

Discovering intercultural relations in the digital age with school students. A few Polish-Italian cases

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This article briefly presents how the implementation of ICT in cultural institutions has improved education and research. The article emphasizes discovering the activity of Italian artists in Poland, thanks to digitization, which was carried out with particular intensity in the last two decades. Digitization has become a great achievement thanks to the funding of numerous international projects by the European Commission. Special recognition in this action should be given to Rossella Caffo and her team, under whose guidance the plan for the coordination of digitization in Europe and numerous detailed projects were created. In addition to the millions of digitized objects sent to Europeana, the project teams also developed several programs. One of them, MOVIO, software for virtual exhibitions, began to be used in projects with Polish schools. One of the virtual exhibitions was devoted to Elwiro Michał Andriolli, an outstanding artist of Italian origin. The exhibition was prepared on the basis of digitized materials available on Polish websites and in Europeana, where we also found unique French and Lithuanian materials. Unfortunately, no Italian objects were found there. We plan to continue searching for the achievements of Italian artists in Poland, in the CrowdSchool project (Creative Learning at School thanks to a collaborative Crowdsourcing Annotation Process), whose aim is to prepare didactic materials useful in distance learning and intercultural connections. Close cooperation is planned here between a Polish secondary school from Jarosław, interested in architecture, and a Liceo Artistico from Bologna.

Our first meeting with the Italian delegation from the Central Institute for the Union Catalogue of Italian Libraries and Bibliographic Information (ICCU) took place in Budapest in 1994 at the Annual gathering of the European Library Automation Group ELAG, where we discussed virtual catalogs, and each country presented progress reports in library computerization¹. As libraries faced many problems during the period of transformation, a few years later, in 1997, the International Center for Information Management,

¹ Paula Goossens, *ELAG 94: Report of the library systems seminar on library services in an electronic environment*, «Program: electronic library and information systems» 29 (1995), n. 1, p. 63-67.

Systems and Services (ICIMSS) was established to prepare cultural workers, mainly librarians from Central and Eastern Europe, for an unknown digital era. For that purpose students were offered six postgraduate blended courses comprising in-person and online sessions.

It was the beginning of significant changes. Just a few years later, we were included in a number of EU projects under the charismatic leadership of Rossella Caffo, supported, among others, by experts like Antonella Fresa, Marzia Piccinino, Maria Teresa Natale, Pier Giacomo Sola, and Andrea Tempera. Working with professionals from several European countries, we have successfully moved on from the 20th to the 21st century. Our shared work began in 2003 with the MINERVA project, where, on behalf of the Polish Ministry of Culture, we discussed the issue of coordinated digitization in Europe. This resulted in the creation of the Europeana portal², to which our international group provided a rich content from a number of subsequent projects³.

In addition to the content provided to Europeana, several tools were developed and tested. One of the most useful software was MOVIO, which allows you to create virtual exhibitions. MOVIO was produced by an Italian company as a result of the EU Athena+ project coordinated, like many others, by the ICCU⁴.

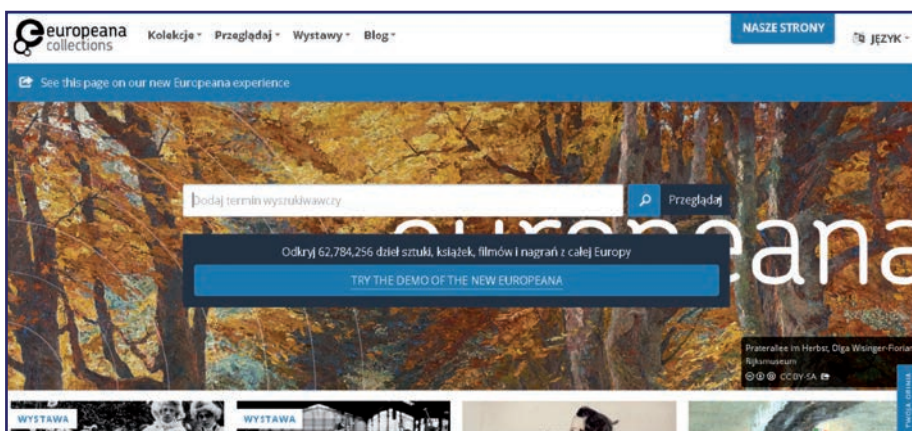


Figure 1. Europeana portal. Screenshot from https://classic.europeana.eu/portal/pl?utm_source=new-website&utm_medium=button

² <https://www.europeana.eu>.

³ The Europeana portal was created in 2008, and we have many publications on this topic. One of them, describing plans for this portal, was also published in *Digitalia*: Jon Purday, *Think culture: Europeana.eu from concept to constructions*, «*Digitalia. Rivista del digitale nei beni culturali*» 5 (2009), n. 1, p. 105-126. At the end of March 2021, Europeana has an impressive, constantly growing number of records (currently 61,980,798).

⁴ The Athena project results are still available on the project homepage <https://www.athenaplus.eu/>.

This software turned out to be very helpful not only in our work, but also as an attractive support in education. We started testing it in 2016, in a project supported by the Ministry of Education, while working with a group of talented students from three Polish secondary schools. Students found this kind of work in which they conducted independent research and the results of their work were made available to the public in the form of a virtual exhibition, to be very engaging. They also appreciated the technical side of their project, where they got to know new things and enjoyed the opportunity to combine research and technical knowledge⁵. By 2019, working with students from the schools who were more interested in such cooperation, we have created 30 virtual exhibitions⁶.

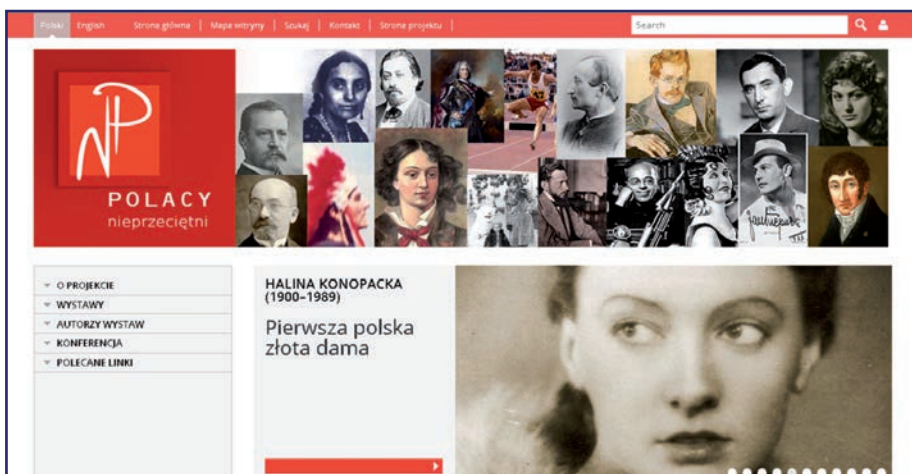


Figure 2. Example of the portal created to present students' exhibitions. Screenshot from <http://www.eduwystawy.eu/nieprzecietni/>

The majority of the exhibitions were devoted to extraordinary people. Inventors, researchers, artists, saints, politicians, travelers and explorers were among the selected characters.

One of the student teams decided to create an exhibition devoted to their school patron, Michał Elwiro Andriolli (1836-1893). Andriolli, born in Vilnius (in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth under Russian partition), was an artist of international renown in the 19th century. He was brought up by a Polish mother from a noble family and an Italian father. Elwiro's father Francesco took part in Napoleon's army campaign against Russia and was taken prisoner by the Russians for 6 years. Then, together with his companion of misery, the architect Cesare

⁵ The first portal created for that purpose is available at <http://eduwystawy.eu/>.

⁶ Other portals are available at <http://www.eduwystawy.eu/pamiec/>; <http://www.eduwystawy.pl/patroni/>; <http://www.eduwystawy.pl/nieprzecietni/>.

Anighini, he settled down in Vilnius. Anighini was hired by the Tyszkiewicz family to build their palace and church, and Francesco Andriolli collaborated with him. Then, being a versatile artisan, he established his own workshop and married a Polish noblewoman. His son Michał Elwiro felt Polish, but he was interested in his father's homeland and therefore went to Italy to improve his artistic education at the Academy of St. Luke in Rome. However, in Italy Andriolli not only studied diligently and visited the homeland of his ancestors, but was also interested in the activities of the Carbonari. In 1860 he met Giuseppe Garibaldi (1807-1882), a national hero who fought for the unification of Italy. Young Andriolli, in whose veins Italian blood flowed, joined Garibaldi's squad, learning active patriotism. Later on, in Poland, he behaved similarly fighting against Russia during the January Uprising of 1863. With the suppression of the Uprising, the insurgents, including Andriolli, were imprisoned and punished by the forfeiture of their property. Andriolli managed to escape from the prison and, looking for a safe place to live, he first settled in London, and then moved to Paris, where he earned a living by using his artistic talents. Very soon his drawings found their way to illustrated magazines and became the focus of his work. More information about this extraordinary Polish-Italian artist can be found at the virtual exhibition not only in Polish, but also in English⁷.

When creating this exhibition, we used most of the materials already digitized by Polish libraries and museums. Moreover, as Andriolli was also the designer of



Figure 3. Francesco Andriolli with his sons: Michał Elwiro (left) and Erminio (right). Screenshot from the exhibition available at <http://nieprzeciętni.pl/andriolli/en/28/siblings>.

⁷ The original exhibition prepared by the students is available in Polish at <http://www.eduwystawy.eu/andriolli/>, while its revised version with an English translation can be found on the portal planned as the main access point to all exhibitions after verification: <http://nieprzeciętni.pl/andriolli/en/1/home>.

wooden, richly decorated houses, the students working on the project took pictures of the architectures and added them to the exhibition. In addition to Polish materials, the Europeana portal served as a source of additional illustrations. We found there, among others, an oil painting from a Lithuanian museum and materials from the French digital library Gallica. Surprisingly, there were no Italian materials on Michał Elwiro Andriolli in Europeana, although we know that in the town hall of Bretonico, where his father came from, there is an exhibition devoted to Michał Elwiro Andriolli, and even a street is named after him – Via Elviro Michele Andriolli. We hope that in the near future we will also find in Europeana Italian content relating to Andriolli.

The Andriolli virtual exhibition shows just one of the examples of Polish-Italian relations, but there were many more similar connections over the centuries. They have been even mentioned in the Polish and Italian anthems, written in 1797 by Józef Wybicki, and in 1847 by Goffredo Mameli respectively.

Già l'Aquila d'Austria Le penne ha perdute. Il sangue d'Italia, Il sangue Polacco, Bevé, col cosacco, Ma il cor le bruciò	Marsz, marsz, Dąbrowski, Z ziemi włoskiej do Polski. Za twoim przewodem Złączym się z narodem.	March, march, Dąbrowski, From Italy to Poland. Behind your cord Joining the nation.
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But their relationships started much earlier. One of the most outstanding figures is Bona Sforza (1494-1557), who, after marrying the Polish King Sigismund I the Old (1467-1548), came to Poland with her royal court in 1518. Another great Italian who came to Poland even before Bona Sforza was Filippo Buonaccorsi (1437-1496) an Italian humanist, writer and diplomat who served as a tutor to the sons of Polish King Casimir IV Jagiellon. In Europeana, however, we will not find any Italian digital materials related to Bona Sforza or Filippo Buonaccorsi, known also as Filip Kallimach. In the period from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century many Italian immigrants found employment in Poland, especially in such industries as lead and salt mines, glassworks or trade⁸. Italians, however, are best remembered as artists and architects who have travelled all over the world. Many Italian architects and artists have stayed in Poland, building churches, palaces and other important buildings. Some of them worked on contracts, but many, such as Merlini, Marconi or Bellotto, stayed in Poland forever, starting their families here. We plan to recall their works in our new project CrowdSchool (Creative Learning at School thanks to a collaborative Crowdsourcing Annotation Process), which started in September 2020. The project is financed by the French Erasmus+ agency

⁸ Tygielski Wojciech, *Włosi w Polsce XVI i XVII wieku*, Warszawa: Więź, 2002.

and coordinated by the Association Dédale. The main goals of the project include the preparation of didactic materials, especially useful in distance learning and intercultural connections. The project involves 13 partners, including 4 schools. Close cooperation will be carried out between the Polish secondary school in Jarosław (Liceum) and the Liceo Artistico of Bologna. The Liceo Artistico chose the theme of food and dress in art, while the school in Jarosław became interested in architecture and landscape. Both groups of students, assisted by local professional partners, will create a database useful for the curricula in their schools. Europeana will be the main source of this database. Together with the Polish class specializing in architecture, we plan to select materials useful for the history of Polish architecture. Italian architects played an important role in this story. As we already double-checked, Europeana offers materials provided by Polish institutions, including many photos of architecture provided by our association.

In addition to the projects described above, we are still planning to cooperate with schools on virtual exhibitions devoted to people who significantly contributed to the development of Polish culture. The short list includes among others architects Domenico Merlini (1730-1797), Antonio Corazzi (1792-1877), Enrico (Henryk) Marconi (1792-1863), who built many palaces and important buildings in Poland. Two other Italians whom we would like to commemorate in the form of virtual exhibitions are Tito Livio Burattini (1617-1681) inventor, scientist, explorer, and architect, and Bernardo Bellotto (1721-1780) invited by the Polish King Stanisław August Poniatowski as a court painter. In his works he used a camera obscura, so he left quite detailed pictures of Warsaw buildings, which proved to be very useful to rebuild Warsaw, destroyed during the WWII.

So far, we have only found Italian digitized material available in Europeana for Bellotto. Hopefully, more Italian content will find its way to Europeana before we start working on the exhibitions. If it fails, we also have a different plan that was included in the application for another Erasmus project. The Sunrise project, coordinated by an Italian association, plans to integrate creativity into STEM disciplines (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths). If the application is successful, students from the school we are partnering with will add their own contents to Europeana. These will be photos and drawings of the selected architecture, including bridges and other technical constructions. Among other things, there will also be aqueducts, for which Italy is famous. In Europeana you can find quite a lot of digitized Italian materials of these buildings.

All these projects, based on digital content, are expected to strengthen intercultural connections, especially between students from Poland and Italy.

Questo articolo presenta brevemente alcuni progetti che, grazie all'implementazione delle ICT nelle istituzioni culturali, hanno contribuito a migliorarne le attività di istruzione e ricerca. L'articolo sottolinea in particolare il lavoro di riconoscimento e scoperta dell'attività degli artisti italiani in Polonia, grazie all'intenso lavoro di digitalizzazione svolto negli ultimi vent'anni con il finanziamento di numerosi progetti internazionali da parte della Commissione Europea. Un riconoscimento speciale per questo risultato va a Rossella Caffo e al suo team, sotto la cui guida sono stati creati il piano per il coordinamento della digitalizzazione in Europa e portati avanti numerosi progetti. Oltre ai milioni di oggetti digitalizzati inviati a Europeana sono stati sviluppati anche diversi programmi; tra questi MOVIO, software per la realizzazione di mostre virtuali, ha iniziato ad essere utilizzato nei progetti di alcune scuole polacche. Una di queste mostre virtuali è stata dedicata a Elwiro Michał Andriolli, un eccezionale artista di origine italiana. La mostra comprende materiali digitalizzati disponibili su siti web polacchi e in Europeana, dove sono stati reperiti anche straordinari contenuti francesi e lituani ma, sfortunatamente, non sono presenti oggetti digitali provenienti dall'Italia. Il progetto di ricerca sugli artisti italiani in Polonia continuerà grazie a CrowdSchool (Creative Learning at School, realizzato in collaborazione con Crowdsourcing Annotation), con lo scopo di preparare materiali didattici utili per l'apprendimento a distanza e le connessioni interculturali. Lo sviluppo del progetto prevede inoltre una stretta collaborazione tra la scuola secondaria polacca di Jarosław, interessata all'architettura, e il Liceo Artistico di Bologna.

L'ultima consultazione dei siti web è avvenuta nel mese di giugno 2021