

Literary heritage in museum exhibitions: Identifying its main challenges in the European context

Marina Strepetova – Jordi Arcos-Pumarola

Marina Strepetova, Master's degree in Cultural and Natural Heritage Management
University of Barcelona
School of Tourism, Hospitality and Gastronomy CETT
Av. de Can Marcet 36-38
08035 Barcelona
Spain
e-mail: marinastrepet27@gmail.com

Jordi Arcos-Pumarola, Master's degree on Cultural and Natural Heritage Management,
University of Barcelona
School of Tourism, Hospitality and Gastronomy CETT
Av. de Can Marcet 36-38
08035 Barcelona
Spain
e-mail: jordi.arcos@cett.cat

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Literary heritage in museum exhibitions: Identifying its main challenges in the European context

Literary heritage presents a dialectic relationship between tangible and intangible elements. This complex duality presents challenges for curators, who must try to communicate this immaterial essence through the exhibition language. This article, structured on a two-phase research process, aims to identify the main challenges for literary heritage valorisation and communication in the museum context. First, interviews with specialists in literary heritage and museology from Catalonia and Russia were carried out to identify the main issues to be considered when designing a literary heritage exhibition and managing a literary heritage centre. Second, the websites of three renowned literary European museums were analysed to inspect whether and how these aspects are tackled by these museums and presented to their potential visitors. Results show that, firstly, the duality of literary heritage is vital in the designing of the exhibition; and secondly, that concepts such as human mediation, literary tourism, and promotion are important in finding new strategies to communicate and visibilise literary heritage intangible meanings.

Keywords: house museum, intangible heritage, literary heritage, museography

Introduction

In 2003, UNESCO adopted its *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*.¹ In this document, intangible cultural heritage (ICH) was defined and brought in the cultural spotlight. This document, which shifted the interest from material heritage to ethereal cultural expressions,² fully acknowledged the challenges that this change posed to heritage interpreta-

¹ UNESCO (2003). *Convention for the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage*. Paris: UNESCO. Accessed 15 January 2019, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001325/132540e.pdf>

² BLAKE, Janet. Museums and Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage – Facilitating Participation and Strengthening their Function in Society. In: *International Journal of Intangible Heritage*, 13, 2018, p. 18–37.

tion and communication. In this sense, one of the main aims of this document was to define intangible cultural heritage and to identify new ways to transmit it. Two years later, and in the same vein, a new document was adopted by UNESCO that recognized the importance of heritage to cultural expression.³ The title of this document was *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions*. Its aim was to give institutional recognition to the heritagization of cultural expressions that can be considered part of our ICH. In this way, UNESCO consolidated an intangible turn in heritage studies by giving importance to living cultural expressions.⁴

Considering this framework, the relationship between Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) and museums or heritage centres has become a central topic for museum studies, since it transforms the idea of the museum from a container for objects to be displayed and preserved to a people-centred space.⁵ This context permits us to talk about the concept of a museology of the intangible. This museology deals with the challenges of presenting, interpreting and transmitting ICH through a discourse shaped by tangible mediums in an exhibition context.

The present paper focuses on literary heritage, which has its origins in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when attention to the territory and landscape linked to literary authors increased.⁶ This is the case, for instance, with Shakespeare's New Place, which was already a tourist attraction during the eighteenth century and may be one of the first victims of "tourismphobia", in this case by its owner, the clergyman Francis Gastrell, who was so irritated by the tourists wanting to see it that he decided to demolish the entire house and its garden, along with all the trees that inspired the author. The original house was never rebuilt and only the foundations remain. The people of Stratford-upon-Avon, the town where Shakespeare spent his final years, were horrified and Gastrell became so unpopular he eventually had to move out of the town. Over the centuries, the will to give heritage status to literature through monuments, house museums, plaques and cultural activities such as routes has gradually grown. Likewise, literary tourism, understood as the act of visiting places related to literary depictions or linked with literary figures,⁷ became an increasingly popular trend.

In this context, museums are considered a privileged platform to transmit literary heritage because, on the one hand, one of their main goals is to build an educative discourse to transmit a message, while on the other hand, they have an active role in safekeeping and improving awareness of the meanings and intangible dimensions of heritage.⁸ In this way, literary house museums are not only built to create an atmosphere but also to generate a didactic discourse

³ UNESCO (2005). *Convention on the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions*. Paris: UNESCO. Accessed 16 January 2019, <https://en.unesco.org/creativity/sites/creativity/files/passeport-convention2005-web2.pdf>.

⁴ VALENTIN, Emanuel. Intangible Search, Searching the Intangible: The Project E.C.H.I. and the Inventarisation of Intangible Cultural Heritage. In: *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 2 (8), 2013, p. 113–120.

⁵ ALIVIZATOU, Marilena. *Intangible Heritage and the Museum: New Perspectives on Cultural Preservation*. New York: Routledge 2016.

⁶ BALEIRO, Rita, QUINTEIRO, Silvia. *Key concepts in literature and tourism studies*. Lisboa: Universidade de Lisboa, 2018.

⁷ SQUIRE, Shelagh. J. Literary tourism and sustainable tourism: Promoting "Anne of Green Gables" in Prince Edward Island. In: *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 4 (3), 1996, p. 119–134.

⁸ CARVALHO, Ana. *Intangible Heritage and Museums: New and Old Challenges?* Published in: CIDOC Icom International Committee for Documentation, 2017. CIDOC Blog. Accessed 5 January 2019, <http://network.icom.museum/cidoc/blog/ana-carvalho/L/11/>

that explains their particular heritage and accomplish their pedagogic function.⁹

Thus, to enable this dialogue between both objectives of the exhibition, the museology of literary house museums is a central issue on which to reflect. The intangibility of literature also places this research in the context of the discussion mentioned above on the challenges and best practices for transmitting ICH in museums.

In this vein, the present paper aims to explore which are the main issues to take into account when valorising intangible literary heritage in museums, where literary heritage is considered as a form of ICH.

Defining the framework: literary heritage and literary house museums

Heritage is a social process, and the process through which it is built is dependent on the society.¹⁰ The never-ending discussion about dominant values is constantly redefining the heritage of a specific society in a particular historical time.¹¹ This is the reason why heritage is a contested area, since it may strengthen cultural identities, but also lead to social and cultural conflicts.¹² This complexity also exists when considering the concept of literary heritage. In this sense, the process of building literary heritage must consider which authors deserve to be heritagized and why. This process is not always uncontroversial, and it raises issues about collective identity and values.

In the same way, the question of what constitutes literary heritage is also a complex subject. Considering its formation process, literary heritage could be understood as a literary canon, that is, a list of literary works that a particular society considers its own legacy.

Nevertheless, the intangible turn on heritage studies explicitly enables us to conceive literature as a cultural expression that influences our gaze on landscape and places. Thus, the impact caused by literature in the collective imaginary is such that it can leave an imprint on the landscape. Besides, some particular objects or places act as mediums that bring us closer to narrative accounts and literary geniuses. This way, literary heritage is not only a list of canonical or venerable literary authors, but also the influence of literature in the cultural landscape.¹³

According to this context, literary heritage transcends a mere list of literary works; following Uccella's definition,¹⁴ it materializes the intangible aspects of literary works, that is, their values and ideas, through tangible elements related to the author such as their homes, landscapes (imagined or biographical), libraries, everyday objects, books and so on. Therefore, literary heritage may evoke feelings, ideas and emotions which are generated by literary works, by recalling the world vision transmitted by them. In this sense, literary heritage may be an empirical entrance to the cultural richness of books.

From this perspective, tangible elements of literary heritage are mediums for accessing and comprehending literature. However, disclosing their meanings requires heritage interpretation, since the link between tangible and intangible can remain unperceived for non-specialist people.

Given the importance of authors in literature, literary house museums are privileged places in which to access to the atmosphere of the creative genius and near the environment where

⁹ TORRES GONZÁLEZ, Begoña. Introducción. In: *Casas museo: museología y gestión*. Madrid: Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte, 2013, p. 7–10.

¹⁰ MUNMANY, Mireia. *La gestión del patrimonio literari*. Tarragona: Universitat Rovira i Virgili, 2017.

¹¹ PRATS, Llorenç. El concepto de patrimonio cultural. In: *Cuadernos de Antropología Social*, 11, 2000, p. 115–136.

¹² SILVERMAN, Helaine, RUGGLES, D. Fairchild. *Cultural Heritage and Human Rights*. New York: Springer, 2007.

¹³ DONAIRE, José Antonio. *Turisme cultural: entre l'experiència i el ritual*. Bellcaire d'Empordà: Vitel·la, 2008.

¹⁴ UCCELLA, Francesca. *Manual de patrimonio literario*. Gijón: Trea, 2013.

the writer found inspiration for their tales. As Munmany states,¹⁵ this connection with the private life of a public literary personality is the main trait of literary house museums.

Thus, literary house museum exhibitions are usually in former private spaces and intended to create an original aura. Nevertheless, as the ICOM definition of the museum states, museums should not just be a place for the enjoyment of experts: they must also become educative spaces that communicate heritage to non-experts. This becomes a challenge in the literary house museum context that the curators of exhibitions must address. Such museums usually hold a collection of objects that belong to the author. These objects have an emotional impact on visitors, who have an emotive experience visiting the intimate atmosphere where their favourite author lived.¹⁶ But visitors who are not particularly familiar with the author need something more to have a meaningful experience. In this sense, museums need to build a message with these tangible elements. The building of this message becomes a central point in the exhibition context.¹⁷ Thus, literary house museums should enhance and make visible literary heritage by negotiating between providing an emotional and educative experience.

This way, the exhibition of a house museum is a challenging test bench for museography and different museological approaches, given the multiplicity of features that each house museum presents, as Pavoni shows in her work.¹⁸ The objects of house museums are closely interrelated, creating a scene or a context.¹⁹ This context links the tangible elements with the intangible values bonded to the house and its former inhabitants. Therefore, the exhibition is a dialectic space that struggles to transmit intangible aspects of the authors and their work through the objects placed there. That is why literary house museums demonstrate that the split between tangible and intangible cultural heritage is a mere theoretical construct.

Methodology

Intending to identify the present challenges for museography in literary house museums, we carried out qualitative research in two phases. In the first phase, we conducted interviews with literary heritage specialists. This way, we identified the main topics that literary house museums must address in their museography. In the second phase, we analysed whether the identified issues are present in the websites of renowned literary house museums. In this way, this second part of our research aimed to analyse how these topics are currently tackled in the main literary heritage centres.

The research instrument of the first phase was a semi-structured interview of 16 questions, with the objective of collecting the experts' thoughts on literary heritage, its musealization, and its management. The sample selected was subjective and based on the experience of the researchers in this area and their geographical accessibility. The data was analysed to identify: points of agreements and divergence, the challenges of literary heritage management and its musealization.

¹⁵ MUNMANY, Mireia. *La gestió del patrimoni literari*. Tarragona: Universitat Rovira i Virgili, 2017.

¹⁶ PAVONI, Rosanna. Towards a definition and typology of historic house museums. In: *Museum International*, 53 (2), 2003, p. 16–21.

¹⁷ SOLA, Tomislav. *Concepto y naturaleza de la museología*. In: *Museum*, 153, 1987, p. 45–49.

¹⁸ PAVONI, Rosanna. Towards a definition and typology of historic house museums. In: *Museum International*, 53 (2), 2003, p. 16–21.

¹⁹ PÉREZ MATEO, Soledad. *Las casas museo en España: análisis de una tipología museística singular*. PhD Thesis, Murcia: Universidad de Murcia, 2016. Accessed 5 January 2019, <https://www.tdx.cat/handle/10803/365304>.

The interviewed experts were as follows:

- Experts in literary heritage:
 - Mireia Munmany, Project Manager of the Catalan Literary Heritage Network “Espais Escrits” and author of the doctoral dissertation “Gestió del patrimoni literari català femení. Conceptualització i proposta d’anàlisi” [Female Catalan literary heritage management. Conceptualization and proposal of analysis].²⁰
 - Francesca Uccella, academic expert in Italian and Catalan literary heritage, author of “*Manual de patrimoni literario* [Manual of Literary Heritage].²¹
- Presidents of literary heritage networks:
 - Galina Alexeeva, President of ICOM International Committee for Literary Museums and Head of the Academic Research Department of Gosudarstvenniy Muzei Leo N. Tolstogo “Yasnaya Polyana” [The Leo Tolstoy Museum-Estate “Yasnaya Polyana”].
 - Anna Aguiló, President of “Espais Escrits”, Catalan Literary Heritage Network, and Director of the Josep Pla Foundation.
- Museographers with experience on literary heritage exhibitions:
 - Mónica Martínez Bajo, exhibition technician at Vil·la Joana, literary museum of Jacint Verdaguer.
- Guides of literary museums:
 - Oriol Izquierdo, former president of Institute of Catalan Letters and guide at Jacint Verdaguer’s literary museum Vil·la Joana.
 - Anna Moré, guide at Jacint Verdaguer’s house museum in Folgueroles

For the second phase, we took into account the four issues identified in the interviews’ analysis, namely: the creation of literary attractions; the role of human mediation; the use of tangible and original elements in museography; and the presence of the landscape in the museum’s discourse. Using this list of topics as an instrument of analysis, we examined the websites of the following three literary house museums: Shakespeare’s Birthplace, Goethe National Museum, and Maisons Victor Hugo. With this case study approach, we studied the discourse of these heritage centres on the inspected elements. The analysis of the presence of these elements in the websites of writers’ homes is interesting for two reasons. First, it allows us to verify whether these aspects are taken into account in the discourse of three reference institutions. Second, it is relevant because the first contact visitors have with these centres is often via internet. Thus, the discourse in the literary home website can define whether visitors will consider this place appealing, and also shape their expectations about the visit.

The selected sample was based on the importance of the chosen figures in the European literary context, the existence of a consolidated literary museum, and that museum’s presence on the internet. Through these three cases, we aimed to carry out a first approach to describing the museographical treatment of three key figures from European literature in three different countries.

²⁰ MUNMANY, Mireia. *La gestió del patrimoni literari*. Tarragona: Universitat Rovira i Virgili, 2017.

²¹ UCCELLA, Francesca. *Manual de patrimoni literario*. Gijón: Trea, 2013.

The complexity of literary heritage and the creation of literary tourism attractions

As mentioned, the complexity of literary heritage is based on its role as a link between tangible and intangible elements. In the centre of literary heritage is the search for ideas, knowledge, traditions and other conceptions that make us think, teach us and tell us histories. The intangible realm of the author's ideas and words becomes tangible through the book's pages. After this first materialization, literary heritage broadens itself. In this way, papers, pens, tables, houses, yards, landscapes, cities and so on become part of literary heritage in the sense that they are part of the author's biography or source of inspiration.

Literary heritage management should keep in mind this duality of both the intangibility (which, according to Uccella, consists of all those conceptions provided by the literary work, i.e. those ideas, emotions and feelings, intuitions awoken by the reading) and the tangible side of literary heritage. Here we find the library and manuscripts of the author placed first, and then their personal objects and places. The configuration of this tangible universe depends on the work of institutions, which give value to handwritings, archives, libraries, objects and properties. This heritagizing work has the aim of facilitating understanding of the author's ideas.

The tangible and intangible dimensions of literary heritage complement each other and build a literary image of an author or a territory. Its promotion, according to Munmany and Alexeeva, depends on cultural tourism and promotion policies. Izquierdo and Aguiló declare that literary tourism is still to develop, since the conception of literary heritage is new for the community. There is a lack of promotion and a lack of true specialists. In this context, the main aim for most literary organizations is that literary tourism professionals are familiarized with literary works to promote literary heritage attractions more consistently, according to Aguiló. This can also help to address the challenge of extending the target audience for the writer's homes beyond school tourism, which is the main audience in Catalan centres of this type.

Uccella highlights the work "Espais Escrits", the Catalan Literary Heritage network, in promoting authors. In comparison with Italian networks, the Catalan one guarantees the promotion of canonical authors, while the Italian examples base their strategy on commercial projects. This is the case of the literary tourism agency "Feltrinelli Viaggi", which is an interesting project, but its relation with literary heritage becomes problematic given its primarily commercial character, in that it only creates products for recent authors and bestsellers, in pursuit of greater economic benefits.

The relationship of writers' homes with tourism companies may also be unstable, as Alexeeva explains. In the Russian context, there were, until last year, various contracts between literary museums and the Railways Company of Russia to provide transport for tourists who visited certain places associated with the works of Tolstoy, Chekhov or Pushkin. However, all these collaborations expired, and the literary institutions today must seek new sponsors and collaborators. This is an excellent example of the need to improve and facilitate collaboration between literary heritage organizations and the public administration in charge of cultural and literary tourism policies. In this sense, the need to share best practice on how to build a closer relationship between tourism and literary centres is urgent.

The last big challenge for literary heritage is how to attract visitors in a global tourism context. There is a barrier between visitors and literary heritage in the sense that many tourists do not want to visit a literary museum because they do not have any prior knowledge about the author or their books. If the tourist is not aware of a particular place, it does not exist in

their image of the destination and, therefore, cannot be a tourist attraction. Thus, to our survey question on whether it is possible to visit a literary museum without any prior knowledge about the author, there was agreement among respondents that stimulating and encouraging the reading of the featured author can be considered as one of the main objectives of literary house museums. In this sense, these places must give basic biographical information and aim to turn visitors into readers. Uccella highlighted the example of Orhan Pamuk's museum that was created to stimulate the reading of his novel *The Museum of Innocence*. However, Munmany affirms that not all literary museums are prepared for accomplishing this goal. Martinez and Izquierdo explained that the literary museum of Jacint Verdaguer, "Vil·la Joana", in Barcelona is an excellent example of how a literary museum can be useful to inspire new readers. In their opinion, its exhibition can be attractive for different types of visitors because it integrates different discourses: literature from a general perspective, literature, and the city of Barcelona, history, architecture and so on. This way, the exhibition is not only focused on Verdaguer and his books. This concept of creating a space that communicates not only biographical information, but also other topics broadens the museum's offering and may be interesting for visitors who are not familiar with the figure of the Catalan poet before their visit.

The essential role of human mediation in literary house museums

There was agreement between all specialists that guided tours are the best way to visit a literary house museum, because the guide discloses elements that help visitors to get inside the intangible world of the author. Uccella underlines the importance of undertaking the first visit with a guide, since it gives an initial account from to understand the content and message of the museum. According to Munmany and Moré, guides create a particular atmosphere, as well as give trustworthy explanations about the authors and their work.

Alexeeva also highlights that guides can adapt their explanations to visitors' background. This addresses one of the main difficulties of literary heritage: that is, explaining it to visitors with no prior knowledge of the author and their work.

Aguiló also mentions that, besides guided tours, writer's homes also carry out many cultural activities such as workshops, seminars and roundtables which expand the opportunities for visitors to learn about literature beyond the exhibitions. The role of specialists in these activities is also crucial, since their participation enhances understanding of author's masterpieces. For instance, "Literary vermouth. Josep Pla a la Fonda Estrella" is an activity at Josep Pla's house museum in Calella de Palafrugell, Catalonia. Non-specialist participants analyse texts by the Catalan author together with specialists, discovering Pla's literary world while discovering gastronomical specialties of the region and enjoying the Costa Brava landscape.

Thus, human mediation is essential when dealing with intangible literary heritage, and guides provide the necessary tools to enable visitors' transformation into heritage interpreters. Guides are the ones who promote a dialogue between the tangible and intangible nature of literary heritage, using objects and spaces as the starting point to transmit authors' biographies, the main ideas of masterpieces, historical context, and social relationships. Objects and spaces are the guiding thread that binds the tangible and intangible aspects of literary heritage.

The tangible side of literary heritage

The intangible aspects of literary heritage are its *raison d'être*, but given their immaterial nature, they are fragile and their conservation and communication is challenging. The visible side

of literary heritage – that is, objects and spaces – can assist in the preservation and interpretation of literary heritage. For this reason, tangible objects are indispensable in literary museums, since they are the base for constituting a discourse to present the intangible aspects of literary heritage.

According to the specialists, this is the reason why many centres choose to build their exhibitions in the framework of traditional museography that consists of presenting author's tangible legacy, their personal objects, houses, books and so on in their original state with some minor adaptations to museography's plan.



Figure 1: *Presentation of Verdagner's parents' room in the house museum of Verdagner in Folgueroles, using traditional museography and personal objects of the writer's family*

In traditional museography, spaces could be original or recreated according to the author's or their family's memoirs. The main reason to present the author's house museum in a way that preserves its material spaces and gives priority to the conservation or the material preservation of the container – that is, the house and its objects – is to show the private spaces that belonged to the author and illustrate the cultural and social features of the author's historical moment, preserving a sense of intimacy.

Even so, some exhibitions of writer's homes are also influenced by other museographic lines of thought. This is the case with the house museum of Verdagner in Folgueroles and Foundation Josep Pla in Calella de Palafrugell, where the visitor can find elements related to didactic museography such as teaching boxes. In Foundation Josep Pla and Vil·la Joana we also find interactive modules and touching panels inspired by interactive museography. In Vil·la Joana, for instance, we find a module where visitors can use their senses beyond vision – that is, hearing and touch – to experience literature. In this way, the museography enables original experiences and interaction between the visitors and the exhibition.



Figure 2: *“Touch the paper” – a module of the exhibition at Vil·la Joana where visitors can touch different types of paper and recreate this sensation when they touch the book’s pages*

The use of technology is, nevertheless, not shared by all literary museums. There are some positive practices in Catalonia, but the majority of Russian and Spanish literary museums still present traditional museography. The main reason for this, according to Izquierdo, is that these institutions focus on safeguarding the author’s heritage. Furthermore, in a context where there is a lack of resources, support and collaboration from government administrations, which do not usually invest in reforming literary heritage centres, most of these institutions avoid risky approaches in conceiving their exhibitions.

The setting of writer’s homes: the landscape and literary heritage

Literary and local heritage are often closely related, since the landscape is a source of inspiration source for many literary authors. Here, the concept of landscape is not only used to allude to nature but also to urban and cultural landscapes: for example, the Saint Petersburg of Dostoevsky or the Dublin of James Joyce.

Considering this relationship between literature and the territory, the grounds of literary house museums are often inspiring as places where literary authors spent their days and found inspiration for their works. Furthermore, literary house museums may also be linked to the cultural landscape of a territory, since literary heritage presents a particular view of local heritage: costumes, traditions, holidays, thinking, religion and so on. The book is a perfect way to meet a territory and its traditions. Verdaguer’s poetry helps us to discover Catalan identity; Sholokhov’s novels lead us to explore Cossack culture; Cervantes’s books open to us the Spanish soul. The book conveys author’s viewpoint and personal experience framed by a particular culture and its intangible meanings.

In this sense, the landscape is a tool to interpret the literary heritage and foster its comprehension, according to Aguiló. This is why literary routes are the best way to discover a connec-

tion that exists between literary heritage and landscape. For instance, Moré explains that the surroundings of Folgueroles, where the Catalan poet Verdaguer was born, helps people not only to understand the significance of Verdaguer's poetry, but also to discover Catalan country culture. In fact, this entire village breathes with the poet's name.

In the Russian context, museologists are well aware of this importance of landscape in literary heritage preservation. In this sense, there is a policy of literary landscape protection in Russia. Many literary house museums in Russia preserve and promote the connection that exists between nature and literature with the help of the government administration. For example, one of the most famous museums is Yasnaya Polyana, House Museum of Leo Tolstoy, where the writer's houses and lands are situated. The landscapes around Yasnaya Polyana appear in the letters and diaries of Leo Tolstoy and his family and friends. The Sholokhov State Museum Preserve is another excellent example of protecting the literary, local and natural heritage. In this case, the relationship between literature and nature is extended to the preservation of traditional regional crafts.

The landscape and literature are interrelated, landscapes blend into literature, and this fusion helps to promote different places and turn them into cultural tourism attractions. Notwithstanding, it is crucial to balance the following objectives: to offer a singular experience of the place to visitors, to promote the reading of the author's masterpieces, and awake the need to share the place and come back with family and friends. To accomplish these objectives, it is necessary to find support and synergies to identify strategies and best practices that facilitate the fulfilment of the objectives of a literary house museum; that is, to preserve and share, by creating emotional and didactic experiences, the literary heritage of the writer.

How do writer's homes address these aspects in their discourse?

As mentioned in the methodology section, we will assess how the identified aspects are present in the websites of three literary house museums.

Shakespeare's birthplace

The website of Shakespeare's birthplace is in the frame of Shakespeare's Birthplace Trust. At the writing of this paper, the other four Shakespeare homes and gardens are still closed because of the Coronavirus outbreak. For this reason, most of the information on the Trust's website is focused on the only heritage centre still open: Shakespeare's birthplace.

When accessing the website, the first information one finds is an image of the façade of the building and a brief description of the relationship between the building and the intangible elements it may recall: Shakespeare's childhood and family tales, as well as Shakespeare's influence in our culture. This influence is exhibited through rare objects which are symbols of how deeply Shakespeare is rooted in our culture. In this sense, the management of Shakespeare's birthplace understands the use of objects as a way to make visible the intangible essence of literary heritage. To ease the exhibition's comprehension, the website also includes a list of five must-see items with a brief explanation that links each item with Shakespeare's life. In this way, the exhibition, even when based on original objects, tries to make explicit the link between tangible and intangible heritage. This strategy could be related to the museology of the object, because by underlining material elements of the exposition, a discourse on Shakespeare's biography or ideas can be developed.

In relation to human mediation, the website states that group visits are cancelled until November 2020 due to measures against Coronavirus. Nevertheless, the website offers numerous educational resources that can assist in constructing a previous background before the visit. In this sense, we find resources adapted to different educational levels and ages, basic information about elemental concepts on Shakespeare's life and context, podcasts, MOOCs, audiovisual resources, documents addressed to scholars and specialists, and more. In this sense, this writer's home responds to the educational mission of museums and, beyond human mediation, expands its offer to other educational strategies and mediums. Taking into account the literary tourism context, it is interesting to highlight that Shakespeare's birthplace offers sessions developed for non-native English learners. In this sense, a group of students from beyond the UK world can visit the place and enrich their visit through human mediation in a session specially adapted for them.

Although at the time of writing the other four houses of the Shakespeare's Birthplace Trust were closed, the group of heritage centres offers various perspectives on Shakespeare's literary heritage and shows that Shakespeare's legacy not only remains alive inside his birthplace, but also in the town itself. The literary landscape takes an essential role here, transforming Stratford-upon-Avon into a current literary destination. One example that illustrates this is the "Walk the 'Anne Hathaway'" activity which suggests visitors go by foot from Shakespeare's birthplace to Anne Hathaway's Cottage, passing by other centres of the Trust and visiting Stratford. This way, the town itself becomes part of the visiting experience.

To conclude, the topics identified through the interviews have a strong presence on the Shakespeare's Birthplace website, since there the visitor can expect to have an educative visit which goes beyond the exhibition itself and integrates with some of the surroundings. Significant efforts are made on the website to provide information and resources to ease the comprehension and enjoyment of the exhibition.

Goethe National Museum

Goethe National Museum belongs to Klassik Stiftung Weimar, which manages more than 20 other historical sites related to German culture. The website has a German and an English version, providing information to visitors from non-German speaking countries. The principal information is divided into three sections: the Goethe Residence, Goethe's collections, and the Building timeline. The first one offers a brief description of Goethe's relationship with the house, highlights the presence of original objects in the exhibition spaces and displays images of the most important rooms of the house. This first section also explains the importance of the residence's gardens, explaining their relationship with Goethe's botanical studies. Here again, the surroundings of the building, beyond the house walls, are remarkable and related to the intangible essence of the literary figure.

In the second section, Goethe's collections, the project of the German writer to compile and classify artworks and specimens during his life is presented. The website explains the intellectual objective of his collections, and showcases some of these original items that visitors will see in the exhibition. Finally, the third main section shows a timeline with information about the construction and reformations of the building. Thus, the three main sections of the website underline the importance of the original places and objects that the visitor will find in the exhibition. Here, it seems that visitors should expect an exhibition built around traditional museography standards, and that gives importance to the conservation of an original aura, although

objects are always related to some of the works or topics addressed by Goethe during his life.

However, the Goethe National Museum exhibition goes beyond these original spaces by including another permanent exhibition under the title “Flood of life – Storm of Deeds” which uses original objects as well as interactive and audiovisual resources to illustrate how central topics in Goethe’s works are still influencing our contemporary society.

In the same way as Shakespeare’s Birthplace, the Goethe National Museum website offers various resources to prepare for a visit or to delve into Goethe’s legacy in an educative context. Visitors to the house can avail themselves of an audio guide to enhance their autonomous exploration of the exhibition. Nevertheless, human mediation has an important presence on the website, where visitors can book group tours for the various heritage centres that belong to Klassik Stiftung Weimar. In the case of Goethe’s House, we find a daily tour to the permanent exhibition “Flood of life – Storm of Deeds”. In this sense, in Goethe’s National Museum we find similar strategies that also take into account the highlighted issues and topics identified through the interviews.

Maisons Victor Hugo

Maisons Victor Hugo manages two properties related to the French writer: the apartment he rented in Paris from 1832 to 1848 and his house in Guernsey. The rooms of both places are described on the website. The webpage is translated into English and Spanish, making it easier for international visitors to access the museums.

The Paris property presents a biographic discourse, in that its rooms illustrate three different periods of Hugo’s life through original objects and furniture. The first rooms show the atmosphere in which Hugo grew up and became a figure of Romantic Movement; the following rooms are focused on his exile, and the last ones explain his return from exile and recognition as an important figure. The exhibition uses mainly original and recreated objects to offer the visitor a journey through the temporal context in which Hugo lived. Similarly, the exhibition of the House in Guernsey has been designed following this museographic conception. In Guernsey, however, the landscape plays a more prominent role, since the garden and views are part of the immersive and symbolic atmosphere offered to visitors.

In relation to human mediation, at the time of investigation, options were limited due to COVID-19. Nevertheless, the website offered information about guided tours for adult and youth visitors, as well as for other kinds of groups. At the time, this information was only available in the French version of the website; visiting international tourists are limited to the use of mediated resources (such as the audio guide) to enhance their experience, while human mediation, a key aspect identified in the first phase of our research, is only offered to French-speaking visitors.

Considering the content of the guided visits, the Paris museum offers both thematic visits inside the house and guided tours that combine a visit to the writer’s home with a guided tour in Paris. In this way, the urban landscape becomes an important symbolic element to be interpreted in comprehending the author’s literary heritage. Thus, human mediation is the element that introduces the landscape into the narrative account of Hugo’s apartment in Paris. In this sense, this example shows that there is no unique strategy: rather the features and characteristics of the place have to be taken into account when designing the best strategies to foster a seductive didactic visitor experience.

Conclusions: new strategies to manage literary heritage

The present research has analysed which are the key elements to take into account when valourising and communicating literary heritage in a museum context. To identify these elements, we gathered the opinions of experienced professionals on literary heritage management from Catalonia and Russia.

Their opinions allowed us to approach literary heritage management in many ways. For instance, they gave a particular definition of literary heritage in which intangibility is its essence. However, particular material objects such as books, buildings and objects play a significant role in understanding the intangible literary heritage and help us towards its interpretation. Thus, when designing such exhibition spaces, this complex system of literary heritage and the dialectic between tangibility and intangibility it embodies should be taken into account to transmit the symbolic and intangible content hidden behind the exhibited objects.

Human mediation has been identified as an essential tool for assisting visitors in interpreting the exhibition. Nevertheless, human mediation is not always logistically possible, and some visitors may prefer to make an autonomous visit. In this sense, museography should also be applied to help audiences comprehend the exhibition. Most of the literary heritage centres use panels, pictures, writings, original objects and other static elements in their exhibitions. This kind of traditional museography is useful when the tangible object is the protagonist of the exhibition, but in literary house museums this museographic approach is not always capable of expressing the intangible aspects of the museum's focus. This is especially relevant when addressing the exhibition to non-specialist visitors.

The inclusions of new technologies and interactive elements in the exhibition could be an alternative to human mediation, since, used correctly, they can broaden the literary house museum's account of its subject and, in this way, open the collection to non-specialist people and permit autonomous visits.

In this process, the close relationship between literary heritage, local heritage and cultural landscapes is essential. Many literary house museums preserve local heritage and the landscapes that surround them. The inclusion of this content in the exhibition and activities presented at the writer's home could be a way to attract new visitors. Beyond this, the experts surveyed for this study also identified a number of other urgent issues to be tackled by literary heritage managers, including the lack of promotion of literary heritage and the need to generate synergy between government administration and private companies.

The responses to the interviews were used as a basis from which to inspect the websites of three renowned heritage centres: Shakespeare's Birthplace, Goethe National Museum, and Maisons Victor Hugo. The objective of this second phase was to check whether the elements identified in interviews have a role in the presentation of these museum to potential visitors. Analysis of these websites confirmed that all three international examples address these topics in the design of their museography and mediation resources. In the same way, this research shows that each museum adapts and interprets these elements according to its own particular context.

In conclusion, the communication of literary heritage in literary house museums can be enhanced in many ways, and the three present examples could be used as role models, since, as we have seen, they foster all the key elements identified. In this process, museography plays a vital role, and there is a need to reflect on museographic approaches that allow the preservation of original spaces and, at the same time, construct new ways to engage in dialogue with visitors of

varying cultural backgrounds. Didactic museography and the use of new technologies are particularly relevant museographic approaches that must be taken into account by literary heritage centres. In this sense, future lines of research may be based on analysing good museographic practices and identifying how visitors perceive the use of these museographic approaches in their visit experience.

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