IMRE KERTÉSZ KOLLEG JENA

CALL FOR PAPERS: WORKSHOP

**DIGITAL PUBLIC HISTORY IN EAST CENTRAL AND SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE:
WHAT REMAINS AFTER THE PANDEMIC?**

Workshop Venue: Imre Kertész Kolleg, Friedrich Schiller University Jena
Date: 27/28 January 2022

Public history relies essentially on the public – the viewers, spectators, the audience and their presence in designated premises, on guided tours, or open-air tribunes. For the past 16 months the public's access to museums, exhibitions, commemorative events and other historical representations or performances was limited due to the Covid-19 restrictions, and in some cases, it still is. The financial and structural implications that the Covid-19 crisis will have on the future of cultural and historical institutions and the way they function, remain to be seen. What seems to be evident, however, is the fact that the pandemic had a major impact on how cultural-historical institutions approach and use digital tools in order to maintain their work in the absence of a physical audience. In most cases, the only way for these institutions to continue was to migrate their events, exhibitions, commemorations, tours and performances to the digital sphere. After at least 16 months of operating in such a "crisis-mode," it is time to take stock of these experiences and to ask what the "big leap" to the digital sphere means for future practices and for theorizing about public history. We would like to inquire into these issues by linking theoretical reflections of different disciplines such as public history, ethnology, museology, memory studies and history didactics with practical observations, by connecting concrete examples or individual experiences with various concepts and analytical frameworks.

The workshop is being organized by the Cultures of History Forum, the online publication platform of the Imre Kertész Kolleg Jena that addresses the evolution of historical cultures in Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe. For this reason, the geographical focus of the workshop will be mostly on the experiences made in this region, but more general theoretical explorations about the use of digital technologies in public history are also welcome. We are especially interested in papers that reflect on the process of transforming cultural and educational activities from on-site to on-line events or formats.

The following aspects could be addressed:

1. Actors and narratives
   - How does the migration to the digital sphere implicate, influence and alter the forms and formats of historical representations and the narratives which are told?
   - Who is creating, telling or narrating history in the digital sphere? Are there "new digital actors" besides the established institutions? How does that challenge or reinform existing historical narratives?
   - How do processes of "going online" differ with regard to specific institutions and what effects do they have on institutional identities?

2. Technology and practices
   - What technologies are used to produce a virtual exhibition?
   - How were specific technologies like VR, AR or mixed reality used for digital storytelling? How do these technologies modify the approach to material culture, objects and the concept of historical representation? How does this reverberate with the concept of authenticity or originality? What does the dissolution of historical distance in digital immersive environments mean for concepts of historical learning?
   - How will the issue of individualized experiences, for instance in VR worlds, as opposed to the social practice of visiting a museum or a commemoration be addressed?
   - What are the ethical red lines with regard to immersive technologies? Can atrocities and acts of war be resurrected in a VR experience?
   - Will Virtual and Augmented Reality applications be a common feature of exhibitions or memory sites in the future and what are the expected implications for concepts of witnessing and historical learning in the long run?

3. Audiences
   - Did the audience for historical representations in the digital sphere significantly in- or decrease, or change in any way? Did that have any impact on the authors/institutions responsible?
   - How did more participatory and interactive approaches in digital formats challenge and change the understanding of "audiences" which has so far been mostly related to on-site events? What changes in the ways in which institutions interact with different audiences? How do audiences interact amongst themselves in the digital sphere?
   - How does the co-construction of historical knowledge work when spectators are transformed into users, "prosumers" and "produsers" of historical content in digital formats? How does "produsing" as a collaborative approach reverberate with the institutions responsible for the digital content?

Applications are not restricted to responding solely to these questions; we also encourage applications that introduce other aspects of the topic. It is, however, decisive that applicants not only reflect on best practices but also elaborate on the theoretical and conceptional aspects of digital public history, or develop ideas for how to place the experiences of the Covid-19 crisis into broader conceptual and theoretical frameworks.

The workshop will provide space for exchange on trends, practices and experiences of digital public history in Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe. It is our aim to publish some of the papers as a special issue in the online-journal *Cultures of History Forum*.

Please send an abstract with max. 1000 words and a short biographical note by **October 15, 2021** to juliane.tomann@uni-jena.de and ec.pettai@uni-jena.de. The workshop is planned as an on-site event in Jena, Germany, and the Imre Kertész Kolleg will cover accommodation and travel expenses according to the rules and regulations of the respective Thuringian legislation. Should you have any further questions regarding possible topics or practical matters, please do not hesitate to contact us.