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Publishers' and editors' perceptions and use of electronic textbook

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ABSTRACT

Currently e-learning editions are actively conquering the educational environment, but there are some challenges and obstacles in the process. Therefore, the purpose of the article is to determine the perceptions of publishers and ezine publishers, as well as to clarify their role in the book digitization process. We believe this will highlight the advantages and disadvantages of using e-textbooks, obtain interesting and useful data for future promoters and publishers, help to systematize terminology. The article explores the perceptual characteristics of e-learning publications by publishers and publishers. For this purpose, a survey was conducted of 50 people who work in educational publishing houses. The questionnaire method was applied and a sample was formed as a material collection strategy, in particular a partial quantitative sample was applied. In addition, statistical observation was applied as a method of mathematical statistics, descriptive statistics to summarize indicators, and a content analysis method was used to provide quantitative data on the phenomenon under study. It was concluded that when creating new e-textbooks, factors should be taken into account: high quality, professional need (clearly define the target audience) and set a reasonable price. The survey results indicate that modern publishers are aware of the importance of the main features of electronic textbooks (hyperlinks, illustrations and high-quality multimedia), which gives hope that users will receive such publications in the near future.

KEYWORDS: editors, e-textbook, hyperlinks, multimedia, publishers.

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Percepciones y uso de textos electrónicos por editoriales y editores

RESUMEN

Actualmente las ediciones de e-learning están conquistando activamente el entorno educativo, pero hay algunos desafíos y obstáculos en el proceso. Por lo tanto, el propósito del artículo es determinar las percepciones de editoriales y editores de publicaciones electrónicas, así como aclarar su papel en el proceso de digitalización del libro. Creemos que esto resaltará las ventajas y desventajas de usar libros de texto electrónicos, obtendrá datos interesantes y útiles para futuros promotores y editores, ayudará a sistematizar la terminología. El artículo explora las características de percepción de las publicaciones de aprendizaje electrónico por parte de editoriales y editores. Para este propósito, se realizó una encuesta a 50 personas que trabajan en editoriales educativas. Se aplicó el método del cuestionario y se formó una muestra como estrategia de recolección de material, en particular se aplicó una muestra cuantitativa parcial. Además, la observación estadística se aplicó como un método de estadística matemática, estadística descriptiva para resumir indicadores, y se utilizó un método de análisis de contenido para proporcionar datos cuantitativos sobre el fenómeno en estudio. Se concluyó que al crear nuevos libros de texto electrónicos, debe tenerse en cuenta los factores: alta calidad, necesidad profesional (definir claramente el público objetivo) y establecer un precio razonable. Los resultados de la encuesta indican que los editores modernos son conscientes de la importancia de las características principales de los libros de texto electrónicos (hipervínculos, ilustraciones y multimedia de alta calidad), lo que da la esperanza de que los usuarios recibirán tales publicaciones en el futuro cercano.

PALABRAS CLAVE: editores, libros de texto electrónicos, hipervínculos, multimedia, editoriales.

Introduction

The problem of functioning of the electronic textbook is actively discussed in the scientific circles and the media both in Ukraine and abroad. Most of the research is about finding out the benefits of electronic publications and the feasibility of introducing them into the educational process. Foreign sources claim that the cost of printed educational literature has increased over the past years (Baker-Eveleth, L. & Stone, R.W., 2015). And this is the main reason forcing students to choose better alternatives to traditional textbooks. The educational environment is changing dramatically with the introduction of information technology and the expansion of electronic textbooks. However, there is no

single point of view on understanding the advisability of using electronic textbooks, which determines the relevance of our research.

Publishers and editors are important participants of the communication process of e-book expansion. They have faced the challenge of the new digital age and should adjust their publishing activities to the new digital format. With the growth in popularity of tablet computers and more advanced mobile devices, publishers are increasingly making digital versions of books that have traditionally been available in paper format, available (Millar, M. & Schrier, Th., 2015). They are also the key players of the publishing market, who are responsible for popularization and promotion of e-books. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to determine how publishers and editors perceive electronic publications by analyzing foreign and national materials, as well as to identify their role in the process of book digitalization.

1. Theoretical Framework

The analysis of foreign researches has shown the relevance of issues related to implementation of e-textbooks into the educational process. The peculiarities of using the e-textbooks were studied by such foreign researches as Baker-Eveleth, L. & Stone, R.W. (2015), Brew, A. & Boud, D. (1995), Bossaller, J., Kammer, J. (2014), Johnston, D. J., et al (2015), Quesada, C., et al (2015), Van Horne, S., et al (2017), Van Horne, S., et al (2016), Kahler, J. E. (2017), Gresty K.A. & Edwards-Jones A. (2012) and others.

Most of their works focus on determining the effectiveness of using electronic publications, on specific field research, conducting questionnaires, surveys and engaging expert groups. These researches were conducted in Italy, Spain, Luxembourg, the United States, Canada, and other countries.

Modern foreign scientists understand that one of the most important innovations of the publishing industry of the last century, which publishers faced, was introduction and promotion of the e-book. This became the catalyst for important changes in the publishing sector, including promotion of self-publishing platforms, possibility of "printing-on-demand", reading on digital media (from screens of computers, laptops, mobile phones). The biggest challenge for the publishers was the emergence of exclusively electronic

publishing houses: traditional experienced print publishing houses had to decide to what extent should they join this process and whether to join it at all.

Researchers Jose Peirats Chacón, Isabel M. Gallardo Fernández, Ángel San Martín Alonso, Sílvia Cortés Mollà in their article "Los contenidos curriculares digitalizados: Voces y silencios en el ámbito editoriall" (2015) ("Digitized curriculum: voices and silences in the publishing field") have analyzed the position of some Valencia publishers on moving to digital textbooks used at educational centers of extracurricular level. By using a mixed methodology (through a series of interviews, surveys, discussion groups and analysis of document) three aspects of the process were studied: technological, pedagogical, and commercial (Peirats Chacón et al., 2015).

Based on the results of the survey, interviews and discussion groups, the researchers have determined that there is no clear understanding and unanimous opinion as to which strategy should be chosen for textbook publishers. Thus, the society is faced with the choice of digitized books: some are only for professors, others use them on a digital platform, most are used on tablets, portable computers or laptops.

Jenny Bossaller and Jenna Kammer (University of Missouri) in "Faculty Views on eTextbooks" (2014) claim that over the past few years, some publishers have rethought their approaches to educational technology and producing of electronic publications. "Through acquisitions and mergers, these publishers have positioned themselves as leaders and innovators in the educational technology industry by purchasing learning management systems (LMS), online learning service companies and learning analytic platforms" (Bossaller, J., Kammer, J., 2014, p. 68). As an example, is the largest educational company Pearson Education, which acquired a learning tool and service company eCollege, an online services company EmbanetCompass, an adaptive learning technology platform Knewton.

In some cases, publishers work with independent software and distribution companies to make their products available to the market. At the same time, they also continue to develop and market their own individual digital books and ancillaries. Technology acquisitions has allowed the publishers to considerably invest in the development and production of e-books, or e-texts, which can include multimedia, interactive materials, assessments and potentiality of social networking (Bossaller, Kammer, 2014, p. 68). Intensive integration by the publisher influences teaching and learning

processes, simplifies online course design, can minimize the instructor's voice (Chesser, W., 2011).

There are some positive aspects (such as convenience, portability, and currency) and negative aspects (such as privacy, cost, and outsourcing) of teaching with e-texts. It is acknowledged that technology acquisitions led to higher prices for textbooks, shifting the expenses on development onto the students. Therefore, the issues of reasonable and transparent pricing and additional options for purchasing textbooks and related resources are very relevant (Bossaller, J., Kammer, J., 2014, p. 68). The availability and accesss of electronic publications is also very important issue. Maxwell, Little, and Stites-Doe (2011) studied how students wanted to access their e-texts: 79% preferred accessing them on a laptop, 59% would consider using their smartphone to access the e-text, 10% abandoned their e-text for print due to slow networks and printing problems.

It is of central importance to the future success of e-textbooks that content format standards emerge and become adopted by the publishing and software players in the market. The individual publishers will continue to develop their own unique delivery platforms, but for large schools and school corporations there is an equally important need for cross-publisher content platforms. These platforms will allow schools to implement a single solution that accommodates multiple publishers and will make campuswide adoptions much more manageable for large schools (Chesser, W., 2011).

2. Materials and Methods

We use quantitative designs to our practice-based investigation, as it includes the collection and analysis of quantitative (close-ended) data. A quantity aspect included structured close-ended questionnaire to collect information about perception and specifics of using electronic textbooks by a reference group. Our research was conducted according to this scheme: quantitative data collection, quantitative description and analysis resulting in interpretation.

Special methods of studying the efficiency of using the e-textbooks were applied. In particular, the method of content analysis was used, which involved the collection of quantitative data on the phenomenon under study and allowed to make objective

conclusions regarding the distribution and usage of electronic publications among publishers and editors.

There were used different methods of information retrieval and its analysis, in particular, operationalization of studied concepts (electronic publication, electronic textbook), sociological research conducted by a method of semi-structured questionnaire survey aimed at such respondents as publishers and editors.

Statistical processing of empirical data was performed using the SPSS PC program. The method of content analysis was used for processing the open questions given in the questionnaire. Flexible interviews were conducted with representatives of various publishing houses. Comparative study was used to process the results of the survey.

The method of mathematical statistics - statistical observation - was also applied. Moreover, the descriptive statistics was used to generalize indicators of a single variable (random sample statistics), as well as to determine the correlations between two or more variables (correlation and regression analysis).

In order to ensure the validity of the questionnaire survey, the questions therein were discussed and approved at a meeting of the Department of Publishing and Editing of the Publishing and Printing Institute of the National Technical University of Ukraine "Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute". When conducting the questionnaire survey, there were considered all the requirements set for survey technology, voluntary participation therein was maintained, anonymity and confidentiality of answers of all respondents were preserved.

3. Results and Discussion

In order to study the peculiarities of perception of e-textbooks, Ukrainian publishers and editors used a survey methodology, according to which questionnaires were distributed at 10 publishing houses dealing with publication of educational literature. In particular, these were publishing houses that operate on the basis of modern educational institutions (publishing house "Politekhnika" at the Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute, publishing house at the Ukrainian Academy of Printing in Lviv, publishing house at the Kharkiv Academy of Culture); state publishing houses aimed at scientific literature ("Naukova Dumka", "Navchalna knyha-Bogdan" publishing house, "Ranok", "Akademiia")

and commercial publishing houses involved in publishing educational and children's books ("Kalamar", "Chas maistriv"). The number of respondents was 50 people - publishers, editors, who daily work on preparing and publishing educational literature, face problems of digitalization of the publishing market, can objectively evaluate the prospects and problems of e-book implementation.

The first question, which we asked the publishers and editors was to find out how they understood the term "electronic publication". The overwhelming majority (42 persons - 84%) understood it only as electronic manuals and textbooks. Such understanding of electronic publications by the given respondents may be conditioned by the peculiarity of their professional activity. Instead, only 4 people (8%) understood "electronic publication" as dictionaries, encyclopedias; 4 more persons (8%) – as directories, catalogs, brochures, guides.

76% of respondents (38 people) would look up for brief information on a particular issue on the Internet; 6 respondents (12%) would refer to print media, 6 persons (12%) would look up for information both in print and electronic publications.

The answer to the third question: what methods of accessing the publication you considered to be the best, was unexpected: all 50 people (100%) replied that it was the Internet. The obtained data certify the significant digitization of the process of cognition of a modern person, in particular the specialist in the publishing and printing industry.

As for devices from which the publishers obtain necessary information, the respondents divided almost in two halves: 23 persons (46%) would read on a computer and laptop; 27 persons (54%) would use a mobile phones and tablets. We consider that this data should be taken into account when creating future electronic educational publications, whose format should be adjusted to all types of digital devices.

The fifth question showed how much publishers and editors trust the information from the Internet, as they were asked whether they verified such information. The received answers were as follows: 13 people (26%) - always; 17 people (34%) - never; 20 people (40%) - sometimes if the resource was unknown and inauthoritative.

The following question is of particular value to future publishers of electronic educational publications as it clarifies the important aspects of using electronic publications. When answering the questions, it was possible to choose several answers at

once. 76% (38 respondents) considered that completeness of provided information was the most important, 56% (28 persons) – the ease of searching; 32% (16 people) - the ease of accessing; 24% (12 respondents) - the authoritativeness of the publication; possibility of updating and amending the information for important for 16% (8 persons). And only 2 people (4%) valued the possibility of feedback and were not interested in editing the text at all. Therefore, it is important for publishers and editors as users of electronic publications to have complete and verified information, easy search and easy access capacities to ensure comfortable operation with the publication. They are not interested in feedback and editing, which may be due to the small spread of interactive, multimedia publications of the proper quality, to which users are simply not used to.

The seventh question was intended to determine what would encourage respondents to purchase electronic educational publications. The received answers indicated that it should be: high quality - 21 people (42%), professional necessity - 22 people (44%), and low price - 8 people (16%); only 6 people (12%) would appreciate the authoritative of the publishing house, the author. Thus, the publishers when creating new electronic educational publications should firstly consider such 2 factors: high quality, professional necessity (clearly identify their target audience), and a reasonable price.

In order to identify the factors that encourage the purchase of electronic educational publications, we asked whether the opinion and recommendation of other users influence on the decision to purchase such publications. The answers were as follows: 23 people (46%) would follow the responses of others, 19 respondents (38%) - sometimes and 8 people (16%) - never would do so. The data obtained show that the overwhelming majority of respondents - 84% choose electronic publications deliberately, and 44% - seriously and motivated considering their professional necessity.

It was also important to find out what could repulse from purchasing electronic educational publications, with the following provided possible answers: a large number of mistakes and poor design; the inconvenience of searching the necessary information; incompleteness of information (absence of the required word in the register, inexhaustible information in the article); high price.

The largest number of respondents were not willing to buy electronic educational publications with inconvenient search - 34 people (68%), publications with large number

of mistakes, poor quality design and incomplete information will repulse 20 people (40%). Only 16 respondents (32%) would refuse from the publication because of a high price. Thus, users-publishers are ready to pay for quality electronic educational publications with convenient search, good design and functionality.

The following group of questions was intended to solve the issue of filling and functionality of future electronic educational publications and might be particularly useful for developers and publishers who should consider these aspects and meet user demand.

As for filling the electronic educational publications and usage of addendum, it was possible to choose several answers at once. Thus, 14 people would read only the introduction (28%); use addendum - 6 users (12%); use pointers - 12 respondents (24%); learn the bibliographic lists - 8 people (16%); and would not use any addendum - 20 people (40%).

An important component of electronic educational publications are hyperlinks that distinguish them from print publications and give users the ability to deepen the information. This instrument of electronic publications was used by 32 respondents (64%), as it expanded the horizon, helped to learn more. However, 16 respondents (32%) were distracted therewith, and only 2 respondents (4%) did not know what it was. Thus, we may recommend future developers and publishers of electronic educational publications to actively use this functionality as it is requested by the users.

Components of any educational publication are illustrations that help to demonstrate the subject, phenomenon of the world around. When asked if respondents would like to see illustrative materials in electronic educational publications, the vast majority (72%) replied that they would want to see illustrations in such publications, namely 26 (52%) decisively said "yes"; 10 people (20%) wanted to see high quality illustrations; only 14 people (28%) did not consider illustrations to be important.

An indicator of a high-quality electronic educational publications is multimedia component that is not used in many electronic qualifying publications today. The answers to this question also certified in favor of using the multimedia component in modern electronic educational publications: 28 respondents (56%) answered "yes", high-quality multimedia was important for 11 people (22%), which generally equals to 39 (78%) of the

total respondents; and only 11 persons (22%) did not consider multimedia as a necessary component of the electronic educational publications.

The above survey suggests that modern publishers are aware of the importance of the core features of electronic educational publications (hyperlinks, illustrations, and high-quality multimedia), which gives hope that users will receive such publications in the nearest future.

Along with the awareness of improvement of the electronic educational publications and the prospects for their release, we asked publishers how this educational literature was presented in publishing houses and found the following results. When asked whether their publishing houses issued electronic educational publications, 32 respondents (64%) answered affirmatively, 18 (36%) - negatively, which generally testifies to the prospect of the process of distribution and implementation of the electronic educational publications. However, the following questions indicated that the majority of such publications were produced in pdf format, as evidenced by 28 respondents (56%), which meant that hyperlinks and multimedia components in the vast majority of publications were still absent.

Conclusions

Having conducted an empirical research, we have been convinced of the hypothesis that e-textbooks are convenient and widespread publications in the educational process. Most users perceive electronic publications differently, and do not fully understand the meaning of the term "electronic publication". Accordingly, clarification and editing of its definition in scientific literature remains relevant. The same applies to the issue of separation of types of electronic publications, the criteria for their delimitation and ranging available electronic publications into a specific type.

Having analyzed the scientific works on the researched topic, performed an experimental research and studied its results, we came to a conclusion that practical developments and analytical researches in the field of electronic publications are relevant for the modern publishing market. In Ukraine, this topic is new, instead it is broader and better studied by foreign scientists.

Due to the survey, we were able to determine the features of perceptions and peculiarities of using e-textbooks by a professional reference group "publishers/editors", to highlight the advantages and disadvantages of using the e-textbooks.

According to the survey, users – publishers and editors want to obtain high quality electronic publications with high level of performing, without mistakes, with full presentation of information. The quality plays a crucial role in decision making. The criterion of ease of use of the electronic publications also is very important, which includes the ease of search, the ability to navigate by hyperlinks, and adaptive layout for different devices.

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