FROM LOCAL HERITAGE
TO OPEN KNOWLEDGE

Schools as Community-Based Knowledge Hubs

The Moslavina Heritage Project as a Case Study

GUARDIANS 2026 • INVITED TALK

The case is local. The challenge is global.

Iva Galić
Primary School Mate Lovrak • Kutina, Croatia



WHO ARE THE GUARDIANS OF TRUTH AND INTEGRITY?

Scientists? **Editors?** **Librarians?** **Teachers?** **Students?**

What if research integrity begins long before university?

Guardians 2026 foregrounds reproducibility, validity and integrity in conducting and communicating research.

THE INFORMATION CHALLENGE

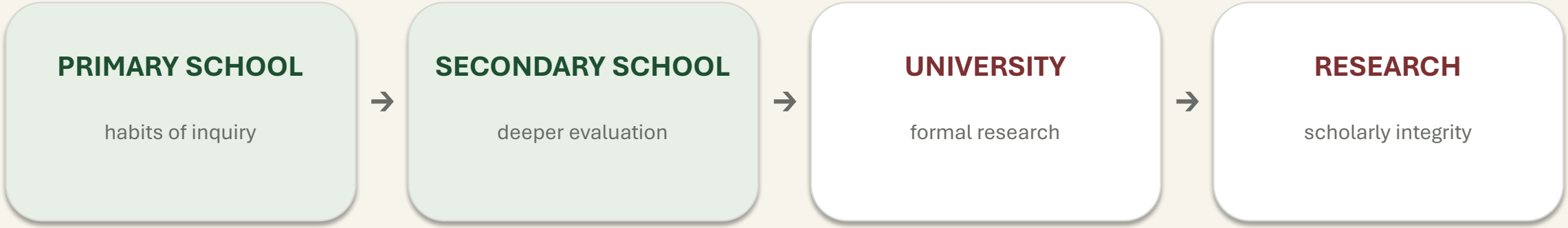
Critical thinking is the bridge between information and trustworthy knowledge.

INFORMATION ≠ **KNOWLEDGE** ≠ **TRUSTWORTHY KNOWLEDGE**



Critical thinking operates throughout the process—not only at the end.

CAN INTEGRITY BE LEARNED BEFORE UNIVERSITY?



If we want future researchers who value evidence and integrity, we need to develop critical thinkers much earlier.

MOSLAVINA: A CASE STUDY

A local setting for exploring how students can create, evaluate and share knowledge.



THE PROJECT

16 eighth-grade students

School library • teachers • local ethnologist • local community

Research focus

traditional architecture
folk costumes
lifestyle and everyday life
music and customs

Moslavina becomes a living laboratory for inquiry.

TRADITIONAL ARCHITECTURE: READING THE WOODEN HOUSE

Heritage can be examined as evidence embedded in place, materials and everyday life.



STUDENTS ASK:

- How was the house built?
- What was each space used for?
- What does it reveal about family life?
- What has changed—and what remains?

Observation → documentation → interpretation

MUSIC AND ORAL TRADITION

Intangible heritage requires careful listening, contextualisation and comparison of sources.



FROM PERFORMANCE TO RESEARCH

Students explored how songs, instruments and oral traditions carry knowledge across generations.

Critical questions

- Who remembers the tradition?
- Are there different versions?
- What context gives it meaning?
- How can it be documented responsibly?

FOLK COSTUME: OBJECT, SOURCE AND IDENTITY

Material culture becomes a source that students can observe, compare and interpret.



LOOK CLOSELY

Embroidery • materials • colour • form • jewellery • function

COMPARE

Students compare examples and connect visible details with written and oral sources.

INTERPRET

What can clothing tell us about identity, place and everyday life?

THE ETHNOLOGIST AS A COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE PARTNER

Expert knowledge supports context, terminology and interpretation.



EXPERT DIALOGUE

Students do not receive knowledge passively.

They ask questions,
compare explanations,
clarify terminology,
and connect expert knowledge
with other evidence.

Community expertise becomes part of the research process.

THE SCHOOL LIBRARY AS A RESEARCH SPACE

The library connects heritage objects, expert knowledge, sources and student inquiry.



THE LIBRARY ENABLES STUDENTS TO:

- encounter primary and secondary sources
- formulate questions
- search for additional information
- evaluate and compare sources
- discuss interpretations
- organise and communicate findings

It becomes a place where knowledge is created—not only stored.

FIELDWORK: HERITAGE IN ITS ORIGINAL CONTEXT

Experiential learning moves students beyond secondary sources.



FIELDWORK MAKES RESEARCH VISIBLE

Students observe heritage where it exists, document details and connect physical evidence with information from people and sources.

OBSERVE | RECORD | QUESTION | COMPARE

Authentic context encourages curiosity and careful observation.

FROM RESEARCH TO STORYTELLING

Students documenting the traditional way of life in Moslavina

RESEARCH → DOCUMENTATION → INTERPRETATION → COMMUNICATION

The students did not only collect information about heritage. They transformed their research into a short film that brings traditional everyday life to the audience.

5-minute student film

STUDENT FILM

INSERT 5-MINUTE FILM HERE

Traditional Way of Life in Moslavina

BUT HOW DO WE KNOW THAT THE STORY WE TELL IS RELIABLE?

The film leads from heritage interpretation to critical thinking and research integrity.

FACT **MEMORY** **EVIDENCE** **INTERPRETATION**

↓

Students had to decide which information to include, which sources to trust, how to compare oral accounts with other evidence, and how to communicate uncertainty.

This is where a heritage project becomes an exercise in critical thinking and responsible knowledge creation.

CRITICAL THINKING IN THE CASE STUDY

Students learn to distinguish observation, memory, evidence and interpretation.



- Is this a fact, a memory or an interpretation?
- Who is providing the information?
- Can another source confirm it?
- Does the object support the story?
- What context is missing?
- How should uncertainty be communicated?

Critical thinking is part of the research method—not an extra activity.

STUDENTS BECOME RESEARCHERS



ASK → SEARCH → OBSERVE → INTERVIEW → DOCUMENT → COMPARE → INTERPRET → SHARE

They were not simply collecting information.

They were learning how knowledge is constructed.

Project-based • research-based • experiential learning

FROM MEMORY TO EVIDENCE

Critical thinking turns a story, object or observation into a researchable claim.

A community member shares a memory.

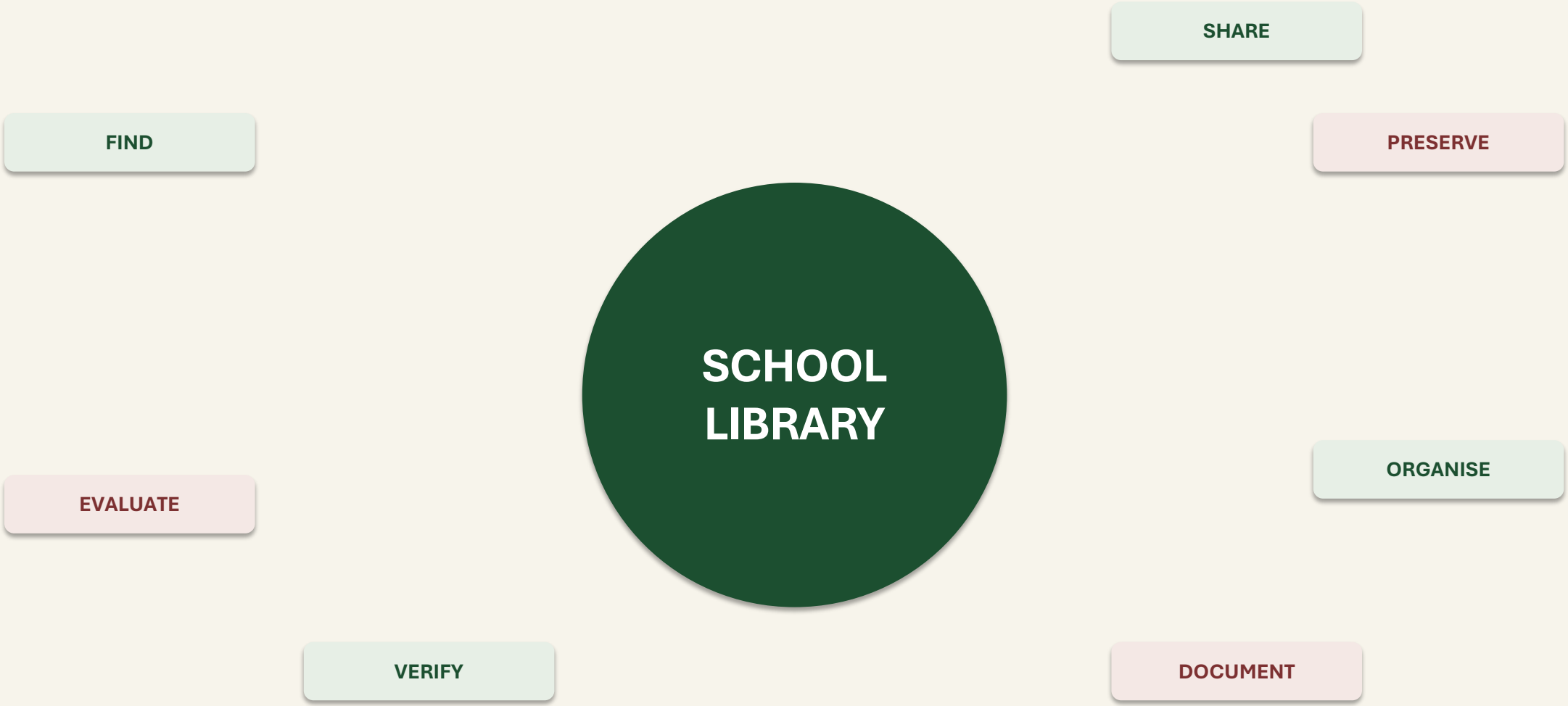
↓

Is it evidence?

- Who is the source?
- Do other sources confirm it?
- When was it recorded?
- Is evidence being interpreted or described?
- Can it be documented?
- What remains uncertain?

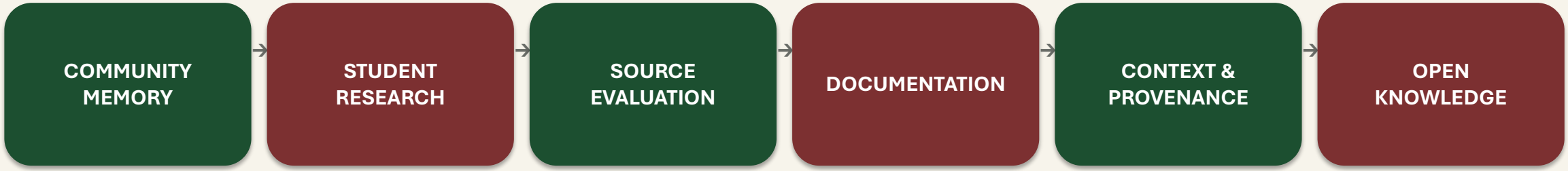
The goal is not suspicion. The goal is proportionate verification.

THE SCHOOL LIBRARY AS A KNOWLEDGE HUB



Information literacy + critical thinking + ethical communication

FROM LOCAL KNOWLEDGE TO OPEN KNOWLEDGE



Open knowledge is not only about access.

It also requires context, traceability, responsible interpretation and clear communication of uncertainty.

WHAT CAN GO WRONG?

Using information-integrity concepts as a lens for learning—not as labels for every local source.

Incorrect information	→	check accuracy
Conflicting accounts	→	compare sources
Missing context	→	restore context
Selective information	→	seek additional evidence
Uncertain information	→	label uncertainty

Every claim deserves an appropriate level of verification.

Conceptual link: Taswell et al. (2021), Truth in Science, DOI 10.48085/M85EC99EE

WHAT DID STUDENTS DEVELOP?

INFORMATION

- source evaluation
- information literacy
- digital literacy

RESEARCH

- observation
- interviewing
- documentation
- interpretation

CRITICAL THINKING

- questioning claims
- comparing evidence
- recognising uncertainty

RESPONSIBILITY

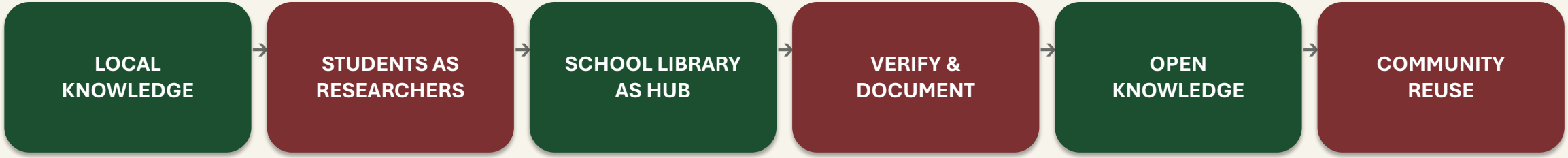
- ethical use of information
- respect for community knowledge
- responsible sharing

Observed project outcomes include research and communication skills, critical thinking and digital literacy.

FROM MOSLAVINA TO A TRANSFERABLE MODEL

THE CASE IS LOCAL.

THE CHALLENGE IS GLOBAL.



Potential domains: cultural heritage • oral history • local history • biodiversity • environmental knowledge • community memory

WHY THIS MATTERS FOR GUARDIANS 2026

Research integrity can be introduced through authentic inquiry long before university.

REPRODUCIBILITY

Document methods and sources

VALIDITY

Test claims against evidence

INTEGRITY

Communicate responsibly and acknowledge uncertainty

These are not only university-level values. They can become habits of mind in primary education.



WHO ARE THE GUARDIANS?

Scientists • Researchers • Editors
Librarians • Teachers • Communities

STUDENTS.

If we want future researchers who value truth, evidence and integrity,
we need to develop critical thinkers long before they enter university.

It can begin in a school library.



THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

Iva Galić

Primary School Mate Lovrak • Kutina, Croatia