

“My Street” Project: revealing the cultural heritage of Central Slovenia

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Abstract: »My Street« project was developed by Ljubljana City Library exclusively for the KAMRA portal, a website containing Slovenian digitized cultural heritage. This project presents the history of streets and urban districts in Central Slovenia, reveals interesting facts from the lives of prominent figures and thus allows visitors of the KAMRA portal to take a virtual walk through places and among people from the past.

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1. Introduction

Ljubljana City Library (LCL) is the largest public library in Slovenia. Its network consists of five regional units with 17 branches in Municipality of Ljubljana and 13 branches in seven municipalities, which are contracting partners. It also has 43 mobile library stops. LCL was established in 2008, when six separate Ljubljana libraries consolidated.¹ LCL performs its activities for the residents of Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia, as well as for its visitors. It also performs special tasks of central regional library for the Central Slovenia region which has about 500.000 residents.²

¹In 2008 Oton Župačič Library, Bežigrad Library, Slovanska Library, Prežihov Voranc Library, Šiška Library and Jože Mazovec Library merged into Ljubljana City Library.

²The regulation on the activity and funding of central regional libraries assigns LCL four main tasks: 1. Ensuring an enlarged and more demanding collection of library materials and information. 2. Providing professional help to regional libraries, including collaboration in planning the development of the information system. 3. Coordinating collection, processing and preservation of local studies material. 4. Directing withdrawn library materials of its region.

LCL has been involved into the KAMRA portal project from the start as it was one of the ten central regional libraries running the development of the portal from 2005 to 2008. Now it is one of the most active regions contributing local heritage material to the KAMRA web pages. Most of the collections published by the partners from the Central Slovenia region in the recent years are a result of a special LCL project entitled My street, whose main goal is to present the history, development, cultural pulse and life of people at a certain place (part of town, a street, a main square) to the public and in this way promote the interest in local studies throughout Slovenia.

2. The KAMRA portal

The KAMRA portal is a website which provides access to digitized Slovenian cultural heritage. It was developed between years 2005 and 2008. The project was run by a Consortium consisting of ten central regional libraries, the Public Library Association and the National and University Library and was financed by the Ministry of Culture. The portal was fully launched at the end of 2008 and is now a regular program, financed by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport. It was managed by the Consortium till 2011 then Celje Central Library took over the responsibility for management and development of the portal. The regional central libraries and the Public Library Association still take part in maintenance and development of the KAMRA portal as they co-finance it and manage regional editorials.

A big part of cultural heritage stored by cultural organizations is still not accessible to the public. The purpose of portal KAMRA is to provide these organizations with free infrastructure, maintenance and training, so they can make public the documents which are of importance to the local community. The portal is opened to all institutions (museums, archives, schools etc.) and individuals and it is aimed at the general public.

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The KAMRA portal provides access to different digitized content: full texts, images, audio and video material. This enables easier, faster and more result oriented data search. Digital collections are presented as stories: a certain theme, described by a short text, is illustrated with images, additional textual documents and audio and video recordings.

KAMRA's mission is

- to coordinate the collection and access to digitized local cultural heritage content,
- to enable the users to take creative part in the cultural and social community happenings,
- to help citizens gain access to cultural heritage and local studies material housed in libraries, museums and archives,
- to promote digital content of libraries, museums and archives, since in the future they will represent one of the leading generators of e-content to be used by partners from economic sectors (tourism, creative industry, education),
- to promote the Slovene knowledge and culture worldwide,
- to provide access for all those who are not able to access the content physically,
- to preserve the Slovenian local cultural heritage in digital form permanently.

Every region has a possibility to choose content for publication that is typical of the area, interesting, and of importance to the local community. This can be:

- presentations of local authors or prominent figures, including their work in digital form, photographs, postcards of the house of their birth, audio recordings of their voice or an

interpretation of their work, and video recordings of literary evenings or celebrations held in their memory,

- documents of typical local societies: their actions, the life stories of their founders or key players, their texts, audio recordings, the memories of their descendants and friends,
- local postcards from different eras, stories linked to the locations on them and their owners,
- audio and video recordings of local dialects related to the material being described and documented,
- collections by local artists, their biographies, exhibition catalogues, and interviews,
- film material with local-interest content (primary and secondary),
- content related to tourist attractions in the local community (natural or cultural),
- local ethnographic content (how we used to live, folklore, domestic crafts, customs, etc.),
- famous buildings and the life stories of their inhabitants.

The KAMRA portal follows the Digital Agenda for Europe 2010-2020 strategy (2010) by providing access to digitized analog collections. By providing free infrastructure and education the portal encourages public libraries and other local cultural organizations to plan digitization of their local studies collections.

KAMRA was also involved in EuropeanaLocal project. This allowed the portal to become one of Slovenian repositories which enable the content to be harvested and featured on Europeana.

Digitization of material for the KAMRA portal has been emphasized in public libraries of Central Slovenia region for several reasons:

- the cost of digitization which arise from smaller projects, such as preparation of digital stories for the KAMRA portal are much lower than those of digitization projects of large corpuses of library materials,
- local studies are becoming increasingly important in public libraries,
- means have to be provided for full-time employment of regional coordinators of local studies (within performing tasks of LCL as Central regional library), who can build digital collections in a more quality and organized way and deal with very time consuming preparations of the collections.

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The KAMRA portal is currently being upgraded. By the time this paper is published the testing phase will be finished. Along with all the technical upgrades KAMRA will also be completely renovated.

2.1 KAMRA editorial policy

As the concept behind KAMRA portal is regional, there are 10 local editors who are situated in 10 central regional libraries. The main editorial office is situated at Celje Central Library.

The duties of the main editor are the following:

- reviewing the content of the portal and coordinating the addition of content with the regional editors,
- calling meetings and organizing training for regional editors,
- organizing and providing training for content contributors when necessary,
- co-operating with the contractor to improve the portal and rectify errors,

while the regional editors:

- coordinate the addition of content in the region,
- review and edit the regional content, and approve the publication of all regional content,
- assist external partners in creating content,
- organize regional training for new content contributors,
- make proposals for portal improvements.

In 2010 LCL upgraded the education system for learning data entry into the administrative environment of the KAMRA portal by e-learning.

E-learning is very practically oriented. The participants get to know the basics, how to use the portal and design stories on the site. E-learning is accessible 24 hours a day (anytime, everywhere), that is why the participants have the possibility to decide for themselves when they are going to use it. The e-learning content is divided into five exercises with a number of different tasks. By solving all of them the participants learn how to enter the data into the administrative environment of the KAMRA portal. The e-learning tutor monitors, guides and helps the participants in the learning process and answers their questions by e-mail.

This kind of learning process proved to be very efficient. By solving different tasks by themselves (with the only help of a special manual) the participants memorize the proceedings much better. Till September 2012 thirteen contributors finished this e-learning successfully. At the end of e-learning every participant is asked to fill out a questionnaire about their experience with e-learning. In accordance with the results of the questionnaires the tasks are upgraded and improved on a regular basis.

3. My street project

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My Street project was developed by Ljubljana City Library exclusively for the KAMRA portal. Its main goal is to present the history, development, cultural pulse and life of people at a certain place (part of town, a street, a main square) to the public and thus promote the interest for local studies throughout Slovenia. Also involved in this project are six public libraries from the Central Slovenia region. Ljubljana City Library provides them with help and counseling for planning, preparation and creation of digitized collections. It also provides education for all the content contributors. The project stands as a good example of an effective tool for promotion of libraries and their local studies material.

The project started in 2010. Six regional public libraries decided to join in. The main topic was presentation of important streets and squares in the cities of Central Slovenia region.

By mid-2012 the Central Slovenia region published 18 digital collections under the wing of the My Street project, 4 of them were published by LCL (A street at my beloved Zalog, Tavčar street in Ljubljana, Ljubljana neighborhood Fond houses and Dane Zajc). Central region libraries contributed the remaining 14 digital collections of which seven explore selected streets and their inhabitants, three represent the image of a certain place, three introduce famous personalities and one explores craft, trade and industry in a specific town.

In fact, the exact number of published digital collections, created for this project, is difficult to define. Some collections consist of a multitude of sub-collections which are added subsequently. This way some of the collections are constantly being updated. If a collection becomes too large, it can be divided into several parts, which means that the number of digital collections is constantly changing.

Libraries choose their topics independently. Usually they choose a theme that during the formation of a digital collection is current and interesting or it is of importance to a specific local environment. In the My street project libraries publish one or two digital collections a year, some even more.

Since LCL strives to publish quality and interesting digital collections, it tries in the process of preparation to connect as much as possible with other cultural institutions, associations and individuals.

It is a strong involvement of the Central Slovenia region in My street project which largely contributed to the fact that in 2011 the regional editor received the award for the most active and successful work on the KAMRA portal.

Bellow I will present four collections, which were published on portal KAMRA as a part of My street project by LCL as well as a few selected collections of the regional libraries.

3.1 LCL collections

3.1.1 A street at my beloved Zalog

As a part of the project LCL wished to present the most well-known and interesting streets in Ljubljana, so they asked for ideas from the colleagues of LCL branches. Of all the collected proposals they chose a street in Zalog, which is known for its very genuine neighborly relations. For visual presentation of Zalog and its history old postcards from LCL local studies collection have been used, while for presentation of street events and neighborly relations photographs from the archive of one of the neighborhood families have been used. This digital collection has a special feature, a short documentary film called The Sunny street. It was filmed on a special street event, the 29th street picnic. Both, documentary film and trailer have been published on YouTube and *online* links to both of them can be found on the KAMRA portal.³

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3.1.2 Tavčar street in Ljubljana

One year later Tavčar street was chosen. This street lies in the center of Ljubljana and is known for its famous Court House Palace, Miklošič park across from it, interesting architecture and certain important people who once lived here. To show the historical outline of Tavčar street and Miklošič park the library connected itself with Ljubljana Historical Archives, which has allowed eleven postcards with images of Tavčar street to be published on the portal. For the presentation of the architectural gems of Tavčar street photographs shot by the library staff were used.

In cooperation with the Chamber of Architecture and Environmental Planning of Slovenia there was also a workshop for children organized, entitled Tavčar street held at LCL. It was attended by two classes of elementary school pupils from the fifth grade. The purpose of the workshop was to present them the Tavčar street, its characteristics and history. The whole event was documented in the form of photos and videos, which were also published in the digital collection.⁴

³Digital collection *A street at my beloved Zalog* is accessible on the KAMRA portal at the following url: <<http://www.kamra.si/Default.aspx?region=6&module=5&id=873>>.

⁴Digital collection *Tavčar street* is accessible on the KAMRA portal at the following url: <<http://www.kamra.si/Default.aspx?region=6&module=5&id=580>>.

The collection will keep being upgraded, firstly with a sub-collection about the famous inhabitants of Tavčar street, inside which there is already a sub-collection about the translator Branko Madžarevič. He kindly provided LCL with his biography and a photo. He also agreed to do an interview, which is published in five parts at the KAMRA portal.

3.1.3 *Ljubljana neighborhood Fond houses*

The collection shows history and life at one of the most interesting neighborhoods in the Slovenian capital. It presents through photographs the actions and events prepared by the residents in a common desire to socialize and live a better life.

In the year the collection was being prepared the neighborhood celebrated its 75th anniversary of existence and the event was held exactly on European Neighbors' Day. Residents decorated the whole street and prepared a picnic, which we documented. We also did an interview with the residents' representative and published it at portal KAMRA in five parts. Residents celebrated their neighborhood anniversary also by opening of the exhibition of Fond houses at the Slovanska Library, a branch of LCL. The exhibition had been digitized and uploaded to the portal KAMRA.⁵

3.1.4 *Dane Zajc*

The collection of Dane Zajc represents a set of collections of prominent personalities. It deals with the life and work of a renowned poet, playwright and essayist Dane Zajc. The collection was created in collaboration with Pionirska – The Centre for Youth Literature and Librarianship and Slovenian library-museum MEGA quiz. In collecting the photographic material we also had help from the author's son Lenart Zajc.⁶

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3.2 ***Selected regional libraries' collections***

3.2.1 *City presentations through old postcards*

Some regional libraries have chosen to present their city with the help of old postcards from their own local studies collection. The postcards talk about the history of places and lives of their inhabitants over time. Ivan Cankar Library from Vrhnika prepared a digital collection entitled Cankar's Vrhnika with its surroundings, which presents Vrhnika and surrounding places, some attention is also given to the writer Ivan Cankar and the natural and cultural heritage of Vrhnika.⁷

Logatec Library prepared a collection of old postcards of Logatec in a similar manner. It presents Logatec and its surrounding places.⁸

⁵Digital collection *Ljubljana neighborhood Fond houses* is accessible on the KAMRA portal at the following url: <<http://www.kamra.si/Default.aspx?region=6&module=5&id=1602>>.

⁶Digital collection *Dane Zajc* is accessible on the KAMRA portal at the following url: <<http://www.kamra.si/Default.aspx?region=6&module=5&id=1984>>.

⁷Digital collection *Cankar's Vrhnika with its surroundings* is accessible on the KAMRA portal at the following url: <<http://www.kamra.si/Default.aspx?region=6&module=5&id=1321>>.

⁸Digital collection *Logatec Library's collection of old postcards* is accessible on the KAMRA portal at the following url: <<http://www.KAMRA.si/Default.aspx?module=5&id=877>>.

3.2.2 Images of cities

Some libraries started the presentations of city images a little bit differently, by publishing sets of research papers done by primary school students. Logatec Library in close cooperation with a local primary school created a collection from a set of research papers that address specific features of Logatec. The collection was named Logatec in the past and now.⁹

3.2.3 Crafts, trade and industry presentations

Grosuplje City Library has decided to explore crafts, trade and industry in Grosuplje and published its findings in the form of a very large digital collection.¹⁰

3.2.4 Presentations of streets and roads

Other libraries decided to present certain roads, streets and squares. Logatec Library did a detailed survey of Cankar road in Logatec: its history, the history of houses and their inhabitants. They also included some special events which happen on this road every year.¹¹

Similarly Ivan Cankar Library from Vrhnika prepared a large digital collection Talking a walk on Vrhnika's Old road, where it reveals the history and the present of the houses building after building and presents their inhabitants.¹² Litija Library took their work even further by including in their collection Valvazor square in Litija in addition to the presentation of the square and its more significant inhabitants, the pulse of the square.¹³

4. Conclusion

LCL is very proud of the results of My street project. Regional libraries have accepted it as their own and cooperate even though the current financial situation is not very beneficial towards any kind of digitization projects. LCL believes that My street project has still a lot to give so it will continue to run it. There are still a lot of interesting and important topics that need to be turned into digital collections and LCL will do its best to digitize and publish as many as possible.

LCL is constantly looking for new partners to contribute their stories to the portal and will be very active in this field also in the future. It will keep striving to promote Slovenian cultural heritage among the public and to provide access to material with special local importance to residents of Central Slovenia region and others.

⁹Digital collection Logatec in the past and now is accessible on the KAMRA portal at the following url: <<http://www.kamra.si/Default.aspx?region=6&module=5&id=1036>>.

¹⁰Digital collection *Crafts, trade and industry in Grosuplje* is accessible on the KAMRA portal at the following url: <<http://www.kamra.si/Default.aspx?region=6&module=5&id=1311>>.

¹¹Digital collection *Cankar road in Logatec* is accessible on the KAMRA portal at the following url: <<http://www.kamra.si/Default.aspx?region=6&module=5&id=1037>>.

¹²Digital collection *Talking a walk on Vrhnika's Old road* is accessible on the KAMRA portal at the following url: <<http://www.kamra.si/Default.aspx?region=6&module=5&id=650>>.

¹³Digital collection *Valvazor square in Litija* is accessible on the KAMRA portal at the following url: <<http://www.kamra.si/Default.aspx?region=6&module=5&id=812>>.

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