
Scholar reaching the audience – a perspective of a civil society sector publisher in the humanities

Martina Petrinović

Introduction

- 1 Open access and consequently open science have changed the science horizon in the last couple of decades. Except for positive effects on the development of the scholar community, as a result of open access scientific research is now mostly available to the general public. Assuming that the public is aware of the open science policy and its potential for the personal, social and economic growth, the question arises does the public consume the scientific outputs more in the last couple of decades and did open access bridge the gap between science and the public?

Target audience

- 2 A non-for-profit civil society publisher of scholarly journal and other publications (monographs, conference proceedings, conferences, workshops and lectures) in the humanities in the field of art history can illustrate the issue of reaching the public and all its implications. To define the target audience and who are we addressing to is crucial. Important are information about education, location, age and ability and willingness to use digital content. In the existing context set out by tradition academic community by default uses scholarly publications because it uses it as a platform to present research. Student population is part of the academic audience This group has no active interest in production of the academic content. Important group is the professional public with interest in developments in the field with a limited interest in active participation in creating content but very often such professionals or practitioners in the discipline of art history offer good quality research in form of a

scientific paper. These readers of scientific publications and contributors include professionals in the field working in different sectors: education, museology, conservation, tourism and the real economy. The last group represents the general public with interest in art history and heritage as a part of their lifelong education and other private interests in art history.

Geographical coverage

- 3 Although art history is a rather small scholar community, the discipline is present in all education systems around the world and creates a part of the social development regardless of political or economic conditions. In the European context, art history as a discipline functions in the humanities from the 19th century and is a rather new member of the scholar community. The discipline is highly connected to the national or regional aspects. The researches in the field follow the geographic setting and as a consequence they are highly connected with the local community and therefore local language. The overall idea behind art history from its beginnings was to address the wide audience.
- 4 With new technological developments and the growth of digital possibilities in scientific publishing, especially with the possibilities of open science, the local scientific outcomes became global. The traditional publishing model set at its beginning in the mid-20th century has made a soft transition from the traditional printing media to digital publishing by making use of all available tools to improve the process of publishing (peer review process, the editing process, linguistic aspects, publication ethics, accessibility, and visibility). In Croatia all publishers of scholarly journals in all disciplines belong either to the public or civil sector, there are no publishers of scholarly journals in the private sector. There is no commercial component in publishing scholarly journals, especially in the humanities – at the moment all papers are published in open access with no article processing charge for the authors.

Language issues

- 5 Art history in Croatia has evolved from the late 19th century when it was mainly functioning as a peripheral discipline. As expected, the discipline evolution reflects the changes in the politics and socio-economy of the country. The first monumental professional texts were written in a national language with authors being equally fluent in German and Italian. With the rise of the importance of the international citation indexes¹ and pressure on scholars to publish internationally visible researches, the language used in publications progressively changes to English.
- 6 It is obvious that multilingual authors are changing English-language academic writing. The English language is lingua franca or English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Non-native English language authors are facing all those limitations (Burgess, 14). On the other hand, we witness negative long-term consequences on the development of the registers and lexical resources with the possibility that they may eventually be lost. This serious situation of domain loss has been discussed in the literature in the context of Scandinavian European countries (Ferguson, 10); however, the experience can be

projected on small languages in the south of Europe and even broader. In order to respect local languages, publishers who do not publish in English exclusively are investing in bilingual publications of academic journals (Morley and Kerans, 121). This is a great pressure on the journal's financing and its sustainability in the end. The Helsinki Initiative on Multilingualism in Scholarly Communication² launched in 2019 voiced the concerns of "small" languages; however, its impact on policymakers remains to be seen. Administration in the Croatian Ministry of Science and Education provides finances and sporadic and uncritical prescriptive guidelines on scientific publishing for publishers and scholars who are members of a scientific community.

- 7 Another loss of that may occur is the loss of the local general public and the local professional public that is not connected to the academic sector and is not lead by the academic career promotion. Never the less, this public is interested in scientific research and must be regarded as valuable legitimate consumers and promoters of scientific research.
- 8 Peristil offers its readers full texts mostly in Croatian with keywords, captions, abstracts, summaries translated into English (Norman, 225). Machine translation by Google Translation can provide sufficient understanding of the body of the text when source language is Croatian and target language is English. After the analysis of texts (in total 180 000 characters with spaces) translated from Croatian into English by Google Translation – there were crucial mistakes in translating personal names (e.g. name Bela is translated into beauty). Such mistakes can construct major problems in understanding, however the places where translation is misplaced a reader with no knowledge of Croatian language may suspect that there is a mistake. However, the main points of the analysed texts remain clear in the machine translated text and may serve readers as a free of charge translation tool.

Self-promotion

- 9 Open access as a byproduct of open science is available; however, the large number of publications discourages the audience from accessing it in the first place. To illustrate, only in Croatia, in seven decades the number of scholarly journals in the field of art history has increased from three to twenty journals. The rapidly growing community of scholars with the increasing number of doctoral dissertations on the Zagreb University in Croatia alone plummeting from 0,38 per year in the first half of the 20th century to 7,4 Ph.D. thesis per year in the first two decades of the 21st century. Another aspect is the question of the attitude of a potential reader toward the digital media, which had already been discussed in surveys (Kovač and van der Weel).

(...) media and reading trends in recent decades indicate broader social and cultural changes in which long-form deep reading traditionally associated with the printed book will be marginalised by prevailing media trends and the reading modes they inspire. As these trends persist, it may be necessary to find new approaches to vocabulary and knowledge building.
- 10 Society of Art Historians from 1954 publish journal Peristil. Along its symbolic print run of 200 copies per issue in the last couple of years as opposed to 1000 print run from the 1970s through the early 1990s journal is available in fully open access on Hrčak portal of Croatian scientific and professional journals³. Based on the analysis of 62 issues

authors from the academic community prevail, however there is a significant input from the practitioners in the field.

- 11 Authors publishing in *Peristil* are not used to promote their papers on their private accounts on social networks and are not aware of the effect it may have (Marušić and Marušić, 221). Authors expect the publisher to disseminate their work and have attitude that the prestige of the journal and their research are enough to acclaim their work in the community of professionals. Number of authors engaged in self-promotion of their work is minimal.

Promoting the discipline

- 12 The importance of the civil society sector is recognised in today's Europe and in the last couple of decades holds an important socio-economic role returning its significance from the 19th century. The non-governmental non-for profit organisations have a long tradition of a voluntary association to promote a certain idea or goal, and today it returns its significance. It is difficult to measure the effectiveness of such associations. Social science tries to measure the impact of the civil sector on the socio-economic development of a society (Pevcin, 633).
- 13 The nowadays prevailing tool to evaluate the importance of a journal within its field the Impact factor (IF) may function in other sciences (Bocanegra-Valle, 122), however imposing it on the humanities, namely art history is deceptive. There is no certain way to prove the impact of a text among the readers. Can the number of downloads of a certain paper be proof of its relevance, remains to be seen? The impact may be seen in several years, even decades. The researches in art history cover a wide time frame, media and geography, and they are carried through a longer period.
- 14 Questions raised are publication, continuous reading, education and cultivation of the audience to read and use scientific research. The aim is to arch over the closed-circuit of researchers as core audience and use open access platforms for accessing the wider public and in the end boost visibility using social networks (Matheleus and Beal, 229) and other means of promotion (lectures, public announces).
- 15 At the moment art historians must embrace the potentials of digital publishing. Consequently, the development of art history as a discipline and writing about art may come to the next level envisioned in the early 19th century.
- 16 Publishers' responsibility to society is to provide straightforward, meaningful and direct communication of scientific researches with the interested public. The basic tool for this process is the principles of open science used in correlation with long-term visionary actions advocating scientific excellence organised by professionals in the field.

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NOTES

1. One of the minimal journal selection criteria for Scopus (Elsevier) is to publish in English, <https://www.elsevier.com/solutions/scopus/how-scopus-works/content/content-policy-and-selection> (accessed March 20, 2020).
2. International petition was launched in 2019. <https://www.helsinki-initiative.org/en> (accessed March 20, 2020)
3. Hrčak – portal of Croatian scientific and professional journals is the central portal of Croatian scientific journals. HRČAK offers the access to the journals following the Open Access Initiative. <https://hrcak.srce.hr/?lang=en> (accessed March 20, 2020)

ABSTRACTS

The non-governmental non-for profit organisations have a long tradition of a voluntary association to promote a certain idea or goal. In this light, a professional association publisher may boost the visibility of its scholarly publication after identifying its audience. Art history as a discipline in the humanities should use the potentials of open access and open science to develop a new model of synthesising researches on the global level.

INDEX

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AUTHOR

MARTINA PETRINOVIĆ

Croatian Society of Art Historians

dpuh@inet.hr