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ACCESSIBILITY OF ARCHIVES AS CULTURAL HERITAGE FOR BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED PERSONS – A CASE STUDY OF THE HISTORICAL ARCHIVES OF ŠUMADIJA

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Abstract:

This paper examines accessibility practices at the Historical Archives of Šumadija in Kragujevac, focusing on access for blind and visually impaired users.

The study is based on a single case and limited user feedback, which may affect generalizability and it contributes to the underexplored field of accessibility in archival practice in Serbia. This paper employs qualitative analysis of institutional documentation, exhibition catalogues, and public programmes, complemented by insights from informal consultations with staff and users. Findings indicate limited institutionalization of accessibility, though recent audio-based and open-air initiatives show promising potential. Recommendations include developing audio guides, tactile materials, and staff training to enhance inclusive archival access.

Keywords:

archival accessibility, blind and visually impaired persons, the Historical Archives of Šumadija, inclusive cultural heritage

Izvleček:

Dostopnost arhivskega gradiva kot kulturne dediščine za slepe in slabovidne osebe – primerjalna študija Zgodovinskega arhiva Šumadije

Ta članek obravnava prakse dostopnosti v Zgodovinskem arhivu Šumadije v Kragujevcu, s poudarkom na dostopu za slepe in slabovidne uporabnike.

Študija temelji na enem samem primeru in omejenih povratnih informacijah uporabnikov, kar lahko vpliva na splošno veljavnost ugotovitev; hkrati pa prispeva k doslej premalo raziskanemu področju dostopnosti v arhivski praksi v Srbiji. V članku je uporabljena kvalitativna analiza institucionalne dokumentacije, razstavnih katalogov in javnih programov, dopolnjena z ugotovitvami iz neformalnih posvetovanj z osebjem in uporabniki. Ugotovitve kažejo na omejeno institucionalizacijo dostopnosti, čeprav nedavne pobude, ki temeljijo na avdio rešitvah in razstavah na prostem, kažejo obetaven potencial. Priporočila vključujejo razvoj avdio vodnikov, taktilnih gradiv in usposabljanje osebja za izboljšanje vključujočega dostopa do arhivov.

Ključne besede:

dostopnost arhivskega gradiva, slepe in slabovidne osebe, Zgodovinski arhiv Šumadije, vključujoča kulturna dediščina

1 The Concept of Inclusive Cultural Heritage

The concept of inclusive cultural heritage has emerged within broader shifts in understanding the role of cultural institutions in contemporary society. While traditional approaches to cultural heritage have primarily focused on the protection, preservation, and expert interpretation of tangible and intangible assets, contemporary theories increasingly emphasize the need for accessibility, social relevance, and the active role of audiences (Smith, 2006, pp. 29–34). In this context, inclusivity has become one of the key principles in the management and presentation of cultural heritage.

Inclusive cultural heritage refers to an approach in which cultural content, institutional practices, and interpretative models are adapted to diverse social groups, with the aim of ensuring equal access, understanding, and participation (Harrison, 2013, pp. 14–19). This concept extends beyond narrowly defined physical accessibility and encompasses the removal of communicational, sensory, social, and cultural barriers, as well as the inclusion of different communities in the processes of interpreting and representing heritage.

One of the fundamental dimensions of inclusive cultural heritage is accessibility, which entails creating conditions that enable cultural content to be available to all users, including persons with disabilities (The Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society – Faro Convention 2005). In practice, this includes not only physical accessibility of spaces but also the development of alternative forms of communication, such as audio content, tactile materials, and digital formats. However, accessibility represents only the initial step toward inclusion.

Another significant dimension of the concept relates to representation, that is, the question of whose stories, experiences, and identities are present in cultural heritage. Traditional institutions have often privileged dominant narratives, while marginalized groups have remained insufficiently visible or have frequently been represented through stereotypes (Macdonald, 2013, pp. 1–7). An inclusive approach seeks to critically reassess and expand these narratives, enabling more equitable representation of diverse social groups. Furthermore, inclusive cultural heritage implies participation, understood as the active involvement of audiences in the creation and interpretation of content. Instead of the traditional model in which the audience is a passive recipient of information, contemporary approaches encourage collaboration with communities, the development of participatory models, and the co-creation of cultural programmes (Simon, 2010).

A particularly important aspect of the inclusive approach concerns the interpretation of cultural heritage. Contemporary interpretative models seek to overcome the dominance of the visual by introducing multisensory approaches that enable different modes of experiencing and understanding content (Black, 2012, pp. 64–68). For persons with visual impairments, this includes the development of audio descriptions, sound-based guides, and tactile elements.

The concept of inclusive cultural heritage is closely linked to the rights-based approach, which is grounded in the premise that access to culture is a fundamental right of every individual (United Nations, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006). In this regard, international documents that emphasize the right of persons with disabilities to equal participation in cultural life are of particular importance.

In the field of archival science, the application of this concept represents a relatively new challenge. Archives have traditionally been oriented toward the protection and professional use of archival materials, while aspects of public accessibility and

interpretation have long remained secondary (International Council on Archives (ICA), *Principles of Access to Archives*, 2012). However, contemporary trends increasingly emphasize the role of archives as public institutions with social responsibility. Nevertheless, in practice, many archival institutions continue to operate within a traditional, visually oriented model, which limits access for persons with visual impairments (Shepherd & Flinn, 2009, pp. 23–27). For this reason, the introduction of inclusive practices represents an important step toward transforming archives into more accessible institutions.

2 Inclusive Cultural Heritage in Serbia: Legal and Strategic Framework

The United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2006, and Serbia ratified it in 2009, thereby committing itself to the protection and advancement of the human rights of persons with disabilities, including their equal participation in cultural life, sports, recreation, and leisure (Article 30). The Convention is grounded in the principles of dignity, autonomy, non-discrimination, accessibility, and equal opportunities, while the General Comments of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities emphasize that accessibility constitutes a prerequisite for full participation in society. Accordingly, through its Constitution, anti-discrimination legislation, the Law on Culture, and other normative frameworks, Serbia has ensured equal access to facilities and services, including libraries, media, and digital content. Furthermore, by ratifying the Marrakesh Treaty, it has enabled access to published materials for persons with visual impairments.

In the field of inclusive culture—particularly accessibility in culture for persons with disabilities and the realization of their rights—several strategic documents are of key importance. These include the *Strategy for the Development of Culture of the Republic of Serbia (2020–2029)*, the *Strategy for the Improvement of the Position of Persons with Disabilities in the Republic of Serbia (2020–2024 and 2025–2030)*, the *Strategy for the Development of the Public Information System (2020–2025)*, and the *Strategy for the Prevention of and Protection against Discrimination (2022–2030)*.

Among the guiding principles of the *Strategy for the Development of Culture (2020–2029)* are the promotion of mutual understanding and the equal inclusion of vulnerable groups in cultural life, as well as broad access to culture and active participation. Within the specific objective of improving investment systems in cultural institutions and heritage protection, the Strategy emphasizes that “special attention should be paid to investment in the removal of physical barriers and facilitating access to cultural institutions for persons with disabilities.” It foresees systematic investment and regular maintenance of institutions, ensuring accessibility for persons with disabilities.

The Strategy further addresses equal participation in culture, highlighting policies of equal opportunity and the inclusion of all social groups in cultural life. It emphasizes that, in addition to removing physical barriers, adapting cultural content is essential. Measures include the adaptation of domestic film and audiovisual content, as well as the development of acquisition plans for library materials and equipment for persons with visual impairments. Within the objective of digitalization in culture, the Strategy underscores that “particular attention should be paid to the accessibility of digitized materials and institutional websites,” in accordance with principles of universal design and universal access, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and WAI (Web Accessibility Initiative) standards of the World Wide Web Consortium. The

Strategy for the Improvement of the Position of Persons with Disabilities (2020–2024) defines its general objective as "equalizing opportunities for persons with disabilities in the enjoyment of all civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights, with full respect for their dignity and individual autonomy, ensuring independence, freedom of choice, and full and effective participation in all areas of social life, including community living."

In the broader international context, relevant frameworks include the *European Disability Strategy 2021–2030 (Union of Equality)*, the *Council of Europe Disability Strategy 2017–2023 (Human Rights: A Reality for All)*, and the *New European Agenda for Culture (2018)*. The European Disability Strategy emphasizes, within its priority area of equality and non-discrimination, the importance of improving access to arts and culture, recreation, sport, and tourism for persons with disabilities. It highlights that accessible and inclusive cultural and recreational activities are essential for full social participation. The European Commission also commits to promoting artistic creation by persons with disabilities and ensuring that cultural heritage and the arts are accessible and inclusive.

The Council of Europe Disability Strategy (2017–2023), to which Serbia is a party, focuses on the broader social advancement of persons with disabilities. Its overarching objective is to achieve equality, dignity, and equal rights through priority areas that include equality and non-discrimination, awareness-raising, and accessibility.

3 Blind and Visually Impaired Users in Archives – The Situation in the Republic of Serbia

Although, since 2000, the Republic of Serbia has established a normative framework in the field of anti-discrimination and human rights protection that includes the rights of socially excluded groups, in practice a pronounced sectoral imbalance in its implementation is evident. While inclusion measures are primarily implemented in the domains of education, social protection, and the labour market, cultural rights remain marginalized, despite their formal recognition within the concepts of cultural democracy and cultural participation (*Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions*, 2005). As Bogdanović notes, "culture has an exceptionally strong impact on all segments of society, and one of its essential roles is to contribute to overall social cohesion and the development of society as a whole" (Bogdanović, 2017, pp. 166), which underscores the necessity of its systematic integration into social inclusion policies.

In this context, accessibility of cultural heritage, as a key component of the concept of inclusive cultural heritage, implies not only a formal right of access but also a real, functional ability of different social groups to use cultural resources. In line with the social model of disability, which conceptualizes disability not as an individual deficit but as a consequence of societal barriers (Oliver, 1990), the issue of access to archives for blind and visually impaired persons must be analyzed through the prism of institutional, spatial, and communicational constraints.

The lack of access to archival materials for persons with disabilities has been recognized in the literature, particularly highlighting the absence of materials adapted for blind and visually impaired users, as well as barriers related to physical access to archival buildings for those with visual impairments and/or mobility difficulties (Nglube, Sibanda & Makoni, 2013). Existing studies confirm that archives, compared to other sectors—especially within culture—lag behind in providing services to persons with disabilities (Kepley, 1983; Jeremy, 2018). Some scholars emphasize the importance of

adhering to accessibility principles, while acknowledging that archives are slow to recognize the specific needs of persons with disabilities (Kepley, 1983). However, access does not merely entail the physical ability to enter a building; it also includes the capacity to use collections and documentation preserved within archival institutions. Such access is, in fact, the result of both physical and intellectual accessibility, reflecting the ability of researchers to locate and engage with records both in person and online (Winn, 2015).

An empirical insight into the condition of the archival network in Serbia, based on a survey conducted for the purposes of this study and covering more than 30 archives, primarily indicates the structural inaccessibility of these institutions. The most basic prerequisite for inclusion—physical accessibility—is largely absent, as almost no institution provides tactile guiding paths or other forms of universal design that would enable independent movement for blind and visually impaired users. This finding points to a discrepancy between normative provisions and actual practice. Responsibility for this condition cannot be reduced to individual archival institutions but must be understood within a broader governance and policy framework. Local governments, as founders and funders, as well as competent ministries, play a crucial role in shaping and implementing accessibility policies in accordance with international standards, particularly the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which emphasizes the right to participate in cultural life on an equal basis.

Spatial and infrastructural conditions further complicate the issue. A significant number of archives are housed in non-purpose-built, often historical buildings, frequently shared with other institutions, while storage facilities are often dislocated. Such spatial arrangements not only hinder logistical functioning but also deepen structural barriers for users. The absence of elevators, access ramps, and other elements of accessible infrastructure indicates a systemic neglect of inclusivity in the planning of cultural infrastructure. Nevertheless, material constraints cannot serve as sufficient justification for the absence of any inclusive practices. Within contemporary museological and archival approaches, increasing emphasis is placed on the concept of “interpretative accessibility,” which entails adapting content to different sensory and cognitive needs of users (Sandell, 2007). In this regard, even minimal interventions—such as tactile models, audio content, or digital interpretations—can represent significant steps toward inclusion.

An analysis of existing practices demonstrates that archival activities in Serbia in this field remain extremely limited. Blind and visually impaired persons are effectively “invisible” in user records, indicating a phenomenon of structural exclusion. Isolated cases of archival use, such as those recorded in the Archives of the City of Belgrade, remain sporadic and are based on ad hoc adjustments, often mediated by third parties, which further problematizes the issue of user autonomy. By contrast, cultural institutions—particularly museums—have more substantially integrated principles of inclusion into their programming policies, developing models of participatory and accessible culture. Archives, however, continue to operate within a traditional framework, highlighting the need for their transformation into more open and socially responsible institutions.

4 Case Study – The Experience of the Historical Archive of Šumadija, Kragujevac

Starting from the identified structural limitations, the Historical Archive of Šumadija in Kragujevac (IAŠK) made an initial step in 2023 toward the practical implementation of inclusivity principles, seeking to provide exhibition content accessible to blind and visually impaired users. This initiative may be interpreted as a shift from a traditional model of cultural production toward a more inclusive and participatory approach, in line with contemporary trends in cultural policy and theory.

In this context, Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) offers a valuable analytical framework for understanding the structural exclusion of persons with disabilities from cultural institutions. Cultural institutions, including archives, have traditionally reproduced dominant patterns of cultural legitimacy, privileging those social groups that possess the appropriate forms of cultural capital (education, cultural competencies, access to resources, etc.). From this perspective, the inaccessibility of archival content to blind and visually impaired users can be interpreted as a form of structural symbolic exclusion that extends beyond physical barriers into the domain of cultural inequality.

The initiative undertaken by IAŠK to adapt exhibition content thus represents an attempt at redistributing cultural capital and expanding the circle of legitimate users of cultural resources. The selection of the exhibition theme on the Football Club "Radnički" (Stepanović, 2024) further supports this strategy, as sport, as a cultural phenomenon, has the potential to transcend class and educational barriers, functioning as a medium of cultural democratization.



Picture 1: A person with visual impairment at the opening of the exhibition* "History of a Dream - FK Radnički (1923–1969)" *at the Historical Archive of Šumadija



Picture 2: A visually impaired person reading Braille material to access the exhibition content "* History of a Dream - FK Radnički (1923–1969)*" at the Historical Archive of Šumadija

At the same time, this process may be interpreted through the lens of participatory culture (Jenkins, 2006), which emphasizes the active role of audiences in the creation and interpretation of cultural content. Feedback obtained from blind and visually impaired users revealed the limitations of the initial model and contributed to the redefinition of interpretative strategies. In this way, users were not merely passive recipients but became co-creators of meaning, marking a significant shift toward a participatory model of cultural production.

The identified shortcomings regarding the insufficient descriptiveness of Braille captions point to the need for more complex interpretative tools, in line with the concept of interpretative accessibility. The transition toward richer, narrative-based audio descriptions can be understood as an effort to enable a more equitable cultural reception, compensating for the absence of visual experience through alternative sensory modalities. Such practices correspond to contemporary trends in multisensory museology and inclusive design.

Further development of exhibition practices in 2025 involved relocating content into open-air settings and integrating audio recordings and QR codes. In this context, the exhibition dedicated to the prominent Yugoslav actor Dragomir Bojanić Gidra (Stepanović, 2025) can be analyzed within the framework of audience development. This concept refers to the strategic and continuous expansion and diversification of audiences through the adaptation of content to different needs and expectations (Kawashima, 2006). Accordingly, the activities of IAŠK represent a form of inclusive audience development, aimed at engaging marginalized groups traditionally excluded from archival institutions.



Picture 3: A blind person explores the exhibition 'Attention! Filming in Progress! Dragomir Bojanić Gidra' via an audio guide at the Historical Archives of Niš in 2025

At the end of 2025, Slavko Stepanović curated an additional exhibition titled 'The Stefanović Family: The Rise and Fall of an Industry (1907–1945)', supported by the local community and the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Serbia (Stepanović, 2025b). The exhibition delineates the history and evolution of the food industry in Serbia from the late 19th century through the mid-20th century, observed through the prism of a single family and the various stakeholders involved in this pivotal economic sector. A central objective of this project was the advancement of accessibility; hence, the accompanying audio recordings for the blind and visually impaired were designed to be as descriptive and immersive as possible. These detailed narrations were meticulously crafted to enable visitors to mentally reconstruct the visual elements and form an authentic representation of the historical content. Furthermore, the exhibition featured Braille translations of concise descriptive texts. Through the integration of QR codes providing expanded digital content, alongside professional guided tours and assistants, the entirety of the exhibition's narrative was made fully accessible to the visually impaired community.



Picture 4: A visitor with visual impairments engages with the exhibition content using dedicated audio descriptions during the exhibition ''The Stefanović Family: The Rise and Fall of an Industry (1907–1945)'' at the Historical Archives of Šumdija in December 2025

The use of contemporary digital tools in this process is particularly significant, as they enable new modalities of access to cultural content and contribute to the democratization of culture. However, as this case demonstrates, technological innovation alone is insufficient; its effectiveness depends on how it is integrated into a broader framework of inclusive practice and the extent to which it responds to the actual needs of users.

Despite these advances, the initiatives remain within the realm of isolated examples of good practice, indicating the absence of a systematic approach. It can therefore be concluded that archives in Serbia continue to operate within a relatively closed field, with limited orientation toward broader audiences. Sustainable transformation requires the institutionalization of inclusivity principles through cultural policies, strategic documents, and inter-institutional cooperation. In this process, the development of staff awareness and competencies is crucial, as is the establishment of partnerships with organizations representing persons with disabilities. Only through the synergy of individual initiative and systemic support can existing barriers be overcome and a sustainable model of inclusive archival practice established—one that contributes not only to the accessibility of cultural heritage but also to broader social cohesion.

5 Conclusion

The consideration of the concept of inclusive cultural heritage within normative, theoretical, and practical frameworks demonstrates that the issue of accessibility to cultural content can no longer be regarded as marginal or secondary. Rather, it constitutes one of the central concerns of contemporary cultural policy and institutional social responsibility. Inclusion, understood in a broader sense, implies not only the removal of physical barriers but also a critical reassessment of existing models of interpretation, representation, and audience engagement.

The analysis of the legal and strategic framework in the Republic of Serbia indicates the existence of a relatively well-established normative foundation, aligned with international standards and a rights-based approach. However, empirical findings reveal a pronounced discrepancy between normative provisions and actual practice, particularly within the archival sector. Archives, as institutions traditionally operating within a visually oriented paradigm, continue to insufficiently recognize the needs of persons with disabilities, resulting in their structural exclusion from cultural life. In this context, the application of various theoretical frameworks enables a deeper understanding of the mechanisms of exclusion, while concepts such as participatory culture and audience development point to potential directions for transforming institutional practices. Inclusion, therefore, cannot be reduced to a technical issue of accessibility; rather, it entails a fundamental shift in the understanding of the role of cultural institutions—from closed systems of knowledge to open, socially engaged spaces.

The case study of the Historical Archive of Šumadija in Kragujevac demonstrates that progress is possible even under conditions of limited resources, but also that the process of inclusion is necessarily gradual, experimental, and grounded in dialogue with users. The introduction of audio content, tactile elements, and digital tools represents a significant step toward interpretative accessibility, while simultaneously highlighting the need for further development of more complex, user-oriented models. Particularly important is the role of user feedback, which enables a transition from a model of “for the audience” to one of “with the audience.”

Nevertheless, isolated examples of good practice, if not accompanied by systemic measures, remain limited in scope and impact. Sustainable transformation of archival practice therefore requires strengthened institutional support, enhanced inter-institutional cooperation, and the consistent implementation of existing strategies and legal frameworks. In this process, particular importance should be placed on the education and sensitization of cultural professionals, as well as on the development of partnerships with organizations representing persons with disabilities. Ultimately, inclusive cultural heritage is not only a professional challenge for cultural institutions but also a broader societal imperative. Its implementation contributes not only to improved access to cultural content but also to the construction of a more just, open, and cohesive society, in which culture functions as a shared resource for all its members.

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POVZETEK

DOSTOPNOST ARHIVSKEGA GRADIVA KOT KULTURNE DEDIŠČINE ZA SLEPE IN SLABOVIDNE OSEBE – PRIMERJALNA ŠTUDIJA ZGODOVINSKEGA ARHIVA ŠUMADIJE

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Avtor v članku obravnava pojem vključujoče kulturne dediščine in njegovo uporabo v arhivskih institucijah, s posebnim poudarkom na dostopnosti za slepe in slabovidne uporabnike v Republiki Srbiji. Analiza združuje normativne, teoretične in empirične perspektive, da bi raziskala, v kolikšni meri se kulturne ustanove, zlasti arhivi, usklajujejo s sodobnimi standardi vključevanja, dostopnosti in participativne kulturne prakse.

Na normativni ravni raziskava pokaže, da je Srbija razvila razmeroma celovit pravni in strateški okvir, usklajen z mednarodnimi instrumenti na področju človekovih pravic, zlasti s Konvencijo Združenih narodov o pravicah invalidov (CRPD). Ta okvir dodatno podpirajo nacionalna zakonodaja, dokumenti kulturne politike in sektorske strategije, ki poudarjajo enakopraven dostop do kulturnega življenja, načela univerzalnega oblikovanja in odpravo ovir za invalide. Poleg tega srbska ratifikacija ustreznih mednarodnih sporazumov in usklajevanje z evropskimi političnimi agendami kažeta na formalno priznanje dostopnosti kot temeljne kulturne pravice. Kljub tej trdni normativni podlagi pa izvajanje teh načel ostaja neenakomerno in razdrobljeno med posameznimi institucionalnimi sektorji.

Teoretična obravnava koncepta vključujoče kulturne dediščine izpostavlja paradigmatski premik v razumevanju kulturnih institucij. Namesto da bi se osredotočali izključno na ohranjanje in strokovno usmerjeno interpretacijo, sodobni pristopi poudarjajo dostopnost, sodelovanje, zastopanost in vključevanje občinstva. Študija, ki črpa iz ključnih teoretičnih okvirov, kot so Pierre Bourdieujev koncept kulturnega kapitala, teorija participativne kulture in modeli razvoja občinstva, dokazuje, da kulturne ustanove pogosto reproducirajo strukturne neenakosti, saj dajejo prednost uporabnikom, ki posedujejo prevladujoče oblike kulturnega kapitala. V tem kontekstu izključevanje ni zgolj fizično, temveč tudi simbolično in strukturno, vgrajeno v institucionalne prakse, interpretativne okvire in komunikacijske sisteme.

Empirično študija razkriva znatno vrzel med normativnimi zavezami in praktičnim izvajanjem, zlasti v arhivskem sektorju. Arhivi v Srbiji še naprej delujejo pretežno v okviru vizualno usmerjenega modela organizacije in širjenja znanja, kar omejuje dostopnost za slepe in slabovidne uporabnike. Empirični podatki in terenska opazovanja kažejo, da se ukrepi za zagotavljanje dostopnosti – kot so taktilni materiali, avdio opisi in digitalne podporne tehnologije – redko sistematično izvajajo. Posledica tega je, da so osebe z okvarami vida v veliki meri še vedno izključene iz uporabe arhivov, kar odraža širše

strukturne ovire znotraj kulturne infrastrukture, vključno s fizično nedostopnostjo, nezadostno prilagoditvijo za razumevanje in omejeno ozaveščenostjo institucij.

Primer študije Zgodovinskega arhiva Šumadije v Kragujevcu ponuja nazoren primer nastajajočih vključujočih praks v tem omejevalnem kontekstu. Institucija je sprožila več eksperimentalnih in projektnih ukrepov, namenjenih izboljšanju dostopnosti, vključno z avdiointerpretacijami, taktilnimi elementi in uporabo digitalnih tehnologij, kot so QR-kode in razstavne oblike na prostem. Te pobude predstavljajo pomemben premik v smeri interpretativne dostopnosti in veččutnega vključevanja ter prehod od tradicionalnih, na institucijo osredotočenih modelov k bolj participativnim pristopom. Pomembno je, da so povratne informacije slepih in slabovidnih udeležencev odigrale ključno vlogo pri preoblikovanju interpretativnih strategij, kar poudarja pomen dialoga in soustvarjanja pri razvoju vključujočih kulturnih vsebin.

Kljub tem napredkom ugotovitve poudarjajo, da takšne pobude ostajajo osamljeni primeri dobre prakse, in ne sestavni deli sistematične institucionalne strategije. Pomanjkanje dolgoročnega načrtovanja, doslednega izvajanja politik in usklajenega medinstitucionalnega sodelovanja omejuje širši vpliv teh prizadevanj. Zato študija trdi, da trajnostni napredek na področju vključujoče arhivske prakse zahteva prehod od ad hoc pobud k strukturni vključitvi načel dostopnosti v upravljanje kulture, institucionalno načrtovanje in strokovno usposabljanje.

Sklepno je treba vključujočo kulturno dediščino razumeti ne le kot tehnični ali infrastrukturni izziv, temveč kot temeljito preoblikovanje vloge kulturnih institucij v družbi. To zahteva novo zasnovo arhivov kot odprtih, participativnih in družbeno angažiranih prostorov, ki aktivno vključujejo raznolike skupine uporabnikov. Uresničitev te preobrazbe je odvisna od sinergije med pravnimi okviri, institucionalno zavezanostjo, krepitvijo strokovnih zmogljivosti in sodelovanjem z organizacijami, ki zastopajo osebe s posebnimi potrebami. Končno izvajanje vključujoče kulturne dediščine prispeva ne le k izboljšanju dostopnosti kulturnih vsebin, temveč tudi k širšim družbenim ciljem, vključno z enakostjo, socialno kohezijo in demokratično udeležbo v kulturnem življenju.

About the author:

Slavko Stepanović (born 1980) is a distinguished Senior Archivist at the Historical Archives of Šumadija and a long-standing member of the Association of Historians of Šumadija, joining shortly after its inception. Throughout his career, Stepanović has been dedicated to bridging the gap between archival science and the public, specifically focusing on making cultural history accessible to younger generations. He has curated several notable exhibitions that highlight diverse aspects of Serbian history, including: *Jovan Stejić – The First Serbian Doctor of Medicine in Renewed Serbia* (2018), *History of a Dream – FK "Radnički" (1923-1969)* (2023), *The Liberation of Kragujevac: Two Sides of the Coin* (2024), *Attention! Filming in Progress! Dragomir Bojanić Gidra* (2025), *and The Stefanović Family: The Rise and Fall of an Industry (1907–1945)* (2025).

Stepanović's expertise extends to the international stage. In September 2022, he participated in the HistoCON 2022 event in Berlin, invited by the German Federal Agency for Civic Education (*Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung*). During this event, he co-led a specialized workshop examining the status of women in communist societies (1945–1989).

His work continues to emphasize that archives are not merely repositories of paper, but vital witnesses to human life and social evolution.

O avtorju:

Slavko Stepanović (rojen leta 1980) je priznan višji arhivist v Zgodovinskem arhivu Šumadije in dolgoletni član Združenja zgodovinarjev Šumadije, h kateremu se je pridružil kmalu po njegovi ustanovitvi. Vse svoje poklicno življenje se posveča premostitvi vrzeli med arhivistiko in javnostjo, pri čemer se osredotoča zlasti na približevanje kulturne zgodovine mlajšim generacijam. Bil je kustos več pomembnih razstav, ki osvetljujejo različne vidike srbske zgodovine, med drugim: Jovan Stejić – prvi srbski doktor medicine v obnovljeni Srbiji (2018), Zgodba o sanjah – FK »Radnički« (1923–1969) (2023), Osvoboditev Kragujevca: dve strani kovanca (2024), Pozor! Snemanje poteka! Dragomir Bojanić Gidra (2025) ter Družina Stefanović: Vzpon in padec industrije (1907–1945) (2025).

Stepanovićevo strokovno delo sega tudi na mednarodno prizorišče. Septembra 2022 se je na povabilo Nemške zvezne agencije za državljansko izobraževanje (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung) udeležil dogodka HistoCON 2022 v Berlinu. V okviru tega dogodka je sovodil strokovno delavnico, posvečeno položaju žensk v komunističnih družbah v obdobju 1945–1989.

Pri svojem delu še naprej poudarja, da arhivi niso zgolj skladišča papirja, temveč pomembni pričevalci človeškega življenja in družbenega razvoja.