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CROATIAN DIGITISATION PROJECTS OF NEWSPAPERS AND JOURNALS – AN OVERVIEW

Abstract: Historic newspapers and journals are extremely valuable resources for the study of national and local culture, science, history and politics; consequently, they are often used by researchers and other users. The paper aims to present digitisation projects of newspapers and journals in the Republic of Croatia. Digitisation projects are analysed according to several elements: digitising institution, reasons and aims of digitisation, project duration, realisation ratio, selection criteria, copyright issues, availability, metadata, search options and financing. Finally, the advantages of the Portal of digitised Croatian historic newspapers and journals, its benefits and advantages for cooperating institutions are presented.

Keywords: historic newspapers, historic journals, digitisation projects, cooperative portal

1. Introduction

Heritage institutions are today faced with the urgent need to preserve and provide access to their precious collections including scarce and valuable collections of newspapers and journals. Historic newspapers and journals are the keepers of the past historical, social, cultural and local events. These unique documents contain extremely valuable information about national and local culture, science, history and politics that cannot be usually found anywhere else. For these reasons they are frequently used by researchers and other users.

By digitising their collections, heritage institutions fulfil their basic role to protect valuable resources, and to provide easy access and the possibility to browse and search digitised resources on the Web, at any time and from anywhere in the world. Basic goals of any digitisation project that can be undertaken by libraries, archives, museums, publishers or any other holders of important and valuable collections; are to protect precious originals and enable access so that the users can explore rich content stored in newspapers and journals.

Since the beginning of the 21st century, Croatian libraries and other heritage institutions have been digitising the most valuable and sought for items from their newspaper and journal collections. The paper will present and analyse different projects pertaining to digitisation of newspapers and journals in the Republic of Croatia in the hope that the findings can be of use to decision makers and future projects leaders, and that they would provide the basis for better cooperation and creation of a single Croatian digital library for newspapers and journals based on the Portal of Digitised Croatian Historic Newspapers and Journals [8], created in the National and University Library in Zagreb.

2. Corpus and Method

The first digitisation efforts in the Republic of Croatia go back to the year 2000. After a number of isolated projects the project Croatian Cultural Heritage [1] was established in 2007. The Croatian national digitisation strategy was devised within the framework of this project, the national project for the digitisation of archival, library and museum material established by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia as well as by the central library, archival and museum institutions – the National

and University Library in Zagreb, the Croatian State Archives and the Museum Documentation Centre as project leaders. The main project goals are: creation of new digital content, improvement of its availability and promotion of a systematic and standardised approach to digitisation of holdings in heritage institutions. Full documentation with recommendations and instructions for digitisation is available [2].

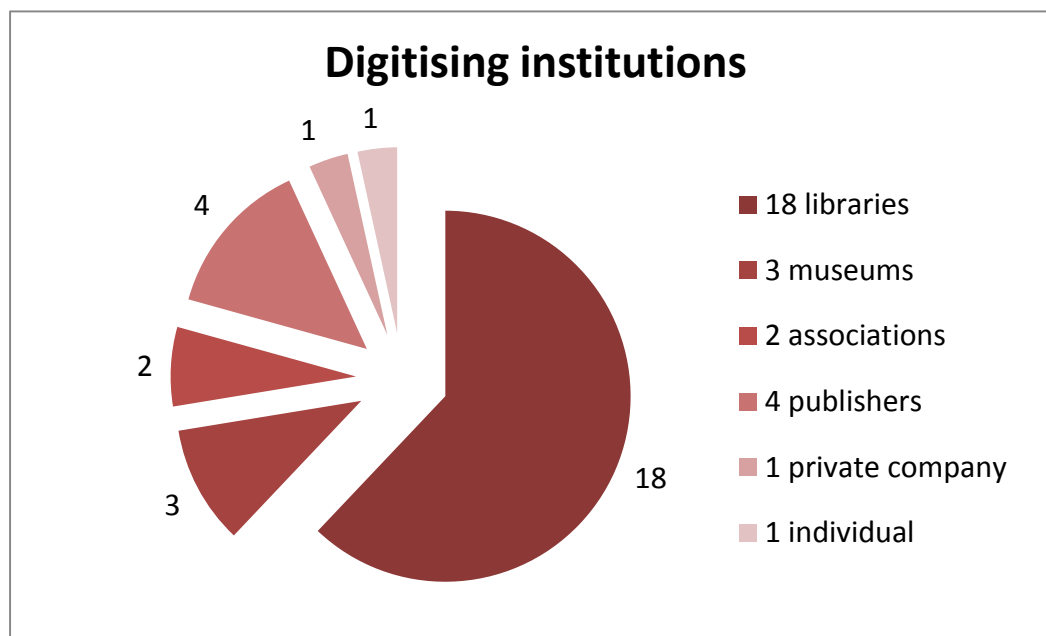
The analysed corpus of 31 digitisation projects was created on the basis of the publicly available data on the financed projects provided by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia [6], but using other public information as well. The corpus includes the projects that started from 2005 up to 2011. Some projects were completed during this period and some are still on-going. The analysis was based on the following elements: digitising institution, reasons and aims of digitisation, project duration, realisation ratio in accordance with the stated aims, selection criteria, copyright issues, availability, search options, metadata and sources of financing. The data were collected from projects' documentation, projects' and institutions' websites and other available resources.

3. Results

3.1 Digitising institution. The analysis showed that the following institutions digitise newspapers and journals: 18 libraries, three museums, four publishers, two associations, one private company and one individual. It is no surprise that libraries are by far the most represented in the sample since the protection and providing access to their collections is their basic responsibility. There are different types of libraries among these eighteen: the National and University Library in Zagreb, four Croatian university libraries (Public and University Library in Osijek, University Library in Pula, University Library in Rijeka and University Library in Split), but also a number of public libraries (from the cities of Bjelovar, Karlovac, Koprivnica, Krapina, Sisak, Split, Šibenik, Varaždin, Vinkovci, Virovitica, Zagreb) and research libraries (Research Library in Dubrovnik, Library of Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts). The libraries digitise the most important and the oldest titles from their collections, either at the level of the whole country or at the regional/local level. Other institutions digitise publications from their own field of interest. The three museums participating in digitisation projects digitised either the journals they published or are still publishing. The Archaeological Museum in Split digitised the journal *Bulletino di archeologia e storia Dalmata* (1878); the Croatian School Museum digitised the oldest Croatian pedagogical journals *Napredak* (1859) and *Školski prijatelj* (1868). However, the History Museum of Istria digitised their collection of serials. Naturally, the four publishers digitised their own publications: the Croatian Mountaineering Association the journal *Hrvatski planinar* (1898), the Croatian Forestry Society the journal *Šumarski list* (1877), Gospodarski list d.d. the journal *Gospodarski list* (1855), Narodne novine d.d. the newspaper *Narodne novine* (1843). Interestingly enough, these digitised publications are among the oldest Croatian serials, as indicated by the starting year of their issuance given in the parentheses.

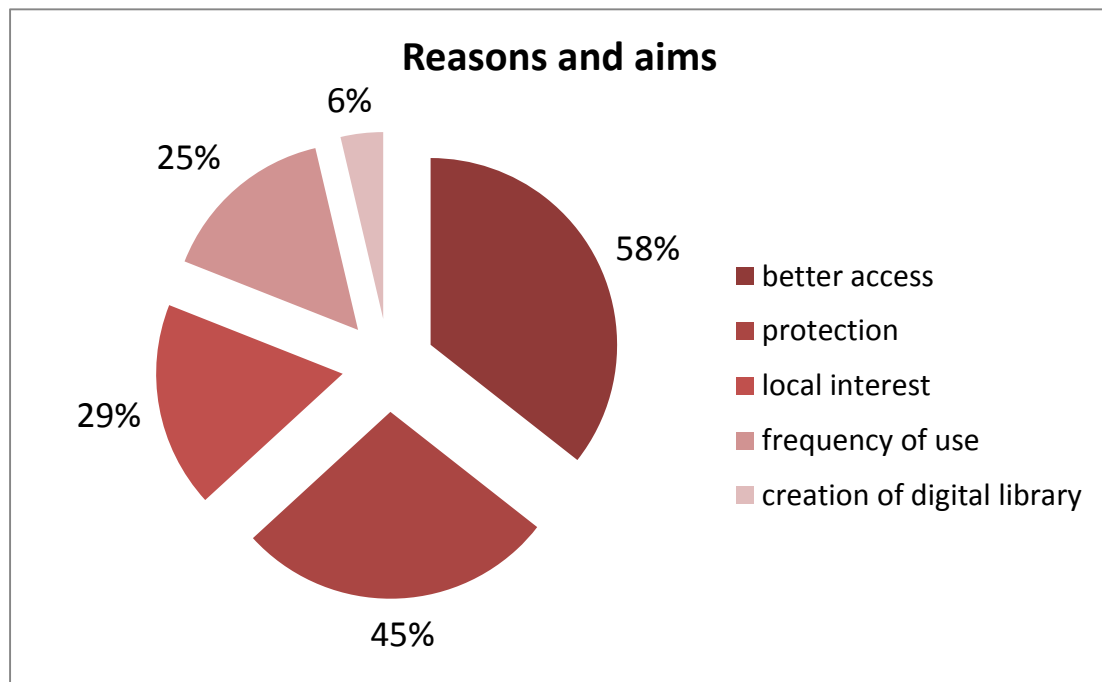
The Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies digitised *Hrvatska zastava* and *Radnička straža*, two of the most important emigrant Croatian newspapers from their collection, and the Centre for Women's Studies has started the project of digitisation of the journals that were edited by the Croatian writer Marija Jurić Zagorka. The case of the private company Point d.o.o. from the town of Varaždin is quite special – they have been involved in numerous digitisation projects and on the basis of these activities they have created the project Metelwin, a digital library of the titles they have digitised. However, some of these titles are also available through other projects, for instance Point d.o.o. digitised the newspaper *Glas Podravine* for the Public Library Fran Galović in Koprivnica, and consequently it is available on the Library's website and on the Metelwin [3]. The individual involved

in digitisation is a student from Bjelovar. In cooperation with the Public Library in Bjelovar, he digitised two newspaper titles during the work on his thesis “Digitisation of old newspapers: challenges and problems on the example of *Bilogora* and *Bjelovarski radikal*” [5].



Picture 1: Digitising institutions included in the research

3.2 Reasons and aims of digitisation. The reasons and aims of digitisation stated in the project documentation were: better access to resources (58%), protection of old and valuable resources (45%), local interest and importance (29%), frequency of use (25%), and creation of digital library (6%). All libraries emphasized the importance of better access and protection of resources as the main reasons for digitisation. Moreover, public libraries digitise resources of local interest and the first to be digitised are the most frequently used newspapers and journals. The creation of digital library was among the reasons stated in the project documentation of the National and University Library in Zagreb and the Project Metelwin.

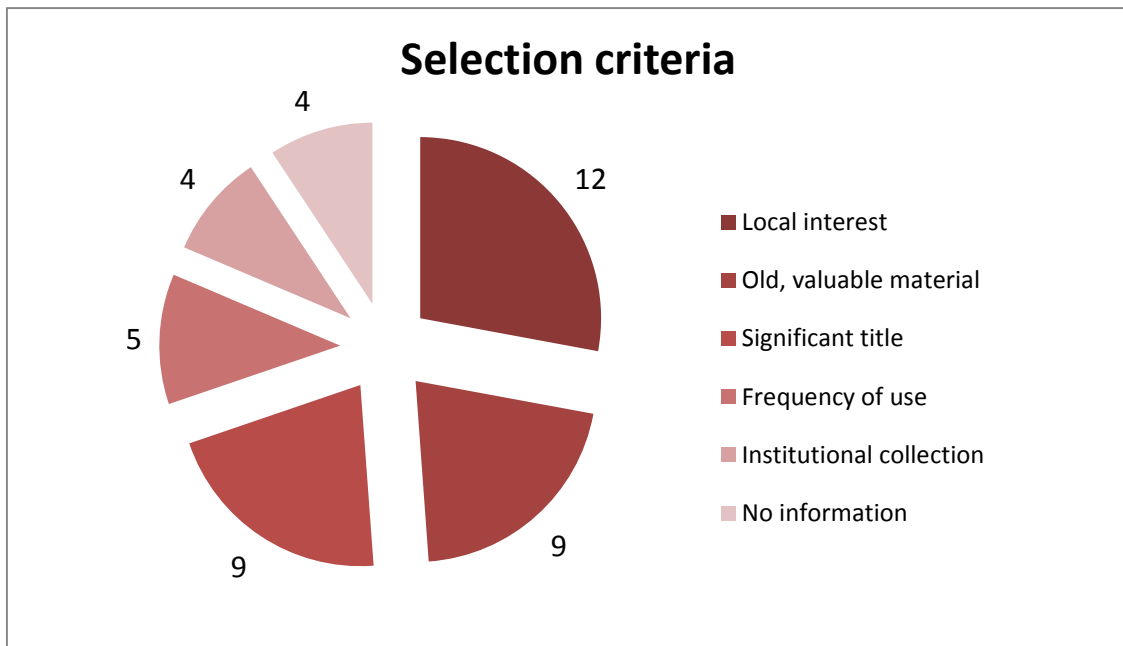


Picture 2: Reasons and aims of digitisation

3.3 Project duration. In the analysed corpus the starting years of the projects range from 2005 to 2011. One project started in the 2005 when the publisher Narodne novine d.d. began digitising the newspaper *Narodne novine*. There were no new newspapers and journals digitisation projects during 2006. After the establishment of the project Croatian Cultural Heritage and the more or less regular financial support from the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia in 2007, an increase in the number of digitisation projects was observed – three in 2007, five in 2008, then nine projects in 2009, seven projects in 2010, and five projects in 2011. The starting year could not be established for two projects. Regarding the duration of the projects, most of them finished within a year (13 projects), six projects lasted for two years, two projects continued for three years, one project lasted four years, and nine projects are still on-going. Since the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia finances digitisation projects annually, most projects last one year only and consequently these were generally small scale projects with a low number of digitised resources.

3.4 Realisation ratio. Most of the projects were completely finished (17 projects), usually the projects that lasted one year. The realisation ratio of four projects is 50% (e.g., publications were digitised, but are not yet publicly available), four projects are still in progress, and there was no information available regarding the ratio of digitisation realisation for four projects.

3.5 Selection criteria. The documentation of the 31 digitisation projects that were included in the research contained the following selection criteria: twelve projects (39%) stated that local interest is the most important selection criterion. Those were mostly projects of public libraries. The protection of the old and valuable resources was the selection criterion in nine projects (29%). Digitisation of the significant publications was the selection criterion in nine projects (29%). The frequency of use was the selection criterion in five projects (16%). Digitisation of the institutional collection was the criterion in four projects (13%). Four projects (13%) provided no information about the selection criteria.

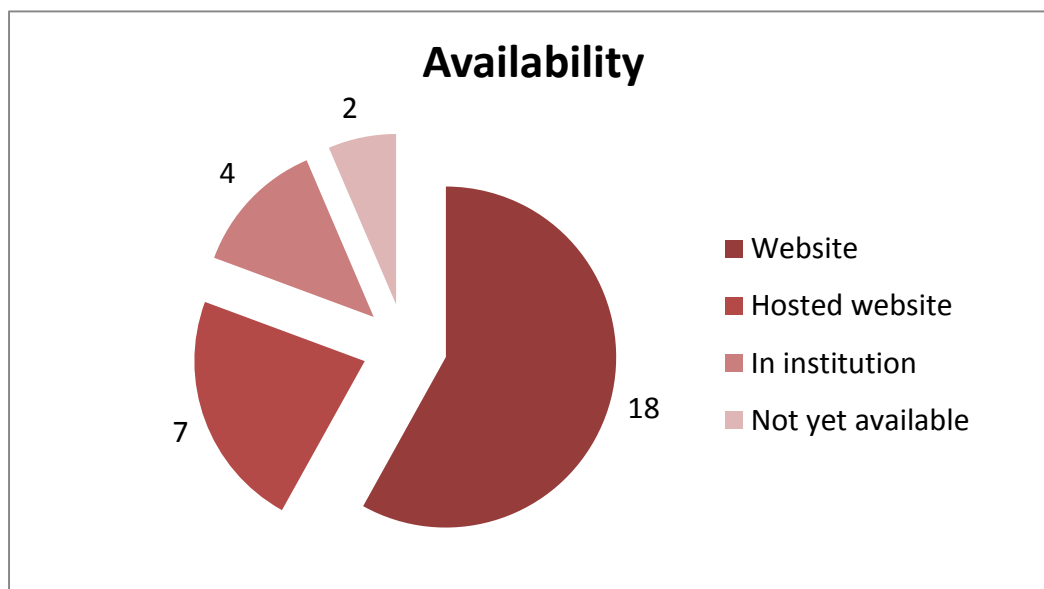


Picture 3: Selection criteria

3.6 Copyright issues. According to the Croatian law, the copyright for newspapers and journals that belong to the category of anonymous works is seventy years from the year when they were printed [7]. Most of the newspapers and journals included in digitisation projects are in the public domain – in 18 projects (58%) digitised resources are no longer protected by copyright. In seven projects (22%) the publications were digitised by the publishers themselves. The resources that are under copyright were digitised in six projects (19%). In the majority of the projects, the permission for digitisation and online publishing of digitised resources was obtained from the copyright owners. But some institutions digitised copyrighted material without obtaining the permission from the owner. For instance The Public Library Fran Galović in Koprivnica, referring to the general principles of open access to knowledge and information, claims that „the published digitised resources are part of the public domain cultural heritage of Croatia“ [4]. They invite the individuals whose rights might have been violated to contact the library in order to rectify that. The resources in question are usually the so called orphan works, the copyrighted works for which the copyright owner cannot be identified or located.

3.7 Availability. The availability of digitised resources is extremely important. As stated in the subsection 3.2 Reasons and aims for digitisation, a better access to resources is the most important reason for digitisation in 58% of the projects. Additionally, one of the requirements for financing a digitisation project by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia is that the digitised resources have to be made publicly available. In the analysed corpus, 58% (or 18 projects) are available on the website of the digitising institution or on the projects' website. In seven projects (22%) digitised resources are available on the hosted website. Two projects included in this research are also hosted websites for resources digitised within other projects – the Portal of Digitised Croatian Historic Newspapers and Journals (host for seven digitisation projects), the project of the National and University Library in Zagreb, and Metelwin – digital library created by the company Point d.o.o. The

resources digitised within four projects (13%) are available in the institution only. The resources digitised within two projects (6%) are not yet available.



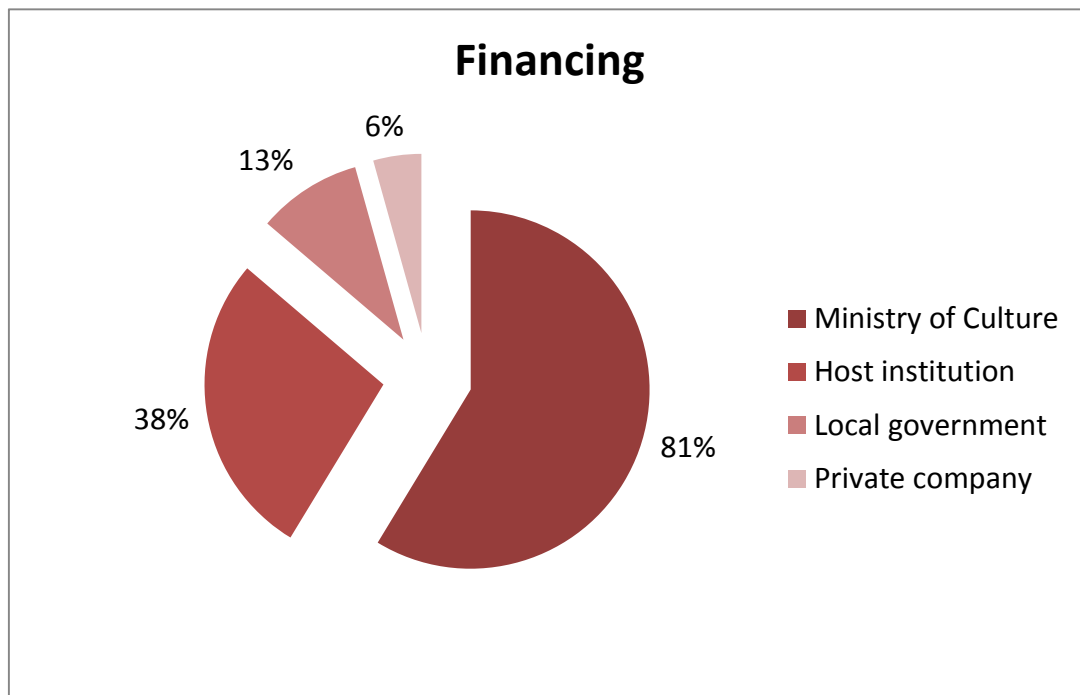
Picture 4: Availability of the digitised resources

3.8 Search options. Search options available on the websites of the projects were also analysed. Simple, full text search is available in seven projects (30%). Full text search, but also search by title and year is available in five projects (21%).

Advanced search options are available in eight projects (34%). It has to be stressed that the advanced search option is actually available on two websites only – digitised journal *Šumarski list* (available on the publishers' website) and the Portal of Digitised Croatian Historic Newspapers and Journals – the Portal is the hosted website for resources from seven digitisation projects. There is no search function available on the websites of four projects (17%).

3.9 Metadata. In the analysed corpus of 31 digitisation projects metadata is available in only 15 projects (48%). The metadata standards and metadata elements used for the description of the resources differ from project to project. There is no common metadata set used for the Croatian digitisation projects.

3.10 Sources of financing. The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia is the main source of financing of digitisation projects in Croatia – 25 projects (81%) are financed within the framework of the project Croatian Cultural Heritage. The host institutions finance 12 projects (38%). Four projects (13%) are financed by the local government, and the private company is the financing source for two projects (6%).



Picture 5: Sources of financing

4. Discussion and conclusion

The analysis shows that the aims and selection criteria of digitisation projects in Croatia are similar to other digitisation projects. The projects comply with the Croatian national digitisation strategy and recommendations. The majority of digitised resources are in the public domain or the permission for digitisation of the copyrighted material was obtained. Due to the fact that the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia is the primary source of financing, digitisation projects are distributed among different institutions, including small ones as well.

However, half of digitised resources are not described by metadata; there is no search function in 17% of the projects, and search options need to be significantly improved in approximately 70% of the projects. This stresses the need for further development and implementation of the digitisation guidelines and procedures, technical improvement and institutional collaboration.

A possible solution to the current situation can be strengthening of the role of the Portal of Digitised Croatian Historic Newspapers and Journals. Namely, the National and University Library in Zagreb undertook (with the support of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia) the development of this cooperative portal as a freely available tool to all Croatian heritage institutions enabling production and publishing of digital reproductions online, browsing and searching of newspaper and journal issues, simple and advanced searches of full text journal articles as well as aggregator function.

By developing standardised and harmonised procedures for digitisation the Portal can facilitate the availability of printed national heritage, improve the protection of unique and rare originals, and be used for coordination and rationalisation of digitisation efforts by the decision makers.

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