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## COMMUNICATIVE SPACE OF MODERN MUSEUMS DURING THE PANDEMIC

Yuliia Kliuchko

*PhD in Education, Associate Professor,  
ORCID: 0000-0003-1969-4308, klyuchkoy@gmail.com,  
Kyiv National University of Culture and Arts,  
36, Ye. Konovaltsia St., Kyiv, 01133, Ukraine*

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The purpose of the article is to explore the communicative space of modern museums in the conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic, to outline the main vectors of its development. The research methodology is based on the general scientific principle of objectivity, structural and functional, analytical methods are used during the analysis of the communicative space of museums in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Taking into account the current state of museums in Ukraine, the main theoretical achievements of the issue are systematized and generalized; it is shown that the topic of the research at the present stage has not yet been comprehensively reflected in the domestic scientific literature. The novelty of the article is to determine the main vectors of the development of the communicative space of foreign and domestic museums during the COVID-19 pandemic, to study the most successful projects of Ukrainian museums in the context of the transformation of the communicative space. Conclusions. The study shows that today the establishment of a sustained and constructive dialogue with its audience is an important result of the museum activities as one of the communication centers in the cultural space. This article demonstrates that there is a rather significant transformation of the museum environment and the museum communicative space, which is manifested in a combination of traditional and innovative directions, the development of adaptation strategies following the modern conditions. It is claimed that for museums the time of the pandemic is the time of mastering new communication channels, the time of pooling resources. Information technologies adjust and supplement the content of the main functions of museum's activities. Without digital technologies and digital communication, the museum is no longer able to achieve its full potential as a sociocultural and educational institution. The article shows that during the COVID-19 pandemic the Internet communication between Ukrainian museums and their audience has actually become the only way to interact. To attract a new audience, Ukrainian museums are implementing inclusion practices, rebranding, interdisciplinary and inter-museum projects, applying creative approaches to adapt educational programmes to the online format, and significantly increasing the amount of content for children and adolescents.

*Keywords:* museum; communicative space of museums; COVID-19 pandemic; digital communication; inclusion practices; museum identity; museum audience

## Introduction

The museum industry has been on the threshold of major changes for a long time. In particular, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, communication concepts for different types of museums, ideas about the criteria for the effectiveness of museum activities have changed. There is a heated debate over the content of the concept of “museum”, its features and functions. Recently, museology has been focusing on the content of the museum as an institution, its prospects, impact on society and the formation of public consciousness, and so on. The situation that has resulted from the coronavirus pandemic is likely to accelerate the transformation processes in the museum industry.

The development of the new forms and ways of communication between public museums and their audience and society during the pandemic creates the need for museums to find a new self-determination and positioning themselves both in the real social environment and in virtual space. The interaction of museums with the audience is enhanced by the fact that museums go beyond their usual exhibition activities and offer more active, partly interactive, forms of reproduction and perception of information. For the reasons given above, there is an urgent need to comprehend the museum reality and the place of the museum audience in this reality in the context of the modern sociocultural situation, to analyse current research and museum practices.

Recent research and publications analysis despite the negative effects of the current crisis, museums have proven capable of generating new ideas and experiences. During the pandemic, museums successfully moved most events online, reviewed materials from their own archives and collections, and introduced new formats of interaction with the audience. Even in conditions of physical inaccessibility, museums have begun to create an environment that is comfortable and accessible for various audiences.

Experts and museum workers are only beginning to discuss the mission, vision, and values of museums in the conditions of COVID-19. Experts from UNESCO and the International Council of Museums (ICOM) were among the first to study the museums’ activities in the conditions of the coronavirus. The research was aimed at assessing the impact of COVID-19 on museums and museum facilities. But according to experts, once the restrictions are lifted, one in ten museums may never reopen, experts noted that museums play an important role in how resilient society is in times of crisis, how well it is able to withstand difficult circumstances (UNESCO, 2020). The Network of European Museum Organizations (NEMO) conducted a survey of 650 museum managers in 41 countries to analyse the situation, management decisions, and find out statistics of quarantine losses as a part of the “Museums and quarantine” study. The part of the study was devoted to the analysis of museum contacts with their audience. In particular, more than 60% of respondents said that they had increased their online activity. The study of the means and channels of communication of museums showed the following: museums have become more active in using social networks, hashtags, shows, and stories about individual objects; the number of online excursions and virtual exhibitions has increased; the activities as to podcasts, live broadcasts and game creation have

intensified. Statistical analysis of the internet audience of museums showed that 40% of respondents note an increase of online visits from 20% to 500%; more than 70% of respondents have stepped up their social media activities, 80% of them using Facebook and 20% using Instagram as the platforms for their activities. Video conferencing (27.6%), chat programmes (16.7%), email (11.8%), and social media (8.7%) are among the most popular communication tools between museum professionals (Network of European Museum Organisations, 2020). The public international community MuseumNext, which studies modern technologies, innovative projects in the museum sector, also conducted a number of studies on the activities of museums in the conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic and promising directions for their development in the future (Richardson, 2020).

Scientific understanding of museum activities in the context of COVID-19 is carried out by the researchers of various branches of humanitarian knowledge. The issue is being actively discussed in foreign professional periodicals. Articles published in a special issue of the journal of *Museum&Society* “Isolation as a collective experience: Museums’ first responses to COVID-19” highlight the current activities of museums around the world (Levin, 2020). In the context of the research topic, publications in the *Journal of Museum Management and Curatorship* deserve consideration. In particular, D. Agostino, M. Arnaboldi, A. Lampis analysed the activities of Italian state museums during the COVID-19 crisis. The results of the study of the 100 largest state museums in Italy have shown a sharp increase in cultural materials and initiatives on the Internet. According to researchers, social networks have led to the democratization of communication, expanded the possibilities for the self-organization of society (Agostino et al., 2020). The director of the American National Gallery of Art Kaywin Feldman, while determining the phased strategy of a museum during COVID-19, emphasizes the expansion of the communicative space, testing new directions and interpretation practices in the work with the museum audience (Feldman, 2020).

The authors of the *Museums Journal* in their analytical publications also refer to the peculiarity of the development of the modern communicative museum space. The journal raises issues of attracting volunteers to museum activities, the development of museums as a component of domestic tourism, and ways to promote museum collections (Museums Association, n.d.).

### **Purpose of the article**

The purpose of the article is to explore the communicative space of modern museums in the conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic, to generalize new phenomena of world museum activity and the most successful projects of Ukrainian museums, to outline the main vectors of the transformation of the museum communicative space.

### **Main research material**

In the current sociocultural situation, the development of the museum industry is largely determined by the dynamics of the communicative space of

museums and museum-type institutions. It is necessary to take into account the systemic interdependence of communicative processes in the space of culture and museum communication processes, as well as the presence of communication in all areas of museum activity during the study of the communicative space of museums. The communicative space includes exhibition activities, mass media, local and global communication networks, museum audience, etc. Since the nineteenth century, the museum communicative space has expanded significantly. Today, researchers distinguish the internal and external space of museum communication. According to M. Kryazhevskikh, the communicative space of a museum is a category that combines the characteristics of cultural and information space in the context of the activities of a museum or museum association, includes the internal space of museum communication, where at the level of understanding, creating and demonstrating collections, cultural discourse is modeled and a model of cultural reality is created, and the external space that provides for the museum's participation in social, cultural and market relations (Kryazhevskikh, 2012).

Let's take a closer look at the communicative space of Ukrainian museums and museum-type institutions in the conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2<sup>nd</sup> All-Ukrainian forum "Museum Management in the face of COVID-19 challenges" on the basis of the D. Yavornytskyi National Historical Museum of Dnipro became important for understanding the development of the museum industry in general and determining the vectors of the museum communication development in particular. The forum discussed the functioning of museum social networks, online educational work, and presented the best museum projects and publications that appeared during the pandemic (Vseukrainskyi forum, 2020).

Participants of the webinar "Museums after quarantine: challenges and answers" discussed the challenges facing Ukrainian museums during the pandemic (Dim Franka, 2020). The event was initiated by the Franko House, the Lviv National Literary and Memorial Museum of Ivan Franko, and the Department of Culture of the Lviv City Council. Special guest Kateryna Chuieva, director-general of the National Museum of Arts named after Bohdan and Varvara Khanenko (Kyiv), president of the Ukrainian committee of the International Council of Museums (ICOM Ukraine) paid considerable attention to the issue of communication with the museum audience (VGO Coalition, 2020).

The 2<sup>nd</sup> all-Ukrainian scientific and practical conference "Museum pedagogy in scientific education" highlighted the current educational practices of museums. Among the main areas of work of the conference: issues of creating and operating the latest interactive scientific and educational spaces in Ukraine; museums and challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic; virtual museum spaces (Dovhyi, 2020).

Today, there is a rather significant transformation of the museum environment and museum communicative space. Individual production processes, tools, and forms of communication with the audience are changing. Information technologies adjust and supplement the content of the main functions of museum's activities. Modern museums can no longer ignore their presence in

the Internet space. Without digital technologies and digital communication, the museum is no longer able to achieve its full potential as a sociocultural and educational institution. Due to the pandemic, almost all activities have been transformed into a virtual space, the Internet communication between Ukrainian museums and their audience has actually become the only way to interact.

Museums have adapted their educational programmes for online use. Basic forms of cultural and educational activities (excursions, thematic master classes, etc.) were among the first to be transferred to the internet format. The tours were partly conducted in the form of edited videos or live broadcasts, during which visitors had the opportunity to get answers to their questions. Masterclasses were usually held in the format of Zoom meetings and so on. Museum experts experimented with new forms of communication with the audience, and new projects and programmes were developed online. In particular, the amount of content for children and adolescents has significantly increased.

The communicative space of Ukrainian museums has significantly expanded due to the introduction of inclusion practices. In 2020, with the support of the Ukrainian Cultural Foundation, the project “Accessibility of museums for visitors with intellectual disabilities” was implemented. Among the partners and performers of the project are the Bohdan and Varvara Khanenko National Museum of art, the State Historical and Cultural Reserve of Dubno, and the Kremenets Museum of local lore. The work of the project is presented by the publication of the book “I’m going to the museum: a book in an easy-to-read format” (Kravchenko & Rudyk, 2020b) and methodological guidelines (Kravchenko & Rudyk, 2020a), as well as a film about the development of the museum classes for people with intellectual disabilities (VGO Coalition, 2020).

In the context of inclusion practices in the museum communicative space, it is worth noting the collection “Best practices of inclusion”, published in 2020 with the support of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Ukraine. This is actually the first edition that summarizes and presents the best practices of inclusion of Ukrainian museums, examines the organization of museum policies regarding inclusivity, information, and physical accessibility of museums and exhibitions, and highlights the issues of inclusive competence of museum staff. The authors emphasize that “museums have learned to work with content and have some experience in adapting it to the needs of different target groups” and at the same time stress the need to develop specific strategies that “are aimed at the sustainability of inclusive processes, and comprehensive actions that will contain an assessment of the needs of the vulnerable groups and their own capabilities, strategic partnership, and cooperation, joint development of programmes, plans, and projects, communication strategy and representation of their services, organization of feedback, as well as elements of advocacy and fundraising” (Yasenovska & Zinenko, 2020).

It should also be noted that recently, in order to attract a new audience, the demand for museums rebranding has increased in Ukraine, and a number of interesting cases have appeared in 2019-2020. According to the professional research, branding and identity of museums contribute to the formation of necessary associations among consumers regarding their products, the

growth of the popularity of the institution (Rentschler & Hede, 2011). For example, in 2019, an identity was created for the Odesa Art Museum, which was later successfully integrated into the communicative space of this museum. In 2020, the Kyiv History Museum, the National Museum of the Kyiv Art Gallery, the National Museum of History of Ukraine received a new identity. In accordance with the new style, the team of the Kyiv History Museum is working on updating the website and social networks, plans to create new advertising posters, internal navigation in the museum ("Nova aidentyka Muzeiu istorii", 2020).

A new identity, a new official museum website, and video content about the project for the Youtube channel were created within the framework of the project "Kyiv Art Gallery. Update" in cooperation with the publishing house "Antykvart", with the support of the Ukrainian Cultural Foundation. This project also resulted in the publication of three scientific papers. In particular, an updated guidebook, which reflects the changes that have taken place in the permanent exhibition and collection of the museum, as well as the results of continuous long-term research work of its staff, was published. All publications created within the framework of the grant project "Kyiv Art Gallery. Update", did not provide for commercial distribution. "170 Ukrainian museums and cultural institutions, 100 specialized libraries, 80 higher educational institutions of Ukraine, as well as 339 individuals who managed to place an order received free copies. PDF versions of the created publications can be viewed on the website of the museum" ("Natsionalnyi muzei", 2020). The National Museum of the History of Ukraine also presented a new visual communication. The letter M was chosen as the graphic sign of the museum's logo, which becomes dynamic and easily integrated into merchandising, in particular, in the design of business cards, posters, badges, souvenirs, etc. The theme of infinity as a continuous chain of historical events connected with each other also appears in the logo. ("Nova nazva", 2020). In the view of the foregoing, we can argue that the communication space of museums has significantly expanded due to the involvement of partners for the implementation of interdisciplinary and inter-museum projects.

It should be noted that current realities increasingly provide for the formation of institutional responsibility of museum staff, new competencies, the ability to solve integrative and communicative tasks, constant readiness for changes, innovative activity, the search for non-traditional schemes in solving problems of preserving, presenting and interpreting museum collections.

The analysis of modern museum practices suggests the communicative museum space characterized by the modernization of methods, techniques, and methods of interaction with the audience based on the principles of variability, flexibility, and openness to innovation.

## Conclusions

In the conditions of COVID-19, the museum sector is adapting to the era of lockdowns, which is likely to lead to certain changes in its future activities.

A qualitatively new understanding of the special character of the museum as a sociocultural institution and its place in society is being formed. The personality of the museum visitor, his or her needs, expectations, and desires are the basis for the development of museum communication. The study shows that today the establishment of a sustained and constructive dialogue with its audience is an important result of the museum activities as one of the communication centers in the cultural space. There is a rather significant transformation of the museum environment and museum communicative space. The results of the analysis of museums' activities suggest the evolution of the communicative space, which is manifested in a combination of traditional and innovative directions, the development of adaptation strategies in accordance with modern conditions. Individual production processes, tools, and forms of communication with the audience are changing. The COVID-19 pandemic is the time of mastering new communication channels, the time of pooling resources. Information technologies adjust and supplement the content of the main functions of museum's activities. Modern museums can no longer ignore their presence in the Internet space. Without digital technologies and digital communication, the museum is no longer able to achieve its full potential as a sociocultural and educational institution. Due to the pandemic, almost all activities have been transformed into a virtual space, the Internet communication between Ukrainian museums and their audience has actually become the only way to interact. To attract a new audience, Ukrainian museums are implementing inclusion practices, rebranding, interdisciplinary and inter-museum projects, applying creative approaches to adapt educational programmes to the online format, and significantly increasing the amount of content for children and adolescents. As a result of the expansion of the museum's communicative space, the gap between the museum-communicator and the museum-storage is getting smaller, which allows visitors to immerse deeper into the museum's collections and the meanings of the artefacts preserved in them. One of our priority tasks is to set up mechanisms for the development of the museums in Ukraine, which would adapt it to modern conditions, form a qualitatively new system capable of responding quickly and adequately to the challenges of time, and turn museums into one of the leading social institutions in the system of humanitarian development of the country. In our opinion, museums should create events and programmes with a deep meaning and creative presentation, form a new generation of museum managers who, following the global trends, are able to introduce innovations in the field of collection management and their presentation to the museum audience; organizers of festivals and cultural events should involve museums in cooperation.

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## КОМУНІКАТИВНИЙ ПРОСТІР СУЧАСНИХ МУЗЕЇВ В УМОВАХ ПАНДЕМІЇ

Ключко Юлія Миколаївна

*Кандидат педагогічних наук, доцент,  
ORCID: 0000-0003-1969-4308, klyuchkoy@gmail.com,  
Київський національний університет культури і мистецтв,  
Київ, Україна*

Мета статті — дослідити комунікативний простір сучасних музеїв в умовах пандемії COVID-19, окреслити основні вектори його розвитку. Методи дослідження базуються на загальнонауковому принципі об'єктивності, структурно-функціональному й аналітичному методах під час аналізу комунікативного простору музеїв в умовах пандемії COVID-19. З огляду на сучасний стан музейної справи в Україні, систематизовано та узагальнено основні теоретичні здобутки проблеми; показано, що тема дослідження на сучасному етапі не має поки комплексного відображення у вітчизняній науковій літературі. Новизна дослідження полягає у визначенні основних векторів розвитку комунікативного простору зарубіжних та вітчизняних музеїв в умовах пандемії COVID-19, дослідженні найбільш успішних проєктів українських музеїв в контексті трансформації комунікативного простору. Висновки. З'ясовано, що сьогодні для музею, як одного з центрів комунікації в культурному просторі, важливим результатом діяльності є встановлення стійкого і конструктивного діалогу зі своєю аудиторією. Доведено, що відбувається достатньо серйозна трансформація музейного світу та музейного комунікативного простору, що проявляється у поєднанні традиційних та інноваційних напрямів, розробці адаптаційних стратегій відповідно до сучасних умов. Визначено, що час пандемії для музеїв це — час опанування нових каналів комунікації, час об'єднання ресурсів. Інформаційні технології коригують та доповнюють зміст основних функцій музейної

діяльності. Без використання цифрових технологій та діджитал-комунікації музеїв вже не здатен повноцінно втілювати свою місію як соціально-культурного та освітнього закладу. З'ясовано, що в умовах пандемії COVID-19 майже вся комунікація музеїв України зі своєю аудиторією в мережі Інтернет стала фактично чи не єдиним способом взаємодії. З метою залучення нової аудиторії українські музеї впроваджують практики інклюзії, здійснюють ребрендинг, реалізують міждисциплінарні та міжмузейні проекти, застосовують креативні підходи до адаптації освітніх програм у онлайн-формат, значно збільшують кількість контенту для дитячої та підліткової аудиторії.

*Ключові слова:* музеї; комунікативний простір музеїв; пандемія COVID-19; діджитал-комунікація; практики інклюзії; музейна айдентика; музейна аудиторія

## **КОММУНИКАТИВНОЕ ПРОСТРАНСТВО СОВРЕМЕННЫХ МУЗЕЕВ В УСЛОВИЯХ ПАНДЕМИИ**

Ключко Юлия Николаевна

*Кандидат педагогических наук, доцент,  
ORCID: 0000-0003-1969-4308, klyuchkoy@gmail.com,  
Киевский национальный университет культуры и искусств,  
Киев, Украина*

Цель статьи — исследовать коммуникативное пространство современных музеев в условиях пандемии COVID-19, обозначить векторы его развития. Методы исследования базируются на общенаучном принципе объективности, структурно-функциональном и аналитическом методах при анализе коммуникативного пространства музеев в условиях пандемии COVID-19. С учетом современного состояния музейного дела в Украине систематизированы и обобщены основные теоретические достижения проблемы; показано, что тема исследования на современном этапе комплексно не отображена в отечественной научной литературе. Новизна исследования состоит в определении основных векторов развития коммуникативного пространства зарубежных и отечественных музеев в условиях пандемии COVID-19, изучении наиболее успешных проектов украинских музеев в контексте трансформации коммуникативного пространства. Выводы. Выяснено, что сегодня для музея, как одного из центров коммуникации в культурном пространстве, важным результатом деятельности является установление стойкого и конструктивного диалога со своей аудиторией. Доказано, что происходит достаточно серьезная трансформация музейного мира и музейного коммуникативного пространства, которая проявляется в сочетании традиционных и инновационных направлений, разработке адаптационных стратегий в соответствии с современными условиями. Определено, что период пандемии для музеев это — время освоения новых каналов коммуникации, время объединения ресурсов. Информационные технологии корректируют и дополняют содержание основных музейных функций. Без использования цифровых технологий и диджитал-коммуникации музей уже не может в полной мере реализовывать свою миссию как социально-культурное и образовательное учреждение. Выяснено, что в условиях пандемии COVID-19 почти вся коммуникация музеев Украины со своей

аудиторией в сети Интернет стала фактически чуть ли не единственным способом взаимодействия. С целью привлечения новой аудитории украинские музеи развивают практики инклюзии, делают ребрендинг, реализовывают междисциплинарные и интермузейные проекты, применяют креативные подходы к адаптации образовательных программ в онлайн-формат, значительно увеличивают количество контента для детей и подростков.

*Ключевые слова:* музей; коммуникативное пространство музеев; пандемия COVID-19; диджитал-коммуникация; практики инклюзии; музейная айдентика; музейная аудитория