Academic journals of media and communication – between scientific rigor and compromise[1]

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Abstract

The present paper performed an analysis of the quality standards the Romanian journals of journalism and communication should comply with. The evaluation criteria included, on one hand, the coherence of editorial policies and the adequate integration of the published material within the profile of the respective publication and, on the other hand, the „external" conditions, such as consistency and publishing frequency of the volumes, technical conditions with regard to the graphic design, visibility within national and international academic medium etc.

Keywords

Academic journal, journalism, communication, quality, compromise.

Résumé

Cette recherche représente une analyse des standards de qualité que doivent remplir les revues académiques roumaines dans le domaine du journalisme et de la communication. Les critères d'évaluation visent la cohérence des politiques éditoriales, l'adéquation des contributions au profile de la revue, tout comme les conditions „externes" concernant notamment la consistance et la périodicité des numéros parus, les conditions graphiques, la visibilité dans le milieu académique national et international, etc.

Mots-clés

Revue académique, journalisme, communication, qualité, compromis.

1. Preliminaries

The present study revisits, with some additions and modifications, the description of the current state of journal publishing within Romanian academic environment[2] – universities, research institutes, professional associations –, which is characterised by an increasing contrast between the desire for quality assurance derived from the editors' high standards and the pressure coming from various forms of institutional monitoring and evaluation, on one hand, and the specific work conditions which are rather unfavourable in terms of finances and human resources, on the other hand. This complex situation may sometimes lead to disregarding the (self)imposed scientific standards.

As far as method is concerned, our analysis was based on quantitative evaluations of quantifiable features as a principle, from which some qualitative-determined conclusions have been drawn. The analysis onset was the 'statement on editorial policy' of each journal we examined, as long as we had access to it. Then, we followed the evolution of each publication according to their initial editorial policies. We have, unfortunately, discovered that some journals did not publish a 'statement' as such in their debut issue, so that the area of interest and the prescriptions regarding form and content were exclusively detectable in their 'call for paper' invitation article, if present.

The research material initially consisted of academic journals in various fields of human sciences (philology, history, cross cultural studies), philosophy, ethnology, anthropology, and the like[3]. The present study additionally considered the journals in the field of media and communication, which are here mainly discussed.

The inventory of the existent academic journals proved to be rather narrow, which was not necessarily disadvantageous. In order to reconcile our research hypothesis with the conclusion we reached, we could say that it is preferable to have fewer journals of high quality than many and unsubstantial. In fact, we investigated 23 Romanian universities with faculties, departments or, at least, academic teams specialised in the field of communication and/or journalism, in the expectation of finding academic journals with published contributions in that specific field. 13 such journals have been found, most of them as sections of the respective university *Annals*, or, even more

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restrictive, as associated with other fields of study – Public Relations, Political Sciences, Philology, Culture etc. (see *Annex*). A further obstruction to our analysis resided in the fact that very few of them had a regular frequency of publication, whereas others could metaphorically be considered as belonging to the order of Ephemerid. Accordingly, our case studies narrowed to five publications, as follows:

▪ RRJC = *Revista Română de Jurnalism și Comunicare* [Romanian Journal of Journalism and Communication], Faculty of Journalism and Communication Sciences, University of Bucharest

▪ RRIP = *Revista Română de Istorie a Presei* [Romanian Journal of Journalism History], Romanian Association of Journalism History

▪ SUBBE = *Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai, Seria Ephemerides*, Faculty of Political, Administrative and Communication Sciences, Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca

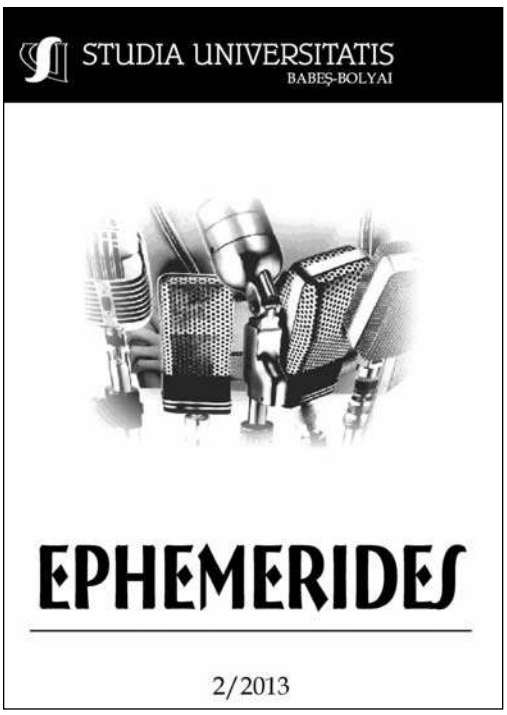
▪ RJCPR = *Revista Română de Comunicare și Relații Publice* [Romanian Journal of Communication and Public Relations], Faculty of Public Relations and Communication, National School of Political and Administrative Sciences, Bucharest

▪ AUCCOM = *Analele Universității Craiova, Seria Comunicare* [Annals of the University of Craiova, Series: Communication], Faculty of Letters, University of Craiova.









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We have also documented various aspects regarding other journals, whenever we have considered them interesting for our study and despite their deficient frequency of publication, their heterogeneous contents profile or their narrow visibility. General conclusions have been drawn with regard to all the hereinabove mentioned research material, i.e. including journals in the fields of human and social sciences, philosophy, etc.

2. Potential micro-monographs

2.1. RRJC. *Revista Română de Jurnalism și Comunicare* [Romanian Journal of Journalism and Communication] is by far the oldest, the most adequate to the research profile and the most active in the field. Published by the University of Bucharest, Faculty of Journalism and Communication Sciences, RRJC benefits at present from the cooperation with The Ars Docendi Publishing House of the same university and with the Association of Trainers in Journalism and Communication (AFJC)

The history of RRJC goes down to the year 1995, when Mihai Coman, currently a university professor, published *The Global Network*, under the aegis of Central and Eastern European Schools of Journalism Network. That journal was followed in 2002 by *Jurnalism & Comunicare. Revista Română de Jurnalism și Comunicare* [Journalism & Communication. Romanian Journal of Journalism and Communication], initiated by Mihai Coman and Marian Petcu, under the aegis of the research centre of the Faculty of Journalism and Communication Sciences and in association with Tritonic Publishing House in Bucharest. In 2006 a couple of organisational changes occurred: Ars Docendi became an editorial partner, the editorial board was revised, and the journal title changed into *Revista Română de Jurnalism și Comunicare* [Romanian Journal of Journalism and Communication]. The initial editorial program and the cooperation strategies were preserved as before. One year later, in 2007, the Journal was placed under a third guiding authority, the Association of Trainers in Journalism and Communication.

The structure of the Journal remained fairly stable over the years, as well as substantial, diversified and adequate to the research profile. A first – untitled – section in an early issue of the Journal covered the fundamental concerns within the field of study: the relationship between political discourse, media discourse, and the social construct of reality; the (rather antagonist) relationship journalist – specialist in communication; communication from an anthropological perspective a.o. Later, this rather eclectic section split into two, named *Journalism* and *Communication*, respectively. The next sections of the journal remained constant for a long time, although they were less provided with research studies (mainly 1-2 articles/section): *MediAnalize* [MediAnalyses], *Dicționar* [Dictionary] (dedicated to fundamental concepts in the field of journalism/communication); *Noile tehnologii de informare și comunicare* [New Technologies in Information and Communication] (consistent and diverse, given the evolution of the technologies in question, approx. 5 articles/issue); *Laborator* [Laboratory] (dedicated to research studies in the field or in other connected fields – sociology, psychology, anthropology, etc.); *Istoria presei* [History of Journalism]; *Recenzii* [Reviews]; *Vitrina* [Showcase].

The editorial team included Prof. Mihai Coman, Ph. D., director, Assoc. Prof. Marian Petcu, Ph. D. – editor-in-chief, later replaced by Raluca Radu, and Toader Pană and George Hari Popescu – website supervisors. Responsible for the editorial desk were Carmen Oltei/Carmen Golojan (between 2002 and 2005) and George Hari Popescu (for the following years). The editorial board comprised 34 members from universities, research institutes, communication and mass-media agencies from Romania, Republic of Moldova, France, Italy, Poland, Finland, Germany, USA, Canada, Belgium, Great Britain.

The editorial policy favoured articles, studies, and book reviews which covered various directions within the field of communication sciences as long as they represented research analyses of the way communication interacts („affects and is affected by", as the 'call for paper' invitation article specified) with the social, economical, and political environment – „in constant change", placing a special interest on Central and Eastern Europe. Both the 'statement on editorial policy'[4] and the promotion statement of the publication emphasized the role of debate forum the Journal assumed playing within the academic world. Debate topics covered the field of communication sciences including discussions about journalism, public relations, advertising, and social communication.

RRJC distinguished itself by the great number of contributors from home and abroad. Notable personalities from all over the world, especially from France, USA, Canada, Sweden, Israel, as well as from Croatia, Poland, Bulgaria, Belgium, Greece, Malaysia,

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Austria, Portugal, Finland, have constantly contributed to each issue. Further academics (professors, researchers, Ph.D. candidates or Master's students) have broadened that faithful group of contributors.

The visibility of the Journal is relatively good, since the entire collection may be examined in university, central, or academic libraries in Romania and in many other countries, as well. The subscription system and the constant frequency of publication have also contributed to the fair visibility of the Journal. Much more important is the existence of an electronic version. Thus, the Journal – with all its issues – is accessible within three international data bases (EBSCO, ProQuest, RePEc). In addition, online access is granted on the journal website where the issues published in 2006-2009 have been uploaded.

2.2. RRIP. The idea of publishing *Revista Română de Istorie a Presei* [Romanian Journal of Journalism History] was advanced by Marian Petcu in 2005 at the National Symposium of Journalism, organized by Ilie Rad at Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca. It was also then that the same promoter advocated the idea of creating a Romanian Association of Specialists in Journalism History, with specific goals, such as writing a treatise on journalism history, opening a museum in that specific field of study, and organising various scientific gatherings[5].

The first six issues have been edited by Marian Petcu, in cooperation with Aurelia Lăpușan from "Ovidius" University in Constanța, and published in Constanța starting with the year 2007. In 2008 the first congress of the association has been organized by „V. Goldiș" University and held at Macea Castle in Arad[6]. Starting with the issue number IV, 1 (7), 2010, a new concept for both the internal structure and the graphic appearance of the Journal was introduced.

The editorial team included Prof. Ilie Rad, Ph. D., as director, Assoc. Prof. Marian Petcu, Ph. D., as founder and editor-in-chief, Assoc. Prof. Aurelia Lăpușan, Ph. D., „Ovidius" Univeristy of Constanța, as responsible for the editorial desk, and one further person in charge of each issue – either Romina Surugiu, or the administrative organizer of the congress held in that specific year. The editorial board comprised nine members: along the above mentioned Aurelia Lăpușan, Ph.D., are here included Elena Abrudan, Ph. D., „Babeș-Bolyai" University in Cluj-Napoca; M. Cernicova, Ph. D., Polytechnic School in Timișoara; Maria Danilov, Ph. D., National Museum of Archaeology and History of Moldova in Chișinău; Peter Gross, Ph. D., University of Tenesee, USA; Silvia Grossu, Ph. D., State University of Moldova; Petrea Lindenbauer, Ph. D., Institute for Romance Studies in Vienna; Mircea Popa, Ph. D., „1 Decembrie 1918" University in Alba-Iulia; Gabriela Rusu-Păsărin, Ph. D., University of Craiova.

The Journal had a frequency of publication of two issues per year. The new edition, which has been constantly published, maintained a wide homogenous structure, as follows: *I. Editorial* [*Editorial*]; *II. Studii și eseuri* [*Studies and Essays*] – very ample (approx. 8-12 articles), extremely diverse and adequate to the research profile of the Journal. In particular, journalism history was examined from the perspective of socio-linguistics or ethno-linguistics (studies on Hungarian-speaking journals and associations were frequent) etc. The topic of these articles covered inland journalism, the evolution of method in interdisciplinary studies, history of genres and forms in journalism, history of personalities and of major cultural and social-political events as reflected by the media (elections, reformation), etc. Other sections in the journal structure are: *III. Dialoguri esențiale* [*Essential Dialogues*]*; IV. Ancheta revistei* [*Journalistic Survey*]; *V. Recenzii* [*Reviews*] – which is very ample, approx. 10 articles/ issue. This last section was accompanied by a subsection entitled „*Cărțile colegilor noștri* [*Works of Our Colleagues*]", which included reviews of works written by academics or journalists, although the authors reviewed in section V belonged to the same socio-professional category. The last three sections are *VI. Miscellanea* (anniversaries, commemorations, and special events); *VII. Din viața asociației* (ARIP) [*Notes on Association Activities* (ARIP)]; *VIII. Arhiva de aur* [*The Golden Archive*] (letters, portraits, notes, etc.). The structure of the Journal is nevertheless flexible, so that some small-sized sections were sometimes added to the regular ones (for instance, *Conferințele ARIP* [*ARIP Conferences*], V, 2(10), 2011). There were also instances when some of the sections changed their title or their positioning within the basic structure [for instance, *Works of Our Colleagues* became *Works of ARIP-members* (V, 2); *The Golden Archive* was placed before *Reviews* (V, 2)]. Especially consistent with the research profile of the Journal is the section *Studies and Essays*, which is the most substantial segment within the economy of the publication and which frequently included pages of monographs on Romanian periodical publications.

The editorial policy seems to have adopted originality as its leading principle[7]. This can be inferred

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from the editorial articles and the various studies published within the main sections, as well as from the standards included in the instructions that have been published on the third cover. Here, the term *inedit* [Eng.: new, original] is emphasized (though not rendered as absolute). As a matter of fact, all published materials proved compliance with these instructions. Further notable features of the Journal are: the thorough research in the field, the proper placing of demonstrations into context, the careful presentation of facts (for example, historical and local details are diachronically examined on a national and universal scale). Editorial articles, signed by Marian Petcu, Ilie Rad, Mircea Popa, Aurelia Lăpușan, Gabriela Rusu-Păsărin, and Mihaela Teodor are highly substantial, as they historically examine many serious concerns with regard to media in general and to Romanian contemporary media in particular, such as: the significance of statistical data (according to M. Petcu, a number of 4500 Romanian periodical publications have been reported by the INS [National Institute of Statistics] for the year 2009), the problem of school magazines, the relationship between media and youth, etc.

It is obvious that the annual ARIP congress offered precious material to the Journal, which seems to have acted as a press department of not only the association, but its congress also. As a rule, the guests of honour (E. Simion, M. Sala, M. Cimpoi – members of the Romanian Academy) had their conference lectures published in the second issue of the Journal in the respective year. In addition, the Journal aimed at recovering old, but extremely valuable, texts, such as Edgar Papu's conference lecture held in the 1970s within the Babeş-Bolyai University Conference Series *"Testimony of a Generation"* (the name of the conference series became the title of an *ad hoc* section in RRIP, VI, 2) or the original essays of C. Coposu (published in the same previously mentioned issue of the Journal, within *The Golden Archive* section). Other (totally or partially) original texts which have been published within the same section *"Testimony of a Generation"* are also interesting and extremely useful – for example, the text signed by Bartolomeu Anania, or the interviews with Mircea Malița, Sorin Toma a. o. Other notable contributions have been brought by renowned personalities in the field, like Tatiana Slama-Cazacu, N. Dabija a. o.

The volumes of the Journal are dense, well-balanced, and with a constant structure. Starting with the issue number 7, each volume had exactly 212 pages, a fact which in itself is a technical performance that testifies to a remarkable editorial effort and a professional pagination. The volumes are also richly illustrated (see the historical pictures on the cover and the portraits, facsimiles, etc. from inside the Journal). Placing the author's photograph at the beginning of each article might be considered as a luxury pattern, which very few academic journals can afford, especially when the team of contributors varies considerably from one issue to another. The graphical design of the cover displays a great attention given to unity and stability, whereas the necessary variations are also present. Its tones are calm and temperate, though not cold. As expected, originality of interpretation, scientific rigor, and richness of illustrations are recurrent aspects that have been mentioned in the critical reception of the Journal (RRIP, 1, 13, 2013). Originality, diversity, and abundance of study material are also a result of the specificity of the Journal research area. Though lacking a tradition which Anglo-Saxon or Francophone media enjoys, the History of Romanian Journalism is not underprivileged as far as people, publications, and events are concerned. Documentation is thus generous and, moreover, interpretation grids are accessible, since the readers' interest is already captivated by the artistic, literary way the history of a detail (a famous article, a controversial discussion, an event reflected by the media of the time, an editorial experiment etc.) is rendered. It is obviously more difficult to discuss technical aspects of journalism and communication from the perspective of all the sciences involved, from an interdisciplinary perspective. It is the more difficult to do so considering the unprecedented evolution of communication in general. On that account, the most valued materials that are published by RRJC (see 2.1.) deserve all the appreciation. However, it is obvious that not everyone is able to publish or to assume responsibility for such academic journals, and that is one of the major concerns in this area of discussions.

The RRIP visibility inland is assured by mailing the Journal to all ARIP members, to town and university libraries, and to other institutes (of linguistics, of history and literary history etc.), including Romanian cultural institutes abroad (Brussels, Budapest, Berlin, Istanbul, Lisbon, London, Madrid, New York, Paris, Prague, Rome, Saint Petersburg, Stockholm, Warsaw, Venice) and some Romanian Language Lectureships in foreign countries (Trondheim, Saint Petersburg, Vienna a. o.). Editors of the Journal have also

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received feedback from Australia, where it had been cited for 1.200.000 times in 2012[8]. All that information is accessible on the ARIP website, following the link: www.arip.ro.

2.3. SUBBE. *Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai. Series*: *Ephemerides* is published by the Faculty of Political, Administrative, and Communication Sciences at „Babeș-Bolyai" University (UBB) in Cluj-Napoca.

The Journal was founded in 1996, as a special series of UBB *Annals,* and included articles on journalism, media and communication, in exact agreement with its title (*Journalism, Media and Communication Journal*). The texts have been published in English, German, French and Romanian. The frequency of publication is of 2 issues per year. Prof. Ion Maxim Danciu, Ph.D., and Prof. Elena Abrudan, Ph.D. are its editors, whereas Ioana Filipaș is responsible for the editorial desk. The editorial board comprises ten members, three of which being Romanian (Ilie Rad, Aurel Codoban, Vlad Jecan) and seven others – from abroad. There are a limited number of Journal issues that are accessible. The ones we could examine showed that the Journal did not have a special structure divided into various sections. The only section that has been separated from the rest of the contents, and named as such, is the section of *Reviews*. Recent issued numbers have 98-170 pages.

2.4. AUCCOM. *Annals of University of Craiova. Series: Communication. Media* was edited since 2011 by the academic staff specialised in Communication from the Faculty of Letters, University of Craiova.

The initiators promoted the publication as a necessary "space for academic discussions in the fields of social communication, journalism, and public relations". As a matter of fact, the Journal published articles, case studies, reviews, translations, interviews etc. in various fields: media communication, cultural anthropology, journalism, communication in advertising, communication in politics, history of journalism, organisational communication.

The first initiator was Assoc. Prof. Gabriela Rusu-Păsărin, Ph.D., who is the director of the publication. The editorial board includes Assoc. Prof. Ştefan Vlăduțescu, Ph.D. – editor-in-chief and Lecturer Mihaela Popescu, Ph. D. – editorial desk, later joined by Lecturer Alina Țenescu, Ph.D. (Romanian language), Prof. Gabriela Scurtu, Ph.D. (French language) and Teach. Assist. Andreea Bratu (English language) as editors. Publishing languages are Romanian, French, and English. The structure of the Journal comprises five well-balanced sections: *Studii şi articole* [Studies and Articles]; *Studii de caz* [Case Studies]; *Traduceri* [Translations]*; Interviuri* [Interviews]; *Recenzii* [Reviews].

The frequency of publishing is twice a year. The volumes, which appear in a B5 format with approx. 225 pages per issue, are hardly accessible due to deficient dissemination. The only visible issues are the first two – in fact, a double number edited in 2011 as a single volume – and the ones of 2013, edited as a single volume, as well.

2.5. RJCPR. *Romanian Journal of Communication and Public Relations*/*Revista Română de Comunicare și Relații Publice* is edited by SNSPA [National School of Political and Administrative Studies], more exactly, by the Centre for Research in Communication and by the College for Communication and Public Relations in Bucharest. We considered it worth examining, although it only partially covers the topic of interest discussed by the present paper. In July 2014, a 32nd volume had already been issued (vol. 16, 2 (32), 2014. That was a thematic number, entitled *Organizational Challenges in the Knowledge Society*, with Anne Murray – from Pfeiffer University, SUA – as Guest Editor. The Journal complies with the evaluation system within the academic environment, since it was listed as a 'B+' publication by the former CNCSIS[9] and now registered in seven international databases: EBSCO, ProQuest, DOAJ, CEEOL, Copernicus, Cobell's, and Genomics Journal Seek.

The editorial team includes, at present, Paul Dobrescu (editor-in-chief), Elena Negrea (editor), Denisa Oprea (senior assistant editor), and Anca Oancea (junior assistant editor). The editorial board consists of 27 members, 11 of which being from abroad.

3. Form and content in the academic journals of media and communication

3.1. When examining above mentioned journals, we focused on the *thematic and compositional structure* because it is the structure that reflects the way editors conceived their strategies in pursuing their intended goals. As a rule, the designed sections of each journal match the topics and directions to be researched and the concerns to be recorded and reported, so that their approach from various perspectives was perfectly coherent. Unfortunately, scientific rigor of such a structure was not always

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supported by the authors' contributions as far as the topics of their articles was concerned. That explains the dynamics of the sections and of their naming: it has been actually found that editors were forced to restructuring the sections and adapting it to the content of the studies and articles they received or to sacrificing the constant frequency of publication, in the expectation of materials that would concur with each section as settled from the journal debut. Any of those two ways of solving the problem already represents a small compromise of the initial expectations. This phenomenon is confirmed by the difficult way thematic issues are elaborated. Contributions on a specific topic are very hard to gather, especially when they are requested by a simple "call for paper" invitation. In fact, thematic issues are more easily set up by gathering communication papers that have already been presented at scientific conferences, and even then there is a possibility that some papers are but slightly connected to the subject. By examining the collections, a broadening of the initial expectations was noticed. For example, in issue number VII (IX), 2 (39), 2012, 58 p., of RRJC there are only two sections: 1. *Journalism – Media Accountability* (4 articles), 2. *Communication and Culture* (3 articles). The seven materials (with ten authors, two Romanians and eight from abroad) are of a very good quality, though it is obvious that the second section title became more general in character, so that it could include three materials that were very dissimilar as far as their contents and approaches were concerned.

Naturally, the dynamics of the sections arose from the difficulty to classify materials, but it also represents a proof for flexibility and adaptability to new methods and approaches. The former collection of J & C included 7-10 sections, with up to 18 contributions, and with a medium number of pages of approx. 110. The new collection, RRJC, reduced its structure to 4-6 sections and, accordingly, its number of studies and articles. There is also an important variation in the total number of pages of the volumes (between 79 and 152 pages per issue). After 2010, the Journal adapted its strategies to the standards required by the (then) CNCSIS and became registered in the international database EBSCO, and later in ProQuest. Since 2011, articles are published in foreign languages only (English and French, with abstracts and key words in two languages). The number of pages is still fluctuating – between 76 (VII, 1, 2012) and 43 (VI, 4, 2011). Now it is more obvious than ever that the sections were adapted to the materials they received: the issue number V, 3, 2010 has four sections with six materials; issue numbers VI, 4, 2011 and VII, 1; 3-4, 2012, have three sections each, whereas issue number VII, 2, 2012 has two sections only, with very general titles**:** *Journalism-Media Accountability* and *Communication and Culture*. Other issues displayed sections with names that have been adapted in order to match specific articles (for example, the name *Local Media* was adapted so that it could include Mariana Tocia's article on pragmatics within the local media from Dobruja; the name *Essay* was meant for including Monica Spiridon's article). Some highly specialised titles have been found, too (for example, *The Mediated Construction of Women Identity*).

3.2. *ISI indexing and the impact factor (IF),* which are established by an international authority after the quality evaluation of the contents, are not part of the essential information given on the cover of the Journals we examined here. That is a result of the fact that such a reference (to an international evaluation) does not strategically belong to the self-evaluation system of the respective editorial boards. Lower or absence of an ISI indexing demonstrates that the journals did not comply with the IDB requests to fill in the required documentation[10], which was, in fact, a reasonably simple task, necessary not only for the publication to be inventoried, but also for statistically establishing its rank on a *sui generis* scale of scientific value. Therefore, it is even more difficult to believe that the journals we examined here have ever requested a scientometric analysis in order to help them adjust their orientation with regard to subject, methodology, etc. and to thusly enhance their visibility. The most renowned authority in this respect is the Thomson-Reuters Institute, whose indexing is recognized all over the world.[11] As far as journals are concerned, the respective indexing actually represents an evaluation of the contributors. Consequently, the ISI indexing is only used by researchers and university teaching staff to gather points for filling the grids of personal evaluation in order to occupy higher positions or to obtain a salary increase.

Returning to the concern regarding the content quality in the academic journals, it is necessary to mention once again that the indexing obtained through registration and mathematical calculation represents but one possibility of evaluation. A purely scientometric measurement will never be able to replace experts' judgement, however subjective it

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might be. Besides, even mathematical calculation should be prudently considered for various reasons: a) the selecting of citations does not take into consideration books (monographs, treatises, etc.), university handbooks, and laboratory experiments which referenced their work with citations from an article in an academic journal; b) one cannot consider exactly the – positive or negative/critical – context in which an article had been cited; c) frequency of citation may be manipulated from within the journals[12]. And the list of reasons can continue… Nevertheless, bearing an IF still represents a target for every respectable journal.

3.3. *Language of publication* represents a real concern which has been being discussed long before and long after the big dispute caused by the provoking article of a Ph. D. candidate, entitled *Dezmățul limbilor în publicațiile academice* [Anarchy of Languages within Academic Publications][13]. Renowned personalities have already accepted that, in order to propel Romanian research activities, Romanian language should be given its proper place not only in journals of literature, but also in those of culture and science. Nevertheless, Romanian research activity can become visible via an international language only. This dilemma frequently resulted in using bilingual texts in various proportions, as follows: articles – in Romanian, abstracts + key-words – in English (and Romanian, in some cases, – see RRIP); articles – in both Romanian and/or a foreign languge, titles, abstracts and key-words – in two or even three international languages. Some of the journals are consistent with the adopted system – see AUCCOM; others, though not specialized in media and communication but with constant inclusions in their structure of sections of this kind, apply the trilingual system for titles, abstracts, and key-words, and for the author's professional contact data, if available. That usually resulted in a crowded, baroque-styled title page for each article, especially if the titles were very long – see the case of *Studii de Știință și Cultură* [Studies on Science and Culture], „Vasile Goldiș" University, Arad. Unfortunately, however, most of the cases exhibited an opposite phenomenon, i.e. in their trying to be economical the journals sacrifice Romanian language in favour of complying with the visibility standards that are required by the various evaluation authorities and the IDB indexing.

There are further aspects to be considered for the issue here in question, such as: the linguistic correctness of the translated texts, the difficulties in finding a proficient translator, not to mention that a translation as such entails high costs, etc. There are translated articles in some journals – otherwise respectable – that may become eligible as study material for students of foreign languages or of translation studies. The study of such materials, as a counter-example of equivalence, reveals the difficulties inexperienced translators have encountered along the process, with regard to, for instance, the selection of the appropriate synonym for the given context (*quiet/silence*) or the "false friends" (*companion* was literally translated into Romanian as "companion"; the Romanian phrase *revistă științifică* [scientific journal], was incorrectly translated as "magazine", etc.). Some authors send their article written in Romanian but, even if the material is of high quality, very few journals can afford paying a translator, given that most of the editorial work is volunteer.[14] Even the *peer review* process may be affected by the foreign language version of the article. There are specialists who can evaluate the content of an article within a very narrow field and have, at the same time, an excellent command of a foreign language – English, as a rule. The opposite case is, unfortunately, more common and the Romanian texts reach translators who do not exactly understand them, because they are too technical. Consequently, editors of academic journals make compromises once again, this time in the form of a certain tolerance for flaws like the ones reported here. The case when proficient translators are hired by editors may result in higher time, money, and energy costs. Moreover, the procedure is rather complicated (cf. *Diacronia*, Iași): 1. The article, written in Romanian language, is sent to the editors and, then, carefully evaluated by specialised reviewers; 2. The article is sent back to the author in order for him to make the necessary revisions as indicated by the reviewers; 3. The revised article is sent back to the editor; 4. After approval, the author shall have the article translated into English (sometimes other languages are allowed – French or German); 5. The author send the translated text to the editor; 6. Linguistic evaluators correct the language errors, if present. As a result, the procedure takes a long time even for journals with an *open deadline*, i.e. journals with electronic versions only, and it is sometimes possible to miss the yearly deadlines, which may result in reducing the frequency of publication for the respective journal and/or in loosing the balance as far as the number of materials per issue is concerned.

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3.4. The combination between the *peer review process*, i.e. the evaluation of work by people with similar competence, and the translation process represents a further source of contrast between expectations and results as far as editing academic journals is concerned. Most of the difficulties have been here already listed. As a rule, editorial boards comprise a great number of members, just because editors want to ensure that "the right man is in its right place", i.e. that each material find its competent reader and evaluator. That is a way of relieving reviewers from the burden of having to evaluate too many articles per year. Unfortunately, the process sometimes becomes dysfunctional, mainly due to evaluators, who are not always available for the task. The final decision, whether an article is approved or rejected, is often made by the 2-3 editors of the journal, or even by only one of them. The evaluation charts *en cache* for the CNC(I)S commission are often filled in *post factum*. By contrast, declarations of academic honesty proved themselves very useful, even though they represent another reason for delay, since it always appears someone who does not understand that these declarations should accompany the article from the beginning. In any case, it is to be noticed that the journals examined in our paper did select materials they received for publication, at least from the point of view of academic honesty (including anti-plagiarism scanning). The same care for originality is likewise exhibited by other journals from our corpus of study. None of them seems to be in the difficult position the famous, ISI indexed, *Metalurgia International* is. This publication represents an example of an anti-academic journal, as it was proved by the prank the colleagues from University of Belgrade played in 2013.[15]

3.5. *Journals distribution* is a further concern that should be discussed within the context examined here. In general, journals that had already undergone the CNCSIS evaluation process – very few: RRJC, RJCPR – have already submitted printed copies to academic libraries and to other important libraries in Romania and abroad. They also have their own *website*, on which an archive is accessible. RRIP is in the libraries only thanks to being mailed to all ARIP members and to the participants at yearly congresses. Other journals offer a subscription system, which is usually managed by the associated publishing house. At present, the safest distribution for a journal would be the one using its electronic version, with *open access* to both *Abstracts* and *Full Texts*, etc. But, from this perspective, all the 13 journals in the field of media and communication that we examined here are deficient. The RRJC electronic archive gives total access only to the issues between 2006 and 2010; on the AUCCOM *website* a single issue is posted (the double one of 2011, containing abstracts only); the RJCPR *website* displays only 16 issues (so that the year of foundation year for that journal was hard to be determined other than from a rough calculation)[16]; from the SUBB, series *Ephemerides*, only 23 issues are accessible; from the *Annals of West University of Timişoara – Series Philosophy and Communication Sciences*, founded in 1997, only 17 issues (published after 2000) are accessible out of the total number of 60, full text is available only for the issues published in 2012-2013; from the *Annals of Danubius University*, only 8 issues are visible, etc. It can be assumed that in some cases no other issues exist, though it seems impossible to know the exact truth, since the respective *websites* are incomplete, unprofessional and not updated. Considering the fact that the target audience of academic journals mainly consists of researchers, especially of young ones (Master's students, Ph.D. candidates, postdoctoral researchers, etc.), the electronic version is the most appealing and the most accessible to them.[17] Academic journals should represent a formative school for the new generations of specialists and, for that reason, open access to their contents is a *sine qua non* condition.

4. Conclusions

4.1. Certainly, there are also other criteria for examining academic journals in the field that we considered here, but the discussion of the core problems has been actually avoided. No content analysis (documentation, subject relevance) was here conducted, since such an evaluation exceeds the competence of a single person. The qualitative aspects of academic journals were only partially and somewhat indirectly determined by resorting to the same quantifying procedures, i.e. the presumed impact upon readers from various professional categories, external evaluations, etc.

4.2. From this perspective, figures like IDB indexing or the IF should be neither idealized, nor ignored as long as the possibilities for a general, systematic, and permanent quantification of expert judgement are extremely reduced at present. The

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respective descriptive-statistical data (the real figures) should be visibly displayed on the imprint of all academic journals in Romania.

4.3. Our analysis reflected the contradiction that exists between the strategies of the current system of higher education – national and international – which compels institutions and specialist teams to editing academic journals, although they may not have the capacity to do so at acceptable (social, not necessary scientometric) standards, on one hand, and their conditions of existence, on the other hand. ARACIS [Romanian National Council of Academic Evaluation and Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions] control grids request the editing of journals in the respective field, especially if doctoral schools exist or are foreseen within the evaluated faculty. But it is hard to believe that as many journals could exist and maintain decent standards as many faculties, departments or specialists teams exist within Romanian universities. From this perspective, yet in close connection with other aspects too, a perpetuation of 'forms without content' is demonstrated by the practical reality, which was partially covered by the present paper.[18]

4.4. The present study implicitly suggested that a maximum number of three journals in a specific field and with complementary profiles are sufficient enough for universities and research institutes. These could represent a platform of cooperation for all the specialists in the field, including those from abroad, with benefits for all participant sides. The above-mentioned specific ARACIS requirement could be easily rephrased, in order to give it a realistic and a logical meaning: when evaluating a team, the number of studies published by its members in national and international recognised journals should be relevant, and not whether that team was able to publish its own journal or not. Otherwise, an unacceptable divergence between scientific rigor and practical results of that specific team shall only perpetuate.

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16. RAD, Ilie *Ecouri ale revistelor editate de ARIP (Echoes of ARIP Journals)*, in: *Revista Română de Istorie a Presei*, IV, 2 (8), 2010, pp. 194-196.

Notes

1) Petre Gheorghe Bârlea is a university professor at the Department of Romanian Philology, Classical and Balkan Languages – Faculty of Letters, „Ovidius" University, Constanţa. He is a founding director of DICE Journal, Bucharest. He wrote volumes, studies, and lectures on rhetoric and neo-rhetoric, pragmatics, critical thinking, and research techniques in the field of communication. He is also a doctoral thesis advisor.

2) Cf. P. Gh. Bârlea, 2014, pp. 45-70.

3) Following journals have been examined: *Diversité et Identité Culturelle en Europe (DICE*), MNLR Bucureşti; *Revista de Politica Ştiinţei şi Scientometrie (RPSS*), CNCSIS Bucureşti; *Diacronia*, Universitatea „Al. I. Cuza" Iaşi; *Caiete Critice*, Fundaţia Română pentru Ştiinţe şi Arte Bucureşti; *Revista de Filosofie*, Universitatea Bucureşti; *Studii şi Cercetări de Onomastică (SCO*), Universitatea Craiova; *Studii de Ştiinţă şi Cultură (SŞC)*, Universitatea „Vasile Goldiş" Arad a.o.

4) Considered as „an act of courage" within professional and academic context of the time, the launching of the Journal was insistently placed under the sign of "researching the media in a period of transition" and of "maintaining an academic conduct", cf. Mihai Coman, 2002, pp. 3-4.

5) Ilie Rad, 2007, p. 5.

6) Cf. Marian Petcu, 2012, pp. 181-182. The text made reference to two influent books on the history of Romanian journalism, both signed by M. Petcu, who commented: „I am now more and more convinced that we will never have a treatise on the history of Romanian journalism. We do not deserve it."

7) In his 'statement on editorial policy', Ilie Rad set four distinctive objectives for the Journal: the recovery of the past, in "journalistic and communicational" terms, and from a strictly scientific perspective – „without passion or ideological prejudice"; the recovery of valued materials written by renowned personalities, who had previously published them in journals with little or no visibility (since these materials are considered as highly useful for scientific documenting of monographs, for example); reinstalling the truth about the historical place and role some publications had within Romanian media; gathering the necessary material for the "final edifice" – the treatise on the history of Romanian journalism, cf. I. Rad, 2007, p. 5.

8) Cf. Ilie Rad, 2010, p. 195.

9) It is interesting how this self-labelling continued even though journals of media (and communication) din not accept that evaluation system after the transformation of CNCSIS [National Research Council in Higher Education] into CNCS [National Research Council]. Nevertheless, the CNCS system continued after 2011 for journals of human sciences only.

10) For instance, in order to establish the IF according to their criteria, *Index Copernicus* annually requires the directors of publications, which are indexed in that database, to fill in a special form – electronically, of course.

11) The Thomson-Reuters Institute belongs to a private corporation, as many similar ones do. Yet, it benefits from the proficient contribution of specialists who are affiliated to the renowned centre of research in Massachusetts. The IF established here for journals of sciences is but one of the classification criteria within their own value scale – the most accepted worldwide, though. In practice, the first stage means listing as many journals as possible that are rigorously classified by field, profiles, etc. For example, in 2013 a number of approx. 300 periodicals were listed in the field of mathematics. Then, the ratio A/B is determined, corresponding to year N, where B = total number of published articles by a journal during the year N_1, N_2 etc. and A = total number of citations for each article in a specific journal; citations are selected from the other journals on the same list. Many specialists admitted that this kind of quality measurement is rather "broad", but it still remained acceptable in the absence of a better one. Cf. Liviu Ornea, 2015, p. V.

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12) In the above-cited article, L. Ornea mentioned the academics' ingeniousness in influencing the IF: it has been recorded a relatively discreet phenomenon of reciprocal citing within colleagues of the same field or institution. As far as our documentation is concerned, another and more efficient procedure has been noticed: the instructions for contributors to a journal which we examined included the request/recommendation that the material sent to be published should contain references from articles published in that respective collection…

13) Cf. Victor Eugen Gelan, *Dezmățul în limbi străine al revistelor academice românești de filosofie*, in: *Contributors.ro – Educație. Opinie*, July 16, 2014.

14) To our knowledge, there are very few situations in which an academic journal is able to hire a paid editor to (almost) exclusively perform this kind of work in an office and with secretarial help. There are cases, though, when institutions associated to journals (such as publishing houses) can financially support – modestly, of course – coordination and drafting for each issue. There are no known cases of payment for translation services, regardless of who performed them: translators or the authors themselves. The research institutes within Romanian Academy seem to enjoy a slightly better situation in this respect.

15) Cf. Raluca Pantazi, *Two Serbian academics deliberately published a fictional research paper in the Romanian journal 'Metalurgia International', with false references, including children's magazines,* in: *HotNews.ro*, Sept. 18, 2013. It must be added that the phenomenon became international since it had been reported in many countries. The 'call for paper' invitation coming from journals with self-declared IDB indexing or false IF was a common enough behaviour within the universe of "academic research".

16) Other articles, that are considered "special" by the editors, can also be accessed, by using a different *link*.

17) On the necessity of introducing the electronic system of archiving, cf. R. Munteanu and M. Apetroaie, 2006, pp. 209-213.

18) On academic competence and achievement as reflected by the studies published in journals from Romania and from abroad, cf. P.T. Frangopol, 2005 and 2006; M. S. Frankel and J. Cave, 2002; A. Ardelean; A. Pisoschi, 2006; A. Iancu, 2005 a. o. The present paper discussed neither the details of the analysis that placed academic journalism within the general context of journalism history (cf. studies published by M. Petcu, 2005, 2012a, 2012b, Ilie Rad, 2007 a. o), nor the ones that questioned, as a principle, the very existence of academic journals: according to some opinions, deficient distribution of journals and the quality of most of them should have led to their publishing as electronic versions only, whereas other opinions argue that lines of study with Bachelor's or Master's students and Ph.D. candidates who do not publish according to standards should be drastically diminished.

19) The Annex has been set up with the help of M. V. Constantin, Ph. D. candidate.

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ANNEX[19]

No.	University	Faculty/ Departament/ Specialty	Title of the Academic Journal	Editor	No. of issues /year of foundation	Link to website
1.	SNSPA [National School of Political and Administrative Studies] Bucharest	Faculty for Communication and Public Relations Publice	*Roumanian Journal of Communication and Public Relations*	Paul Dobrescu – Editor-in-chief	16 issues	http://journalofcommunication.ro/
2.	West University of Timişoara	Faculty of Political Sciences, Philosophy and Communication Sciences Departament of Philosophy and Communication Sciences	*Annals of West University in Timişoara* Series *Philosophy and Communication Sciences*	Yasmina Petrovici – Editor	17 issues Founded in 1997	http://www.rophidas.ro/page.php?url=http://www.polsci.uvt.ro/
3.	„Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University, Iaşi	Academic team for Communications and Public Relations from the Faculty of Philosophy and Social-Political Sciences	*Scientific Annals of Alexandru Ioan Cuza University. Section: Communication Sciences*	Paul Balahur	Founded in 2008	http://anale.fssp.uaic.ro/
4.	„Danubius" University, Galaţi	Faculty of Sciences and International Relations	*Acta Universitatis Danubius. Communicatio*	Gheorghe Lazăr – editor-in-chief	8 issues 2007 – 2014 Current issue: vol. 8, N° 1/2014	http://www.univ-danubius.ro/
5.	„Tibiscus" University, Timişoara	Faculty of Journalism, Communication and Modern Languages	*Annals. Series Journalism*		2008	www.tibiscus.ro/
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7.	University of Oradea	Faculty of History, International Relations, Political Sciences and Communication Sciences, Departament for European Studies and International Studies	*Annals of University of Oradea. Series Europene Studies and International Relations*	Mircea Brie - editor-in-chief	2009-2013	http://www.analerise.igri.ro/archive.php
			Communication and European Frontiers (online)	Luminiţa Soproni	12 issues	http://www.iser.rdsor.ro/eurolimes.htm
8.	„Vasile Goldiş" West University, Arad	Faculty of Political and Administrative Sciences Departament of Communication Sciences	*Studies of Science and Culture*	Vasile Man - editor-in-chief founder	Vol. X Current issue: No. 3/2014	http://www.revista-studii-uvvg.ro/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=46&Itemid=27
			Journal of Public Administration and Social Policies	Marius Grec - senior editor Marţian Iovan, Constantin Grecu *et alii* - editors	Thematic issue - no. 7 12 issues	http://revad.uvvg.ro/
9.	„Lucian Blaga" University, Sibiu	Faculty of Social and Human Sciences , Journalism, Communication and Publice Relations	*Saeculum. Section Communication*	Ion Dur – editor-in-chief	New Series, Year V (VII)	www.ulbsibiu.ro/

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