

# *Electronic Research Infrastructure for Bulgarian Medieval Written Heritage: history and perspectives*

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## Abstract

The paper traces the history of the *Histdict* system, which turned into a basis for the new *Electronic Research Infrastructure for Bulgarian Medieval Written Heritage*, which was included into the National Research Roadmap at the end of 2020. Through this act the state declares its support to our resources, that have been so far created and supported by project funding. And of course, it is a big recognition of our efforts and achievements. On the other hand, this act coincided with two other events: the inclusion of RESILIENCE (Research Infrastructure on Religious Studies) in which *Histdict* is taking part, in the European Research Infrastructures Roadmap and the start of the updating and upgrading of the system. Given the situation the Infrastructure is now facing new challenges—not only the successful improvement of the services it offers, but also the inclusion of the Orthodox Cultural Heritage into European research exchange, which will promote and popularize the history and culture of Southeastern Europe.

## 1. Introduction

The *Electronic Research Infrastructure for Bulgarian Medieval Written Heritage* started in 2009 as a doctoral and post-doctoral project BG051PO001-3.3-04-001 ICT Tools for Historical Linguistic Studies, funded by the European Social Fund, OP Human Resources, and was upgraded by three following projects under the same scheme:

- BG051PO001-4.3.04-0004 *E-Medievalia (Electronic Resources for Distant Learning in Medieval Studies)* (2012–2014)
- BG051PO001-3.3.06-0024 *Informatics, Grammar, Lexicography* (2012–2015)
- BG05M2OP001-2-009-0005 *Modern Palaeoslavonic and Medieval Studies* (2017–2019)<sup>1</sup>

In the periods when our activities were not covered by European funding, we used other project opportunities such as internal funding in the framework of the University Humanities Complex, in which we participated with the project *Digital Medievalia* (2016–2018). Since the end of 2019 the RI has been supported by the National Research Programme “Cultural Heritage, National Memory and Social Development” funded by the Ministry of Education and Science and coordinated by Sofia University as a leading research institution in the field of Humanities. In the meantime, we were allocated a substantial amount of money for upgrading the existing digital resources under the project *Heritage BG* funded by Science and Education for Smart Growth Operational Programme ([nasledstvo.bg](http://nasledstvo.bg)). Now, after two years spent for unsuccessful bids, we have selected an IT company that is supposed to fulfil this important task.

In 2019 we applied for becoming a part of the National Roadmap for RIs and at the end of 2020 our digital resources were officially accepted as a starting RI.

Since March 2018 we have been involved in two overlapping ESFRI projects aiming at becoming

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<sup>1</sup>The projects' goals and results have been constantly reported and popularised, see [Ganeva \(2018\)](#), [Totomanova \(2012, 2017, 2018\)](#), [Totomanova-Paneva \(2020\)](#).

a European RI on Religious Studies (ReIReS<sup>2</sup>, RESILIENCE<sup>3</sup>). Therefore, we have not been able so far to count on a stable funding on behalf of the state and we had to finance our work under different kinds of project initiatives in order to survive and implement our plans to produce a complex of digital resources for studying and popularising Bulgarian written heritage. Our resources are included in the *Cyrrillomethodiana* web portal where you can find detailed information about all our projects related to the RI. The partnership consists of 3 institutions: Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, Cyrillo-Methodian Research Center at Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, BAS Central Library.

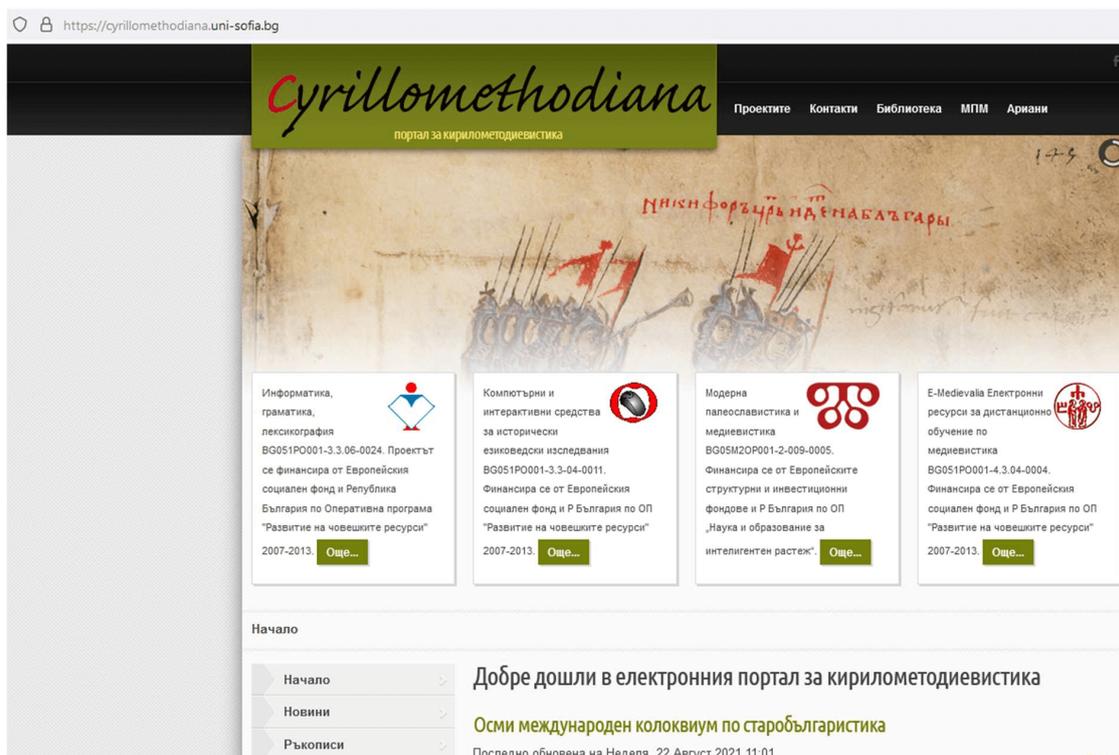


Figure 1: *Cyrrillomethodiana* web portal, [cyrrillomethodiana.uni-sofia.bg](https://cyrrillomethodiana.uni-sofia.bg)

### But why the written heritage?

The written heritage is the most reliable source of history of every nation and country and the basis of the national identity. Our RI provides digital research resources and tools for studying Bulgarian Medieval written heritage in terms of *diachronic linguistics*, *literary history*, *Bulgarian and European history*, *theology*, *cultural history*, and *philosophy*. The Old Bulgarian language (Old Church Slavonic), created by the Holy Brothers Cyril and Methodius, functioned as a sacred language of all Orthodox Slavs in Southeastern Europe during the Middle Ages as well as in Romania and Moldova. That is why researchers in the field of the history and culture of the Slavo-Byzantine Medieval world are interested in using the available digital resources.

### And why electronic?

- Using digital technologies for publishing and processing medieval texts reduces the time of data collection and production of reliable research results. In other words, the introduction of digital technologies in such a conservative field as historical humanities not only optimizes the work of researchers but also creates the conditions for new research initiatives and projects.
- Digital tools make the field of historical humanities more attractive for young people born in the digital era.

<sup>2</sup>See [reires.eu](https://reires.eu).

<sup>3</sup>See [resilience-ri.eu](https://resilience-ri.eu).













- Creating a parallel corpus with translations into Modern Bulgarian language so that the works of Old Bulgarian writers will be accessible to the general public as well
- Continuous updating of the historical dictionary
- Creating synchronous electronic dictionaries on medieval texts
- Maintaining and upgrading the existing software
- Research
- Training of doctoral and postdoctoral students and young scholars
- Publishing: research and publications of texts and dictionaries

On June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021, the ESFRI Forum included RESILIENCE in the Research Infrastructure Roadmap 2021. This means that RESILIENCE will take its place in the strategic Research Infrastructures for the European Research Area and that it can work on the further development of the Research Infrastructure for Religious Studies. Therefore, the situation now is different. As a part of RESILIENCE we will expand the circle of potential users of our digital resources including also the learning platform E-Medievalia with its courses in Old Church Slavonic. But the most important result of our participation in RESILIENCE opens for us new horizons and provides the great opportunity to include the cultural heritage of South-eastern Europe related to the Christianity into European research exchange. At the same time, it represents another big challenge for us. And to face this challenge decently we are looking for new partners...

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