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## **White stork Online Archive: Experience from online workspace**

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#### **ABSTRACT**

A short paper describes experience from remote collaboration of three secondary schools from three European countries participating in Europe At School 2001 competition. Teams from Spain, Romania and Croatia, were joined for 6 months into Project Group to learn more, explore and publish conclusions about Ecology theme "White Stork in Europe". One of the main requests in this competition is to co-operate, communicate and publish online, e.g. via Internet. Joining of school teams together and remote collaboration were realized in virtual classroom named "White Stork Online Archive" located at Internet server of School "M.A.Reljkovic", Slavonski Brod. Online workspace platform, developed by SB OnLine Web Team, helped us in communication and learning about the theme, building online database with reference papers, documents, links, multimedia clips and easy publishing of students' works. An important achievement in our project was publishing articles in EkoMAR e-zine on weekly and daily basis using automated e-zine Composer tools located at server. Authors of zine articles were students of virtual classroom spread in three countries and their Team Leaders were Editors.

Our conclusions about online workspace usage are:

- easy communication and relaxed time schedule
- student can participate in learning resources creation
- automated system limits personal creativity but enables focusing to content and task

#### **Introduction**

Internet offers great potential for developing new approaches used in classic education. School M.A.Reljkovic, Slavonski Brod, Croatia was between first schools from local area connected to the net. Since 1996 the first workshops about Internet, have been held in our school, resulting web pages published by our students have become visible. As partners of Slavonski Brod online community we participated in their experiments with practical usage of Internet. This work describes one of this experiments in which was realized remote collaboration of three secondary schools from three countries participating in Europe At School 2000/2001 competition.

School Teams from School M.A.Reljkovic, Slavonski Brod, Croatia, GSG Moasil, Braila, Romania, and I.E.S.J-Sera, Palma de Mallorca, Spain were joined for 6 months into Project Group to learn more, explore and publish conclusions about Ecology theme "White Stork in Europe". One of the main requests in this competition is to co-operate, communicate and publish via Internet. When we met some people from SB Online Team discussing how to realize this project they say "use our *Workspace* and make virtual classroom, you will be the first, maybe it works, we need someone to try it.". We were affraid and confused. How to use something you have not idea what it is and do we have enough equipment in school for that,

what we need, how to educate students in three countries to work with it? What does this mean “maybe it works” (?), we have program and deadlines. But, after a few weeks, when we saw it in action, all became clear – that virtual *something* is really useful and not too complicated.

## WHAT WERE PROJECT TASKS?

Researching and learning about Ciconia Ciconia (White Stork) population in Europe:

- learning about the white stork population in Europe
- exploring the local stork population in three countries
- creating a knowledge base: a collection of papers, references, photographs, links
- interviews with local experts and other people (eyewitnesses)
- creation of essays on White Stork, Stork in Art, Heraldic, History, etc.
- publishing essays and stories about local tradition and beliefs about Stork
- local actions: work with children - collection of drawings, stories, songs...
- publishing articles in a multilingual e-zine
- make a final conclusion regarding the subject

## HOW DID WE COMPLETE OUR TASKS?

Virtual workspace collaboration platform (online community, online classroom) called White Stork Online Archive (WSOA) was used at skola-mar.avalon.hr to communicate, learn and publish. WSOA is kind of virtual or online classroom, or electronic workshop based on platform for collaboration over Internet named *Workspace* developed in Slavonski Brod. All operations inside the WSOA are simplified and many of them automatized by online tools. Main parts of the workspace are: **online databases** (archives of documents, images and multimedia clips), **web directory** (database with internet addresses), **asynchronous communication** (e-mail lists, personal e-mail, WWW Board, HotNews), **e-zine EkoMAR** and finally, **online tools** (automatized publishing in online archives, e-zine production in online collaboration tool zine Composer and some management tools) and **help section**.

Online archives of documents, images, multimedia clips, links, communication (hotnews, www board, mail lists) and finally - e-zine "EkoMAR" were the most important segments used in our project. All information and documents published in WSOA databases are visible in public and accessible from Main Page. Publishing of documents, images, clips and links in online workspace databases was done with automated tools at Internet server side (online tools), so users located in three countries could use simple Internet workstation equipped with any Internet browser only. Process of preparation and publishing of e-zine EkoMAR was automatized by e-zine Composer online tools which used templates for zine pages and simple forms to upload images and write text of article.

Team Leader can publish in WSA databases tasks, papers, and other, moderates communication, publishing and discussion and finally has role of Editor in EkoMAR zine. Inside all parts of WSA archives, Team Member can upload own documents, images, clips and links, prepare articles for e-zine using online tools. Each team member adds own works inside workspace and has active role in building of workspace's knowledge base.

HotNews, several e-mail lists (Team Leaders List and Team Members List), WWW Board were communication tools inside the Project Group.

At the start, tasks and papers needed for the young researchers (students) were published in online archives. Students' works, text, images and multimedia clips were locally produced and immediately stored in WSA online databases. By each new document published in online archives, our mini knowledge multimedial data base has grown up each day during the few months. Internet resources, having content concerning our theme – Ciconia Ciconia in Europe, were detected using search engines or in some other way, visited by members of the school teams, and after the evaluation, these addresses and a short comment were recorded in our online directory database. This way all members of three school teams were using the same online information resources enabling them to learn more.

After collecting of materials and learning, numerous articles about Stork were published in a multilingual e-zine, in English, Croatian, Spanish and Romanian language. Some local activities, interviews, works with children and similar were documented in both WSA and EkoMAR zine as zine article, text document or even as a short movie or audio clip.

## **WHAT ARE THE RESULTS OF OUR WORK?**

### **1. multilingual e-zine EkoMAR, issue 2001**

e-zine EkoMAR for ecology, arts and culture (started by School M.A.R, Croatia in yr.1998) was focused this year to the Ecology & White Stork in Europe as multilingual e-zine in which students from three schools prepared and published their articles. E-zine was edited by three editors (Team Leaders from Croatia, Romania and Spain). Preparation and publishing of EkoMAR zine was done through online tool zine Composer which enables Editors and numerous Authors to do their job remotely over Internet.

### **2. New online resources about the White Stork:**

Our Online Archive contains electronic documents about project, papers and students works, images, audio & video clips. Internet Links, online directory with addresses of Internet resources on Nature & Ecology were built. Teams from three schools created a section called Ciconia Ciconia in Links, together with links to general ecology themes. Archive and Links could be useful for all others interested in theme.

### **3. Developing experience in the online collaboration system**

We have learned some completely new things: what it is and how to use virtual workspace for remote collaboration. We now have experience before how to work together, in online community, trying to overcome the dislocation in space and time problems plus language and culture barrier.

## Conclusion

This type of simple virtual workspace collaboration platform offers easy communication and relaxed time schedule solving space and time dislocation problems, student can participate in learning resources creation what is totally new and modern principle, automated zine publishing system limits personal creativity but enables fast and simple zine producing. It was space of surprises for us, it was interesting and it was efficient – we finished our tasks with success. We believe in staying in contact with friends from other countries who were joined in this project. Who knows, maybe friendship started in virtual workspace will last and be realized in real world in the future.

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Supporting Collaborative Information Sharing with the World Wide Web: The BSCW Shared Workspace System

## BIOGRAPHY

Vlado Prskalo (1955) graduated and postgraduated at Faculty of Physics in Zagreb, with special interest in contemporary Quant Theory. He was a teacher of physics in Secondary School "MAR" during 20 years, and became a headmaster of that school in 1990. Exploring new areas, supporting new technologies he recognized in Internet great potential for education. Thanks to him, School "MAR" was between the first schools from local area connected to the net. He is one of three founder of SB OnLine community. Since 1996 first workshops about Internet have been held in school, and several web pages made by students have been visible. He is great promotor of integration of the school in European projects.