KREATIVNI CENTAR AND CHALLENGES OF DIGITAL TEXTBOOK PUBLISHING IN SERBIA

Ljiljana Marinkovic
Dejan Begovic
Kreativni centar, Serbia
NEGATIVE SIDE OF PRESENT SITUATION

• Serbian publishers are not very engaged in digital publishing (first couple of attempts are just under way this year)

• Serbian textbook publishers are also not very engaged in digital textbook publishing (only very limited amounts of content are usually put on CDs as supplementary material that comes with regular printed textbooks)
• Serbia is not listed as a country in AppStore, so to get any kind of content for iPad or iPhone you need to do it “indirectly”. The similar situation goes for Kindle etc.
• Reasons:
  
  • **Economic Reasons**
  • Serbian book market is decreasing for years, economic situation is bad for decades, number of bookshops is dropping, sales figures are lower in last years... 😞
  • Digital publishing demands significant investments right from the beginning and results are uncertain
• Schools in Serbia don’t have sufficient number of computers and even the existing ones are not used adequately in the teaching process
• **Educational Policy**

• Conservative, old-fashioned approach carried out by Ministry of Education and Science

• Last year’s Law on Textbooks draft made by Ministry of Education and Science suggested a definition of a textbook as only a “printed paper edition”, but, luckily, after a public discussion, the draft was taken back to “further improvement”

• No support from state for developing or introducing new technologies in schools
• **Teacher’s Education and Curriculum**
  Teachers are not well educated and prepared for using new digital technology (they use computers mostly for text editing)

• Curriculum is overloaded with unnecessary content and teachers working with children are too oriented on memorizing facts instead of teaching them to use knowledge for better understanding and creative ways of solving everyday problems
• Cultural Policy

• Digitalization is mostly understood as a set of projects that should enable public libraries to have free digital content for free public usage
• Serbian National Library introduced an obligation for publishers to submit electronic (PDF) copy of every new published book together with 5 printed copies. If a publisher does not provide it, it is eliminated from public mandatory purchase from Ministry of Culture and can be even forbidden to get an ISBN number for a new book.
• Huge amount of material is illegally distributed on the internet among teachers without any respect for authors’ rights
After all of this, the conclusion might be:

- **Serbian educational system is NOT a good environment for introducing new, digital textbook content at the moment, because it is not ready for it!**
• Therefore, would it be wise to start with digital text books in Serbia now?
• Well, to be honest, obviously, NO!
• So, some of you might ask us, what are we doing here at all?
• Before answering that question, let’s see the other...

• POSITIVE SIDE OF PRESENT SITUATION
• Young Generations Orientation Towards IT
• According to the research of Serbian State Statistics Institute from 2012:
• 99,5 % of university students use computers
• 95 % of young people from 16 to 24 use computers
• 60 % of young people from 12 to 29 use Internet, 45 % of those on a daily basis
• IT industry in Serbia is considered “out-of-the-system” because it shows very promising results, unlike the Serbian economy in general – there are 2000 companies with more than 6000 employees mostly exporting their products
• Expected Changes out of Political Reasons

• Serbia has been officially recognized as a candidate for EU. So, Serbia will have to adjust its law and policy framework in many fields, including education in relatively short time
• Expected Changes in Educational Policy

• There is more serious discussion about inevitable necessary reform of educational system in Serbia (results of PISA testing strongly confirm this)

• Passive learning based on memorizing enormous amount of facts must be changed with interactive learning which will enable students to get useful, functional knowledge
• Digital interactive textbooks will be a strong tool for this structural change in the educational system.
• **Expectations from new Minister of Education and Science**

• After the latest general elections a new Minister, Mr Srdjan Verbic, has just been appointed. He is, after many years, the first person who really knows how modern educational system should be organized, since he was working in Petnica Science Centre, well known scientific center for students of elementary and secondary schools.
Mr. Srdjan Verbic is also the author of Kreativni center’s textbooks for Physics in elementary schools (published before he became minister)
• After all of this, the new conclusion might be:

• Although Serbian educational system is NOT a good environment for introducing new, digital textbook content at the moment, there are signs that situation will change in the near future!
• Therefore, would it be wise to start with digital text books in Serbia now?
• YES, of course, and it would be wise to be among the first publishers who will do that!
• That is why we are here!

• Thank you!