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Challenges in Discoverability and Visibility of OA Books

Content : The Case of FF Open Press

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ABSTRACT

Aim: The presentation aims at describing the library led university press open access publishing program at the University of Zagreb, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (FF Open Press, available at: <https://openbooks.ffzg.unizg.hr/>). Being a small academic institution, with programs mainly in humanities, and output largely in a small language, visibility is our main concern, and we see open access as a logical and desired way of increasing the visibility and impact of our publications. Publishing open access books, as well as ensuring their visibility and discoverability, presents a specific set of challenges.

Methods: So far, our open access book program has been developed with existing capacities (staff and technical) and with open source software solution (PKP Open Monograph Press), as we wanted to see how far we can get with this zero-budget approach. After an initial period of development, many advantages, but also some limitations of this approach became apparent, especially in comparison with some hosted open access solutions like OpenEdition Books (<https://books.openedition.org/>), Ubiquity Press (<https://www.ubiquitypress.com/>) or OAPEN Library (<http://www.oapen.org/>). When we speak of visibility, discoverability and impact, we have both the international academic audience as well as national wider community readership in mind, as our output is equally aimed at both. Reaching each of those different audiences requires different strategies and brings ahead a different set of challenges. Those challenges will be recognized and described, based on the recent international surveys and guidelines (1-7), but also taking our own experiences into consideration, and some possible solutions will be outlined.

Results and Discussion: In reaching the global scholarly audience, it is important to get the content of our books included in various discovery channels, ranging from library catalogues and webscale discovery systems, CrossRef, Google Scholar, commercial citation databases and abstracting & indexing services, as well as global open infrastructures like DOAB, OAPEN and OPERAS. In that respect, we are facing a number of challenges regarding standardization in:

- presentation of books (need for producing and distributing high-quality metadata, choosing the right metadata standard, publishing books in different formats, problems in the discoverability of individual chapters, presentation of multilingual content, the multiplicity of digital identifiers (4)),

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- editorial procedures (variations in peer-review procedures, especially in edited books and conference proceedings), and
- recording impact (at present we do not have appropriate ways of measuring the impact of books, especially in humanities (6,8), but also, we have to acknowledge that the impact of books, through citations, altmetric indicators and downloads will happen in the longer timeframe (4)).

In the efforts to increase the impact of their publication, libraries and university presses are finding that the "discovery, acquisition, and usage tracking have been increasingly outsourced over the last few decades to commercial operations" (4), and the open access could be an opportunity to revert the process.

Additional important mechanism for dissemination of OA books is depositing them in institutional repositories or sharing via social networks by their authors, which should be encouraged (by using open licences and clear self-archiving policies).

When we are considering reaching the general public, within national (and regional) borders, some lessons can be drawn from the development of Hrčak portal (<https://hrcak.srce.hr/>), which has been very successful in promoting Croatian OA journals in the last decade. The development of Dabar - The national network of OA repositories (<https://dabar.srce.hr/>) sends a similar message of the importance of building a shared infrastructure. It seems that building a common national portal for open access books, but at the same time creating and empowering a community of open access book publishers (with the aim of exchanging experiences and mutual strengthening of competences and finding common technological solutions) could be the optimal approach with the monograph publishing too.

Conclusion: Although the focus of this presentation is on issues related to visibility and discoverability of books in humanities and social sciences, those are inevitably connected to other issues related to building open and sustainable infrastructures (with carefully planned governance structures and sources of funding), quality certification, copyright and licensing issues and designing successful business models for book publishing. Even further, the issues of visibility will lead us to redefine the role of the book and to rethink the role of humanities and social sciences in academia and in society at large. With whom and for whom are we publishing, who do we want to find and read what we publish and to what purpose?

Key words: open access books, open access monographs, visibility, discoverability, humanities and social sciences

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