

Libraries of Ukraine as Centers of Digital Art Events: Transformation of Functions and New Formats of Cultural Communication^{*}

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Abstract

The article examines the role of libraries in Ukraine as centers for organizing digital art events in modern conditions of martial law, post-war reconstruction and global digitalization. The transformation of libraries from traditional knowledge repositories into interactive cultural platforms capable of uniting communities and forming new communication formats is shown. Particular attention is paid to the implementation of innovative practices, in particular, virtual exhibitions, VR/AR technologies, online exhibitions and art events in the digital environment, which help to overcome spatial and temporal barriers and ensure the wide availability of cultural practices. It is noted that digitalization opens new opportunities for libraries and at the same time requires the development of digital infrastructure and the training of specialists. It has been proven that libraries are not only intermediaries between the user and the document, but also moderators of cultural dialogue, initiators of creative practices and key actors of cultural digitalization. It is concluded that in the long run, libraries can transform into laboratories of digital culture, where traditional and modern forms of creativity are combined, ensuring the sustainability of cultural identity and its modern transformation.

Keywords

library, library transformation, library hub, cultural communication, public space, cultural digitalization, interactive cultural platforms

1. Introduction

In modern conditions, when the world is experiencing global digitalization, and Ukraine is going through a difficult period of martial law and post-war reconstruction, libraries are transforming from traditional knowledge repositories into innovative, technologically equipped hubs. They are no longer just passive intermediaries between the user and the book, but become active actors in the process of cultural digitalization, which is driven by urgent social needs.

This transformation requires a profound rethinking of the role of libraries, given their ability to implement state-of-the-art technologies to increase access to information and cultural goods. Today, leading library institutions are not only digitizing their collections, but also actively implementing tools that make content interactive and immersive. This includes the use of VR/AR technologies to create virtual tours and exhibitions, the use of specialized software to manage digital archives, and the implementation of cloud platforms to provide remote access to resources.

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In this context, the study of the role of libraries as organizers of digital art events that open new opportunities for cultural communication in the modern information society is of relevance. We aim to analyze how digital technologies – from platforms for creating online exhibitions to tools for multimedia installations – are changing traditional practices of cultural exchange. An important goal is to outline innovative formats of cultural events (virtual performances, interactive lectures, master classes) that libraries are implementing thanks to digital infrastructure, forming a new model of interaction that combines educational, artistic and social functions.

2. Related works

A review of modern scientific approaches to innovation and transformation processes in the library sphere and the study of concepts of strategic development of the library indicate that this topic occupies one of the leading places in the focus of scientific research and is of interest to many both Ukrainian and foreign scientists and practitioners. It should be noted that it has been quite popular in recent years.

Thus, in the scientific work of G. Prystai "The Library as a Component of the Cultural and Artistic Environment of the Region" (2016) it is stated that modern libraries should develop the cultural environment of the region in cooperation with other socio-cultural institutions in the interests of all its residents, providing information, resource and socio-communication infrastructure for productive creative interactions" [1, p. 5].

O. Marina's dissertation research "Libraries of Ukraine in the Digital Media Space: Theoretical and Methodological Foundations of Development" (2018) considers the adaptation of Ukrainian libraries to the digital media space, which will significantly "balance the pace of technological and social development of libraries in the digital media space and contribute to the introduction of social and communication technologies" [2, p. 10].

In the monograph "Information and Documentary Support for the Development of the Social and Communication Space of Culture in Ukraine", the scientist V. Dobrovolska emphasizes that "cultural institutions, in particular archives, libraries, museums as centers of social communications, traditionally perform the function of centers of social life and social communication..., they have always been environments for communication, exchange of ideas, accumulation of information and knowledge, formation of multidirectional groups of people" [3, p. 177]. Given this, their role in cultural communication with the community is undeniable.

O. Ivashkevych in his article "Digital Transformation of Libraries in Ukraine: Present and Prospects" (2021) analyzes the role of modern libraries and concludes that they "in practice rethink their mission in society, transforming into an intellectual center and technological hubs"[4, p. 54].

However, there are still many issues that need to be resolved when clarifying the role of libraries in cultural communication with the community.

The purpose of our article is to determine the role of libraries as initiators and organizers of digital art events that open up new opportunities for cultural communication in the modern information society. Special attention is paid to the analysis of how digital technologies transform traditional practices of cultural exchange, contribute to the integration of libraries into the art space and allow establishing a dialogue with different audiences, including young people and remote users.

An important goal of the study is also to outline innovative formats of cultural events (online exhibitions, virtual performances, multimedia installations, interactive lectures and workshops) that libraries implement through digital platforms. All this should prove that such practices not only expand the communicative horizons of libraries, but also form a new model of cultural interaction, which combines educational, artistic and social functions.

3. Methodology

In the modern information and communication environment, libraries are increasingly

integrated into the cultural space, using digital technologies to create new formats of artistic communication. This process requires appropriate scientific understanding, which should be based on interdisciplinary approaches and take into account the specifics of libraries as unique socio-cultural institutions. The methodological basis of the study combines library science, cultural studies and communication concepts focused on the study of innovative practices.

With this in mind, it is advisable to use several models and methods of analysis.

The methodology of digital humanities allows you to study cultural processes in a virtual space, analyzing how digital tools transform artistic practices and interaction with audiences. This includes exploring the use of specialized software (e.g. for creating 3D models and virtual tours) and web platforms (for organizing online exhibitions and events), allowing libraries to become active participants in digital art practices.

The "library as a cultural hub" model reveals the role of libraries as interactive platforms for artistic events and creative communication. It allows us to consider the library not as a repository, but as an open space where education, art and communication are combined.

The case study methodology aims to study specific examples of digital art initiatives in libraries. This method allows you to analyze successful practices and their impact on expanding the audience, forming an innovative image of libraries and integrating them into the world cultural process.

In addition, to strengthen the empirical base of the study, an extended survey was conducted among visitors and remote users, which includes questions about their attitude to specific digital platforms (online exhibitions, webinars, VR studios) and their readiness to use new technologies. This will allow you to obtain objective data on the perception of library innovations. Additionally, you can use web analytics tools to track traffic and user behavior on digital library resources (for example, the number of visits, time spent on the page, interaction with content).

Together, these approaches form a comprehensive research toolkit that helps to explore how new communication practices are changing the place and function of libraries in today's society.

4. Results/Discussion

The analysis of the selected methodological approaches made it possible to identify the key trends and features of the development of libraries as organizers of digital art events. The use of the methodology of digital humanities made it possible to consider the library in the broader context of cultural communication, focusing on new forms of interaction with the audience in the online space. The application of the "library as a cultural hub" model has demonstrated that libraries are able to go beyond traditional functions and form interactive platforms for creativity and dialogue.

The results of the case study, in turn, confirmed the effectiveness of the practical implementation of digital art formats in the activities of libraries of various types – from national to public. This made it possible to see how specific projects contribute to the expansion of the audience, the formation of an innovative image of libraries and their integration into the global cultural process. The results obtained create the basis for further discussion on the prospects for improving cultural communication in the digital age.

In particular, the practical application of the methodology of digital humanities has shown that libraries are becoming active participants in digital art practices, integrating modern technologies into cultural communications. For example, the Yaroslav the Wise National Library of Ukraine [5] organizes virtual exhibitions that allow you to present artistic heritage in digital format. The library regularly hosts online exhibitions of virtual books dedicated to significant anniversaries, important social dates and literary figures. Among them are "To the 90th Anniversary of the Birth of Halyna Gordasevich (1935–2001), Ukrainian Poetess, Prose Writer, Public Figure" (<https://nlu.org.ua/vustavki.php?id=1370>); "To the 50th anniversary of the birth of Rostyslav Semkiv (1975), Ukrainian writer, literary critic, critic, translator, publisher" (<https://nlu.org.ua/vustavki.php?id=1378>); "Ukrainian Book Publishing of the Late 19th – Early

Twentieth Centuries. Ukrainian Publishing Houses in Exile" (<https://nlu.org.ua/vustavki.php?id=1388>), etc.

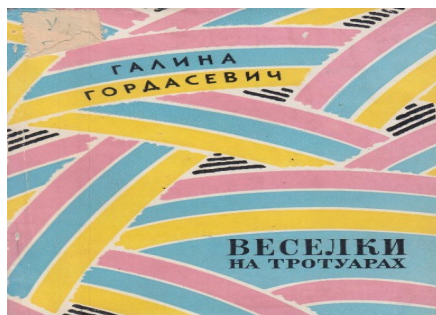


Figure 1: Fragment of the exhibition dedicated to Halyna Gordasevich

These exhibitions serve as a convenient form of presenting documentary materials from the library's collections, the online version of which is available on the institution's website.

For example, the British Library implements online galleries using interactive tools. Among its well-known digital collections is the British Library Sounds platform, which presents audio materials: accents, dialects, music recordings, jazz and popular music, nature sounds, etc.

The Library of Congress offers digital collections of art materials with multimedia support. As an example, we can cite the following: "Collection of memories: treasures from the Library of Congress" (presentation of artifacts (voice/video recordings, manuscripts, photographs, maps, etc.) that reflect collective memory; it is known that it has been open since June 2024); "Swann Gallery" (exhibition of political cartoons, comics and illustrations); "Not an Ostrich: and Other Images from the American Library" (exhibition of photographs from daguerreotypes to modern digital images), etc. There are also thematic online exhibitions, for example: "Thomas Jefferson", "Women Come to the Front: Journalists, Photographers and TV Presenters during World War II", etc.

All these examples of such online exhibitions testify to the effectiveness of Digital Humanities as a tool for creating new formats of cultural interaction.

The "Libraries as a Cultural Hub" model has gained popularity. Within the framework of this approach, libraries are considered as open platforms for creative communication, combining the functions of education, art development and communication. In Ukraine, an example is the Roman Ivanychuk Lviv Regional Library for Youth [6], which organizes various events (meetings with writers, famous people, master classes, etc.), multimedia art events, and online broadcasts of cultural events (<https://www.facebook.com/bibliotekanarynku>).



Figure 2: Moments of the meeting that united the audience around the book by Iryna Savka "Heavenly Umbrella"



Figure 3: Poster for the master class "Creating a unique shopping bag using the embossing technique"

A vivid example in this direction is the activity of the Central Library of the Poltava territorial community[7]. The staff of the institution conducts many creative events, including: a historical journey in 3D format during a meeting with the Poltava historian, local historian and publisher Oleg Lebedynskyi, who reconstructed the image of historical monuments, monuments and cultural centers of the city with the help of the latest computer technologies.



Figure 4: Fragment of the event "Historical Journey in 3D Format"

The exhibition-installation "Light of Freedom", dedicated to the Independence Day, was also interesting.



Figure 5: Fragments of the exhibition-installation "Light of Freedom"

One of the modern areas of library activity is the introduction of virtual (VR) and augmented reality (AR) technologies. A vivid example of this is the V. G. Korolenko Kharkiv State Scientific Library [8], which was one of the first in Ukraine to provide its visitors with the opportunity to travel digitally. His project "Virtual Tour of Ukraine" opened access to interactive tours of cities, museums, monuments and other cultural and historical locations of our country. In addition, an

interesting form of work in this library are online quizzes aimed at forming knowledge about the history and culture of the Kharkiv region, in particular: "Art Kharkiv Region" (created to popularize the art history of the region); "Kharkiv Metro: From Idea to Legend"; scientific and educational project "Sweet Mosaic: The History of Georges Bormann's "Chocolate Empire", which tells the story of a famous Kharkiv enterprise, etc.

Virtual exhibitions of the same library have become a modern tool for popularizing book and documentary collections, cultural heritage and scientific achievements. Thanks to digital technologies, users have the opportunity to get acquainted with thematically structured collections of literature, archival materials, rare publications and art exhibits in a convenient online format. Such exhibitions not only expand access to the library's funds, but also form a new cultural and educational space, combining scientific research, local history and creative approaches to presenting information. They are an important step in the development of digital communication between the library and the community, contributing to raising the level of information culture and preserving national memory. For example, you can name the following: "Professor L. Tsenkovsky – Ukrainian Pasteur" (<https://surl.li/gjpnrd>); "Oleksandr Zasyadko: Creator of Ukrainian Combat Missiles" (<https://surl.li/bdycfr>); "Maria Zankovetska – a legend of Ukrainian theater" (<https://surl.li/riottn>) and others.

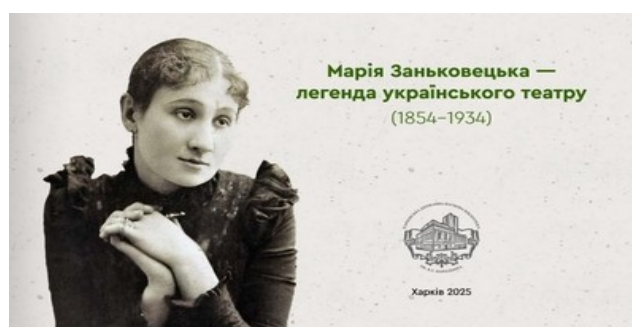


Figure 6: Virtual exhibition "Maria Zankovetska – the legend of Ukrainian theater"

The Scientific Library of the National Academy of Culture and Arts is also actively working on the creation of thematic virtual exhibitions [9], which present a wide range of projects dedicated to the history of culture, artistic phenomena, prominent figures of Ukrainian and world science and art. Its online exhibitions are distinguished by a carefully thought-out structure, scientific content and visual appeal, which allows not only to get acquainted with the collections, but also to perceive exhibitions as an interactive educational and cultural resource. Thanks to the use of digital technologies, the library forms a virtual space that provides continuous access to knowledge, contributes to the professional development of future specialists in the field of culture and art, and at the same time popularizes Ukrainian cultural heritage in the world information space. For example: "World PR Specialist Day"; "Art and Culture" (exhibition dedicated to World Art Day); "Yuriy Andrukhovych" (a virtual exhibition dedicated to the 65th anniversary of the birth of the Ukrainian writer, poet, essayist, translator, leader of postmodern literature); "Language as a Code of the Nation" (virtual exhibition dedicated to the Day of Ukrainian Writing and Language), etc.

Poland is also actively developing similar initiatives: for example, the Lublin Library regularly hosts interactive literary and artistic events in a hybrid access format (offline + online). Such examples demonstrate that the cultural hub model allows libraries to become centers of creative industries and digital culture.

Recently, the case study methodology has been increasingly used in the activities of Ukrainian libraries, which allows you to analyze specific successful practices of digital art projects of libraries. Thus, the V. G. Korolenko Kharkiv State Scientific Library was one of the first to introduce interactive innovations for the presentation of its collections and cultural projects. Virtual exhibitions allow users to remotely explore rare publications and archival materials, and the use of VR/AR technologies creates a "presence effect" at the exhibition. All this will contribute to

expanding access to collections, innovative promotion of knowledge and attracting young audiences.

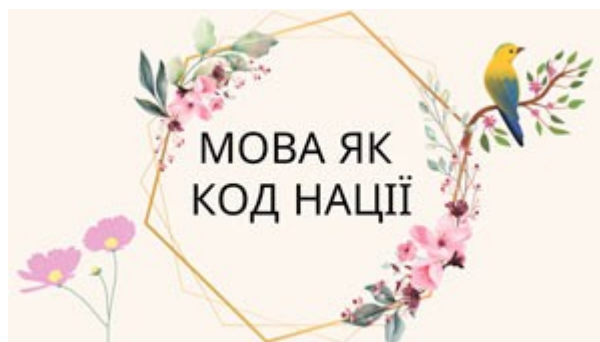


Figure 7: Virtual exhibition "Language as a code of the nation"

The Yaroslav the Wise National Library of Ukraine presents cases of its educational and outreach programs, in particular, implements a series of online lectures and interactive media literacy projects in the format of Zoom meetings and broadcasts on social networks. Thanks to this, during martial law, it was possible to preserve the educational and cultural function of the library, ensure the continuity of the cultural and educational process, and support the community of readers in crisis conditions.

The Odesa National Scientific Library [10] has examples of cases of the introduction of digital resources. Thus, the library organizes large-scale conferences with the possibility of online participation, combining scientific communication, presentation of publications and exhibitions. This makes it possible to attract participants from different countries and expand professional contacts, form an international scientific space and popularize the library as a cultural brand.

The V. Stefanyk Lviv National Scientific Library of Ukraine[11] demonstrates examples of digitization and representation of cultural heritage in the public domain (<https://www.lsl.lviv.ua/index.php/uk/golovna2/>).

Public libraries in Kyiv and territorial communities implement coworking formats, creative studios, psychological support for internally displaced people, organize master classes, communication clubs, educational initiatives for children and adults, etc.

Such examples confirm that the case study method in library practice becomes not only a tool for analysis, but also a means of promoting innovations, sharing experience, and forming a positive image of libraries in society.

Among foreign examples, we can mention the illustrative activities of the New York Public Library, which creates digital art installations in collaboration with artists, and the National Library of France, which offers virtual tours of art collections. The analysis of these cases confirms that digital art events contribute to audience expansion, youth engagement, and increased cultural mobility of users.

In the summer, while undergoing library and archival practice, 2nd year students of the specialty B 13 "Library, Information and Archival Affairs", who took it in the Central Library of the Poltava Territorial Community (Poltava), conducted a small study. Visitors to the library were asked to take a test that included the following questions: Do you perceive the library as: 1) an information center; 2) cultural and artistic center; 3) a place for entertainment; 4) volunteer center. 4,402 people took part in the survey. The results of the study are presented in the diagram (Figure 8).

Thus, for the majority of respondents, the library retains its main educational mission as an information center (49%, 2,158 people). At the same time, 30.5% (1,344 people) consider it a center of cultural and artistic events. Accordingly: 18.9% (832 people) as a place of entertainment, 1.5% (68 people) – as a volunteer center. That is, the new social roles of the library are gradually consolidated in the perception of its visitors. Recently, the model of integrated cultural

communication has gained momentum, which has become a synthesis of various channels of interaction (social networks, online platforms, multimedia tools). In this model, libraries play the role of coordinator of communication flows between cultural representatives, different communities and audiences.

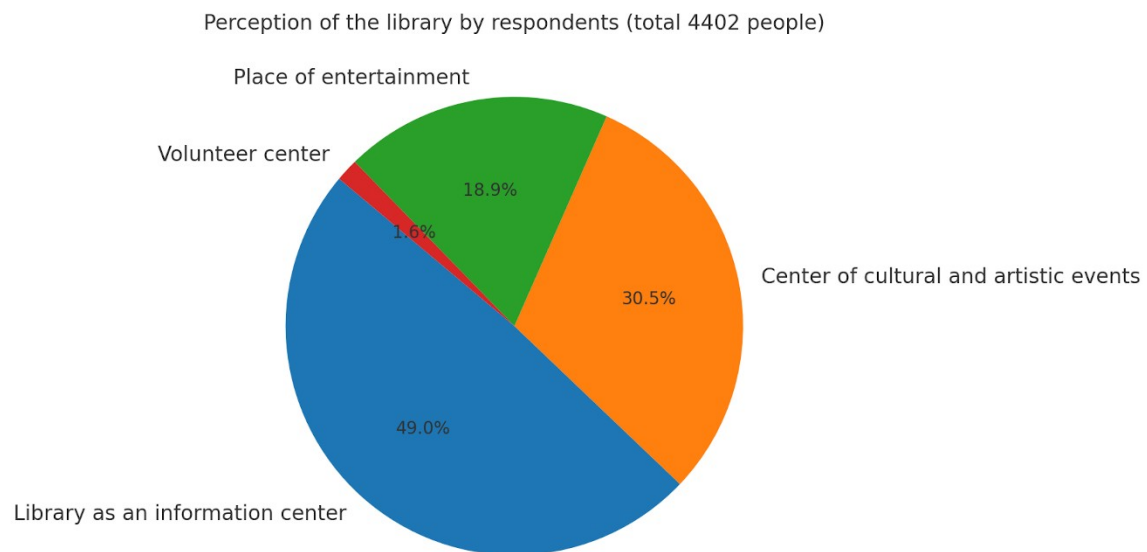


Figure 8: Results of a survey on readers' perception of the library

A review of modern scientific approaches to innovation and transformation processes in the library sector shows that this topic is one of the leading in scientific research and is of interest to many Ukrainian and foreign scientists and practitioners. Research confirms that websites and digital libraries are not just platforms for consulting and reviewing content, but also tools for building connections with local communities. For example, the Rakkonigi Castle Digital Library was created as part of a project with the aim of making heritage available digitally while engaging and expanding the local community [12].

The researchers also note that, despite active digitalization, physical library spaces remain important. The library serves as a space for learning and reading, expanding the private circle of users beyond their home environment. An analysis based on observations of online spaces during the COVID-19 pandemic revealed a high demand for working outside the home, even with digital alternatives. This study highlights that physical presence in the library helps to establish certain forms of co-presence, routine, and socialization among like-minded people[13].

Marketing and promotion of services are also becoming key for libraries of all types and sizes. A study containing an in-depth analysis of marketing strategies in South Africa's universities and public libraries found that university libraries predominantly focus on digital marketing strategies leveraging the technological knowledge of their users. Instead, public libraries take a community-based approach, using a combination of traditional and digital methods. The choice of these strategies depends on local factors such as budget, demographics, and technological accessibility[14].

In addition, libraries play a crucial role in promoting metaliteracy, a comprehensive approach that rethinks information literacy in the context of a rapidly evolving digital environment. This approach emphasizes that users must not only consume information, but also create and critically analyze it, which is especially relevant in the era of disinformation and fake news. By embedding metaliteracy in library services, institutions strengthen their position as reliable sources of knowledge and adapt to the demands of society. Incorporating media literacy, digital technology, and artificial intelligence into library programs can significantly improve societal understanding and engagement[15].

It is becoming clear that libraries are moving away from static presentation of information and

are actively implementing tools that make content interactive and accessible to a wide audience.

Virtual exhibitions, such as those created by the Yaroslav the Wise National Library of Ukraine, become a powerful tool for presenting artistic and book heritage. To create them, specialized platforms and software are used that allow you to digitize traditional exhibitions. For example, tools such as Artsteps or Matterport can be used to create 3D tours and virtual galleries, which provide the effect of "presence", allowing users to "walk" through the exhibition from anywhere in the world.

The introduction of virtual (VR) and augmented reality (AR) technologies is one of the modern areas of library activity. For example, the Kharkiv State Scientific Library named after V. G. Korolenko provided its visitors with the opportunity to travel around Ukraine in digital format by creating the project "Virtual Tour of Ukraine". To implement such immersive projects that create an "immersive effect", game engines such as Unity or Unreal Engine, as well as mobile applications that integrate elements of augmented reality to "bring to life" physical objects, can be used.

To ensure the educational and cultural function in crisis situations, such as martial law, libraries actively use digital platforms to communicate with the audience. The Yaroslav the Wise National Library of Ukraine conducts online lectures and media literacy projects via Zoom and broadcasts on social networks. In addition, libraries, including the Roman Ivanychuk Lviv Regional Library for Youth, use Facebook to broadcast cultural events online, which allows them to attract a wide audience and expand the boundaries of access to art.

These examples show that libraries use a diverse range of digital tools, allowing them to transform from traditional repositories to interactive cultural platforms. This contributes not only to expanding access to knowledge, but also to the formation of a new model of cultural interaction, where technology is combined with art and education.

5. Conclusions

In modern conditions, due to both martial law and the needs of post-war reconstruction, and global processes of digitalization and cultural policy, libraries in Ukraine are becoming important centers for organizing digital art events. They are increasingly going beyond the traditional functions of storing and maintaining documents, transforming into interactive cultural platforms capable of uniting communities and forming new communication formats.

The study demonstrates the multifunctionality of the library in public perception and confirms its ability to respond to new challenges and needs of the community.

Modern library institutions are actively introducing innovative forms of work: creating virtual exhibitions, developing VR/AR studios, organizing online exhibitions and art events in digital formats. This approach allows overcoming spatial and temporal barriers, ensuring the accessibility of cultural practices for a wide range of users, and promoting the integration of Ukrainian culture into the global digital space.

Foreign and Ukrainian researchers emphasize that digitalization opens up new opportunities for cultural institutions, but at the same time requires the training of specialists, the development of digital infrastructure, and the rethinking of traditional models of cultural interaction.

Studies emphasize that the library becomes not only an intermediary between the user and the book, but also an interpersonal communicator, moderator of cultural dialogue, and initiator of creative practices.

In this context, digital art events are of particular importance. They form a new type of interpersonal communication, where the user is both a participant and a creator of the cultural process. Social networks, interactive platforms, multimedia formats allow libraries to work with different target audiences, expanding the limits of access to art and knowledge.

Thus, libraries are becoming key actors in cultural digitalization. Their role is not only to preserve and disseminate knowledge, but also to create new formats of cultural communication that combine information, art and technology.

We are deeply convinced that in the future, libraries can become real laboratories of digital

culture, where the synthesis of traditional and modern forms of creativity will take place, which will ensure the sustainability of cultural identity and its modern transformation.

Declaration on Generative AI

During the preparation of this work, the authors used Grammar to check grammar and spelling.

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