

**MULTIMEDIA DOCUMENT “PRIEST ĆIRA AND PRIEST SPIRA”  
THE UNITED KNOWLEDGE ON THE COMMON  
STUDENT’S PROJECT**

**Darja Kovrlija**, stopostodarja@yahoo.com, University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philology

**Valentina Tasić**, tasictina@gmail.com, University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philology

**Suzana Topalović**, suzana.sue@hotmail.com, University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philology

Digitized cultural heritage is one of the fundamental assumptions of the development of information and knowledge-based society. Digitization of cultural heritage is not just a modern way of protecting and preserving it, it also implies the presentation of heritage, enabling continuous access to its contents. In order to maintain the importance of cultural heritage and promote it, and with the aim of developing cultural diversity and human creativity, it is necessary to save it from the clutches of time, and for this purpose modern technological achievements are increasingly used.

The term *multimedia* - comes from the Latin words *multus* (many) and *medium* (something lying in intermedium position). Multimedia, as a combination of text, image and sound, represents an excellent and efficient example of the use of modern technology for the preservation of the legacy of a society. Just because it combines a number of different media, multimedia has become widely applied in education, business, but also in entertainment. It allows users to easily navigate through the document and use it interactively, offers a detailed introduction to the

topic, motivates customers and maintains their attention, but it also helps them to clarify certain doubts. With the help of multimedia, specific topic can be presented in a new way and a user can look at it from different perspectives.

Students of the Department of Library and Information Science, University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philology, as the future guardians of knowledge, as well as links to the new findings, have used within the final-year course Multimedia documents the knowledge gained during their studies to produce the entirely new form of cultural heritage from a unique literary treasure.

Thus students, with the common efforts and cooperation with many cultural institutions, have made closer the book "Priest Ćira and priest Spira" by Stevan Sremac to new generations through multimedia interpretation of less known words and phrases, customs, clothing, housing and a spirit of time presented in the book, as well as a through the multimedia presentation of biography and bibliography of Stevan Sremac.

Sremac's skills of observation, perception and insight into the essence of things and events, which brought him the title of one of the greatest writers of Serbian realism, were crucial for the selection of his work "Priest Ćira and priest Spira" as the topic of our multimedia document. In fact, this novel of Stevan Sremac can be viewed as a rich cultural and historical heritage, because it gives an accurate picture and description of life, people, customs, language and culture of northern Bačka in late 19th century, and an important part of this novel is based on the encounter of different cultures and pervading of cultural influences in Vojvodina.

In order to make the most use of multimedia, not only have we recorded an audio narration for each chapter heading, but students showed their acting skills as well. The dialogue between two priest's wives was performed by two students from our department and recorded. By creating a unique combination of traditional and modern,

electronic and printed, in order to promote the use of modern media, the students, using Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Illustrator and Adobe Flash as a result got a "book of modern age" - a multimedia version of the novel "Priest Ćira and priest Spira".

The initiator of the project was Professor Cvetana Krstev, the head of the Department of Library and Information Studies, while the coordinator was Aleksandra Trtovac, a PhD student at the Faculty of Philology and the senior librarian at the University Library "Svetozar Marković", while in the technical part of making multimedia document students were helped by their friend Stefan Tošić, web designer. We wanted to create this document as good as possible, so the help of friends was valuable. During the development of the document students also had help from Biljana Lazić, the master student at our Faculty, who participated in the last year's project and who was helping with advices and directed us towards the fulfillment of the task.

The document included a digitized book "Priest Ćira and priest Spira"<sup>1</sup>, a short biography of Stevan Sremac, bibliography of his work and a few anecdotes related to Sremac's life. During gathering of materials needed for the multimedia document creation students were establishing contacts with various cultural-historical institutions, the officials of which by the rule met the students' needs whole-heartedly. Of all materials that had been gained only those related to the book itself and the epoch were selected.

We have already mentioned that various cultural and scientific institutions helped us in finalizing our project. Here we want to emphasize an excellent cooperation with the Museum of the National Theatre, which helped students to see the life of Sremac from various angles and therefore enabled us an insight into the times in which

---

1 Downloaded from Anthology of Serbian literature located: [http://www.ask.rs/ASK\\_SR\\_AzbučnikDela.aspx](http://www.ask.rs/ASK_SR_AzbučnikDela.aspx)

he lived. At the exhibition which the Museum, very conveniently, held at the same time as we were working at this project, students had an opportunity to see writer's handwritten notes, but also his personal belongings such as: his writing desk, the oldest book in his personal library (the Bible), an inkwell and medals. An excellent cooperation was also established with the archives of the National Theatre, which gave the students an insight into theater posters.

We also emphasize the cooperation with the National Library of Serbia and hereby we wish to express our thanks especially to Ms. Ljiljana Macura, librarian – informant, which helped the students to find the etymology of unfamiliar words and phrases, which are an integral part of multimedia document and which are presented at the end of the book in the form of a dictionary. The same good cooperation we had with the University Library "Svetozar Marković" in Belgrade, as well as with the Sterija Theatre in Novi Sad. The Sterija Theatre did not have material for our document but they directed us to the Library of the Serbian National Theatre in Novi Sad. However, during collecting materials students encountered some difficulties. Here, we have to point to the problems that students have been facing with throughout the years in certain institutions. The door was closed during our visits to the Public Service where they didn't realize that this project is important for the preservation of tradition and cultural heritage. Because of the changes of the ownership at the film production houses, we were not able to get a copy of a feature movie, but at the end we used very short sequences that were found on YouTube (at length which is not in conflict with the Copyright Act).

Unfortunately, the public service wasn't the only cultural institution at that path of misunderstanding. Nevertheless, the students themselves worked hard, acted a dialogue from the book and recorded audio introduction to each chapter. We believe that identity of one nation and the preser-

vation of tradition are common concern not only for those who make projects like this one, but also for all cultural institutions. All institutions of cultural importance should unite over such issues to overcome problems that may arise. With regular meetings and continuous work students complemented each other, resolved doubts and discussed collected material and selected the most important and illustrative parts. In this way, students with their persistence, cooperation with cultural institutions and a joint effort successfully completed the project.

The result is a collection of carefully selected material - photos, articles, recipes, registry of less known words and phrases, audio and video recordings. In addition to the digital text of the novel, multimedia document contains 150 terms explained in the registry, and 172 photos and about 27 minutes of video footage. In addition to multimedia documents, the students created a blog about work on this project.<sup>2</sup> The aim of this multimedia document and the blog about it is to evoke the spirit of Vojvodina in those far-away days, lifestyle, clothing, customs, and stereotyped behavior of priests and their wives in a small town.

We presented the multimedia version of the novel "Priest Ćira and priest Spira" at the International Scientific Conference "Cultures in Dialogue", organized by the Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade in September 2012. It was really well accepted not only by professors and students who attended the Conference but also by employees of Radio Belgrade and Radio Television of Serbia who were also among listeners. We hope that the experience and contacts we have made will help students of future generations to access needed material and establish better cooperation with the Public Service. We also promoted our multimedia document in the

<sup>2</sup> Downloaded from: <http://2012mmd.blogspot.com/2012/05/blog-post.html>

Cultural Center “Nea Pangea” in Belgrade.

Modern, multimedia version of this unrivaled novel deserves a lot of attention and people are soon interested in it. Through modern media, we managed to interpret the old content in a new way. The ultimate goal is to maintain increasing of the interest for this novel in new generations. To that end, it would be good to promote this multimedia document to seventh-grade pupils of elementary schools because this work is a part of their mandatory reading schedule.

New technologies are there to be used in the best possible way; some of them we used to create this multimedia document, and thus preserve and digitize a part of our cultural heritage. Modern achievements such as computers, the Internet and the others are there to complement, beautify, enrich, preserve and display in a different way the traditional content, but traditional and modern do not exclude each other.

We want to point out our belief that the book in its traditional form will never disappear, only the presentation of its contents will move from one form to another. That is, the content always remains the same, priests Ćira and Spira will always remain exactly in the way that Sremac made them, only the way we look at them, listen and read about them will change.