

# CHAPTER 10





## CULTURAL HERITAGE IN NATURE AND SOCIETY E-TEXTBOOKS FOR THE FIRST CYCLE OF EDUCATION

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**Abstract:** This paper describes the content related to cultural heritage which exists in e-textbooks on nature and society for the first cycle of education. The research aim is to identify the cultural heritage content through the analysis of e-textbooks “*World around us*” for the first and second grade, and “*Nature and society*” for the third and fourth grade. E-textbooks are accessible to all and serve as a media promotion of educational content within them. The research was conducted in June 2023 on a sample of e-textbooks for nature and society published by *Klett* Publishing House (N = 8). The methods used include theoretical analysis and content analysis. Units of analysis include sentences from the main text and visual content such as images, photographs, and drawings within the didactic-methodological toolkit for various subjects, grades, and teaching topics. The research results have shown that as students progress to higher grades, the volume of content related to cultural heritage increases. However, the analyzed e-textbooks, however, do not sufficiently aid in the development and reinforcement of students’ concepts of cultural heritage. Based on the results, conclusions have been drawn, and pedagogical implications have been provided. It is recommended that the content in e-textbooks on nature and society be modified to explicitly address the etymology of cultural heritage content according to the students’ age. This would contribute to a stronger knowledge base among students regarding cultural heritage, serving as a foundation for further learning at higher educational levels.

**Key words:** *Cultural heritage, cultural property, Klett, World Around Us, Nature and Society*

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## 1. Introduction

Modern society is undergoing numerous changes in all fields of activity. It is confronted with complex interactions between scientific and technical-technological developments that have led to the constant proliferation of new information on a daily basis. The most significant development is in the field of information and communication technologies (ICT), which have transformed all aspects of human life and work, both as individuals and as members of a social community, as well as the entire society. ICT has penetrated all aspects of social life and work, including science, culture, and education. The integration of ICT into the fields of science, culture, and education, involving cultural workers, scientists, teachers, and educators, requires them to respond to these new demands, which involves their continuous learning to apply ICT in science, culture, and education (Pecanac et al., 2016). As an innovation, ICT significantly contribute to promotional activities in all areas of social life and work. These innovations are not yet fully utilized in education, which is still predominantly traditional and which "... on the one hand tends to emphasize the acquisition of facts and knowledge while on the other hand neglecting the development of a well-rounded personality and the child's moral and social values" (Milenovic and Botic, 2023: 454).

Media promotion significantly contributes to the promotion of cultural heritage. In many cases, it is the primary means through which individuals learn about elements of both national and global cultural heritage. This approach provides users of cultural heritage with essential information and knowledge that can serve various purposes, including the development of general culture and awareness, the acquisition of knowledge, and learning about cultural heritage... All of this can contribute to an individual's decision to personally visit sites, objects, and areas in the social environment where various elements of cultural heritage are located.

It is evident that the promotion of cultural heritage contributes to the development of cultural tourism in many situations. In academic circles, both nationally and globally, cultural tourism is becoming increasingly prevalent. This approach utilizes tradition and culture in promoting general tourism, which also has economic significance for the society. For the effective implementation of cultural tourism, a marketing approach is crucial. Under such circumstances, digital promotion of cultural heritage holds particular importance as it positions the cultural-historical offering on a global marketing plan and tourist market. This form of media promotion of cultural heritage is primarily used by all local environments. The contribution of media promotion to the development of cultural

tourism and sustainable development of Serbia's cultural heritage is indicated by the results of some recent studies (Ratković Njegovan and Šidjanin, 2022; Katanić et al., 2020; Stošić Mihajlović, 2020; Tanasić and Tanasić, 2020).

In addition to providing opportunities for acquainting people with cultural heritage, media promotion also bridges the gap between cultural heritage and its potential users on both national and global scale. Initially, this involved lectures, panel discussions, and TV promotions using photo albums, presentations, documentary films, and other forms of cultural heritage promotion. With the advancement of science and technology, new possibilities for presenting cultural heritage content have emerged. Today, it is possible to virtually tour numerous sites and memorial complexes in all countries around the world. This form of media promotion of cultural heritage allows individuals not only to learn about but also to virtually experience the areas and locations where elements of cultural heritage are found (Dramićanin and Sančanin, 2022). The biggest memorial complex of this kind in the world is Yad Vashem, located on the Mount of Remembrance in Jerusalem. It contains numerous museums, avenues of giants, avenues of the righteous, libraries, multimedia centers, sculptures, paintings, art museums, original documents, lists, and international Yad Vashem School dedicated to Holocaust studies, all with the aim of preserving the culture of remembrance for the victims and heroes of the Holocaust (Milenović, 2016). It is precisely in this school that an innovative didactic-methodological model and educational system of the Yad Vashem School are implemented to enhance the effectiveness of learning. Significant attention is given to the media promotion of the school and the entire complex. Every year, dozens of seminars for teachers and the international community are held. Additionally, materials related to the Holocaust are translated into all major world languages, and content is recorded. The media promotion of this complex grows each year.

Media and virtual promotion of cultural heritage in certain situations bring the context of teaching and learning to students. Projects of virtual promotion of cultural heritage have been implemented regarding this topic. For example, in one of them, the practical possibility of simultaneous virtual exchange of cultural heritage between students in an anthropology class and students in an English language class was explored. The aim of this project was to use qualitative data collection methods to answer three fundamental questions: "1) whether virtual promotion of cultural heritage contributes to creating stronger connections between distant groups of students; 2) whether students will learn English better in this way; and 3) whether students' awareness of cultural heritage will be raised to a higher level (simultaneous awareness of cultural heritage and its appreciation with a sense of action towards cultural heritage)" (Kimball et al., 2022: 15).

Based on the research results according to the defined objectives of the analyzed project, which confirmed all hypotheses, it could be seen that media promotion of cultural heritage significantly contributes to learning and can be used for more effective teaching, especially in terms of correlation in education when it is media-designed to assist teaching and learning. Although the project was implemented for older students and even university students, the model resulting from the project can be used in the teaching of nature and society for the first cycle of education. This also emphasizes the need for cultural heritage to be media-designed to meet the needs of the target group for which it is intended.

Based on the analyses provided, it can be said that the education of younger school-age children about cultural heritage in elementary schools is limited by both the curriculum and textbooks. Media promotion of cultural heritage adapted for the learning of younger students is insufficient. Educational and cultural programs dedicated to elementary school students have long ceased to be broadcast on national television and are generally non-existent on other channels. Scientific papers addressing the promotion of cultural heritage in national and international journals are rare. Significant contributions to media promotion of cultural heritage have been made by academic conferences organized by the Center for Culture, Education, and Media "Akademac" from Sremski Karlovci, which have been organized three times since 2020 and have explored various aspects of media and communication (Sančanin (ed.), 2022; Petrović and Sančanin (eds.), 2021; Sančanin and Ratković Njegovan (eds.), 2020). These conference proceedings have included papers presenting results that explicitly emphasize the role of media promotion in cultural heritage and the sustainable development of cultural heritage. However, the published papers did not include an analysis of the content related to cultural heritage in e-textbooks on nature and society as a form of media promotion of cultural heritage for academic and educational purposes, which further justifies this research.

## 2. Cultural heritage

The term "cultural heritage" has different synonymous meanings. Generally, terms such as cultural heritage and cultural assets are used. In approaching the problem in this research, the term "cultural heritage" will be used. Based on numerous definitions in national (Jeremić and Milenović, 2020; Rakić, 2020; Trbojević et al., 2015) and international journals (Cores Torres & Rodríguez, 2023; Zeren Akbulut, 2022), cultural heritage encompasses everything that has been inherited

from previous generations, which they created, discovered, conceptualized, articulated, practiced, and nurtured, which can be used by present generations with the need to continuously complement it with new elements and preserve it from decay and oblivion for all future generations. In this research, cultural heritage refers to everything inherited from previous generations, indicating how previous generations of a particular society lived and acted, and what they created, which present generations should use, enrich, strengthen, and preserve for future generations. Based on this, cultural heritage includes art, architecture, various books and manuscripts, objects, oral literature, traditions, customs, ancient crafts, and other elements of explicit and implicit traditions and culture. It can be noticed that there is material, immaterial, and natural cultural heritage; movable and immovable; written and oral... Material cultural heritage consists of hidden and world-renowned buildings of exceptional importance, monuments, and material works of art (Andrejić, 2021). Intangible cultural heritage includes works of art in the fields of music and visual arts, oral traditions, and people's way of life, i.e., traditions they nurtured and customs (Mihajlović, 2017). Natural assets as elements of cultural heritage are national parks and special natural reserves in Serbia of special importance due to the protected plant and animal species that are under state protection. All these elements are important for every generation. They therefore stand for cultural heritage that must be greatly enhanced, reinforced, utilized, and maintained for all future generations.

The Ministry responsible for culture in Serbia maintains a special national register of adopted elements of intangible cultural heritage. Registration is carried out in accordance with the *Law on Cultural Goods* from 2021 and the adopted *Regulation on the Registration in the National Register of Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Republic of Serbia* from 2012. According to the provisions of Article 2 of the Regulation, lists of intangible cultural heritage are defined as follows: "...1) National Register of Intangible Cultural Heritage; 2) National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding; 3) List of proposals for the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity; List of proposals for the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding; 4) Lists defined at the local/regional level for all areas of intangible cultural heritage [...]" (2012: 1-2). Article 3 of the same *Regulation* defines lists related to knowledge, living heritage bearers, festivals and customs, oral traditions, and performing instruments.

The Lists of Intangible Cultural Heritage adopted at the local and regional levels are regulated by the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO, which was ratified in Serbia through the adoption of the Law on the Ratification of the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible

Cultural Heritage in 2010. According to the Convention, intangible cultural heritage comprises skills, practices, expressions, knowledge, instruments, objects, artifacts, and cultural spaces that communities, groups, and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. In Serbia, there is a List of Intangible Cultural Heritage, currently consisting of 57 elements. Without going into a detailed analysis of each element, they include the following: *Слава* [Patron Saint Day], *Крсно име* [Christian name], *Крсна слава* [patron saint celebration]; *Молитва* [prayer], *Ђурђевдански обичај* [St. George's Day customs]; *Белмуж* [polenta]; *Изливање и паљење ратарских свећа* [Pouring and lighting field candles]; *Израда пиротског качкаваља* [Making of Pirot hard cheese]; *Пиротско ћилимарство* [Woven carpets from Pirot]; *Филигрански занат* [the craft of filigree]; *Клесарски занат, Бела вода* [Stone craft, Bela voda]; *Лазарске мантије, традиционални начин припреме* [Lazarske mantije, traditional method of preparation]; *Злакуска лончарија* [Zlakusa pottery]; *Косовски вез* [Kosovo embroidery]; *Певање уз гусле* [Singing to the accompaniment of the Gusle]; *Грокталица* [Rattling singing]; *Певање из вика* [polyphonic duet folk singing]; *Епски хумор* [Epic humor]; *Коло, коло у три, коло у шест* [circle dance]; *Руменка*; *Свирање на гајдама* [Playing the bagpipes]; *Фрулашка пракса* [Flute playing]; *Свирање на кавалу* [Playing the kaval]; *Наивно сликарство Словака* [Naive Painting of Slovaks]; *Лазарице у Сиринићкој жупи* [Women's Spring Ritual Processions in Sirinic]; *Израда дрвених чутура у селу Пилица* [Making Wooden Flasks in the Village of Pilica]; *Вуков сабор* [Gathering in honor of Vuk Karadzic]; *Ојкача* [Ten-line poem ending in ou]; *Врањска градска песма* [Vranje traditional urban folk song]; *Чување Христовог гроба* [commemorating the tomb of Jesus Christ]; *Пиротско приповедање* [Pirot storytelling]; *Ђурђевдан* [Saint George's Day]; *Шљивовица* [Plum brandy]; *Казанџијски занат* [Copper smithing craft]; *Станарско ћилимарство* [Stapar carpet weaving]; *Знања и вештине прављења кајмака* [Knowledge and skills of making clotted cream]; *Циповка – знање и умење припремања традиционалног хлеба у Војводини* [Cipovka - knowledge and skill of preparing traditional bread in Vojvodina]; *Кување жмара („жумијар“)* [Zumijar - dish made from lamb meat, leeks, and cornmeal]; *Бела вила* [Easter custom games in Kosovo and Metohija]; *Паљење петровданских лила, лилање* [Lighting Petrovdan Candles]; *Здравице* [Toasts]; *Опанчарски занат* [Cobbler's trade]; *Двопредно плетење вунених чарапа* [Double-knitting woolen socks]; *Певање уз ројење пчела* [Singing during beekeeping]; *Бездански дамаст – умеће ручног ткања орнаментисаног свиленог дамаста жакар техником* [Bezdan damask – the art of hand-weaving ornate silk damask using the jacquard technique]; *Ткање бошчи* [traditional woven apron]; *Женидба краљевића Марка – покладна свадба у Шрпци* [The Marriage of Prince Marko - Shrovetide (Carnival) Wedding in Šrpci]; *Вермен* [Nativity Scene]; *Сјеничко – нештерско ћилимарство*



*[Sjenica and Pešter Rug Weaving]; Ражањско црепуљарство [Clay bread pot from Razanj village of Rujiste]; Крстови од времена [Crosses for Protection from Weather]; Темкица Библија [Bible Binder]; Драгачевски сабор и сабор трубача у Гучи [Dragačevski Sabor" and "Trumpet Festival in Guča]; Трбуштво – свирање ансамбла/орекстра лимених дувачких инструмената, блех музика [an ensemble/orchestra of brass wind instruments, brass music]; „Ускршњи обичаји - освећивање паске/пошвецања паски (русин.)/посвячення паски; посвячення великоднього кошика (укр.)” [Easter Customs - Blessing the Easter Bread]; Мало коло [Small circle dance where female dancers hold onto the shoulders of male dancers, who interlock their hands behind the females' backs]; Тамбураши, тамбурашке праксе [Tamburitza players]; Знања, имења, вештине израде ојуца [Knowledge, skills, and craftsmanship of making decorative lace]; Маћанске плоче – израда и употреба [stone slabs used for roof coverings]; and Другаричење/кумачење [Godfathers/blood brothers].*

The list of cultural heritage of Serbia in UNESCO is not final and is constantly being updated. Elements of Serbia's cultural heritage can be proposed by scientific institutions, cultural institutions, museums, memorial centers, cultural societies, memorial complexes, academic and educational institutions (faculties and universities), etc. Whether the proposed element will be included in the UNESCO list depends on several factors. The most significant ones are: uniqueness compared to similar elements on national or global levels, among many others. Therefore, it is important to consider the interconnection of these mentioned elements with the cultural heritage element that is intended for submission for inscription on the UNESCO list. Today's progress in science and technology, particularly ICT, digitalization of cultural heritage (Sančanin et al., 2022), and its virtual creation (Dramićanin and Sančanin, 2022), significantly contributes to the promotion of Serbia's cultural heritage, its more effective use in teaching and learning, and its enduring protection from unwanted external influences.

### **3. Cultural Heritage in E-Textbooks on Nature and Society Education as a Form of Media Promotion**

In parallel with the media promotion of cultural heritage and the reduction of distance between cultural heritage and its potential users, the discussion also revolves around the need for its preservation, enhancement, and empowerment. There is also a discussion about the necessity of developing people's awareness of the significance and the need for understanding the cultural heritage of their own country from the earliest childhood and educational levels. Pedagogical

practice demonstrates that in the first cycle of education, “insufficient attention is given to cultural heritage” (Milenović and Simić, 2017: 198). The content in nature and society textbooks, where cultural heritage should be most prevalent, is also found to be inadequate, as shown by the analyses of this research. Hence, there is an emphasized need for correlation with other subjects within the first cycle of education. For these reasons, students often lack sufficient information about cultural heritage relevant to understanding current societal events. For instance, in the research conducted by Živorad Milenović and Mirjana Simić, which involved a comparative analysis of the knowledge of younger-grade students in elementary schools in Kosovo and Metohija and central Serbia about basic concepts related to Kosovo and Metohija, it was determined that “the knowledge of younger-grade students about basic concepts related to Kosovo and Metohija is insufficient, and higher levels of knowledge are demonstrated by students attending elementary school in Kosovo and Metohija compared to students attending elementary school in central Serbia...” (2018: 280). The results indicate a general lack of familiarity with basic concepts related to Kosovo and Metohija: “...what Kosovo and Metohija is; which ethnic group is the most populous in Kosovo and Metohija; what is the capital of Kosovo and Metohija; naming three cities, rivers, mountains, and monasteries in Kosovo and Metohija; identifying the national park located in Kosovo and Metohija; explaining why Kosovo and Metohija is significant for the Republic of Serbia; and listing the natural resources for which Kosovo and Metohija are known” (Milenović and Simić, 2018: 282-283). Somewhat better knowledge results were shown by students living in the region of Kosovo and Metohija compared to students living in central Serbia. Certainly, this is not a result of school learning but rather the outcome of direct learning in the region where students are educated and have a permanent place of residence. This is because insufficient attention is given to these concepts in younger grades of elementary school. There are two reasons why cultural heritage items are insufficiently known. On one hand, there is inadequate media promotion of the mentioned content about Kosovo and Metohija, regarding the educational and cultural program adapted for younger-aged children, which ceased to be broadcasted on state television long ago. On the other hand, for children from elementary schools in central Serbia, school trips and excursions to the Kosovo and Metohija region have not been organized for nearly four decades due to security reasons.

The above mentioned shortcomings can be partially overcome through different forms of learning. Besides the previously mentioned methods of learning through correlation with various subjects within the first cycle of education, learning about cultural heritage content can also occur in various real-life and practical situations within the family and the social community. Learning about

cultural heritage in real circumstances holds special significance for students, as the knowledge gained becomes foundational and serves them in further learning and in gaining a better understanding of the world around them and societal relations. Media, as a means of learning about cultural heritage in the context of the ICT society, is educationally effective, but parental and teacher assistance is crucial in such circumstances. The media promotion of cultural heritage contributes significantly to this process. E-textbooks in nature and society education and other e-textbooks within the first cycle of education also make a significant contribution as a form of media promotion for cultural heritage content. Without delving deeper into the ethical dimension and humanistic nature, it is worth noting that throughout human history, well before the advent of mass media, the most effective media promotion of a country's cultural heritage was carried out by the Nazis during the period of Nazi Germany from 1933 to 1945 (Milenović, 2021; Milenović and Rajčević, 2021; Milenović, 2020).

Regarding e-textbooks used in education, including nature and society education within the first cycle of education, there are various opinions when comparing them to the printed version of textbooks. Some perspectives consider them to be different textbooks (Roberts et al., 2021) that, in addition to the instructional content being delivered, should also incorporate special tools contributing to teaching based on innovative teaching systems. In such a teaching approach, both the role of the teacher and the role of the student change simultaneously (Milenović and Botić, 2023: 466). According to the results of one research, the use of educational platforms in teaching significantly contributes to the effectiveness of teaching, learning, and student engagement. However, in Serbia, there is still no suitable environment that favors education implemented through educational platforms (Milenović et al., 2020b: 104).

The e-textbooks used in schools in Serbia are not structured for educational platforms. The difference lies in the fact that e-textbooks represent an electronic version that is identical to the printed textbook. In order for teachers, students, and their parents to use them in nature and society education, it is necessary for them to possess optimal competencies. The importance of students' proficiency in using e-textbooks is highlighted by research results that show a strong positive correlation "between students' knowledge levels about e-learning and their assessments of the importance of e-learning implementation in grade-level education" (Milenović et al., 2020a: 5). To equally and even more effectively utilize e-textbooks outside the classroom, as they are used by younger-grade students and their parents, there is an emphasized need for "improving teachers' digital competence for using e-textbooks in the classroom" (Milenović et al., 2023: 60). The presented analyses point to the responsibility of teachers to pedagogically

train students and their parents in using e-textbooks for nature and society education and other e-textbooks within the first cycle of education.

The content about cultural heritage in nature and society e-textbooks is structured according to the complexity and capabilities of younger-grade students and their psychophysical development. These contents are present in the e-textbooks for the subject "Svet oko nas" (World Around Us) in the first and second grade of elementary school, as well as in the e-textbooks for the subject "Priroda i društvo" (Nature and Society) in the third and fourth grade of elementary school. Depending on the complexity and the need for linear and systematic knowledge acquisition, they are structured by teaching topics for each grade of elementary school. In the first grade of elementary school, content about cultural heritage is covered within one teaching topic: "Ja i drugi" (Myself and Others). In the second grade, it appears in two teaching topics: "Ja i drugi" (Myself and Others) and "Kultura življenja" (Culture of Living). In the third grade, it is covered in two teaching topics: "Kultura življenja" (Culture of Living) and "Prošlost" (Past). In the fourth grade, cultural heritage content is distributed across three teaching topics: "Prirodne i društvene odlike Srbije" (Natural and Social Characteristics of Serbia), "Čovek prirodno i društveno biće" (Human as a Natural and Social Being), and "Prošlost Srbije" (Past of Serbia).

Unlike printed textbooks, e-textbooks not only serve the purpose of teaching and learning younger-grade students but also allow for their use by parents, contributing to the media promotion of all textbook content, including those related to cultural heritage. As such, they are accessible to a broader readership for various purposes. Depending on the nature of the research being conducted (as is the case in this conducted research), nature and society e-textbooks and other e-textbooks within the first cycle of education can be used by researchers as tools or subjects of investigation. So far, media promotion (Andersson & Danielsson, 2021; Masele & Rwehikiza, 2021; Zhao & Guan, 2021) and content about cultural heritage in nature and society e-textbooks (Milenović & Botić, 2023; Milenović & Simić, 2018, 2017; Milenović, 2017) have been mostly studied in isolation and separately. In-depth research of their connections, necessity, and importance will be done in this paper. There have been tangential studies on the role of media in preserving memory and protecting cultural monuments of Serbia in Italy (Mihajlović, 2018), the importance of digitizing cultural heritage for its protection and preservation (Lučić, 2023), and the need and importance of studying communication on teacher training programs, which can contribute to some form of media promotion of contents taught in the first cycle of education, including nature and society content (Milenović et al., 2021).

## 4. Method

Cultural heritage is a multidimensional concept that is terminologically defined as cultural heritage or cultural property. In addition to its multidimensionality, cultural heritage is characterized by dynamics stemming from its essence, encompassing explicit and implicit values of material and spiritual culture inherited from previous generations or emerging through societal, scientific, or cultural activities in the present. This heritage needs to be preserved for future generations, providing intriguing starting points for this research. Cultural heritage is an engaging research topic suitable for critical and constructive examination from various aspects at all levels of education. Studies and learning about cultural heritage within primary education are mainly focused on content related to language and literature, nature and society, music, visual arts, religious education, and civic education, as well as elective subjects related to national tradition and culture. In this context, particularly interesting is the teaching of nature and society within subjects like "Svet oko nas" (World around us) in the first and second grade, and the subject "Priroda i društvo" (Nature and Society) in the third and fourth grade of primary school. These subjects are based on the integration of social and natural science content, whose conceptual framework also encompasses cultural heritage. The challenge of this research lies in the content related to cultural heritage within the first cycle of education, particularly in nature and society e-textbooks.

Given that cultural heritage plays a significant role in the upbringing and education of children and youth, and that media promotion of cultural heritage greatly contributes to their effective utilization, enhancement, and empowerment, with the aim of preserving it from oblivion and making it available to future generations, it was important to explore how and to what extent cultural heritage is taught in the first cycle of education. There may be serious distinctive approaches depending on the subjects related to nature and society, grades, and teaching topics. The research subject is the study of cultural heritage in nature and society e-textbooks within the first cycle of education. What distinguishes each country is its cultural heritage. In the context of ICT, it is important to highlight the most significant specifics of national cultural heritage in nature and society e-textbooks (Sančanin et al., 2022). Based on research results, a comparative analysis of the content about cultural heritage will be conducted, considering different subjects related to nature and society, grades, and teaching topics within the first cycle of education. This analysis will be compared with the results of similar research conducted in national and international journals.

*The research topic* emerged from the broader educational platform of a group of authors (Milenović and Botić, 2023; Vasiljević et al., 2022a; 2022b; Milenović,

2017) dedicated to exploring the multidimensionality and understanding of elements of cultural heritage. The research focus was mainly directed towards the content of textbooks within the first cycle of education, aiming for a comprehensive understanding of cultural heritage. With the formation of the European Union, which represents an entity devoid of political, economic, cultural, and national boundaries, numerous questions regarding the interrelations between European and national identity and cultural heritage have been raised (Vasilijević, 2015). The need to study Serbia's cultural heritage in nature and society e-textbooks is significant, as it represents a national and identity-defining aspect of Serbia, regardless of its aspiration towards European integration. Preserving cultural heritage and maintaining what is national, despite globalization and the need to embrace all things European, is characteristic even for states that were among the first to join the European Union. This can be clearly seen in the examples of Scandinavian countries, especially Sweden, which, despite globalization and European processes and the acceptance of the Bologna Declaration, remained committed to their own national identity, cultural heritage, and national education (Milenović, 2005). The research goal is aimed at identifying the content related to cultural heritage in nature and society e-textbooks the first cycle of education.

### ***Research objectives***

Based on the objective, the research objectives have been defined. They relate to determining the proportion of cultural heritage content in e-textbooks for the subject "Nature and Society" in the first cycle of education: 1) Across topics and units of the "World Around Us" curriculum in the first and second grade; 2) Across topics and units of the "Nature and Society" curriculum in the third and fourth grade. The independent variables of the research are the informative lesson contents and visual materials. The dependent variable of the research is the cultural heritage content.

### ***Research instrument***

The data was collected through research and recorded in an evidence sheet designed specifically for the purposes of this conducted study. The evidence sheet is not standardized and contains categories (rows and columns) where data about the cultural heritage content were entered based on subjects, grades, and topics, as well as informative lesson contents and visual materials in "Nature and Society" e-textbooks. Given these reasons, the research conducted and the description provided makes it comprehensible.

### **The sample and research procedure**

The sample is purposive and consists of 8 “Nature and Society” e-textbooks in the first cycle of education published by the Klett publishing house. These e-textbooks were licensed and approved for use in the 2022/2023 school year, with two e-textbooks selected for each grade. The sample selection is based on two factors. Firstly, educational practice indicates that Klett’s “Nature and Society” e-textbooks are among the most commonly used in schools in Serbia during the 2022/2023 school year. Secondly, these e-textbooks from Klett for each grade are composed of two parts, which, aside from health-related reasons and the need to reduce the burden of carrying heavy books, do not differ significantly in terms of content from e-textbooks of other publishing houses. The following e-textbooks were analyzed:

1. Gavrić, Z. & Milovanović, D. (2019). *“Maša i Raša – Svet oko nas” – udžbenik za prvi razred osnovne škole (1 i 2 deo) [“Masha and Rasha – World Around Us,” – e-textbook for the first grade of primary school (1st and 2nd part)]*. Belgrad: Klett.
2. Gavrić, Z. & Milovanović, D. (2021). *“Svet oko nas” – udžbenik za drugi razred osnovne škole (1 i 2 deo) [“World Around Us” – e-textbook for the second grade of primary school (1st and 2nd part)]*. Belgrad: Klett.
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### **Data analysis**

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics in the statistical package IBM SPSS 24.0. Since all variable categories had established frequency values, mostly of smaller magnitudes, percentages were not calculated. The research results are presented in tables.

## 5. Results and discussion

The data regarding the share of content about cultural heritage in the Nature and Society course during the first cycle of education, categorized by subjects and grades (teaching “World around us” and “Nature and society”), as well as by teaching topics and grades, based on the analysis of informative lesson content and visual content, are presented according to the calculated frequency data.

**Table 1.** Content about cultural heritage in the e-textbooks within the “Svet oko nas” subject

Grade	Number of topics	Number of elements and units of elements		Titles of teaching topics
		Number of elements	Number of units	
First grade	01	01	04	1. <i>Me and others</i>
Second grade	02	02	14	1. <i>Me and others</i> 2. <i>Culture of living</i>

The analysis of the e-textbook “Masha and Rasha – World around Us, 1 and 2” for the first grade of elementary school reveals that all content is structured within three instructional themes: 1) Me and Others; 2) Health and Safety; and 3) Spatial Orientation. According to the data presented in Table 1, it is evident that content about cultural heritage (four units) is only present within the first instructional theme titled “Me and Others.” In the e-textbook “World around Us, 2” for the second grade of elementary school, all content is structured within six instructional themes: 1) Me and Others; 2) Culture of Living; 3) Movement in Space and Time; 4) Inanimate Nature; 5) Living Nature; and 6) Humans as Creators. According to the data from the same table, content about cultural heritage in the second grade (total of 16 units) is represented within two instructional themes: Me and Others and Culture of Living.

By conducting a more detailed analysis of the content related to cultural heritage within the specified instructional themes, it can be observed that in the e-textbook “World around Us, 1” for the first grade of elementary school (Gavrić and Milovanović, 2019), content about the essence of human beings in relation to others of different faiths is only implicitly mentioned within texts about family patron saint celebrations (slava), Christmas, Eid al-Fitr, and Easter (both Catholic and Orthodox). What can be noticed in these implicit parts of the texts is the absence of explicit definitions for these terms (family patron saint celebration,



Christmas, Eid al-Fitr, and Easter). There is no possibility for first-grade students to identify themselves as Orthodox, Muslims, or Catholics based on these texts. This approach contradicts one of the fundamental tasks of schools and education, which is "...to form a system of basic concepts as a basis for further learning" (Vasilijević et al., 2022b: 275). In the e-textbook "World around Us, 2" for the second grade of elementary school, content about elements of cultural heritage is mentioned within the instructional theme "Me and Others," specifically about Saint Sava and the family patron saint celebration (slava), and within the instructional theme "Culture of Living," encompassing 14 units about cultural heritage. Among these, eight photographs are included: the state flag of Serbia, Small Coat of Arms of Serbia, Large Coat of Arms of Serbia, Golubac Fortress, Ethno-Village Sirogojno (accompanied by text), Spasovdan celebration in Belgrade, Grape Harvest Days in Vršac, and Vuk's Assembly in Tršić. Additionally, there are three defined terms: coat of arms, anthem, and flag of the Republic of Serbia, as well as three undefined terms: holiday, fair, and assembly. However, these elements are insufficient for understanding the concept of cultural heritage and its significance in society.

Regardless of the limited extent of content about cultural heritage in the first and second grade of elementary school, this approach to the "World around Us" curriculum, and thus the results of this conducted research, are understandable. This is because the initial grades of elementary school are associated with the period of adapting younger students to the conditions of living and learning in primary school, as they transition from preschool education. This is also indicated by research results from around the world published in leading journals. In a recent study conducted in Pristina, with a sample of "12 first-grade elementary school teachers and 9 parents of first-grade students" (Sylaj & Hajrullahu Ramabaja, 2022: 63), it was determined that the adaptation of first-grade students during the transition from preschool education "is not sufficiently effective due to insufficient teacher training [...]" but that this deficiency is partially mitigated by the established good collaboration between teachers and students' parents (Sylaj & Hajrullahu Ramabaja, 2022: 72-73). It is evident that the first grade represents a period of adaptation for students to new conditions of living and learning in elementary school. This suggests the conclusion that the learning of complex instructional content, such as explicit and implicit elements of cultural heritage, is not favored during this phase.

Similar results related to the issue of teaching in the early grades of elementary school have been found in some other research studies. These studies have pointed out problems such as insufficient alignment of instructional content (specifically, in the case of mathematics and other subjects) with the age of students in the first and second grade of elementary school (Bal & Gezgin, 2022). There are

also issues related to the learning of content and the traditions and culture of a country that is not the students' home country (Ayten & Ates, 2021), as well as other challenges in the interrelation between psychophysiological growth and development and the content taught to first and second-grade students. This particularly applies to complex and often abstract content in the curriculum for the first and second grade of elementary school (Gago Galvagano et al., 2021; Bishop, 2020).

There are also research studies that, despite the challenges faced by students in the first and second grade of elementary school, emphasize the importance of media promotion of content taught in younger grades, which is directly or indirectly related to cultural heritage. In one of these studies, the significance of promoting learning content through YouTube is highlighted as a form of "informal children's learning" (Caldeiro-Pedreira et al., 2022: 32). The authors of the study present numerous illustrations as examples of how learning can occur in the early grades of elementary school and suggest other YouTube video clips whose content can contribute to the effectiveness of children's learning (Caldeiro-Pedreira et al., 2022: 37). In addition to the results of this research, which indicate the need for pedagogical training for teachers, as well as younger students and their parents, in using e-textbooks, there are also findings from other studies that highlight the potential of media and media promotion to significantly contribute to the effectiveness of teaching and learning. This extends to the training aimed at acquiring and enhancing digital competencies of teachers, younger students, and their parents for using e-textbooks in education and learning (Bonnes et al., 2020).

**Table 2.** Contents about cultural heritage in the "Nature and Society" e-textbooks

Grade	Number of topics	Number of elements and units of elements		Titles of teaching topics
		Number of elements	Number of units	
Third grade	02	09	24	1. <i>Culture of living</i> 2. <i>Past</i>
Fourth grade	03	27	111	1. <i>Natural and Social Characteristics of Serbia</i> 2. <i>Human - Natural and Social Being</i> 3. <i>Serbia's Past</i>

According to the data presented in Table 2, it can be seen that the content related to cultural heritage in the "Nature and Society" e-textbooks for the third and fourth grade of elementary school is significantly more represented compared to the representation of cultural heritage content in the e-textbooks of the

subject "World Around Us" for the first and second grade of elementary school. The higher representation is not only reflected in the number of teaching topics (two teaching topics in the textbook for the third grade and three teaching topics in the e-textbook for the fourth grade), but also in terms of the number of elements of teaching content related to cultural heritage (nine in the third-grade textbook and 27 in the fourth-grade textbook) and the number of units of content elements (24 in the third-grade textbook and 111 in the fourth-grade textbook). In the textbook for the third grade, the content related to nature and society is studied within nine teaching topics. These are: 1) Relief and Waters of the Area; 2) Orientation in Space and Time; 3) Culture of Living; 4) Past; 5) Inanimate Nature; 6) Living Nature; 7) Life Communities; 8) Movement; and 9) Materials. The content related to cultural heritage is covered within two teaching topics: Culture of Living and Past. In the the fourth grade textbook, the content related to nature and society is studied within four teaching topics. These are: 1) Natural and Social Characteristics of Serbia; 2) Human - Natural and Social Being; 3) Serbia's Past; and 4) Materials.

In the "Nature and Society" e-textbook for the third grade of elementary school, the content related to cultural heritage is studied within two teaching topics: Culture of Living and Past. Within the teaching topic of Culture of Living, the content related to cultural heritage is mentioned during the study of traditional Serbian costumes. Photographs of costumes from the Šumadija region and the Vlach ethnic group are presented. The Vlachs are an ethnic group mainly settled in Serbia, particularly in the Homolje region, partially in Vojvodina, and in areas around Kladovo, Negotin, Bor, Boljevac, and Zaječar in border regions adjacent to Romania and Bulgaria (Milenovic, 2014; Миленовић, 2012). Cultural heritage content is also mentioned in the context of learning about music, where a photograph of the Serbian circle dance (Kolo) is presented. Additionally, there are references to tableware with a photograph of old Serbian tableware, as well as documents, featuring photographs of the Dušan's Code and the Miroslav Gospel.

The second teaching topic in which elements of cultural heritage are presented is "Past." These elements are featured in sections related to artistic works of Serbia, where the painting of the Battle of Kosovo is shown, and fortresses are mentioned, including a brief description of Kalemegdan Fortress. In the section of the e-textbook that discusses significant historical figures of Serbia, photographs of Filip Višnjić and Vuk Karadžić are displayed, along with photographs accompanied by descriptive text of renowned personalities: Stefan Nemanja, Rastko Nemanjić, Dositej Obradović, Vuk Karadžić, Jovan Jovanović Zmaj, Mihajlo Pupin, Nikola Tesla, Milutin Milanković, Desanka Maksimović, and Stevan Mokranjac. In the section of the e-textbook describing traditional Serbian cuisine, photographs

of national dishes of Serbia are shown: sarma (cabbage rolls), homemade smoked bacon, Serbian cake, and roasted peppers.

Significantly more extensive content in terms of the number of teaching topics, elements of cultural heritage, and the number of units of these elements, compared to the textbooks for previous grades in the "Nature and Society" subject during the first cycle of education, is present in the e-textbook for the fourth grade of elementary school. Within the teaching topic "Natural and Social Characteristics of Serbia," some of the most notable buildings are presented, and their photographs are shown: the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, the National Theater in Belgrade, and the University of Belgrade. In the section related to Coats of Arms, alongside the photograph of the Coat of Arms of Serbia, photographs of the Coat of Arms of the City of Belgrade, the Great Coat of Arms of Serbia, and the Small Coat of Arms of Serbia are shown. A part of this teaching topic, which concerns the most significant fortresses of Serbia, displays photographs of the fortresses of Kalemegdan and Golubac. Photographs of the State Flag of the Republic of Serbia and the National Flag of the Republic of Serbia are also featured. The State Anthem of Serbia – "Bože pravde" – and its text are covered within this topic. Photographs of paper banknotes of 20, 50, and 100 dinars, as well as coinage of 1 and 2 dinars, are shown. Regarding the description of cultural heritage elements related to historical monuments, a photograph of the monument to Prince Mihailo is presented. Photographs of the National Museum in Belgrade, the Old (Ethno) Village – Sirogojno, and the monasteries Hopovo and Rača are also included. The least space dedicated to cultural heritage is within the teaching topic "Human - Natural and Social Being." In this section, only the photograph of the Hilandar Monastery and an artistic painting of the fresco "White Angel" are shown.

The most extensive space devoted to cultural heritage, which is explicitly defined in some parts, is found in the teaching topic related to the "Past of Serbia." Within the study of specific historical events and personalities, only photographs are presented when describing elements of cultural heritage related to: historical coats of arms – the Coat of Arms of the Nemanjić Dynasty; fortresses - Smederevo Fortress; archaeological sites – Maglič, Gamzigrad, and Lepenski Vir; historical currency – King Uroš's currency; artistic frescoes - Cyril and Methodius, Emperor Dušan, Emperor Dušan's Arrival in Dubrovnik, Serbian Migration, Council in Orašac, Battle at Mišar, Hajduk Veljko on a Cannon, Takovo Uprising, Nemanjić Dynasty's Family Tree, Saint Sava, King Radoslav, King Vladislav, White Angel, King Dragutin, King Milutin, Stefan Dečanski, Stefan Uroš I, Stefan Uroš V, Warriors, Queen Simonida, Lazar Hrebeljanović, Princess Milica, and Despot Stefan Lazarević; churches: Peter's Church in Novi Pazar, Church of Our Lady of Ljeviš in Prizren, and St. Sava Temple in Belgrade, as well as the Saborna Church in Belgrade and the

Church of St. George on Oplenac; settlements - Ethno Village Mokra Gora (also known as Drvengrad); documents – Miroslav Gospel, Dušan's Code, and Sretnje Constitution; historical monuments: Gazimestan, Execution of the Princes in Valjevo, Karadjordje, Prince Mihailo, Jovan Jovanović Zmaj, Unbowed Hero on Avala, Belgrade Victor on Kalemegdan, Executed School Children in Kragujevac, Memorial Cemetery to the Liberators of Belgrade, Kadinjača, Kosmaj, and Bubanj in Niš; objects - stool and table; museums - Vuk Karadžić Museum in Belgrade and Dositej Obradović Museum in Belgrade; famous buildings: Stari Dvor, Novi Dvor, Belgrade Main Railway Station, Government Building of the Republic of Serbia, National Assembly Building, and Belgrade Main Post Office; and famous personalities - Milunka Savić, Stefan Nemanja, Stefan the First-Crowned, Đorđe Petrović, Dositej Obradović, Vuk Karadžić, Alexander Karađorđević, Miloš Obrenović, Mihailo Obrenović, Milan Obrenović, Ivo Andrić, Miloš Crnjanski, Milutin Milanković, Nikola Tesla, Milana Barili, Josip Broz Tito, and Draža Mihailović. Within this teaching topic, alongside photographs, there is also explicit descriptive text about monasteries - Studenica, Đurđevi Stupovi, Žiča, Hilandar, Mileševa, Sopoćani, Gračanica, Visoki Dečani, Peć Patriarchate, Ravnača, and Manasija. Photographs with accompanying text that explicitly describes famous personalities - Milunka Savić, Stefan Nemanja, Stefan the First-Crowned, Đorđe Petrović, and Dositej Obradović - are also provided.

Unlike the content about cultural heritage in the "World Around Us" subject in the first and second grade of primary school, the content about cultural heritage within the "Nature and Society" course in the third and fourth grade, especially in the fourth grade, is mainly explicit and not solely based on visual content. Depending on the assessment of students' capabilities, some content about cultural heritage is described and defined. In this way, students acquire more in-depth knowledge about cultural heritage, understand its significance for the people, and recognize its values, contributing to the development of national identity. With this approach of explicit determination of cultural heritage content, the expected function of the nature and society e-textbook is fulfilled, as it "must provide the opportunity to understand the network of concepts and establish a chronological connection with other concepts covered in the textbook" (Vasiljević et al., 2022b: 287). In such circumstances, students become curious, creative, innovative, and heuristic in approaching the learning of cultural heritage content, exploring various databases and applications. Students are also given the opportunity to use educational software tailored to their needs and abilities, "which represents a special program designed for specific subjects" (Milenović et al., 2020b: 99).

It is evident that educational software containing content about cultural heritage contributes to creativity, innovation, and encourages students toward

ds creative and exploratory work. However, despite these benefits, results from certain studies have shown that “educational software produces good results in teaching... they are still insufficiently used in education in Serbia” (Milenović et al., 2020b: 104). Many digitized databases containing content about cultural heritage are not adequately utilized in school education and student learning. Therefore, it is not possible to speak of an innovative, heuristic, and holistic approach to the development, upbringing, and learning of younger students. One study has determined that an innovative approach (examined in the context of physical education) “the prior knowledge of 11-year-old students has significance in further learning... teachers have a significant impact since the success varies among schools” (Milenović et al., 2021: 945). The lack of optimal knowledge about cultural heritage in the younger grades of primary school may have repercussions on the proper and timely formation of a sense of national belonging for students, which can further impact the development of national identity in later years. This conclusion aligns with the findings from research on innovative teaching approaches, such as the one analyzed in the context of physical education.

The subject “Nature and Society” taught in the third and particularly fourth grade of primary school, allows students to become more closely acquainted with and gain a deeper understanding of content related to cultural heritage. Therefore, it is necessary to direct them towards using digitized and virtual content about cultural heritage. This allows students to not only better comprehend and understand the content but also virtually experience it. This approach ensures more effective learning and achievements in the “Nature and Society” subject. To overcome the mentioned challenges and achieve better results by the end of the “second semester, it is necessary for students to practice (research in other subjects)...” (Milenović et al., 2021: 948). All of these aspects can significantly contribute to the promotion of educational content about cultural heritage in “Nature and Society” e-textbooks and other subjects. The structure of e-textbooks is also very important, as they should include specific tools for more efficient utilization of the content. Furthermore, access to other databases containing information about cultural heritage, tailored to the complexity and age-appropriateness of first-cycle education, can enhance learning outcomes.

## Conclusion

The research findings presented in the form of conclusions have shown that content related to cultural heritage is inadequately represented in the “World

around us" e-textbooks for the first and second grade, as well as in "Nature and society" e-textbooks for the third and fourth grade of primary school. Through content analysis, it has been concluded that as students progress to higher grades, the volume of content that implicitly defines aspects of cultural heritage increases. The least amount of content related to cultural heritage is identified in the first grade within the topic "Me and Others," in the second grade across two topics: "Me and Others" and "Culture of Living," in the third grade within two topics: "Culture of Living" and "Past," and in the fourth grade across three topics: "Natural and Social Characteristics of Serbia," "Human as a Natural and Social Being," and "Serbia's Past." Apart from brief sentences, photographs, pictures, and illustrations that mostly carry implicit character, only a few concepts explicitly define content related to cultural heritage in the second and third grades. However, these concepts are primarily explicitly defined in the fourth grade of primary school. Despite taking into account the characteristics of younger students and their capabilities within the first cycle of education when selecting educational content for "Nature and Society," it is concluded that content related to cultural heritage in these textbooks is insufficiently represented and does not provide students with enough material to enhance their knowledge about cultural heritage. An inconsistency is also noticed between the educational content about cultural heritage in the "Nature and Society" e-textbooks in the first cycle of education and the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage Elements of Serbia accepted by UNESCO as part of the world cultural heritage.

Based on the research results, it is important to highlight certain pedagogical implications that are significant for enhancing the quality of learning for students in the first cycle of education about cultural heritage. In addition to changing the educational content within the "Nature and Society" subject, which implies introducing additional content about cultural heritage, while staying within the existing scope of content and replacing materials that are either repetitive or unnecessary, attention is drawn to the need for aligning the "Nature and Society" subject with other scientific and educational domains. This especially applies to language and literature instruction, religious education, civic education, music education, visual arts, and elective subjects within which content about national traditions and culture is implemented. A significant contribution should come from extracurricular activities such as field trips and relevant visits, with their program implementation including content related to cultural heritage. Media, teacher-parent partnerships based on a collaborative relationship, are also expected to contribute. All of this should help students in the first cycle of education, in addition to school-based learning, to gain knowledge about cultural heritage in various practical situations within their families and the broader community. In order to achieve this, teachers

are expected to direct both classroom and extracurricular activities towards implementing a project-based approach to teaching and learning. The culminating phase of project-based teaching is the promotion of realized activities, in which students are the direct implementers. Thus, knowledge about cultural heritage gained in this way is more enduring and foundational, extending beyond the classroom and serving students in their further learning and in solving everyday life problems.

### **Acknowledgements**

This paper was written as part of science project which have been funded by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of Republic of Serbia. 1) *Material and spiritual culture of Kosovo and Metohija*, ID 178028.

### **Conflict of interests**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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