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Impact of National Research Assessment Exercises on Monographs and Scholarly Books authored by the Lithuanian Researchers

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Introduction

For many years, scholarly books have been and continue to be an important channel of scholarly communication and a unit for research assessment. Books as a mean of scholarly publication are more frequently used in social sciences and humanities (SSH), yet remain important for the communication in science, technology and medicine (STM) (Bonaccorsi et al., 2017). However, in the context of research assessment, books and especially monographs are extensively discussed as an output in crisis due to the threats arising in relation to their quality and production (Basili and Lanzillo, 2018). In this work, we present a comprehensive and still on-going study on the assessment of books in Lithuania to fill in the gaps in the international knowledge on that topic. The goal of the study is to investigate the impact of National Research Assessment Exercises

(RAE) on Monographs and Scholarly Books authored by the Lithuanian Researchers over the period of 2004 to 2016.

From 2005 to 2017, Lithuanian policy makers have designed and approved the evaluation methodologies after the books had been published. So, the research institutions were not able to prepare in advance for the evaluation. In 2018, the most current and valid Lithuanian legislative acts encourage participants of the research system to strive for the best results and choose the best publishers to disseminate their outcomes.

Methodology used in this research

Firstly, the method of document analysis was used to analyse how the evolution of requirements for research outputs such as monographs and other scholarly books occurs by the changes in the Lithuanian legal acts from 2001 to 2018.

<p>Novelty</p> <p>2001–2007 Institution submit a separate one-page summary on the novelty</p> <p>2008–2015 "...contains clear and prominent elements of novelty..."</p> <p>2017 just "Novelty"</p>	<p>MONOGRAPH (definition)</p> <p>2001 "A monograph is a non-serial bibliographic item, i.e. an item complete in one part, or a systematic or complete publication on a single subject" from Harrod's Librarians Glossary</p> <p>2002 added: "... or presents an original interpretation." Valid for 2003–2007.</p> <p>2008 "Non-serial and non-continuous bibliographic unit (publication), which systematically and/or exhaustively analyses one topic (subject), ... novelty elements, provides a solution to a scientific uncertainty, which was not evident from the existing body of knowledge and level of methodology; it can also be in the form of generalised publications of authors and other researchers on the same topic or an original approach to the topic.</p> <p>2009–2015 "...Non-serial and non-continuous publication, which systematically and/or exhaustively analyses one topic (subject), ... novelty and scholarlyness ..."</p> <p>2009–2015 <i>Significant research monographs, studies etc.</i> — the significance determined by experts of the field/branch of science</p> <p>2017 added "...is a reviewed publication ..."</p>	<p>Peer-Review</p> <p>2001 mandatory for STM & SS, optional for Humanities: (a) reviewers are well-known foreign experts in the field or (b) reviewers are appointed by the trusted institution, and they are not affiliated with the authors' institution (if they are — the monograph is not a scientific monograph).</p> <p>2002 added: "... The appointment of reviewers is strictly confidential" — valid for 2003–2007.</p> <p>2003–2016 not mentioned 2017 just "Peer-review"</p>	
<p>Scientific level</p> <p>2001–2007 "the monograph summing up the papers already published in an international peer-review publication (written by the authors of a monograph or other researchers)"</p> <p>2009–2015 "...scholarliness particular to each area or field of science..."</p> <p>2017 Element of scholarliness</p>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td data-bbox="715 1184 866 1263"> <p>ISBN</p> <p>Mandatory all years</p> </td> <td data-bbox="870 1184 1136 1263"> <p>Volume of book</p> <p>2008 10 author's sheets for SSH</p> <p>2009– 8 author's sheets for SSH & STM</p> </td> </tr> </table>	<p>ISBN</p> <p>Mandatory all years</p>	<p>Volume of book</p> <p>2008 10 author's sheets for SSH</p> <p>2009– 8 author's sheets for SSH & STM</p>
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<p>Citations / Published Reviews</p> <p>2001–2006 copies of reviews</p> <p>Note: Submission for an evaluation only in the second year after publication if citation or review come later than a year after publication.</p>	<p>Publisher (mandatory all years)</p> <p>2006 – "A globally-recognised (academic) publisher is a publisher that continually issues research authored by national and international researchers; distributing its production in many countries; publishing globally-recognised research (cultural, professional) books and journals (more than five journals indexed in Web of Science). Mandatory presence on the providing sufficient information about the nature and global recognition of the publisher".</p> <p>2006–2009 <i>The List of globally-recognised publishers</i> (for STM) covers all named publishers and other publishers that are globally-recognised in the opinion of experts.</p> <p>2010 – Globally-recognised publishers are determined by experts</p>		
<p>Target audience</p> <p>2001–2006 researchers, MSc & PhD students</p>	<p>Printings</p> <p>2001–2008 100 copies (if published in Lithuania)</p>		
<p>Libraries</p> <p>2001–2006 The main libraries bought the copies (if published in Lithuania)</p>	<p>Summary</p> <p>2017 Summary in English, French or German</p>		

Figure 1. Requirements for monographs as institutional outputs in 2001–2017

Secondly, the bibliometric analysis of the records of scholarly books submitted to RAEs was performed. The outputs as records were accumulated into the database managed by the Lithuanian Research Council (LRC) and used for RAE 2005–2017.

Finally, ISBN codes and information about publishers and countries of origin were specified using additional sources: (1) The Lithuanian Academic Electronic Library; (2) The National Bibliography Data Bank; (3) Worldcat, OECD; (4) Global Register of Publishers, International ISBN agency.

Following the specification of metadata, the further analysis focused on 4135 books with ISBN published in 2004–2016 that were submitted by institutions for the annual evaluation in 2005–2017.

Correlations between the types and numbers of books submitted for the assessment and the changes in methodologies

Over the analysed period (2001–2018), Lithuanian methodologies for research evaluation changed frequently and every new legal act had some changes in requirements for types of publications with ISBN. The concept of a *monograph* was first mentioned in the Lithuania legislation in 2001, in *Regulations for requirements applicable to research monographs*. Because of page limitations, we cannot give a detailed explanation of the changes over the time. However, Figure 1 shows a high-level overview in the requirements for monographs over the period 2001–2017.

The methodologies for RAE were prepared by two separate groups of national experts in SSH and STM. Differences in the methodologies for SSH and STM made the impact on the types of publications (monographs, chapters in edited volumes, etc.), countries and publishers which issued the books authored by the Lithuanian researchers (Fig. 2).

The grouping of publications by type and area revealed that the greatest fluctuations occurred in SSH between 2009 and 2011 and in STM between 2008 and 2016. It can be linked to a new type that was introduced in the methodologies, namely, chapters/papers in edited books in 2009 (STM) and in 2010 (SSH). Since 2010 in STM, institutions received points and, respectively, more funding exceptionally for research monographs or book chapters issued by prestigious publishers. This explains why the level of monographs in STM is so low from year 2009. As can be seen in Fig. 2, while books in STM were mostly published abroad, most books in SSH issued in Lithuania. Chapters in edited volumes comprised more than 90% of the STM production since 2010 when book chapters started to be considered along with monographs. Very few STM monographs are published abroad.

Meanwhile, in the case of SSH disciplines, monographs, book chapters and other publications published in Lithuania or with non-prestigious foreign

publishers earn less points only. The difference was not significant for books issued by global-recognised publishers. Such publishers are determined by experts since 2010. The definition used is quite simple and is presented in Figure 1.

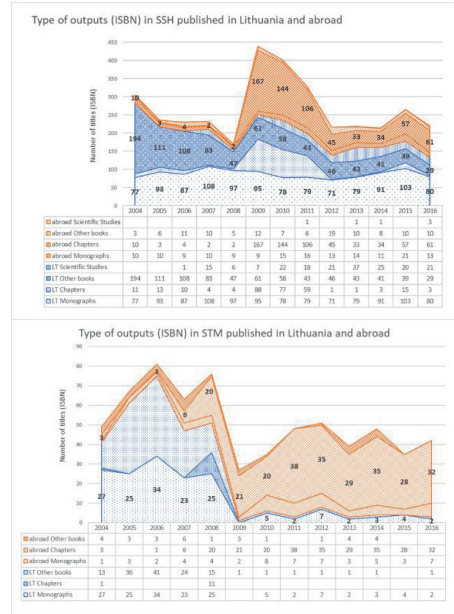


Fig. 2. Publications in SSH and STM by type and publishing in Lithuanian and abroad

Conclusions

This research is on its starting point and still going on, so more detailed conclusions will be presented later. The results of this study point to the conclusion that changes in the research assessment system affect the researchers' choice between publishing a monograph or publication of smaller volumes, e.g., the article or chapter in an edited book.

The long-term requirement on publishers (e.g., publishing with the globally recognised publishers) led to an increase in the number of publications published abroad, especially in STM.

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