

Why digital badges matter? (SRCE experience)

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1. SUMMARY

Digital badges are becoming increasingly used in education as a tool to validate learning achievements. Whether to for informal educational content that enables in short period of time the acquisition of certain skills and competences. Or in formal education as micro credential, for extra-curricular training or a game element in the course. SRCE implemented digital badges in 2015 to enable participants to get credentials for completing training courses and to educate teacher about digital badge and how they can be used. In presentation gained experience and lessons learned on digital badges will be presented.

2. ABOUT DIGITAL BADGES

Digital badges have a wide, but growing application in education, whether it's an educational program, a course, a module or just an activity. Accordingly, their application varies from being used as information, proof of acquired competences (clearly indicating how the learning outcomes are valued) or just as a reward or motivation for further work and learning. Digital badges are indicators of achievement or skill presented as small images. They consist of metadata and include links that explain context, meaning, process how they were acquired and the results of the activity. They prove that someone has a certain skill or knowledge. Given the range of advantages and practicalities they bring, badges are getting more and more present into the educational process and are becoming an integral part of it. Open badges provide additional contribution to digital badges, or extend their applicability, and enable the creation of an open system. Open badges enable participants to visualize the knowledge, skills and achievements they have acquired in an institution, and to make this information visible through the badge image and its metadata for later access and review. Open badges can be displayed anywhere on the web, they are portable credentials because they have integrated information about someone's learning experience and acquired knowledge and skills.

3. SRCE EXPERIENCE WITH IMPLEMENTATION OF DIGITAL BADGES

University Computing Centre SRCE (www.srce.hr/eng) as the national competence center for information and communication technologies and the center for education and support in the area of ICT application have introduced digital badges into its learning activities in 2015. The E-learning Centre at SRCE (www.srce.hr/elc) implemented badges in its online courses on topic of the Moodle and e-learning technologies. They were awarded as a credentials for completing all the activities in the course. The aim was to enable participants who completed the course to share the evidence of their gained skills and knowledge but also to acquaint teachers with digital badges and possibility to use them in their teaching. First reactions from participants were divided. Some teachers this was gamification of the educational process but others the rather positive about it. In the role of participants, they liked the possibility to receive, beside paper certificate of completion, digital certificate for their learning achievements. One more benefit from digital badges was that they could be using in educational process as the reward for achievements in the course or in the extracurricular activity and additional motivation for students. This digital certificate contained information about the course, the course provider, learning outcomes of the course and the assessment methods. The initiative was recognized by other services in the SRCE: first in 2016 the educational programmes for IT specialists (Linux academy and edu4IT programme), and in 2018, the online basic IT courses (called Tečajevi SRCA). Today, all SRCE online courses have possibility for participants to earn digital badges, it has become a standard component. Besides them, number of face-to-face courses added the possibility to earn digital badge as well.



Picture 1: Digital badges by SRCE awarded for completion of courses developed by E-learning Centre

SRCE had the opportunity to be a project partner in the Erasmus+ project ReOPEN. - Recognition of Open and Valid Learning (<http://reopen.eu>) which was coordinated by the Vytautas Magnus University from Lithuania. The project goal was to create instruments to develop validated open online learning for recognition of prior and non-formal learning. One of the project activities was to explore the application of digital badges as a new form of digital credentialisation and tracking one's learning path in non-formal open learning. SRCE participated in the realization of this activity and co-developed the educational materials on digital badges. Besides the educational material, project partners developed the workshop on the recognition of non-formal learning which included the part about digital badges as well. The workshops prepared by SRCE attracted high number of teachers from schools and higher education, as well as the educators working in adult education system. Their feedback was very

positive especially on the part regarding the implementation of digital badges. SRCE team gained valuable experience in this project, especially on digital badges.

4. DEVELOPMENT OF THE ONLINE COURSE ON DIGITAL BADGES

The next step SRCE took was development of the online course on digital badges and their application in learning activities in Croatian language.

Development of the online course “Digital badges application in the learning activities” (Primjena digitalnih znački u obrazovnim aktivnostima) started in spring 2018. The aim of the course was to familiarise teachers and anyone involved in education process with the concept of digital badge, what it consists of, what it is used for, how it’s being created and how it can be used in different educational environments.

The screenshot shows a Moodle course page titled "Primjena digitalnih znački u obrazovnim aktivnostima". The page is in Croatian and features a sidebar with navigation options like "KALENDAR" (calendar for February 2019), "PRISTUPAČNOST" (accessibility), "KORISNICI ONLINE" (1 user online), and "LICENCA" (Creative Commons license). The main content area includes a welcome message, a list of learning objectives, and a list of topics to be covered. A blue ribbon graphic on the right says "Digitalne značke su za dijeljenje".

Dobrodošli na tečaj o digitalnim značkama!

Dobrodošli na još jedan tečaj Centra za e-učenje Srca. Na ovom tečaju utvrdit ćemo koje su prednosti primjene digitalnih znački u obrazovnim aktivnostima te s kojima se izazovima pri tome srećemo.

Zašto smo se odlučili na izradu ovog online tečaja?

Digitalne značke imaju široku, ali i sve veću primjenu bilo da se radi o obrazovnom programu, tečaju, kolegiju, modulu ili samo aktivnosti. U skladu s tim njihova primjena varira od toga da služe kao informacija/dokaz o stečenim kompetencijama (pri tome jasno navodeći na koji način su vrednovani ishodi učenja) ili samo kao nagrada odnosno kao motivacija za daljnji rad i učenje.

Stoga je cilj tečaja "Primjena digitalnih znački u obrazovnim aktivnostima" upoznati vas s pojmom digitalne značke, od čega se sastoji, čemu služi i kako se izrađuje te kako se njome koristiti u različitim obrazovnim okruženjima.

Tečaj je podijeljen u nekoliko cjelina, a po završetku tečaja polaznici će moći:

- objasniti pojam digitalne i otvorene značke
- samostalno izraditi digitalnu značku
- integrirati digitalnu značku u neku obrazovnu aktivnost
- izvesti dobivenu digitalnu (otvorenu) značku i pokazati je i drugima.

Cjeline koje ćemo obraditi u ovom tečaju su:

1. Uvod u digitalne značke
2. Digitalne značke u obrazovanju
3. Kako izraditi digitalnu značku
4. Izvoz digitalne značke u druge sustave

Tečaj nije mentoriran i možete ga pohađati brzinom koja vama odgovara ili pregledati samo neke dijelove tečaja koji vas zanimaju. Predviđeno vrijeme za prolazak cijelog tečaja je šest školskih sati. Polaznici koji prođu cijeli tečaj, odnosno pregledaju sve zadane materijale i ispune završnu anketu dobit će potvrdu o završetku tečaja i digitalnu značku.

Nadamo se da će vam ovaj tečaj pružiti dovoljno informacija i dati ideju kako primijeniti digitalne značke u obrazovnom okruženju.

Pri izradi tečaja korišteni su i materijali o otvorenim značkama koji su pripremljeni u okviru Erasmus+ projekta Recognition of Valid and Open Learning (ReOPEN), na kojem je Srce bilo partner. Više o projektu možete pronaći na: www.reopen.eu

Picture 2: Main page of the online course on digital badges

The course was prepared and developed by SRCE team and reviewed by external expert. The online course was developed using the e-learning platform Moodle, widely used for online courses developed by SRCE. The course was in production from the mid-September 2018 and first feedback from course participants was very positive. In first three months 334 participants enrolled into the course. This results were more than it was expected and are considered great success. Usually teachers are

reserved about new things in education and are not so eager for training because of the lack of time. The course includes the survey with the aim to collect participants' feedback. The survey is not mandatory, but those participants who want to earn digital badge have to fill it in as one of the tasks in the course. The survey is anonymous and 70 participants responded to it. From this number, 67 of participants fulfilled all the tasks and activities in the course and received the digital badges. Majority of participants (92,85%) are school teachers and the rest of the higher education teachers. The participants are satisfied with the course and the average grade they have given to the course is 4,42. With response that 95,71% participants have gained the knowledge and skills they have expected it is considered that the development of the course was justified. SRCE will continue with its work on raising awareness on new technologies and their possibilities to enhance the quality of educational process as well as providing training for teachers.

5. REFERENCES

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6. AUTHORS' BIOGRAPHIES



Sandra Kucina Softic is Assistant Director for Education and User Support at the University of Zagreb University Computer Centre (SRCE). She is also the Head of the E-learning Centre at SRCE and the Head of the Office for E-learning at the University of Zagreb. Her work is focused on monitoring and fostering the e-learning implementation in higher education institutions in Croatia and providing support and advice to institutions, teachers and students in implementation of new technologies in learning and teaching process. She is Croatian representative in ET2020 Working group on Digital Education: Learning, Teaching and Assessment (2018-2020) and she is member of European Commission Education and Training Expert Panel Group.

Tamara Birkić is working at the E-learning Centre at the University of Zagreb University Computing Centre. She works with teachers helping them in implementation of e-learning technologies into educational process. She is educator holding training courses for teachers and author of online courses about Moodle system. Her area of interest is in instructional design and multimedia.

Irena Jandrić graduated at University of Zagreb Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Services, with the major in Speech Pathology and Therapy, in 1998. She has been employed at University of Zagreb University Computing Centre's Department for Educational services since 2005. At her current position she is responsible for the delivery of basic ICT training, including planning of educational activities, coordination of teams developing classroom and online courses, coordination of trainers, and delivery of classroom and online courses. She's interested in adult education (ICT and other areas), with the emphasis on different teaching methods.