COLLECTION OF RESEARCH REPORTS

The case of ethnological research collection

Collection of research reports (CRR) was systematically built by experts in ethnology at IESA SAS since 1946. It contains over 1.500 documents recorded in the ethnological field research (a total of 120.000 items). CRR comprehensively covers traditional cultural heritage throughout Slovakia. Documents contain mixed formats such as texts (handwriting/typewriting), photos, drawings, music sheets and textile fabrics. CRR is currently in a state of analog-to-digital conversion.

Thematic research collection is an unique collection of primary sources and other materials gathered by scholars to support research on a theme. The aim of the poster is to illustrate the application of two principles of thematic research collection (contextual mass, scholarly contribution) in the ongoing process of digital curation of CRR. It highlights the specificity of research collection (compared to collection as such) and exemplifies the principles on the strategy of digital curation of CRR.

AUTHORS

Andrej Gogora, PhD. <andrej_gogora@savba.sk>
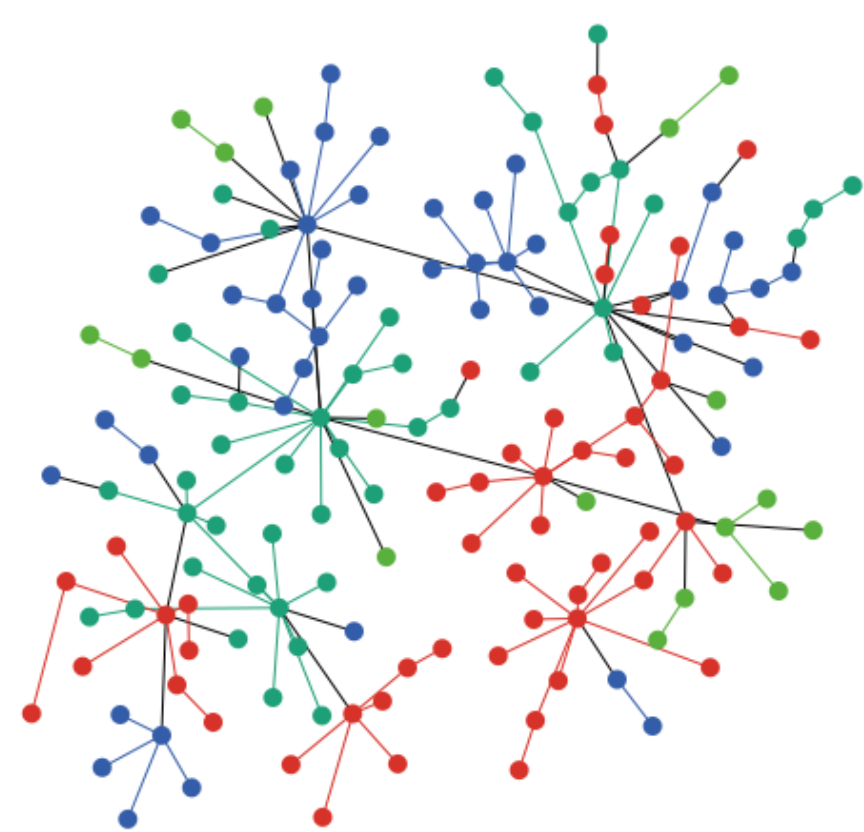Tomáš Kubisa, PhD. <tomas.kubisa@savba.sk>

AFFILIATION

Institute of Ethnology and Social Anthropology (IESA SAS)
Slovak Academy of Sciences
Bratislava, Slovakia
https://uesa.sav.sk/en/

Institute of Ethnology and Social Anthropology
Slovak Academy of Sciences

---

01 CONTEXTUAL MASS

The principle of contextual mass means a researcher's involvement in the creation of the collection through qualified selection of content and research-meaningful management. The purpose is to curate a research collection saturated with rich contextual information – a balance between thematic focus coherence and high density of heterogeneous interconnection to support the research use.

"Collections built on a contextual mass model create a system of interrelated sources where different types of materials and different subjects work together to support deep and multifaceted inquiry in an area of research." (Palmer, 2004)

The original analog CRR had the characteristics of a critical mass because, as a whole, it was thematically heterogeneous (it extensively tried to cover all possible categories of folk culture), and the internal contextuality of such a mass was diluted (new acquisitions were added to the fund mechanically and with low level of metadata granularity).

Several thematic collections were extracted from CRR and carefully curated by teams of researchers. For instance, *The Collection of Frank Wollman* are aggregation of folk tales that has a low thematic and high interconnection density (collected by students from 1928 to 1947, comprises of 119 documents – 8.852 text pages). Through curatorial extra teamwork, the additional layers of research-rich data were purposefully added that strengthened the coherence and increased the structural connections, thus the research potential.

Critical mass
- heterogeneous in content
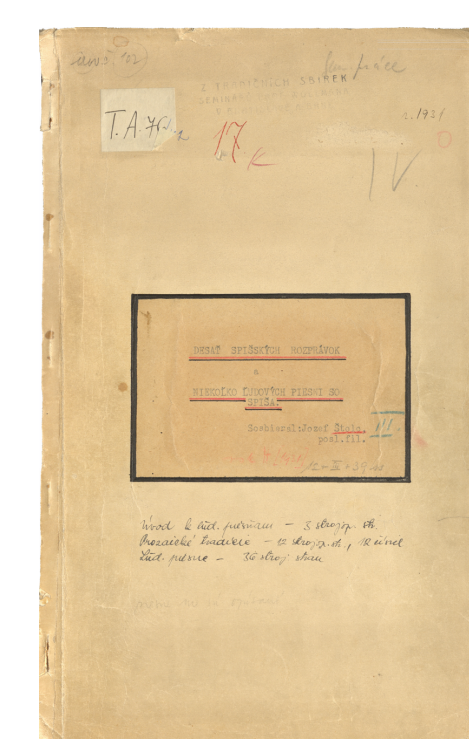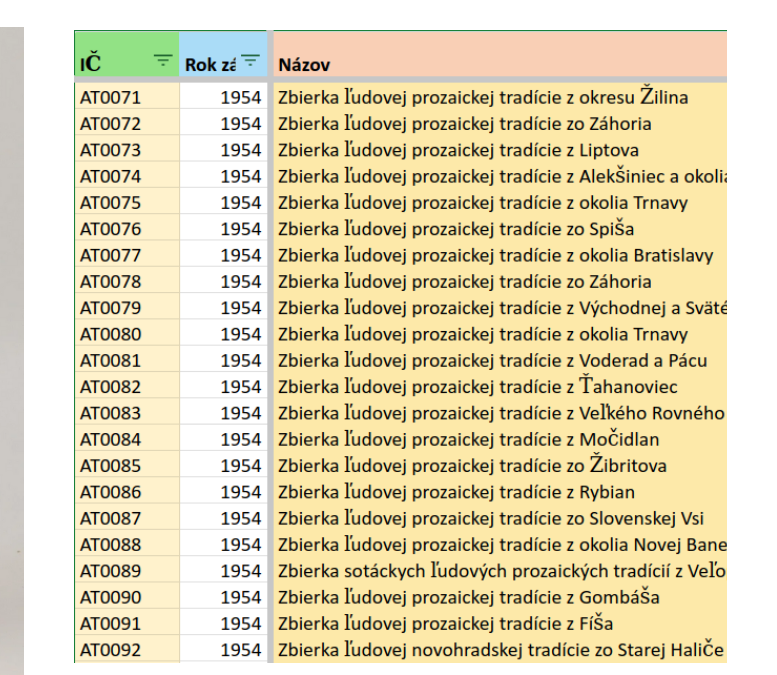- dispersed in context
- e.g. large-scale digital libraries
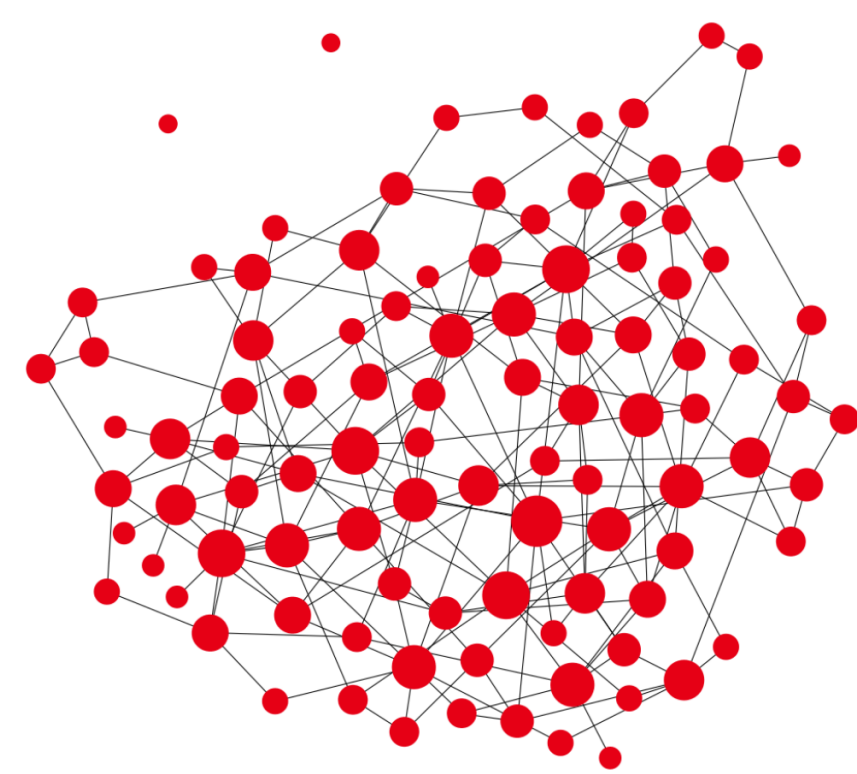
Contextual mass
- thematically specific and coherent
- high degree of connectedness
- e.g. personal thematic collections

Original document of folk tales

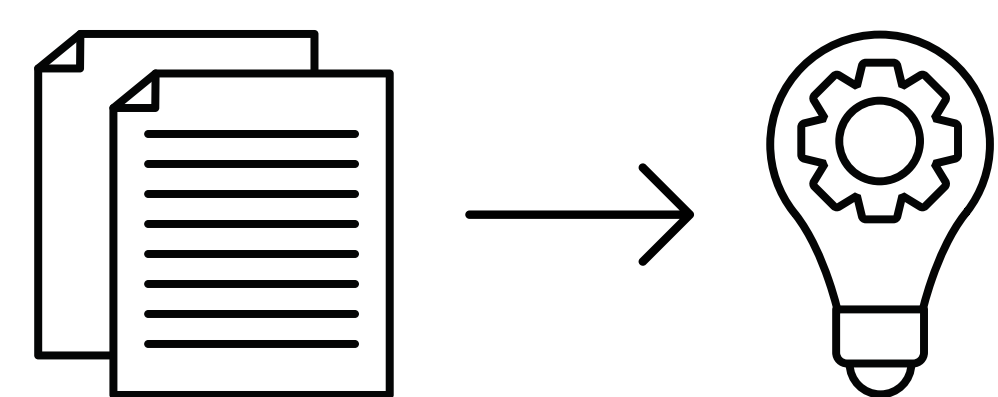Ethnological researchers expertise, selection, thematic/locality index and commentaries

Published volumes: Slovak folk tales 1-3

Secondary materials (articles, monographs), related CRR documents

---

02 SCHOLARLY CONTRIBUTION

The scholarly contribution principle states that the main criterion of thematic research collections is whether they generate added value for the given scientific field during their creation and use. It is a dynamic model in which there are responsive and feedback relationships between research collection and the research itself. In terms of authorship, a thematic research collection can rarely be attributed to one or a few co-authors; and the traditional concept of the author is replaced with the term "creator" as a hybrid digital scholar.

In addition to CRR core service (documentation and infrastructural support), the reciprocal model is realized in the cyclic process of creation-use-creation of collection research reports. It is precisely the added value of the scholarly contribution that CRR and the participating actors/factors bring to the ethnological research environment. CRR lifecycle curation-research environment:

Supportive function
Standard digital resource that simply facilitates or speeds up the scientific work.
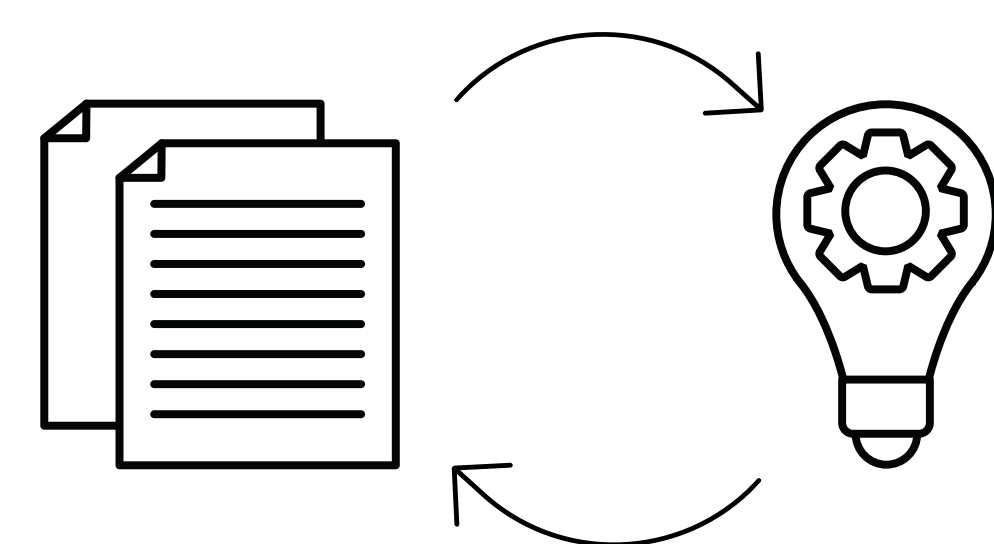
Generative function
Specific function by which a digital resource as a complex environment productively participates in scholarship.

Research project

Users (researchers, academic, public)

Research questions, hypothesis, articles

Researcher participation

Ethnological thematic research collections

Digital humanist

Digital curator

Field research

Online repository system

Raw data, metadata

Standardized research report

Archival storage

RELATED LITERATURE

- Fenlon, K. (2017). Toward a characterization of digital humanities research collections: A contrastive analysis of technical designs. Proceedings of the Association for Information Science and Technology, 54(1), 82–92.
- Palmer, C. L. (2004). Thematic Research Collections. In S. Schreibman, R. Siemens, & J. Unsworth (Eds.), A Companion to Digital Humanities (pp. 348–365). Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Unsworth, J. (2000). Thematic Research Collections. MLA Annual Conference, Washington DC.