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DIGITALIZATION PROCESSES IN SAMARKAND MUSEUMS DURING THE YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE

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Abstract

This thesis examines the digitalization processes in Samarkand museums during the years of independence. The study focuses on the transformation of museum activity from traditional exhibition and storage practices to modern digital forms of preservation, presentation, communication and visitor service. Special attention is paid to the Samarkand State Museum-Reserve and other museums connected with the cultural heritage of the region. The research shows that digitalization in Samarkand museums developed gradually: first through the improvement of documentation and museum registration, then through the modernization of exhibition practice, and later through virtual visits, electronic information resources, online communication and multimedia tools. The thesis concludes that digitalization has become an important factor in preserving cultural heritage, expanding public access to museum collections and strengthening the role of museums in education, tourism and cultural diplomacy.

Keywords: Samarkand museums, digitalization, independence, cultural heritage, virtual visit, museum activity, museum collections, innovation, tourism, historical memory.



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Museums are among the most important institutions for preserving cultural heritage and historical memory. During the years of independence, Uzbekistan paid special attention to the protection of national values, restoration of monuments and modernization of cultural institutions. Samarkand has a unique position in this process because it is one of the oldest historical and cultural centers of Central Asia. The museums of Samarkand preserve archaeological, ethnographic, artistic, architectural and documentary materials that reflect the development of Uzbek statehood, science, crafts, urban culture and international cultural relations.

Digitalization has become one of the most important directions in the development of modern museum activity. It includes the creation of electronic catalogues, digital registration of exhibits, virtual exhibitions, online excursions, multimedia presentations, QR-code information systems, digital archives and interactive educational resources. In Samarkand museums, these processes are closely connected with the growth of tourism, the need to preserve valuable collections and the expansion of access to cultural heritage. Therefore, the study of digitalization in Samarkand museums during the years of independence is important for understanding the transformation of museum work in the context of modern cultural policy.

The aim of this thesis is to analyze the main directions and significance of digitalization processes in Samarkand museums during the years of independence. The object of the study is the activity of museums in Samarkand, while the subject is the introduction of digital technologies into museum preservation, exhibition, communication and educational practice.

The research is based on historical-comparative, analytical and descriptive methods. The historical-comparative method makes it possible to identify the



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stages of digital transformation in Samarkand museums. The analytical method is used to study the relationship between museum modernization, cultural heritage preservation and tourism development. The descriptive method helps to characterize the practical forms of digitalization, including virtual visits, electronic resources and multimedia presentation of exhibits.

The source base of the research includes legal documents of the Republic of Uzbekistan related to museum development, official information of museum institutions, materials about the Samarkand State Museum-Reserve, scientific publications on museum studies and cultural heritage, and information about modern museum technologies. The chronological framework covers the years of independence, with special attention to the period after 2017, when the modernization of state museums and the strengthening of their material and technical base became more active.

The digitalization of Samarkand museums developed as a gradual and multidimensional process. In the first years of independence, the main attention was paid to preserving museum collections, revising exhibition content and strengthening the role of museums in national self-awareness. At that time, digital technologies were not yet widely used, but the foundations of future digitalization were formed through systematic registration, classification and scientific description of museum objects.

The next stage was connected with legal and organizational strengthening of museum activity. The adoption of state programs aimed at improving museum work created favorable conditions for technical modernization. Museums began to pay more attention to the quality of exhibition design, visitor service and information accessibility. In Samarkand, this was especially important because museum objects are directly connected with major cultural and tourist routes,



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including Afrasiab, Registan, Gur-i Amir, Shah-i-Zinda and other historical monuments.

A more active stage of digitalization began with the introduction of online resources and virtual presentation tools. The Samarkand State Museum-Reserve, as one of the main museum institutions of the region, developed digital forms of communication with visitors. The availability of a virtual visit section made it possible to present museum spaces to a wider audience, including people who cannot visit Samarkand physically. This form of digital communication expanded the educational and promotional functions of the museum.

Digitalization also influenced the interpretation of museum exhibits. Traditional labels and guided tours began to be supplemented by multimedia materials, online texts and visual resources. Such tools help visitors understand the historical context of exhibits more deeply. For foreign tourists, digital information is especially useful because it can provide multilingual access to museum materials. For students and researchers, digital resources create additional opportunities for independent study and academic work.

Another important result of digitalization is the improvement of museum collection management. Electronic documentation helps preserve information about exhibits, their origin, condition, restoration history and exhibition movement. This is particularly significant for Samarkand museums because many collections contain rare archaeological and historical objects. Digital registration reduces the risk of information loss and improves the scientific use of collections.

Digitalization has also strengthened the connection between museums and tourism. Modern tourists often search for information before visiting a museum. Websites, virtual tours, digital maps and online announcements help attract



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visitors and organize their cultural experience. In this sense, digital tools serve not only museum science but also the development of cultural tourism in Samarkand.

The digital transformation of Samarkand museums shows that modern museum activity cannot remain limited to physical exhibitions. A museum must communicate with society through different channels and provide access to heritage in both traditional and digital forms. This is especially relevant for younger generations, who are accustomed to digital information and interactive learning.

At the same time, digitalization should not replace the original museum object. Its main function is to support preservation, interpretation and access. The value of a historical exhibit remains connected with its authenticity, but digital technologies help explain this value more effectively. For example, a virtual visit can attract interest, while a real visit allows the viewer to experience the material presence of the object. Therefore, the most effective model is the combination of traditional museum practice and digital innovation.

The development of digitalization in Samarkand museums also faces certain challenges. These include the need for qualified specialists, high-quality digital equipment, stable financing, multilingual content, cybersecurity and long-term preservation of digital data. It is not enough to create digital materials once; they must be regularly updated, technically maintained and scientifically verified. Therefore, digitalization requires systematic management and cooperation between museums, universities, IT specialists and cultural heritage institutions. Digitalization processes in Samarkand museums during the years of independence reflect the broader modernization of cultural heritage institutions in Uzbekistan. These processes developed from basic documentation and



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registration to virtual visits, electronic resources, multimedia interpretation and online communication. The Samarkand State Museum-Reserve and other museums of the region demonstrate how digital technologies can support preservation, education, tourism and cultural promotion.

The research shows that digitalization has expanded access to museum collections, improved visitor communication and strengthened the educational role of museums. At the same time, the future development of digital museum activity in Samarkand requires professional training, technical modernization, electronic cataloguing, multilingual digital content and closer cooperation with educational and tourism organizations. In this way, digitalization can serve not only technological progress but also the preservation of national heritage and historical memory.

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