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THE PROJECT ENCYKLOPEDIA LUBELSZCZYNY AT THE CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON REGIONAL AND LOCAL HISTORY, MARIA CURIE-SKŁODOWSKA UNIVERSITY, LUBLIN

The review discusses the digital project Encyklopedia Lubelszczyzny, developed at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University's Center for Research on Regional and Local History. Based on the analysis of the project's database, as well as the description of the project's purpose and objectives provided by its creators, the review outlines the concept, structure, and goals of this initiative, which seeks to build an interactive database of the history of the towns and villages of Lublin Voivodeship. Particular attention is given to the project's dual model of presentation: the contents are organized into an "expert zone", reserved for professional researchers, and a "regionalists' zone", intended for the broad community of local history enthusiasts. This arrangement promotes interaction between academic research and local communities. The review reflects on the significance of the digital turn in the humanities, new forms of cooperation between historians and the general public, and practices of cultural heritage preservation in the virtual setting.

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The digital age poses new challenges for historical scholarship, transforming the way historians work with archives, produce knowledge about the past, and communicate this knowledge (Noiret 2018). Researchers used to go to archives to study materials preserved there; today, their task is to add new sources, ensure their accessibility, and develop navigational tools to simplify search and verification. The digital age calls into question traditional forms of representing historical knowledge. It is not only about developing principles of open science, but also about coming up with ways to represent history that would be adapted to the virtual space. Another issue growing in importance is cooperation with a wide lay audience in producing historical knowledge. The availability of digital technologies, which are increasingly successfully used by non-professionals to create their own histories, poses for historians the task of changing their perception of the lay public as passive recipients of expert knowledge and developing practices of interaction with the public in history-making on equal terms, where the expertise of historians would meet the needs, desires, and cultural knowledge of ordinary people (Foster 2014, 4).

The digital turn has produced new disciplines such as the digital humanities, digital history, and digital public history, which promote not only the use of new digital tools to facilitate the ways historians have traditionally done their work, but also reflection on how these tools change the nature of historical inquiry (Von Eijnatten, Pieters, Verheul 2013, 57). Supporters of the digital turn argue that it has made possible a new global approach to the knowledge and understanding of history based on new values, interpretative practices, and strategies of meaning-making (Burdick et al. 2012, 7). That is why today these new trends go beyond the digital disciplines, becoming a challenge and new reality for all historians.

Digital projects, presentation of research in virtual space, and interaction with audiences have become common practices for individual historians and research teams. Sharing accumulated experience in this area allows for a better understanding of the strategies, values, and challenges faced

by scholars that engage in such work and can become a valuable source of inspiration.

In these pages, we would like to engage in a more detailed discussion with the authors of the project “Encyclopedia of Lubelszczyzna,” created by the efforts of the UMCS Center for Research on Regional and Local History.

According to the creators, Encyklopedia Lubelszczyzny is an interactive database on the history and social, economic, and cultural life of the towns and villages of Lublin Voivodeship, designed to facilitate access to verified and reliable data on the history of the Lublin region, collected in one place on a scale never seen before¹.

Currently, the project includes information-filled online chapters (pages) dedicated to more than 300 settled localities across what is today Lublin Voivodeship (about 40 more pages are in development). Notably, the database also includes settlements that have not survived to this day but played their role in the historical development of the region².

Each settlement page is split into two parts: the expert zone (for professional researchers) and the regionalists’ zone (for lay local history enthusiasts). These sections are visually differentiated, which makes navigating the website more convenient and intuitive.

The expert zone for communities at the level of *gmina* and *powiat* centers begins with the section “W Świecie Cyfrowym,” which includes links to official websites of local self-government, statistical resources, online encyclopedias, and public, sports, and religious organizations and enterprises. In addition, the section directs visitors to professional and amateur video materials dedicated to local history and current events, sourced from social media. There are also links to sources and academic publications on the region that are accessible online. The links are systematized by headings reflecting the specifics of the available Internet resources, such as the existence

¹ Dla korzystających — mapa strony. Centrum Badań nad Historią Regionalną i Lokalną UMCS: website. URL: <https://lubelskie-encyklopedia.pl/index.php/jak-korzystac/> (accessed: 01.01.2026).

² Paszkowska A. Wielka, wirtualna, interaktywna encyklopedia Lubelszczyzny. Kurier Lubelski: website. Date of update: 24.01.2023. URL: <https://kurierlubelski.pl/wielka-wirtualna-interaktywna-encyklopedia-lubelszczyzny/ar/c5-17225501> (accessed: 01.01.2026).

of local press or distinguishing aspects of local history (for instance, there may be resources dedicated to national minorities living in the region)³. Overall, the headings cover general information, current events, culture, history and traditions, religious life, public institutions and enterprises, tourism and sports, and local landmarks and attractions.

It is no coincidence that in the expert zone the section dedicated to Internet resources comes first. Through it, the authors of the project invite the visitor to collaborate and personally participate in interpreting the past. Studies show that people tend to trust information more if they feel they can contribute to or control the narrative thanks to the availability of easily accessible sources, hyperlinks, and resources that become a space for independent research and interpretation (Foster 2014, 7).

The expert section for each locality in the database includes information on the origin of the settlement's name, its first appearance in historical sources, coat of arms, and administrative affiliation, as well as a map of the area. It also covers toponymics, anthroponymics, archaeological information, history of the area and local landowners, demographic data, ethnic and religious makeup of the population, economic development, landmarks and sites of memory, and important historical events. Such arrangement allows the compilers both to present specific information, such as the demography of the region, and to capture the fortunes of the locality across various historical contexts (through military and political conflicts and economic transformations). Individual contributors are able to add to or modify the rubrics according to the specifics of the historical development of the area — for example, by providing information on local crafts⁴. It should also be noted that the expert information about individual localities is of a research, rather than reference, nature: it contains references to academic literature and archival sources and includes maps and photographs, depictions of important archaeological finds and local attractions in the past and present. Many photographs have

³ Sławatycze. Centrum Badań nad Historią Regionalną i Lokalną UMCS: website. URL: <https://lubelskie-encyklopedia.pl/index.php/2023/10/29/slawatycze/> (accessed: 01.01.2026).

⁴ Biłgoraj. Centrum Badań nad Historią Regionalną i Lokalną UMCS: website. URL: <https://lubelskie-encyklopedia.pl/index.php/2024/09/15/bilgoraj/> (accessed: 01.01.2026).

been taken by the contributors themselves⁵, which testifies to their desire to see the area with their own eyes, explore the surviving landmarks and artifacts, and share the picture that emerges with the website's visitors.

The page for each locality contains, as already mentioned, a segment designated as "Little Homeland — the Regionalists' Zone." The authors of the project see it as a tool for building communication and cooperation between professional researchers and the broad community of local history enthusiasts, which is one of the main goals of the UMCS Center for Research on Regional and Local History⁶.

As stated on the project website, prospective contributors to "Little Homeland — the Regionalists' Zone" must submit to the website moderators a historical narrative in any form (essay, popular article, multimedia presentation, film, photographs, scans of documents, and more) under their own name, by clicking on the corresponding tab in the sections devoted to: local self-government, companies and enterprises, churches and religious associations, cultural life, education, sports, notable personalities, memorabilia from family archives, memoirs and recollections, tourist attractions, and folklore and local sites of memory.

The authors envision the regionalist zone of their website as a space for interaction and exchange where the creativity and knowledge of lovers of local history can find expression, as well as a database that helps to identify, represent, and, importantly, preserve family and local heritage⁷.

It is interesting that the zone opens with a rubric that invites visitors to share their own ideas about development strategies for the region's communities

⁵ For instance, Aleksandrów. Centrum Badań nad Historią Regionalną i Lokalną UMCS: website. URL: <https://lubelskie-encyklopedia.pl/index.php/2023/06/22/aleksandrow/> (accessed: 01.01.2026); Stoczek Łukowski. Centrum Badań nad Historią Regionalną i Lokalną UMCS: website. URL: <https://lubelskie-encyklopedia.pl/index.php/2024/11/05/14414/> (accessed: 01.01.2026).

⁶ Zostań współautorem strony. Centrum Badań nad Historią Regionalną i Lokalną UMCS: website. URL: <https://lubelskie-encyklopedia.pl/index.php/instrukcje/> (accessed: 01.01.2026).

⁷ Paszkowska A. Wielka, wirtualna, interaktywna encyklopedia Lubelszczyzny. Kurier Lubelski: website. Date of update: 24.01.2023. URL: <https://kurierlubelski.pl/wielka-wirtualna-interaktywna-encyklopedia-lubelszczyzny/ar/c5-17225501> (accessed: 01.01.2026).

and the region as a whole. This appeal for participation, on the one hand, reflects the democratization of public life in Poland and, on the other, is aimed at strengthening civil society by encouraging citizens to take responsibility not only for maintaining the existing order, but also for improving the life of local communities.

Thus, the Encyklopedia Lubelszczyzny strives to both represent the current state of knowledge on the region's history and help preserve its cultural heritage by creating a space for community and engagement. The authors of the project offer a view of history as a living and continuous process that has no end point, proclaim the principles of shared authorship in history-making, and provide tools for putting these principles into practice.

The creative team of the project — historians of the University of Maria Curie-Skłodowska — are long-term partners of our department and faculty. Over the past few years, our institutions have regularly participated in joint conferences, exchanged students for annual archival tours, and shared in academic mobility programs. Moreover, it was the Faculty of History of the University of Maria Curie-Skłodowska that extended a helping hand to members of our department Yulia Kiseleva and Victoriia Ivaschenko at the time of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine.

We are deeply grateful to the creators of the project for agreeing to share their experience in this anniversary issue of the Bulletin of V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University marking 60 years since the establishment of the Department of Historiography, Source Studies, and Archaeology.

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**ПРОЄКТ «ENCYKLOPEDIA LUBELSZCZYZNY»
ЦЕНТРУ ДОСЛІДЖЕНЬ РЕГІОНАЛЬНОЇ
ТА ЛОКАЛЬНОЇ ІСТОРІЇ
УНІВЕРСИТЕТУ МАРІЇ КЮРІ-СКЛОДОВСЬКОЇ В ЛЮБЛІНІ**

У рецензії розглядається цифровий проєкт «Encyklopedia Lubelszczyzny», розроблений у Центрі досліджень регіональної та локальної історії Університету Марії Кюрі-Скłodовської в Любліні. Спираючись на аналіз бази даних проєкту, а також опис мети та завдань проєкту, наданий його авторами, у публікації окреслено концепцію, структуру та мету цієї ініціативи, спрямованої на створення інтерактивної бази даних з історії міст і сіл Люблінського воєводства. Особливу увагу приділено дуальній моделі представлення проєкту: контент розподілено на «експертну зону», закріплену за професійними дослідниками, та «зону краєзнавців», призначену для широкої спільноти аматорів локальної історії. Така структура сприяє взаємодії між академічною наукою та місцевими громадами. У рецензії проаналізовано значення «цифрового повороту» в гуманітаристиці, нові форми співпраці між істориками та громадськістю, а також практики збереження культурної спадщини у віртуальному середовищі.

Ключові слова: **Польща, публічна історія, цифровий краєзнавчий проєкт, партисипативне виробництво знань.**

Конфлікт інтересів: автор засвідчує, що, незважаючи на те, що є членом редакційної колегії цього журналу, процес рецензування, ухвалення рішення щодо публікації та редагування здійснювалися незалежно, без його участі чи впливу. Будь-які потенційні конфлікти інтересів були повністю усунені шляхом зовнішнього контролю за процесом. Крім того, автор повністю дотримувався етичних норм, зокрема щодо уникнення плагіату, фальсифікації даних і дублювання публікацій.

У роботі не використано ресурси штучного інтелекту.

Conflict of Interest: The author certifies that, despite serving as a member of the editorial board of this journal, the processes of peer review, editorial decision-making regarding publication, and editing were conducted independently, without the author's participation or influence. Any potential conflicts of interest were fully mitigated through external oversight of the process. In addition, the author has fully adhered to ethical standards, including the avoidance of plagiarism, data falsification, and redundant (duplicate) publication.

No artificial intelligence tools were used in the preparation of this work.

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