



Tourism and Libraries: Multiple Case Studies

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Received: August 28, 2024

Revised: January 29, 2025

Accepted: February 27, 2025

Published: April 5, 2025

Keywords:

Libraries;
Tourism;
Case studies;
Literary tourism



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Abstract: *Thirty years ago, libraries - up to then undiscussed guardians of knowledge - around the world were facing problems, because their vital roles were being undermined. These roles, which include educating the population and informing the public, have been replaced by television, the Internet, and other tools. To fight for their survival and sustainability, libraries tried to determine what other role they could play. New initiatives have been launched to save libraries. In recent times, the concept of libraries has undergone a remarkable transformation. A wave of innovative, state-of-the-art library facilities has emerged across the globe, challenging traditional notions of what a library should be. These modern institutions are far from the quiet, book-filled spaces of yesteryear. Instead, they have evolved into dynamic hubs of activity, designed to captivate both local and international visitors. They have rooftop gardens, public parks, verandas, play areas, teen centres, cinemas, arcades, art galleries, restaurants, and more. In addition, libraries today are also becoming tourist attractions around the world, so their role is being transformed.*

The goal of this paper is to present case studies of libraries in tourism providing a discussion based on a comparison, of the modern roles of libraries and literary tourism reflecting perspectives of application in Croatia.

1. INTRODUCTION

The transformation of libraries is closely linked to the rise of literary tourism, where travellers visit locations with significant literary connections. Libraries, especially those with historical or architectural significance, have become prime destinations for book lovers and tourists alike. Visitors seek to experience the atmosphere of the places that have inspired great works of literature or served as settings for famous stories. This growing trend highlights the enduring importance of literary heritage and its ability to draw people into the world of books, even in an increasingly digital age.

This paper presents a series of case studies focused on the role of libraries in tourism. It gives an overview of libraries as tourist products and deals with the role of libraries in tourism, libraries as tourism attractions and tourism products, providing thus the basis for the development of cultural tourism and identity.

The first section provides an analysis of the challenges facing modern libraries and reading rooms, examining their evolving functions. The next chapter reviews the concept of libraries as a tourism product, discussing the role of libraries in tourism, their function as attractions and tourism products, and their potential as foundations for the development of cultural tourism and identity. The findings of this paper will contribute to the analysis and development of new tourism products, particularly in enhancing the tourism offerings of the Republic of Croatia.

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2. LITERATURE REVIEW: THE ROLE OF LIBRARIES

Libraries have long been pivotal institutions in social life, evolving to meet changing societal needs. Before modern communication technologies, libraries and reading rooms were central hubs for information sharing, gathering, and socializing (Rudan, 2012). Even hotels incorporated small libraries, providing guests with spaces for relaxation, activities, and social connection (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2009).

As tourism developed, libraries began to expand beyond their traditional roles, increasingly engaging with the tourism sector (Li, 2019). Hotels, often located outside urban centers, established reading rooms to cater to tourists' needs for information and leisure reading (Jelinčić, 2010). While these spaces have largely been repurposed in modern hotels, they once played a significant role in the hospitality offering.

Libraries continue to be essential to community life, contributing to education across all age groups, promoting democratic values, fostering literacy and information literacy, serving as cultural centers, supporting scientific research, and fulfilling various other roles (Lankes, 2011). Their impact often extends beyond their professional boundaries, providing care and support to their communities (Koontz & Gubbin, 2010).

As non-profit organizations, libraries operate with a focus on serving community needs rather than generating profit (Rubin, 2016). Their true value lies in the intangible benefits they provide to society, which are often difficult to quantify or measure in economic terms (Aabø, 2005).

Despite libraries fulfilling crucial needs for their patrons, their broader societal impact, including their potential value to tourism, often goes unrecognized by the general public and various social groups. The example of Croatia showed that the role of libraries in tourism is not recognised, nor sufficiently valorised. The majority of strategic and planning documents (Institute for Tourism, 1992, 2012; Tomljenović et al., 2003; Tomljenović & Boranić Živoder, 2015) for developing tourism or cultural tourism at national and regional scales frequently overlook libraries as potential contributors to the tourism landscape. The existing tourism strategic and developmental plans are mainly oriented towards economic indicators of demand and expenditure, socio-demographic indicators of tourists, different aspects of travel characteristics, length of stay, etc.

In Croatia, this potential has not been sufficiently exploited as the country has potential, for example, the National and University Library (NSK), the Croatian National Library and the Central Library of the University of Zagreb, the largest library in Croatia. Its creation is associated with the founding of the library of the Jesuit College in Zagreb (1607). In 1776, it became part of the newly founded Royal Academy of Sciences. As early as in 1816, a foundation was established for an "academic public library", and the Library obtained the right to free copies of the Budapest University Press publications (Croatian Encyclopaedia, 2022). This is a library that has a valuable cultural and historical heritage and is not promoted at all as a cultural good.

In total 1,781 libraries are evidenced in the Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Croatia (DZS, 2015). There are 89 libraries in 42 towns enumerated in the Library directory (Ministry of Culture, 2016). A significant portion of the catalogued collections, about a quarter, hold provisional protected status as cultural assets. The remaining three-quarters have secured full protection. Notably, religious institutions such as monasteries, dioceses, and various faith communities house the majority of these registered collections, accounting for over 60% of the total.

3. LIBRARIES AS TOURISM PRODUCTS: CASE STUDIES

3.1. The Role of Libraries in Tourism

Cultural identity plays a crucial role in enhancing the appeal of tourism destinations, contributing to a unique visitor experience (Govers & Go, 2004). This identity serves as a magnet for tourists, drawing them to specific locations. Cultural heritage, a key component of this identity, extends beyond physical landmarks to encompass people's traditions, cuisine, attire, music, dance, and both oral and written cultural expressions (Jelinčić, 2010).

Global modernization has led to the deterioration of cultural heritage, prompting increased attention from policymakers, particularly in Europe. These initiatives aim to revitalize cultural heritage as a strategic asset for sustainable development and contemporary lifestyles while engaging stakeholders in its recognition and preservation.

Libraries play a vital role as custodians of literary heritage and cultural identity. They serve as cultural, educational, and informational hubs for their communities, providing access to diverse knowledge and resources (UNESCO, 1994). In the tourism sector, libraries contribute through their informative, educational, and cultural functions, potentially becoming attractions themselves and integral parts of heritage and literary tourism experiences.

Tourism and literature have a complex relationship, but literary tourism has become, without a doubt, a growing niche within cultural tourism (Ferreira et al., 2020; Potočnik Topler et al., 2024). The earliest instances of literary tourism are believed to have originated in the 15th century, linked to the works of Petrarch in southern Europe (Potočnik Topler, 2016). Over the subsequent centuries, literature continued to play a significant role in inspiring and guiding literary tours, with its influence particularly notable among the English upper class in recent centuries (Hendrix, 2009). However, some scholars argue that its origins can be traced back to ancient Rome (Smith, 2012; Potočnik Topler, 2016). This form of cultural travel encompasses a diverse array of experiences, from visiting author-related sites like statues, graves, and residences, to participating in themed tours and events celebrating literary figures and their creations (Potočnik Topler, 2016).

Literary tourists are drawn to locations that have inspired beloved stories or featured prominently in works of fiction. This niche travel sector appeals not only to dedicated literature enthusiasts but also to a broader audience of cultural travelers who appreciate the intersection of knowledge, experience, and emotion in their journeys (Potočnik Topler et al., 2024, p. 32).

Destinations such as the Shakespearean sites in Stratford-upon-Avon (Potočnik Topler, 2020) or Byron's Newstead Abbey (Busby & Shetliffe, 2013) exemplify how literary heritage can serve as a powerful draw for tourists. The appeal of literary tourism lies not only in the connection to the literary past but also in the immersive experience it offers, allowing visitors to step into the worlds of their beloved characters and narratives. Therefore, identifying and assessing a destination's literary heritage, followed by the development of literary maps and heritage-based tourism products, creates distinctive and unparalleled experiences that cannot be duplicated anywhere else in the world (Quinteiro et al., 2020). This trend has significant economic implications, as it contributes to the preservation of cultural heritage and supports local economies through increased tourism revenues. When developing literary tourism products, designers are encouraged to integrate this form of tourism with complementary experiences like active, wine, and culinary tourism. The

goal is to create multifaceted experiences that are not only informative and educational but also interactive, entertaining, and distinctively memorable. By thoughtfully balancing these elements and tailoring them to specific audience segments, literary tourism can become a more engaging and appealing travel option. (Potočnik Topler, 2022).

The role of libraries is outstanding as they have the tradition of gathering and keeping local collections and this is how they shape the cultural identity of a particular area, representing its culture in both the deepest and widest senses. It is possible to agree with the former director of the Croatian National and University Library, according to whom “the National and University Library is a temple and a treasury of the Croatian literary heritage, which best expresses and affirms the Croatian national identity and acknowledges its continuity”.

Libraries serve as vital cultural bridges in tourism, fostering meaningful exchanges between visitors and locals while safeguarding community identity (Tokić & Kranjčević, 2018; Tokić & Tokić, 2017). Many of these institutions are housed in structures of considerable historical and architectural merit, often becoming iconic landmarks in their own right. Even contemporary library buildings are gaining recognition for their innovative designs, potentially joining the ranks of cultural treasures.

A select group of libraries worldwide have garnered attention for their exceptional architecture, as noted by Govers and Go (2004). These range from the modern Central Library in Seattle to the centuries-old Trinity College Library in Dublin. Other standout examples include the futuristic Geisel Library in San Diego, the sleek TU Delft Library in the Netherlands, and the reimagined Bibliotheca Alexandrina in Egypt. The list of architecturally significant libraries continues to grow, with additions like Copenhagen’s striking “Black Diamond” Royal Library and the avant-garde University Library in Aberdeen. These structures underscore the evolving role of libraries as not just repositories of knowledge, but as captivating destinations in themselves, blending cultural significance with architectural innovation.

The transformation of Austria’s Admont Abbey into a library stands as a remarkable example of repurposing historical spaces, resulting in one of the world’s most stunning literary repositories. Croatia has also embraced similar adaptive reuse projects, as evidenced by the conversion of an industrial complex in Labin, recognized as a Cultural Good of Croatia in 2006.

While Croatian law permits the integration of libraries into tourism offerings, national tourism strategies and development plans have largely overlooked these institutions in their research and planning. Some tourism planners even suggest that libraries and archives may not be ideal cultural resources for attracting international visitors, primarily due to their content being presented in the local language.

The project Library of Croatia is worth mentioning as allows users to walk through a “virtual door” to the Croatian libraries. Croatia thus became the first country to facilitate access to an unlimited virtual library through open digital platforms and related applications. This continues to represent a huge potential for libraries in Croatia, but primarily for the tourism offer of the Republic of Croatia in the sense of exploitation of this potential.

Libraries have emerged as compelling destinations for tourists, offering a unique blend of cultural and historical significance. The Library of Alexandria in Egypt stands as a prime example of this

trend, playing a pivotal role in the country's cultural tourism landscape (Library of Alexandria Annual Report, 2012). Its appeal stems from various factors, including its striking architecture, rare collections, and cultural importance, as well as a range of additional amenities for visitors. The Library of Alexandria's annual reports highlight a diverse array of activities, including guided tours, educational programs, art exhibitions, and concerts. Several museums are also housed within the complex, enhancing its appeal. The Library's online presence is equally impressive, with its website attracting over 650 million annual visitors and 1.8 million daily users as of 2012 (Library of Alexandria Annual Report, 2012). The Library's status as a tourism icon for Egypt is underscored by its substantial ticket revenue, approximately 1.4 million euros annually, with 40-60% contributed by international tourists (Library of Alexandria Annual Report, 2012). This financial success not only demonstrates the Library's significance to the community but also its broader impact on Alexandria's tourism sector (Jelinčić & Zović, 2012).

Many renowned libraries worldwide, including the British Library, Library of Congress, National Library of France, and the National and University Library in Zagreb, demonstrate the significant role libraries play in tourism. These institutions attract visitors for several reasons. Architectural splendour is a major draw, with both exteriors and interiors showcasing cultural, historical, and monumental value. The buildings themselves often stand as architectural marvels, enticing tourists with their design and historical significance. Unique collections serve as another attraction, featuring local artifacts, rare books, manuscripts, and incunabula. Specialized scientific and professional collections, along with digitized archives, offer glimpses into cultural and intellectual heritage. Libraries also host a variety of events that appeal to tourists, such as educational workshops, concerts, art exhibitions, and literary gatherings. Guided tours provide insights into the library's history and operations. Lastly, many libraries have connections to famous historical figures, attracting visitors interested in exploring important milestones in the lives of these eminent individuals.

The legislation governing cultural heritage protection encompasses a wide range of institutions, including "restoration institutes, museums, galleries, archives, libraries, and other public cultural entities engaged in conservation and protection of cultural assets" (RoC Official Gazette, no. 69/1999, cl. 94). This law recognizes these organizations as crucial for safeguarding cultural treasures.

Furthermore, European Union regulations define certain items as national treasures, specifically mentioning "incunabula, manuscripts (including maps and musical scores), either individually or in collections, as well as books over a century old, whether as single items or collections" (cl. 2). This classification may explain why none of the 19 local library collections surveyed in this study have been officially registered in Croatia's Cultural Goods Registry, despite their potential historical significance.

3.2. Libraries as a Basis for the Development of Cultural Tourism

Libraries often serve as central hubs of cultural and public life within their communities, a role that is particularly evident in smaller or rural areas. However, there is a noticeable lack of methodical and scholarly research on the relationship between libraries and tourism. This topic remains underexplored by experts in both fields, with most studies focusing only on prominent libraries like the British Library, La Bibliothèque Nationale de France, and the Library of Alexandria, which attract significant numbers of visitors due to their global reputation. Libraries are also frequently used as the cultural and social epicenters of their communities, particularly in smaller

locales (McIntosh & Goeldner, 1984). However, the intersection of libraries and tourism remains a largely unexplored area of study, with limited scholarly research available. This knowledge gap is especially pronounced when compared to the attention given to renowned institutions like the British Library or La Bibliothèque nationale de France, which attract substantial visitor numbers. Interestingly, while museums and galleries often feature prominently in tourism strategies, libraries are often overlooked by local authorities and tourism organizations in their planning. This oversight persists despite the potential value of libraries in the tourism sector. As McIntosh and Goeldner (1984) point out, numerous libraries house specialized collections related to travel and tourism, which could prove invaluable to industry professionals, government officials, and academics alike. Goeldner and Ritchie (2009) further emphasize that although libraries and similar cultural institutions are not typically created with tourism in mind, they can significantly enhance a destination's appeal. Many libraries offer inviting spaces where visitors can delve into local history, culture, and traditions, providing a perfect refuge on inclement days. Moreover, the desire to explore a different language or culture often serves as a powerful motivator for travel, positioning libraries as potential catalysts for tourism experiences.

Whitman (2003) indicates that tourists can find local public libraries interesting as attractions or tourism destinations. With certain coordinated planning and preparation through a partnership among libraries, ministries of culture and tourism visitor centres or DMOs, more tourists could visit local libraries abroad and, in that way, discover the live dimension of the local culture. The stamp collection in the National Library in Turkey fits the tourism offer and can be attractive to tourists. Libraries are recognised as a concrete part of the tourist potential in Safranbolu, Turkey. In Poland, there are many renovated libraries which are now tourist attractions. In practice, some of the libraries have the role of tourist attractions but remain in the shade of other tourist attractions. In Italy, there is the possibility of linking culture, education, tourism and information and communication technologies (Whitman, 2003).

The intersection of cultural tourism and libraries has garnered increasing attention in recent years. A study focusing on the State Library of Queensland in Australia (Carson et al., 2013) highlights the significant role libraries can play in literary tourism. This research emphasizes the importance of fostering emotional connections between tourists and the cultural, literary, and community aspects of a destination, while also stressing the value of community engagement in tourism initiatives.

In a separate study, Spentza and Kyriakaki (2013) examined the Adamantios Koraes Library in Greece. Their findings suggest that incorporating this library into international tourist guidebooks could significantly enhance its appeal to visitors, particularly those with cultural and educational interests. This underscores the potential for libraries to serve as key attractions in cultural tourism landscapes.

At the beginning of the '60s, Antić and Pavlinić (1962) and later on Pavlinić (1964) explored libraries as important tourism resources in Croatia. Two expert conferences were organised: Libraries in Tourism Offer, at the Town Library "Ivan Goran Kovačić" in Karlovac (2007) and Libraries and Continental Tourism, in Beli Manastir (2016), with case study reports (Petrić, 2016). With their cultural heritage, libraries can be appealing also to users who are looking for specific points of interest. The global appeal of libraries as tourist attractions is evident in numerous examples worldwide. The Library of Alexandria in Egypt, for instance, plays a significant role in the country's cultural tourism development (Lazarević, 2010). This trend extends to various types of libraries, including those in convents and memorial libraries dedicated to authors and other notable public figures.

Research by Zović (2011) examining public libraries in Istria County reveals that their potential for cultural tourism remains underutilized. Further investigation by Jelinčić and Zović (2012) into Istrian public libraries' role in cultural tourism concludes that their contribution is suboptimal, approaching the topic from the perspective of libraries as cultural attractions.

Libraries contribute to the tourism industry through their core functions: informative, cultural, and educational. Beyond these, libraries offer additional resources such as unique architecture, events, concerts, film screenings, exhibitions, workshops, and meetings, which can appeal to tourists. They play a crucial role in societal and local economic development. Libraries not only preserve cultural heritage and promote community identity but also provide opportunities for lifelong learning and technological support for local entrepreneurs.

3.3. Libraries as a Basis for Building Cultural Identity

Tourism has been widely recognized as a catalyst for integrating local populations into regional economic activities, as evidenced by successful developments in various tourism segments like cultural, rural, and cyclotourism (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2009). When managed effectively, the tourism industry, particularly when linked with culture, can serve as a foundation for sustainable economic development in local communities (UNWTO, 2018).

Cultural heritage encompasses a broad spectrum of inherited resources, including tangible and intangible forms, as well as collections maintained by public and private institutions such as museums, libraries, and archives (UNESCO, 2003). These resources hold significant value for society from cultural, ecological, social, and economic perspectives, necessitating their protection and increased community awareness (Throsby, 2010). Culture is inherently a cross-cutting and integrative phenomenon, with cultural change and development intrinsically linked to educational, economic, and social sectors (Nurse, 2006). The European Union emphasizes the intersectoral political relevance, positive economic and social influence, and sustainable development potential of cultural heritage (European Commission, 2014).

The EU promotes innovative utilization of cultural heritage to foster economic growth, job creation, social cohesion, and environmental sustainability (European Union, 2018). Cultural heritage, often misconstrued as merely an expense or limited to identity-related aspects, has multifaceted impacts:

- Economic: Encouraging innovative finance, investment, management, and business models to enhance cultural heritage's efficiency as an economic driver (CHCfE Consortium, 2015).
- Social: Promoting innovative use of cultural heritage to stimulate integration, inclusion, cohesion, and participation (Murzyn-Kupisz & Działek, 2013).
- Environmental: Advancing innovative and sustainable use of cultural heritage to realize its full potential in contributing to sustainable development across European countries, cultural landscapes, and environments (Nocca, 2017).

Croatia's tourism industry plays a vital role in the country's economic landscape, serving as a key catalyst for various socio-economic developments. Its significance is particularly evident in its substantial contributions to both employment and the nation's gross domestic product. (Škrinjarić, 2018). A discussion has been going on in the last ten years about how to further develop this economic sector, its offers and possibilities so that its full potential could be used (Škrinjarić, 2018).

Croatia's tourism model predominantly focuses on "sun and sea," characterized by extended stays concentrated along the coast during the summer months (Kozić, 2013). The country exhibits the

most pronounced seasonal tourism profile in the European Union, despite the rich historical and cultural offerings of Mediterranean countries (European Commission, 2018). This seasonality poses challenges for the tourism industry and local economies.

In the era of globalization, tourism is increasingly international, yet paradoxically, there's a growing interest in local culture and features (Urry & Larsen, 2011). The cultural identity of destinations enhances the tourism product, providing unique experiences (Richards, 2018). However, the potentially destructive nature of tourism necessitates the protection and preservation of cultural identity (Jelinčić, 2010).

Despite the potential of cultural heritage as an economic asset, tourist attraction, and identity factor that can contribute to social cohesion, the cultural heritage potential of libraries remains underutilized and undervalued in Croatia's tourism offerings. Current strategic and developmental tourism plans in Croatia primarily focus on economic indicators, tourist demographics, travel characteristics, and length of stay (Croatia National Tourist Board, 2024). Libraries are rarely mentioned, except in relation to cultural employment statistics, which are considered "less important for tourism product creation" (Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Croatia, 2013). Recent research indicates that foreign visitors are dissatisfied with the diversity of cultural offerings, particularly during adverse weather conditions (Gržinić & Vojnović, 2014). This highlights a gap in Croatia's tourism product, especially for "rainy day" activities (Gerard Jeurig, 2017).

Libraries, with their resources and community-oriented activities, have the potential to enrich and enhance the tourist experience (Rudan, 2012). By organizing events and programs for both locals and visitors, libraries can contribute to sustainable tourism development and help address the current limitations in Croatia's cultural tourism offerings (Jelinčić, 2010).

4. CONCLUSION

Croatian libraries possess untapped potential as tourist attractions, particularly those with buildings and collections recognized in the National Register of Cultural Goods. Even libraries not officially designated as protected cultural heritage, such as the modern structures housing the National and University Library in Zagreb and the University Library in Split, offer architectural interest and cultural significance to their respective locations.

Many libraries, regardless of their official heritage status, curate local collections that play a crucial role in preserving national heritage and fostering cultural identity. These collections often represent invaluable resources for understanding and appreciating the local history and culture. The appeal of book collections extends beyond traditional library settings. Noteworthy collections can be found in various contexts, including religious institutions, private holdings, and community-based assemblages. This diversity of locations and custodians adds depth to the potential for literary and cultural tourism experiences in Croatia.

By recognizing and promoting these assets, Croatia could enhance its cultural tourism offerings, providing visitors with unique insights into the country's rich literary and cultural landscape.

In different case studies, it is noted that libraries can be used as a considerable tourism potential. Libraries can be used as attractions and tourism products; they can be used as a basis for the development of cultural tourism and as a basis for building cultural identity. Although this study was

conducted to enable recognition of the full potential of libraries as tourism products, it, however, has certain shortcomings. Only publicly available case studies were used in this research, in both Croatian and English languages. It is to be supposed that there is a series of research which tackle similar issues in similar countries, such as is the case in the Republic of Croatia, and which are not accessible. Also, in this paper, a systematic analysis was not conducted of all the factors that can lead to the exploitation of libraries for tourism purposes. Future research should review the role of libraries in tourism in Croatia and the improvement of the tourism offer and income from tourism. Future research should connect with specific libraries in countries where success has been recorded in this sector to determine what exact factors are responsible for the successful use of libraries for tourism purposes.

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