



The Digitalization of Albanian - Language Books and Libraries

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Letter to the Editor

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The correlation between the notions book, library, publisher, bookshop, on the one hand, and the computer-internet or communication technology, on the other, reopens the dilemma of the cultural and anthropological future of the book and the library as the most powerful, elite and popular institution, the institution of knowledge throughout the human history. The change that is happening in this relation is not a priori the crisis and reduction of aesthetics opposed to technology and adventure, however, the future of this correlation is not simple and so easy predictable.

A survey conducted in 2008 by the Book Fair in Frankfurt with 840 experts from the field of book industry showed that in 2018 the sale of digitized books was higher than the sale of printed books. A considerable number of conservatives -- namely around 27% of them -- do not agree with the findings of the survey, and they do not agree that at some point in the future the sale of the digital book will bit the sale of conventional, printed book.

But the history of electronic book is nearing. The beginnings of digitalized book date back to 1971, when Michael Hart, a student of Illinois University, started dissolving in the university network digitized books. There was a limited extent, in a local network. The truth, the book presented in electronic form for global network is of a new age, and communicators have noticed that this occurred in 1987 when the first book was published by Michael Joyce -- "Evening". In less than half of a century, the electronic book has inundated the web pages,

portals, libraries, bookstores, and electronic archives. It seems as an endless race for the powerful position by the powerful media and communication systems in the book market and publishing in general. The projects Gutenberg, Google Books, and Open Content Alliance aim at digitalizing millions of book headlines and manuscripts by challenging in this way the library as an object and conventional institution.

In this same way are done the common book projects that can be used by a large number of readers. Different partners, like Smithsonian Institution, Hewlett-Packard, Yahoo, and Microsoft's MSN are uniting to extend digital scanning of different publications. In this extensive process, one of the problematic issues is that related to the regulation of copyright works, which are rare titles and library property. There have been already a number of lawsuits against major digitalization systems that point the finger on those that have breached of copyright. Open Library, in a nonprofit project will make digitalization of 18,000 books in the University of California, but that previously had not provided the copyright. Thus, the challenging trend of modern communication technology has an ethical threshold that must be resolved through party agreements by libraries, publishers, authors, and major digitalization systems.

Despite the problems, national cultures within archives, libraries, bookstores, museums, and so on, could not remain long out of information access and knowledge on a global scale. To see more right this report, which does not close the fundamental dilemmas of whether printed

book will be dominate over the electronic one and whether the classic libraries will remain more important than the electronic ones, some sociological and cultural aspects treated will further elucidate this relations.

It looks as a magical vision, but the true one. Borges wrote decades ago about the emergence of the internet, that all people only write a great book – literature. The thinking of Borges is the forerunner of the aim of Sloan Foundation, which plans to “digitalize the knowledge of the world”. The book that is an elite facility of communication, but in the period of individual and collective medialism, is being put into the essence of media technology-industry. The media technology offers wide-ranging opportunities for communication and a wider space around this possibility, it should mention different forms of access that are offered to the reader in advance, such as: partial publication before a work out, partial publication after release work, compete edition, translation, processing for other needs – radio, television, film, theater -microcopy, plates, CDs, tapes and pocket publications, free publications, reprint, school publications, book loans for commercial and non-commercial purposes, anthologies and special publications, photocopies, multimedia-internet. These are many of the forms that have been made possible by modern communication technologies, through which the book arrives partially or complete in the form of copyright or processed, to the wide public media. This breadth of technological alignment had scared sociologists and culturologists to see with more pessimism the future of greatest source – the knowledge, the book.

The last chances of the book in the new technological processes have also shown some of the most renowned theorist of communication in the XX century, among whom Marshal McLuhan. Just considering all the potential offered by this technology media, especially considering television, in the 1960s, prognosis was that “the end of the book will arrive in 1980”. Fortunately, this prognosis was not realized. After the death of McLuhan in 1980, another center of culture and technology in Toronto with his name got extinguished, symbolizing the cessation of the unusual and unpleasant prognosis.

Sociologists, communicators, anthropologists, psychologists, and others have viewed the report from the different angles between the book and media, alarmed by a dramatic tone started by McLuhan. What are the similarities, supplements and differences and disadvantages of each separately? Bearing in mind the fact that the media forms action from the most delicate models to the more aggressive and rough, labeled media for the lack of delicacy of the book. Media does not bear the book value that is a typical communication tool that is more subtle, such as the paintings. This could be the case, but rarely and is constantly challenged in the media, which today means the civilization of public crisis.

Publication of the e-book is rational, even in the context of space. In one CD alone one can process about 500 average books. In 10 CDs you can find a solid

library. Traditionalists will answer: national libraries arose with the creation of nation, with industrialization; therefore they have the symbolic references. And people do need such a symbolic. For instance, the former mail letters had the intention of transferring ideas, emotions and serious communication, while the today’s media letter aims at communication and entertainment, mostly not serious, in its essence. Media do not prejudice the demand to control behavior; the book is much more conservative and traditional. Needless to say that the media cultivates and builds collective attitudes, especially when there is a polycentric network, thus turning the basic message to an extreme ideology, nationalist, racist etc. There can be noise around a certain book, with no possibility to react, but media urges and established the noise itself, models the volume, the content and its breadth.

In the case of the Albanian-language books, different institutions and foundations have started a process of digitalization, but still have not managed to enter strongly in the global market of knowledge. The extent and the quality of communication usage in the internet are controversial, since the researches done in Kosovo show major expectations of users for discussions and non-knowledgeable and not academic exchanges. The Internet usage in the European puts Kosovo at the low level of usage. Statistics published by the IUE indicate that in 2012, in Kosovo internet was used by 377,000 people or 20.5 percent of the population. This seems an unrealistic percentage, after the researches done by other institutions that put Kosovo with high utilization. After 1999, Kosovo has seen each year an increase in the internet access. According to TRA, the access of internet services in 2009 was about 121 connections or 7.05 percent per capita. On the other hand, the access of internet services per homes was 35 percent in 2009, while in August 2008 the access level reached the figure of around 21.6 percent. That there has been a solid stretch of internet network in Kosovo can be proven with the examples of the Post and Telecommunications of Kosovo (PTK). The PTK and IPKO Telecommunications Company now have over 400,000 internet connections in the country and its use has increased by 6 percent compared to a year ago. In Kosovo, in 2013, there were over 850,000 internet users, who represent about 45 percent of the population. The internet expansion makes us understand the potential of transmitting the message online.

Albania, with 1471.400 internet users, with a turnout of 49 percent, is among the last countries in Europe. The number of users does not speak for the quality and content consumed, since the main institutions of knowledge, science and art, are still in the process of digitalization. Thus the Kosovo Academy of Sciences and Arts has not yet digitized its publications, while the National Library of Kosovo has started as the first phase, with the formatting of fund information. In the National Library of Albania, one of the first projects was the digitalization of information of manual file cabinet of rare values (manuscripts and antiques), thus allowing the search in the distance of digital catalogues; E-ALBANICA, representing the Digital Albanological

Library with the content of rare works of National Library (manuscripts, antiques, maps and periodicals 15-19th centuries in Albanian and other languages). The e-books in Albanian are expected to be in the market with an intercultural offer with digitalization of communication systems in educational, scientific and cultural institutions.

Besides the market, the assessment for the quality of studies and teaching will be low. A list of the agency 'Ranking' on the quality of the universities in year 2013 ranks the University of Pristina to 4416th place, while a year earlier it was listed to the 3387th place for the quality. The University of Tirana is even further down below, with the serial number 8012. To consider how low the academic quality is assessed, I will illustrate it with the cases of the universities in the region. Namely, the University of Belgrade is on the position 729, while the University of Ljubljana on the 241th place.

Modernization of academic and cultural services through new technologies is the best option of communication within the Albanian area and with the world. Today there is little information about the Albanian culture and extension of this information to the regional and global technological systems creates chances of the fairer assessment of the world through the cultural values. Digitalization of the wealth of knowledge and cultural values, through a long-term project, with the intention on the cultural market and cultural industries, have broken the closure that looks like a still active barrier to being an active part of market of knowledge and work.

There are quite a few people who travel alone, without the books, without media, or without both. Libraries and books are considered traditional-conservative values, cultural and civilization values, but simultaneously very modern in today's life. They will continue to remain as such. Media has a civilizing and cultural understanding, but not so traditional-conservative. The communication technology is evaluated by the communicators to be a technology of civilization, while the opponents argue that it is the inhuman technology. While, the human civilization was previously identified with book, by its expansion, with libraries and bookstores, today's civilization is not identified equally by the books, but with the media, even more by the social networks, facebook, twitter, etc. Writing is only a small segment of civilization, while the media is the totality of the present world civilization, without alienating writing.

These dilemmas bring us to the beginning of the topic. What will happen with classic-traditional library and printed book, influenced by the rapid spread of digitalization? Can we avoid the letter with wonderful characters and those characters that are available only in computer screens? Will we have in the near future at home, in a very small space, a library with hundreds of thousands of books, the largest parts of which we will never reach to browse? All these are expected to occur. But at the same time, the traditional readers' war on paper, with a format of prestige and cultural and anthropological dedication will prove to mark the victory, as a significant victory of civilization.

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Ibrahim Berisha was born on 20 March 1955. In a young age he started as a journalist (covering culture) in Rilindja daily newspaper where he remained for many years, to continue as editor on magazines such as Ora, Exclusive, Albanica, and Jeta e Re. He writes prose, poetry, and essays, many of which have been translated in a number of foreign languages. Berisha was one of the co-founders of the peaceful movement of Kosovo Albanians for freedom in 1989. He holds a PhD degree in sociological sciences, and teaches sociology at the University of Prishtina.

His publications include poetry, short stories, novels, sociological and culture studies. Some of them include: *Mediakultura* (Mediaculture), *Media-Agjensët e Komunikimit* (Media-Communications Agents), *Konvergjencia Intelektuale* (Intellectual Convergence), *Media dhe Tranzicioni* (Media and Transition), *Sociokulturë* (Socioculture), *Gruaja e Vetmisë* (Woman of Solitude), *Fryma e Shiut* (The Scent of Rain), *Të Martën Mbrëma* (Tuesday Evening), *Origjina e Rinjohjes* (The Origin of Rediscovery), *Hardhia e Mureve* (The Wall Vine-Tree), *Sipërfaqja e së Dieles* (Surface of Sunday), *Fundi është i mundshëm* (The End is Possible), *Kafazi i Frikës* (Cage of Fear), *Fisi i Mbretërve të Humbur* (The Tribe of Lost Kingdoms) ect. He lives in Prishtina.