

# Digitization of

## Doctoral Dissertations

### as a Part of

### Scientific Heritage:

### Objectives, Mission and

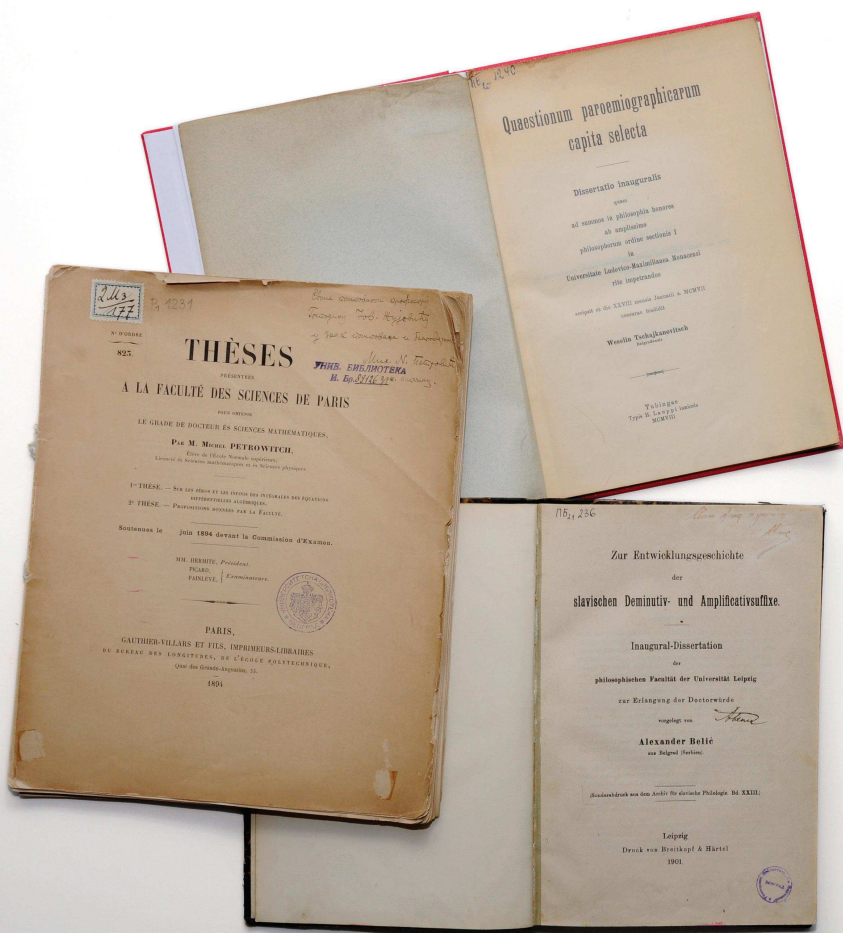
### Copyright Issues

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#### Introduction

University library "Svetozar Marković" is a central library of the University of Belgrade and deposit library for doctoral dissertations defended on that academic institution. Today, there are more than 25.000 items in the Library collection. By the decisions of University Senate, electronic versions of doctoral dissertations have been systematically archived in the Digital repository of the University of Belgrade (PHADRA) since 2012 and they are available through the system "E-theses". When University of Belgrade signed Berlin declaration on open access to knowledge in the science and humanities in 2011, the open access of PhD thesis became preferable, but since 2014 mandatory. Question about retrospective digitization of dissertations was raised soon after establishing this infrastructure for electronic dissertations, and University library started new service like digitization "on demand": if the user, who defended his dissertation before 2012, wants to put his doctoral paper online and in open access, he can send a request to University library together with the License agreement. The library will scan the printed copy from its collection and deposit it into the Repository. The idea of retrospective digitization has brought into consideration special part of this precious collection – old doctoral dissertations, defended during 19th and at the beginning of 20th century.

#### Project

Project "Digitization of doctoral dissertations defended before 1941: dissertations of Serbian scientists defended on foreign universities and dissertations from Belgrade University (1905–1941)" started in 2014 and was supported

during that year by the Ministry of culture and information of the Republic of Serbia. During the project, only items from the University library collection were digitized: around 140 dissertations from Belgrade University (the University of Belgrade since its establishment in 1905 till 1941), which are integrated in the existing system "E-theses" and more than 40 dissertations from foreign, European universities, which can be searched on the new portal inoteze.unilib.rs. This is the foundation for long term and continuous activity of the Library to locate, collect and make visible the rest of thesis, which is a challenging task especially when the object of interest are thesis from foreign universities. But at the same time this venture has opened several questions about its importance, consequences and problems.

#### Historical relevance

Old doctoral dissertation do not belong only to the history of science, they are a significant part of national history as well. It could be especially visible in Serbian history where we can consider dissertations as material evidence of national educational strategy. Serbia gained its complete independence in 1878 but even earlier, during hard and slow process of fighting for sovereignty in 19th century after almost five centuries under the Turkish occupation, governmental policy considered national education as important issue. As early as 1830 the Prince of Serbia Milos Obrenovic brought the act that legitimized sending of high school graduates to study at foreign universities. Restored Serbian state needed educated human resources to recompense the lost time and join the other developed European countries. There is evidence that in period from

1882 till 1914 Serbia supported education of more than 850 students at European universities; at the same time the middle class became better materially situated and many of them sent their children to studies at their own expense. Among these student there were many who became well known Serbian scientists, professors of future University, academics and writers.

#### Visibility and revalorization

This project enables recognition and reevaluation of academic achievements as well as their proper presentation, in order to have them seen as integral part of national history. It gives the possibility for better understanding of accomplishments of the whole generations of scientists, but also of their missions and significance. Dissertations have become a way to ensure the presence of certain scientists within the European context, and to make it more visible. Finally, the increasing visibility of thesis is the best way to reconsider possible relevance and influence of scientific results.

#### Copyright and "orphan works"

Among these dissertations there are many "orphan works", the papers with unknown or unavailable copyright holder. The year of death for certain authors cannot be identified, so it is unknown if the work is in the public domain. But the bigger problem is the inexistence of legislation for using "orphan works". In 2012 the European Commission brought Directive 2012/28/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 on certain permitted uses of orphan works. That Directive indicates that

"diligent search" should be conducted in order to search the rights holder, accompanied with the solid evidence of such search. Since that Directive hasn't become the part of Serbian legislation system yet, it means that it cannot be applied, causing consequences in treatment of doctoral dissertations which belong to the category of orphan works.

#### Conclusion

The digitization of doctoral dissertations places several challenges in front of the Library mainly caused by the importance of such task, on one side, and the possible solutions on the other. It requires not only resources of the Library itself but also those from other institutions. It opens the possibility for cooperation with specialists from other subject areas: historians, law professors, archivists and others. It could be considered as a task of national interest since its objective is to gather and make visible the results of scientists' achievements spread across European and other universities. It introduces a long term research project into the Library with visible results and with considerable reception. Copyright issues or impossibility to put some of these items in open access should not be taken as an obstacle for a Library, since the main goal is to collect material and make it more visible through the information centers, such as portals, with thesis available on metadata level and with possibility to get the digital copy. This becomes more important during the extension of the project with an objective to collect copies of dissertations that University library does not possess, and to conduct research for finding evidence of dissertations of Serbian scientists in the other university centers.

