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Digitisation of Folklore Archives: A Crisis of Tradition or Its 'New Life' on the Internet? The Example of Adolf Dygacz's Collection

Abstract

The process of digitising archives, a universal trend in the last decade, also concerns music resources, thus offering new functionalities to their users. Its effects can facilitate researchers' work since digital material is readily available and easy to locate. The questions that remain open concern the status of oral history contained in those audio-visual documents, its value and durability, the current results and possible consequences of making these materials accessible on a mass scale, as well as the effectiveness of multidimensional grassroots initiatives, such as cooperation on building virtual collections of materials. What possibilities open up for the musical folklore archives that are currently being discovered? Can digitisation suddenly make them more valuable in the eyes of the society? In this paper, I attempt to diagnose the problem of musical archive digitisation on the

example of the ethnomusicological collection of Adolf Dygacz. I stress the importance of local history, which is a common subject in the humanities and has always been part of folklore studies but was not considered in the light of memory studies until very recently.

Keywords

music digitisation, ethnomusicology, musical folklore, Adolf Dygacz, memory studies

The process of digitising archives, a universal trend in the last decade, also concerns musical resources, thus offering new functionalities to their users. In the field of folklore studies, these advanced functions include searching for folksongs by their verbal text contents (the incipit or text fragment) and melodies (notated music), as in the case of the digital version of Oskar Kolberg's *Complete Works*.[1] They also include facilitated access to archive audio recordings of traditional music available in the so-called 'phonographic' repositories.[2] Such facilities make research more effective since the digitised material is readily available and easy to locate, which allows scholars to save time and improve their efficacy on a previously unattainable scale. However, as many scholars studying the mediatisation of culture have noted,[3] the currently 'fashionable' digitisation, involving 'a number of activities of diverse nature and varied scope',[4] 'much emphasised

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[1] For the English-language version of this database, available on the website of the Oskar Kolberg Institute, see: http://www.oskarkolberg.pl/en-US/MusicDb, accessed 3 Apr. 2021.

[2] Notable in this context is the multi-stage project 'Polish traditional music – the phonographic heritage. The current state of affairs, storage and accessibility', implemented by the Institute of Art of the Polish Academy of Sciences. More on work within this project in: J. Jackowski, H. Klekowicz, E. Grygier, eds, 'Documental recordings of Polish traditional music in the digital domain. Digitization and dedicated system of archiving, developing and making historical ethnophonographic resources available', *Digital Transformation Playbook*, https://crido.pl/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Documental-recordings-of-Polish-traditional-music-.pdf, accessed 3 Apr. 2021.

[3] Cf. K. Kopecka-Piech, 'Mediatyzacja w ruchu, czyli kształtowanie się medialnej mobilności', *Kultura i Historia*, 24 (2013), http://www.kulturaihistoria.umcs.lublin.pl/archives/5065, accessed 15 June 2020.

[4] M. Turska, 'Cyfrowe archiwa tradycji lokalnej', *Biblioteka*, 16 (25), 2012.

in expert literature',[5] nevertheless still leaves many questions open. These questions concern the status of oral history contained in those audio-visual documents, its value and durability, the current results and the possible consequences of making these materials accessible on a mass scale, of bringing to live the little private tales and recordings, as well as the effectiveness of multidimensional grassroots initiatives in the form of participatory processes[6] such as cooperation on building virtual archives. The latter process is now encouraged by dynamic societies and institutions, such as libraries, museums, and galleries. The vast amount of material submitted to this process both as part of institutional projects and as a result of grassroots digitisation means that some of it is 'frequently not free of errors',[7] unbrowsable, and, as Michael Frisch put it, 'closer than most people realize to that shoebox of unviewed home-video camcorder cassettes',[8] which, 'rarely organized, much less indexed in any depth' becomes useless, and 'the considerable potential of audio and video documents to support high-impact, vivid, thematic, and analytic engagement with meaningful issues, personalities, and contexts, is largely untapped'.[9] To avoid such situations, the process of efficiently collecting and managing excess data resulting from the ease of digital data recording ought to be supported by a number of good practices, such as correct cataloguing,

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[5]   Turska, 'Cyfrowe archiwa…', 307.

[6]   More on grassroots digitising initiatives in: A. Tarkowski, J. Hofmokl, M. Wilkowski, eds, 'Digitalizacja oddolna. Partycypacyjny wymiar procesu digitalizacji dziedzictwa', https://wilkowski.org/notka/94, accessed 8 Oct. 2020. The authors define 'grassroots digitisation as the involvement in the process of digitising the cultural heritage of persons and institutions from outside the group of bodies traditionally concerned with digitisation, such as libraries, archives, museums, as well as specialised commercial companies cooperating with the former. In the case of born-digital contents, grassroots digitisation entails ever wider democratisation of the process of co-creating culture,' which 'supplements the results of institutional projects through less formalised activities taking the form of a kind of social movement for the digitisation of culture.' This process can also be referred to as civic or participatory digitisation (a term derived from Henry Jenkins' concept of participatory culture).

[7]   Turska, 'Cyfrowe archiwa…', 308.

[8]   M. Frisch, 'Oral History and the Digital Revolution: Toward a Post-Documentary Sensibility', for publication in R. Perks and A. Thompson, eds., The Oral History Reader (2nd edn, London: Routledge, in press), https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.582.7124&rep=rep1&type=pdf, accessed 3 Apr. 2021.

[9]   Frisch, 'Oral History…', 1.

naming and 'tagging' principles applied to the digitised collections.[10] However, even these principles, apart from the technical aspect of streamlining research, come down to the question of virtual archives' effectiveness, functionality, and durability.

According to Paul Thompson, 'all history (in his text, this term also concerns the documentation of ancestral heritage through digitisation – note by AK) depends ultimately upon its social purpose,' which is in many cases 'obscure'. For this reason, collecting data may sometimes appear to be an unreflective 'pursuit of knowledge for its own sake.'[11] This statement may equally be applied to the process of digitisation, whose effects are frequently limited to placing the archive materials in (un)limited space without their further use or control over their social applications. This problem affects many areas of culture. In my paper I will limit myself to the issue of traditional music resources, whose digitisation has for many years been accompanied by methodological doubts and concerns about the future of the thus modernised archives. In the case of well-known collections, such as Kolberg's oeuvre,[12] this concern is of secondary importance, since (thanks, among others, to active promotion by the staff of Poznań's Oskar Kolberg Institute and the Museum of Oskar Kolberg in Przysucha) that scholar's role and achievements in the fields of ethnography and folklore studies are universally known and appreciated today. The case is rather different, however, with collections compiled by less-known folklorists, whose field recordings, though frequently mapping out major uncharted territories on the ethnomusicological map of cultural traditions, are

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[10] Frisch, 'Oral History…'.

[11] P. Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* (1988), 21. It is thanks to its social purpose, Thompson claims, that 'in the past [history] has been handed down by oral tradition and written chronicle, and why today professional historians are supported from public funds, children are taught history in schools, amateur history societies blossom, and popular history books rank among the strongest bestsellers.' However, '[t]here are academics who pursue fact-finding research on remote problems, avoiding any entanglement with wider interpretations or con-temporary issues, insisting only on the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake.' Thompson, *The Voice of the Past…*, 21.

[12] An interesting analysis of Oskar Kolberg's presence in, among others, social space, media, and diploma theses, has been presented by: Łukasz Smoluch, 'Oskar Kolberg (1814–1890). Dostępność dzieła, świadomość społeczna, obecność w przestrzeni publicznej i mediach', in W. Grozdew-Kołacińska, ed., *Raport o st-anie tradycyjnej kultury muzycznej* (2014), 12–39.

still waiting for their promoters. In their case, those involved are full of concerns about the future of small niche projects, including digitisation plans.

These concerns are related not only to the 'crisis of tradition and identity' diagnosed by ethnomusicologists, music life organisers, and representatives of social sciences, but also to the following, methodologically significant question: 'Is traditional music losing its inherent value, transformed under the powerful impact of breath-taking technological progress?'[13]

What are the future chances of the currently discovered folk music archives which, despite their historical value, may prove quite irrelevant in confrontation with tendencies in the contemporary society, which include diminishing participation in local music life? Can digitisation suddenly make them socially more important and valuable? And, finally, is there a risk that such a new and modern form (a hot digital medium, as described by Herbert Marshall McLuhan's already classic equation 'the medium is the message') may transform musical resources to such an extent that they will completely lose their former power of involving the audience in the process of cultural communication?

The Adolf Dygacz Archive

The collection of Polish ethnomusicologist Adolf Dygacz (1914–2004), who conducted intensive field research from the 1940s onwards,[14] is an example of a music archive thematically comparable to the above-mentioned work of Oskar Kolberg. Dygacz's expeditions were at first part of the institutional Musical Folklore Collection Campaign; later he undertook them privately. They took him to nearly all the ethnographic regions of Poland, with particular focus on Upper Silesia and the

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[13] M. Wosińska, 'Formowanie tożsamości społecznej a muzyka tradycyjna w Polsce XX i XXI wieku', in W. Grozdew-Kołacińska, ed., *Raport o stanie tradycyjnej kultury muzycznej* (2014), 206.

[14] Danuta Kaszuba describes Dygacz's earliest research undertaken in 1929; cf. D. Kaszuba, *Krytyka artystyczna Adolfa Dygacza* (2004), 17. The greatest part of his collection, however, comes from the period between the 1940s and the 1970s, as evident, among others, from field recording protocols and the informants' announcements contained in the audio recordings.

Dąbrowa Basin, in which the greatest proportion of his collection originates. His resources are currently being transformed into the Silesian Library's digital stock as part of the multi-stage project 'Digitisation of Professor Adolf Dygacz's Collection' implemented by the Upper Silesian Ethnographic Park in Chorzów. The aim of the project's first stage (initiated in 2018 and co-financed from the Silesian Province Regional Operational Programme / European Regional Development Fund for 2014–2020) and its second phase (implemented as part of the programme 'Digital Culture 2019: Digitisation of Professor Adolf Dygacz's Collection – Stage Two) has been to organise the archive documents (manuscripts containing sheet music, partly unpublished typewritten texts of folksongs, and audio recordings on reel-to-reel tapes). The music material is being reconstructed (using modern notation) and placed on two open access online platforms: the Silesian Digital Library[15] and the RegMus museum information system.[16]

Differently than in Kolberg's case, however, Dygacz's writings published to date have only enjoyed modest popularity in musical and academic circles[17] and not enough has been done properly to publicise his output. As a result, he remains unknown and has not received due appreciation as a folklorist, either on the local or the nationwide scale.

Born in 1914 in the village of Droniowice (between Lubliniec and Koszęcin, Upper Silesia), Adolf Dygacz attended primary state school, and later the Oblate Fathers' secondary school in Lubliniec, where he received both general and music education. Following his end-of-school exams at Katowice's Adam Mickiewicz Secondary Humanities School, he completed active military service at the Grodno Reserve Officers' Training Corps. Until the outbreak of World War II he studied law at Warsaw University, simultaneously continuing his music

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[15]   https://www.sbc.org.pl/dlibra/collectiondescription/458, accessed 9 June 2020.

[16]   http://simuz.pl/sim/a_multimedia/index.php, accessed 9 June 2020.

[17]   Cf. W. Nagengast, ed., *Adolf Dygacz 1914–2004. Życie i działalność* (2007). This volume, comprising the memories of persons who collaborated with Dygacz, was published in connection with the research session entitled 'Professor Adolf Dygacz, PhD, Habil. – Life and Work', held in 2007 by the Silesian Museum and the Society of Friends of Science in Katowice. The second publication, Danuta Kaszuba's monograph *Krytyka artystyczna Adolfa Dygacza*, is an attempt to describe Dygacz's activity, including his work on the traditions of Upper Silesia, which was his main research area, as well as the achievements of his MA and PhD students.

training. He took part in the Polish September Campaign of 1939 as a reserve officer. Having escaped from German captivity, he joined the Polish resistance movement in Upper Silesia. Arrested by the Gestapo in January 1941, he stayed in Nazi prisons (in Opole, Bytom, Katowice, and Racibórz) until the end of the war. In 1945–1948 he completed his interrupted law and business studies at the Higher School of Social and Economic Sciences (now the University of Economics) in Katowice, as well as music pedagogy and music theory studies at the same city's State Higher School of Music (now the Karol Szymanowski Academy of Music) and musicology at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow. Most of his academic and research work, beginning with his master's thesis entitled *Charakterystyka pieśni ludowych na Śląsku Opolskim* [*Folksong Characteristics in the Opole Silesia*], was dedicated to analyses of folksongs from Upper Silesia and the Dąbrowa Basin, with a focus on the culture of Polish social-professional groups (miners' and steelworkers' songs), which are most characteristic of these regions owing to their industrial development.

Apart from intensive field research, Dygacz taught at Katowice's State Higher School of Music, the University of Wrocław, and the University of Silesia's Cieszyn branch, where he was head of the Music Theory and Music Folklore Department and the deputy director of the Institute for Music Education.[18] He was also active as a music journalist and critic. His impressive list of publications includes texts on folk music culture written from 1947 onwards for such newspapers and magazines as 'Trybuna Robotnicza', 'Dziennik Zachodni', 'Życie Bytomskie', 'Trybuna Opolska', 'Śląsk Literacki', the Polish minority's magazine 'Zwrot' in Český Těšín, and others.[19] He collaborated with Polish Radio's broadcasting station in Katowice, for which he prepared and presented broadcasts, as well as the Katowice branch of Polish Television. The latter collaboration bore fruit in the form of a series of TV broadcasts entitled 'Z teki folklorystycznej Adolfa Dygacza' ['From Adolf Dygacz's Folkloric Portfolio'], for which he independently wrote scripts and introductions, as well as appearing in

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[18] K. Turek, 'Adolf Dygacz – zarys życia i działalności', in: W. Nagengast, ed., *Adolf Dygacz 1914–2004. Życie i działalność* (2007), 7–11.

[19] J. Dygacz, 'Bibliografia prac Adolfa Dygacza (w układzie chronologicznym)', in W. Nagengast, ed., *Adolf Dygacz 1914–2004. Życie i działalność* (2007), 58–59.

some of them as their presenter.[20] He also distinguished himself with his work for cultural institutions and organisations, among others as Poland's representative at the International Centre for the Study of Workers' Songs in Budapest, a member of the Ethnological Sciences Committee at the Polish Academy of Sciences, the International Federation of Music Folklorists, and a music consultant to 'Śląsk' Song and Dance Ensemble.[21]

Dygacz's collection comprises songs (recordings, manuscripts, and typescripts) from nearly all the ethnographic regions of Poland. In the light of conducted research and digitising work, the music of Upper Silesia and the Dąbrowa Basin forms by far the largest group among these sources. This category can be internally subdivided into three regions: the Opole Silesia and the area of Częstochowa in the north; the industrial district around Katowice, Bytom, and Tarnowskie Góry in the centre, with the Dąbrowa Basin as a culturally separate subregion studied at length by this ethnomusicologist,[22] and the Cieszyn Silesia with the Silesian Beskids mountain range in the south. In terms of subject matter, the folklore of individual social-professional groups (miners and steelworkers) occupies an important place in his collection; in this topic, Dygacz found his academic niche and new research direction, which has no continuators at present.[23] The immense potential that he recognised in songs associated with the mining profession is reflected in his monograph *Ludowe pieśni górnicze w Zagłębiu Dąbrowskim*[24] [*Miners' Folksongs from the Dąbrowa Basin*] and his postdoctoral thesis (1975), as well as in numerous other publications, such as *Śpiewnik pieśni górniczych* [*Miners' Songbook*] (1956), *Pieśni górnicze. Studium i materiały* [*Miners' Songs: Studies and Materials*] (1960), 'Polska pieśń górniczo-hutnicza' ['Polish Miners' and Steelworkers' Songs'] (*Literatura Ludowa*, 1964), 'Z badań nad folklorem muzycznym górników naftowych' ['From the Studies on Oil Rig

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[20] Kaszuba, *Krytyka artystyczna…*, 17.

[21] Kaszuba, *Krytyka artystyczna…*, 18–19.

[22] Comprising the administrative units (Pol. *powiaty*) of Zawiercie, Myszków, Będzin, Olkusz (partly), as well as two municipalities with county rights: Sosnowiec and Dąbrowa Górnicza.

[23] Kaszuba, *Krytyka artystyczna…*, 61.

[24] A. Dygacz, *Ludowe pieśni górnicze w Zagłębiu Dąbrowskim. Studium folklorystyczne* (1975).

Workers' Musical Folklore' (*Literatura Ludowa*, 1972).[25] Despite numerous thematic links to miners' folklore, which has been explained by the interrelations between mining and steel production and the fact of both groups living in the same local communities, steelworkers' folk tradition was approached by Dygacz as an autonomous phenomenon, the precious heritage of that professional group, which brought a new perspective into many fields of literature and music. 'The cult of work typical of steelworkers' songs,' the ethnomusicologist claimed, 'casts a new light on that splendid monument of Polish literature and of old Polish steelworkers' culture, the early seventeenth-century poem *Officina ferraria*[26] by Walenty Roździeński.'[27] As Dygacz emphasised, thanks to the study of steelworkers' songs that poem's links to folklore had been found to include elements of folk poetics, vocabulary, phraseology, and artistic typisation.[28] During his field research the musicologist visited several dozen glassworks throughout the country, which brought to his attention another previously largely unresearched topic – that of glass instrument construction (*Ludowe instrumenty szklane polskich hutników szkła*[29] [*Polish Glassworkers' Folk Glass Instruments*], 1979). Dygacz developed his own classification of occupational songs, which he divided into: ritual- and custom-related; historical, social, and revolutionary; pieces dedicated to the profession and accompanying work; songs related to family and social life; songs of courtship

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[25] J. Dygacz, 'Bibliografia prac…', 58–59.

[26] Some of the oldest evidence of the development of industry in Upper Silesia and of the separate cultural identity of the then territory of the Polish Crown can be found in Walenty Roździeński's seventeenth-century poem *Officina Ferraria*. The author emphasises the natural resources, types of occupations, activities, and religious beliefs as elements shared by the Polish Kingdom and Silesia. Nevertheless, he also notes the separate character of these regions. Though born in and associated with Silesia, Roździeński spent more than forty years in the territory of the Crown. He stresses the fact of belonging to both countries: Silesia and the Crown, but he does not sign his poem 'Silesius', which may suggest that the cultural differences between Silesia and the Dąbrowa Basin were recognised already in that period, creating an identity dilemma for the region's population. Cf. R. Ocieczek, 'Officina ferraria (1612)', in M. Jarczykowa, ed., *Renarda Ocieczek: odnowienie doktoratu* (2014), 29–38.

[27] Source: Library research in the collection of the Upper Silesian Ethnographic Park in Chorzów (May 2020). *Pieśni ludowe hutników polskich* [*Polish Steelworkers' Folksongs*], 95/5.

[28] *Pieśni ludowe hutników polskich*, 95/5.

[29] J. Dygacz, 'Bibliografia prac…', 58–59.

and love; comic and satirical songs, those about music-making and dance, as well as occupational dances. He improved the terminology, paying special attention to the text's character, metrical and rhythmic qualities, and tonal features, including musical scales.[30] Dygacz described such now rare and unique rituals as 'a miners' and steelworkers' nativity play' and 'a steelworkers' wedding', as well as children's music-and-movement games related to these two professions, such as *Ele mele dutki, górniczek malutki* [*Pear pie primer, yon little miner*] and the game of a carter delivering coal as fuel on his horse-drawn cart *Idzie zima, węgla nie ma, furman jedzie, węgiel wiezie* [*Winter's coming, we've run out of coal, here comes the carter with more coal*].[31] The musicologist took great care, first and foremost, to record and transcribe the music. A separate group that he described consists of songs dedicated to Saint Barbara, patron of miners, and Saint Florian, steelworkers' patron.

The folklorist's collection proves of special significance also in the context of the vanishing and scantily researched traditions of the Dąbrowa Basin, which in folklore research has usually not been distinguished as an autonomous region, ethnographically different from the neighbouring areas. For this reason, it has been the subject of only a few academic studies and songbooks.[32] Dygacz's contribution to our knowledge of the musical culture of that region consists of nearly three thousand songs, among which, apart from the occupational categories described above, a sizeable group is made up of multi-thematic common songs, including some on historical subjects as well as 'frivolous' ones. In the Dąbrowa Basin, songs have their distinct melodic and textual variants, which testifies to the separate local identity of the region's inhabitants.

Another, equally interesting folklore study, considered by scholars as Dygacz's pioneering discovery and achievement,[33] is his 1966 publication *Rzeka Odra w polskiej pieśni ludowej*[34] [*The Oder River in Polish Folksongs*], which is a preliminary survey of the state of research into

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[30]   A. Dygacz, *Ludowe pieśni górnicze…*, 42.

[31]   Source: Library research in the collection of the Upper Silesian Ethnographic Park in Chorzów (May 2020).

[32]   The Dąbrowa Basin has usually been discussed jointly with Lesser Poland, the Kielce Region, or with Upper Silesia.

[33]   Kaszuba, *Krytyka artystyczna…*, 79.

[34]   A. Dygacz, *Rzeka Odra w polskiej pieśni ludowej. Studium folklorystyczne* (1966).

the previously unidentified 'Oder folklore', complete with extensive source material.

Closely as these works are related to the cultural policies of communist Poland, which gave priority to the songs 'of the working people in cities and villages' (evidence of this can be found, among others, in the activities of the International Centre for the Study of Workers' Songs, 1965–1968, with headquarters in Budapest, in which Dygacz represented Poland), there is no doubt that the scholar's ethnomusicological studies and analyses fill major gaps on the map of previously uncharted territories of traditional music. They are, on a nationwide scale, an essential source of knowledge about musical folklore in southern Poland, providing us not only with a wealth of texts, but also with solid music transcriptions and with comparative analyses.[35] Thanks to audio recordings, both the texts and melodies of songs collected during field research could be transcribed precisely, with details of tempo, accentuation, and such specific qualities of performance as register or elements important in musical folklore: the vocal and interpretative manner of the informants, who had been born at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Precise documentation (including the informant's name and surname, age, place of residence, and date of recording) does Dygacz much credit as a researcher, and makes it possible to perform, for instance, contemporary analyses of the current state of musical folklore memory in individual regions of Poland.

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[35] In his work *Ludowe pieśni górnicze w Zagłębiu Dąbrowskim* [*Miners' Folksongs from the Dąbrowa Basin*], Dygacz compares the musical folklore of Polish 'workers' community' to that collected by Bartók: 'From what I have managed to establish so far, the migration range of this melody [i.e. the song *Górnicy, górnicy / Miners, Miners* – A.K.] is considerable. It was recorded by Béla Bartók in Slovakia early in the twentieth century, as the setting of a text about love. However, in the Slovak version there is no trace of syncopation, just as the song's Silesian varieties have lost their krakowiak characteristics. This shows how in the process of local integration folksongs may lose the characteristics of one folkloric tradition or acquire new ones, and undergo more complex transformations as well. In any case, the phenomenon of poetic and melodic motifs migrating between cultures has thus proved to be present in miners' folklore as well.' He also related the workers' culture he studied to the Moravian folklore known from František Bartoš's collections of Moravian national songs and from the work of František Sušil: 'I have written it down [i.e. the lullaby *Lulajże mi, lulaj / Lullaby, My Darling* – note by A.K.] in many variants in Silesia, the regions of Kielce, Rzeszów and Kraków; but I have also discovered it in Moravian sources'. Cf. A. Dygacz, *Ludowe pieśni górnicze…*, 42; 58–59; 26.

The 'New Life' of Music Collections vs 'Use-Neutral Digitisation'

In the context of digitising archives such as the one which is the subject of my paper, one may easily and almost automatically define their main target users as well as the expected effects of further use. The likely users of folk music repositories are teachers and students of regional culture; both will access them for educational purposes. Judging by the results of reports on the presence of traditional music in the core curricula of general and artistic schools,[36] Their use of this resource will only be sporadic. Another category I should add are leaders of folk ensembles looking for new repertoire (assuming that they will not first yield to the pressures of folklorism[37] and will not consider it pointless to return to bygone traditions which are not necessarily in vogue anymore). It is nevertheless likely that the crisis of identity and tradition observed in social sciences and the humanities, as well as in reports on the state of traditional music, will rebound on digital archives. Even now, a digitised collection may be viewed from at least two perspectives: as a 'store' into which 'someone has uploaded' contents (the so-called 'use-neutral' or 'uncommitted' digitalisation', which prioritises the technological dimension of the project) or in the context of breathing a 'new life' into that music by bringing in the individual stories of the music's co-authors, that is, the local communities, including folk musicians, artists and performers.

One of the currents in the humanities, known as 'restitutive', 'regenerative', 'supportive', or 'affirmative',[38] aims at a restitution of

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[36] Cf. D. Grzybek, 'Muzyka tradycyjna w szkolnictwie powszechnym i artystycznym', in W. Grozdew-Kołacińska, ed., *Raport o stanie tradycyjnej kultury muzycznej* (2014), 249–256.

[37] What is meant here by folklorism is *not* 'the artistic activity of those ensembles which put special emphasis on bringing out archaic elements in folk music, those which call for profound understanding and long practice (for instance, of using untempered intonation in singing or the fingernail technique when playing knee fiddles), or of those ensembles tending toward contemporary (classical) and improvised music which can hardly be accused of simplifying musical forms or pandering to mass taste' (cf. W. Grozdew-Kołacińska, 'Muzyka folkowa – "tradycja na skróty" czy "współczesna muzyka ludowa"?', in W. Grozdew-Kołacińska, ed., *Raport o stanie tradycyjnej kultury muzycznej* (2014), 51. The term 'folklorism' has been used in my paper in the opposite sense.

[38] E. Domańska, 'Historia ratownicza', *Teksty drugie*, 5 (2014), 13.

traditions – a process which is dynamic, open, community-based, and depends on individuals' proactive role and causal power. This trend concerns the past-becoming-future-as-researched-in-the-present. It entails a multidisciplinary approach that reinforces the causal power of both individuals and groups with respect to shaping reality. Its aim is 'to seek out, recover, preserve, and make available the non-existent, neglected, frequently forgotten pasts, deleted from the annals of Great History, as well as to document the various traces of those pasts', with special emphasis on reconstructing and cultivating local history and on 'the role which participatory forms of building knowledge about history play in this process […]'.[39] Humanities experts who opt for a turn towards the local are convinced that shared responsibility for creating history can build a sense of meaningfulness and purpose; it can encourage and involve people in the cultivation of what is gradually disappearing, but also make them use and share what still exists. According to Anna Nacher, the thus conceived 'regeneration' reiterates the vision of digitisation as a mechanism for building 'a community of practice', whose essential purpose was defined, among others, by John Dewey's model of pragmatism. His model is based on the principle of informally sharing resources, knowledge, techniques, and skills. In this model, knowledge inspires action, provides a foundation for, and bestows meaning on, human activity, as well as helping to recruit new participants. Practice is defined here as a way in which the group focuses its energies and activities on one jointly defined purpose, that of transmitting knowledge and skills.[40] This, as Nacher emphasises, creates a chance 'to guarantee to digital archives a certain degree of durability, since in the age of "archive fever" they are under the constant threat of becoming mere "archival silos" for data, that is, vast virtual networks filed with objects whose virtual life is fading away since they have failed to enter the social space in any manner'.[41]

As Dobrosława Wężowicz-Ziółkowska observes in her paper 'Folklorystyka a historia ratownicza: czy się spotkamy?' ['Folklore Studies and Lifesaving History: Can We Meet?'], delivered during the

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[39]   Domańska, 'Historia ratownicza', 13.

[40]   A. Nacher, 'Cyfrowe archiwa/bazy danych. Wspólnota praktyki w działaniu', *Kultura współczesna*, 2 (2019), 43.

[41]   A. Nacher, 'Cyfrowe archiwa…', 43.

conference entitled 'Folklor w społecznościach tradycyjnych i nowoczesnych' ['Folklore in Traditional and Modern Communities'], folklore studies, like other humanities research, have in fact always stressed the importance of local, potential, existential, and affirmative culture. A still, that culture has not been considered so far in the light of memory studies, which open up new horizons for thinking about the past, as well as new original methodological perspectives.[42] What is more, the turn towards local knowledge and art, fundamental to postcolonial studies and post-humanities (which '[r]ather than reiterating the established forms and methods of disciplinary knowledge […] examine the ways in which changes in the society and culture force researchers to rethink the theoretical, methodological, and ethical foundations of their work'[43]), provides a chance for an attempt to lead folklore studies out of the deadlock. Folklore studies have been perceived so far as a petrified discipline of the humanities, largely irrelevant and quite unadjusted to the contemporary state of culture; as, in fact, a relic of the nineteenth-century humanities. In this context, 'lifesaving history'[44] (also referred to by Domańska as 'digital lifesaving history'), which allows for the involvement of local inhabitants, enthusiasts, and rightful owners (that is, folklore' co-authors, including musicians) in the process, seems to provide a remedy for the crisis of tradition, since it makes us aware that tradition is still needed. Astrid Erll seems to express a similar view in her work *Memory in Culture*. She opens the chapter on 'Media and Memory' as follows: 'Cultural memory is unthinkable without media. It would be inconceivable without the role that media play on both levels — the individual and the collective.'[45] This, however, does not change the fact that, though media technologies make it possible to disseminate cultural memory content in space and store it in time[46], they 'are far from being neutral containers for memory semioses. Their specific materiality, their potential and limits

[42] Dobrosława Wężowicz-Ziółkowska, 'Folklorystyka a historia ratownicza: czy się spotkamy?', an unpublished paper delivered during the International Research Conference 'Folklor w społecznościach tradycyjnych i nowoczesnych', held on 26 Sept. 2019 in the Upper Silesian Ethnographic Park in Chorzów.

[43] E. Domańska, 'Historia w kontekście posthumanistyki', *Historyka. Studia Metodologiczne*, 45 (2015), 6.

[44] Domańska, 'Historia w kontekście…', 17.

[45] A. Erll, *Memory in Culture* (2011), 113.

[46] Erll, *Memory in Culture*, 121.

contribute to the character of the message.[47] The media do not offer a direct reflection of memory, but only a construction of the past. At this point, therefore, I will return to the fundamental issue of the medium itself, which should by no means be neglected in the study of the cultural memory digitisation process.

Despite the chances and hopes that 'digital lifesaving history' and the pragmatic 'community of practice' present for the future of digital archives, one needs to be aware of the downsides of uploading data into the World Wide Web. These include an impoverished message and the ephemeral character of that message, as commented upon by Aleida Assmann. The latter author distinguishes three transformations which digitisation has generated in 'storage memory'[48]: a) the shift from material to electronic carriers of information; b) expansion of storage space accompanied by a radical reduction of long-term stability; c) fast circulation and wide (immediate and precisely directed) access to information. By juxtaposing the internet with other human memory carriers from the past, such as papyri, stone, and parchment, Assmann highlights the progressive 'dematerialisation' process whereby solid carriers are replaced by fluid, virtual, ephemeral ones, existing only here-and-now, from which deleted data disappear without a trace. In this age of fast technological transformations, she thus views the internet as an unstable tool tuned exclusively to the here-and-now dimension, which, though it does store information, nevertheless contains no solid and tangible store, despite ever more convenient forms of storage and the growing amount of memory space available. The new digital media, Assmann claims, have not invalidated the concept of culture as memory; on the contrary, they have brought out its importance. By

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[47]   Erll, *Memory in Culture*, 122.

[48]   Assmann distinguishes functional memory (*Funktionsgedächtnis*) from storage memory (*Speichergedächtnis*). 'By functional memory one should understand here cultural knowledge which binds the members of a given group. It must be instilled and embodied, learned and internalised, so that all the participants of a given culture can identify with it and feel that they belong to it. By storage memory, on the other hand, one should understand objectified cultural knowledge which is recorded in sign systems and transferred to material carriers.' The author emphasises that 'despite and in the face such technical transformations, culture conceived as transgenerational communication nevertheless still depends on both these types: functional and storage memory.' Cf. A. Assmann, 'Speichergedächtnis und Funktionsgedächtnis in P. Rusterholz, R. Moser, eds, *Wir sind Erinnerung* (Haupt: Bern, 2003), 183–184.

separating objects from their material form, the internet now comprises everything that can be converted into information (including texts, images, and sounds). At the same time, however, it contains nothing else, since remembering is not the internet's proper quality. The essence of memory still lies in its truth and authenticity.[49] In the context of musical folklore, the latter qualities are inextricably linked with the act of performance: with music, singing, and dance (and thus with the community!) The meaning of that act is now being lost in the 'fluidity' of the medium and is becoming susceptible to such destructive phenomena of cultural diffusion as borrowing, copying, imitating, and 'remaking' elements of culture.[50]

It would be hard not to agree with Erll that 'media products must always be understood as no more than an "offer" to a mnemonic community. This offer can be accepted, but the media product can also be ignored or used in other than memorial ways.'[51] An archive is in each case a kind of offer whose further uses depend on their social usefulness and on the community's involvement. It might thus seem that we have come a full circle and returned again to the sense of crisis and the lack of chances to restore traditions. The success of digitisation depends, in a way, on the local community's sense of identity, which is now dissolving and fading away under the influence of numerous globalising and technological transformations. Music, however, still remains at the very core of the deepest experience of culture. It is a core type of cultural event,[52] comprising a variety of social meanings and operating on all the levels of the human society, both on the individual and global scale. It plays a key role in human life.[53] It constitutes the cultural capital of local communities, equipping social groups with resources which they can use to construct and negotiate their own identity. Music is a resource for controlling social space, but also for marginalising some groups.[54] This is why in ethnomusicological re-

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[49] Assmann, 'Speichergedächtnis und Funktionsgedächtnis…', 191–192.

[50] C. Obracht-Prondzyński, P. Zbieranek, 'Dziedzictwo kulturowe jako narzędzie rozwoju regionalnego i lokalnego. Przypadek Pomorza', in *Kultura na peryferiach* (2018), 158.

[51] Erll, *Memory in Culture*, 123.

[52] Cf. T. Turino, *Music as social life. The politics of participation* (2008).

[53] S. Hallam, 'Where now?', in *Oxford handbook of music psychology* (2009), 561–564.

[54] R. Lidskog, 'The role of music in ethnic identity formation in diaspora: a research review', *International Social Science Journal*, 66, 24. https://doi.org/10.1111/

search the topic of relations between music and identity is gaining more and more importance. Old sources are being restored to favour and new ones are indicated, which makes it possible to form insightful multi-subject biographies of the little local communities. Without the latter, Wężowicz-Ziółkowska observes (in the paper quoted above), our world would not exist, however uniformised and globalised it may appear to have become.

We may suspect, naturally, that the digitisation of Adolf Dygacz's folk archive, whose historical importance and value I hope to have demonstrated here, is likely to produce yet another 'silo of data'. That digitisation project, however, is also an institutional 'offer' addressed to the local community (in this case, to the inhabitants of Upper Silesia and the Dąbrowa Basin), for which it can become 'memory fodder' capable of reinforcing and initiating processes that will involve both individuals and groups. This is a two-way process, both grassroots (bottom-up) and institutional (top-down). It still represents an unblazed trail full of mounting (financial, promotion-related, and educational) obstacles on both sides. Though this process may not head off the crisis of tradition, it will nevertheless demonstrate how much still depends on ourselves, on our passive or proactive participation.

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