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UNIVERSITY MUSEUMS OF GREAT BRITAIN: REPRESENTATIONAL FUNCTION

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The purpose of this article is detection of different possibilities for the representation of a university corporation in the UK realized through various museum practices. This research focuses on two groups of university museums selected on the principle whether they form some kind of a narrative or they can be examined as a anarrative. The presence or absence of the physical space of the museum was also taken into account.

Various approaches were used during the research: analysis of representations and visual studies of museums; museum audience research, analysis of the interaction between museum spaces and urban community. As a result, the cases presented in the article bring us closer to understanding of how a museum changes, and what public and museum workers themselves invest in this concept, and how museum practices are used by British universities for accumulating their history.

Key words: history of universities, museum studies, University museums, United Kingdom, representations of the past.

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In Europe (including Great Britain) during the XX c. we can observe the transformation of the educational function as a typical for the university museums process – it should be noticed that they had been founded mostly as teaching collections. This type of museums is traditionally characterized not only by their administrative and financial dependence on the University but also by their integration into the academic teaching, scientific, social and cultural practices. So in the traditional model we can observe interdependence between university and its museum(s) (Stanbury, 2000, p. 6).

However after significant changes of the teaching methods that took place in many disciplines and the reduction of the subject-oriented learning university museums lost their traditional aims and practices including real "dissection" of museum pieces on biology and chemistry lessons, on seminars in physical and chemical laboratories. Simultaneously in the 1970s the funding for the British university museums was slushed because of the financial crisis. It led to the dispersion of collections and to the closure of some museums that had no financial autonomy [Merriman, 2002, p. 72, about situation in other regions see: Willunson, 2000]. This difficult situation persisted at the beginning of the XXI c. Thus, at that time most of the British university museums had to resolve urgent problems related to the further strategies for their functioning and, in particular, to procuring of the exhibits' conservation. The results of investigation that were published by N. Merriman in 2002 can show some consequences of this situation. They are based on sociological survey of the university museums that include interviews obtained in Scotland in 1990, in Northern England in 1993, and later during the 1990s in various regions of the United Kingdom. Merriman highlighted problems such as a lack of money and staff, the fact that at the same time some collections had no public access [Merriman, 2002, p. 75].

Since the late 1980s transformations of the university museums were analyzed by scholars [Stanbury, 2002, p. 1]. In the beginning of the XXIst c. increased attention to this problem was closely related to the materiality turn in anthropology and intellectual history. Following this approach, researchers study collections of the university museums (including scientific instruments, inventions, experimental apparatus, medical and biological preparations etc.) for reconstruction and analysis of the evolution of knowledge and educational practices. [Kozak, 2018]. Sometimes university science museum try to overcome 'placelessness' of their spaces and exhibit proper archaic forms of space organization and representation of items as a monuments of the history of science (See, for example of a successful project the case of the Zoological museum, a part of the Science Museum of the University of Coimbra, Portugal, official website: [Museu da Ciência da Universidade de Coimbra]).

Nevertheless in the XXIth c. university museums try to conserve another their important function, namely, a representation of the academia and its corporation. They attempt to demonstrate uniqueness of their institution not only to their students, professors, university entrants and their parents but also to the

external visitors that do not belong to the academic sphere. We should underline that museum collection (or collections) are considered as a very important prestigious attribute of any significant higher education institute in the United Kingdom [Merriman, 2002, p. 76].

These academic institutions use various types of museum for self-representation including the previous type of science museums. Some of major museum projects aim to represent all university culture not only on regional or national but also on universal level. We should mark two of them: The European Museum of Students in Bologna, Italy (([MEUS: The European Museum of Students], see about its origins and purposes: [Brizzi, 2010]) and the virtual International Museum of the Student of the University of Salamanca, Spain [Museo Internacional del Estudiante]. Both these projects are dedicated to international student culture and thus demonstrate evolution of student costumes, feasts, songs and rituals. At the same time both projects aim to represent their institutions. The MEUS should confirm the international prestige of the University of Bologna as the first university in the world (so-called *Alma mater studiorum*). The virtual museum of Salamanca emphasizes specifics of this old university as one of the best examples of the traditional student culture. We will observe similar diversity of the levels of self-representation (institutional, local, regional, national) in the British cases.

Representational function of university museum is widely discussed. Practices used for the translation of the university history and traditions through museum collections are criticized. A number of researchers bring up questions: why did the university select some types of items for the public exposure? Why did it so often hush the voices of marginalized groups excluded from the public sphere by this selection? [Macdonald, 2006, p. 3–4]. Thus, in the study of the British university museums we should consider both external and internal diversity of the self-representational purposes and practices.

The focus of our investigation is the problem of the representation of the academic past in the university museums of the United Kingdom. We will observe how historical images are constructed as a part of identity of the academic corporation. We will discuss what exactly a particular university wants to show in its museum exhibition, what practices and strategies are preferred, who is the target audience of these museums.

The British university museum spaces that use different approaches for the representation of the academic past were sampled during this research. We excluded such "giants" as museum complexes of the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge that have massive archeological, scientific and art collections because the identities of these universities (and their museums) are closely related to the cities and local and regional history. The mission of these museums does not include a narration about university corporation.

The study revealed various practices of the representation of the past used by university museums. Basing on the criterion of (a)narrativity they can be divided into two groups.

The first group embraces narrative practices. They are used when a museum (including online-museum) adheres to the procedural narrative in its approaches to the demonstration of collections. Such museum "guides" a visitor towards certain way by introducing the museum pieces and constructing and interpreting the past of the university. This way represents the process of university development. It could be compiled chronologically or through the integration of smaller plots into a larger narrative.

Within the use of anarrative practices the elimination of narrative elements is often related to the rejection of consistent historical interpretations. We can distinguish different levels of how museums are involved in creating (or deconstructing) some narratives in their space. Therefore discussing cases of narrative practices we can talk about the limitedness of the narrative element, but rarely about its complete absence.

The narrative museum practices of the first type are used in the Museum of the University of St Andrews (MUSA) [The Museum of the University of St Andrews] and the King's museum of the Univerity of Aberdeen. In this cases we will also observe the practices of representation that are used for the work with archive in the University of Dundee, Scotland [Archive Collections of the University of Dundee] and in the online-projects of the University of Edinburgh [The Centre for Research Collections (CRC) of the University of Edinburgh].

We will analyze anarrative practices in the cases of the Arts University Bournemouth (AUB), South West England, museums of the University of East Anglia [The Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts] and the museum of the University of Dundee [LifeSpace Science Art Research Gallery].

We also consider the presence or absence of the physical space that could be used by museums. Sometimes representative practices of the university and its museums can be implemented through periodic applying of the archive funds temporary exhibitions or through the online-projects. Understanding of the role of physical space and virtuality in the life of a modern museum is an actual problem for the contemporary museum studies. [Shlyahtina, 2013, s. 13.] Therefore, our article also poses a problem of how the universities can use museum spaces as symbolic places that can accumulate and translate academic history, its tradition and identity.

Our sources include official websites of the university museums and related materials such as plans of museum premises and buildings, documents dedicated to the digitalization of collections and collecting policy, online archives and encyclopedias, and private correspondence with the staff of museums and students.

First, we will observe the museum practices of two of the oldest Scottish universities[4]. The University of Saint Andrews is located on the North Sea coast. It was founded at the beginning of the XVth c. and became the first university in Scotland. It has the third position (after Oxford and Cambridge) in the British university ranking system that is highly regarded all over the world [University League 2019]. The University of Aberdeen is the fifth oldest in Great Britain. It was founded in 1860 by a merger between King's College (existed since XV c.) and Marischal College (XVI c.)

The first museum of the University of Saint Andrews (MUSA) was founded in 2008. Before its foundation the University conserved some objects and collections that were declared significant for forming of its identity in the past and present [Kozak Z. Op.cit.]. Now the museum is on redevelopment. It gives us an opportunity to study two its versions: the previous one and reformed museum space that is planned to be open in 2019.

Before the redevelopment, the museum was divided into four parts. They gave possibility to observe the evolution of the university and look at the students' everyday life of a past age. The first gallery was dedicated to the early history of the oldest Scottish University since 1410–1414. The second gallery proposed an 'immersion' in the life and traditions of the students of various periods (since the XV c.). Further, the visitor could see the modern academic activity, its investigations and innovations. The forth gallery was intended for temporary exhibitions.

The MUSA has an interesting collection of academic dress, antique university furniture, as well as fine and decorative arts. Its funds include scientific instruments that were used for teaching of the Natural Philosophy, Physics and Astronomy, chemical devices and artifacts [MUSA collections Centre leaflet].

These items form an academic history. For example, it was constructed with the portraits of the famous persons related to the University and took significant part in the history of Scotland, – and with the silverware and furnishings of the University buildings, for example, the spoons that were used in the dining rooms of the XVIIIth c. The exposition included (and will include) the Norwegian flag that was held by the famous explorer Fridtjof Nansen in his Arctic expedition to the North Pole in 1895. In 1926 Nansen was elected the Rector of the University of St Andrews (it is largely honorary position) and gave it a gift of this relic that became integral part of the representation of the academic past.

So the items of everyday life are the objects that could tell the official (and partly unofficial) history of the University of St Andrews. According to this story

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[4] For these cases the main sources are the sites of the university museum. For the MUSA visual plans for redevelopment of the museum (in 2019) were available.

its education does not add up to teaching and investigating activities. It is represented as an integral process that also includes a dinner held in the interim between lectures or living in rooms of residences.

The plan for 2019 has no significant conceptual changes of the four galleries. It is planned to develop two new spaces for temporary exhibitions of items from various university collections. At the same time the Museum wants to advance its potential as an university research centre. The future visitor will be able to come to the studio or working room (similar to a co-working zone). It was intended to stimulate educational processes in the MUSA and promote public involvement into the University research activities. [MUSA extension project: news].

Hence, one of the new spaces is designed as a platform for the research conferences and collective work (possibly also for the investigation) for the members of the local community and the academic corporation. In that way the local community will receive an opportunity to participate in various research practices of the University. Therefore coming together with the City and collaboration are the fields where the representative function of the Museum will be actualized.

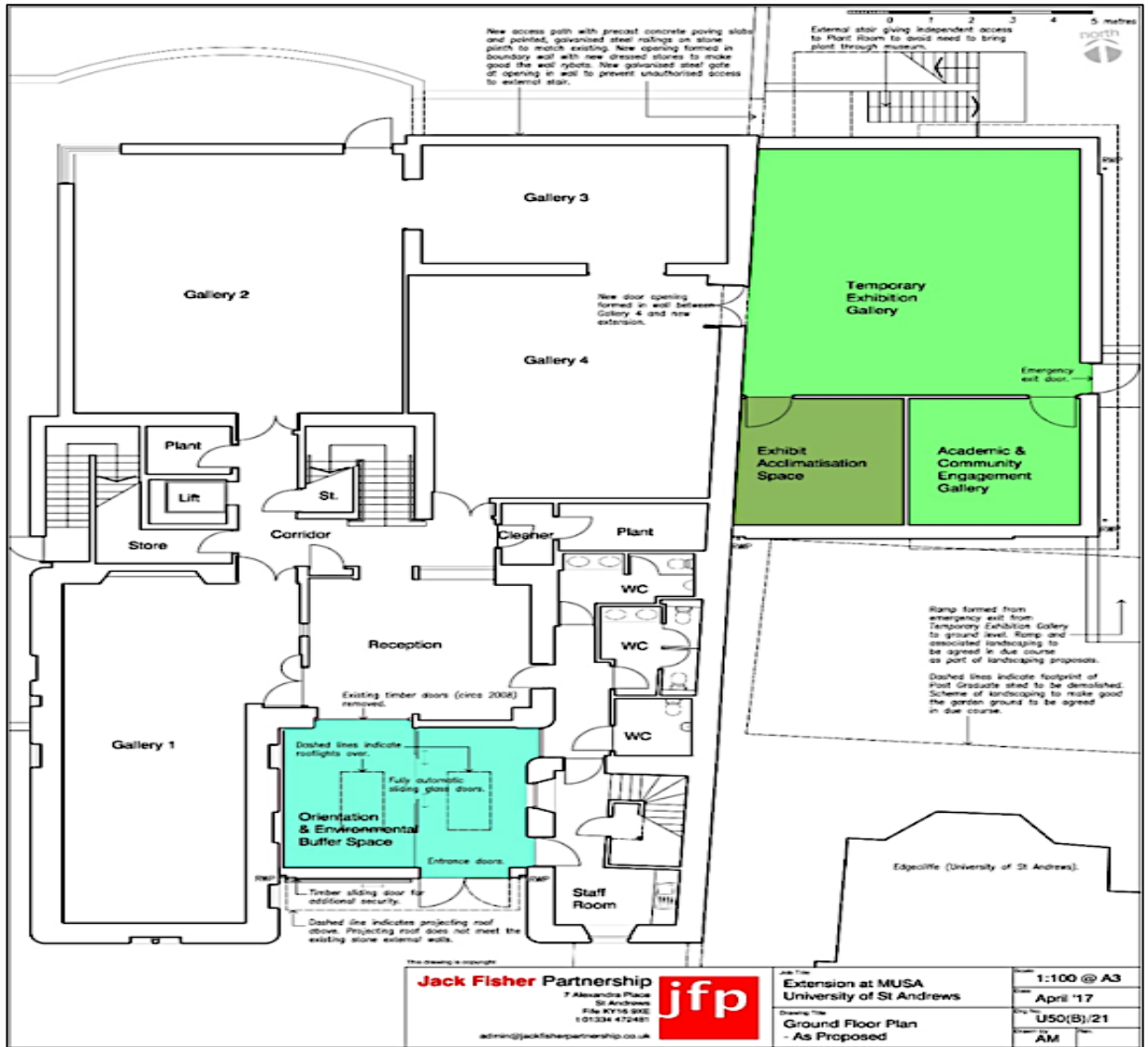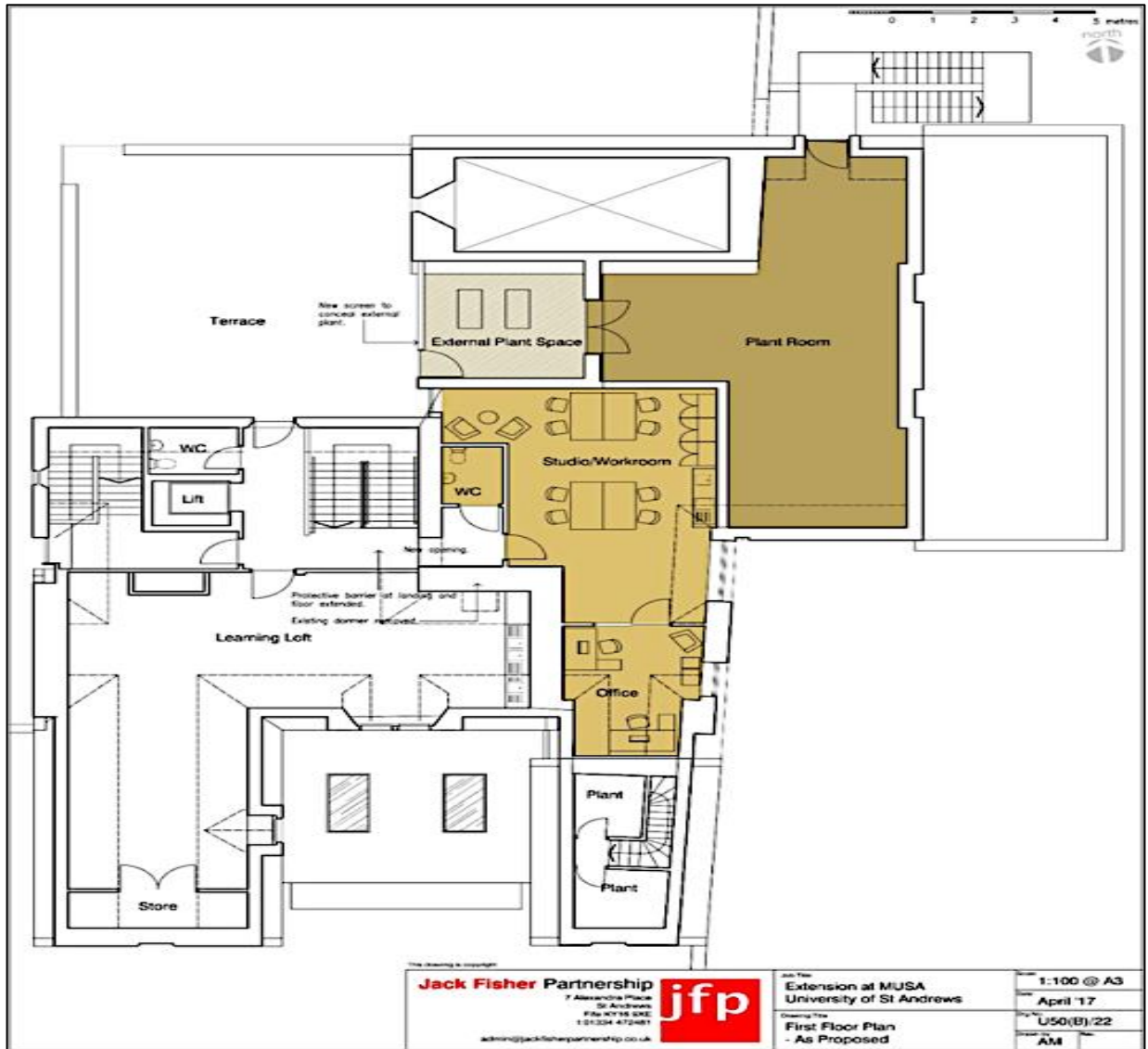*Illustration 1. Plan of the ground floor of the MUSA*

Illustration 2. Plan of the first floor of the MUSA

The King's museum of the University of Aberdeen has no permanent exposition. Every few months a new temporary exhibition starts. Both professors and students prepare these exhibitions. Like the MUSA, the museum of the University of Aberdeen is open not only for the academic corporation. It receives tourists and school students, organizes evening lectures and other public events. For example, in 2015 the museum organized the exhibition that was dedicated to the perception of the university experience (both by the students and docents) during the First World War ['Let those who come after see to it that his name be not forgotten' – Remembering U Company].

The university has massive collections that are the base for the exhibitions. Besides this "flexible" representation of the academia and its past in the constantly functioning museum spaces, the University uses another way of self-presentation. Online catalogues of its collections are published in the Internet. The archivists even propose some thematic segmentation of the items. For example, one of such

groups is presented by the collection of illustrative materials for student learning (traditional Botanic sketches) [Educational illustration] or medical collections [Medical instruments]. At the moment the Archive continues to digitalize its funds for the online collection.

Illustration 3. The building of the King's museum of the University of Aberdeen

The case of the University of Dundee[5] is another example of the representation of the academic past that is based on the materials of an archive. This university has a massive collection including arts, scientific samples, documents, notes, maps and photos. Along with the proper academic collections the University of Dundee conserves some items that belonged to the industrial corporations related to the University (for example, textile industry or local railroad companies). All these potential exhibits are administered by the Museum service of the University of Dundee. The curator organizes temporary exhibitions in different locations around the campus from time to time.

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[5] Our study of the archive of the University of Dundee is based on the information received in personal correspondence of the author with the archivists. The other sources are sites related to the University of Dundee and the document dedicated to its collecting policy and mission (June, 2016).

Now the university has no permanent exposition that could demonstrate any consistent representation of its academic history and holds temporary exhibitions that are integrated into other narratives. For example, the exhibition timed to the meeting in the Tayside Medical History Museum narrated the history of the Medical school [Medical history] that was closely related to the University [Ksenia Komoza. Exhibitions in the University of Dundee. Private correspondence. (August, 20. 2018)].

The University of Edinburgh was founded in 1582[6]. It is located in buildings of the historical Old town. Now rich collections of the University of Edinburgh and its archive (some of them are related to the academic history) are digitalized actively.

The archive is situated on the sixth floor of the main building of the university library. The access to the library can be gained (after a formal procedure) by various groups of visitors (including persons that are not students). However, some services are not free because technically this library is not the public one. At the moment there are no exhibitions dedicated to the university history in the spaces of the library. But such projects are considered in the future [Kseniya Komoza. Collections of the University of Edinburgh. Private correspondence. (August, 20. 2018)].

The specialists of the University of Edinburgh have created the online-project Our history [«Our history» project of Edinburgh University] in the formate of open encyclopedia. The website of this project includes a timeline that covers the period from the university foundation of 1557 to 2013. There are active links that guide a user to the articles dedicated to various facts of the academic history. Primarily the authors stated that they had chosen only "50 key occurrences" but later they added some stories and biographies of the persons that took part in them. People are the main theme that run all the history of the university for creators of this project [Is this a comprehensive history?]. Similar patterns of organization could be found in the second project of the University, Alumni database [Alumni Database]. Thus, the university history can be digitalized and represented in the form of a virtual collection that is constructed as a narrative. But in contrast to the tourist guides or web pages of the popular encyclopedias, it is the University itself that forms and organizes this virtual funds and databases.

In analyzed cases we can observe a complex approach to narrativity of the university museums. They use not only the "official" timeline but also biographies, private and everyday history. All these elements are integrated into the general narrative of the University.

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[6] Our sources for the study of the case of the University of Edinburgh are published and accessible online documents dedicated to the policy of digitalization of its collections, collecting policy, and online archives and encyclopedias. Along with these sources materials of the private correspondence with the staff of the archive.

Representative functions of anarrative museum practices

To a certain extent representative functions can be implemented with definitely anarrative museum practices. For example along with the mentioned online project *Out history*, the University of Edinburgh permanently digitalizes the items of its collections including objects that are important for the academic history. However, this project does not purpose to create an integrated online narrative of the University history. The digitalization aims to facilitate access to the collections for researches. The content for digitalization is chosen basing on the interests and demands of students, professors and researchers. [A digitization strategy for the University of Edinburgh]. The archive provides access to objects but gives no interpretations. Thus, we cannot state that its purpose is to "tell some story in the online space". But we can see some items that are related to the identity of the University, its history and evolution in various periods (maybe unintentionally for the authors).

We should emphasize that the Archive of the University of Edinburgh represents not only the past of its academic corporation but also all the history of education in Scotland, of course, paying special attention to the University's contribution to its development. Documents and objects from the Archive could provide good illustrations of relations between the University and the City in various epochs including 'town and gown' conflicts. The Archive conserves sources that can give information about strategies of administrative decisions in the University, and personal collections proceeding from academics. The archivists proclaim special approaches for digitalization and publication of archival items: they choose only unique data that could be useful for resolving global scientific problems. The collections are augmented with donations that are results of collaboration between academic departments and local communities and organizations.

Illustration 4. One of the items from the online collection of the University of Edinburgh [Online collections Available at: https://images-teaching.is.ed.ac.uk/luna/servlet/detail/UoEcha~4~4~345279~104761:Tertia-Ossium-Tabula?qvq=&mi=159&trs=4161 (accessed 30 Ouctober 2018].
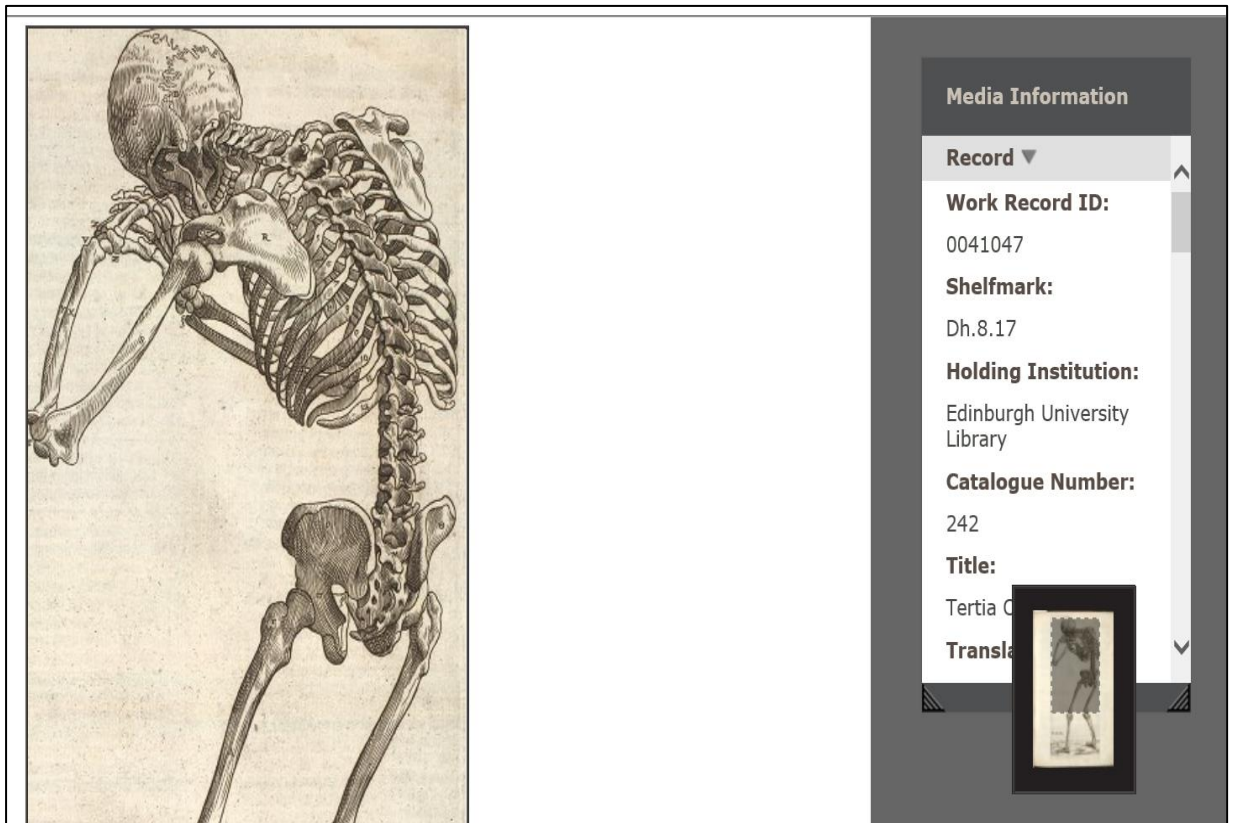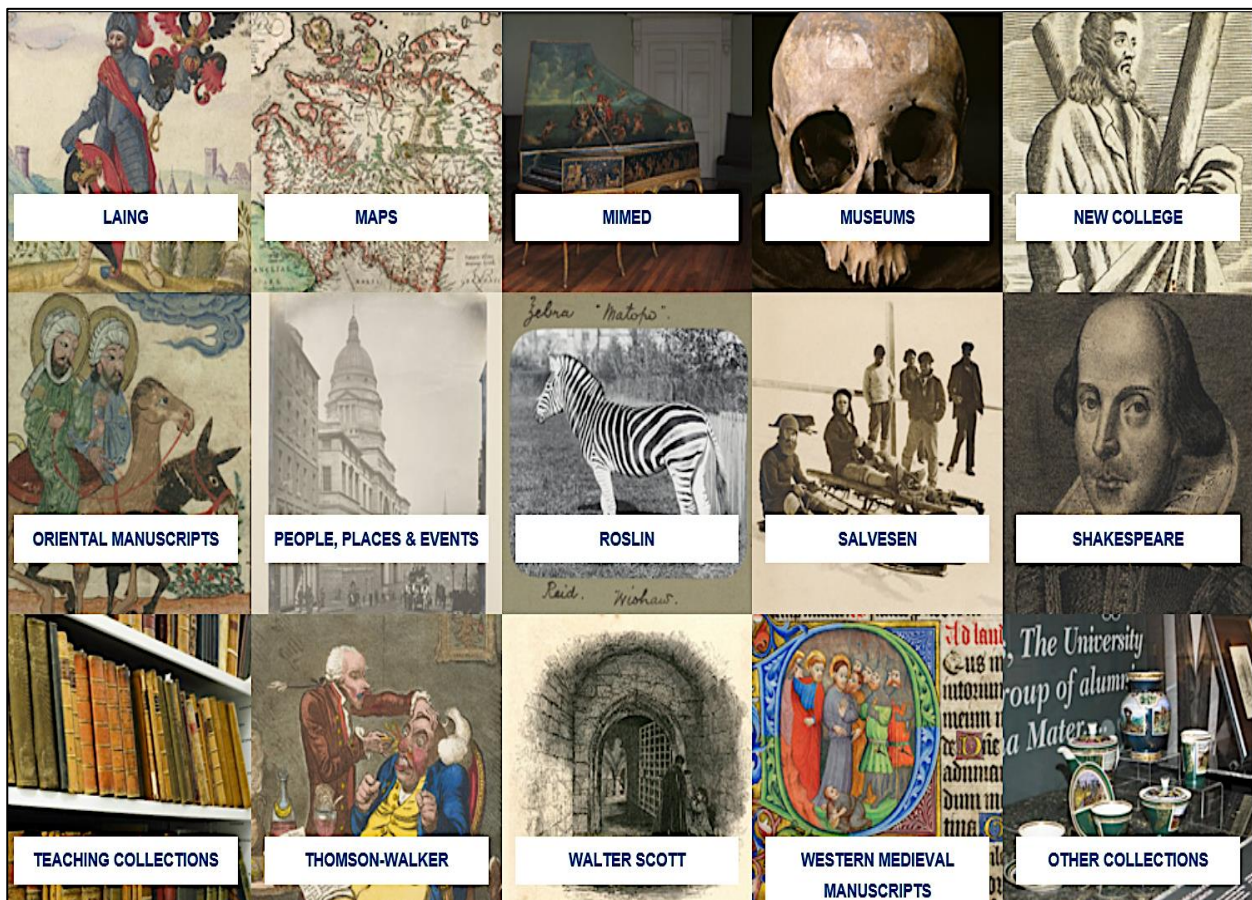
Illustration 5. Online collection of images of the University of Edinburgh [Online collections. Available at: http://images.is.ed.ac.uk/ (Accessed 20 September 2018]

Exhibitions of the Arts University of Bournemouth (AUB) demonstrate old cameras that belonged to the directors graduated this higher school, the works of its students and prizes. The items are exhibited in the same spaces where the student classes are held. These exhibitions could be visited both by students and persons that are going to matriculate the University. These exhibitions "revive" the history of cinema and photography in the context of one definite English University. Old cameras are important not only as historical objects but also as instruments of the persons related to the University. At the same time there is no narration, the Museum or the Academia does not become a "story-teller" and provides no interpretations. These objects are integrated into the academic space and exhibited only with a brief commentary about their authors or former owners but they represent identity of the University, its graduates and past.

Collections of the University of East Anglia and the Museum of the University of Dundee bear resemblance to the AUB. Their Art Centers exhibit many works, but do not provide any representation of the University as corporation. These museum spaces are given to the contemporary artists that usually have no relation to the University. But they form image of the University as a guide of up-to-date culture for any visitor. As mentioned above, the "traditional" museums are interpreted as a necessary attribute of any respectable university. Such art spaces could be comprehended as declarations of the actuality and openness of the academic corporations.

Illustration 6. Arts University Bournemouth – old cameras that belonged to the students-cameramen, from the private archive of the author.

Illustration 7. Arts University Bournemouth – prizes of former students, from the private archive of the author.

Illustration 8. Arts University Bournemouth – works of artists that were related to the University, from the private archive of the author.

Conclusion

The history of universities, everyday life of academics and students (both inside and outside academia) are represented in massive collection of old universities. We observe various practices (and reconstruct some strategies) of representation of the university identity in the museum that provide its special opportunity to "tell its own story". Sometimes it could be represented without a use of real space – through virtual collections, databases and encyclopedias, or by transformation of "usual" academic spaces – when temporary exhibitions and special events are organized.

We think that it is essential to consider if a museum or archive give any commentary or interpretation for its collection to answer the question of how the Universities represent themselves through their museums. As demonstrated below, the British universities can "tell their stories" using various narrative models and using different types of objects (including for example cameras of former students) and patterns of spatial organization. So the university museums construct new types of narratives that can represent the past of academic corporation. Sometimes items that represent elements of everyday and personal live are integrated into the general narrative that is organized chronologically and dedicated to the

development of the University. Museums also create special spaces to represent the actual academic life.

But there are some narratives based on a non-chronological organization. Sometimes a university chooses significant episodes of its history and display them by means of items from museum collections. For example, it can organize and represent its past through personal biographies of its faculty or graduates.

The choice of narrative forms and patterns is defined basing on the supposed target audience. An academic corporation needs to be self-presented not only for its own better understanding and interpretation of its past, traditions and identity but also for cooperation with persons and communities that are not involved into the academic life. Thus, many university museums (including online projects) proclaim openness and accessibility. In the cases of the MUSA and King's museum we can conclude that dialogue with local communities is one of the main functions of such spaces.

In other cases museums are oriented on the "interior audience". So the temporal exhibitions of the University of Dundee that are organized on the territory of its campus are mostly intended for academics and students. Objects exhibited on the stands in the UAB are also "very local" because only the ones who spend a lot of time in the university buildings could interact with them. The examined online projects aim to provide a resource for researchers, so they do not give interpretations for their massive collections and simply make the access to them easier. The only exception is Our History, the project of the University of Edinburgh, that creates narrative of the academic past through making selection of the key moments in the evolution of this institution and giving comments.

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