DIGITAL STORYTELLING

Increasing interaction with the audience

Lessons learned from practical experience in three small historic towns

With the support of the Creative Europe Programme of the European Union.
diStory
DIGITAL STORIES OF SMALL HISTORIC TOWNS

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Foreword
By definition, museums are institutions that serve the public. They play a special role in identifying, collecting, storing, analysing, presenting and popularising the heritage and artefacts that are the actual messengers of the culture and life of a particular time.

The Radovljica City Museum is one of the youngest of the five units of the Radovljica Municipality Museums. Our collection of artefacts and data is still being developed, and a diStory project has contributed to our mission.

The purpose of the project was to familiarise our museum workers with the potential of digital technologies as a means of communication with the public, consisting of a variety of audiences. It motivated the museum workers to get out of their historic building and initiate a dialogue with residents. As residents revealed their knowledge, told their stories, expressed opinions and shared experience, they contributed to the interpretation of the local heritage and to the forming of the local identity. This created a relationship in which the people, the residents, become a living museum, aware of and, in their own way, responsible for the preservation of the cultural values of their location.

Four partners from three countries, the Radovljica Municipality Museums, Slovenian Association of Historic Towns, Serbian Urban Development Centre in association with the Museum of King Peter Karađorđević, and Comune di Fermo, Italy, were intensively engaged in the project, in association with the City Museum, from September 2016 to June 2018. They were involved in learning, working with the audience, developing the products in a common platform and a mobile app.

The experience gained from our work was collected by the Slovenian Association of Historic Towns so that it could be shared with interested public.

The diStory project helped the cooperating museums to build up relationships with different audiences, and it is our intention to strengthen them in the future. We will be happy to further build on the results of this project and extend cooperation to new partners.

Verena Štekar-Vidic
Director
Radovljica Municipality Museums
Lead partner
Stories and digital stories
Any tree needs strong and healthy roots to grow and develop. Likewise, each individual, each nation and the overall human community need to know about their own history and be aware of the past in order to be able to develop and build a brighter future.
Heritage is part of the past, representing and reflecting its values, knowledge and skills, creating and expressing stories and memories that have over centuries been accumulated in places and people.
The diStory project helped the small historic towns of Fermo (Italy), Radovljica (Slovenia) and Topola (Serbia) to search for hidden stories and storytellers. Our special focus was to invite the young, who we refer to as the “new audience” as they rarely explore heritage in general. By using digital technologies in storytelling, our stories now live in film and social networks help us share them with the world.
Stories, memories and experience are reflections of life, work and creation in each community and they will become part of our heritage. We wish the project to continue to live through the future finding and recording of stories that can be shared on our platform.
We invite all, children, parents, grandparents and grandchildren, the young and less young – find and record the stories. This will make you one of the few people who are writing down history.

Mateja Hafner Dolenc
General secretary
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Introduction
This manual is an outcome of a project called **DiStory – Digital stories of small historic towns**, supported by the Creative Europe programme. It has been prepared on the basis of learning and experience gathered by the project partners who have worked together for 22 months in exploring possible new approaches to building interactive relationships with residents and visitors by exploiting the potentials of digital technologies for the interpretation of cultural heritage.

The manual is intended for museums, heritage sites and other cultural organisations operating in smaller local environments that have little experience in developing digital approaches to the interpretation of cultural heritage, and yet have a need and motivation to do so and promote relationships with existing audiences or attract new ones.

In the chapters that follow, you can learn about our story – the need, the approach, what we actually accomplished and what in our opinion worked well or not so well. We hope our findings can serve museum managements, curators and historic town managers as an inspiration to explore their own ways to use digital technologies for enriching communication with the local community and visitors, and to better link cultural heritage with everyday life.
Brief introduction to our historic towns and partner organisations

The diStory project enabled collaboration and exchange between four organisations representing three small historic towns. Find out more at www.distory.si.

Radovljica, Gorenjska, Slovenia  🏢  Population: 18,000
Radovljica is one of the region’s administrative, educational and cultural centres. It is also known as “Linhart’s town”. Anton Tomaž Linhart (1756-1795), a native Slovene writer, was an important figure of the Age of the Enlightenment. Around 1500, the Old Town developed from a smaller centre dating back to the 13th century.

Fermo, Central Italy  🏢  Population: 40,000
Its origins date back to the Iron Age (IX century B.C.). In 264 B.C, it became a Roman colony with the name of ‘Firmum Picenum’. Medieval and Renaissance urban development made the old historical town of Fermo a real open air museum. Fermo’s 17th century cultural heritage, including the Church of St. Martino, the Globe Room, an ancient public library, Priors’ Palace, Azzolino Palace, the Church of Carmine and many private buildings, is especially noteworthy. Christine of Sweden, Peter Paul Rubens, Cardinal Decio Azzolino and Romolo Spezioli were some of the personalities that enriched the town’s cultural heritage in the 17th century.

Topola, Šumadija, Serbia  🏢  Population: 25,000
Its first traces of settlement date back to the Neolithic Age, but the town is most famous as the former seat of the Serbian Karađorđević royal family. The most important part of the municipality is a historical quarter that preserves a memory of important historical events. The Oplenac hill that stands above the town is noted for early 19th and early 20th century architecture, including a fortified manor, the St. George Orthodox Church and mausoleum of the royal family, luxury villas, a wine cellar and impressive vineyard ambiance.
Partners


**The Slovenian Association of Historic Towns** represents the interests of local communities and economic institutions in the field of the preservation, encouragement and development of life in old town centres, and at the same cares for the cultural heritage of Slovenia. The main purpose of the Association is to ensure the organised and uniform appearance and activity of historic towns of Slovenia in their pursuit of their common interests and goals. The aim is to promote the development and renewal of historic towns in Slovenia.

**Serbian Urban Development Centre:** The main objectives of the Centre are to promote urban living in Belgrade and culture and arts within the urban areas. The Centre devotes its special attention to the arrangement of public and exhibition space, and to protecting urban units in Belgrade, including the cultural and historical monuments that bear witness to the development of the city. The Centre aims to promote the application of advanced technologies, alternative energy solutions and environmental protection. In this project, the partners worked in close cooperation with the Municipality of Topola and the Foundation of King Peter Karađorđević.

**Comune di Fermo, Italy:** the Municipality has around 250 staff acting in different sectors. The Sector for Culture, Tourism and Sport is responsible for the development of culture and heritage. The Fermo Civic Museum is not a legal entity but an integral part of the sector. Culture and tourism represent the 2 main axis of development of the City, with more than 30 employees involved in a specific cooperative, “Sistema Museo”, that supports the Municipality in museum management and services development. The City has set up a dedicated initiative, “Museo diffuso del Fermano”, supporting digitalisation to improve access to a huge cultural heritage over an area of 500 km².
What were our common needs and interests?

The local museums of the three historic towns keep very traditional relations with audiences: there has been limited contact with schools and certain individuals, while museum activities were seldom directed towards the broader local public. Visitors and tourists were instead “observers” of historic towns and their artefacts instead of being actively involved.

The structure of visitors to museums and historic towns is changing: School groups are declining, while the number of tourists, in particular adults and families, is increasing. Reaching them has become more challenging. Reattracting youth to experience cultural heritage requires different interpretation and communication approaches that are closer to their lifestyles and interests.

Closer cooperation with local community actors requires going outside our buildings – to stimulate better understanding and enjoyment of historic town heritage by the visitors and residents, museums need to move from the interpretation of the museum and the building interior out onto the streets and the historic outdoor spaces, and link the past and present life of the town.

Digitalised artefacts and other heritage resources should become accessible to visitors – digital and mobile technologies are not used sufficiently to enhance the visitor experience. There is almost no use of modern ICT and virtual technologies for the promotion, interpretation and communication of cultural heritage in our three historic towns.

Low level of expertise in the application of digital technologies and financial resources to follow the shift to digital technology in the cooperating historic towns.
What were our aspirations?

By working together, we aimed to contribute to the attractiveness and accessibility of heritage in the three small historic towns for the new or changed audiences characterised by the use of digital technologies and changed needs, expectations, lifestyles and values.

We focused on:

- Exploring how new digital technologies can enable local museums and small historic town administrations to open up to the audience more and improve their communication and interpretation approaches.
- Learning by doing in cooperation with local stakeholders to gain audience development skills and expertise in using digital technologies.
- Encouraging organisational changes within the participating local museums or small historic town administrations.

In practice, all this was addressed in a process that involved the creation of digital stories for the three historic towns.
2

Approach
“A historic town = a living lab”

Our approach was based on a joint learning by doing in a real life environment. The process for creating a digital story consisted of 5 key steps, which were structured in four modules as shown below. The main feature of the approach was that the creation process was supported by common capacity-building measures, which enabled common learning for the partners, sharing and interaction with specialists and joint work with the selected audiences to create the digital stories.

1. Audience analysis and AD strategy
2. Engaging an audience
3. Design of the digital story
4. Production of the digital story
5. Testing, dissemination

Chart 1: Structure of the working process
The process
How we did it and what we learned
Step 1: Analysing the audience and drafting the audience development strategy

Who do we want to focus on?

First of all, it is good to review the way you currently interpret your town's heritage, and the extent to which digital technologies (e.g. web sites, social networks, multimedia presentations, etc.) are used for presentations and interpretations, to understand your strong and weak points. Also, you need to know who your current and potential audiences are and what you want to achieve – working more intensively with the existing visitors, attracting new ones, or something else?

The analysis of the current situation and the experience and needs identified by the partners identified that the following audiences were relevant:

RESIDENTS of historic towns and their extended families – DIGITAL IMMIGRANTS

A town without residents and townspeople is merely a bit of scenery, beautiful scenes but an empty space, in which no one feels good, least of all visitors or travellers.

Residents create life and create stories.

Through the years and centuries, life is there for all to see, but at the same time it is hidden from view behind stone walls, in narrow streets, secret corridors, underground passages, dark cellars and attics, behind corners or on squares, creating stories that are interesting, tragic, joyful or gloomy. Some are unfinished and are still ongoing, making our towns even more mysterious and interesting, and the people who live and perform in these stories, tales, legends, and fairy tales are also attractive, interesting and mysterious.

Specifically, we shall focus on children in primary schools and their parents:

• among those visiting museums, the lowest number of visitors is in the age group 20-40, including young families.
• At the same time, the 20-40 age group is the biggest user of modern communication tools and social networks.
THE YOUNG who live in the region (DIGITAL NATIVES)
Exploring cultural heritage through new media, digital technology and Internet tools are the digital “languages” spoken and understood by the young.

Digital language is the language of the future, which museums, old town centres, cultural monuments and cultural heritage interpreters will need to master.

We decided to focus on secondary school students and higher education students, including their teachers.

SENIOR CITIZENS living in the region (DIGITAL IMMIGRANTS)
People aged 60+ are an interesting target group which is usually not much involved in using modern technology. The use of digital tools tends to be largely linked to Internet surfing and using phones for making calls, since often they do not yet have smartphones. However, the older generation has an abundance of knowledge, experience, historic memories. They know the stories of towns and may even have been involved in their creation. They are visitors to museums and they love their own towns. Senior citizens are also well organised and have their own senior citizens’ organisations (pensioners' clubs, associations for older people, etc.).

DISABLED PERSONS (DIGITAL IMMIGRANTS)
People with disabilities are users, visitors and also the residents of towns and, since to them, their town is the world in miniature, they know it very well. They frequently face barriers on their journeys or when they want to attend cultural events, which prevent access or unhindered movement around towns. Old town centres, with their old buildings, are not adapted for use by people with disabilities, who are often prevented from accessing them by stairs, thresholds, narrow passages, steep paths etc.

The focus will be on inviting people with disabilities to give opinions and make suggestions and to tell the story of their town as they see and experience it. We would like them to draw attention to the mobility issues. The digital stories should help learn about the parts of the towns and the buildings which are more difficult for them to access, or are even inaccessible.

The terms ‘digital natives’ and ‘digital immigrants’ were coined by Mark Prensky in 2001.

‘Digital natives’ are a new group of students enrolled in educational establishments, and refers to the young generation as ‘native speakers’ of the digital language. It is a catch-all category for children who have grown up using technology such as the Internet, computers and mobile devices. This exposure to technology in the early years is believed to give digital natives a greater familiarity with and understanding of technology than people who were born before it was widespread.

‘Digital immigrants’ is a term used to describe the generations of people who did not grow up in the digital age. People born before 1985, who have adopted technology at a later point, are considered to be digital immigrants.

Digital immigrants are believed to be less quick to pick up new technologies than digital natives. This results in the equivalent of a speaking accent when it comes to the way in which they learn and adopt technology.

(Source: tecnopedia.com, Wikipedia.org)
How do we intend to engage and work with the various audiences?

After deciding which audiences you want to address, prepare a plan how you intend to work with them. Our primary objective was to develop new products – digital stories – in cooperation with local audiences.

The key steps:

1. Establishing communication with the audience and understanding the audience better
2. Involving the audience in collecting stories
3. Selecting the main story and developing the script
4. Production
5. Testing and distribution

Although, in general, the same key steps were planned for all selected audiences, differences existed in concrete approaches with regard to the skills of the “digital natives” and “digital immigrants”. Whereas it was expected that students in secondary schools and higher education (digital locals) would be able to develop and film the story using already acquired skills, other audiences would need more support in using digital technologies than was provided by the young and the mentors.

Audience development is a strategic, dynamic and interactive process of making the arts widely accessible. It aims at engaging individuals and communities in experiencing, enjoying, participating in and valuing the arts through various means available today for cultural operators, from digital tools to volunteering, and from co-creation to partnerships. Audience development can be understood in various ways, depending on its objectives and target groups:

- **Increasing audiences** (attracting audiences with the same socio-demographic profile as the current audience)
- **Deepening relationship with audiences** (enhancing the experience of the current audiences for a cultural event and/or encouraging them to discover related or even unrelated, more complex art forms, fostering loyalty and return visits)
- **Diversifying audiences** (attracting people with a different socio-demographic profile to the current audiences, including people with no previous contact with the arts)

(EAC/08/2015 Tender specifications)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residents</th>
<th>Young</th>
<th>Senior citizens</th>
<th>Disabled persons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 1:</strong> Present the project using social media</td>
<td><strong>Step 1:</strong> Present the project using different platforms</td>
<td><strong>Step 1:</strong> Workshop – presentation of the project</td>
<td><strong>Step 1:</strong> Workshop – presentation of the project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 2:</strong> Online survey - find out their needs and suggestions</td>
<td><strong>Step 2:</strong> Online survey - find out their needs and suggestions</td>
<td><strong>Step 2:</strong> Survey - find out their needs and suggestions</td>
<td><strong>Step 2:</strong> Online or classic survey - find out their needs and suggestions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 3:</strong> Contribute a story... ...Grandma told me... ...houses have stories to tell ...memories of a town ...every object has its own story ...I remember ...When I was a child</td>
<td><strong>Step 3:</strong> Invitation to contest for shooting of ‘The DiStory of my town’ film • invitation to take part • selection of best entries • deciding on promotion</td>
<td><strong>Step 3:</strong> Contribute a story... ...Grandma told me... ...houses have stories to tell ...memories of a town ...every object has its own story ...I remember ...When I was a child</td>
<td><strong>Step 3:</strong> Contribute a story... ...Grandma told me... ...houses have stories to tell ...memories of a town ...every object has its own story ...I remember ...When I was a child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 4:</strong> DiStory Museum evening Meet the residents and e-friends, presentation of stories and scripts</td>
<td><strong>Step 4:</strong> Screen films • promote and screen films • awards • distribution activities</td>
<td><strong>Step 3:</strong> DiStory Museum evening Meet the residents and e-friends, present stories and scripts</td>
<td><strong>Step 3:</strong> DiStory Museum evening Meet the residents and e-friends, present stories and scripts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 5:</strong> Present digital stories Present and share final script and produced digital stories</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Step 4:</strong> Workshops – shoot ‘The DiStory of my town’ films provide mentors to create scripts, choose actors, directors,...</td>
<td><strong>Step 4:</strong> Workshops – shoot ‘The DiStory of my town’ films provide mentors to create scripts, choose actors, directors,...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Example 1:** Overview of the Audience Development Strategy
Step 2: Engaging with audiences in practice

Extending the invitation to actively participate in the project

To effectively reach out to specific audiences, one needs to take into account the most effective communication channels. This is of particular importance for establishing initial contacts. A mix of digital and classical communication channels was used, some of which targeted wider audiences (web sites, newspapers) while others were more focused. For example, to reach youth and senior citizens, direct mailings were sent to school principals and the presidents of pensioners’ clubs, followed up by phone contacts and visits.

What we learned...

The publication of news and distribution of leaflets are not enough...
Although web sites or publications in local newspapers or distribution of leaflets are perceived as a good tool for informing the public, they are far from enough to mobilise the audience to actually take part.

A personal approach works best!
Residents of Radovljica Old Town, especially those living in houses of particular historic value, were invited to chat about the idea by mail or phone, or were simply approached out in the square. We asked them to tell us what it was like to live in the Old Town’s main square, and to share the stories of the past. And we were made very welcome!

Language
The way digital natives and digital immigrants communicate is also important. While the young were familiar with the term “hackathon”, using the term “creative workshop” was a more effective way to approach older generations. Interestingly, “storytelling” was also interpreted in many different ways by various audiences.
The matrix below shows how effective selected communication channels were for specific types of audience:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication channels</th>
<th>Residents</th>
<th>Youth</th>
<th>Senior citizens</th>
<th>Disabled persons</th>
<th>General public</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project web site</td>
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<tr>
<td>Partner web sites</td>
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<td>Social networks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Regional/local newspapers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leaflets</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal contacts (mail, phone, e-mail)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Events (museum cafés, museums evenings, openings)</td>
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<td>E-mailing lists</td>
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<tr>
<td>Blog</td>
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</table>

Example 2: Assessment of communication channels by Slovenian partners
A basic and yet very important task is to get to know your audience well:

- **How do they perceive their historic home town or a place of visit?**
- **What are their interests?**
- **What kind of interpretation would they like to experience?**

There are several ways of getting to know them:

- **A short survey** seems an appropriate method to find out about the views of a larger number of participants. (For example, we carried out an online survey for students, residents and scholars). Make sure that your questions are easy to understand and that the questionnaire is not too long.
- **Interviews** with relevant representatives of the audience and professionals (historians, curators, archaeologists), tourist organisations and others can also provide a good complement to the survey findings.
- **Guided tours:** for example, students from the School for Catering and Tourism were invited to guide us through the Old Town, and we compared their interpretations with those of the museum guides, discussed the differences, specific points of interests, etc.
- Organise **focus groups, workshops and meetings**, inviting the audience and/or professionals...
- You should yourself **visit the points** of interests and be guided.

**What did we learn from...**

**... students in Radovljica, Slovenia?**
Most interested in unusual and interesting things and stories or facts that can be connected with their own situations. Did not enjoy purely factual presentations. More interested in the future than in the past (they would appreciate a guided tour through the town which was directed towards life in the future).

**... residents of Topola, Serbia?**
Want to find out more about the personal life of important historical figures. Perceive the existing guided tours and interpretation as old-fashioned. Would show potential visitors the known historical and cultural points and attractions. Would like to learn about the memories of, and legends and information held by some Topola citizens.

**... teenagers in Fermo, Italy?**
Prefer interviewing others than talking about themselves and their stories. Enjoy using smart phones to discover the hidden stories of Fermo and interact with other residents.
A questionnaire for secondary school students before taking a guided tour of Radovljica Old Town.

1. On _____ you will be guided through Radovljica Old Town. What is the first thing that comes into your mind when we say Radovljica Old Town? (3 words): ____________________

2. Guided town tours are:
   • Something I want to do, but only in school time
   • Often boring and too long, uninteresting
   • Interesting, I always listen to the guide with enthusiasm
   • Completely unnecessary.

3. The guide who is guiding a group through the town, should:
   • Deliver as much information as he/she can
   • Interact with the audience and make them participate
   • Consider the wishes of the guided group
   • Finish the guided tour early if the group doesn’t listen or is bored.

4. If I had the choice, I would choose a guided tour
   • Through local historical and cultural sights
   • To the best local restaurants and bars
   • To galleries and art studios, or a graffiti tour
   • To the most neglected, untidy parts of the town
   • To the most photogenic spots in the town (for an Instagram challenge for students that will follow?).

5. If I could choose a guide, I would select:
   • Someone my age knows and understands what is interesting for me
   • An expert who has unlimited knowledge about history and heritage
   • A classic map that is convenient and gives you the freedom to choose what you want to see
   • An app that can give you information about the town/sight that you are interested in and let you decide whether you want to visit it
   • A stray dog.

6. I like to explore unknown foreign towns:
   • With my friends or family
   • With a guide from an agency
   • From my home, using the Internet, Instagram, etc.
   • Alone.

7. In connection to Radovljica, I would like to learn more about:
   • Its history
   • Nature
   • Local cuisine
   • Anton Tomaž Linhart,
   • When my bus will come
   • Where I can get good, cheap coffee
   • Where I can spent my free time
   • Shopping
   • Other: ____________________

8. What would you suggest that a tourist should see in Radovljica? ____________________

9. What would you suggest that a tourist should do in Radovljica? ____________________

10. Your message to the guide before your guided tour through Radovljica Old Town: ____________________
A similar online questionnaire was used for residents of Topola.

1. E-mail: ___________________________

2. Your age:
   • 10 - 20
   • 21 – 40
   • 41 – 60
   • 60+

3. Occupation: ___________________________

4. Which is first thing that comes into your mind when we say Topola (3 words)?
   ___________________________

5. If my friend visited Topola, I would take him/her to see: ___________________________

6. How would you present Topola to a visitor?
   • With an expert guided tour through the principal cultural and historical sights
   • Guidance by someone your age who knows what interests you
   • With an application which can offer you information about the town/sight which you are interested in and let you decide whether you want to visit it
   • A classic map which gives you the freedom to see what you want
   • Other: ___________________________

7. Existing touristic tours and guides are:
   • Interesting and educational, I always listen to guides with enthusiasm
   • Boring, dull, often too long
   • Completely unnecessary
   • Old-fashioned
   • Other: ___________________________

8. What would you suggest that a tourist should do in Topola?
   • Visit museums and galleries
   • Visit the best restaurants and bars
   • Visit abandoned, hidden places in town
   • Visit the most photographed places in town
   • Other: ___________________________

9. Which types of information about Topola are unknown/unavailable to visitors:
   • Memories, oral legends and information that the people of Topola posses
   • Old arts and crafts
   • Local cuisine
   • Basic practical information (about transportation, accommodation, cheap places to eat, etc.)
   • Other: ___________________________

10. I like to explore new places:
    • With my friends and family
    • With a tourist guide
    • From home, with the help of the Internet
    • Alone
    • Other: ___________________________

11. In relation to Topola, what would you like to know more about?
    • The private life of important historical figures
    • The everyday life of the people of the certain epoch
    • Topola today
    • Other: ___________________________
Engaging the audiences in collecting stories of their towns and people

After establishing initial contacts with the audience, a variety of approaches were used to learn more about their interests, needs and expectations and to motivate them to collect stories, photos, documents and other materials about their historic towns. An equally important mission was to inspire the audience to share their own ideas about how they would like to present their town stories with us, and engage them in learning about heritage in fun and innovative ways and developing ideas for digitising the town story.

Schools proved to be the most effective partner in reaching out to children. Teachers can help in presenting the project idea and motivating children to take part, and also in engaging parents or grandparents.

Some ideas:

• **Animated film production:** weekly workshops for children were organised in Radovljica during the holidays. Children learned about the town’s history and then recreated one of the historic events using stop motion animation. Have a look at the films about the fire in Radovljica created by the youngest and older children or read a blog [here](#).

• **Presentation of new technologies:** In Serbia, the children responded enthusiastically to new ways of discovering history and heritage and were asked to tell us how they would like the town to be presented, or write down or draw their ideas.

• **Engaging children and parents:** With the support of teachers, the children were encouraged to ask parents and other older people to tell stories or anecdotes about the towns and collect and share with us photos, videos and texts.
Students have good knowledge of different digital technologies and can already create their own output. Our focus was to boost their creative potential and provide them with practical knowledge. There was a high level of interest in our demonstration of how new technologies, such as augmented reality, can be used to present cultural heritage.

What worked for us?

- **The recording of stories while walking through the Old Town**: the purpose was to collect statements from the young. The walk combined learning about the historical places and putting them in the context of today, e.g. who should we put up a monument to today? A montage of the recorded statements was made with the support of the mentor.
- **Thematic workshops** were organised with students of tourism and young tourist guides. In them, the topics under discussion were future trends in the tourism sector and the presentation of cultural heritage: what attracts new audiences, what is the influence of new technologies in presenting cultural heritage, how much they are used by cultural institutions and tourism sector, and how they would use them in their own town.
- **Hackathons – Hack Creative Week**: This concept has been used during the project, during several stages of product development, from drafting the first ideas and learning about the digital technologies to further scoping and delivering the ideas in practice. As part of the Hack Creative Week in Škofja Loka, there was a call for digital stories and the best digital stories were given prizes. Please watch one of the stories produced [here](#).
- **Blogs and social networks** proved very helpful in the distribution of collected stories and materials and keeping interaction with the audiences.

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**A hackathon (also known as a hack day, hackfest or codefest)** is a sprint-like design event in which computer programmers and others involved in software development, including graphic designers, interface designers, project managers and others, collaborate intensively on software projects. The goal of a hackathon is to create usable software (e.g. an application).

(Source: Wikipedia.org)

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**Example: Fermo ...**

The Municipality of Fermo decided to involve local actors, especially schools and cultural organisations, that were invited to become protagonists in telling the stories of the town to visitors and tourists arriving in Fermo to learn about and appreciate its material and immaterial heritage.

The municipality invited the schools in the area to share photos, videos and texts that could help tell stories and special anecdotes related to the main places and characters of Fermo’s history. The response was very positive. Children and older people, simple and educated people, all enjoyed sharing stories of their life in Fermo, while teenagers preferred to carry out interviews with others.

To facilitate the distribution of the collected material, a team was formed,. This consisted of an associated part-
ner, Coop Sistema Museo and a well-know journalist and blogger, who was given the task of searching, collecting documents and testimonies and creating a presence for our work on social media.

The research led to five meetings with the schools and the involvement of six classes, the holding of 35 interviews, and the collection of 56 documents (videos, photos, etc.).

When interviewing residents, the introductory question was about Fermo or a specific historic site. People were left to freely speak and soon shared with us personal stories and stories of their children, parents and grandparents.

It was noted that residents of Fermo are very proud of their place and perceive it as the centre of the world. One of the often heard stories was about ‘hide and seek’ in the world’s largest Roman water cisterns, built underground in Fermo. People remember playing there as children before the place was open to the public. Another popular story is about trains arriving at Fermo.

Senior citizens are usually the most interesting and inspiring sources of information, very keen to share memories about their ancestors, town, old crafts, history, art, etc. Contact with this audience through digital channels is not easy. It can best be achieved by arranging workshops at pensioners’ clubs or specially organised events.

Some ideas:

- **Meetings at pensioners’ clubs**: weekly meetings in the pensioners’ club were used as a place to share memories and to record stories about the town and its residents. A collection of old photos was a good tool to bring the memories back.

- **Study circles**: a group engaged in history and art history study within adult education centre were invited to take part in the project and share their stories.

- **Museum café**: this is where we held the events where group interviews were held, some of which were later followed up with individual interviews. This also provided an opportunity for those who were not so comfortable at speaking in larger groups.

- **Chatting at the local square**: A very simple approach enabled us to learn more from the residents living in historic buildings, about their life, stories, etc.
In the experience of the Serbian and Slovenian partners, people with disabilities were the hardest to reach and involve in the project. We were only able to find out how little they visit museums, and go to exhibitions and visit historical sights through personal contacts. Also, some of the people we were able to get in touch with were unwilling to be filmed and share a story. Some of them do have access to digital technologies, but some are not able to use them.

### What we learned ...

- Working together with local actors (schools, associations, etc.) is the key to reaching the target audience.

- Teachers can have a decisive role in motivating pupils, parents, students or even the elderly, and can also contribute as excellent resource sources.

- When working with the young, it is important to connect the themes from the past with their everyday life, to keep them interested.

- An award can serve as an additional motivation for the young to get involved with creating their own stories.

- The audiences respond best to the presentation of examples of good practice in using new technologies in heritage presentations.

- The audience is interested in working on real examples. What needs to be accomplished should be defined clearly, and a high level of active participation should be ensured.

- In some cases, students were at first a bit shy and reserved about talking and filming themselves. We encouraged them by holding some interviews together and they shared some stories about their town which they created using their mobile devices.

- When working with senior citizens, it is necessary to provide them with support for using digital technologies, and this is an excellent opportunity to create space for intergenerational cooperation.

- Disabled persons still face many obstacles when accessing cultural heritage, and the development of applications is one of the ways that such barriers can be addressed.
Some tips:

• Children and young under 18 years of age need permission from their parents before they can be filmed.

• Always get prior approval! Asking for it afterwards is an additional burden and even worse, you may forget about it ... and it will not be possible to use the video.

• Provide your audience with basic guidance about what you are doing at each specific step – what you would like them to do, what topics you would like to discuss, how this will be used, etc.

• Make sure your camera is on and actually recording. Bring a spare battery with you.

• Watch out for to any disturbing sounds in the vicinity while recording.

• Inform the audience about the progress of the project and provide them with the video recordings that they have contributed.

Organising Hack Creative Week ...

• Using the concept of a hackathon in the process of digital story development proved very useful both for the partners, enabling them to share and learn from experts, and for the audiences who joined the creative processes at several stages (identifying and scoping the stories, improving scripts, production)

• Define your audience and your speakers and mentors – invite experts and practitioners

• Publicise the event well – use relevant communication platforms to reach out to as many creative people as possible

• Plan some time for learning and exchange – organise relevant lectures or presentations (e.g. about current and new practices and technologies for presenting cultural heritage, audience development and participation. If possible, organise visits to best practice examples).

• Practical part – organise teams to work on the story of the historic town

• Ensure mentoring for the teams - during actual development and in the use of digital technologies

• Provide feedback on the proposed solutions
Step 3: Choosing a story and developing a digital script

Interaction with the audiences in local community during Step two enabled the partners to harvest several memories, stories, photos, writings, videos, audio recording, and in some cases even existing storytelling products, presenting our historic towns and people, that had been produced by the young creatives. What was also important was that we could learn about their interests and wishes, and how they would like their town to be presented.

Now you need to choose your story.

We start from the premise that cultural sites are, in fact, highly emotional places. Regardless of age, location or state of preservation, they are seedbeds not just of knowledge, but of emotional resonance and human connection.

Digital storytelling represents an opportunity to enhance the cultural heritage to the extent that it considers and is able to combine different ways of fruition within the same cultural site and within the same experience of visiting.

What remains at the core of every successful project, according to the greatest experts in digital storytelling, is the ‘story’, i.e. the ability of a place to create relationships between the lives of the people who live in that place and the visitors who want to know about it.

As this is one of the critical parts, ask yourself:

- What is the story about?
- What is its purpose? What message should be conveyed to the audience?
- Will the story draw the attention of the audience?
- Can the audience relate the story to their everyday life?
- Is the story short and simple?
- Can the story provoke emotions?

The next step is to create a digital script.

When preparing a scenario for a digital script, one has to be familiar with how particular technologies can be used, what they offer, and how they can align with the content one wants to present. Also, it is necessary to assess
which digital storytelling approach will best adapt to specific parts of the stories. Basic information about certain spots or figures is still necessary, bearing in mind that there are people who will be getting to know the town and its history for the first time. So, even if it is apparently boring, it must be present in the digital script. It can be brief, but must still provide enough information for the visitor to have a clear picture of what they are seeing and visiting.

Furthermore, when different points in the scenario are presented, they need to have a thread that connects them. In this case, we achieved this by using 2D or 3D reconstructions of historical figures that are the guides through the town's history. In order to attract different public, the content needs to be interpreted in diverse ways, for example overlaying the physical reality with different digital content with technologies such as augmented reality in the form of audios, films, 2D and 3D reconstructions, and using games and quizzes. However, it still needs to be user-friendly in the sense that people who are not skilled in new technologies are still able to move through the content easily and immerse themselves in the digital story.

**What we learned ...**

- When preparing a digital script, take into account the findings and learnings from the research on your audience.

- The text should be short and clear. Do not try to feed in too much information: this can also be found on the Internet if someone wants to explore more. The main purpose is to attract the visitor to explore more.

- What could be challenging is how to address different target groups at the same time.

- When you have made your first draft, discuss it with experts, (creative writers, designers, programmers, curators, etc.) and then rewrite and revise until you are happy.

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**Digital storytelling** is a relatively new term which describes the new practice of everyday people who use digital tools to tell their story. Digital stories often present in compelling and emotionally engaging formats, and can be interactive.

**Digital stories** are multimedia presentations that combine a variety of communication elements within a narrative structure. Media may include any combination of the following: text, images, video, audio, social media elements (such as tweets) or interactive elements (such as maps).

**Digital storytelling is being used by many museums.** Some museums help interpret community history and make it accessible. Finished digital stories can have many uses: advertising an upcoming exhibition, preserving a short-term project, building relations with communities, etc. They provide volunteers with skills and can be permanently displayed in galleries.

(Source: Wikipedia)
Example: The concepts of our stories

Radovljica
The umbrella story is a walk through the Old Town square guided by Anton Tomaž Linhart. Linhart tells the story of the town as it used to be, and what it is like today. The narrative includes the memories and stories collected from the residents, students and pupils.
The visitor discovers the story of the town at 10 selected points, where they are given different facts and told about historical buildings and events. A walk through the Old Town square includes the house in which Linhart lived as a child. Other walks reveal other important historical houses and traditional crafts. Each of the 10 points is complemented by audio and video recordings, photos, games and augmented reality.

Fermo
The main tourist attractions (places and people) of the city of Fermo were chosen among the ones that have the most visitors during the year, among those that have the greatest potential but are not yet known enough, and among those more related to stories kept in the memory of the inhabitants. Also, the purpose was to makes the visitor’s visit experience more complete by satisfying both the need for knowledge (the rational part) and the need to create a relationship with places and people (the emotional and sentimental part), which is most important, because it is the one that tends to prolong the emotional bond with places and stimulate the need to tell other people about their experiences.
The chosen script used to digitally tell about Fermo is aimed at immersing the visitor in the history and stories of Fermo and also to create a tool that can be implemented in the future. The starting point is a view from the top of the city, highlighting the main points of interest. The visitor is invited to “dive” through the alleys and historic squares of Fermo to discover stories, anecdotes and useful information, whether you want to know Fermo remotely or if you are planning an on-site visit. The walk though Fermo is guided by Christina of Sweden.

Topola
The idea was to prepare two types of presentations, one for the web and and for mobile devices. The main focus of both platforms is to reveal the hidden layers of the town. The web platform will present the personal stories of residents that have often been left untold or overseen in traditional presentations.
King Peter often emerged in brainstorming sessions as the most inspiring historic figure. In our story, he would appear as a life-size figure in the mobile application at spots identified with the help of an audience needs assessment. The existence of his diary enabled us to include the King’s actual words or comments on the town in our animations.
The story takes the user to eight points around Topola. The chosen locations represent the main attractions connected to the Karadorđević royal family and in particular King Peter.
Step 4: Production

Digital tools have made it easier and cheaper to produce and distribute multimedia material, whereas the great competition between museums and cultural sites in trying to offer increasingly unique and exclusive experiences makes it difficult for small realities to carry out projects with high quality standards. However, a high standard in terms of technologies used does not necessarily mean achieving the goal of improving the attractiveness of a cultural site.

The main challenge when working with ICT is to make quality products. If it is true, in fact, that ICT enables everyone to share and distribute content through the Internet, with little resources, it is equally true that, to be able to offer new cultural products that are able to make a leap forward in terms of breadth and public diversity, it is necessary to have sufficient financial resources and also great skills in the management and promotion of services related to new products, which is not always the case.

The ease with which we are able to open a window on the world using the Internet is not compensated by the growth in capacity and resources necessary to promote it and make it truly visible to an increasingly demanding public, with respect to cultural enjoyment.

What was our experience in the production of digital stories?

Going back to the start, at our first Creative Hacking Week in Belgrade we were faced with the challenge that, while all three towns had the goal of promoting the town’s heritage to new and diverse audiences using innovative digital solutions, we all came from different backgrounds and had different expectations and ideas on how to approach the project. This was the main problem to be solved, because the idea of having a digital solution requires a well-structured methodology.

Partners were introduced to different solutions that implement new technologies for information presentation and had the opportunity to work in small teams to create the first draft stories, using the free platform izi.TRAVEL software platform. Guided by izi.TRAVEL trainer, partners created first digital stories that were then instantly available on mobile devices. They could test their stories and gain more understanding about what it means to create a digital story, whether storytelling changes depending on the medium used and how, what skills they need, and so on.
Some of the questions that were raised at the start:
• Whether we should create our own application that would provide more freedom in content and story creation or use some of the existing platforms.
• Which new technologies should be explored, and what that mean implied. How to go beyond technology and involve the audience through interactive experience.
• How the solution would involve local audiences in collecting intangibles, stories, memories and artefacts.

Following the results of the Creative Hacking Week, the audience development strategy and insight into what an audience is looking for, and brainstorming sessions among partners, including the young designers, programmers and curators of the winning solutions, were conceptualised.

The main idea behind the web and mobile platform, was discovering hidden layers of the town using innovative digital solutions. This would be achieved by a collaborative web platform presenting personal stories through short video interviews and a mobile app that adds another layer through augmented reality.

Our objectives were:

- To capture the spirit of the place and present it in digitally innovative and user centred way.
- To use innovative technologies like augmented reality (AR) for the mobile app. AR is a new medium providing a mix of digital content with our reality, and adding another digital layer in the presentation of the town.
- To have the audience as active participants, adding a new personal layer in towns interpretation and presentation.

We decided to propose a design for a mobile app for iOS and Android devices that will include a presentation for all 3 towns. During several Skype meetings, draft scripts for all 3 towns were discussed to design common presentation frameworks for the 3 towns. The common framework that led to a single mobile presentation was also important for each of the partners because it formed the basis for future development of the mobile platform with the inclusion of other small historic towns.

We also looked at best practices. Most of the apps used augmented reality, and everyone agreed that AR is one of the most promising technologies and that the project should exploit the potential of this new medium. Augmented reality opens up an opportunity to bring history to life by overlaying the physical world with animated historical content. Furthermore, it actively involves users, making passive observers into active participants.
Each town was represented by a map with "hotspots" marking places with additional multimedia content: general information, images, quizzes, augmented reality guides. Each place includes a Did you know? or Secret option. Secrets are a "look behind the scenes" with little-known information. This option also serves as a connection to the web platform and the personal stories of town residents. The form on the web site also invites people to send in their stories and contribute to the platform. Interesting stories from the platform will be included in the app, under the Secret option.

The design of platforms further enhances the nature and idea of the project, communicating at the same time with digital generation. Custom maps on which each town is represented with a graphical symbol, and with layouts and colours inspired by programming, introduces innovation by design for town presentations.

In devising the app and web platform we wanted to provide a way to make a variety of information and stories available for people who were not able to visit the actual sights. A 360° view of the Old Town houses in Radovljica which are not accessible for the physically disabled was shot and included in the app. Furthermore, the app would enable a sort of tour through the town’s heritage with the information about the spots that not accessible for some people, and the web platform would enable people to get to know the previously unknown and unavailable personal stories and memories of town people. When we designed the app, attention was paid to the selection of fonts and their colours (black and white) so that the narrative part was easy to read.

**Augmented reality (AR)** is an interactive experience of a real-world environment whose elements are 'augmented' by computer-generated perceptual information, sometimes across multiple-sensory modalities, including visual, auditory, haptic, somatosensory and olfactory. The primary value of AR is that it brings components of the digital world into a person’s perception of the real world, and does so not as simple display data, but through the integration of immersive sensations that are perceived as natural parts of an environment. (Source: Wikipedia.org)
Our guides through historic towns:

**Christina was Queen of Sweden** in the 17th century. She was a very close friend of a Cardinal born in Fermo. To live close to him, Christina gave up the crown and religion and moved to Italy. Christina’s story shows 30 years of dedicated friendship and romance in the richest and most vivid times of the Fermo history. Today, Christina guides the visitors through the fascinating buildings and streets built in her time as a virtual reality character.

**Anton Tomaž Linhart** was a son of a hosiery manufacturer from Radovljica, Slovenia, who became an intellectual and one of the most important persons of the Age of Enlightenment. He was also the first Slovenian playwright, the founder of contemporary historiography and a state official. He is most famous for two comedies written in Slovenian when the official language in the territory was German. On 28 December 1789, the year of the French Revolution, the comedy Županova Micka (Micka, the Mayor’s Daughter) was performed in Ljubljana. Linhart himself was the director, and his wife was a performer, and that is how Slovenian theatre was born.

**King Peter I Karađorđević**

He was an interesting ruler whose military career was complemented by other deeds. He translated John Stuart Mill’s philosophical work ‘On Liberty’ into Serbian, was interested in advanced technologies and was the first to ride a motorcycle in Serbia at that time. He was a founder of the most significant construction in Topola, the Saint George Church on the Oplenac hill. The King’s diary is exhibited in the Oplenac Museum. In our digital story, King Peter was developed as a visual character, but does not guide the visitors, he is an interpretation subject.
What we learned ...

Working with the audience gave us valuable insights and paved the way to our proposed web platform solution.

When creating a 3D animation, and content for a mobile application, one of the main challenges is the quality of content versus having it available on as many devices as possible. The main challenge here is that the audience, especially younger members, are used to and expect good quality content, while at the same time this is not possible if the objective is to have the app and content available across different devices and operating systems, including ones that are not up to date. One thing that is overlooked is the communication value and PR value of advanced high-end solutions. Past experience has shown that advanced solutions themselves generate a lot of interest, even from an audience that is not interested in the subject itself.

Digital technology is good for bringing heritage to groups of people who may face difficulty in accessing it at actual locations.

Interpretation of the three historic towns to visitors is offered by people living there. This is innovative and creates another layer in the town’s interpretation and presentation that is both digital and personal at the same time.

Visit our storytellers at https://distory.io
Step 5: Testing and distribution

Testing of the apps

The production of the apps was one of the most demanding and at the same time exciting tasks that brought together our knowledge and creative potentials.

In all three towns, the audiences were invited to try the app and respond to a questionnaire asking about the following:

- How easy/difficult is to use the app?
- Appropriateness of the length of texts, the amount of pictures, photographs and provided information, quality of graphics, etc.
- Usefulness of the app for education purposes
- Augmented reality approach and features, the audio guide
- Difficulties of the tasks (interactive parts, games, …)
- What they liked most, what they missed, etc.

Some preferred to use the online survey, while others printed out and returned the questionnaire. In Radovljica, 130 people tested the app and 84 provided responses.

In Topola, in addition to questionnaires, an informal control group was included in testing. This group did not use the app. Instead, they were provided with classic map accompanied by images and text.
The initial feedback was very positive!

In Radovljica, 83 % of users, younger and older ones, found the app easy to use. Close to half of respondents said there was too much text and that they would appreciate more pictures and photographs. 63 % found the audio guide interesting. 88 % found the app useful for education purpose, while 73 % found it overall useful or liked it a lot. In their comments, the users pointed out that they would like to have more information about history, would like additional visitor points to be presented, and they liked tasks in the form of video games. Users also noted some technical issues, e.g. the app did not work on older devices, content-related errors, etc.

Watching people during testing was quite satisfying because it was obvious that they were having fun and learning at the same time. Some of them even said they couldn’t stop until they got to the end. Those testing in groups cooperated and helped each other. According to them, this was more interesting than a classic guided tour.

The first responses from Topola residents, and also students from Belgrade University, Department of Philosophy, were very positive. They were intrigued by the contemporary approach to presenting heritage and were also glad to find out that Topola is a part of an initiative including two other small historic towns. They were proud of the subject of the royal family and particularly liked the augmented reality part. The AR part was very popular with school groups who wanted to take pictures and share them on social networks. Based on their feedback, this is functionality that should be included and would also help distribution.

Comparing their experiences with those of the control group, we can conclude that the app involves the users more, and thus turns a passive observer into an active participant. It may be more suitable for a younger audience, making the experience interesting, up to date and memorable, especially the AR part.

Feedback from residents of Topola:

• The younger audience, e.g. school children and young adults, found the application easy to use, while older ones found it more complicated.
• We can conclude that there are also content-related differences connected to age. While senior citizens preferred a traditional approach with images and text, the younger audience was particularly interested in interactive content and augmented reality. The senior audience also found it unnatural to hold their devices up to the designated markers and did not have enough patience for the interactions with them.
• The audio part of the app was welcomed by all.
• The secret option, with less-known information about Topola, was very popular among all age groups. The younger audience liked the option for sharing the content instantly from the app.
In Topola, special attention will be put to reaching out to and inviting disabled persons to the launching event, where they will get to know the final product. This may inspire them to help us enrich and improve the app and web, based on their comments and suggestions. Perhaps they will even share their story with us.

**In Fermo,** the app was extended to include a virtual reality (VR) tour of the Fermo museum. Results from testing showed excitement by the users over the concept and the innovative approach to the digitisation of local stories. Fermo citizens participated in the virtual tour and tested the app during the official launch. Older citizens enjoyed the virtual tour a lot, while youngsters were keen on using smart phones. The new product is of particular interest for tourists, as the content and structure of the platform enables them to search for more local stories when they get back home.

The visitors to the virtual reality tour will be given special binoculars which were carefully tested in advance by the project team. The museum decided to purchase a few high-tech binoculars and more low-cost binoculars that are suitable for virtual reality/3D presentations.

**What we learned from visitor feedback**

- Testing by the audience is a very valuable and almost indispensable step that can lead to further improvements of the app both in terms of content and technically.

- Using the app was something natural for the younger generations, the digital natives, but it was also a valuable experience and learning for older generations, while using it in a group may add value to the overall experience and fun.

- Interactive content and augmented reality were specially popular among the younger generation, while the audio guide was well accepted by all audiences taking part in testing. All were interested in discovering the unusual facts and hidden layers of the towns and their people.

- Always include the option for instant sharing of the app contents.

- It is very important to take care over the creation of texts and selection of photos and other materials: they must be short and focused, as this is critical to keep the attention of the audience.

- Overall, using a digital story has shown new dimensions that can effectively link the audience and heritage through interactive exploration, thus building new relationships with, and knowledge and appreciation of historic towns.
Now we want the world to explore and learn about our historic towns!

After improving the apps and eliminating the technical issues, it was time to celebrate the project achievements with our audiences. In all three towns a launching event was organised on the same day.

The app is available on Google and iTunes stores for anyone to download.

Visit us at:
www.distory.io to get to know our storytellers.
www.distory.si to get to know our towns, the team and more about the project activities.

And most important ... Visit Fermo, Radovljica and Topola!

We will be delighted to take you to around the town, our way!
Looking back
Developing knowledge and sharing experience in the interpretation of cultural heritage and building new or strengthening existing relationships with the audiences by using digital technologies was a path worth walking. Cooperation at international level was another added value enabled by the Creative Europe programme.

We have looked back at what we’ve learned, found interesting or would do differently next time:

**Aleksandra Ažman**, project coordinator
Me as a camera operative? Hmm ... Well, I did it! And I am glad I did. The people we interviewed have developed an authentic and warm relationship with their old town. They all talked about it with respect and love. Their lives are strongly connected with it. Their living space co-creates their everyday life. Moreover, they really feel good living in the old heart of Radovljica, whether it’s made out of clay, gingerbread or chocolate.

**Jerneja Jelovčan Koselj**, project coordinator
diStory was an opportunity to connect with audiences more closely and create new valuable friendships with people who really love their town, and are open-hearted and cooperative. Interesting part of the project? Discovering that even financial reports can sometimes be fun for someone who prefers letters over numbers. It would be perfect if we included even more people in creating the script for digital stories and somehow tried to find more time for collecting stories. It was very satisfying to discover that the new connections between participants and us are strong and ready to take us to the new level of creating new stories.

**Ema Lukan**, museum educator
For me, the most interesting part of working with audience was creating stop-motion animation with children. Even though I work as a museum educator, I was surprised at the high level of digital literacy they showed. They were not only capable of understanding the digital processes, but also of co-creating and actively participating. It was also interesting to observe how “digital storytelling” is already an essential part of their DNA, whereas older people experience many difficulties and constraints adopting it.

**Katja Praprotnik**, curator
I have learned that people react to personal contacts rather than through social media. I realised that children and teenagers have a love of history, which we introduce through stories and new technologies. I would take more time for conversations with people, because this is the only way for people to entrust us their personal stories.
Vissia Lucarelli, tourist guide and communication manager in Museums of Fermo

I have been collecting stories since my childhood, but the diStory project enabled me to connect with the stories of people of Fermo, the daily life of the local community and the museum, for the first time. Interviewing more than 35 residents of different ages, I realised that telling stories is pretty much about human beings. People like talking about their stories. As stories are spoken directly, without any filter, they feel intact, and very often even “rough”. I enjoyed working with new audiences and I am determined to do so again in the future.

Rade Milić, archaeologist and project coordinator at the Urban Development Centre in Belgrade, Serbia

With the approaching end of the project, we are inevitably drawn by a need to look back and somehow summarise our experiences and activities. The project definitely put to some of our existing expertise to the test, but also provided us with some new skills in audience development and communication/presentation/interpretation of cultural heritage.

The workshops and experts, and the variety of people from different backgrounds, definitely played an important role in teaching us about good practice examples and gave us guidance and a direction in which to proceed in creating the digital story of our town.

The most interesting and new part to us was definitely working with audiences. You are never prepared enough. The audience taught us that you always need to have the right approach to suit the age group you are dealing with. You have to know how to approach them, how to interest them in your project, and how to inspire them to work together with you and help you find out more about their town. So, the people who know them best can give you the best advice (e.g. teachers). But the most interesting and amazing things are the stories that you discover and people you meet, amazing accounts of a way of life, a memory, an anecdote telling more than just a community and a town’s story, but a way of being and functioning, somehow a layer of a place’s social history.

So, when you get the story, you must know how to enable it to live in the future and stay a part of our intangible heritage, but also how to bring the story closer to audiences. This is the part where new means of storytelling can help us make it more digitally attractive and appealing for the wider public. With the mobile app and the web platform, we enabled it to be a part of a digital age. Maybe there are things we should have done differently, but then again, this joint learning process taught us a lot. This project was a great opportunity for small towns to play with innovative media solutions, to actively involve artists, students, citizens and create a solution that will bridge the gap between digital and physical while creating a content for a new era of audience and making a passive observer an active participant.
Mateja Hafner Dolenc, general secretary

Cultural heritage, preserved in museums, or the heritage admired in historical areas of old city centres, is the link that ties the community, it is the foundation of nation’s identity, and the commonwealth of humanity – but is this heritage still interesting for young people? During the diStory Project, we asked young people who were involved in creating the project, and were one of the new heritage audiences, this question. We observed them during the production of films that were simply entitled “The Digital Story of My Town”. They created exceptional films based on fairytales, legends and stories from our towns, and which were inspired by the richness of our heritage. 15 teams produced 15 films in a 48-hour-long hack-athon – films that are youthful, creative digital stories about our historical towns. Films that even real professionals would be proud of.

As a result, even though the question of whether heritage is important for young people is perhaps a tricky one, we can be confident that the answer is “yes”!

And this heritage will be the source of inspiration for creating new stories, short digital records and fleeting impressions, where the exceptional creativity and the imagination of young people, using new technologies, will create limitless new possibilities for experiencing heritage.

And that really sums up the diStory Project.

Verena Štekar-Vidic, project leader

I am convinced that, after working in the diStory project, museums at partner locations will be much more visible and accepted in their environment than they were before. We have done an important piece of work. We have found different ways to meet people, from children to senior citizens, and motivate them to talk and to share their experiences and impressions about life in our towns. It was intensive work, yet a pleasure to be involved with, full of positive energy. The results are many different digitally recorded stories, which importantly clarify and enrich the identity of our places. And the results are also connections between museums and the audience that will continue to stay alive after the project.