

## **History of the book as a research topic in Croatia: a brief overview**

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Within the Croatian research community an interest in the history of the book can be found in the areas of information sciences, the humanities, social sciences, and especially in history, literature, sociology, anthropology, and linguistics. Due to the high degree of interdisciplinarity, it is very difficult to offer a brief overview of the area or determine what elements should be included. This brief study will focus on the following components: the research community, university infrastructure, research projects and programs, conferences and summer schools, journals publishing articles on book history, academic monographs published to date, and recent doctoral dissertations.

The book history research community in Croatia includes practitioners and theorists from various professional backgrounds, from librarians, information specialists, and museologists, to archivists, historians, literary historians, sociologists, linguists, and others. A number of steps precede the interpretation of historical material, including organization, restoration, preservation, and digitization. Connections and cooperation between all participants is therefore extremely important. Since 1996, in Croatia, the AKM (Archives, Libraries, Museums) annual conference has been held in Poreč and Rovinj in Istria. Many of the aforementioned participants meet at the conference to share their experience and progress, as well as to develop tools which allow, among other things, access to and discovery of book history material.<sup>1</sup> Since 2000, there has also been the annual Digitization Festival project at the National and University Library in Zagreb, where various projects for digital collections of Croatian heritage institutions are presented.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://akm.hkdrustvo.hr/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://dfest.nsk.hr/>

Croatian Cultural Heritage is the national project for the digitization of archival, library, and museum material.<sup>3</sup> Its aim is to promote the creation of new digital content and improve its visibility and access. This has led to the Digital Collection of the National and University Libraries in Zagreb, as well as many smaller digitization projects in other heritage institutions, mostly libraries. As part of this project, old Croatian newspapers and eighteenth- and nineteenth-century journals, as well as manuscript collections and old and rare books from the library holdings, have been digitized.<sup>4</sup>

Three Croatian universities offer programs and courses related to the history of the book: the University of Zagreb, the University of Zadar, and the University of Osijek. The University of Zagreb has a Department of Information and Communication Sciences that includes programs on archive management, librarianship, museum science, information technology, and information science. The department also offers a postgraduate doctoral program with two elective courses related to the history of the book, on digitization of cultural heritage and historical newsprint as a source of information. The University of Zadar offers a postgraduate doctoral program in the knowledge economy and information transfer. One of the three modules offered is on the organization, preservation, and use of literary heritage, covering the social history of the book, library heritage in European libraries, the preservation, bibliographic referencing, and content management of old materials and manuscripts, and communication aspects of newspapers in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Department of Information Science at the University of Osijek has two faculties devoted to the history of books, publishing, and libraries and to the preservation of literary heritage and cooperation with heritage institutions.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.kultura.hr/eng>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.nsk.hr/category/zbirke/>

In 2007, the Ministry of Science, Education, and Sports approved a research program entitled Organizing, Interpreting, and Preserving Croatian Literary Heritage.<sup>5</sup> which includes projects identifying the prerequisites for a digital library of Croatian printed heritage to 1800 (director: Prof. Zoran Velagić, University of Osijek), theoretical and technological conditions for organizing and preserving Croatia's written heritage (director: Prof. Tatjana Aparac-Jelušić, University of Zadar), and the challenges of discovering and interpreting library heritage in Croatian library collections (director: Prof. Jelena Lakuš, University of Osijek).

The first summer school for the study of old books was held in 2009 in Zadar; in 2011 it became the Summer School in the Study of Historical Manuscripts and in 2013 the Conference and School on Records, Archives, and Memory Studies. In 2015, a conference entitled "Book and Society" was held in Split; in 2018 it will be held in September. In October 2018 the Conference and School on Authority, Provenance, Authenticity, and Evidence will be held in Zadar. There are also two regular conferences, the aforementioned annual AKM (Archive, Libraries and Museums) conference in Istria and the bi-annual LIDA (Libraries in the Digital Age) conference in Zadar, where book history topics are occasionally presented. It should also be noted that most of these conferences publish proceedings.

Only one Croatian journal focuses on the history of the book in its own right: *Libellarium: Journal for the Research of Writing, Books, and Cultural Heritage Institutions*, published in English and Croatian since 2007 by the Department of Information Sciences of the University of Osijek and the University of Zadar.<sup>6</sup> All articles published in *Libellarium* are open access and available online. Occasional articles on book history topics can also be found in the journals *Croatian Library Journal*, *Kaj: Journal of Literature, Art and Culture*, *Croatica*

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<sup>5</sup> [http://zprojekti.mzos.hr/public/c-prikaz2\\_det.asp?psid=25&ID=371](http://zprojekti.mzos.hr/public/c-prikaz2_det.asp?psid=25&ID=371)

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.libellarium.org/index.php/libellarium>

*Christiana Periodica, Gazophylacium: Journal of Science, Art, Economics, and Politics, Scrinia Slavonica*, and other journals of history, literature, information, and art.<sup>7</sup>

Although a handful of earlier publications and monographs on the local and regional history of libraries, reading, publishing, and printing can be found in Croatian literature, the true pioneer in the study of the history of the book in Croatia was Prof. Aleksandar Stipčević (1930–2015), who published six books in the field. The first edition of his work *The History of the Book* was published in 1985 and provides a broad overview of the history of books, bookselling, writing, and printing from ancient Middle Eastern cultures to modern times.<sup>8</sup> The second edition was published in 2006, at a time when the Croatian research community was becoming more interested in the history of the book. Stipčević also wrote three books on censorship in history: *Censorship in Libraries* (1992), *The Perfect Censor, or a Handbook against Harmful Books and their Authors* (1994), and *How to Avoid Censors* (1997).<sup>9</sup> In 2012 he published *The Fate of the Book*, which deals with literary culture in the history of mankind and discusses the fate of books in Croatian culture and the destiny of books in world book history.<sup>10</sup> However, his most comprehensive and most important work aimed at understanding

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<sup>7</sup> *Anali Zavoda za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku* [Annals of the Institute for Historical Science of the Croatian Academy of Sciences in Dubrovnik], *Arhivski vjesnik* [Archive Journal], *Cris: časopis Povijesnog društva Križevci* [Cris: Journal of Historical Society of Križevci], *Historijski zbornik* [Historical Review], *Muzeologija* [Museum of Art], *Osječki zbornik* [Osijek Collection], *Podravina: časopis za multidisciplinarna istraživanja* [Podravina: Journal for Multidisciplinary Research], *Rad HAZU. Razred za društvene znanosti* [Work of the Croatian Academy of Sciences. Department of Social Sciences], *Radovi Zavoda za hrvatsku povijest (Filozofski fakultet Zagreb)*, [Papers of the Croatian History Institute (Faculty of Philosophy, Zagreb)], *Radovi Zavoda za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Zadru* [Papers of the Institute for Historical Science of the Croatian Academy of Sciences in Zadar], *Senjski zbornik* [Senj Collection], *Zbornik Odsjeka za povijesne znanosti HAZU* [Proceedings of the Department of Historical Science of the Croatian Academy of Sciences]. Jasna Tingle, "Istraživanja povijesti knjige u hrvatskim časopisima u razdoblju od 2001. do 2010" [Book history as a research topic in Croatian journals from 2001 to 2010], *Libellarium: journal for research of writing, books, and cultural heritage institutions* 5.1 (2012): 1–13.

<sup>8</sup> Aleksandar Stipčević, *Povijest knjige* [History of the Book]. Zagreb: Nakladni zavod Matice hrvatske, 1985, and Aleksandar Stipčević, *Povijest knjige* [History of the Book], second edition. Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 2006.

<sup>9</sup> Aleksandar Stipčević, *Cenzura u knjižnicama* [Censorship in Libraries]. Zagreb: Faculty of Philosophy, Department of Information Studies of the Department of Information Science, 1992, Aleksandar Stipčević, *O savršenom cenzoru iliti Priručnik protiv štetnih knjiga i njihovih autora* [The Perfect Censor, or a Handbook of Harmful Books and their Authors]. Zagreb: Nakladni zavod Matice hrvatske, 1994, and Aleksandar Stipčević, *Kako izbjeći cenzora* [How to Avoid Censors]. Zagreb: Hrvatska sveučilišna naklada, 1997.

<sup>10</sup> Aleksandar Stipčević, *Sudbina knjige* [The Fate of the Book]. Lokve: Naklada Benja, 2000.

the history of the book in Croatia is the three-part work *The Social History of the Book amongst the Croats* (2004, 2005, 2008), which deals with various aspects of book history in Croatia chronologically. The work brings together a variety of topics related to the production, dissemination, and consumption of texts.<sup>11</sup> Anyone interested in any aspect of the history of the book in Croatia should start with these works.

In Croatia, there are only a few published monographs which bring research into the history of books and reading into line with contemporary theoretical and methodological approaches. In 2010 Zoran Velagić published *Writer and Author: The essence of authorship and the system of authoring of religious books in the 18th century*<sup>12</sup> which poses a number of questions relating to the corpus of texts by North Croatian writers of religious works in the eighteenth century. The first part of the book reconstructs the general, collected biographies of eighteenth-century North Croatian writers, giving a short chronology. The second part on authority analyzes the authorship of religious books of that era. It gives an interesting view of censorship which prevented the publication of so-called “unnecessary” books. The numerous links and collaborations between authors and censors raise the interesting question as to whether North Croatian religious literature created mere scribes or real authors and to what extent their writing was the creation of individuals and inspiration, or simply the result of copying, translating, compiling, and plagiarizing. In 2011 Marijan Hameršak’s book *Stories: The history of childhood and fairy tales* was published. It contains particularly interesting chapters on the narrative practices which led to the appearance of fairy tales in Croatian children’s literature.<sup>13</sup> Marijana Tomić published a book in 2014 entitled *Croatian Glagolitic*

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<sup>11</sup> Aleksandar Stipčević, *Socijalna povijest knjige u Hrvata [The Social History of the Book amongst the Croats]*. Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 2004, 2005, 2008.

<sup>12</sup> Zoran Velagić, *Pisac i autoritet: bit autorstva i sustav autorizacije vjerskih knjiga u 18. stoljeću [Writer and Author: The essence of authorship and the system of authoring religious books in the 18th century]*. Zagreb: Naklada Ljevak, 2010.

<sup>13</sup> Marijana Hameršak, *Pričalice: o povijesti djetinjstva i bajke [Stories: The history of childhood and fairy tales]*. Zagreb: Algoritam, 2011.

*Breviaries at the Crossroads of Manuscript and Printed Traditions*<sup>14</sup> which presents research conducted on the Glagolitic<sup>15</sup> corpus which emerged between the second half of the fifteenth century and the late sixteenth century. The author explores how texts are arranged in manuscript and printed Croatian Glagolitic breviaries and the influence of text organization in Glagolitic manuscript codices on printed books and vice versa. She also examines the effect of the appropriation of text organization in a period of transition between manuscript and print, which demonstrates the development of book production in Croatia. The historian David Šporer published a book in 2015 entitled *An Introduction to Book History: The Basis of Access*, in which he interprets the relevant literature on the history of the book in the French and Anglo-American spheres, which so far consists of a small number of translations or individual articles and monographs by Croatian researchers over the past ten years.<sup>16</sup>

Very few dissertations on the history of books have been published so far in Croatia. The handful of doctoral dissertations to date are Jelena Lakuš, *Book, Society and Culture. Religious and Political Order in Dalmatia (1815-1848)*;<sup>17</sup> Marijana Hameršak, *Formations of Childhood and Transformations of Fairy Tales in Croatian Children's Literature*;<sup>18</sup> Ivanka Kuić, *Book Reception in Split During the Period of Second Austrian Government (1814-1918)*;<sup>19</sup> Marijana Tomić, *The Organization and Appropriation of Texts of Croatian Glagolitic Breviaries at the Crossroads of the Manuscript and Printed Tradition*;<sup>20</sup> Alojzija

<sup>14</sup> Marijana Tomić, *Hrvatskoglagoljski brevijari na razmeđu rukopisne i tiskane tradicije* [Croatian Glagolitic Breviaries at the Crossroads of Manuscript and Printed Traditions]. Zagreb: Naklada Ljevak, 2014.

<sup>15</sup> Editor's note: Glagolitic script is the oldest known form of Slavic writing, predating Cyrillic. It was created in the ninth century by Saint Cyril to transcribe books of liturgy in Old Slavic.

<sup>16</sup> David Šporer, *Uvod u povijest knjige: temelji pristupa* [Introduction to Book History: The Basis of Access]. Zagreb: Leykam International, 2015.

<sup>17</sup> Jelena Lakuš, *Book, Society and Culture. Religious and Political Order in Dalmatia (1815-1848)*. Budapest: CEU, 2006.

<sup>18</sup> Marijana Hameršak: *Tvorbe djetinjstva i preobrazbe bajke u hrvatskoj dječjoj književnosti* [Formations of Childhood and Transformations of Fairy Tales in Croatian Children's Literature]. University of Zagreb Faculty of Philosophy, 2008.

<sup>19</sup> Ivanka Kuić, *Recepcija knjige u Splitu za vrijeme druge austrijske uprave (1814-1918)* [Book Reception in Split During the Period of Second Austrian Government (1814-1918)]. University of Zagreb Faculty of Philosophy, 2012.

<sup>20</sup> Marijana Tomić: *Organizacija i apropijacija tekstova hrvatskoglagoljskih brevijara na razmeđu rukopisne i tiskane tradicije* [The Organization and Appropriation of Texts of Croatian Glagolitic Breviaries at the

Tvorić, *Women as Authors and Readers of Croatian Prayer Books from the sixteenth to the nineteenth Century*;<sup>21</sup> and Nada Topić, *The Role of the Split Bookstore Morpurgo in the Development of Reading Culture in the Second Half of the Nineteenth and the First Half of the Twentieth Century*.<sup>22</sup> Some dissertations are still being written, and thanks to postgraduate programs at the universities in Zadar and Zagreb, their number is likely to grow.

An overview of published articles, monographs, and dissertations shows that Croatian researchers make use of manuscripts, books, book catalogs, bibliographies, inventories of libraries, newspapers, magazines, bookshops, subscription lists, diaries, *ex libris*, correspondence, and other resources. The topics covered in their research include the history of publishing, printing, librarianship, and reading societies, text organization, text appropriation, authorship, censorship, readership (women's reading, children's reading, reading culture), and the social role of book.

In conclusion, the history of the book in Croatia is a relatively new area and there are many obstacles to accessing historical materials, which impedes their interpretation. The biggest problem is that there is still no information regarding what has been preserved: there is a pressing need to identify and catalogue collections of old and rare books kept in church and monastery libraries, museums, and archives. Subsequently it will be necessary to make this historical material accessible to researchers, and digitization is certainly a good way of achieving this. If we look at all the participants in Robert Darnton's communication circuit (authors, publishers, printers, shippers, booksellers, and readers), in Croatia, we know the most about authors and the least about readers; we need researchers to undertake more

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*Crossroads of the Manuscript and Printed Tradition*], University of Zagreb Faculty of Philosophy, 2013.

<sup>21</sup> Alojzija Tvorić: *Žene autorice i čitateljice hrvatskih molitvenika od 16. do 19. stoljeća* [*Women as Authors and Readers of Croatian Prayer Books from the 16th to 19th Century*], University of Zagreb Faculty of Philosophy, 2013.

<sup>22</sup> Nada Topić: *Uloga splitske Knjižare Morpurgo u razvoju culture čitanja u drugoj polovici 19. i prvoj polovici 20. stoljeće* [*The Role of the Split Bookstore Morpurgo in the Development of Reading Culture in the Second Half of the Nineteenth and the First Half of the Twentieth Century*], University of Zadar Department of Information Sciences, 2015.

comparative and readership studies. Although Croatia currently has a small research community interested in book history, these shortcomings are also potentially an advantage, since there is much historical material that is still to be identified and explored in the future. There is certainly much scope for our research community to grow.

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