressive collaboration work in identifying the buildings in the posts mentioned above and contributing with their own resources, links or information related to the subject but there are also negative sides of crowdsourcing. The negative part of contextualization when one is to refer to the information provided by the comments is that the information is not always accurate and because Museum of Photography is not a formal institution, the information cannot be verified as being historically accurate. Alex Galmeanu is just a photographer, not a historian but as the content of the photos embed historical content, there are plenty of comments related to historical events. And sometimes there can also be noticed disagreements related to the historical content of the photos as in the post *Iron Guard*

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[116] Galmeanu, Alex. Se caută cladire – partea a doua, Muzeul de Fotografie, entry February 18, 2011 http://www.muzeuldefotografie.ro/2011/02/se-cauta-cladire-partea-a-doua/ [accessed 24.04.2012]

parading[117]where readers do not agree with the photo's date presented in the post, also specified on the actual photo. Moreover, there is a strong disagreement on the historical facts presented in the post and the ones mentioned by the readers, with reference to whom it might be in the photo and the historical circumstances in which the photo was taken. So, it can be noticed that the comments create a small conflict between some readers who are accusing each other of historical fallacies, nationalism and ignorance. At one point a reader addresses to Alex saying that "I think it would have been fair if you didn't write anything about the Iron Guard than to just make fun of the memory of thousands of anticommunist warriors […]" [08/01/2011 at 22:03]. The comment is unfounded though, because Alex Galmeanu withdraws his information from the back of the actual photo and from Wikipedia, and he does not use his personal opinions.

8.2 Collective memory and nostalgia

In this part, it will be discussed another aspect of Museum of Photography, namely the capacity of its readers to use collective memory and nostalgia in order to remember past events related mostly to their lives through the help of the photos. Apart from crowdsourcing, where the readers produced objective data, without any sentimental implications, collective memory and nostalgia are used to recollect memories and feelings from a certain time in readers' lives which have emotional load and are not necessarily accurate from the historical point of view.

Collective memory is defined by Misztal as "the representation of the past, both that shared by a group and that which is collectively commemorated, that enacts and gives substance to the group's identity, its present conditions and its vision of the future"[118] and it is "quite different from the sum total of the personal recollections of its various individual members, as it includes only those that are commonly shared by all of them".[119] The unity of remembering in Museum of Photography consists in the content of the photos, namely the events that they represent and which help people remember how life was back then including positive and negative aspects. An illustrative example which will be used in this section is the entry *1964 or An American in*

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[117] Galmeanu, Alex. Garda de Fier in defilare, Muzeul de Fotografie, entry July 29, 2012
http://www.muzeuldefotografie.ro/2010/07/garda-de-fier-in-defilare/ [accessed 24.04.2012]
[118] Quoted in Watson, Sheila. Museums and their Communities. UK: Routledge, 2007. Print.
[119] Ibid., 118

Bucharest.[120] The entry contains photos taken by an American who visited Bucharest in 1964, and which are accompanied by the photographer's text. Alex Galmeanu mentions that there are twenty-eight images but he selected the most important ones for display. However, the entry is by far one of the most popular of Museum of Photography as it gathered 344 responses[121] from the readers. This entry is an example of what is going on the blog in terms of collective remembering and it is representative for other posts tagged under "communism". As it was a controversial period in Romanian history, people's memories are divided and there is always a division of the good and the bad aspects of living under the communist regime. As noticed from the comments on this entry, people separate themselves on two groups: the ones who thought that back then was better and the ones who think that nowadays is much better. However, both groups contribute to the blog post with useful information that it is not only interesting to read for a person who never lived in those times but it has also personal historical value as one does not find it in history books.

Collective memory in Museum of Photography is not only triggered by the content of the photos but as Halbwachs states it is a social process in which people as a community remember. "[…] a person remembers only by situating himself within the viewpoint of one or several groups and one or several currents of collective thought" (Halbwachs, 1980: 32). Some of the comments are related to one another, people make references to others' memories and produce even more on the basis of the whole group's remembrances; "many of our remembrances reappear because other persons recall them to us" (Halbwachs, 1980: 32). The comments of this post are usually made by people who lived or still live in Bucharest; among them are also lots of readers who have emigrated and express their nostalgia towards the city of their childhood. The dual nature of the comments arises from nostalgia and there are readers who criticize or try to take a neutral position: "The photos awaken nostalgia, but idealizing the past is the result of selective memory that preserves only the beautiful. Let's not idealize Bucharest in the 60's." [04/02/2009 at 01:49] In Museum of Photography, nostalgia is actually a form of collective remembering. The readers make use of their yearning for the past in order to rebuild it. The division in the comments referring to good or bad times, comes from the continuity of living in the same place and being a witness to perpetual changes. The readers who emigrated are heavily influenced by nostalgia as their memories are detached from the present environment. Their memories have been idealized in time and their nostalgia is actually "memory with the pain removed" (Lowenthal, 1985: 8).

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[120] Galmeanu, Alex. 1964 sau Un American la Bucuresti, Muzeul de Fotografie, entry January 29, 2009 http://www.muzeuldefotografie.ro/2009/01/1964-sau-un-american-la-bucuresti/ [accessed 28.04.2012]
[121] The data was taken on 2nd of May 2012.

My God! What memories! I was born in 1954, I left Bucharest in 1982...since then I've never come back because I'm afraid not to "alter" these images and memories that I have about my native city. I read few of the comments, forgive me but I don't trust the ones who talk about improving the conditions of the city and its inhabitants […] [04/02/2009 at 16:30]

This is one of the plenty comments of people who have left Bucharest who keep as memories only an idealized image and often refuse to face the present for fear that what they see will ruin their past remembrances. As some of the readers mention, even the photos are subjective and do not represent the whole period "[…] those are photos, they are subjective. They don't offer a faithful view of that time. It's just a piece of it." [31/01/2009 at 10:06]

Collective memory in Museum of Photography is present as a group remembering which is related to a certain space and time. As Halbwachs mentions "[…] it is impossible to deny that we often replace our remembrances within a space and time and whose demarcations we share with others, or that we also situate them within dates that have meaning only in relation to a group to which we belong […]" (Halbwachs, 1980: 54). The comments of this entry are made mostly by past or present inhabitants of Bucharest who have lived there around 1964, thus making them part of the collective memory group. Not only the photos as additional objects but the space they represent is well ingrained in people's memories, making an almost unbreakable bond with the past. Even if "stones are movable, relationships between stones and men are not so easily altered" (Halbwachs, 1980: 133). Bucharest is a "repository of people's memories […]the battleground for the past, where the past remains open and contestable, [it] can be read as the topography of a collective memory in which buildings are mnemonic symbols which can reveal hidden and forgotten pasts. Most of the comments in *1964 or An American in Bucharest* are of this kind:

I'm 52. I was born and grew up in Bucharest and my memory is still good…I miss the city back then (as well as 70's when I was in high school) clean, fresh, civilized. The streets were washed at night, including the sidewalk, there were plenty of lights, the movies were in the evening from 20.15, then from 22.30…after that people went to the restaurant…My parents didn't manage to leave me home alone, they had to take me with them…It's not true that there was poverty back then, there were plenty of (natural) products, the shortages started after 1980. In that time, my young parents came from Pescarus restaurant on Saturday evening at 1 o'clock at night, alone until the Triumphal Arch, where we used to live, and nothing ever happened to them…

> There are times that I regret; they will never come back…Now when I go out I feel the aggression! I am very disturbed by the crowd, people who are dressed ugly, vulgar, behaving violently, coldly (thick-skinned I would say). It's true, I can't adapt…I salute all of my generation, with beautiful memories! [11/02/2009 at 23:15]

The memories vary a lot from person to person which is normal since collective memory is based on individual memory but all of them manage to construct the image of a lost time and space and create a story which is interesting to follow along with the photos. There are readers who mention that "a photo values 1000 words. This presentation of Bucharest from the 60's fits this saying." [16/02/2009 at 03:23], however, the comments are by far useless and they do help to form a picture of Bucharest through the eyes of its inhabitants. Besides adding information to the photos on the blog, the comments are a proof that Museum of Photography is an interactive space where people can express their view, feelings, and thoughts without being censored by authority. One of the biggest benefits of a blog space which allows a heritage community to comment on the displayed heritage is that there is no censorship when it comes to critique. Among the 344 comments there are plenty of disagreements but none of them generates impolite remarks or degenerates into a virtual fight. An example is discussing the controversial political context of those times:

> I hesitated to add some thoughts but…most of us are overwhelmed by the nostalgia. It's a pity that some couldn't help to involve politics a bit. I think that the photos awoke other memories, too. Let's take them as they are: a beautiful gift which proves that something still vibrates, that it's not gone. [14/02/2009 at 18:03]

The above quoted reader does not agree with the fact that other comments refer to the political context of the photos instead of just enjoying their aesthetical qualities. However, another reader disagrees:

> […] it is impossible not to involve politics when talking about those times. The politics of those times is part of our 'nostalgia', I don't approve of communism and dictatorship, but let's be honest, IT WAS QUIET AND PEACEFUL, it was clean and order and the most important, we had HOPES. [15/02/2009 at 13:18]

> In general, people have different views on Bucharest in the 60's: some of them were the nostalgic who mentioned that back then the city was clean, people were good-looking, polite, the traffic was light, and the times were prosperous compared to nowadays when Bucharest has turned into a dirty, polluted, dusty and crowded capital, filled with stray dogs and violent people.

I came for studies from Focsani to Bucharest in 1964. Your images revived the charm of the former Bucharest, with the matchless atmosphere of its streets. What is Bucharest today? A gathering of big and hideous buildings and a city without personality. Pity! Pity! Pity! [08/02/2009 at 09:47]

I loved Bucharest as a patriot and I was very happy every time I and my parents visited it…now I have to admit that I hate going to Bucharest…you cannot breathe because of the exhaust gases, summer is the worst, you see only dirt everywhere and thousands of stray dogs…and illiterate people…it's not the capital that I used to love as a child […] [09/02/2009 at 09:36]

Some readers think the 60's were not as bright as others describe them.

In this regard, I want to add that the city center, as I remember it, was noisy and quite dirty (lots of spit on the sidewalk, tram, bus and trolley tickets, cigarette ends, trash cans were full) but at that time we weren't disturbed that much by the mess (look at all the trash that everybody was throwing out of the train windows, or left behind at a picnic – I had to emigrate to understand what a clean city means). […] We are not anymore what we used to be 40 years ago. Moral degradation, greediness, desire to have it all, lack of responsibility, honor, sense of duty, becoming besotted because of mass-media, etc, etc are global phenomena and our Bucharest is following the trend. [16/02/2009 at 07:19]

There are also lots of comments discussing the political events of the respective time, the general atmosphere related to national minorities in Bucharest, mass-media and culture. The most important aspects of this type of discussion in Museum of Photography are not the accuracy of information that the comments generate as this blog is not owned by a formal institution. Instead, collective memory and nostalgia in Museum of Photography should be considered as a way of sharing impressions and experiences of the past and adding a multifaceted value to the photos which otherwise would have been silent witnesses of the past. Museum of Photography does not only display cultural heritage but it also allows a large public to comment and have an opinion about their own heritage. The fact that not every reader praises the glorious past and there are also critics and disagreements, offers Museum of Photography diversity and authenticity. By sharing their memories, the readers of Museum of Photography "strengthen social bonds […] and use past experience to construct models to understand inner worlds of self and the others" (van Dijck, 2007: 3).

Another important aspect in this entry is the fact that there are some readers who question the authenticity of the notes on the photos. Apparently, the text which accompanies the photos has writing mistakes that are not typical for a native, given the fact that the author of the photos and text is an American. One of the comments on this subject states:

> I have an observation: I'm wondering if the photos' author is an American. The comment on a photo about University mentions '43 faculties'. In American-English 'faculty' means 'professor'. The sections of a university are called 'departments' or 'schools' (School of Communication, etc.). Then, on another photo, the author says that the streets are 'crouded'. The correct version is obviously 'crowded' and maybe Americans aren't the best at spelling but this is flagrant. I hope I'm not being misunderstood, I don't want to criticize, on the contrary, I'm wondering if the photos and the comments belong to an American. [29/01/2009 at 22:15]

This comment referring to the authenticity of the photos, in terms of authorship, is among the few in this entry that detaches itself from the pattern of collective memory and nostalgia. However, this proves the fact that Museum of Photography allows its readers the freedom to express their opinions on the photos without restricting the discussion only to a certain subject. Alex Galmeanu replies:

> I noticed that. On the other hand the texts are written in English, in a weird English. I received the photos from US and the developments are also made there by Kodak in October 1964 […] [29/01/2009 at 23:23]

Collective memory and nostalgia are still the main factors which derive from the historical content of the photos as the past is always an endless source of memories. *1964 or An American in Bucharest* offers a fine example of how collective memory works in cultural heritage virtual environments which are not bounded to a formal institution. Not only does the conversation go smoothly, without major incidents like impoliteness but it shows that people are able to feel that "they were somehow part of a communal past, experiencing a connection between what happened in general and how they were involve as individuals" (van Dijck, 2007: 10) even if they are complete strangers to each other who share their memories behind a computer screen.

8.3 Trolls and spam

The previous sections have dealt with the productivity of readers in Museum of Photography referring to crowdsourcing, collective memory and nostalgia. As shown above, the content of the

blog in terms of comments is peaceful and civilized. The readers contribute with photo related useful information and share their memories with the others generating content which is typical of the cultural heritage environments.

But, as it is a virtual environment, Museum of Photography is not spared of rude remarks and ads which interfere with the overall polite tone of the other comments. Because it is presented under a blog format and there are comments allowed, the readers can express themselves freely and sometimes passing the boundaries of politeness, insulting other readers or making rude remarks about the photos. Some of the rude comments and spam on the blog are removed by the author, accompanied by an explanation that mentions the reason of removal. However, there are still comments which interfere with the polite tone and which are usually tempered by other readers.

According to Urban Dictionary a troll is "one who posts a deliberately provocative message to a newsgroup or message board with the intention of causing maximum disruption and argument". [122] Spam is usually known as "unsolicited bulk mail"[123] though blogs have their own type of spam called comment spam and it is "any comment that has been posted to a blog for the purpose of generating an inbound link to the comment author's own site or blog".[124] Museum of Photography does not have noticeable trolls or spam, most of them being removed or the readers are not interested to start an online fight. An example of deleted spam is in the post *1986, Bucharest*[125] "Give me a vote and I thank you… [deleted by admin: sorry, this is a spam]" [26/02/2009 at 02:28] and in *That's how Russians marched into Bucharest*[126] there is a banned troll comment "… [deleted by admin – irrelevant, ungrounded, mean comment]" [10/05/2009 at 16:55]. Rarely the disturbing comments contain bad language like in *Elizabeta Boulevard in 1918*[127]: "when people were simple and respectful, now youngsters swear at ole people instead of respecting them…Romanian pig, shitty youth" [16/04/2011 at 19:17]. In general this kind of comment is not seen as trolling as the reader expresses his opinion about younger generations in a rough manner but not attacking somebody directly. However, noticeable disturbing comments were made on the post *Women from*

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[122] Urban Dictionary. Definition of a troll, 22 Sept. 2002 http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=troll [accessed 02.05.2012]

[123] Spamhaus. Definition of Spam. http://www.spamhaus.org/consumer/definition/ [accessed 02.05.2012]

[124] Webopedia. Comment spam http://www.webopedia.com/TERM/C/comment_spam.html [accessed 02.05.2012]

[125] Galmeanu, Alex. 1986, Bucuresti, Muzeul de Fotografie, entry February 11, 2009 http://www.muzeuldefotografie.ro/2009/02/1986-bucuresti/ [accessed 03.05.2012]

[126] Galmeanu, Alex. Asa au intrat rusii în Bucuresti, Muzeul de Fotografie, March 4, 2009 http://www.muzeuldefotografie.ro/2009/03/asa-au-intrat-rusii-in-bucuresti/ [accessed 03.05.2012]

[127] Galmeanu, Alex. Bulevardul Elisabeta în 1918, Muzeul de Fotografie, entry September 08, 2009 http://www.muzeuldefotografie.ro/2009/09/bulevardul-elisabeta-in-1918/ [accessed 03.05.2012]

1900[128]which depicts portraits of women from the beginning of the 20th century. Some of the readers make remarks on the photos published: "I wanted to comment about the women in the photos. My God, they're so ugly! Besides the last one, they have rough features, plus double chins…very sexy, but that was the fashion back then. When I read novels written in that time, I'll have reservations at statements of the kind 'she was very beautiful'" [16/11/2009 at 08:32]; "The photos and the clothing are nice. The humans…extremely ugly, unfortunately!" [05/03/2012 at 14:54]. These comments are not necessarily trolling but they do cause disagreement and replies from other readers who state that "[…] I'm sorry that among the comments are some people who don't know anything" [07/02/2010 at 01:47]. One main reason for the rudeness of the comments is the content of the photos, namely portraits of women, which might generate a debate regarding the exterior looks. However, the same thing does not happen on the post *Men from 1900*[129]thus showing a gender bias among some readers.

This chapter has proposed to discuss the community of Museum of Photography as it is an important part of the blog's existence. The main focus was on the contributors, which are active on the blog through the material sent and the comments they make. It was shown that the main aspects of this virtual heritage community were crowdsourcing, collective memory and nostalgia. By crowdsourcing people contribute with useful data regarding the buildings depicted in the photos and by using collective memory and nostalgia, Museum of Photography helps people to reconnect with the past by sharing their memories online. Even though Museum of Photography generates a great deal of information with the help of the readers, attention should be paid at eventual inaccuracies as the community of the blog is not formed exclusively of professionals. There is also presented the downside of an online community which sometimes involves trolling and spamming. This is made possible by the blog format which allows higher level of interactivity as it is a Web 2.0 tool. However, Museum of Photography keeps a civilized and formal atmosphere; there are not noticeable conflicts and the author keeps a careful eye on the discussions going on in the comments' area.

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[128]Galmeanu, Alex. Femeile de la 1900, Muzeul de Fotografie, entry November 13, 2009
http://www.muzeuldefotografie.ro/2009/11/femeile-de-la-1900/ [accessed 03.05.2012]
[129] Galmeanu, Alex. Barbatii de la 1900, Muzeul de Fotografie, entry November 18, 2009
http://www.muzeuldefotografie.ro/2009/11/barbatii-de-la-1900/ [accessed 03.05.2012]

9. Conclusion

This research has proposed to deal with a new concept of presenting cultural heritage in social media. Museum of Photography, a Romanian documentary photography blog, was presented and analyzed as a case study which was representative for this research. For defining and highlighting the most important features of such concept, there were used multiple research methods. Through qualitative-ethnographic research based on a study case, I attempted to outline the most important features of Museum of Photography as an online environment which preserves and displays cultural heritage; as an online collection and as an innovative virtual museum. At the same time I also discussed its community, including the positive and negative aspects.

All in all the research was fruitful and it proved that cultural heritage is not only bound to formal cultural institutions but also ordinary people can take the initiative to preserve and display their own heritage when authorities are not interested in doing so. Museum of Photography showed that cultural heritage does not belong only in physical museums but it can be also displayed online due to people's interest and enthusiasm for their own past. The main research question was: how is cultural heritage represented in social media and what implications does this representation have on community and heritage itself? This thesis has managed to answer the main question but it has also raised other questions which are suitable for continuing the research in this field. Museum of Photography offered a great material for researching cultural heritage in social media due to its continuity, rich material and active community. Nevertheless, I am aware that this research has covered only the basic aspects of a virtual heritage environment. However, the basic aspects that were covered, namely how is cultural heritage displayed and what types of cultural heritage there are in Museum of Photography; how does it work as an online collective collection and as a museum and how does its virtual community work, can set a solid ground to further research in this area.

The limitation of this research is the fact that there were not taken into consideration more examples of online cultural heritage environments although lately there have been a slight increase of such projects. Some of the examples are Shorpy[130] and Vederi din trecut[131] (Postcards

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[130] Shorpy Historical Photo Archive http://www.shorpy.com/ [accessed 14.05.2012]
[131] Vederi din trecut http://vederidintrecut.blogspot.com/ [accessed 14.05.2012]

from the Past). By taking just one study case into consideration there is the danger of not seeing other aspects which are not necessarily related to it and basically set limitations to the research. However, the research itself was limited due to the academic requirements. Museum of Photography offered rich research material but it had to be taken into consideration just the one which was relevant for this specific topic, namely documentary photography of Bucharest and Romania in general. The blog offers slightly more than just local photography. Another aspect was the language of the blog which is mostly Romanian. This might be a disadvantage for the non-speakers who would wish to read the blog. However, all the comments I used as examples in the research were translated into English taking carefully into consideration the original text. Another drawback of the research was the ethnographic method which offered a good possibility of studying the community of Museum of Photography throughout their comments but as a researcher I could not interact directly with the readers of the blog due to disrupting the topics of discussion. The observations were made only as an outsider but nevertheless they provided the necessary information for the research purposes.

Among the future implications of Museum of Photography and similar projects is the issue of preservation which is strictly related to cultural heritage. Cultural heritage itself needs to be preserved in order to gain its status as cultural heritage and Museum of Photography does a great job in this aspect. But the issue I am referring to is long-term preservation. I did not refer to this aspect in the research as it would generate an extended discussion but it is nevertheless an issue which can be further researched in relation to online heritage environments. Museum of Photography collects and displays cultural heritage but the question of preservation comes when referred to the existence of such project in time, for example in fifty years. In my opinion it is hard to predict the future of such projects since the online world is constantly and rapidly changing. It is not certain if blogging will exist in the future or new software will be developed for virtual interactive environments. If one wants to predict the future of a project such as Museum of Photography, one needs to look at the future of blogging. On one hand there are optimist voices who affirm that "blog readership has increased steadily and is expected to continue on an upward path" and "the number of blog creators is also expected to climb"[132] which offer hope to projects like Museum of Photography. On the other had it must be taken into consideration the danger that the author might suddenly delete the blog for various reasons or he can simply stop posting. These

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[132]Twist Image. Six Pixels of Separation, entry September 30, 2010 http://www.twistimage.com/blog/archives/the-future-of-blogging-might-surprise-you/ [accessed 14.05.2012]

are one of the considerable uncertainties of such projects; they are unstable due to their digital nature and dependant on the people who create them.

Regarding the readers of Museum of Photography, this plays an important role when it comes to support, as they are the ones who encourage its continuity and make sure that the project is valued and appreciated. In the questionnaire I sent regarding Museum of Photography, I asked questions such as how often does a reader access Museum of Photography and why, what they think about this project, do they consider the content relevant for Romanian cultural heritage and trustable from the content perspective and if they are active contributors. The answers regarding visitor's frequency, content and trust were encouraging. Most of the readers admitted that they do not visit the blog very often. The main reasons they visit Museum of Photography is out of curiosity, they want more information or they like old photography. Most of the people think that Museum of Photography is an excellent project with a rich educational/informative content, which is somehow representative for Romanian cultural heritage and which should be promoted more. The initiative for such project was considered welcome, necessary, interesting, modern, and with a future. Most of the respondents claimed that they trust the content of Museum of Photography although some of them claimed that they had certain reservations due to the fact that it is an amateur project. Unfortunately, none of the readers who responded to the questionnaire sent photographic material to Museum of Photography or contributed in any way. Some of the readers expressed their wish to contribute if they ever have the chance and necessary resources.

In conclusion, Museum of Photography is an example that cultural heritage can be displayed successfully outside the formal institutions. Such projects do have their good and bad sides and there is still much work and effort to be put in developing and maintaining them over time for both research and public enjoyment. Due to a continually developing virtual environment, non-institutional digital heritage can be successfully preserved and displayed by volunteer enthusiasts. Museum of Photography proved that a "museum" is more than a physical institution but a concept that is perpetually developed with possible great outcomes.

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Appendix

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This questionnaire is anonymous, the answers will not be published, it is not compulsory to answer all the questions. The results will be used in the study *Cultural Heritage in Social Media: Museum of Photography*.

You can visit Museum of Photography here: http://www.muzeuldefotografie.ro/

Additional information:

Age:

Profession:

1. How did you find out about Museum of Photography?

2. Do you visit the blog often? Why?

3. Do you think that Museum of Photography is a "museum" even if it is not represented under a traditional format?

4. What do you think about this cultural initiative?

5. Do you think that Museum of Photography is representative for Romanian cultural heritage? Why?

6. Do you consider the content of the blog educational/informative?

7. Are you active on this blog (have you ever sent photos or commented on the posts)?

8. Do you trust the content of the blog? Do you think that the information is accurate?

Thank you! ☺

You can send the answers at: silviadumi2003@yahoo.com