

### Writing History in Multicultural Regions of Southeastern Europe: The Role of Special Libraries and Archives

**Veranstalter:** Institute for German Culture and History of Southeastern Europe, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München (IKGS); State Archives in Pazin; Juraj Dobrila, University of Pula; Faculty of Humanities, Pula  
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It was for good reason that this academic conference dedicated to the problems of studying and writing the history of multicultural regions was organized in Istria. The past of the peninsula, which after multiple changes of political and national borders during the modern and contemporary periods is nowadays divided between Croatia, Slovenia and Italy, has been interpreted in different ways since the 19th century, most often within the framework of national historiographies and through the prism of political history. The opportunities offered by exploring new topics and enhancing much needed communication among researchers were repeatedly highlighted throughout the three days of the conference, while the dialogue continued regularly during the informal gatherings even after the official sections scheduled for discussion.

The goals of the conference were summarized in the introductory remarks held by ANGELA ILIĆ (Munich) from the Institute for German Culture and History of Southeastern Europe at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München. In addition to commenting on the complex history of border areas throughout Southeastern Europe, she highlighted examples related to her own analysis of the history of the cities of Rijeka and Maribor in the Austro-Hungarian period.

The content of the first keynote lecture, held by DARKO DUKOVSKI (Rijeka), was reflected in the fact that Dukovski is an experienced researcher of the modern and contemporary history of Istria and the North Adri-

atic region as well as the author of a university textbook on the history of Central and Southeastern Europe in the 19th and 20th centuries and a number of other scientific monographs. Among the numerous examples of historiographical challenges that a researcher must overcome, Dukovski included prejudice by historians as well as long-standing stereotypes by certain groups of the population based on the image of the self and the other.

The second, extremely stimulating keynote lecture – especially for listeners who are themselves involved in researching archival material – was delivered by VLATKA LEMIĆ (Zagreb). Archives, libraries and researchers in the 21st century are increasingly turning to the possibilities offered by digital platforms (*Topotheque, Europeana, Mapire*, etc.). By using modern tools that allow the spread of knowledge as widely as possible, institutions and individuals are overcoming an outdated way of thinking present in some institutions that still overly restrict access to the material in their possession. In addition, research in publicly funded institutions is often also dependent on public funding through project financing: the digital age offers significantly greater opportunities to achieve the proclaimed goal – knowledge that is publicly available.

GEORG GROTE (Bolzano) summarized his long experience of collecting and digitizing historical material, most notably correspondence and photographs of so-called ordinary people, residents of South Tyrol. The material created at the end of the 19th and in the first half of the 20th century is often kept under inappropriate conditions by the heirs of the author who, while not wanting to throw it away, at the same time do not know what to do with it before it reaches complete decay. By using digitization and assembling it into an extensive collection, this material is not only saved from disappearance but also becomes an important source for social history knowledge.

IVAN JELIČIĆ (Rijeka) addressed the research problems he encountered while collecting data for his doctoral dissertation on the Rijeka workforce during the last decades of the Habsburg Monarchy. Although workmanship seemed to be the focus of historiography during the existence of socialist Yu-

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goslavia, much of the research was devoted to the Second World War period. Indeed, the beginnings of the labor movement at the turn of the century were much less explored, though it would be wrong to say that the subject matter was completely neglected. Investigating a topic today that seems to belong to 20th-century historiography certainly requires, in addition to the use of a demanding methodology, sensitivity to different identity determinants that have been knowingly or unknowingly neglected by previous historical research.

The last presentation in this section, shared between OLJA VIŠKOVIĆ and TULLIO VORANO (both Labin), was dedicated to the Special library Giovanni Antonia Martinuzzi which is a collection left to her hometown by the famous Labin intellectual Giuseppina Martinuzzi, in honor of her parents. The largest part of the collection is kept at the Labin Museum, while a smaller part, consisting of books, newspapers and manuscripts, is stored in Rijeka. Numerous photographs allowed the audience to gain a better understanding of the collection's content.

A round table gathered the already mentioned participants, Georg Grote and Ivan Jeličić, as well as MAURIZIO LEVAK (Pula), the editor-in-chief of the *Histria* journal of history. They discussed specific challenges in researching the history of multicultural and multilingual regions, and in particular the necessity of the knowledge of multiple languages as well as the barriers posed by the frequent occurrence that archival material is stored not in one, but in several institutions, sometimes in several different countries. In addition, the role of regional journals was discussed and the extent to which they must and could be multilingual. In this regard, the participants referred to the still very influential role of ethnocentric, binary, or ideologically loaded regional historiographies, that is, attitudes from the past shaped by the traumatic events of the 20th century.

At the second round table, DEAN KRMAC (Koper) observed multilingual and multicultural Istria-wide cooperation in the field of humanities through the prism of the activities of the *Histria* Humanist Society and its various activities, which include the organi-

zation of scientific conferences, round tables and exhibitions, as well as the publication of conference proceedings and other publications that aim at expanding knowledge of the Istrian past with a significant effort to involve relevant scholars and associates regardless of their national and linguistic background. IVA MILOVAN DELIĆ (Pula) presented her research on the Spanish Flu 1918/19.

The conference contributed to mapping the challenges facing contemporary historians focused on exploring regional histories. Several presentations suggested that the history of a multicultural region requires researchers open to overcoming mental and physical boundaries. The possibilities offered by the digital age to the contemporary historian in researching and presenting their results were an important topic of discussion. Furthermore, the importance of associations that bring together researchers beyond the limitations of national historiographies was emphasized, and the work of the Humanistic Society *Histria* was presented among others as an example of best practice in this field. Additionally, professionally guided tours through the holdings of the State Archives in Pazin and the University Library in Pula allowed participants to explore some of the multilingual material legacy of Istria's diverse history. Through its bilinguality – most of the proceedings took place in English and Croatian – and its focus on developments in academia within the broader Alps-Adriatic region, the conference formed a basis for the continuation and strengthening of cooperation in the near future across national and linguistic boundaries.

#### **Conference overview:**

Angela Ilić (Munich): Introduction

*Session 1: Keynote Lectures*

Moderator: Angela Ilić

Darko Dukovski (Rijeka): The Possibilities and Methodology of Scientific Research and Writing of Historical Syntheses of Central and Southeastern Europe

Vlatka Lemić (Zagreb): Archives, Community and Society in a Global Environment: Contemporary Trends and Professional Practices

*Session 2: Best Practices*

Moderator: Vlatka Lemić (Zagreb)

Georg Grote (Bolzano): South Tyrolean Correspondences

Ivan Jeličić (Rijeka): Research on Late Habsburg Fiume/Rijeka: Considerations on the Workers

Olja Višković and Tullio Vorano (Labin): The Special Library Giovanni Antonia Martinuzzi

*Session 3: Round table: The Challenges of Researching the History of Multicultural Regions*

Moderator: Angela Ilić

Maurizio Levak (Pula): The Importance and Role of Regional Academic and Professional Journals

Respondents: Ivan Jeličić (Rijeka) and Georg Grote (Bolzano)

*Session 4: Round table: Transregional and International Cooperation*

Moderator: Mihovil Dabo (Pula)

Iva Milovan Delić (Pula): Local Reflections of Global Phenomena: The Case of the Spanish Flu 1918/19

Dean Krmac (Koper): Multilingual and Multicultural Istria-wide Cooperation in the Field of Humanities

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