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Ethnographic Museum in Belgrade, Serbia

DOCUMENTATION OF ETHNOGRAPHIC MUSEUM IN BELGRADE THE PAST, THE PRESENT, THE FUTURE

Documentation is the substance of museums' existence. Therefore documenting the museum materials (objects, photographic records, archive documents, events in the museum) is a highly important step in the chain of museum activities, as it is believed that "if something is not in the museum documentation, it is not in the Museum". If all necessary and relevant data on museum material are determined, it is better protected as in case of disappearance a search and an investigation is immediately started, and in case of a destruction of an (ethnographic) object it is possible to perform reconstruction according to the documentation. Data recorded in much detail, and especially those pertaining to functions of ethnographic objects, also help in presentation of exhibitions, as they enable authentic representation of the object.¹

ANCIENT PAST

The Ethnographic Museum in Belgrade has established and officially signed its first inventory book in 1905, and it contained only the basic data on the object.²

Until then the ethnographic material was acquired for presentation at the exhibitions, but the objects were not expertly classified, described and inventoried, and instead only the lists were made.³ For example, for most objects dated before the First World War there are almost no descriptions or material that could be used as a study source. The commonly cited excuse for this condition was closely spaced exhibitions in which the Museum participated.⁴

The period after the First World War was the time of restoration and working on museum collection. The first and most important task was preparing new inventory. The Main Inventory was established in 1922 and included all objects already present in the

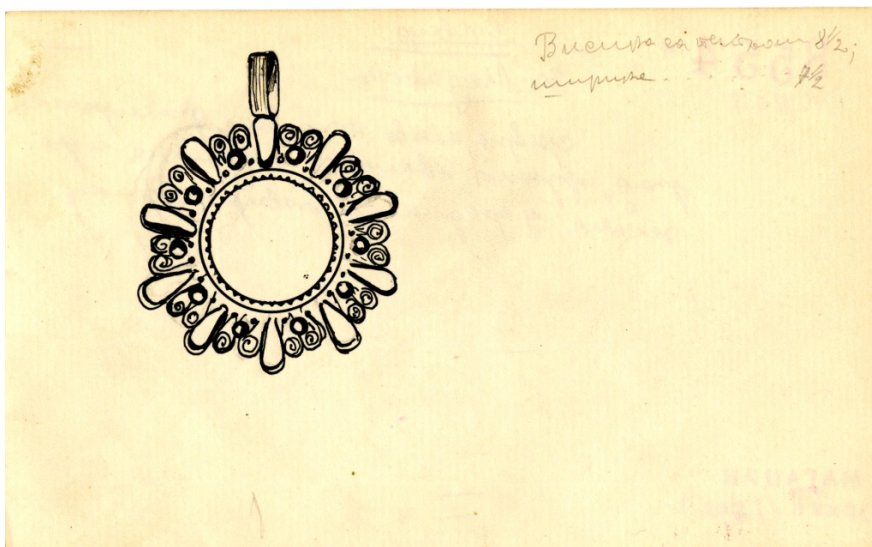
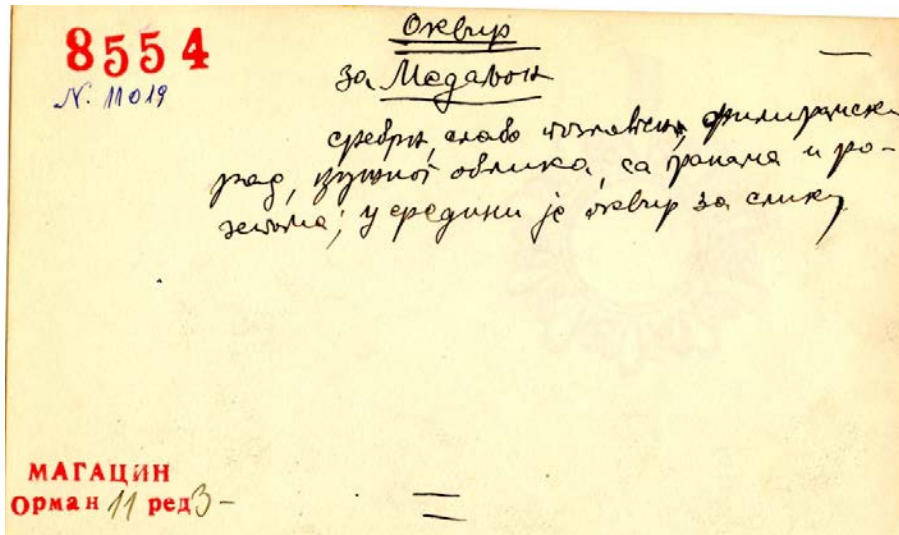
¹ Љиљана Ђертић, *О документовању етнографских предмета*, Спона 30, Нови Сад 1987, 127-131

² Љиљана Ђертић, *Улога музеолошке документације*, 37-38; Боривоје Дробњаковић, *Етнографски музеј у Београду 1901-1925*, ГЕМ 1, Београд 1926, 11-26

³ Боривоје Дробњаковић, *Етнографски музеј у Београду 1901-1926*, 11-26

⁴ Љиљана Ђертић, *Музеолошка документација Етнографског музеја у Београду*, ГЕМ 41, Београд 1977, 5-62, 56

Museum as well as those obtained at a later date. Each object was entered in several catalogues: a) in alphabetical order, b) according to type of object, and c) sorted by collections. New inventory books were: Register of all objects, Inventory of exhibited objects and Inventory of unexhibited objects. If there were sufficient material means, some of the objects were photographed; otherwise they were drawn by hand.



The first inventory card of the Ethnographic Museum in Belgrade (front and back side)

In addition to the Main Inventory, during the 1930s there were also inventories of Illustrative Department and Department for Musical Folklore, Archives of Folk Songs, and Phonographic and Cinematographic departments.⁵In addition to the Central Card Inventory, documentation now also included Regional Card Inventory and Object Card Inventory for

⁵Митар Влаховић, *Етнографски музеј НРСрбије*, Зборник Етнографског музеја у Београду 1901-1951, Београд 1953, 19 Београд 1953, 19

specific collections.⁶The Illustrative Inventory (photography negatives, photographs, art material) were separated in 1937.

RECENT PAST

After setting the foundations in 1920s and additions in 1930s, documentation was maintained in the same way until 1961, when a new system of documentation was introduced. The Department of Documentation was formed with following sections:

- a) Main Inventory,
- b) Photo-documentation (with photo-laboratory and film),
- c) Archive of Manuscript Material, and
- d) Collection of Paintings.

All objects included in the Central Register were immediately included in the re-inventory process, and the Department of Documentation still exists according to the same principles.


ЭТНОГРАФСКИ МУЗЕЈ — БЕОГРАД						
БРОЈ ИНВЕНТАРА 11019	БРОЈ КОМПАЈА 1.	ПРЕДМЕТ Привесак (део) (оквир за медаљон) НАРОДНО ИМЕ	МЕСТО ?	КОМУНА		
ОПИС — Материјал, функција предмета, припада пољу, узрасту		СРЕЗ РЕПУБЛИКА				
Направљен је од сребра у техници филигране и слабо позлаћен. Позлата се већим делом скинула. Облика је кружног цвета са отвором у средини \varnothing 2,8 см. за медаљон. Накит за груди.		ТЕХНИКА И НАЧИН ОБРАДЕ Занатски производ у техници филигране и гранулације.				
МЕРЕ Пречник 7,6 см.	ПРЕДМЕТ ЧИНИ ЦЕЛИНУ С БРОЈЕВИМА					
РАСПОРЕЂЕНО: ЗБИРКА Накит ОДАЈА ОРМАН ПОЛИЦА КУТИЈА					БРОЈ НЕГАТИВА 12-286 2.1.68-82	СТАРИ БРОЈ ИНВЕНТАРА 8554

Inventory card of a museum object in 1961.

⁶ Љубомир Рељић, *Документација у Етнографском музеју*, ГЕМ 30, Београд 1968, 129-148; Љиљана Ђергић, *Нав. дело*, ГЕМ 41, 58

THE PAST and THE PRESENT

In 1969 the Ethnographic Museum in Belgrade became the mother museum for all ethnographic departments in Serbia. Therefore the museum documentation was unified, and the existing system of documentation was abridged and corrected. Some of the new approaches included: categorization of museum material according to cultural-historical values and maintaining a single Central Register according to type of material or cultural asset on the Republic level.⁷ The inventory card now included the rubrics “category of object” and “number in Central Register”, which is situated in the National Museum as the central institution for protection of mobile cultural assets⁸.

НАЗИВ И МЕСТО МУЗЕЈА					
ЭТНОГРАФСНИ МУЗЕЈ-БЕОГРАД					
ИНВ. БР.	БР. ЦЕНТРАЛНОГ РЕГИСТРА	БРОЈ НОМАДА	НАЗИВ ПРЕДМЕТА	НАРОДНИ НАЗИВ	ЗБИРНА НАТГО
37452		пар	ОПАНИ И.	ПОКРИВЕНИ ОПАНИ	НАРОДНЕ НОШЕ СРБИЈЕ
МЕСТО		ОПШТИНА	ЭТНОГРАФСНО-ГЕОГРАФСНА ОБЛАСТ		РЕПУБЛИКА, ПОКРАЈИН
Неготин		Неготин	Крајина		Србија
ПРЕДМЕТ ПРИПАДА ГРУПИ:					
НАЦИОНАЛНО-ЕТНИЧНОЈ		КОНФЕСИОНАЛНОЈ		СОЦИЈАЛНОЈ	
српској		православној		сеоској	
ПРОФЕСИОНАЛНОЈ					
Опис - материјал, функција, изгледа, припадање полу, узрасту					
<p>Израђени од учињене говеђе коже. Састоје се од ђона, лица и вржа. Сплетени "заплетом" или "венцем" од жућкасте опуте. Лице широко, са ситно плетеним "покривом" од светлоснеђе уско резане опуте. Врх средње величине, широк у средини удубљен. Носили су се у свечаним приликама. Чинили су саставни део мушке ношње.</p>					
МЕРЕ		ТЕХНИКА И НАЧИН ОБРАДЕ			
дужина стопала 30 цм					
ПРЕДМЕТ ЧИНИ ЦЕЛИНУ СА ПРЕДМЕТИМА ПОД БРОЈЕМ					
БР. НЕГАТИВА		СТАРИ ИНВ. БРОЈ			
2x3p 3620 44448		18432			

Inventory card of a museum object in 1969.

⁷In this period Serbia was a republic within Yugoslavia.

⁸Ljiljana Čertić, Informatica Muzeologica 1-2, 37-38

Each type of museum materials was expertly processed through documentation, and for each type there is a special separate inventory book.

MAIN INVENTORY – CENTRAL REGISTER

Regardless of the form of acquisition of each object (purchasing in the field, purchasing at the Museum, donated in the field, donated in the Museum, or collected in the field), each newly arriving object must pass through the same procedure: first it is entered into the Entry Book of Museum Material. It contains the basic data on the object, and is of central general type as various types of museum materials are entered: object, painting, drawing, slide, photograph, film etc.

The rubrics in the Entry Book include:


1. Serial number
2. Date
3. Object (title)
4. Inventory number
5. Collection
6. Object accepted by curator – manager of the collection
7. Seller or donor of the object
8. Type of acquisition
9. Price of purchase
10. Number of evidential protocol and invoice
11. Comments.

Subsequently each object is entered into the Book of Numbers, which is a supplementary evidence book, and in addition to inventory numbers of new objects it also includes numbers for objects scheduled for re-inventory. Each object acquires its number according to numerus currens (rising number).

Another supplementary book is Book of Donors, containing records on all donations and donors to the Museum, and donors are presented a specially printed Acknowledgment Card. It is a custom at the Ethnographic Museum to present all donations at exhibitions scheduled in five-year intervals, and each such exhibition is accompanied by an appropriate catalogue.⁹

⁹The last such exhibition was “From ancestors to descendants” by Jelena Savić, open in December 2013.

After the entry, the object is assigned to the appropriate collection, so curators-collection managers start the inventory process. They fill the forms prescribed by law in 1969, while since 2010 they have been entered in electronic form¹⁰.

Назив и место музеја					Етнографски музеј - Београд				
Инв. број	Број ЦР	Број комада	Назив предмета	Народни назив	Збирка				
49067		1	ГОБЛЕН		ВЕЗ И ЧИПКА				
Место			Општина - град	Етнографско-геог. област	Држава, република, г				
БЕОГРАД			БЕОГРАД	БЕОГРАД	СРБИЈА				
Предмет припада групи:									
Националној - етничкој			Конфесионалној	Социјалној	Професионалној				
				ГРАДСКА					
Опис - материјал, функција, изглед, припадао полу, узрасту:									
Комад тусора светло жуте боје у кружном раму валовитих ивица. Вез памучним и свиленим концем: наранџасте, ружичасте, беж, смеђе, две нијансе зелене и љубичасте боје. Орнамент је букет цвећа смештен у кружном пољу									
Мере			Техника и начин обраде						
Р: 9 цм С: 1,5 цм			ВЕЗ, ВЕЗ - КОСИ БОД						
Предмет чини целину с предметима под бројем									
Број негатива									
Име, негатив			ПАМУК, СВИЛЕНИ КОНАЦ, ПАМУЧН						
2008 3683			ТКАНИНА, КОНАЦ						
45154			Стари инв. број						

Inventory card of electronically processed museum object

After the completed inventory, the object is stored at the depot, while the card with necessary data is transferred to Department of Documentation, where the curator in charge of Main Inventory signs the arrival of the card and transfers data from the card to the Main Inventory Book of Objects, which has exactly the same rubrics as in the card.¹¹

In addition to objects recorded in the Main Inventory, Museum also hosts objects recorded in the Book of Temporary Inventory. It has the same rubrics as the Entry Book of Museum Material, but the inventory number is temporary.

The temporary inventory numbers are assigned to objects with undetermined value and need for inclusion. Once the value is determined, they are assigned a new inventory

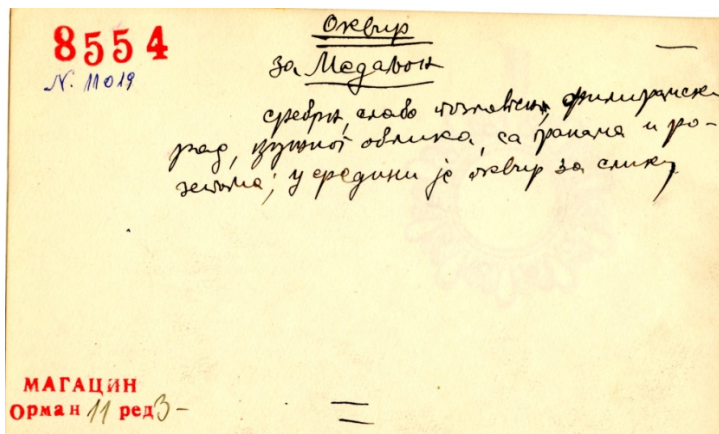
¹⁰Guidelines on registers of artworks and historical works. Sl. Glasnik Republike Srbije, No. 35/96, Article 5, Paragraph 5.

¹¹Since the introduction of the electronic central register in 1994, data are no longer entered in the Main Inventory Book of Museum Objects, as the rubrics were identical.

number and are transferred to the Main Inventory, while if there is still no need for them in the Main Inventory they remain as part of backup fund. In that case they may be used as additions at the exhibitions, or the curator-pedagogue may use them while working with certain groups of visitors (for example blind or poor-sighted).

PHOTO-DOCUMENTATION

The photographic and visual art material was separated from the Main Inventory of Museum Objects in 1937 and separate inventory books were formed. At first, photographic and visual art materials were not separated and they were recorded in the combined Inventory Book of Photographic Material, while the cards for these types of museum objects were stored in the same card system.



Inventory card of museum photographic slide from fieldwork in 1912.

Following the documentation system from 1961, photographic and visual art materials were separated, and separate Inventory Books were introduced as well:

1. The Inventory Book of Photographic Material at the Ethnographic Museum in Belgrade includes:

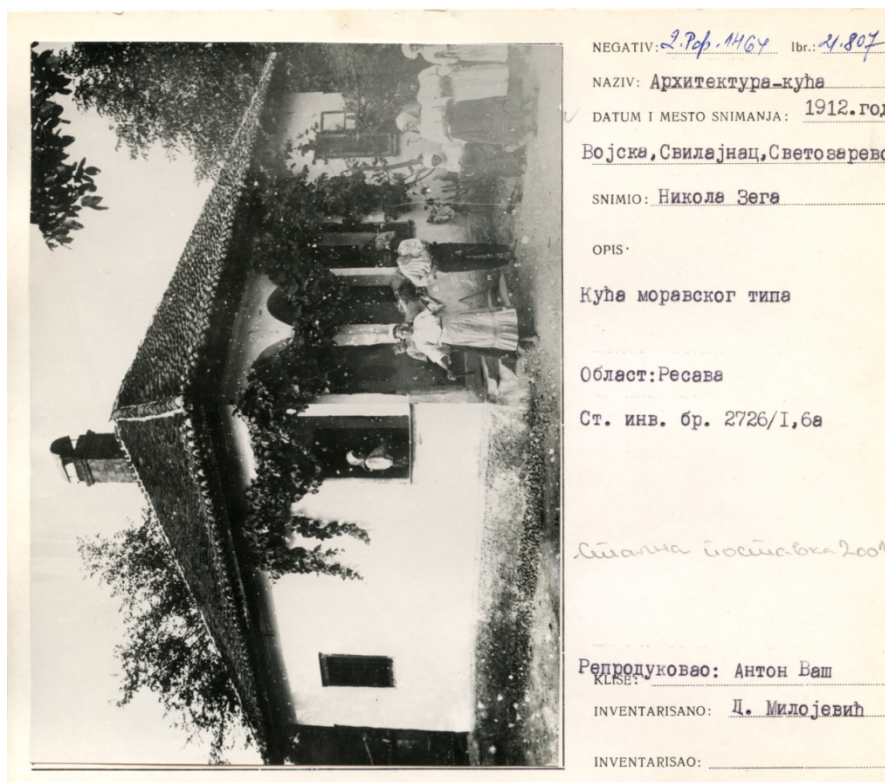
- a) Photographic negatives made during the field research by curators of the Ethnographic Museum, from its establishment to the present day;
- b) negatives acquired by the Museum through donation or purchase;
- c) negatives of photographs of museum objects from the Central Register of objects;

The form of negatives changed through time. At the time when the Museum was established they were glass negatives. As photography developed, so-called plan films of different

formats have appeared, and further advancement of technique brought films of Leica or roll format. There is a special card inventory for photographs made according to these negatives.

The rubrics in this book include:

1. inventory number (of photographic material)
2. format of the negative
3. placement (where the negative is situated)
4. topic
5. description of details
6. location and Republic (where the photograph was made)
7. date when the photograph was made
8. author of the photograph
9. person who reproduced the photograph
10. number of purchase (per account)
11. comments
12. old inventory number (of photographic material)



Inventory card of Photographic Material in 1961.

2. The same system is used for the Inventory Book of Diapositives and Book of Illustrative Material where original photographs are recorded without negatives, together with other

visual art materials including drawings, watercolor and oil paintings etc. If their photographs are made, they get their own number in the Inventory Book of Photographic Material.

Since 2003, museum objects for the Central Register and publications, museum manifestations and sights and phenomena during the field studies by the curators have been photographed with a digital camera, but the Law on conservation of cultural assets does not recognize digital photography and there is no determined standard for archiving this material.

The Department of Documentation at the Ethnographic Museum is storing and processing:

HEMEROTEQUE with newspaper articles (press clipping) pertaining to the Museum and the related events. They have their own special book of records, and in the recent years these reports are also in electronic form.

ARCHIVES OF MANUSCRIPT MATERIAL include documents, manuscripts or acts pertaining to the history of Museum in the past or the important events in the present time (for example, curator reports from field studies or conferences). These documents also acquire their (rising) number, and their data are entered in the Inventory of Archive Material under that number. These data include:

- 1) the date when the document was produced and the date of arrival to the Museum;
- 2) title of the document;
- 3) author of the document;
- 4) comments on the document.

COLLECTION OF PAINTINGS includes art material prepared through various techniques (drawings - in pencil, India ink..., gouache, watercolor, diluted sepia, oil etc.), but including ethnographic motifs. After an entry is made in the Book of Illustrative Material, these museum objects are inventoried on a special type of cardboard and stored in a separate card database. Then they are entered into the Inventory Book of Illustrative Materials¹² and after the following rubrics are completed they become a separate museum object:

1. Inventory Number
2. Number of specimens

¹²This type of museum objects is still called "illustrative material" as for a long time it was not a separately exhibited object but was instead used as illustration of other exhibited objects.

3. Object, material, techniques
4. Title and description of the artwork
5. Name of author and signature
6. Original location of ethnographic material
7. Dimensions
8. Year, century or school
9. State of preservation
10. History of acquisition
11. Price and number of invoice
12. Assigned number and date
13. Number of negative
14. Comments
15. Old inventory number

There is a special inventory book for various types of museum objects temporarily leaving the Museum (exhibits outside of the Museum, loaned objects, guest museum exhibitions), titled **BOOK OF TEMPORARY DISPLACEMENT OR MOVEMENT OF MUSEUM OBJECTS**. In order to displace an object from the Museum it is necessary to add entries to following rubrics:

1. Serial number
2. Date
3. Object (title)
4. Inventory number
5. Collection
6. Caretaker of the collection
7. Processed (card, photograph)
8. Category and cultural value
9. State of preservation of the object and technical protection
10. Object moved by (name) and reason
11. Comments.

THE PRESENT - MISS 2000

The last years of the 20th century (since 1994) at the Department of Documentation at the Ethnographic Museum in Belgrade were dedicated to computerization in order to form a centralized museum network in Serbia. This was accomplished by implementation of Museum Information System of Serbia – MISS 2000¹³. This program was ordered and installed by the Ministry of Culture of Republic of Serbia, and the National Museum in Belgrade became the mother museum for forming a central database on all mobile cultural assets in Serbia. Each museum object should have its own number and code, and this number should include a descriptor of its place in the classification structure, making it recognizable for needs of data searching. The Ethnographic Museum in Belgrade is also the mother museum for all objects in the ethnographic collections in museums in Serbia, and its task is to send the data to the National Museum in Belgrade.¹⁴

Two phases of this program are presently completed in the Ethnographic Museum in Belgrade – the Central Register of Museum Objects and Multimediateca.

As the Law on Protection of Cultural Assets was not changed, since 2010 a program for electronic card was made according to the same principle existing since 1969, enabling the curators to finish the inventory process for each object straightforwardly.

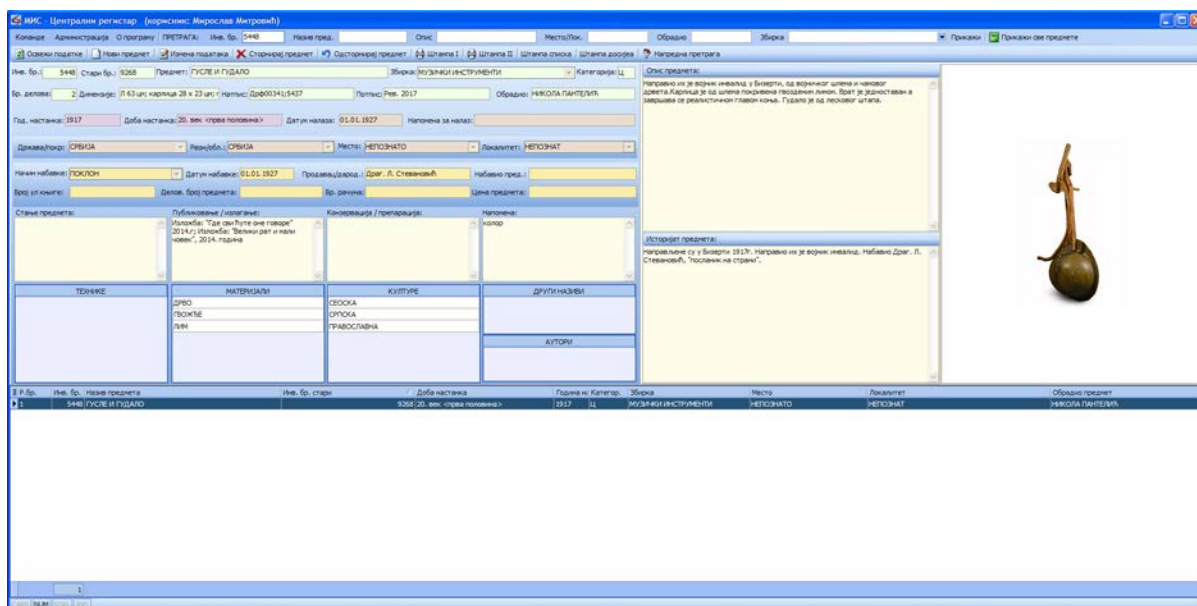
The screenshot displays the 'Central Register -> Objects' window. The main form is titled 'Музеј: ЕТНОГРАФСКИ МУЗЕЈ У БЕОГРАДУ' and 'Збирка: ПРЕДМЕТИ УЗ ОБИЧАЈЕ'. The object is identified as 'Име број: 7853' and 'Назив предмета: МАСКА ПЕЈКА (КОРУБА)'. The form includes fields for 'Стари инв. број: 17528/1', 'Категорија: ЦЦ', 'Димензије: 11 са брадом и роговима 72 цм; 11 леке', 'Натпис: ДрФ00495.7606', 'Потпис:', 'Обрадио: ПЕТАР КОСТИЋ', 'Публиковање/излагање: Изложба: "Маске и ритуали у Србији" 2007', 'Напомена: колор', 'Настанак: Година: Доба: [20 век <прева половина>]', 'Стање предмета:', 'Налази: Држава: СРБИЈА, Република: СРБИЈА, Регион/Обл.: ЈАБЛАНИЦА, Место: ПЕБАНЕ, Локалитет: ПЕРТАТЕ, Датум: 01.01.1947', 'Напомена за налаз:', 'Набавка: Начин: ОТКУП, Датум: 01.01.1947, Број рачуна:, Продавац/дародавац: Драгутин Ђорђевић, Бр. ул. књиже:, Цена: 320, Дел. протокол: 1604, Набавно предмет: Миленко Филиповић'. A list of tabs at the bottom includes 'Опис', 'Технике', 'Материјали', 'Група/Култура', 'Аутори', 'Целина са', 'Мотиви', 'Други називи', 'Историјат', 'Снимци', and 'Фото'. A text box on the left contains a detailed description of the mask, and a photo of the mask is shown on the right.

Electronic inventory card of a museum object in the Central Register from 2003.

¹³ Н. Јевремовић, З.Цветковић, *Музејски информациони систем Србије*, Београд 1996.

¹⁴After several attempts it seems that this planned centralization system is still not functional.

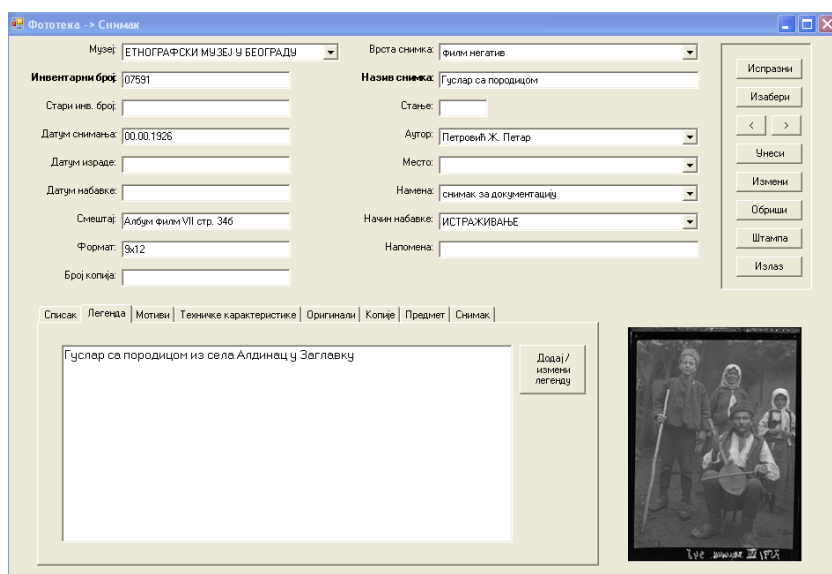
And slightly changed card in 2017.



Electronic inventory card of a museum object in the Central Register from 2017.

In 2005, the Ethnographic Museum in Belgrade has developed its own program for entering data on photographs of museum objects, field research, events in the Museum, but also compact discs, film material and other visual material. One current project includes scanning all types of negatives since the establishment of the Museum and entering the data into the electronic base “Multimediateka”.

These two programs are compatible and data may be mutually searched from any program.



Electronic inventory card in Multimediateka.

THE FUTURE

The information system of the Ethnographic Museum is based on networked modules, sharing some of the data from the database. The modules may be updated independently from each other in order to enable easier use and maintenance, and the even more important challenge is to constantly improve and develop the modules so the Information system, which works with data in museum documentation, should never become outdated itself and surpassed by new technologies.

The future of documentation at the Ethnographic Museum definitively belongs to the further development of Information System and online representation of content interesting for broader public. Integration of the Information System with the Geographic Information System (or Ethnomaps in our internal communication) is the future of Department of Documentation at the Ethnographic Museum in Belgrade, where data on all objects in the museum and all photographs from the photo-documentation but also other data such as the intangible heritage (dances, customs...) will be connected to the physical location at the electronic geographic map that is “aware” of the present administrative-territorial divisions but also of ethnographic regions and their boundaries that have been changing through time. The goal is to enable the experts to perform analysis and research with less technical challenges, while the broader community will have an opportunity of online insight in one of our greatest national treasures in the electronic form – data collected by Ethnographic Museum and connected to a network of Ethnographic Maps.