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Inclusion of the nationally oriented journals into the journal elite of international significance or what can scientific outskirts offer to the metropolis?

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Abstract

Vjesnik bibliotekara Hrvatske has been published since 1950 by the Croatian Library Association, bringing information on the newest achievements in librarianship in Croatia and worldwide. Due to the fact that it publishes only reviewed and categorized articles, the journal has been affirmed as the only relevant scientific and professional journal in the area of Croatian librarianship. It is referred in three databases: *Library and Information Science Abstracts*, *Information Science Abstracts* and *Sciences de l'Information, Documentation*. Thus, the published articles are important elements for evaluation of Croatian librarians' scientific and professional contributions, as well as for acquiring professional and scientific titles. Besides that, special issues edited by eminent professionals in a certain area, serve as

mandatory exam literature for graduate and postgraduate students of the Department of Information Science, Faculty of Philosophy Zagreb, and of the Department of Librarianship, Faculty of Philosophy Osijek. Since March 9, 2004 *Vjesnik bibliotekara Hrvatske* has started publishing its parallel electronic edition free of charge (<http://www.hkdrustvo.hr/vbh>), thus giving its articles more visibility and making them more available to potential readers.

The article will examine the chances of peripheral journals from a small scientific community to be included into journal elite of international significance on the case of *Vjesnik bibliotekara Hrvatske*. The following issues will be discussed:

- the role of nationally oriented journals, e.g., in the protection of communication in the language of a small scientific community, as well as the impact of the local scientific and professional environment on the characteristics of scientific communication, e.g., journal article types, source items, ageing of citations; and
- the need of inclusion of nationally oriented journals into the mainstream of the world scientific communication and international databases in order to fulfil ambitions of scientists and professionals from small, scientific peripheral environment to publish the results of their research in journals which impact allows better visibility in and response from the international scientific and/or professional community.

1 Introduction

The centre-periphery relationship as the approach to various phenomena is present in the research of social, political and cultural history for more than fifty years.¹ At first glance, such a relationship suggests the existence of a more developed and impetuous centre and an undeveloped and passive periphery.² Although such an approach seems to be anachronistic in the globalization processes which take place nowadays, we decided to use it as a starting point for taking into consideration the problem of the inclusion of journals from small communities into the journal elite of international significance. We find the foothold for this in reflections of certain authors who point out that periphery does not need to be negatively determined and dependent upon a strong centre. Just the opposite, by relative independence from a strong centre, it retains a sort of autonomy in which its creative potentials can be realised.³

The role of each journal is information transmission. Different impact on the international scientific flows, as well as different visibility in international scientific communication, differentiate journals between those that have a key role in dissemination of

¹ Čepulo, Dalibor. *Prava građana i moderne institucije : europska i hrvatska pravna tradicija*. Zagreb : Pravni fakultet, 2003.

² Gross, Mirjana. "Jezgra" i "periferija" – nova teorija "industrijske revolucije" u Evropi. *Radovi Instituta za hrvatsku povijest* 16(1983), 247-252.

³ This thesis is illustrated by R. Ivančević by two examples from the history of art of *quattrocento*. The first example shows the openness and readiness of a small community (Šibenik, Croatia) to accept innovative, non-traditional project of the construction of a stone building of the cathedral without plaster, while the second one the conservatism of the Florentines and their incapability to understand the creativeness of the famous architect Filippo Brunelleschi due to which the frontage of San Lorenzo church has remained unfinished to the present day. See: Ivančević, Radovan. *Hrvatska nit u mediteranskom tkivu*. *Dubrovnik* 6, 6(1995), 20-36.

knowledge (international journals) and those which impact is retained within a local scientific environment (nationally oriented journals).⁴

One of the characteristics of international journals is the information transmission in both directions. Since nationally oriented journals usually publish local information and research results which could be applied in local environment, there is no such communication in both directions. Although their role cannot be neglected, e.g. in protection of communication in the language of scientific community, selection of topics etc., it is necessary to consider the possibility of its inclusion in the flows of world scientific communication in order to overcome basic obstacles which characterize scientific periphery: a small number of scientists in relevance to the number of research topics, evaluation and selection of quality of scientific activities and language barrier.

Scientific communication in library and information science in Croatia as a small scientific community is characterized by the strong information inflow from the world science. This inflow shows its readiness to accept foreign influences, and thus its openness and internationalization which makes it an integral part of the world scientific community. This can be applied to *Vjesnik bibliotekara Hrvatske*, too. Since it publishes articles in the language which is spoken by relatively small group of people, a question of its role in local and international scientific communication is raised. Thus, the purpose of the article is to examine whether *Vjesnik bibliotekara Hrvatske*, besides its characteristics of a nationally oriented journal, also shows characteristics of an international journal. This will be done through analysis of certain characteristics of scientific communication, e.g., interdisciplinarity, author's scientific activity, citation sources, number of citations which depends on specific characteristics of subject areas, etc.

2 *Vjesnik bibliotekara Hrvatske*

Vjesnik bibliotekara Hrvatske has been published since 1950 by the Croatian Library Association. The aims proclaimed in the first issue, 1-3(1950), are still valid: history, state and development of Croatian libraries and librarianship, as well as actual events in world librarianship, especially those initiated and supported by IFLA. Its realization during the past decades was guaranteed by engaging experts both in editorial board and on the position of editor-in-chief. For instance, the world known catalogue theorist Eva Verona participated for 14 years in editing of the journal – from 1950 to 1959 as a member of the editorial board, and from 1960 to 1964 as editor-in-chief. Besides the editorial engagement, Eva Verona, actively participating in the most important events in the field of cataloguing in 1960s and 1970s, gave to the journal precious author contributions. Her articles were published simultaneously abroad (*Libri*, *Library Resources and Technical Services*) and in Croatia.

Almost all editorial boards of *Vjesnik bibliotekara Hrvatske* were faced with the problem of regularity and periodicity. In 1998, to solve these problems the editorial board raised the following aim: to update the issuing in a current year and, in a course of time, to reach the periodicity of four issues per year. To achieve this and to retain the quality of material, the board made formal and content changes in editorial policy.

2.1 *Formal changes*

⁴ Penava, Zdenka. Znanstvena komunikacija kroz hrvatske časopise u ISI bazama = Information flows from Croatian journals covered by ISI databases. *Vjesnik bibliotekara Hrvatske* 47, 1-2(2004), 116-128.

Editorial board accepted and followed *Instructions for editing the scientific and professional journals* prepared by the ISSN Centre for Croatia. *Instructions* recommend the following: peer review procedures and categorization of articles; summary and keywords in Croatian and in one world language (usually in English); inclusion of the full bibliographic information, i.e. title in Croatian and in language of summary, author's name, name and address of author's institution; date of receiving and acceptance of article; running title on each page, i.e. name of the journal, issue numeration, author's name, abbreviated title of the article. *Instructions* also recommend the content of the title page of the journal: title, ISSN, UDC, volume and year, number of the issue, place and year of publication, name of the publisher, editorial board, citation databases etc.

As it was suggested by Donald T. Hawkins, then editor-in-chief of the *Information Science Abstracts* database, majority of bibliographic information both on article as on the journal are also supplied in English.

Since March 9, 2004 *Vjesnik bibliotekara Hrvatske* has started publishing its parallel electronic edition free of charge (<http://www.hkdrustvo.hr/vbh>), with the aim of giving its articles more visibility and making them more available to potential readers.

2.2 Content changes

In order to promote content changes, the editorial board decided to publish special issues edited by eminent professionals along with thematically differentiated issues. The reasons for such a decision were:

- to quicken editing and publishing process by distribution of responsibilities: this enables simultaneous preparation of more than one issue by guest-editors, and allows "regular" members of the editorial board to prepare other issues as well as to take care of other activities connected with editing and promoting of the journal;
- to encourage authors, both foreign and domestic, to supply articles, and
- to attract readers to actual and integral review of certain topics guaranteed by the competency of the guest-editor.

3 The role of nationally oriented journals in local scientific community

Due to the rich tradition and amendments mentioned above as well to the fact that it publishes only reviewed and categorized articles, *Vjesnik bibliotekara Hrvatske* has been affirmed as the only relevant scientific and professional journal in the area of Croatian librarianship. It is refereed in three bibliographic databases – *Library and Information Science Abstracts*, *Information Science Abstracts* and *Sciences de l'Information, Documentation*. Thus, published articles are important elements for evaluation of Croatian librarians' scientific and professional contributions, as well as for acquiring professional and scientific titles. Such a situation has started to stimulate potential authors to publish in the journal. The increase of the responses to the call for articles for special issues announced on the journal's web site is also noticed.

Published special issues bring the following topics: bibliographic control in the environment of global information infrastructure, free access to the information, subject approach to the information, cataloguing of electronic resources, serial publications.

The quality of special issues is a result of engagement of guest-editors who are, regardless of the fact that they come from the small scientific community, recognized as

world experts. As members, and some of them even chairs of various international organizations, committees, working groups etc. (e.g. Permanent UNIMARC Committee, Working Group on MLAR, Working Group on FRANAR, FAIFE, Governing Board of International ISSN Centre) they actively participate in library and information sciences and decision-making. Their role is also very important in engaging foreign authors. Till then, foreign authors were rarely published in *Vjesnik*. Exceptions are Festschrifts devoted to famous librarians, in which the articles of their colleagues from abroad were published. These texts were published in the original. In special issues, however, foreign authors' texts are now translated into Croatian because the role of *Vjesnik bibliotekara Hrvatske* is to protect the language of scientific community by creating and promoting professional terminology.

All the mentioned can be considered as reasons that special issues serve as mandatory exam literature for graduate and postgraduate students of the Department of Information Science, Faculty of Philosophy in Zagreb, and of the Department of Librarianship, Faculty of Philosophy in Osijek.

4 The role of nationally oriented journals in international scientific community

As a main carrier of communication, scientific journal delineates the environment of a certain scientific and professional community. It's status in the international scientific community determines scientific contribution of published articles. Thus, inclusion of the journal in international databases proves its quality and international visibility.

As mentioned above, *Vjesnik bibliotekara Hrvatske* is refereed in three databases: *LISA: Library and information Science Abstracts*, *PASCAL: Science de l' information, documentation*, and from 1999. in *ISA: Information Science Abstracts*. Periodical review of search results of all three databases showed that data are not updated in LISA. Although we have been sending the journal regularly, it was covered only for the period 1968-1973. In the 1993 then LISA editor informed us that LISA would start reviewing our journal again covering issues from 1991. Since it was not done, we repeated our request in 1997, 2000 and 2002 receiving no response.

As we have never received any response about the reasons of rejecting *Vjesnik bibliotekara Hrvatske*, we expected that we could learn more about criteria for inclusion in *LISA User Guide*.⁵ However, it offers only number of abstracted journals, number of countries and number of languages, a very detailed list of subject coverage,⁶ and some other technical information. HYPERLINK We have also compared elements from *LISA User Guide* to those mentioned in the *Introduction of ISA*, from which we can learn only about subject coverage⁷

⁵ LISA. <http://www.csa.com/factsheets/lisa-set> (2005-03-25)

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⁶ Ibid.: "Major areas of coverage include: artificial intelligence; book reviews; CD-ROMs; computer science application; information centres; information management; information science; information storage; information technology; internet technology; knowledge management; librarianship; libraries and archives; library managements; library technology; library use and users; medical information; online information retrieval; publishing and bookselling; records management; telecommunications; technical services; WWW."

⁷ ISA 36, 9(November/December 2001): "ISA covers the world's literature on information science – an interdisciplinary field concerned with the theoretical and practical concepts, as well as the technologies, laws, and industry dealing with knowledge transfer and the sources, generation, organization, representation,

and bibliographic tools (classification, indexes etc.). The comparison shows that both databases provide comprehensive coverage of library and information science journals, but “silent” exclusion of *Vjesnik bibliotekara Hrvatske* indicates that there must be a selection process. Since there is no clear and transparent criteria for a selection, it is not obvious why is the journal in one database included while in another excluded.

The journal selection process⁸ with descriptions of the most basic criteria and the qualitative and the quantitative factors in the evaluating journals for coverage can be found on the website of Thomson ISI Publishing Company, the producer of *Web of Science*.⁹ *Web of Science* as an international, multidisciplinary and selective bibliographic and citation database provides comprehensive coverage of the world's most important and influential research in all scientific fields. The 8,700 international journals are an important part of this database. But, comprehensive coverage does not mean all-inclusive. The principle which is often referred to as Bradford's Law, says that, a relatively small number of journals publish the most of important and significant scientific results.¹⁰ So, each journal goes through an extensive evaluation process before being selected or rejected. The journal's basic publishing standards, editorial content, international diversity, and citation data are all taken into consideration.

Although *Vjesnik bibliotekara Hrvatske* is not included in ISI database, to compare and estimate its scientific contribution in the international environment, we used the *Web of Science – Social Sciences Citation Index* criteria for inclusion:

- *basic journal publishing standard: timeliness of publication* as one of the most basic criteria in the evaluation process; following the international editorial conventions which include: informative journal titles, fully descriptive article titles and abstracts, complete bibliographic information for all cited references, and full address information for every author; English language article titles, abstracts, and keywords; application of the peer review process;

- *editorial content*: the ISI editor determines if the content of a new journal will enrich the database or if the topic is already adequately covered;

- *international diversity*: ISI seeks to cover journals with international diversity among authors of both source articles and cited articles, as well as the best regional journals;

- *citation analysis*: for brand new journals, the editors examine the publishing record of the journal's authors and editorial board members, noting where their articles have been published and if their work has been cited; for established journals, these include overall citation rate, impact factor, and immediacy index.

processing, distribution, communication, and uses of information, as well as communications among users and their behaviour as they seek to satisfy their information needs. Coverage: Coverage includes books, journals, and conference proceedings. Items not generally available from publishers, document sales offices, loan or photocopy services of the issuing institutions or major libraries, or via the Internet are excluded. Coverage of journal articles, conference proceedings, and other serial publication is intended to be selective rather than comprehensive; the criterion for inclusion is the pertinence of the subject matter rather than the vehicle of publication.”

⁸ Thomson ISI – The ISI Database: The Journal Selection Process.

<http://www.isinet.com/essays/selectionofmaterialforcoverage/199701.html> (2005-03-25)

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⁹ Web of Science - Social Sciences Citation Index. <http://www.isinet.com> (2005-03-25)

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¹⁰ Bradford, S. C. Sources of information of specific subjects. *Engineering : an illustrated weekly* 137, January 26(1934), 85-86. Reprinted in *Journal of information science* 10(1985), 176-180.

The outcome of this analysis suggests that *Vjesnik bibliotekara Hrvatske* fulfil all formal criteria and almost all of the others for inclusion in ISI databases. The improvement in formal publishing standards and enriched content of *Vjesnik bibliotekara Hrvatske* ensure high journal publishing standards especially timeliness and English language bibliographic elements. An international diversity among authors of both source articles and cited articles published in *Vjesnik bibliotekara Hrvatske* is noticed too.

Analysing cited references in last five years we ascertained 80% of all journals cited in *Vjesnik bibliotekara Hrvatske* are included into the journal elite of international significance. According to *Journal Citation Reports – Social Science Citation Index* (JCR-SSCI),¹¹ the ISI publication for quantitative measure of journals' influence on journals in scientific fields, the core journals cover 55 journal titles related to the library and information science. Information flow through *Vjesnik bibliotekara Hrvatske* presented by high ranged journals seems to offer an opportunity to derive conclusion of the corresponding quality of published articles.

Citations to articles published in *Vjesnik bibliotekara Hrvatske*, which is not incorporated into ISI databases, could not be done. But, a comparative evaluation of the recognition has been gained by a set of foreign and Croatian authors published in *Vjesnik bibliotekara Hrvatske* on the one hand, and in ISI covered journals on the other. Interrelationships of journals were established by citation patterns. Fifteen percent of all authors published in *Vjesnik bibliotekara Hrvatske* in the period between 1998 and 2003 includes foreign authors. The scientific activity of each author has been recorded for the entire period. The correlation analyses of author citations gives interesting insight into the citation activity. Citation rates go up to 200 cited references per author, and depend on field of authors' activity (from classification and cataloguing to information management and processing). Cumulative data on citations to their articles published in ISI journals represent high scientific influence in the field of library and information science.

5 Conclusion

The need of inclusion of nationally oriented journals into the mainstream of world scientific communication and international databases is associated with improvements in communication infrastructure and developments of digital information services for users in the new information age.

The question is how does technological change in communication systems enable users to transform their strategies and routines? How do changes in strategies and routines of using communication systems has impact on the reorganization of information networks? How do these networks redefine the structure of information, and reshape the geography of user's activity?

Theoretical context for addressing these questions derives primarily from traditions and impact of regional and local scientific and professional environment to characteristics of scientific communication as such. This area of theory seeks to explain how to organize activities in networks in order to link internal with those across the border.

¹¹ Journal Citation Reports – Social Sciences Citation Index. <http://www.isinet.com/products/evaltools/jcr/> (2005-03-25)

The communications revolution enables usage of such systems and reshaping of horizons for activities of numerous groups of users. It is such users who can take an active role in a more widespread transformation of library and information science.

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