

E-teaching History

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Edited by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Digital or Cultural Challenges? A Polish History E-Textbook Written by the Older Generation for the Younger One	3
Przemysław Wiszewski	
<i>Shared Histories for a Europe without Dividing Lines: Origins and Outcomes of a Council of Europe History Education Project</i>	21
Piotr Podemski	
“Histotainment” on the Tablet PC and in the Bourbaki Museum.....	38
Peter Gautschi	
New Technology and the Potential and Limitations for Constructivist Instructional Designers: A Multimedia History Textbook	50
Florian Sochatzy, Marcus Ventzke and Waltraud Schreiber	
IT in History Teaching in Estonia: Challenges for the Teachers.....	64
Mare Oja	
History Teaching in the Era of Information Technology: The Trial of the “Electronic School Bag” In Classroom History Teaching.....	75
Chencheng Shen, Zhongjie Meng and Yang Lu	
Using Video Games to Teach High School History: The Case of <i>Civilization V</i>	93
Alexandre Joly-Lavoie and Frédéric Yelle	
Historical Agency and Videogame Play: A Case Study of <i>Assassin's Creed 3</i>	115
Vincent Boutonnet	
<i>Sid Meier's Colonization: Between Public History and History Education</i>	134
Joanna Wojdon	

Smartphone Apps: Their Use of History and Use for History Teaching	141
Dennis Röder	
Playing with the Past: Digital History and Historical Consciousness	153
Emilia Salvanou	
Digital Bildung and Allgemeinbildung: New Challenges to and Potentials for History Didactics	164
Harry Haue	
Why is it Impermissible to Learn History Pleasurably?	173
Takahiro Kondo and Shuhei Tanaka	
How Should Student History Teachers be Trained to Make Most Effective Use of New Technology in their Teaching? Lessons Learned from the English Experience	189
Terry Haydn	
Notes on Contributors.....	214

INTRODUCTION

Using New Technologies to Enhance Teaching and Learning in History (Routledge, 2013), edited by Terry Haydn, is an up-to-date set of reflections by both academics and practicing teachers on various aspects of introducing digital media into history classrooms. The authors concentrate mostly on Internet resources, and especially on social media and Web 2.0. There are chapters on the most popular media to date, such as PowerPoint presentations and applications for interactive whiteboards.

Our book does not intend to repeat nor to question those findings, but it draws readers' attention to the two aspects of new technologies that influence history education but are not mentioned by Haydn and his colleagues: electronic textbooks that have been developed in more and more countries in the last couple of years, and computer games related to history that sell millions of copies and are played by both old and young.

The e-textbook market is growing rapidly, in some countries (including Poland) thanks to the subsidies of governments. The term e-textbook is not very precise, however, and it may vary from a pdf of a traditional book, sometimes with a few animations or pictures to enlarge, to a kind of interactive set of resources and tasks that resemble an educational game rather than a book. So far, there is no empirical research on the ways of use and/or effectiveness of any model of an e-textbook, or their comparison with traditional books. What we present here is a set of (sometimes critical) remarks by authors or co-authors of various models of e-textbooks from different countries on the content of their work, the problems they encountered in development of the teaching materials and the potential benefits for learners.

Computer games are a controversial medium among teachers, students, parents, educational authorities and researchers due to the influence they may or may not exert on young learners. One cannot ignore, however, the fact that young people do play such games, notwithstanding the controversies, and that the school, and the teachers in particular, should take this into consideration one way or another. The authors discuss the educational potential of both individual titles and history-related computer games in general, not only in relation to developing historical knowledge but also imagination, attitudes or, more generally, historical consciousness.

Sometimes they refer not only to computer games but more generally to historical edutainment which the games are a part of. Most (but not all) of the articles originate from the papers presented in September 2014 during the conference of the International Society for History Didactic in Wrocław (Poland). Some other aspects of history and edutainment, that do not necessarily involve digital technologies, are discussed in the 2015 volume of *The International Journal of Research on History Didactics, History Education, and Historical Culture* published by the Society in Wochenschau Verlag.

DIGITAL OR CULTURAL CHALLENGES?
A POLISH HISTORY E-TEXTBOOK WRITTEN
BY THE OLDER GENERATION
FOR THE YOUNGER ONE

PRZEMYSŁAW WISZEWSKI

The objective of this chapter is to present and discuss the conditions determining the shape of a multimedia online history textbook for primary, lower secondary and upper secondary schools written at the behest of the Polish Ministry of National Education (MNE) in the period 2013–2015.¹ The issue I would like to explore in this essay can be reduced to the following question: can differences of a cultural nature between children and the adults responsible for realizing the project's goal of shaping the textbook be identified? If so, can the effects of these differences impact on the shape and future perception of the e-textbook? I would like to keep the theoretical divagations to a minimum, focusing rather on describing and analysing the creation of the e-textbook as a case study. In this context, the narration is of a highly subjective nature. As the person responsible for initiating the project and directing the team of researchers preparing the textbook under analysis, I am incapable of presenting the events without any reference at all to my personal engagement in the composition of the work². In order to confirm the veracity of the information presented, the

¹ An outline of the comprehensive programme for the digitization of Polish schools currently being implemented by MNE, including the creation of digital educational resources which are to include e-textbooks for the humanities, life sciences and hard sciences, was presented in 2012 Cf. <http://men.gov.pl/jakosc-edukacji/edukacja-informatyczna/cyfrowa-szkola-aktualnosc/e-podrecznik-nowa-jakosc-w-polskiej-szkole.html>.

² The team was divided into two sub-teams composed of scholars at the University of Wrocław Institute of History, responsible for preparing a series of textbooks for primary school and for secondary schools. The first series, divided into textbooks covering particular chronological periods, was authored by Małgorzata Pawlak (antiquity), Wojciech Mrozowicz (Middle Ages), Robert Kołodziej (modernity)

events described are placed in a timeline with reference to documentation developed in the course of the project. The ultimate objective of this publication is to shed light on phenomena transforming the classic educational environment in which children and youths learn within the context of changes in the way information is communicated in a society characterized by commonplace, global communication.

Chronology – Of No Little Importance

I received a proposal to submit an offer for authoring a history e-textbook addressed to pupils in Polish schools from the 4th form to the 1st year of upper-secondary schooling in June 2012. This was the result of the Council of Ministers' adoption in April 2012 of legislation to establish the "Digital School" project. This project was composed of four actions, including the preparation of digital education resources for schools of stages II-IV of the educational process (primary, lower secondary, upper secondary).³ At the time the project did not possess a detailed framework, but the fundamental objective was defined. That objective was to prepare textbooks of the highest quality for the MNE, which would be made available in digital form at no charge to pupils around Poland. A proposal to author textbooks in humanities-related subjects – including history – submitted by the University of Wrocław was victorious in the bid process operated by the MNE. This gave the team of university scholars – potential authors – a unique opportunity to inject the most recent achievements in historical research directly into the school system. What is more, the information supplied by the client gave reason to suppose that the textbook was to provide access for pupils across the country to multimedia resources presenting the riches of Polish and world culture. The assumption was adopted that the authors would have wide-ranging discretion in selecting both historical objects and modern works of art to be used as multimedia elements in exercises and presentations. Reproductions of works of art were to be accessible for all pupils to use freely. All this created the conditions for real efforts to reduce social inequalities in respect of education and provision of access for all children to the richest and most up-to-date knowledge about the culture

through 1789), Joanna Wojdon (19th century and contemporary era). The second series was composed by Andrzej Wypustek (antiquity), Przemysław Wiszewski (Middle Ages), Leszek Ziątkowski (modernity through 1789), Monika Piotrowska-Marchewa (19th century) and Barbara Techmańska (contemporary era).

³ <http://legislacja.rcl.gov.pl/docs/3/23941/23943/23944/dokument22402.pdf> (accessed 29.07.2015).

surrounding them. As it would later turn out, history textbooks were in this respect to be supported by textbooks for teaching Polish. During the course of preparing the materials, the team of authors also focused on presenting pupils with the meanings of cultural texts and methods of interpretation.⁴ The impact of the project on society was to be enhanced by the fact that simultaneously with the publication of the textbooks, the MNE was to support universal access to broadband Internet in schools and the homes of pupils (distribution of tablets as end devices).

In March 2013, the MNE supplied the final guidelines for the e-textbook, which we used as the basis for beginning our work. During that time, the Ministry left us with broad freedom of action in preparing the textbook. The team of authors did not receive guidelines from the contractor concerning the form of the work. Conditions as to the content were also quite general. The textbook was to facilitate implementation of the core curriculum as published by the MNE at the primary level.⁵ In May 2013, we received a schedule to follow in our preparation of the textbook. The deadline for submitting a working version of the material suitable for editing was set as February 2014. Work on the version to be published, following editorial review, proofreading and multimedia tests was to be completed by July 2014.⁶ Alongside the preparation of methodological assumptions, the rules for the presentation of content including a draft design of the layout, primary text, exercises and comments to multimedia content, our responsibilities also included authoring multimedia exercises and games. The authors were obliged to select all of the multimedia content that was to be published from familiar sources. After a time it was then specified that only items previously published on open licences and fulfilling certain quality standards would be acceptable. In August 2013, the authors were to supply a detailed description of all maps and pictures of monuments which they planned to use in their portion of the textbook.

⁴ Cf. <http://www.epodreczniki.pl/begin/aktualnosci/uczniowskie-spotkania-ze-sztuka/> (accessed 29.07.2015).

⁵ The core curriculum for history in the Polish educational system contains a keyword-based listing of the primary educational content that should be communicated to pupils at various levels of education. There are 29 themes for primary school, 39 for lower secondary, and 12 for upper secondary. The content of the core curriculum for general education in Polish schools was published in 2009 in a Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 23 December 2008 (OJ L 2009, no 4, item 17, attachment 2 (primary schools) and attachment 4 (lower and upper secondary schools), Cf. http://www.bip.men.gov.pl/men_bip/akty_prawne/rozporzadzenie_20081223.pdf (accessed 29.07.2015).

⁶ Determinations of the meeting held on 25 May 2014.

As time passed, the deadline for submission of the content to the contractor was extended. This was the result of changing requirements concerning the content of the textbook, and also information received as to the technological capabilities that the authors were required to account for in their work. The final text version, accompanied with a description of multimedia content and appropriate metadata, were supplied to the contractor at the end of December 2014. At that time the authors were still in the dark as to the final shape of the layout, which had been revised following the submission of the authors' proposals, as well as the final selection of multimedia materials for publishing and the manner of distribution of the e-textbook. This portion of the project was the domain of cooperation between the MNE and the entities responsible for the technological aspects of the undertaking. The authors were to make changes in their texts in accordance with the instructions given by those implementing the technological side.

The schedule adopted by the contractor did not include research on the needs of children and youths in respect of using e-textbooks. There was also no attention given to consultation with teachers. Many of the changes to the content and form of the textbook made in the course of its preparation resulted from the *ad hoc* requirements of the contractor or technological partners. Up to the completion of the authors' portion of the project there was little attempt made to test the product in interactions with the user.

In the description given above of the administrative and organizational conditions for the development of the textbook, I have purposefully focused on aspects which may be assessed negatively. Such a judgement, however, flows from the assumption that an e-textbook should constitute an instructional aid that offers an entirely new approach to meeting the challenges posed to classic textbooks. A negative evaluation of the elements of the production process is not, however, the sole potential one. Let us observe that the organizational aspects of the project as presented were the result of it being shaped in a manner consistent with the development of tried-and-true products following an established pattern, intended for end users with well-formed and understood habits in respect of the receipt and processing of information. To put it simply – in ordering an e-textbook for children and youths, it was acknowledged that it could be developed in the same manner as consumer products created for adults, by adults. Hence it was assumed that content designed by adults for the end users – children and youths – would adroitly line up with children's communicative needs.

The Foundations of Meanings. The “e-textbook” as Understood by the Team of Authors

Neither in October 2012, when I put together the team of authors, nor in March 2013, when we began work on the textbook, did we possess any convincing, widely used contemporary examples of such a product. And this was true not only of Poland. Research into textbooks available in 2012 (when we began conceptual work on the project) demonstrated that an e-textbook was most commonly treated as a means of transferring solutions applied in traditional textbooks to the digital environment.⁷ This did have its positive aspects, as the form of the message – like a traditional textbook, and thus very familiar to educators - allowed teachers to focus on content. However, from our perspective this truth masked a very serious trap – the authoritarian method of communicating content and creating a vision of the past, so very characteristic of classic textbooks, was to be hammered into the frame of a medium which promotes freedom of choice and diversity of cognitive strategies while providing access to overflowing treasure troves of supplementary information (the Internet). Digital instructional aids – mostly exercises, tests, short video and audio programs - demonstrate a far more diverse and open character. They do not, however, comprise comprehensive wholes providing access to historical phenomena, processes and eras. This is why, as in the case of the Polish ‘Digital School’ programme, they were then and remain today a complement to the skeleton of knowledge offered by traditional textbooks.⁸ It should also be noted with regret that during this period we were unable to establish contact with the team implementing the mBook-Gechichte project, a history e-textbook published in 2014 and developed at Katholische-Universität Eichstätt-Ingolstadt.⁹ However, it can be said with satisfaction that the assumptions and solutions adopted by that team are in very many aspects consistent with those of our own.

Nevertheless, in 2012–2013 the most important question for us was whether children and youths from a fully digital generation experience reality by applying the same metanarrative patterns as those of our own.

⁷ Cf. a brief review of the use of e-textbooks in Europe in 2009-2011 http://eurydice.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Men_podreczniki.pdf (accessed 29.07.2015).

⁸ For example, Catalanian <http://www.edu365.cat/> or a repository focused on audio-visual materials <http://www.edu3.cat/> (accessed 29.07.2015).

⁹ Cf. methodological assumptions of the textbook http://xn--institut-fr-digitales-lernen-b7c.de/fileadmin/templates/Theoretische_und_didaktische_Hintergruende_des_mBook.pdf (accessed 29.07.2015). See also chapter IV.

Do they seek to gain a sense of events around them in the same manner as we do, reaching far back into the past and comprehending the chain of causal links? Do they develop their own vision of the world as we do, by draping a fabric of facts over the skeleton constructed by a model of the truths governing reality, bringing clarity to the emerging image by joining it to successive chains of events and facts? This linear narration, so familiar to us and based on the continual reference of the products generated by analysis of particular cases to a synthetic vision of the world, which was continually subjected to evolution, was vital for us in a time of information paucity. It was then necessary to capture information and build a model out of a few disjointed scraps. This model, in turn, would then serve to justify decisions in respect of the manner in which the contours of the past were presented, as well as the proper way to proceed in the present. However, in a world of excess information, easily available, is such a model of seeking and using information necessary? Is it not being replaced by a model of *ad hoc* use of information which should function as separate wholes, answering the specific question of the user? In this model, acquisition of information is not a process, but rather an act; information is not something we receive for our effort, but rather an instantly accessible product ...

At present, we have at our disposal broadly accepted knowledge about the psychological development of children and associated potential for concrete and abstract perceptions of both simple and complex content. However, and paradoxically, there is little agreement as to the effects wrought within the scope of children's construction of models for describing the world and the shape of those models by changes transpiring in communication compared to the classic, pre-digital generation. It is no less difficult to evaluate these changes from the perspective of society's future viewed through the prism of the traditional values of our contemporary culture.

In this situation, the methodological and content assumptions proposed by the team for the e-textbook were based on analysis of available traditional and digital educational aids, as well as empirical experiences from 1) teaching in primary and secondary schools; 2) reviews of previous traditional textbooks authored by members of the team; and 3) last, but not least, consultations with our own children aged 7–16 years. The effect of this avant-garde procedure was the June 2013 preparation of the fundamental assumptions for the e-textbook. In accordance with the current educational model in Poland, children complete the full history course over two cycles. The first is taught in forms 4–6 of primary school (primary education lasts a total of 6 years). The second is taught in lower

secondary school (3 forms) and the first year of upper secondary school. As a result, we adopted the assumption that the publication of the e-textbook would comprise two series – one for primary schools, and the second for lower secondary and the first year of upper secondary schools. Because of the obvious differences in children's developmental stages, the majority of assumptions of the two series were also formulated differently. They were linked, however, by one leading idea: we are striving to transmit *accurate knowledge* about historical events and social processes *in a manner that will interest pupils while placing emphasis on developing skills*.

This triad of meta-objectives for our project was to be reflected in the structure and construction of the e-textbook. Accurate knowledge was to be ensured thanks to the professional experience of the historians preparing the textbook. The fact that nearly every member of the team had prepared traditional commercial textbooks for primary and secondary schools was grounds for faith in the authors' capacity to stimulate children's interest. They had been invited to write the textbooks based on their ability to ensure sales of those products on the open market.¹⁰ Furthermore, every member of the team possessed years of experience in authoring popular scientific publications. Additionally, Małgorzata Pawlak and Joanna Wojdon had been involved for years in the methodology of teaching history in schools. Joanna Wojdon in particular has conducted research on the potential for the use of information and communication technology for history instruction in schools (cf. Wojdon, *Analyzing*, 2011: 159-180; Wojdon, *Obudowa*, 2011, 394-415).

The team adopted two goals with regard to sparking the interest of pupils. Firstly, and rather obviously, increased emotional activity of the pupils channelled by the structure of the textbook and particular messages contained within it was to facilitate their openness to perception of the communicated elements of knowledge and skills. Secondly, it was considered of equal importance to use positive emotions to construct clear signposts within the memories of students that direct them to specific events, phenomena and processes. These were intended to refer primarily

¹⁰ Interesting children in the content of textbooks on the Polish publishing market was not easy. Several to several dozen versions of the same textbook were sold around the country by an equal number of publishers. At the same time, textbooks authored by the members of the team are no longer among those permitted by MNE for use in schools, which eliminates conflicts of interest between the older publishers and the present authors of the e-textbook. Cf. current list of textbooks for history at educational levels, http://men.gov.pl/podreczniki/wykaz_dopuszczone_lista3.php (accessed 30.07.2015).

to the rich Polish and European symbolic heritage, but would span even broader periods and territories if possible. The primary task of this undertaking was to transmit to children a dictionary for the symbolic language of culture that surrounds them. In this manner, we sought to reinforce their self-awareness in the world of their native, i.e. Polish and European, culture. We also wanted to help them in precisely and quickly communicating with members of that cultural community, in which they would most likely spend the majority of their lives. Thirdly, and lastly, positive emotions – interest – were to be the factor encouraging pupils to engage in their own travels through history beyond the confines of the textbook. In this respect we wanted to emphasize both intra-group interaction and independent activity by the pupil.

This was linked with the conviction that it was possible to educate pupils through the teaching of history in not only the particular skills associated with that area of knowledge (chronological thinking, constructing a historical narrative). We also desired to facilitate pupils' development of universal skills, both cognitive and social. Our conviction was based on the acknowledgement of history as a science specialized in the goal-based critical analysis of diverse information produced by people. We felt that type of instruction would facilitate introducing textbook users to the world of critical analysis of the wealth of information surrounding them, not only through developing the inclination to seek genetic links among pieces of information, but primarily through defining the contexts in which messages arise, are distributed and exert their influence. Most importantly, we wanted to emphasize the necessity of relating the content of the information obtained to the objective which led to its creation, and the cognitive capacities of that creator. In this manner, elements of criticism of a historical source were to support the development of open minds, yet which remained critical towards the flood of information that characterizes the modern world.

The synthetic application of the three pillars in the structure of the textbook's content described above was intended to facilitate enhancing children's sensitivity and awareness of issues of values. This was to be achieved not through the introduction of their concrete forms, but rather by indicating those which are characteristic of a given culture or even individual as factors determining decisions which are taken and shaping relationships with the environment. A significant role to this end was to be played by exercises encouraging reflection on one's own set of values, justifying them in discussions with classmates and the teacher, determining the impact of their cultivation for life in the contemporary

world.¹¹ We desired to make pupils aware not only of the multiplicity of attitudes in life, but also of the patterns of values which function alongside one another and are of benefit to the entire community. At the same time, we wished to raise awareness of the dangers resulting from aggressive promotion of particular forms of values at the expense of other participants in social life.

Structures

In order to implement these assumptions, we proposed a multi-layered structure for the e-textbooks. It was to possess a unified character within each particular level of education (primary, lower secondary, upper secondary). The structures of the particular levels were to differ from one another. However, we treated each of the closed unique narratives encompassing particular epochs of history as a work composed in accordance with the plan developed by the author, which best addressed the epoch presented by that author and its issues. This led to the fundamental division of content being expressed in the separate series of textbooks for primary schools and for secondary schools. Within each of them, particular eras retained their distinctness, and the textbooks addressing them were prepared by different authors (antiquity, Middle Ages, modernity (through 1789), the long 19th century (1789–1918) and contemporary history). This rather conservative chronological approach resulted in part from the needs of the contractor. However, it was also derived in part from the convictions of the authors that it was necessary to give teachers a message constructed in accordance with patterns familiar to them.

The same assumptions determined the selection of the fundamental building blocks of the textbooks. With the differences in developmental levels among children attending different types of schools in mind, it was decided to reduce the structuration of textbooks for primary school in relation to secondary schools.

¹¹ For example, in a lesson for pupils in stage III of education, focusing on the functioning of European societies in the early Middle Ages, there was an exercise in which pupils were to learn about the duties placed on emissaries (*missi dominici*) in 802 by Charlemagne. Next, they were to formulate instructions that the Emperor would give to his/her ministers. Their objective was to understand the values acknowledged by Charlemagne. Next, they were to compare the proposals for the Emperor's hypothetical instructions in class, and then determine what values – according to their classmates – his/her ministers adhered to, lesson by Przemysław Wiszewski, *Spoleczności plemienne i tradycje rzymskie*.

Figure 1: Structure of the division of content of e-textbooks for history prepared by the team from the University of Wrocław at the behest of the MNE, 2013–2015

Primary school	Secondary school	Example of content
Textbook – epoch	Textbook – epoch	Middle Ages
Section	Section	Early Middle Ages
Chapter (lesson)	Chapter (lesson)	Charlemagne
Module	Module	Carolingian Renaissance
	Screen	Letter and book
exercises/multimedia exercises	exercises/multimedia exercises	Expansion of Carolingians' territorial power

Source: Joanna Wojdon, in cooperation with Wojciech Mrozowicz, Małgorzata Pawlak, Robert Kołodziej, *Methodological assumptions for a history e-textbook, stage II*, Wrocław 2013; Przemysław Wiszewski, in cooperation with Monika Piotrowska-Marchewa, Barbara Techmańska, Andrzej Wypustek, Leszek Ziátkowski, *Methodological assumptions for a history e-textbook, stage III and IV*, Wrocław 2013.

In the case of secondary schools, we desired to give the user the potential to develop alternatives to the new chronological-thematic construction and cognitive paths weaving throughout all of the textbooks. We decided upon 1) labelling multimedia screens and exercises with a few basic thematic keywords (e.g. war, family, society, religion, etc.); 2) giving users the ability to define their own keywords they could use to label their own version of the textbooks and create their “own path” through history. This would allow the user at any given moment to select and aggregate her/his mini-book of the thematic areas of interest to him/her for a portion or the whole of human history described in the textbooks.

Thematic navigation of the textbook was also to be supported by a subject index designed to facilitate acquisition of skills used in searching for, analyzing and filtering information. Support for the user was to be provided through two dictionaries available at the text level – subject and personal. An integral part of the system of reference was to be the capacity to cross over to the other e-textbooks being prepared under the MNE project. Our primary focus was placed on giving pupils using the history textbook the capacity to access resources from textbooks for geography and Polish. This last textbook, developed under the direction of Tomasz Piekot, was conceived (primarily) as a textbook on the history of European

culture.¹² Alongside the proposed capacity to search Internet resources at the e-textbook level, the user would also receive a tool facilitating the concentration in one place of a significant volume of information either prepared and vetted by experts (e-textbooks) or subjected to fewer formal requirements. This was to serve as the starting point for the previously mentioned practice of selecting and analyzing information. The next step was the synthesis and publication of statements within the framework of the e-textbook referencing resources which are generally accessible, and therefore verifiable by the class.

Individual chapters (lessons) in the textbook were to have a standardized structure within the borders of their educational level.

Figure 2: Structure of the division of content in chapters of history e-textbooks authored by the team from the University of Wrocław at the behest of the MNE, 2013–2015

Primary school	Forms of communication	Secondary school	Forms of communication
Introduction	Narration, multimedia (fable, story read aloud, filmed, recreated)	Introduction	Mini-lecture, lecture, other multimedia form; exercise with historical source referring to previous modules
Modules	Integrated multimedia exercises	Modules	Interwoven fragments of text and multimedia exercises
	Summary of each module		
Summary	What have I learned? (conclusions which the work done in particular modules should lead to)	Summary	Multimedia exercises referring to the most important items presented in the module; This encounter with history has

¹²Cf. <http://www.epodreczniki.pl/begin/aktualnosci/uczniowskie-spotkania-ze-sztuka/> (accessed 30.07.2015).

	What can I do? (skills) What should I think about? (values)		given me knowledge... skills... understanding...
Want to learn more?	Additional literature, media, etc.		Additional literature, media, etc.

Source: Joanna Wojdon, in cooperation with Wojciech Mrozowicz, Małgorzata Pawlak, Robert Kołodziej, *Methodological assumptions for a history e-textbook, stage II*, Wrocław 2013; Przemysław Wiszewski, in cooperation with Monika Piotrowska-Marchewa, Beata Techmańska, Andrzej Wypustek, Leszek Ziątkowski, *Methodological assumptions for a history e-textbook, stage III and IV*, Wrocław 2013.

This rather conservative structure was supposed to aid in ordering the content and make it easier for teachers to use it. From the user's perspective, this was only a proposal. The users themselves were to define the contours of the textbooks through selection of the aforementioned thematic cognitive paths. In addition, in both series of textbooks the modules, multimedia exercises and also the screens included in the textbook for secondary schools were to retain their potential for autonomous use. It was assumed that they could be used independently in the pursuit of a specific educational objective. This autonomous structure of a portion of the textbook would allow teachers and students to pair modules, exercises or screens with other structural elements of one or several textbooks. As a result, the textbook in the form described in Table 2 was to serve as a starting point for the free-form activity of pupils, shaped purely by the inspiration of teachers and the children's own creativity. This duality of structure received the full support of the contractor (MNE).

That contractor placed strong emphasis on constructing multimedia forms that were appropriate not only for exercises, but also for simple transmission of information. The team of authors fully supported efforts aimed at boosting the use of activating forms in communicating educational content.¹³ This was expressed in the minimization, and in some places the abandonment, of text supplying information in the

¹³ Emphasis on the significance of activation methods in the process of transmission of educational content resulted from the direct experiences of the authors in teaching (cf. Wojdon, 2012: 177-186).

textbook. It was replaced by exercises whose design and outcome were to guarantee the communication of historical content while at the same time forming a creative attitude on the part of the addressee. Completion of tasks was intended to lead to solving the problem contained in the content of the module.¹⁴

In the case of secondary schools, we placed greater emphasis on the skills of decoding, analyzing and using a text delivering information. At this stage, multimedia exercises should not dominate the imagination of the learner, while at the same time they should facilitate the achievement of objectives contained in the assumptions which appeal to emotions (reinforcing traces of memory, motivating to independent exploration, etc.). While the concentrations and forms were different, in both series of textbooks we placed strong emphasis on confronting students with cultural texts as historical sources.¹⁵ Within the modules, there were also supposed to be separate fragments for those interested, as well as direct references to the reality around us through pointing out its links with the past (so-called ‘time capsules’, for example, showing how the shape of a contemporary city’s market square was formed in the Middle Ages).

We assumed that pupils should not be left alone in their efforts to explore the past. On the one hand, they were to be accompanied by the most outstanding Polish historians through interviews and mini-lectures peppering the textbooks. However, a similar role was to be played by fragments of archival film, radio and musical recordings. They were supposed to introduce pupils to the world of the era being studied (for example, recording of early music or declamation of poems in their original language, such as *Beowulf*). Our primary desire, however, was to increase the share among exercises of tasks which would force more discussion in classes (e.g. brainstorming), or would involve directed social

¹⁴ One example is the exercise from the lesson “The elephant and the Polish issue”, presenting the efforts of Poles to resurrect their own state in the 1920s. Joanna Wojdon scrapped a lecture on approaches by Polish politicians who contributed at the start of the 20th century to the battle for independence - Roman Dmowski and Józef Piłsudski. This was replaced with two source texts – short biographies of the politicians – and a table which the students completed on the basis of source material on the views of the two figures. They were also to add their own views, and compare them with the positions of the two politicians.

¹⁵ This concerns not only written sources, but also iconographic presentations. In a lesson on ancient Greek democracy (stage III), Andrzej Wypustek placed the oldest existing inscriptions from Athens alongside a presentation of scribes and readers on a vase from the 4th century BC to demonstrate the link between the dissemination of the ability to write with the birth and development of democracy in Athens.

interactions in the course of gathering materials outside of class (recollections, albums with copies of pictures, genealogical trees for younger children, etc.).

Finally, we assumed the introduction of elements of gamification in the course of using the textbook. Each user was to receive an avatar at the beginning of work with the textbook. The appearance of the avatar would evolve concurrently with progress through the work, adapting to the epoch the user was in. After solving tasks, exploring additional content and publishing unique compositions in a shared virtual space, the user would receive new accessories for the avatar, which would “get promoted” and act as an individualized presentation of the user in a virtual world of learning.

Ultimately, in attempting to fulfil what we believed to be children’s expectations towards the textbook, we decided that knowledge and skills should be transmitted to pupils through:

- diversity, elasticity and openness to creative connections of elements in the structure of information;
- emphasis on analysis of messages with close reference to modernity, while stressing the historical context;
- emphasis on gamification as an aspect awakening interest and a bond between the user and operations performed within the textbook’s framework;
- opening the textbook to transformation and elaboration of knowledge by the user in the course of work with additional information, including external, and primarily – interdisciplinary;
- independently of the elements listed above – retaining control by the authors of the content of particular information chunks in order to ensure the authoritative character of the message.

Problems and Summary

From among the assumptions presented above, only a portion of them – so far – have been implemented. A large majority of the original ideas submitted during the publication process turned out to be impossible to realize for the project’s leading technological partner. Limitations in access to media materials, including multimedia, caused serious problems (nearly all of the planned multimedia maps were scrapped). The majority of problems in this respect was caused by financial limitations, excessive licensing conditions (CC-BY), legal issues related to acquisition of multimedia content and project management organizational issues. Time

limitations and fluctuating requirements and expectations on the part of the contractor during preparation of the project also made it difficult to execute the project according to the initial assumptions for smooth completion of the work. Political considerations also impacted on the conditions set out by the contractor. With a view to the parliamentary elections planned for October 2015, the leadership of the MNE placed heavy emphasis on the visual attractiveness of the portion of the textbook scheduled for publication in September of that year.¹⁶

Lastly, from the perspective of the objectives adopted by the authors in 2013, the most troubling problems were the restriction in access to key monuments of culture, the rigidity of the textbook's final structure (absence of alternative thematic paths), the abandonment of its openness to the external world of information, and finally removal of gamification aspects. In these circumstances, the team of authors looks with trepidation on the upcoming reaction of children to the proposal for the transmission of educational content they will soon encounter. At present, decisions taken at the project management level motivated by factors other than the substantive goals of the project are leading to a dangerous decoupling of the project with the vision and desires of its authors.

The technological maladaptation of the project to its objectives may also impact its future. The clock is ticking, and technological solutions considered cutting edge in 2010 are already far from sufficient to catch children's attention. Development of the technological assumptions applied in an e-textbook cannot be a closed process. Quite the opposite – an e-textbook should function as an open, adaptable system that adjusts to the educational needs formulated by the authors of the educational concept and its users. The reverse dependency, in which the model and technology used in the transmission of knowledge and skills are adjusted to meet precisely formulated, closed technological requirements of the moment, is not only logically erroneous (since the overriding objective is historical education, and not only history of technology). Most importantly, it simply renders the e-textbook inaccessible to young users. For them, a closed and autocratic project can in no way serve as a symbol of modernity capable of

¹⁶ Cf. press material <http://www.rp.pl/artykul/1163913.html> ('Rzeczpospolita', 11.12.2014); <http://www.tvp.info/18113718/zwolnienia-w-men-za-epodrecznik-sztandarowy-projekt-rzadu-kiepskiej-jakosci> (Telewizja Polska, 18.12.2014); <http://edukacja.dziennik.pl/aktualnosci/artykuly/478472,men-kluzik-rostkowska-zwalnia-za-e-podrecznik.html> ('Dziennik', 21.12.2014); http://wyborcza.pl/1,75478,17289072,Zostali_zwolnieni_bo_e_podrecznik_nie_ma_fajerwerkow_.html ('Gazeta Wyborcza', 21.01.2015).

grabbing their attention. Even if it takes this form for only a short time, it will rapidly become obsolete.

Technology alone is insufficient to create a textbook that children will accept as sufficient to meet all of their expectations. We are not – or at least we have not been so far – capable of keeping pace in our educational offerings with the revolutions in young people's technological tastes. Paradoxically, in respect of maximization and optimization of exploiting an available medium for educational purposes, traditional printed textbooks and their electronic versions with multimedia enhancements remain the best forms. They do not need to direct the teacher's or pupil's attention to the technology. The author's contribution, i.e. the content of the message, remains the essence of the material. However, such a classic book with a linear, closed structure suggesting a totality of knowledge does not encourage creativity in the user. Furthermore, by avoiding interaction in real time with the surrounding world of information, it runs contrary to one of the fundamental experiences and social problems faced by young people in Europe – the excess, shallowness and fluidity of accessible information. A book is not capable of meeting those requirements. Its objective has always been to record and transmit information, not to react and participate in discussion over it.

In this context, a multimedia, digital, internet-based history textbook, that may be used on-line, downloaded or printed would seem a good solution to the problems of shaping the skill of analyzing and selecting information, of fostering informational interactions in a community, and also of ensuring affordable access to the highest possible quality of knowledge and cultural heritage. It seems that all of this is within our grasp. However, what is needed is not only acceptance of the distinctiveness of such a textbook compared to the classic book form. It is worth defining fundamental educational objectives with the assistance of a digital networked medium. Perhaps we should ask the question of who really needs a textbook that simply summarizes knowledge from a particular discipline in an age of global, diffuse and non-authoritative information? Maybe adults more so than children? Maybe it would be a better solution to offer continually updated, authoritative, diffuse educational materials, which would be prepared in an appropriate and narrow scope by specialists? It would be easier to adjust small wholes to newly emerging informational challenges. As a result, rather than undertaking large publishing projects every several years, a continual process of review and modernization of educational modules could be maintained. This is also the tone of remarks from the contractor, indicating that e-textbooks should be treated as a collection of autonomous wholes at

the level of modules. The teachers can then freely shape them owing to the broad scope of permissible use under the CC-BY licence.

To a large degree this was consistent with the assumptions of the authors. We did not wish to prepare yet another textbook based on a rigid division of content transmitted in a fixed chronology. Autonomy of educational chunks in the humanities does, however, have its limits. Textbooks for understanding history and culture must be based on a story, a narration describing processes. In painting a picture of a community's past – a phenomenon whose nature is continuity – it is not possible to offer a result consisting of a collection of separate, fully autonomous, small fragments to be used freely. The user should have the capacity to use exercises, multimedia content or even entire modules as he/she sees fit. The fact remains, however, that their content interacts. During a lecture on estate societies in the Middle Ages, a pupil may participate in a simple role-playing game which requires a decision between submitting to the authority of an aristocrat and becoming his subject, or rather attempting to retain his freedom. However, in order to take the right decisions – and to acquire knowledge about the foundations of European civilization – he must have learned about the functioning of Roman society in the 2nd–3rd centuries and the Germanic tribes of the 3rd–4th centuries.¹⁷ Of course, this knowledge does not have to come from our textbook, it can be drawn from other sources. However, if an educational objective is to be achieved in the course of the game, the user must possess particular knowledge. The author's metanarrative gives order to the manner in which pieces of the past are discovered; if the user chooses to abandon it, this should be done consciously and with reference to another, previously accepted cognitive scheme.

We wanted our offer to satisfy new expectations related to the flow of information. At the same time, we also worked to retain what is most valuable in the European tradition – the capacity to conduct a discussion leading to the development of a shared, collective, holistic description of reality. One which will unite, but will also be elastic and adapt to the needs of its user – while remaining open to change, discussion and enrichment. This constitutes merely a test run, and certainly an imperfect one at that. However, I believe that contemporary, traditional textbooks in the humanities are an attribute of industrial education just as classes with rows of desks, summer vacation during harvest time, and assessment of progress using evaluative symbols are. They once served as a means of forming

¹⁷ Lesson by Przemysław Wiszewski, "The ideal and the reality of the three estates" (textbook for stage III education), exercise "Take the challenge...".

subjects and the citizens of nation-states. Perhaps – we may hope – schools will soon be relieved of this function. They will be less concerned with conserving social structures, and more focused on the development of society's creativity. It may be the case in this context that our e-textbook is the final stage in the collapse of the classic model of educational aids. Written by adults for children; I have no doubt that it will soon fall by the wayside – and I only hope: may it be replaced with more suitable tools.

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*SHARED HISTORIES FOR A EUROPE WITHOUT
DIVIDING LINES:*
ORIGINS AND OUTCOMES OF A COUNCIL
OF EUROPE HISTORY EDUCATION PROJECT

PIOTR PODEMSKI

***Unity in Diversity. The Council of Europe
and History Education***

From the very beginning of its existence the Council of Europe, founded in 1949 by the governments of Belgium, Denmark, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and Great Britain, made history education one of its priorities. Article 1 of its Statute declared that “the aim of the Council of Europe is to achieve a greater unity between its members for the purpose of safeguarding and realising the ideals and principles which are their common heritage and facilitating their economic and social progress.”¹ It soon became clear that in order for such a vision to come true, it was necessary to undertake a serious re-evaluation of the politics of history (also referred to as the politics of the past) in Europe (Swoboda, 2009) as well as “the symbolic uses of history for the purpose of national identity formation” (Beattie, 2008: 9). The new ideas have been reflected in the subsequently adopted Council of Europe official documents, which, however, one must bear in mind, contrary to European Union regulations do not constitute mutually binding normative acts, but are rather an expression of a common will to undertake specific steps by all member states.

As early as its Resolution no. 17 in 1952, the Committee of Ministers recommended that “Member Governments should give special consideration to the question of revision of textbooks on history and geography” as well as that “such assistance as may be feasible should be

¹ Treaty of London (Statute of the Council of Europe), 5 May 1949 – www.conventions.coe.int (accessed 23.07.2015).

given to both official and private bodies engaged on the revision of textbooks on history and geography and that facilities should be granted to organisations and persons working on this problem.”² Furthermore, Article 2 of the European Cultural Convention of 1954 stated that, since the achievement of the main aim of the Council of Europe’s existence “would be furthered by a greater understanding of one another among the peoples of Europe”, each Member Government would “encourage the study by its own nationals of the languages, history and civilisation of the other Contracting Parties” and would “endeavour to promote the study of its language or languages, history and civilisation in the territory of the other Contracting Parties.”³ Already at that time it was assumed that nationalistic and xenophobic attitudes widespread in Europe in the past had largely stemmed from a sense of alienation and lack of knowledge of neighbours’ languages, cultures and identities; thus the causes of such attitudes could be eliminated through modification of the member states’ systems of education and mutual promotion of divergent national cultures.

Yet another fundamental step towards launching European history politics aiming at forging a common European identity was the Resolution of the Committee of Ministers no. 11 on “Civics and European Education” adopted in 1964, containing a comprehensive list of European values. The document proclaimed:

Considering that the aim of civics is to provide a training in democratic citizenship and that its current objectives must therefore take account of the fact that today the individual is no longer a citizen of his own country only but also of Europe and the world;

Considering that, at a time when Europe is becoming a reality, it is the imperative duty of secondary education to inculcate into its pupils an awareness of European facts and problems;

Considering that the effective teaching of civics in the European countries is at present hampered by the lack of appeal of existing school courses and by the lack of preparation of the teachers;

Considering that the textbooks and basic material at present in use need to be adapted to the times;

² Resolution (52) 17 (19 March 1952) of the Committee of Ministers – www.coe.int (accessed 23.07.2015).

³ European Cultural Convention (19 December 1954) – www.conventions.coe.int (accessed 23.07.2015).

*Considering, finally, that education in democratic citizenship is a continuous process, which should not be confined to a single subject of the curriculum but should permeate the whole course of education both inside and outside the school.*⁴

In full consideration of all the above-mentioned ideas and circumstances, the Council of Europe urged all Member Governments to “do everything within their power to ensure that all disciplines concerned – for instance history, geography, literature, modern languages – contribute to the creation of a European consciousness”, while the European dimension of national curricula was expected

*to go beyond a purely static description of European institutions, by explaining their function in the light of the vital interdependence of the European peoples and of Europe's place in the world, and by attempting to bring out the dynamic aspects of the European integration process and the concessions, indeed sacrifices, that it entails, and the political and cultural difficulties, even tensions, it may create.*⁵

Although this particular topic had also been present in the Council of Europe documents before, it was only in 1984 – and in a somewhat new historical context of mass-scale migrations – that the question of teacher training was thoroughly addressed. Recommendation no. 18 of the Committee of Ministers called upon Member Governments to “make the intercultural dimension and the understanding between different communities a feature of initial and in-service teacher-training”. In particular, teachers were expected to

- *become aware of the various forms of cultural expression present in their own national cultures, and in migrant communities;*
- *recognise that ethnocentric attitudes and stereotyping can damage individuals and, therefore, attempt to counteract their influence;*
- *realise that they too should become agents of a process of cultural exchange and develop and use strategies for approaching, understanding and giving due consideration to other cultures as well as educating their pupils to give due consideration to them [...];*
- *become conscious of the economic, social, political and historical causes and effects of migration.*⁶

⁴ Resolution (64) 11 of the Committee of Ministers – www.coe.int (accessed 23.07.2015).

⁵ Ibidem.

⁶ Recommendation (84) 18 of the Committee of Ministers – www.wcd.coe.int (accessed 23.07.2015).

Such a definition of the teachers' role provided a response to the gradually growing awareness of Europe's new multicultural reality resulting both from greater mobility between the European countries and an influx of non-European populations in the aftermath of decolonisation. Importantly, the Recommendation viewed migration as "an irreversible and generally positive development", thus first emphasising its inevitability and implying a necessity to handle the process in such a way as to reduce its challenges and to exploit its full potential, which would as a result produce the "generally positive" effect.

Such a policy was meant to – in the opinion of the Committee –

help to further closer links between the peoples of Europe as well as between Europe and other parts of the world [...], considering that the presence in schools in Europe of millions of children from foreign cultural communities constitutes a source of enrichment and a major medium- and long-term asset, provided that education policies are geared to fostering open-mindedness and an understanding of cultural differences.⁷

In this somewhat paradoxical situation – with ethnic and religious diversity growing in Europe in the 1980s while a greater measure of political and economic unity was being achieved – the famous slogan of "Unity in Diversity" was coined to provide a neat expression of the specific pattern of a new European identity: "Unity in diversity is what produces the richness of the common European cultural heritage" (*Resolution on European Cultural Identity*, 1985).⁸ However, it soon occurred that the increasingly conspicuous internal diversity of the original member states of Western Europe proved less challenging. A new scale of multicultural differences came to the fore as the post-Communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe were admitted to the Council of Europe following the collapse of the Soviet bloc. They brought their own, often surprisingly different, historical and cultural sensibility and the voice of societies that had for decades been subjected to the experiments of authoritarian regimes, such as those from Poland (admitted in 1991), Romania (1993), Albania (1995), Russia (1996), Georgia (1999), Armenia (2001) or Azerbaijan (2001).

When joining the Council of Europe, new Member states ipso facto recognised the organisation's heritage and values as their own (including the above-mentioned documents concerning civics and history education). However, as has already been stressed, since the Council of Europe has

⁷ Ibidem.

⁸ Resolution (85) 6 of the Committee of Ministers–www.coe.int (accessed 23.07.2015).