IS1404 E-READ: Evolution of Reading in the Age of Digitization

Position paper

Name: Miha Kovač

WG(s): WG1 Skilled Pisa Age Reading,
        WG4 Ergonomic aspects of reading

1. **Potential research contribution** in light of, or linked to

A. WG interest and Scientific program:

Reading practices and ergonomic of reading are heavily affected by technologies of reading. Even more so, ebooks and printed books could be seen as two different types of communication devices that invoke a variety of different reading practices: As shown by a variety of book historians and contemporary publishing researchers, both reader's understanding of the text and reader's choices are influenced by organisation of the text on the page, by visual and physical appearance of a printed book, including the design of the front and back covers, by blurbs, the name of the author, dedications and inscriptions, prefaces, the title of the book, and so on; and by the retail, social, and personal contexts in which the book is sold, marketed, and read. Just the opposite as in the print culture, the layout of a screen page of an ebook is fluid, e-books don't have covers as visually attractive as p-books, and e-bookstores represent different "browsing environment" than their brick and mortar counterparts in a way that in the former, metadata of e-books, accompanied by automated suggestions of ebook retailer, and in the latter, random browsing and impulsive buying are the most common purchasing mechanism.

My main research interest is on socioeconomic and sociotechnical mechanisms that are driving these changes and on how economics and technologies of publishing interact with reading and literacy practices and ergonomic of reading. Therefore, in WG4 I see my research contribution in analysing the sociotechnical and socioeconomic context in which shift from print do digital reading took place: more simply put, in contributing to understanding the ecosystems of ergonomic of reading.

Similarly as in trade publishing, in educational publishing the shift from printed to digital learning materials took place in the form of a market battle between traditional publishers and tech companies. The fact that in the beginning of the millennium, in a set of countries, digital technologies were introduced to educational systems without previously measuring and testing their impact on learning, clearly indicates that in many parts of Europe, emotions and marketing mechanisms had more weight than pedagogical concerns when introducing digital technologies to schools. Similarly as in WG4, in WG 1 I see part of my contribution in analysing the mechanisms that drive introduction of digital tools to educational systems. As I also participate in a research and development program of new digital tools that takes place in one of Slovene publishing houses, I see my participation also in development of metrics for measuring impact both of digital and print learning tools.

B. Action objectives (pages 7-10 in the MoU):

As my current research focuses on interaction between economics & technologies of publishing on one side and reading and literacy practices and ergonomic of reading on the other, I see my contribution in evoking interdisciplinary research transcending established boundaries between scientific disciplines involved in reading and publishing research. As I am also involved in educational publishing research, I expect that I will also contribute to providing recommendations for optimal text/content design for educational publishing and consequently, evidence-based recommendations to educational practitioners and policy makers.

2. Interest in: organizing training school

Book reading and publishing research methodology: training school*

The aim of the proposed training school is development and testing of methodological tools that will help in understanding relations among recent trends in publishing markets, changes in book formats and changes in reading practices.

Training school will consist of following stages: 1) juxtaposing different methodological approaches as used in publishing studies and in reading research 2) identifying approaches which could provide models and guidelines for building a high-quality adjusted methodological tools, 3) development of tools that will allow assessment of relations between changes in book/text industries and changes in reading practices, 4) testing of the new methodological tools (post-school period).

Training school will contribute to the ERead project by supplying a methodology for better understanding main relations between publishing business models and reading practices. Final outcome of the workshops should be a book market/reading assessment methodology that could be tested at different markets in order to get wider comparative picture of publishing/ reading interrelations and their developments in Europe.

*Joint proposal by Miha Kovač and Zoran Velagić