

## Abstract

### Pasquino: Talking statues and inscriptions in Rome

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Pasquino is a **weLand** project created by Stefano Caneva and Guido D'Ippolito.

Project Partners: Università di Roma La Sapienza; VeMir Visual Engines; Wikimedia Italia; City of Rome

**Pasquino** is a project for urban digital storytelling created by the cultural association weLand. Pasquino owes its name to the famous ancient statue located in the homonymous square in Rome, one of the six “talking statues of Rome”. The project deals with a collection of about 40 public monuments in the city of Rome, which can be extended through time. The selected types of monuments include statues and inscriptions located in public, open spaces.

This choice is coherent with a broader vision. While being traditional protagonists of museums, statues and inscriptions often lose their historical and narrative priority when they appear in the more complex and stratified organisation of urban landscape. With the exception of some world-famous monuments of outstanding artistic value, statues and inscriptions are thus often confined to the background of the visitors’ experience, regardless of their high narrative and historical potential.

Pasquino takes the urban landscape back to the foreground, by making statues and inscriptions the central aggregators of the tourists’ experience: the “cardinal points”, so to say, in the exploration of that open-air museum which is the city landscape with its encompassing historical, social and artistic heritage.

Pasquino relies on the assumption that tourists can acquire a vast knowledge of a city’s history by simply walking through its streets, in an interesting and engaging way. This approach can be turned into reality by providing visitors (tourists, students, citizens) with a high quality and interactive tool.

Pasquino’s response to this need draws on an interdisciplinary approach, which gathers competences from historical, philological, information and communication related disciplines. A specific Pasquino app, based on the *VeMir Ready to go* visual recognition system (already tested for Europeana EAGLE) will allow tourists to identify the monuments via their smartphones, thus avoiding the installation of invasive QRcodes or Bluetooth equipment. Through the Pasquino app, the visitors will have access to CC-BY-SA-licensed texts and video material, which will be collected on Wikivoyage pages in Italian and English. Pasquino will also include a voice guide. The language is automatically selected according to the language setting of the smartphone, thanks to the QRpedia system. Moreover, visitors will be allowed to create their own thematic and topographical play-lists and suggest new monuments, thus contributing to the development of the project.

The multidisciplinary approach of Pasquino combines with a commitment to provide sound academic grounds to digital storytelling for tourism. In all its aspects, Pasquino draws on the results of recent research as regards the historical study of statues and inscriptions (links to the EAGLE database will be included when applicable, in order to meet the needs of students), technology, management and communication. Texts and video materials created for Pasquino will be released on Wikimedia Commons / Wikisource and then used to create Wikivoyage pages. The aim is to let Pasquino play a concrete part in the interaction between top-down and bottom-up models of cultural communication, contributing to the hybridisation between crowd sourcing and expert sourcing. This makes Pasquino a dynamic and scalable project, which

can be extended through time and accompany historical and philological disciplines in their search for a fruitful interaction with the worlds of tourism and open source.