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THE PATH TO THE NEW SLOVENIAN BIOGRAPHICAL LEXICON: THE SLOVENIAN BIOGRAPHICAL/ LEXICOGRAPHICAL TRADITION¹

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Historiography, like literature and art, has been concerned with biographies since antiquity. They have been described according to the extent to which they shed light on historical deeds and events. On the other hand, those who have written biographies of selected personalities have been primarily concerned with the extent to which and the manner in which these biographies portray the character of the protagonist. Such narratives are intended to appeal to the reader as an example of good or bad behaviour in the pursuit of his or her own moral perfection.² Much time has passed since antiquity, and the criteria for selecting personalities worthy of historical memory, as well as the methods and rules for writing biographies, have changed. Records of individuals have found their way to the reader through short, concise biographies (obituary, laudatio, lexicon article), biographical essays or other larger, more extensive works such as historical accounts, studies of individuals, but also autobiographies,

¹ This chapter in the monograph is the result of work carried out as part of the research program *The (New) Cultural History of Intellectual Heritage: Slovenian Historical Space in Its European Context* (P6-0440), funded by the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency (ARIS).

² Oto Luthar, Marjeta Šašel Kos, Nada Grošelj, and Gregor Pobežin, *Zgodovina historične misli* (Ljubljana: Založba ZRC, ZRC SAZU, 2006), 265.

memoirs and biographical novels.³ Today, the term “biography” is used to refer to, among other things, a major literary, artistic or scientific account of a life.

The basic feature of biographical lexicons is the selection of personalities (who to include and who not to include), the second step, the evaluation, is to decide how much space to devote to each personality, and finally the content of the entry itself, what to include and what information not to include in the lexicon. This is all part of the lexicon’s editorial policy and requires a specific approach based primarily on biography. The Slovenian biographical tradition has a long history, and *The New Slovenian Biographical Lexicon* (NSBL, 2013–), which continues and builds on the work of the *Slovenian Biographical Lexicon* (SBL, 1925–1991) and, as its name suggests, is the first Slovenian biographical lexicon to have been published during most of the last century, comes at the end of the period covered by the present text, i.e. in the present day. In fact, serious work on the first volume began as early as 1922, with the publication of a glossary, specimen biographical entries and several articles outlining the purpose/guiding principle of the lexicon, which is basically still valid today, in the following words:

*... to describe the life and work of people who have made any significant contribution to science, culture and national development from remote times to the present day ... i.e., to give reliably the essential biographical and bibliographical facts, the more important literature and a concise assessment of the creative output, where this is possible.*⁴

In addition to the (updated) content and purpose of the two lexicons, there are also several fundamental points of contact. In order to base the biographical entries on up-to-date information, the editors of the *Slovenian Biographical Lexicon* began sending questionnaires to living (public) personalities as early as the 1920s. This was the first material to be stored in the then established Archive of the *Slovenian Biographical Lexicon* (1922), which was later supplemented by material collected by the authors of the biographical entries for the Lexicon and by documents obtained in the process of editing the entries.

³ Irena Avsenik Nabergoj, “Biografija v literarni zgodovini,” in *Biografija na prehodu v digitalnost*, ed. Mateja Ratej (Ljubljana: Založba ZRC, ZRC SAZU, 2019), 66.

⁴ *Slovenski biografski leksikon*, Book IV, vol. XV (Ljubljana: SAZU, 1991), V, from the concluding text to the fourth book).

themselves in one way or another, the community in which they lived has generally ensured that their memory has been preserved. In many cases, the individuals themselves have also ensured their legacy. But as much as we love to tell and listen to stories about life and work (achievements, feats, heroics, tragic fates, etc.), they are also the legacies of the past. It is also thanks to those who have written down these stories, thus preserving the memory of outstanding individuals, that collections of biographies have been created, followed by biographical lexicons and other lexical and/or encyclopaedic works, of which biographical entries are an essential part, alongside the encyclopaedic ones.

In the following, we will give an overview of biographical records in Slovenia from the 16th century to the present day, from the first fragments of printed biographies and their traces to the systematic records of data-organised biographical entries that can be read today. We will be interested in what these records have in common, what guided the writers in their writing (choices, decisions and working processes) and which elements stand out.

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE PRINTED WORD IN CARNIOLA IN THE 16TH CENTURY

An overview of biography in Slovenia begins in 1575, when a printer and bookseller Janž Mandelc⁶ opened a printing house in Ljubljana and printed, among other things, several biographical works. This does not mean, of course, that there were no records of people and their achievements before then. For example, *Die Chronik der Grafen von Cilli* [The Chronicle of the Counts of Celje], which was written in the 15th century “in honour and memory of the noble lord Count Herman of Celje,”⁷ as an anonymous author wrote in the introduction to the text, is an important document for the Slovenian region – today an important text not only for Slovenian but also for European history and for the common region itself. But it was

⁶ “Mandelc, Janez (?–after 1605),” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi345933/>.

⁷ Ludovik Modest Golia, trans. and ed., *Kronika grofov Celjskih* (Maribor: Obzorja, 1972), translation and adaptation of the work, author unknown; originally published in Franz Krones, *Die Freien von Saneck und ihre Chronik als Grafen von Cilli, Teil I; Die Cillier Chronik, Teil 2* (Graz: Leuschner & Lubensky, 1883); scientific critical edition by Franz Krones.

Gutenberg's invention of movable-type printing in the 15th century that made it possible for works about outstanding people to reach a wide public. Today, this revolutionary invention can be compared to the emergence of the digital world, which with modern devices is within reach of everyone and which offers unimaginable possibilities for humanity.

In the Slovenian region, the 16th century is therefore the time when the written word reached a wider circle of people through the printing press. It is in this environment that biography finds its place. For example, two works about Herbard von Auersperg (1528–1575),⁸ the governor and warlord of Carniola, were published in 1575. In that year, during the battle of Budačko, the soldiers of the Ottoman Army, then referred to simply as Turks, shot the warlord's horse, pulled him from the saddle, murdered him and beheaded him. The spearhead, together with the head of Auersperg's relative, Frederik of Višnja Gora, was taken in procession to Istanbul, where it was embalmed and later sold to his relatives for a staggering 20,000 gold coins (according to some sources even 25,000 gold coins). The warlord's tragic death prompted the future regional administrator and viceregent of Carniola, Jurij Khisl (1558–1605),⁹ to write a more extensive eulogy. He entitled it:

*The glory of the most splendid achievements in peace and war of Herbard Auersperg, the most excellent Baron, etc., his life and his glorious death for the salvation and for the benefit of his homeland, achieved on the extreme borders of Croatia, at Budačko, on September 22, 1575, in the battle against the Turks, the most cruel attackers of the welfare of Christians that history has ever known.*¹⁰

It is a biographical account of the 16th century in the form of a laudatory text, which became the first secular bestseller to be published in Carniola. It was dedicated to an important figure, the governor and warlord of Carniola,

⁸ "Auersperg, Herbard, baron (1528–1575)," *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi1000980/>.

⁹ "Khisl, Janez, pl. (1530–around 1593)," *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi273187/>.

¹⁰ Jurij Khisl, *Herbardi Aurspergy baronis etc. rerum domi militiaeque praeclarè gestarum gloria praestantissimi, vita et mors: ad salutem et commodum patriae transacta, et in Coruatiæ extremis finibus ad Budatschkum X. Calend. Oct. in proelio aduersus Turcas, omnis memoriae crudeliss. Christianorum salutis oppugnatores, gloriosissimè oppetita* (Labaci, 1575).

who contributed to the well-being of his homeland not only in times of peace – according to the author of his biography, Khisl, who recognised and appreciated the protagonist’s potential – but also in times of war, when he took part in one of the battles against the notorious and unchristian Turks. He died a horrible death, as we have just written, and his head was carried in a procession of victors to the heart of the enemy territory, after which it was embalmed and purchased with an unimaginable sum of gold coins for the people. If the beheading and its aftermath were still the custom of the victors of the time and not so unusual for the proverbially cruel Turks in the imagination of the rest of the world, the second part of the story in particular testifies not only to the importance of the people involved, but also to the attractiveness of the subject matter, which appealed to the wider masses. The impact of the story is evidenced by the two printed editions of 1575 in Latin and the German translation of 1576.¹¹

The second work on Herbard von Auersperg, printed in 1575, is no less than a funeral sermon by a Ljubljana protestant preacher Krištof Spindler¹² on the occasion of the funeral of the famous warlord, i.e. on the occasion of the typical farewell ritual to the deceased, also because it was printed. In the sermon, the speaker remembered the deceased with biographical information, which ultimately completed the picture of the bestseller published that year, but also left another biographical trace of the depiction of individuals in the spoken (sermon) and printed word.¹³

¹¹ Jurij Khisl, *Hörwarden Freyherrn zu Aursperg, etc. warhafftige, ritterliche, ansehnliche Thaten: wie er die zeit seines lebens seinem lieben Vaterland in politischen, auch ansehnlichen Kriegsbeuelchen gedient, dessen Wolfart aygnem leben fürgezogen, vnnnd auff den 22. Tag Septemb: des 75. Jars, von den Türcken bey Wudatschcki vnuersehens vberfallen, vbermant, vnd nach mit eygner hand von den Feinden genom[m]nen rach ...* (Laybach, 1576).

¹² “Spindler, Krištof (1546–1591),” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi597637/>.

¹³ Krištof Spindler, *Ain christliche Leichpredig: bey der Begrebnus, weyland des Wolgebornen Herr, Herrn Hörwarden, freyherrn zu Auersperg ...* (Laybach, 1575). Only one copy of this work survives, which is damaged.

THE 17TH CENTURY AND THE GREAT WORK BY VALVASOR, THE GLORY OF THE DUCHY OF CARNIOLA

The first collection of biographies in Slovenia was compiled by a polyhistor, draughtsman, collector and publisher Janez Vajkard Valvasor (1641–1693)¹⁴ under the title *Anhang deß Sechsten Buchs, welcher eine Anzahl gelehrter Scribenten begreiff, so aus Crain bürtig gewest* [An appendix to the sixth book, which contains a number of learned writers native to Carniola], he published it in 1689 as an appendix to the sixth book of his monumental work *The Glory of the Duchy of Carniola*.¹⁵

Valvasor conceived the collection with the ambition of introducing the reader to all the important writers of Carniola. The information for the biographical entries came partly from the people he presented in the book, half of whom were his contemporaries, and partly from the books they had written. In a short introduction he explains the chronological order of the biographies:

*However, since this appendix cannot be neatly grouped into clear chapters, the very names of the authors from Carniola, whom we intend to mention here together with their writings, should help us to classify this material. We would like to divide it up according to the sciences and disciplines in which [the authors] wrote, when not too many of them dealt with more than one science or art, both with this or that discipline and with the matter belonging to a main discipline. For this reason, we shall not follow any other order than that which is dictated by the time in which [the works] were written.*¹⁶

¹⁴ “Janez Vajkard Valvasor, baron (1641–1693),” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi759993/>.

¹⁵ *The Glory of the Duchy of Carniola*, written in New High German, is an encyclopaedia published in Nuremberg in 1689 by the polymath Janez Vajkard Valvasor. It is the most important work on his homeland, the Duchy of Carniola, the central part of present-day Slovenia, see Janez Vajkard Valvasor, *Die Ehre dess Hertzogthums Crain, das ist, Wahre, gründliche, und recht eigentliche Belegen- und Beschaffenheit dieses ... Römisch-Keysyerlichen herrlichen Erblandes* (Nürnberg, 1689), appendix in vol. 2, VI, 343–370.

¹⁶ Janez Vajkard Valvasor, *Slava vojvodine Kranjske*, compiled, trans. and ed. Mirko Rupel (Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 1977), 147–154.



Figure 8.2. Janez Vajkard Valvasor (1641–1693), polyhistor, draughtsman, collector and publisher. *Source:* Digital Library of Slovenia.

The text consists of fifty-seven numbered biographical entries, each usually describing one author. Two exceptions are: the first entry on Sts. Cyril and Methodius, who are considered to be the initiators and leaders of Byzantine missionary activity among the Slavs in Moravia and Lower Pannonia in the second half of the 9th century, translators of the Bible and liturgical books into Old Church Slavic, and founders of Slavic literature. Of course, they were not born “in Slovenian territory,” nor did they fit Valvasor’s label of “writers at home in Carniola,” but he included them in his collection because of their influence and merits for the culture of the area. Another exception is the fifty-sixth entry, where the names of nine personalities from Carniola can be found who had their theses printed during their studies. The fifth entry is missing due to a numbering error.

The biographical entries are therefore arranged chronologically from Saints Cyril and Methodius to Valvasor himself, who is presented in the 57th entry. The biography of Valvasor, presumably written by the author himself and attributed to the co-author of *The Glory of the Duchy of Carniola*, a

German jurist and polymath Erasmus Franciscus (1627–1694),¹⁷ is entitled *The Contribution of Erasmus Franciscus to the Miscellaneous Writings of the Gentleman Himself, the Main Author of That Work*. It is also the only titled entry in the set. Interestingly, the fact that Franciscus was Valvasor's collaborator and co-author on his monumental work – of which the appendix, the first Slovenian biography collection, is an integral part – has been lost in Slovenian collective memory.

That the first printed writings with biographical elements were the basis for later collections of biographies, the forerunners of biographical dictionaries, and that the writers (and preachers) also experienced “eternal glory” and their reputation (and that of the protagonists of their biographies) was preserved over time, is proved by VIII. and IX. Valvasor's biographical entries on Krištof Spindler and Jurij Khisl, who, as the two prominent authors of biographical texts on Herbard von Auersperg in the second half of the 16th century, are the starting point of our survey of the biographical origins on the Slovenian territory. From the point of view of the criteria for inclusion in the set of selected biographies, it is interesting to note that Auersperg is not included in the set of selected biographies, since Valvasor's collection of biographies of authors from Carniola did not provide for non-writing personalities.

VIII.

Christophorus Spindler [Krištof Spindler], *the superintendent of the evangelical preachers in Carniola, had a funeral sermon in German published in Ljubljana in 1576 by Janez Mandelc, the new print master, which he delivered publicly at the funeral of the Baron Herbard von Auersperg (who had been beheaded by the Turks at Budačko) in the Church of St Elisabeth in Ljubljana. He spoke with such moving and heart-rending words that many eyes teared up and hardly anyone returned from the church unmourned.*

IX.

Georgius Kisel von Kaltenbrunn [Jurij Khisl of Fužine], *the Baron of Carniola, has very beautifully described in Latin and put into print the*

¹⁷ “Francisci, Erasmus (1627–1694),” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi191508/>.

*life and death of the just-mentioned Herbard von Auersperg, who sacrificed his life in a valiant struggle for his homeland at the aforementioned Budačko, and who is very worthy of posthumous glory after having cut down many Turks with his own hand. This beautiful and readable oration (necrology) was printed in 1577 in Ljubljana in a quarto, and a manuscript copy is still available in the Auersperg Library in Ljubljana.*¹⁸

A BIO-BIBLIOGRAPHICAL WORK BIBLIOTHECA LABACENSIS PUBLICA ... AT THE TURN OF THE 17TH AND 18TH CENTURIES

The manuscript from the beginning of the 18th century entitled *The Ljubljana Public Library of the Charles College of Nobles: An Outline of the Ljubljana Public Library*, which, in keeping with the spirit of the times, bears the date “1715 from the birth of the Virgin.”¹⁹ It is the work of Janez Gregor Dolničar (1655–1719),²⁰ a lawyer, scholar of ancient inscriptions, chronicler and historian who, among other things, presented the life and work of the cultural, scientific and artistic creators of the Carniola region. Dolničar included 191 personalities in his collection and divided them into twenty-one groups by discipline, providing some biographical information on each one, as well as the titles of their printed and manuscript works (a two-part structure). Unlike Valvasor’s work, it does not follow a chronological order:

¹⁸ Janez Vajkard Valvasor, “Christophorus Spindler,” and “Georgius Kisel von Kaltenbrunn,” in *Trubar, Hren, Valvasor, Dolničar*, ed. Luka Vidmar (Ljubljana: SAZU, 2009), 53 (original), 124 (Slovenian translation).

¹⁹ Janez Gregor Dolničar, *Bibliotheca Labacensis publicae Collegii Carolini Nobilium seu De scriptoribus Carniolis, qui tum vetera, tum recentiora saecula illustrarunt, notitia locuples, qua non solum auctorum, qui ad haec usque tempora scripserunt, codices excussi vel manuscripti adnotantur, verum etiam eorum patria, aetas, professio, munia, dignitates, memoranda et obitus recensentur* (Ectypon Bibliothecae publicae Labacensis ... Studio et opere Ioannis Fortunati Mengini Labacensis, Anno a Partu Virginis 1715), on page 3, more extensive title and appendix; manuscript kept in the Seminary library in Ljubljana, sign. št. 14; Ioannes Fortunatus Menginus Labacensis is pseudonym of Janez Gregor Dolničar.

²⁰ “Dolničar pl. Thalberg, Janez Gregor (1655–1719),” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi696804/>.



Figure 8.3. Janez Gregor Dolničar (1655–1719), jurist, scholar of ancient inscriptions, chronicler and historian. *Source:* Digital Library of Slovenia.

Chapter I Introduction to the Public Library of the Ljubljana College of Nobles

Chapter II Equipment and Monuments of the Library

Chapter III Theologians

Chapter IV Canonists

Chapter V. Preachers

Chapter VI Ascetics

Chapter VII Historians

Chapter VIII Genealogists

Chapter IX Lawyers

Chapter X Doctors

Chapter XI Chemists

Chapter XII Philosophers

Chapter XIII Mathematicians

Chapter Surveyors

Chapter XIV Astrologers

Chapter Arithmeticians

Chapter XV Musicians

Chapter XVI Painters, sculptors and architects

Chapter XVII Politicians

Chapter XVIII Speakers

Chapter XIX Poets

Chapter XX Philologists

[Dolničar forgot the chapter on surveyors, which should have been numbered XIV. In addition, he did not number the chapters on surveyors and arithmeticians. In fact, the total number of chapters he completed is twenty-three.]²¹

Of particular interest is the introduction to Dolničar's work, in which he was one of the first in the Slovenian territory to ask the fundamental lexicographical question: Who should be included in the set? There is a problem with access to documents, a lack of available information, etc.:

Dear reader! I wanted to briefly inform you about the purpose of this institution before you start to get to know it better. We shall endeavour, by our diligence, to preserve from decay and human oblivion the merits of the local literary men whom we recognise as excellent and immortal. When we honour their names, we also honour our homeland, because we owe a debt of gratitude to it. For, as Plutarch says, the homeland has a greater right to us than our parents. We shall leave the foreign [literary] writers to be treated by foreigners ...

[...]

Finally, we recognise that there are many famous men whom we have not attracted to this humble work. Nor have we included all the achievements or writings that [the writers] are to be honoured, as more detailed accounts were not available. In due course there will be someone who will describe more extensively what is desirable. In the meantime, you accept the booklet graciously and enjoy our experiment for what it is.²²

²¹ Vidmar, ed., *Trubar, Hren, Valvasor, Dolničar*, 290–291 (original), 391–392 (Slovenian translation).

²² Vidmar, ed., *Trubar, Hren, Valvasor, Dolničar*, 187 (original), 301 (Slovenian translation).

He summarised the purpose of the work and the criteria that guided his choice of personalities in an alternative title to the text: “About the writers of Carniola who have enlightened both older and newer eras. A reliable report, which not only records the printed books or manuscripts of writers who have worked up to the present day, but also their homeland, age, profession, official duties, dignity, memorable achievements and death.”²³

It is interesting to note that Dolničar also counted his son Aleš Žiga Dolničar (1685–1708),²⁴ of whom he was very proud, among the important writers from Carniola. In order to avoid any accusation of bias, he concealed his relationship with him. In his biographical entry, he omitted his real surname and the details of his parents. The biographical entry, like all the other entries in the manuscript, is also interesting from a formal point of view, mainly because the two-part structure is already clearly visible – the form thus also defines the structuring of the data: in the case of Aleš Žiga Dolničar’s entry, the first part contains information about birth and death, education, creative work or the reason for the person’s inclusion in the set, while the second part lists his works – what he published and what remains in the manuscripts:

Aleš Žiga Toliž [Dolničar]. *He came into the world on August 5, 1685 in Ljubljana. He had honest habits from childhood. He was constantly devoted to the appreciation of science and the liberal arts. When he was educated in lower and higher schools, he won every Paladin’s crown. At the Gregorian College of Perugia he took up law. Being an excellent orator, he received applause for his speech on the day of the patron saint of the place, and was the winner during the celebration of the Saturnalia. When he joined the Academy of Eccentrics and took on the task of debating, he was considered a prophet. Even as a young man, he devoted himself to work night and day. He was given permission by his superiors to attend the Drawing Academy. To this noble study he naturally inclined with such success that he easily took the palm of all his rivals. In 1707 he went to Rome to continue his studies. He stayed there for a whole year.*

²³ Vidmar, ed., *Trubar, Hren, Valvasor, Dolničar*, 187 (original), 301 (Slovenian translation).

²⁴ “Dolničar pl. Thalberg, Aleš Žiga (1685–1708),” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi696296/>.

He devoted the time left over from his normal studies to visiting public libraries, drawing and the other arts of architecture and graphics. Since he had excelled in the literary palette, on the recommendation of Mario Crescimbeni, a canon of St Stephen's and the highly renowned founder of the Academy of the Arcadians, he was admitted to the same [academy] under the assumed name of Gliko. On September 10, 1708 he set off to visit Naples, where he would see the sights in eight days. He was seized by a severe fever. After lying down for eleven days, he died. He was buried in the church of St Catherine alle Fornelle of the Dominican Fathers. He died on October 6, 1708, aged 22.

He published:

Hymn to Peasant Life, in Venice in 1713.

Manuscripts:

A profusion of miscellaneous learning.

A Treatise on the Priority of Requests.

A description of the most noble city of Venice.

Antiquities of Oquileia.

Description of the city of Padua.

The description of the sublime Perugia.

*The sights of the beneficent city of Rome.*²⁵

FROM THE ENLIGHTENMENT TO THE 19TH CENTURY: WURZBACH'S LEXICON AT THE HEART OF THE MANY BIOGRAPHIES

Enlightenment ideas came to the Slovenian territory late, in the last decades of the 18th century, and attracted mainly a small circle of educated people. Marko Pohlin (1735–1801)²⁶ is considered to be the founder of the Enlightenment in Slovenia, and the publication of his work *Kranjska gramatika*

²⁵ “Aleš Žiga Tolij,” in *Trubar, Hren, Valvasor, Dolničar*, ed. Vidmar, 262–263 (original), 368–369 (Slovenian translation). This text has been translated according to the Slovenian translation.

²⁶ “Pohlin, Marko (1735–1801),” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 10, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi443704>.

(1768)²⁷ is considered to be the turning point that triggered the first or early era of the modern national movement, the national awakening. At the same time as the Slovenian national movement was gaining strength, the idea of collecting and presenting in an orderly manner basic information about the life and work (and later also the evaluation of this work) of Slovenian and Slovenian-related personalities who actively contributed to the cultural, scientific, artistic, political, economic and general development of the nation was gaining momentum. At his death, Pohlin left behind a large manuscript lexicon of Carniolan writers entitled *Bibliotheca Carnioliae* [Carniolan Library].²⁸ The work, in which he included some authors from places other than Carniola, is basically a baroque collection of diverse information.

In the first quarter of the 19th century, a polyhistor and historian Heinrich Georg Hoff (1739–1809),²⁹ a librarian and the author of the literary history of Carniola Anton Rožič (1791–1837),³⁰ a collector of antiquities and works of art, cultural historian and patron Jožef Kalasanc Erberg (1771–1843)³¹ and other authors of manuscript polyhistoric surveys of the culture and grammar of Carniola, also remained faithful imitators of Valvasor's *Glory of the Duchy of Carniola*. With the advent of the printing press in the first half of the 19th century, a few biographies of prominent Slovenians were already published in German, but they were uncritical and mostly written in a celebratory tone. Two biographies are particularly important: that of Žiga Zois (1820),³² written by a historian, topographer, writer and editor

²⁷ Marko Pohlin, *Kraynska grammatika, das ist: Die crainerische Grammatik, oder Kunst die crainerische Sprach regelrichtig zu reden, und zu schreiben* (Laybach, 1768).

²⁸ Marko Pohlin, *Kraynska grammatika; Bibliotheca Carnioliae* (Ljubljana: ZRC SAZU, 2003), critical edition by Jože Faganel and Luka Vidmar, 317–432 (facsimile), 433–548 (critical translation into Slovene).

²⁹ "Hoff, Heinrich Georg (around 1739–1809)," *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi234277/>.

³⁰ "Rožič, Anton (1791–1837)," *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi522788/>.

³¹ "Erberg, Jožef Kalasanc, baron (1771–1843)," *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi182495/>.

³² Franz Xaver Richter, *Sigismund Zois. Freiherr v. Edelstein* (Laibach, 1820).

Franz Xaver Richter (1783–1856),³³ and that of Valentin Vodnik (1824),³⁴ written by a religious writer František Ksaverij Andrioli (1792–1851).³⁵

The first prominent biography in Slovenian, entitled *Kratko shivljenje Leopolda Volkmera* [The Short Life of Leopold Volkmer],³⁶ was published in 1836 by a grammarian and lexicographer Anton Janez Murko (1809–1871).³⁷ The first collection of a large number of biographies in Slovenian was published between 1847 and 1862 in the almanac *Drobtinice* [Breadcrumbs].³⁸ This publication also included biographies, usually in a special section with descriptive titles that changed over time: *The Mirror of Famous Slovenians and "Others"*; *The Mirror of Famous Natives, to the Dead in Praiseful Memory, to the Living in Handsome Imitation*; *The Mirror of Blessed Men and Women, to the Former in Memory, to the Present in Imitation*. One of the most important biographers was the founder of *Drobtinice*, the bishop, poet and national awakener Anton Martin Slomšek (1800–1862),³⁹ who was also an editor for two years and one of the main contributors to this annual collection until his death in 1862.⁴⁰

Among the Slovenian biographers of the second half of the 19th century, it is worth mentioning at least a poet, writer and politician Radoslav Razlag (1826–1880),⁴¹ who published 34 biographies in the almanac *Zora*

³³ "Richter, Franz Xaver Johann (1783–1856)," *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi506711/>.

³⁴ Frančišek Ksaverij Andrioli, "Valentin Vodnik," *Carinthia: ein Wochenblatt zum Nutzen und Vergnügen*, vol. 14, nos. 13–14, 1824.

³⁵ "Andrioli, Frančišek Ksaverij, pl. (1792–1851)" *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi129930/>.

³⁶ Anton Janez Murko, "Kratko shivljenje Leopolda Volkmera," in *Leopolda Volkmera, pokojnega duhovnika Sekavske shofije Fabule ino Pésmi*, ed. Anton Janez Murko (Graz, 1836), VII–XVI.

³⁷ "Murko, Anton (1809–1871)," *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi380348/>.

³⁸ *Drobtince*, V Celovci [etc.], 1846–1901.

³⁹ "Slomšek, Anton Martin (1800–1862)," *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi584693/>.

⁴⁰ Martin Grum, "Slovenski biografski leksikon: od zadružne gospodarske banke do Slovenske akademije znanosti in umetnosti," in *Sedemdeset let Biblioteke SAZU*, ed. Marija Fabjančič, Dušan Koman (editor-in-chief), Dušan Merhar, and Drago Samec (Ljubljana: SAZU, 2008), 272–273.

⁴¹ "Razlag, Radoslav (1826–1880)," *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi492134/>.

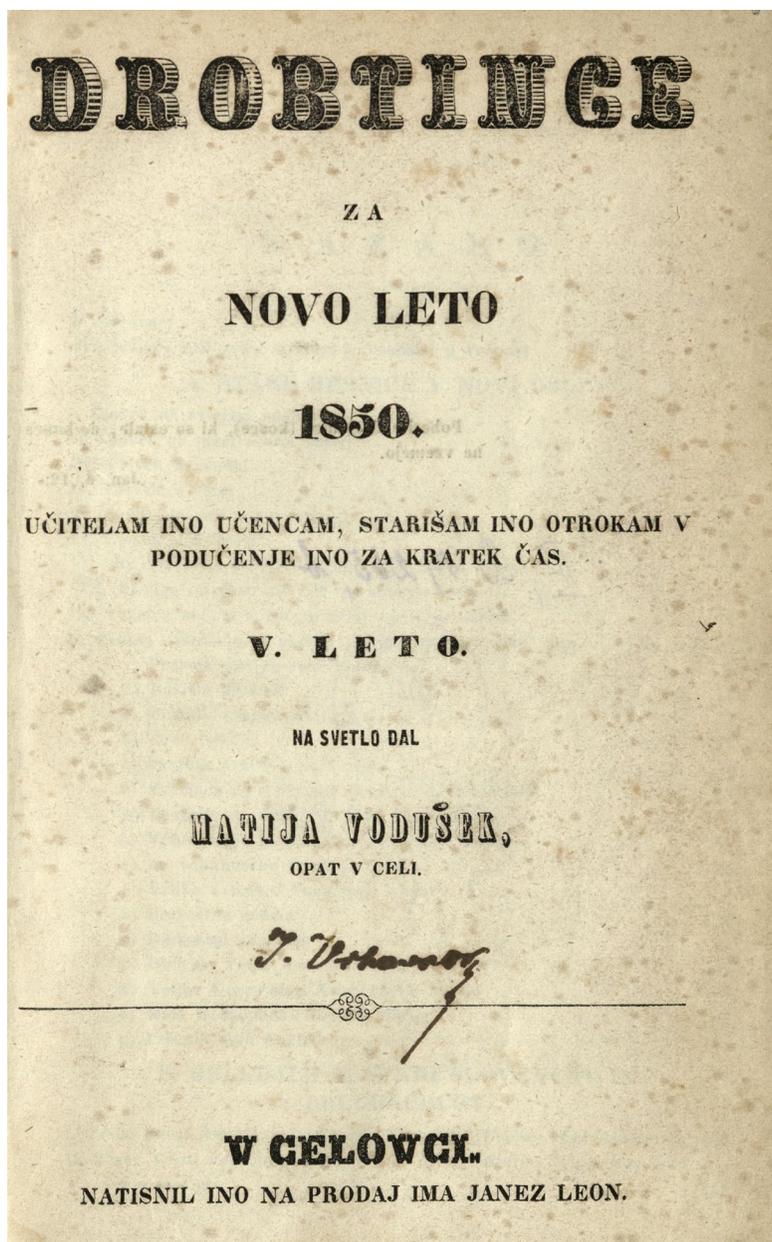


Figure 8.4. *Drobtinice* [Breadcrumbs], 1847–1862. Source: Digital Library of Slovenia.

[Dawn] (1852),⁴² a zoologist, politician, editor, columnist and newspaperman Janez Bleiweis (1808–1881)⁴³ with several biographies in the *Koledarčik slovenski* [Slovene Calendar] (1852–1856),⁴⁴ furthermore a schoolteacher, newspaperman and literary historian Josip Marn (1832–1893),⁴⁵ who was the most prolific writer with 338 biographies – all published in the *Jezičnik* [The Tongue – “expert in literature and language”] between 1863 and 1892.⁴⁶ In 1863, a biographical monograph on Anton Martin Slomšek⁴⁷ was published by a writer and patriot Franc Kosar (1823–1894),⁴⁸ and in 1869, a historian and social organiser Leon Vončina (1826–1874)⁴⁹ wrote the first biographical monograph on the most prominent Slovenian missionary, Friderik Baraga, in the Slovenian language.⁵⁰ Many other authors have occasionally undertaken biographical work, among them Dragutin Dežman (1821–1889),⁵¹ a museologist, politician, archaeologist, natural scientist, poet and publicist, Ivan Navratil (1825–1896),⁵² an editor, linguist and ethnologist, Davorin Trstenjak (1817–1890),⁵³ a writer, ethnologist, historian and publicist, Andrej Praprotnik (1827–1895),⁵⁴ a schoolmaster, poet and

⁴² Radoslav Razlag, “Životopisi,” *Zora: jugoslavenski zabavnik za godinu 1852*, vol. 1 (1852), 127–165.

⁴³ “Bleiweis vitez Trsteniški, Janez (1808–1881),” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi143644/>.

⁴⁴ Prim. Janez Bleiweis, “Baron Žiga Zois,” in *Koledarčik slovenski za navadno leto 1855* (V Ljubljani, [1854]), 17–26.

⁴⁵ “Marn, Josip (1832–1893),” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi349863/>.

⁴⁶ Josip Marn, *Jezičnik* (Ljubljana, 1863–1892).

⁴⁷ Franc Kosar, *Anton Martin Slomšek, Fürst-Bischof von Lavant* (Marburg: E. Janschitz, 1863).

⁴⁸ “Kosar, Franc (1823–1894),” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi292572/>.

⁴⁹ “Vončina, Leon Stanislav (1826–1874),” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi811412/>.

⁵⁰ Leon Vončina, *Friderik Baraga, prvi kranjski apostolski misijonar in škof med Indijani v Ameriki* ([V Celovcu]: Družba sv. Mohora, 1869).

⁵¹ “Dežman, Karel (1821–1889),” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi172598/>.

⁵² “Navratil, Ivan (1825–1896),” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi385781/>.

⁵³ “Trstenjak, Davorin (1817–1890),” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi727223/>.

⁵⁴ “Praprotnik, Andrej (1827–1895),” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi455111/>.



Figure 8.5. Konstantin Wurzbach Knight Tannenberg (1818–1893). *Source:* National and University Library. Manuscripts Department.

writer, Viljem Urbas (1831–1900),⁵⁵ an ethnologist and natural scientist, Franc Kosar (1823–1894),⁵⁶ a writer and patriot, and others.

Towards the end of the 19th century, Slovenian biography took the form of a scientific study. A literary historian, editor and scholar Fran Levec (1846–1916)⁵⁷ wrote more than 50 exemplary biographies of Slovenian artists, mainly poets and writers. Among the many monographic biographies, the first scientific biography of the linguist Vatroslav Oblak⁵⁸ by a comparative historian and ethnologist Matija Murko (1861–1952)⁵⁹ is worth mentioning.

⁵⁵ “Urbas, Viljem (1831–1900),” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi749618/>.

⁵⁶ “Kosar, Franc (1823–1894),” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi292572/>.

⁵⁷ “Levec, Fran (1846–1916),” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi325754/>.

⁵⁸ Matija Murko, *Dr. Vatroslav Oblak* (V Ljubljani: Slovenska matica, 1900).

⁵⁹ “Murko, Matija (1861–1952),” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi380810/>.

In the 19th century, the so-called *Wurzbach Lexicon*⁶⁰ took centre stage. This remarkable work, the *Biographical Lexicon of the Austrian Empire*, which was important for all the peoples of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, including the Slovenians, came to life in the middle of the 19th century. The lexicon is also associated with the Slovenians through Ljubljana-born Konstantin Wurzbach Knight Tannenberg (1818–1893),⁶¹ an outstanding organiser, systematist, collector, poet and polyglot, who conceived the lexicon, edited it to the last volume and compiled almost all of the entries. The comprehensive lexicon, which was monumental for the time and on a global scale, contained 24,254 biographies of personalities from the Austrian Empire, published in sixty volumes between 1856 and 1891. Among them are also many personalities (more than 2,000) from the then Carniola, Carinthia, Lower Styria and Primorska. Although the lexicon mainly favoured the German (noble) elite of the Monarchy, it also provided the Slovenians with the first large, fairly complete and objective encyclopaedic presentation of both literary and non-literary authors and other personalities and (mainly noble) families. The lexicon had a strong influence on later Slovenian, Croatian and other biographical lexicons.⁶²

THE 20TH CENTURY AND THE SLOVENIAN BIOGRAPHICAL LEXICON

The first plans directly related to the *Slovenian Biographical Lexicon* project date back to the period before the First World War. In the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, the so-called *Yugoslav Encyclopaedia* was planned to be published jointly by “Yugoslav academies and learned societies.” It was initiated by the retired Croatian general Marko Crljen, who in 1909 donated 20,000 crowns to the Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts for the

⁶⁰ Constant Wurzbach von Tannenberg, ed., *Biographisches Lexikon des Kaisertums Österreich enthaltend die Lebensskizzen der denkwürdigen Personen, welche seit 1750 bis 1850 im Kaiserstaate und in seinen Kronländern gelebt haben* (Wein: L. C. Zamarski, Kaiserlich-königliche Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1856–1891).

⁶¹ “Wurzbach vitez Tannenberg, Konstantin (1818–1893),” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi847671/>.

⁶² The section on biographies from the 19th century is largely based on Martin Grum’s “Biographical Heritage,” see Grum, “Slovenski biografski leksikon,” 271–280.

Biographisches Lexikon

des

Kaiserthums Oesterreich,

enthaltend

die Lebensskizzen der denkwürdigen Personen, welche 1750 bis 1850
im Kaiserstaate und in seinen Kronländern gelebt haben.

Von

Dr. Constant v. Wurzbach.

Erster Theil.

A — Slumenthal.



(Mit Vorbehalt der Uebersetzung in fremde Sprachen und Verwahrung gegen unrechtmäßigen Nachdruck.)

Wien, 1856.

Verlag der Universitäts-Buchdruckerei von F. C. Zamarski

(vormals J. P. Sollinger).

Figure 8.6. Cover of the first volume of the “Wurzbach’s Lexicon.” *Source:* Archive of the *Slovenian Biographical Lexicon*.



Figure 8.7. List of names for the *Slovenian Biographical Lexicon* (1922) – a few pages of a copy of the booklet owned by France Kidrič (1880–1950), one of the *Slovenian Biographical Lexicon*’s collaborators and for some time also its Editor-in-Chief, with his annotations. The list was compiled on the basis of material including the *Abecedary* for the unrealised *Yugoslav Encyclopaedia*. Source: Archive of the *Slovenian Biographical Lexicon*.

publication of the *Yugoslav Encyclopaedia*, “which would represent the pinnacle of contemporary science and describe the past and present of the lands inhabited by Croats, Serbs, Slovenians and Bulgarians.”⁶³ Slovenian cultural workers were also involved in the preparation of this encyclopaedia. The First World War put an end to this plan. During the war, the original plan was reduced to the *Croatian Biographical Lexicon* (Hrvatski biografski riječnik), the tentative and only volume of which was published in 1916.⁶⁴ The work done for this encyclopaedia, especially the glossary, was later used in the preparation of *The Slovenian Biographical Lexicon*.

In 1921, representatives of the “Czech and Yugoslav academies and learned societies” met in Zagreb to discuss the project of a “Yugoslav encyclopaedia.” It turned out that, despite the great need, such an extensive work was not feasible at the present time. At the same time, “that it be left to individuals to publish in their own district the parts of this future ‘Yugoslav Encyclopaedia.’”⁶⁵ A librarian, lexicographer and translator

⁶³ “Crljen, Marko,” *Hrvatski biografski leksikon*, accessed May 27, 2025, <https://hbl.lzmk.hr/clanak/crljen-marko>.

⁶⁴ Cf. Igor Gosti, “Dvije tisuće hrvatskih životopisa,” *Vjesnik*, May 21, 1999; Joža Glonar, “Slovenski biografski leksikon,” *Jugoslavija*, July 9, 1922, 2–3.

⁶⁵ Glonar, “Slovenski biografski leksikon,” 2–3.

Joža Glonar (1885–1946),⁶⁶ who also reported on the meeting in the daily political newspaper *Jugoslavija*, published in Ljubljana, wrote that this gave Slovenians the right and the duty “to roll up our sleeves and do what we can ourselves.”⁶⁷ The idea of a Slovenian lexicon had been circulating in literary circles for a long time. A decisive turning point came with the initiative of a lawyer, historian and banker Ivan Slokar (1884–1970),⁶⁸ who, shortly after the Zagreb meeting, entrusted the organisation and implementation of the lexicographical and encyclopaedic work to an art historian, publicist and later diplomat Izidor Cankar (1886–1978).⁶⁹ Slokar, who was the director of the Cooperative Economic Bank in Ljubljana, thus provided financial support for a Slovenian conversational lexicon modeled after the German *Brockhaus Enzyklopädie* (1796–1808).⁷⁰ In addition to Cankar, the first editorial board consisted of Glonar, a literary historian and member and for some years president of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts France Kidrič (1880–1950),⁷¹ and a bibliographer, lexicographer and literary historian Janko Šlebinger (1876–1951).⁷² It soon became clear that the conditions for a Slovenian general lexicon containing both biographical and encyclopaedic entries did not (yet) exist. It was proposed that a Slovenian biographical lexicon be prepared first, to be followed later by an encyclopaedic lexicon. Slokar seconded the motion.

As early as 1922, Šlebinger and his colleagues had already prepared a list of 2,335 names of people important in various fields of “work or creation,” the so-called *List of Names for the Slovenian Biographical Lexicon*, which was based on Šlebinger’s material, including the *Abecedary* for the

⁶⁶ “Glonar, Joža (1885–1946),” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi203102/>.

⁶⁷ Glonar, “Slovenski biografski leksikon.” 2–3.

⁶⁸ “Slokar, Ivan (1884–1970),” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi584468/>.

⁶⁹ “Cankar, Izidor (1886–1958),” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi155611/>.

⁷⁰ In 1920, *Brockhaus Enzyklopädie* was reprinted for the 14th time. Last print edition 2005–2006, see “Brockhaus Enzyklopädie,” *Britannica*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Brockhaus-Enzyklopädie>.

⁷¹ “Kidrič, Franc (1880–1950),” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi273316/>.

⁷² “Šlebinger, Janko (1876–1951),” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi659324/>.

aforementioned *Yugoslav Encyclopaedia*.⁷³ At the same time, the basic aim of the planned work was defined, which today would be considered one of the basic guidelines:

*The Slovenian Biographical Lexicon should give as accurate picture as possible of the Slovenian cultural life in the past and present in the biographies of cultural workers; it should include all personalities of any importance for the cultural development of Slovenia who are of Slovenian origin or were born in Slovenia and have worked at home or abroad, as well as personalities of foreign origin who have influenced Slovenian cultural life through their work among Slovenians; biographies should be provided with a note on what has been written about the personalities and their work, where to look for unprinted sources, where they are located, whether pictures have been published. In short: the Slovenian Biographical Lexicon should be a reliable signpost for everyone's orientation, and an aid to the scholar for further research.*⁷⁴

The *Slovenian biographical lexicon* should contain two essential qualities: data (biographical data, subjective and objective personal bibliography, archival and other sources) and an assessment of the creative work. Inclusion in the lexicon was in itself an assessment par excellence.⁷⁵ The authors of the entries included the leading Slovenian scientists and cultural figures of the time, and the entries in the lexicon were based on data collected – as we noted at the beginning – by means of questionnaires distributed among living personalities. Thus, in 1925, the first volume of the *Slovenian Biographical Lexicon* was published. By the First World War, a total of six volumes had been published, all of them by the Cooperative Economic Bank in Ljubljana:⁷⁶

⁷³ Janko Šlebinger and Izidor Cankar, *Seznam imen za slovenski biografski leksikon* (V Ljubljani: Zadružna gospodarska banka, 1922); Grum, "Slovenski biografski leksikon," 276; Oto Luthar and Barbara Šterbenc Svetina, "Novi Slovenski biografski leksikon – prvo dejanje . . .," in *Novi Slovenski biografski leksikon*, ed. Barbara Šterbenc Svetina (Ljubljana: Založba ZRC, 2013), 5–6.

⁷⁴ Uredništvo, "Za uvod," in *Slovenski biografski leksikon*, Book I, vols. 1–4, 1925–1932 (Ljubljana: Zadružna gospodarska banka, 1932), V.

⁷⁵ Grum, "Slovenski biografski leksikon," 275.

⁷⁶ *Fond Komisija za likvidacijo kreditnih zadrug, AS 12*, Arhiv Republike Slovenije, Ljubljana.

Book I

Vol. 1: Abraham–Erberg, 1925, pp. 1–160

Vol. 2: Erberg–Hinterlechner, 1926, pp. 161–320

Vol. 3: Hinterlechner–Kocen, 1928, pp. 321–480

Vol. 4: Kocen–Lužar, 1932, pp. 481–688 + VI

Book II

Vol. 5: Maas–Mrkun, 1933, pp. 1–160

Vol. 6: Mrkun–Petejan, 1935, pp. 161–320

Vol. 7: Peterlin–Pregelj, 1949, pp. 321–480

Vol. 8: Pregelj–Qualle, 1952, pp. 481–611 + VIII

Book III

Vol. 9: Raab–Schmidt, 1960, pp. 1–224

Vol. 10: Schmidt–Steklasa, 1967, pp. 255–464

Vol. 1: Stelč–Švikaršič, 1971, pp. 225–742 + XXXII

Book IV

Vol. 12: Tábornská–Trtnik, 1980, pp. 1–204

Vol. 13: Trubar–Vodaine, 1982, pp. 205–500

Vol. 14: Vode–Zdešar, 1986, pp. 501–780

Vol. 15: Zdolšek–Žvanut, 1991, pp. 781–1049 + XXXII

Personal Index, 1991, 245 pp.

The first three volumes were edited by Izidor Cankar, the first two in collaboration with Joža Glonar, Franc Kidrič and Janko Šlebinger, and the third in collaboration with Joža Glonar and Janko Šlebinger. The next three volumes were edited by Franc Ksaver Lukman (1880–1958),⁷⁷ who continued his excellent work after the Second World War, in collaboration with the editorial board. The publication of each volume was well received by the public, and despite comments on the selection of entries and the individual articles, the writings were very favourable to the work. The lexicon reflected a unified Slovenian cultural space, uniting Slovenes at home, abroad and around the world, and was also open to members of other nations that were important for Slovenian history.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ “Lukman, Franc Ksaver (1880–1958),” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi336060/>.

⁷⁸ Grum, “Slovenski biografski leksikon,” 276–277.

In the course of the editorial process, the contributors to the lexicon also had to deal with the (mis)representation of certain fields of work, which was also the result of the professional orientation of the members of the editorial board and the authors of the individual groups of entries in the lexicon. One of the main reasons for the under-representation of natural scientists in the lexicon was the poorly developed history of the natural sciences and, as a consequence, a small number of authors who could write entries on creators in the natural sciences and medicine. The second editor of the lexicon, France Ksaver Lukman, was the first to point out the imbalance of the lexicon's content.⁷⁹

After the Second World War, which was something of a turning point, important figures from the recent war were included in a new, expanded and modified selection, alongside personalities from overlooked areas of creativity. But even here there was a selection. The censors, appointed by the interested officials of the new authorities, excluded all those who were alleged to have collaborated with the occupation authorities, and the biographies of the few individuals who made it into the selection were scrutinised with particular care.⁸⁰

The Cooperative Economic Bank, the publisher of the Lexicon, was liquidated after the Second World War – as were all pre-war banks. After 1946, the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SAZU) took over the care of the *Slovenian Biographical Lexicon*.⁸¹ Immediately after the war, France Kidrič was appointed editor-in-chief, and he prepared the 7th volume of the Lexicon (published in 1949), while the 8th volume was published for the last time under the editorship of Fran Ksaver Lukman (1952). The latter represents a unique turning point in the consistently favourable and positive reviews of the lexicon throughout its existence. Under the telling headline *Indians, Priests and Patriots*,⁸² Rudi Janhuba,⁸³ then an important political functionary and director of the *Slovenski poročevalec* [Slovenian Reporter],

⁷⁹ Luthar and Šterbenc Svetina, "Novi Slovenski biografski leksikon," 6.

⁸⁰ Luthar and Šterbenc Svetina, "Novi Slovenski biografski leksikon," 6.

⁸¹ Fran Ramovš, "Poročilo podano na svečani seji Glavne skupščine dne 8. februarja 1946," in *Letopis Akademije znanosti in umetnosti v Ljubljani*, Book II, 1943–1947 (Ljubljana: Akademija znanosti in umetnosti, 1947), 142.

⁸² Rudi Janhuba, "Indijanci, farji in rodoljubi," *Slovenski poročevalec*, August 31, 1952.

⁸³ "Janhuba, Rudi (1914–1976)," *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi1012590/>.

published a devastating critique. He questioned both the selection of the personalities discussed (over-representation of priests, under-representation of political workers) and the content of the individual contributions. A literary and theatre critic, playwright, translator, essayist and politician Josip Vidmar (1895–1992), who became president of SAZU in 1952, came out strongly in defence of the lexicon, replying to the challenger in the *Slovenski poročevalec* that the criticism of all things ecclesiastical had been greatly exaggerated and that, as far as the lack of content was concerned, “despite all its shortcomings, the lexicon is the result of a conscientious and long-term scientific effort.”⁸⁴

In the post-war period, the choice of personalities and some of the content was not so much a matter of editorial policy as of everyday politicisation, the tone of which was dictated in the 1950s by the then Minister of Science and Culture, Boris Zihelr (1910–1976),⁸⁵ who did not even stop at the weighty words of the president of the SAZU, Josip Vidmar. The biographies of the theologians were therefore the most frequent target of criticism, but conceptual issues caused additional problems. The inclusion of the heroes of the national liberation struggle and other more or less important companions of post-war politics once again upset the balance of the lexicon, which could no longer be defended in an argumentative sense. For this reason, the painstaking work of the editor and his closest collaborators, who, in addition to the tenacious authors of the articles, deserve special praise for the professional consistency and integrity of the texts of the second volume as a whole (1952), but also of the rest of the lexicon.⁸⁶

After the polemic, the long-time editor Lukman was replaced by a literary historian and librarian Alfonz Gspan (1904–1977).⁸⁷ The lexicon underwent some significant changes in the following years. The range of personalities covered was widened, and areas outside the humanities were included to a greater extent. The lexicon was opened up to younger personalities

⁸⁴ Josip Vidmar, “O Slovenskem biografskem leksikonu,” *Slovenski poročevalec*, September 16, 1952.

⁸⁵ “Zihelr, Boris (1910–1976),” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi868215/>.

⁸⁶ Luthar and Šterbenc Svetina, “Novi Slovenski biografski leksikon,” 7.

⁸⁷ “Gspan, Alfonz, avtor člankov,” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/avtor/Gpn/>.



Figure 8.8. *Slovenian Biographical Lexicon* (1925–1991) – Editors-in-Chief: Izidor Cankar (Vols. 1–3), Franc Ksaver Lukman (Vols. 4–6 and 8), France Kidrič (Vol. 7), Alfonz Gspan (Vols. 9–13), Fran Petre (Vols. 12–13), and Jože Munda (Vols. 12–16). Source: Digital Library of Slovenia; *Delo*, 31. 3. 2018.

who could not be included in the original 1922 list. The biographical and bibliographical processing of the data was deepened, and the articles were revised and supplemented. The Lexicon has become a widely consulted work for both researchers and occasional writers. Since the first volumes were no longer available, the first two volumes were reprinted abroad in 1976, which was a kind of recognition for the lexicon. After Gspan's death in 1977, a literary historian Fran Petre (1906–1978)⁸⁸ took over the editorship for a short period, followed by a lexicographer, bibliographer and literary

⁸⁸ "Kolofon Slovenski biografski leksikon," *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/kolofon/sbl/>.

historian Jože Munda (1930–2018),⁸⁹ who first arranged for the printing of the already largely prepared volumes 12 and 13, and then of the last two volumes and the connecting personal index for the entire lexicon.⁹⁰

THE NEW SLOVENIAN BIOGRAPHICAL LEXICON

Jože Munda, the last editor of the *Slovenian Biographical Lexicon*, successfully opposed the idea of merging the *Slovenian Biographical Lexicon* with the *Encyclopaedia of Slovenia* at the end of the 1980s. Munda convinced Darko Dolinar (1942–2022),⁹¹ the then head of the Institute of Slovenian Literature and Literary Sciences, under which the lexicon was published, that the *Slovenian Biographical Lexicon* should be preserved in its original form. This decision, taken at the beginning of the 1990s, was the basis for the subsequent transformation of the Section for Biography, Bibliography and Documentation of the Institute of Slovenian Literature and Literary Sciences into the Institute of Biography and Bibliography, which was founded in September 1999 and began its work in 2000. In 2005, the Institute was renamed the Institute of Cultural History of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SAZU) in order to pursue a more ambitious research orientation and to increase the visibility of its work both in academic circles and among the general public.⁹²

In 2006, in cooperation with SAZU, the Expert Council of the new *Slovenian Biographical Lexicon* was established, which developed the basis for the new edition of the Lexicon. Based on the suggestions of the members of the Council and the extracts from the Slovenian bio-bibliographical database, designed by Martin Grum at the Institute of Cultural History, a proposed glossary was drawn up, which was the starting point for the selection of the personalities presented in the first volume of *The New*

⁸⁹ “Munda, Jože, avtor člankov,” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/avtor/Munda/>; “Jože Munda (1930–2018),” ZRC SAZU, Inštitut za kulturno zgodovino, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://ikz.zrc-sazu.si/sl/vsebina/joze-munda>.

⁹⁰ Grum, “Slovenski biografski leksikon,” 278.

⁹¹ “Dolinar, Darko (1942–2022),” *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi1025540/>.

⁹² “About our institute,” ZRC SAZU, Inštitut za kulturno zgodovino, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://ikz.zrc-sazu.si/en/predstavitev>.

Slovenian Biographical Lexicon. The selection, as in the first *Slovenian Biographical Lexicon*, mainly reflects the fields represented by the members of the Expert Council of the new lexicon, with the addition of the field editors.

In 2008, the Expert Council of *The New Slovenian Biographical Lexicon* decided to publish the first dictionary in electronic form, which was organised by Petra Vide Ogrin and her colleagues at the SAZU Library, and in 2009 the Slovenian Biographical Clearinghouse was conceived. The efforts to present the *Slovenian Biographical Lexicon* online have resulted in a new Slovenian online biographical portal,⁹³ which accompanies the printed version of *The New Slovenian Biographical Lexicon*. The web portal brings together the entries of the *Slovenian Biographical Lexicon* and the *Slovenian Biographical Lexicon of Primorska Region* (Primorski slovenski biografski leksikon), as well as from *The New Slovenian Biographical Lexicon*. The total number of articles written for *The New Slovenian Biographical Lexicon* that are publicly available online is currently 1,454 personalities (1,229 men and 225 women) and 32 families. In addition to these, the Slovenian Biography portal also publishes 4,527 articles from the *Primorski slovenski biografski leksikon* (published in 20 volumes from 1974 to 1994) and all the articles from the first *Slovenian Biographical Lexicon*. On the Slovenian Biography portal, users can read one or more articles on around 9,000 personalities and 141 families.⁹⁴ It is hoped that the biographical entries in the online version will gradually become more richly illustrated with pictures and other material (portraits, works, musical performances, maps, etc.), and that the cross-references and search facilities will also reveal aspects of a person's life and work that are more difficult for the reader to extract from the printed version.

⁹³ *Slovenska biografija*, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/>.

⁹⁴ Data accessed May 15, 2025.



Figure 8.9. *The New Slovenian Biographical Lexicon*

Vol. 1: A (2013); 189 biographical entries

Vol. 2: B–Bla (2017); 257 biographical entries

Vol. 3: Ble–By (2018); 277 biographical entries

Vol. 4: C (2022); 152 biographical entries

Vol. 5: Č (2022), 116 biographical entries

Total printed biographical entries: 991

Source: Photo by Marko Zaplatil, ZRC SAZU. Archive of the *Slovenian Biographical Lexicon*.

The New Slovenian Biographical Lexicon is the Slovenian national biographical lexicon and today one of the main projects of ZRC SAZU, which, together with the Archive of the *Slovenian Biographical Lexicon* and the Database of the *Slovenian Biographical Lexicon* (PZSBL), is housed at the Institute of Cultural History of ZRC SAZU. It continues and builds on the work of the *Slovenian Biographical Lexicon*, which was published from 1925–1991. In extended descriptions, it presents the most prominent Slovenian and Slovenian-related personalities from all historical periods up to the present day. The lexicon’s authors follow the established research approach in the field of biographical studies. The result is a set of entries based on verified facts and a structure comparable to the Central European tradition of the biographical lexicon. Alongside detailed factual information on birth, schooling and occupation, the glossary entries provide a cultural and historical setting of the personality in space and time. The authors are experts in the fields of activity of the personalities included in *The New Slovenian Biographical Lexicon*, which allows for a credible evaluation of

their work. In addition to the categorisation of entries (A, B, C and D) and various recommendations, the guidelines for selecting personalities for the lexicon, which – like the questionnaires and the instructions to the writers of the entries – are available on the website of the Institute of Cultural History,⁹⁵ also set out the central guideline for their acceptance into the lexicon:

*The New Slovenian Biographical Lexicon welcomes all personalities of Slovenian origin or born in Slovenia and who have worked at home or abroad, as well as personalities of foreign origin who are in any way important for the development and influence in the Slovenian territory in the fields of culture, science, art, economy, politics and society, and in other areas of importance for national identity, and who have contributed to the recognition and promotion of Slovenia in the world through their work among Slovenians and through their achievements in the field of culture, science, art, economy, politics and society, and in other areas of importance for national self-determination and national self-determination.*⁹⁶

The century-long tradition of the *Slovenian Biographical Lexicon* has in many ways shaped the guidelines and work of *The New Slovenian Biographical Lexicon*, and as we have seen, a valuable archive was founded 100 years ago, which is still alive today. Since the conception of the first edition of the lexicon in the 1920s and the last volume being published in 1991, more than half a century later, the *Slovenian Biographical Lexicon* has truly reflected a century of Slovenian history. Readers will find in it not only political, social and linguistic changes, but also the methodological development of the various humanities.⁹⁷ *The New Slovenian Biographical Lexicon* is not just a more or less arbitrarily designed collection of biographies, as the project leader and director of ZRC SAZU, Oto Luthar, and the long-standing editor-in-chief, Barbara Šterbenc Svetina,

⁹⁵ “The New Slovenian Biographical Lexicon (NSBL),” ZRC SAZU, Inštitut za kulturno zgodovino, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://ikz.zrc-sazu.si/en/strani/the-new-slovenian-biographical-lexicon-nsbl>.

⁹⁶ “Smernice za izbor osebnosti v NSBL,” ZRC SAZU, Inštitut za kulturno zgodovino, accessed May 19, 2025, <https://ikz.zrc-sazu.si/sites/default/files/SMERNICE%20za%20izbor%20osebnosti%20v%20NSBL.pdf>.

⁹⁷ Luthar and Šterbenc Svetina, “Novi Slovenski biografski leksikon,” 5.

pointed out in the introductory chapter to the first volume, but a Slovenian national biographical lexicon, which, to use the words of Jože Munda, contains “comprehensive and documented articles on prominent Slovenians and others who are important to Slovenians in some way,”⁹⁸ following the temporal and spatial guidelines of its predecessor, the *Slovenian Biographical Lexicon* (1925–1991), while also reflecting the specifics of the time in which it was itself created.⁹⁹

Although *The New Slovenian Biographical Lexicon* is firmly rooted in the tradition of the still relevant *Slovenian Biographical Lexicon*, it has encountered a number of new challenges with the expansion of the fields covered and the process of digitisation. The history of the natural sciences, in particular, has been underrepresented, as reflected in the number of entries in these fields. For living personalities, the law on the protection of personal data poses a challenge, which could result in the lexicon containing less data. Sometimes individuals do not wish to be included in the lexicon, often for complex reasons. Despite all these issues, it is undeniable that *The New Slovenian Biographical Lexicon* remains the most relevant source for biographical research, and readers’ comments on online entries also contribute significantly to its creation.

⁹⁸ Jože Munda, “Enciklopedija,” in *Enciklopedija Slovenije*, ed. Marjan Javornik (editor-in-chief) (Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 1989), 40.

⁹⁹ Luthar and Šterbenc Svetina, “Novi Slovenski biografski leksikon,” 5.

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