Third level publishing studies: Lithuania, a case study

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Abstract

Under the umbrella of Book Science, research in publishing has a long tradition in Lithuania and is today perceived as an independent branch of scholarship within the Communication and Information Sciences. On the basis of original sources, the aim of this article is to analyse the work conducted by the Institute of Book Science and Documentation of Vilnius University in implementing third level publishing studies (meaning PhD level) and to outline the merits, weak points, opportunities and threats in the planning of further training of scholars within this particular branch. The key research sources are documentation governing doctoral studies in Lithuania, at Vilnius University and the field of Communication and Information Sciences, as well as Communication and Information Sciences doctoral study programmes and descriptions of disciplines, PhD student lists, students’ publication indexes and different archival documents of doctoral studies at the Institute of Book Science and Documentation of the Faculty of Communication of Vilnius University.

KEYWORDS: publishing research, doctoral studies, Lithuania.

Introduction

Although there are no published scientific articles on third level publishing studies in Lithuania, there are still several sources of information regarding doctoral studies in Library Science and Book Science. These sources include the text of Stanislovas Dubauskas about postgraduate studies in Library Science at Vilnius University (VU) that was written in 1999 on the 50th anniversary of Library Science at VU (Dubauskas 1999, 123–129). Based on the list of PhD students between the years 1975 and 1998 (Dubauskas 1999, 312–317), the author conducted a review of the PhD students who had defended their dissertations both in the Soviet period and the first decade of independence. He also used this collated material in his work (Dubauskas 1997) when writing about third-level studies in the encyclopaedic dictionary Knygotyra (Book Science). Another
source of information is Domas Kaunas’s article “Doktorantūra ir doktorantai” (“Doctoral studies and doctoral students”) which was published on the 60th anniversary of the Institute of Book Science and Documentation (IBSD) in the informational publication “Knygotyros katedra” (“Institute of Book Science”) (Kaunas 2000). Referring to the text written by the same author (Kaunas 1997) and published in the abovementioned dictionary Knygotyra in 1997, this article presented a more extensive review of the third-level studies, discussing them as one of the fields of activity of the Institute in 1990-2000. A decade later, when the Faculty of Communication was preparing documents in relation to the right to organize third-level studies in the field of Communication and Information Sciences (CIS) at VU, Alma Braziuniene generalized the data on postgraduate studies managed by the Institute in 1999-2010 and thus contributed to other collective considerations (Vilniaus universiteto dokumentai 2010, 29-31). Additionally, several other informational publications should also be mentioned: firstly, in 1997 and 1998, facts on the third-level studies in the field of CIS were presented in the activity reports of the Faculty of Communication (FC) (Komunikacijos fakultetas 1997; Komunikacijos fakultetas 1999); secondly, while implementing the 2008 project “Preservation of National Identity under Conditions of Globalization: The Renewal of Doctoral Study Programme in the Social Sciences and Humanities and the Creation of Postgraduate Studies Model” (BPD2004-ESF-2.50-03-05/0058), documents of doctoral studies at the VU Faculty of Philosophy and FC were published (Šaulauskas 2007; Šaulauskas, Vaškevičienė 2008); thirdly, upon request of the Ministry of Education and Science of Lithuania in 2009, models of organization and financing of third-level (doctoral) studies were examined, and later the results and recommendations on how the doctoral studies in Lithuania could be improved were announced (Doktorantūra 2009); and fourthly, the first article about doctoral studies in the field of CIS was published in 2014, generalizing the information about doctoral dissertations and their authors between the years 1993 and 2014 (Navickienė 2014). These works are of different nature and of differing importance. Some of them are generalized informational texts, whereas others are significant as published resources, documenting the situation of doctoral studies in the field of CIS that existed at those particular periods of time. Others again can be considered as guides providing knowledge on doctoral studies in Lithuania, as well as outlining best practice of European universities and presenting guidelines for improvements to be made in the sphere of third-level studies in the country. Until now, nobody has provided a thorough account of Lithuania’s experience in third-level studies in publishing, nor investigated the legal basis on which doctoral studies in the field are based. Also, the range of students attracted to the field, the process of studies and issues of preparation for dissertations and results thereof have never previously been considered in detail.

The objective of this article is to analyse the experience of the Institute of Book Science and Documentation (IBSD) of VU in third level degree studies in publishing, to distinguish the main stages of development in these studies, and
to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the studies with a view to planning future training of scholars. The main sources used in this article include documentation governing doctoral studies in Lithuania (the Law of the Republic of Lithuania on Education and Studies), regulations governing doctoral studies at VU, rules governing doctoral studies in the field of CIS, CIS doctoral study programmes and descriptions of disciplines, PhD student lists, defended dissertation indexes and different archival documents of doctoral studies at the FC of VU. It is presumed that considerations in the article will contribute to the studies of the history of the CIS schools in Lithuania and will help to generalize the experience in organization of third level publishing studies at VU.

Period prior to establishment of doctoral/third-level studies in publishing in Lithuania

Although Book Science has existed in Lithuania for several centuries, with publishing research linked to this branch of science, it was only in Soviet times that a formal system for training researchers in this field was established. Prior to 1975, doctoral dissertations in Book Science at VU were, in common with Library Sciences and Bibliography, conducted within the framework of postgraduate studies in Philology and History. The only other possibility open to Lithuanians at that time was to defend their theses in Moscow or Leningrad (now St. Petersburg). In 1975, postgraduate studies in Library science were introduced at VU (Dubauskas 1999, 123) and, together with the aforementioned postgraduate studies in History and Philology, served as the basis for today’s third-level studies in Book Science, as well as for publishing within it.

With the restitution of Lithuania’s independence, changes within VU saw the opening of the FC in 1991, with the re-establishment of the IBSD as a structural unit. Once re-established, the Institute continued the pre-war traditions of independent Book Science¹, developed research in this field and monopolised the training of book science researchers, including those interested in publishing.

In today’s post-independence Lithuania, two periods can be identified in regard to the development of doctoral studies in publishing. The first one covers a ten-year period from 1993 with the introduction of doctoral studies of Library Science and Book Science within Humanities at Vilnius University. The second period, running from 2003 to the present, reflects efforts to develop research in the field of publishing in Lithuania within Social Sciences at Vilnius University and to implement the EU’s common agreements on doctoral studies.

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¹ Although in existence for only three years following its establishment in 1940, the Department of Bibliology was the first academic structure in the field of Book Science in Lithuania and, as such, formed an essential building block to today’s Institute of Book Science and Documentation.
Doctoral studies in Lithuania, 1993-2002

Reacting to changes in requirements and regulations on studies following independence in Lithuania, this period was characterised by the creation of a new system of studies and training of Book Science researchers. Amongst the changes, the Government of the Republic of Lithuania began compiling a rolling five-year list of study institutions that could deliver doctoral studies, as well as introducing a number of laws to regulate universities. Consequently, with these new laws and internal regulations based on them, the relevant documents of universities across Lithuania came into effect, laying down requirements for the delivery of PhD studies, as well as regulating required qualifications for supervisors of PhD students, members of doctoral studies committees and dissertation defence boards, and opponents. These new regulations also provided for the procedure of organisation of PhD studies and defence of dissertations, and amended the length of PhD studies from five to four years.

The middle of this period witnessed a fundamental phenomenon of the institutionalisation of CIS which had a decisive influence on their further development. After centuries of existence within the fields of History and Philology, the era from 1997 has seen Book Science developing within a completely new field, namely Communication and Information Sciences. The first classification of sciences approved in independent Lithuania\(^2\) categorised this field as a group of nine related sciences divided into three branches and attributed to the research area of the Humanities. According to this classification, the FC was authorised to provide doctoral studies, providing the stimulus for the development of CIS as a centralised school for the nine sciences, including research in publishing.

In the period from 1993 to 2003, there were nine doctoral dissertations on publishing successfully defended, representing an impressive 75% success rate (favourably comparable to the 64% for the IBSD as a whole, the even lower figure for VU in its entirety and the 40% for doctoral dissertations across Lithuania). The aforementioned nine doctoral dissertations and three non-defended dissertations dealt with the history of publishing, including analyses of Latin and Polish books of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL), the Lithuanian books in Lithuania Major and Lithuania Minor in the 19\(^{th}\) and early 20\(^{th}\) centuries, publishing in Lithuanian emigrants communities and the publishing of children’s books in Soviet times, as well as the non-historic topic of publishing e-periodicals. The authors of these doctoral dissertations were graduates of the Vilnius university program Library Science and Bibliography Studies or experienced philologists working in old and rare book departments and other research-related units of

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\(^2\) The classification of sciences was approved by Resolution No 1247 of 11 November 1997 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania. According to this classification, the Humanities covered the field of Communication and Information Sciences (06H) which included: Documentation, Information, Library Science, Archival Science (H 100); Bibliography (H 105); and Paleography, Book Science, Epigraphy, Papyrology (H 110).
scientific libraries. The subject area of the dissertations was determined by the interests of the scholars, traditions of such research and the existing weakness in the historiography of the Lithuanian book and books in other languages in Lithuania. Supervisors of the then PhD students were academic coryphaei, professors and habilitated doctors such as Vladas Žukas and Vanda Stonienė, as well as new-generation professors and future professors such as Domas Kaunas and Elena Macevičiūtė. The Institute was assisted by representatives from the faculties of Vilnius University and other Lithuanian universities and research institutions in setting up doctoral studies committees and dissertation defence boards.

Third-level publishing studies in Lithuania, 2003 onwards

The second period in the development of doctoral studies in Lithuania began with the country’s accession to the European Union and the implementation of doctoral studies agreements reached in Berlin in 2003 between EU Ministers for Education. At that time, doctoral studies became a part of the three-level studies system, the highest level of which includes a studies phase, targeted research, preparation and defence of doctoral dissertations, and dissemination of research findings.

In the context of these changes, the first PhD study programme in the field of CIS was approved in 2003 and subsequently has been used as the basis for creating individualised study plans for each doctoral student consisting of at least 20 credits (currently 30 European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) credits) in compulsory and optional courses. The programme has been subject to multiple updates and amendments, including the refinement of subject profiles and introduction of new subjects. Further significant changes came...
into effect in 2010 with changes in the legislative framework\(^6\) resulting in the adoption of the first special document in Lithuania to regulate PhD studies in CIS (\textit{Vilniaus universiteto Komunikacijos ir informacijos mokslų 2010}). This document not only defined the functions of actors involved in doctoral studies in more detail and validated a new body (the Doctoral Studies Committee in the Field of Communication and Information Sciences\(^7\)), but also entrenched higher qualification requirements for supervisors of PhD students and other persons working with third-level students, as well as tightened requirements for the dissemination of the outcomes of doctoral research and broadened the international character of doctoral studies (membership of a foreign expert in a dissertation defence board has become mandatory, except for dissertations dealing with Lithuania-related subjects).

Adaptation of the IBSD to the new requirements was facilitated by opportunities for PhD students to engage in the activities of NORSLIS (the Nordic Research School in Information Studies) and to join the multinational and multidisciplinary network HIBOLIRE (the Nordic-Baltic-Russian Network on the History of Books, Libraries and Reading) which is focused on the education of young scholars. Dissemination of research outcomes in publishing was implemented mainly through regularly held scientific events (converted to international conferences from 1999 and now transforming into regional events (Bliūdžiuvienė 2012) and publication in “Knygotyra” (“Book Science”), the recognised peer-reviewed, open access scholarly journal of VU (Braziūnienė 2013).

From 2003, the range of topics investigated for doctoral dissertations widened considerably with the diversification of the Institute in general corresponding to growth in the corps of teachers in connection with the implementation of BA and MA publishing study programmes. As this period progressed, the crop of applicants has evolved somewhat and, amongst recent applicants for doctoral studies in publishing, graduates have been attracted from within Vilnius University MA programmes in Book Science, Heritage Communication and Information, Publishing, as well as from other Lithuanian higher education institutions (Vilnius and Political Science participated in an interdepartmental project funded by the EU, “The Preservation of National Identity under the Conditions of Globalisation: The Renewal of Doctoral Study Programme and the Creation of Post-Graduate Study Model” (SPD measure 2.5 “Improvement of human resources quality scientific research and innovations”).

\(^6\) The Vilnius University Regulation on PhD Studies effective from 2003 (\textit{VU doktorantūros reglamentas}). [interaktyvus]. [žiūrėta 2015 sausio 5 d.]. Prieigą per internetą: http://www.vu.lt/site_files.

\(^7\) A group of 11 scientists who meet the qualification requirements applicable to senior or chief researchers.
University of Educational Sciences, Kaunas University of Technology, etc.). Since 2003, a total of nine students have worked on doctoral dissertations on publishing-related issues, covering such modern topics as distribution of books, university publishing, handbook publishing, advertising and digital publishing. However, only four dissertations were successfully defended, of which two dissertations tackled historical topics on censorship and regional book culture of the first half of the 20th century and the other two were on publishing topics relevant to the current day, namely advertising and the quality of digital books. Comparing with the pre-2003 period, there was no decrease in the number of students choosing research into publishing, but the rate of successful defence of research work was lower (44%). This was in line with the general trends of third-level studies of the IBSD unit (effectiveness decreased from 64% to 55%) and the average effectiveness in Social Sciences and Humanities in Lithuania, although there is severe competition for admission to doctoral studies in these areas. This lower success rate can be attributed to a number of factors, including the changing crop of applicants, problems with changing types of studies (full-time, part-time, in conjunction with work, etc.) and social problems faced by PhD students due to insufficient funding, as well as generational changes in the scientists able to supervise such doctoral dissertations and influences of the extended range of dissertation topics presented.
Over the past decade, the process of preparing and defending doctoral dissertations that are more oriented towards current publishing problems was assisted by recognised Lithuanian researchers from the Institute of Social Research, Institute of Mathematics and Informatics, Gediminas Technical University, Kaunas University of Technology, Vytautas Magnus University, Mykolas Romeris University, the Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania and Wroblewski Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences. From 2014 onwards, the participation of foreign experts in the activities of dissertation defence boards has been mandatory. This requirement is quite challenging due to the uncompetitive financial situation of Lithuanian research and studies institutions.

One more change worth mentioning in the context of the second period is the clarification of the concept of CIS at the level of classification of sciences. In the updated version of the Lithuanian classification of sciences adopted in 2011, the field of CIS encompassed various branches previously scattered across the Humanities and Social Sciences, and fell within the field of Social Sciences. This was the first time that this classification had been detailed at a sub-branch level and, in this classification, the branch of Book Science was presented as a structure consisting of 21 separate sub-branches, including publishing research. Although the classification failed to identify the field as a multidisciplinary structure, it reflected the dynamics of the CIS field and its branches, illustrating linkage between the sciences at issue with the Humanities, Social Sciences and Information and Communication Technology Sciences.

Conclusions

While concluding, it should be noted that over several decades of competing in the Lithuanian academic market, Vilnius University has won the right to be the sole institution delivering doctoral studies in the CIS field. The FC has established itself as an academic unit with the greatest number of scholarly staff in this field and the IBSD has been the only institution providing doctoral studies in

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14 The classification was approved by Order No V-1457 of 16 October 2012 of the Minister for Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania.

15 According to this classification, the Social Sciences covered the field of Communication and Information Sciences (085) which includes nine branches: Documentology and Archivistics; Library and Information Sciences; Information and Knowledge Management Sciences; Cultural and Creative industries; Communication Sciences; Journalism and Media Sciences; Museology; Book Sciences; History of Script and Writing. The branch of Book Science includes 21 sub-branches: Book Science Theory; Book Science Methodology; Book History; Book Economy; Publishing Research; Bibliopolistic; Book Advertising Theory; Printing and Publishing Statistics; Bibliophile Research; Book Marks Theory; Book Heritage Research; Book Culture; Book Philosophy; Book Sociology; Book Psychology; Book Phenomenology; Book Semiotic; Book Art; Watermarks Research; Incunabula Research; Book as Media Research. The above version of the classification of the field of Communication and Information was prepared in June 2011 by an interdepartmental work group set up by the Lithuanian Research Council. However, Order No V-1457 of 16 October 2012 of the Minister for Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania approved only the list of the fields of studies, leaving the branches and sub-branches thereof unregulated.
publishing. While widening its arena from solely traditional publishing history research, the Institute has become an academic body that also analyses current processes and has developed third-level publishing studies across the integrated nine fields of studies in the CIS. Having implemented the Bologna Process, the future outcomes and quality of studies will depend on external and internal factors that could be identified as strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

**Strengths.** PhD studies in publishing are an integral part of CIS doctoral studies at VU, the sole institution in Lithuania to deliver doctoral studies in this field. As a research centre for Book Science, the IBSD is the regional leader in the Baltic States in terms of scope and sustainability of research works, as well as in the pace of development of relevant topics. With the experience of professors and associate professors in the organisation of publishing studies at all three levels, the IBSD represents a concentration of scholarly and educational potential in this field. Topics of doctoral studies in publishing are closely related to research projects conducted by IBSD researchers. “Knygotyra”, the scholarly journal of the IBSD, provides a possibility for PhD students to publish research outcomes on publishing topics. The IBSD tradition of organising international scientific events promotes dissemination of doctoral research findings beyond Lithuania’s borders and creates opportunities for third-level students to establish and develop international research contacts. The number of applicants to PhD studies in publishing is increasing, not decreasing. A wide variety of study options available (full-time, part-time, externalised defence of doctoral dissertations). Subjects of Book Science and publishing are well-reflected in the PhD study programme in the field of CIS at VU. Book Science and publishing research within it is well-represented on the CIS Doctoral Studies Committee. Many authors of dissertations on publishing topics further their career at Vilnius University and go on to contribute to the strengthening of Communication and Information Sciences.

**Weaknesses.** The success rate for completion of PhD studies in publishing is currently deteriorating and does not exceed the average indicators of the Faculty. There are insufficient funding opportunities for doctoral studies and/or early employment opportunities that would help solve personal financial problems. This impedes successful studies of some of third-level students. IBSD scientific relations are underused to enhance the international character of doctoral studies in publishing.

**Opportunities.** Book Science and publishing research falls within the CIS which is a rapidly developing field of research and studies. CIS research works are relevant both in Lithuania and globally. Increasing competition in the Lithuanian academic market encourages the seeking of better results, analysing the good practice of Lithuanian and foreign partners. There is a possibility to use funding instruments for doctoral studies through tender procedures and/or European Union structural funds. International cooperation opportunities emerging in...
the EU space creates preconditions for enhancing the internationalisation of doctoral studies in publishing. The multidisciplinary potential in the field of CIS concentrated at the Faculty of Communication promotes interdisciplinary research.

**Threats.** Brain drain to other Lithuanian and foreign research and studies institutions and business entities. The insufficient number of state-funded places does not provide opportunities for the even growth of all CIS branches, including Book Science and Publishing. Duplication and dispersion of doctoral studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences impede concentration of top-level research potential which is already very modest, and also do not promote rational financial procedures and undermine the quality of doctoral studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences and the quality thereof in Lithuania. Doctoral students carrying out research into Book Science within Lithuanian studies are not engaged in international research projects and publishing of articles in foreign-language publications.

Archival and printed sources


References


**Sažetak**

**Studiji nakladništva na trećoj razini: slučaj Litve**

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**KLJUČNE RIJEČI:** istraživanja u nakladništvu, doktorski studiji, Litva.