

# KAMRA, the regional portal

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## The portal

Regional portal KAMRA is a web-based information system that combines digital information from various fields, as they are traditionally gathered and mediated by public libraries and other local institutions. Specific contents are created by institutions that are most competent in their respective fields and are then accessible through a single portal, regardless where it is created. Selection and placement of the content is carried out through coordinated co-operation of the regional partnership institutions, but the work itself is mainly done and coordinated by the regional public libraries.

Each user is enabled to create an innovative environment with personalized contents and setting an individual interface 'Moj Portal'. Interfaces with contents for specific target groups, such as children, teenagers and adults are prepared in advance and are also going to vary in terms of graphical design.

The concept of the portal foresees at the first stage the cooperation of local and regional cultural institutions such as libraries, archives and museums. This cooperation has been mostly unorganised and occasional until now.



## Goals

- to coordinate the collecting of cultural, educational, scientific, social and informational contents,
- to offer infrastructure for coordinated collection of information and content at the local level,
- to enable smaller content providers to make their content freely accessible,
- to enable the users to contribute creatively to the cultural and social local environment,
- to assist all citizens to gain access to cultural heritage and local history material housed in libraries, museums and archives,
- to promote the Slovene knowledge and culture,
- to offer the contents to educational institutions as an additional study material,
- to provide access for those who are not able to access the content physically,
- to promote regional co-operation by establishing different regional partnerships (culture, public services, economy, tourism, non-governmental organisations).

The portal contains current information about regional news and events along with the existing data sources from different providers and owners.

Systematic digitisation in libraries, archives and museums has not yet begun, currently there are only single, but important sources, such as an electronic lexicons, glossaries, online quiz, web supported programmes for the promotion of reading and databases containing local studies material, such as old postcards, photographs, documents.

We believe that the establishment of regional portal will stimulate new digitisation projects in cooperation of archives, libraries and museums.

The KAMRA project ambitions have not been only to provide a platform for access to digitalised contents. When the project has been planned, every known development criteria was taken under advisement, including the content related concepts (integrating contents into stories) as well as the technical environment (hgi platform). What creators of the portal have had in mind is also its additional value in the following fields:

#### Enhancement of the regional libraries role

The portal is edited by the staff from regional libraries together with regional project groups. Members of groups are not only libraries, but also representatives of organisations that can in any way contribute local studies contents – principally archives and museums. In this way regional libraries consolidate their role in regions and are in position to establish partnerships which can further lead to other joint projects.

#### Encouragement of digitalisation of local studies contents

The KAMRA portal, together with all the activities it encompasses (education, regional integration...), has already in the preparing phase encouraged many libraries to seriously consider digitalisation projects and it is expected that more of these projects will follow. This portal is in many cases the only way in which smaller institutions can effectively ensure access to their digitalised contents.

#### Enhancement of libraries role as e-content providers

In compliance with European strategies in the field of cultural heritage and lifelong learning, Slovenia is more and more aware of the importance of developing and enabling access to e-content. These tendencies are evident in the Strategy of the Republic of Slovenia as well as in the National Development Programme. Libraries and other local cultural institutions are a priceless source of knowledge which could be easier to access in virtual form and if so, it can be integrated with other contents, thus enriching it. When some informal conversations with various e-content providers (Mobitel, Najdi.si) were conducted, it became evident that they can hardly wait for this sort of contents. Until that point, libraries never even entered their minds.

#### Participating in European Community Programmes

The main strategic decision of the EC in cultural field for the period 2007/13 is to encourage and support access to digitalised cultural heritage which will receive a considerable amount of financial support. The European Digital Library, which currently only includes national libraries, is expanding and in future it will foster many local cultural institutions. Of course, the financial support is not intended for the digitalisation process itself, but mainly for providing better access and preservation of digitalised contents. Above all there is the tendency to integrate contents from different institutions all over Europe.

Slovenian public libraries and their local digitalised collections (even if they had them) could not participate in European projects, but had they been joined in the KAMRA project, they would make an extremely likable partner for any of the previously mentioned EU projects.

#### Course of the project

The idea of establishing a portal for publication of local e-contents derives from a RIM project that was developed in 2003 by the Department of Culture, IZUM, NUK, ARNES and regional libraries with intent of participating in structural funds tenders and includes a set-up of local networks, optical connections in all of the regional libraries and the development of a digitalised content portal. The project was not successful but gave the ground for future activities. At the same time, Slovenia was involved in a EU project CALIMERA, whose objective, amongst others, was to encourage different technical solutions for presentation of local cultural heritage. The knowledge and experiences acquired during this project were a basis for substantive and technological development of the KAMRA portal. And it was at that time also, that the Ministry of Culture participated in yet another EU project, MINERVA, which provided an additional encouragement, especially for financing digitisation projects.

Development of the KAMRA portal is a four year project (2005-2008). The coordinator is the Public Libraries Association, partners are ten regional libraries and National and University Library.

The project is financed by the Ministry of Culture.

A project management group of four people was responsible for the conception of the project, carrying out the administrative processes, the development of the portal and acquired the necessary financial support. They prepared a presentation of the portal and organised trainings for regional editors and content creators.

Regional project groups which consist of regional libraries representatives and regional partners are responsible for the work on the regional level. Their

tasks include coordination of adding the local contents, co-operation with the project group and regional trainings for content creators.

Unsuitable project management was mainly responsible for a great deal of complications which led to one year delay in the development of the portal. The management structure is now established, problems with provider resolved and the work on the project can go on.

## Training and promotion

In the first phase of the project, Slovenian experts and public at large were informed about the development of the KAMRA portal and the concept of the project in general during the informational events in all ten regions, accompanied by presentations in consultation sessions and conferences at home and abroad as well as in the media.

Regional editors constantly kept the work on the project under review and were also involved in some trainings regarding contents creation, on-line writing, promotion and methods of the regional team work.

Almost 150 librarians, curators and archivists have been trained to create contents.

## Technical solutions

The portal runs on software framework based upon Microsoft .NET technology which:

- leverages thin-client (web browsers) use for system administration and data entry
- includes powerful internal workflow system for easy adjustment to organisational model and its processes needs
- has advanced caching techniques for top performance
- includes advanced content management system for simple portal administration and completely customizable front-end interfaces that are cross-browser compatible
- has internal system support for scalability and availability issues
- includes logging system for tracking all activity that enables advanced analytical processing possibilities
- is a world-ready solution that supports completely multilingual and culture specific front-end (portal) and/or back-end (administration) user experience