

Designing a graphical user interface for digital scholarly edition of Freising Manuscripts

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Introduction

The Freising manuscripts (Brižinski spomeniki) are the first recorded occurrence of the Slovenian language, written closely before the year 1000. The Institute Of Slovenian Literature and Literary Sciences of the Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts (ZRC SAZU) has published in 2007 a digital scholarly edition following the TEI XML guidelines. It can be found on the eZISS (Digital critical editions of Slovenian literature) project website (<http://nl.ijs.si/e-zrc>).

The static HTML presentation serves a basic purpose to showcase the information, different transcriptions, facsimile images, sound recordings, and scholarly commentaries. However, the current website of the Freising manuscripts (and similarly the whole eZISS project) is visually outdated and very difficult to navigate. To address this issue, we have been exploring new, modern ways of showing the complex information of a digital scholarly edition on the Internet and on different screen devices. The prototype of our solution is available at <http://eziss.azurewebsites.net/#/>.

Landing page

There are eight digital scholarly editions on the eZISS website:

- Freising Manuscripts
- Škofja Loka Passion Play
- Oaths: Municipal
- Oaths: Borough & Professional
- Zois: Correspondence
- Slomšek: Three Sermons
- Izidor Cankar: From The Road
- Podbevšek: Collected Poems

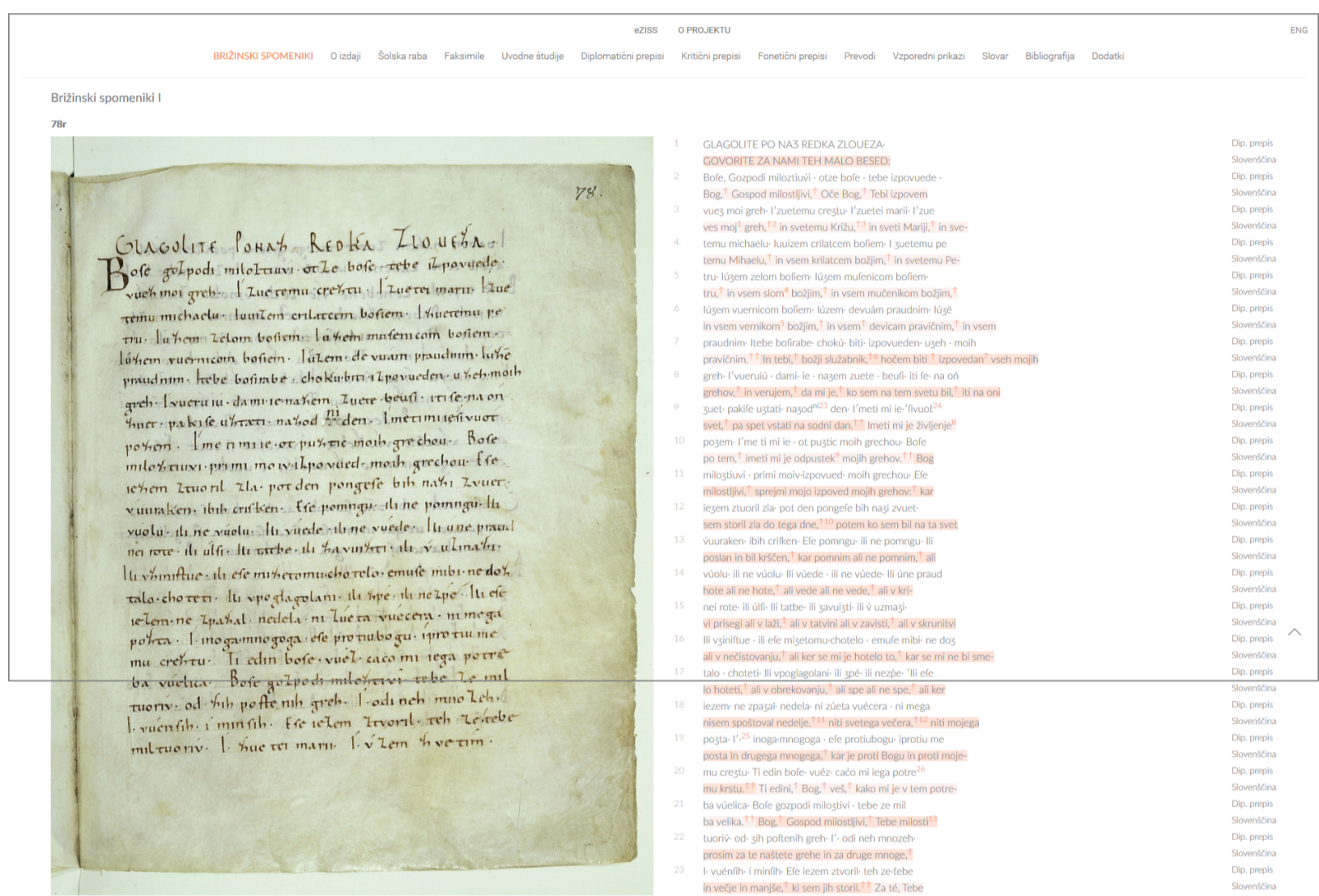
We wanted the user to immediately know what the eZISS website has to offer, therefore we designed a landing page where we put titles of the editions in a vertical menu and added a distinctive colour to each of them for an easier site navigation.



Freising Manuscripts's Home Page

We made a working prototype for a redesigned webpage of the digital scholarly edition of Freising Manuscripts, using modern web technologies and following the principles of graphic and interface design.

As we enter the edition of Freising Manuscripts, we are greeted with a facsimile image which is accompanied by a corresponding diplomatic transcription, the translation into the modern Slovenian language and the audio recording of the reading of the manuscript in reconstructed old Slovenian language as it was spoken in the time when the manuscripts were created. For each line of the manuscript the user can compare its form on the facsimile image with its exact transcription, furthermore, the user can compare the written (and spoken) words of the old language with their meaning that is found in the translation into modern language. Also the sentences are distinctively marked by colour coding. If the user wants to see the facsimile image more in detail and compare it with the transcriptions line by line, the act of mousing over zooms into the spot where the cursor is positioned and allows the user to look at the enlarged facsimile image.



Navigation

A typical problem in modern web design is giving the user feedback about his/her current location on the website and on the effects of his/her actions. With such a large amount of data, it was very important that we tackled this problem in a systematic manner. We have introduced several menus and highlights that let the user know exactly where he/she is located without sacrificing any of the usability of the site.

We introduced a static menu at the top of the site which is the same in all editions and is always accompanying the user as he/she navigates the site. It includes two links: link "eZISS" which takes the user back to the landing page and link "About the project" which takes him/her to another page where he/she can find important information about the eZISS project. Alongside that we added another horizontal menu beneath the static one which contains specific subcategories of particular editions. The page where the user is located is highlighted with the colour on the main menu, giving further indication of what the user is viewing. Freising manuscripts have the following menu structure:

- About the edition
- School use
- Facsimile (gallery)
- Introductory studies
- Diplomatic transcriptions
- Critical transcriptions
- Phonetic transcriptions
- Translations
- Parallel views
- Glossary
- Bibliography
- Appendices

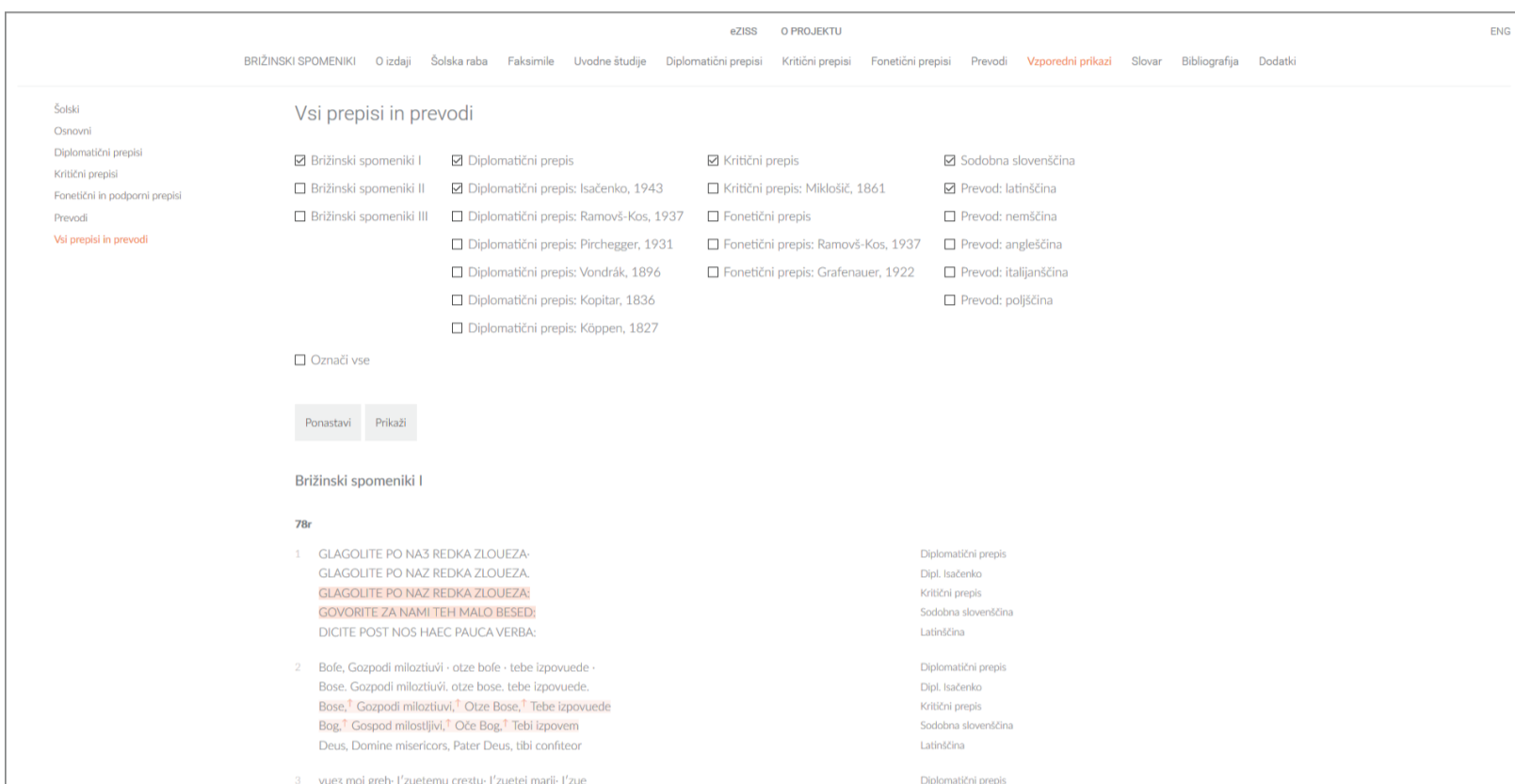
As an example of further navigation complexity, we are showcasing the subpage at "Diplomatic transcriptions" and the left sub menu "Principles of diplomatic transcriptions". Three types of menus are visible here. The main menu we discussed before – the one at the top which is always visible. Left side menu, which indicates further subpages on the topic we are currently viewing, and the right side menu which indicates where on the current page we are located.



Parallel views

With so many transcriptions and different translations it can become very difficult to display all the information in a clear and concise way. To solve this problem we have decided to import all of the (different transcriptions and translations) into an SQL database. This allows us to have a large amount of checkboxes that the user can dynamically select to showcase only the data of interest. By selecting the checkboxes, the user is then shown each of the selected transcripts or translations in a column, where they can then be easily compared. We have decided to opt for SQL due to its ability to showcase the information in a more dynamic way. If we decided to use the original XML, we wouldn't be able to leave the user with so much choice.

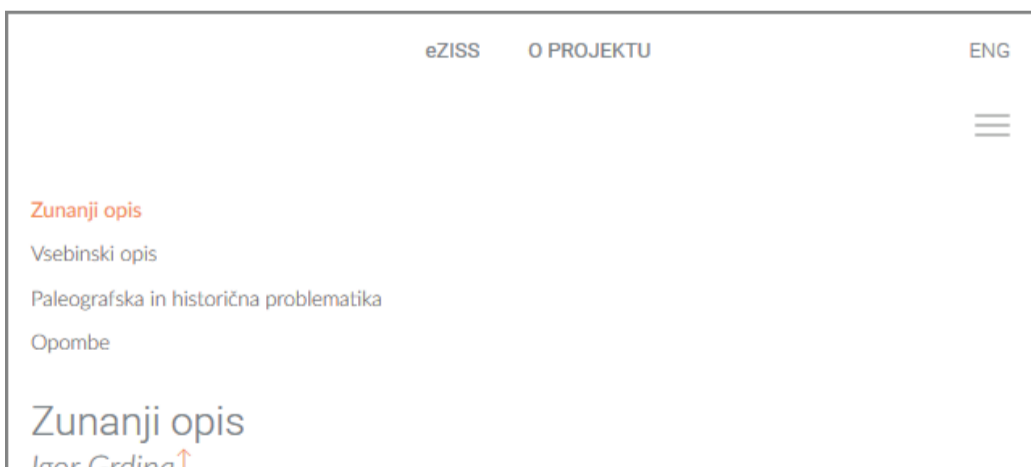
To help the user out, we have decided to create a submenu on the left which contains a few most useful presets of parallel views. These presets serve as shortcuts to specific selections without overwhelming the user with checkboxes.



Mobile view

One of the most important things to be aware of when designing today's web pages is that there is a large amount of devices that users use to access contents on the internet. These include a variety of mobile devices as well as different stationary computers. They differ in usability and their screen size, so it is very important to account for all of the different possibilities in order to give the users the optimal experience on accessing the content they are looking for.

Our solution addresses this problem in a number of ways. The main menu changes its title based on what size of the screen you are viewing it. If it is viewed on a large screen, the title sits on the left, but if it is viewed on a small screen, the title is located at the top of the menu. The pages of different editions have their main menu changed with the retractable menu that is typically used by mobile devices. This menu is then displayed vertically instead of horizontally to provide a greater surface area for the user to click on. Images and components are then scaled down and at a certain point flip into vertical view instead of horizontal one, since in that way it is easier for the mobile user to navigate through different pages.



Conclusion

§ 7 Latinski kodeks Bavarske državne knjižnice v Münchnu (Cm 6426), v katerega so uvezane BS, obsega 169 danes oštevilčenih pergamentnih folijev, kar pomeni 338 strani. Milko Kos¹, ki je doslej najprijatnejši preučil njegovo zgradbo, daje o njegovi sestavi tole poročilo: fol. 1: ovojni list zase; fol. 2-25: trije kvaterniji; fol. 26: posebej uvezan list; fol. 27-34: en kvaternij; fol. 35-40: en ternij; fol. 41-47: en kvaternij; od katerega manjka med folijema 47 in 48 in list; fol. 48 in 49: dva posamezna lista; fol. 50-57: en kvaternij; fol. 58-64: en kvaternij, od katerega je odrezana skoraj polovica fol. 64 in za tem sledi folij; fol. 65-72: en kvaternij; fol. 73-79: en kvaternij, od katerega manjka med folijema 78 in 79 in list; fol. 80-86: en kvaternij, od katerega manjka en list med folijema 84 in 85 (a besedilo ni pomanjkljivo); fol. 87-94: en kvaternij; fol. 95-101: en kvaternij, od katerega je izrezan med folijema 96 in 97 en list (a tekst je celoten); fol.

All in all, combining modern design and web principles has allowed us to construct a user and mobile-devices friendly prototype which we hope will serve as a good example of showcasing the contents of a digital scholarly edition. We hope that our prototype will serve also as an inspiration to all of those struggling with a similar problem.