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Title:

Newspapers as Research Source: Information Needs and Information Seeking of Humanities Scholars

Abstract:

This paper focuses on newspapers as a scientific research source in humanities. The purpose of this paper is to present a portion of the results obtained in the nationwide study which explored how Croatian humanities academics and scholars perceive and use (historical and current) newspapers. The study presented in this paper focused on two groups of researchers, historians and linguists, and aimed to answer the following research questions: What kind of information do (Croatian) historians and linguists look for in newspapers?, What search strategies do they employ to find necessary information in newspapers?, How do they document relevant information from newspapers?

Survey was conducted in December 2013 through an online questionnaire and the initial results show that almost half of respondents use newspapers (print or online) as a primary research source and that the majority of respondents still prefers to consult print newspapers over electronic for a variety of reasons. Interestingly, although majority of respondents find and consult the newspapers in local (Croatian) libraries, archives, museums, a significant portion of respondents (20,4%) visit foreign cultural heritage institutions to access the newspaper material they need.

The paper critically analysis information needs and behaviour of a specific newspaper user group which has not yet been studied in Croatia and provides data which can be contribute to the development of national newspaper preservation policy.

Key words: newspapers, information behaviour, digital newspaper collections, scientific research

Biographies:

Maja Krtalić, PhD, is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Information Sciences at the University of Osijek in Croatia. She obtained a PhD in information sciences. Her areas of interest are primarily in preservation of library material (both paper and digital preservation), with an emphasis on preservation management. She has published several papers on preservation issues in national and international publications and participated at several conferences.

Darko Lacovic is a Teaching and Research Assistant at Department of Information Sciences, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Osijek, Croatia and a doctoral student. His main research interests include human information behaviour and library services to socially excluded persons. He has published in peer-reviewed journals such as Croatian Librarians Herald, Libri and New Library World.

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