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Essay-

Romania vs United Kingdom: A comparative approach of the editorial trend

I. Valentin Petrescu-Mag[‡], I. Costel Meseșan[†]

‡ University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine Cluj-Napoca, Faculty of Agriculture, Cluj-Napoca, Romania, EU; † Asociația Județeană a Vânătorilor și Pescarilor Sportivi Cluj, Cluj-Napoca, Romania, EU. Corresponding author: I. C. Meseșan, ioncostelmesesan@yahoo.com

Abstract. Nowadays, the Romanian editorial state in terms of quality and quantity is ascending continuously. However, it is still far away from the one found in United Kingdom. The British editorial system is one of the best editorial systems ever known. It was built on the backbone of several very old and well known British publishers such as Nature Publishing Group, Royal Society Publishing, Oxford University Press etc, and moreover, many newer publishers/publications were drawn after the face of these British top publishers/publications. It is normal to try and compare your national system with the best systems in terms of editorial issues. If we compare the two systems, they are different from many points of view. The editorial system of UK is among the oldest in the world, in fact they are the pioneers, while the one from Romania is rather young. If the British system is much of quality, the Romanian system is much of quantity (especially on the academic side). In UK, selling publications can be a good affair; in Romania, a publisher hardly ever recovers its investments. This is mainly due to the language of publication of the most part of the books and materials of general interest in the two countries (English in UK – a language of international circulation, Romanian language in Romania – provide a narrower area of readers) and also due to the economic power of the citizen (Romanians have limited financial resources for the acquisition of books, magazines and journals); for this reason the British publishers are mostly traditional while Romanian publishers are mostly open-access in the true sense or open access like.

Key Words: Romania, United Kingdom, editorial system, typology, publishers, publication, language.

Why this comparison? Nowadays, the Romanian editorial state in terms of quality and quantity is ascending continuously. However, it is still far away from the one found in United Kingdom (UK). UK editorial system is one of the best editorial systems ever known. It was built on the backbone of several very old and well known British publishers such as Nature Publishing Group, Royal Society Publishing, Oxford University Press¹ etc, and moreover, many newer publishers/publications were drawn after the face of these British top publishers/publications. It is normal to try and compare your national system with the best systems in terms of editorial issues.

If we compare the two systems, they are different from many points of view. The editorial system of UK is among the oldest in the world, in fact they are the pioneers, while the one from Romania is rather young. If the British system is much of quality, the Romanian system is much of quantity (especially on the academic side). In UK, selling publications can be a good affair; in Romania, a publisher hardly ever recovers its investments. This is mainly due to the language of publication of the most part of the books and materials of general interest in the two countries (English in UK – a language of international circulation, Romanian language in Romania – provide a narrower area of readers) and also due to the economic power of the citizen (Romanians have limited financial resources for the acquisition of books, magazines and journals); for this reason

¹ The names of the publishers changed over time. Their present names are used here.

the British publishers are mostly traditional while Romanian publishers are mostly open-access (OA) in the true sense^{2,3} or open access like⁴.

Although difficult to compare, the two editorial systems can be compared from many types of approach: academic publications vs publications of general interest, serial publications vs books, type of the main media of distribution, e.g. electronic or other media vs print publications, typology of the publishers etc.

After the publication target reader a publication can be an academic publication or a publication of general interest. Academic publications trend is directly correlated with different types of national legislation worldwide. Generally, scientists publish more in terms of number or less frequent but in higher ranking journals, according to specific requirements of scientific merit for maintaining their job or promoting themselves on higher academic levels⁵.

On academic side, Romanian system is much of quantity⁶. This is the result of the need for each institute or university in Romania to hold their own publications and publishers. Almost all the bigger or medium sized universities in Romania have their own publisher (a kind of state-in-state) although some of them have no the critical mass of manuscript submissions to maintain a publishing house at an acceptable level of quality. Therefore in such cases the quality is dumping due to the lack of competition between the authors for acceptance: almost all the manuscripts are accepted. This policy tends to be disintegrated by the latest Romanian laws which apply rigorous and high quality standards for academic titles and habilitated degrees^{7,8}. However, the small university publishers continue to survive due to some internal university rules according to which no PhD student is allowed to defense its PhD title until he or she publishes at least one up to several articles in journals published by their own university, so that enough number of manuscripts are enforced to be collected, most of them being published later than the official date of publication.

Although in UK, like in USA, Australia or other high ranking countries, the trend is "Publish or perish"⁹, the academic publications are less frequent if we take in account the number of publications needed for the yearly individual reports in universities or research institutions. More often from one to three publications per year are enough to demonstrate you are active as a scientist in USA. More important is the journal or the publisher and the impact of your publications^{10,11,12} (measured in total citation count, academic prizes, JIF¹³, SNIP¹⁴, SJR¹⁵, Eigenfactor¹⁶, AIS¹⁷ etc). Such a trend is visible only recently also in Romania. Several years ago, in Romania, 1-3 publications per year were far too little, no matter their impact.

Publications of general interest make order for business in UK because they target both local and global audience. In Romania, publications of general interest were profitable for both authors and publishers before the anti-communist revolution. Now, in Romania, the Internet is preferred as source of cheap information including newspapers, practical guides, medical information and many others, and this is due to the low

² According to OA Budapest initiative (see for more details www.doaj.org)

³ According to Creative Commons Attribution License

⁴ Some so called OA publishers are not aware about what OA really means (see for more details www.doaj.org)

⁵ Petrescu-Mag & Oroian, 2013

⁶ Florian & Florian, 2006

⁷ Order no. 3697 from April 10, 2012 of the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sport

⁸ Annexes 1-35 to Order no 6.560/2012 of the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sport

⁹ See Parchomovsky, G., 2000

¹⁰ Edwards, S., 1999

¹¹ Elliott, C.A., 1981

¹² Hitchcock, E. R., 1989

¹³ The journal impact factor, calculated by Journal Citation Reports (JCR, Thomson Reuters). There is a two-year impact factor and also a five-year impact factor.

¹⁴ Source normalized impact per paper, calculated by Scopus Elsevier (Sciverse). The formula is the invention of professor Hank Moed, see <http://www.scimagojr.com>

¹⁵ Scimago Journal Rank – developed by professor Felix de Moya, see Colledge et al, 2010, and <http://www.scimagojr.com>

¹⁶ Calculated by Washington University. For more details, consult www.eigenfactor.org

¹⁷ Article influence score in a metric for journals; it is calculated and published by Thomson Reuters (JCR)

economic potency of the citizen. Romanian language is the predominant language of publication in Romanian editorial system and this provides a narrower spectrum of readers.

Serial publications vs books. There is little evidence or at least we have no serious recent data on British or Romanian magazines statistics. The ISSN International Center is not up-to-date... in fact they cannot be up-dated due to the often frequency changes, temporary delays in publication, or dying serials. However it is clear that English language publications have far more subscribers and that goes for the British system, less for the Romanian one.

However, there are clear evidences on top journals for both countries. Thomson Reuters¹⁸, University of Washington – Eigenfactor¹⁹, Scopus Elsevier²⁰, Scimago Journal Rank²¹, Index Copernicus²² and Google Scholar²³ are such examples of sources of information for top journals *sensu* academic journals. Nonetheless these evidences are made on authors' country and not on publishers' country. However, they are relevant as a general image because except best of the top journals (which are highly international), the rest of them use for the most part of their content native authors. For example, in Figure 1 is presented the statistics of total documents published by authors from UK and Romania (as calculated by Scimago²⁴).

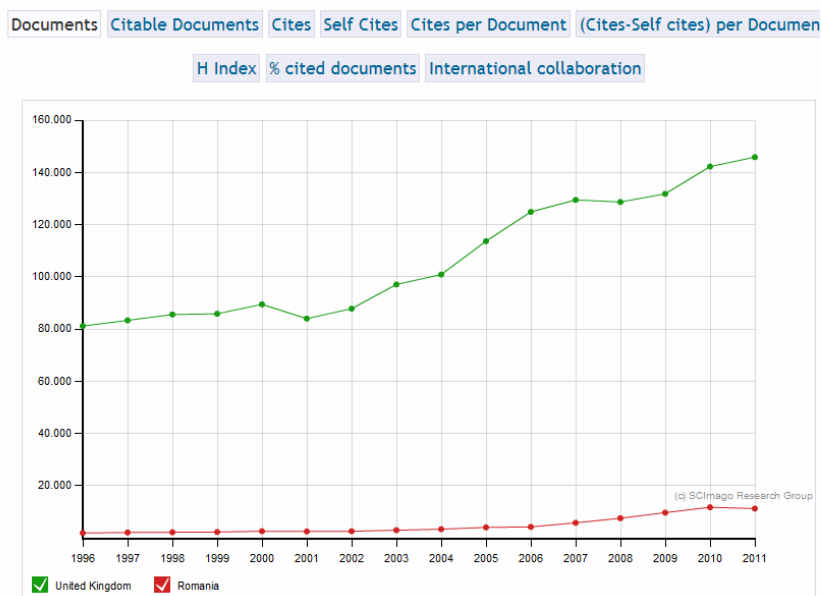


Fig. 1. The statistics of total documents published by authors from UK and Romania (a quantitative indicator) (Source: Scimago Country Rank).

Although there is a clear domination of UK for both quality and quantity, we should not forget SCImago included in their statistics only top journals. Romania has lower number of top journals than UK. Romanian scientists accepted much easier until recently to publish in journals of marginal importance. UK has also a higher number of scientists than we can find Romania.

¹⁸ Thomson Reuters, <http://ip-science.thomsonreuters.com/mjl/>

¹⁹ Washington University, www.eigenfactor.org

²⁰ Scopus Elsevier, <http://www.scopus.com/home.url>

²¹ SCImago. (2007). SJR – SCImago Journal & Country Rank. Retrieved June 30, 2013, from <http://www.scimagojr.com>

²² Index Copernicus International, http://www.indexcopernicus.com/index_en.php

²³ Google Scholar, http://scholar.google.ro/citations?view_op=top_venues&hl=ro

²⁴ Scimago Country Rank, <http://www.scimagojr.com>

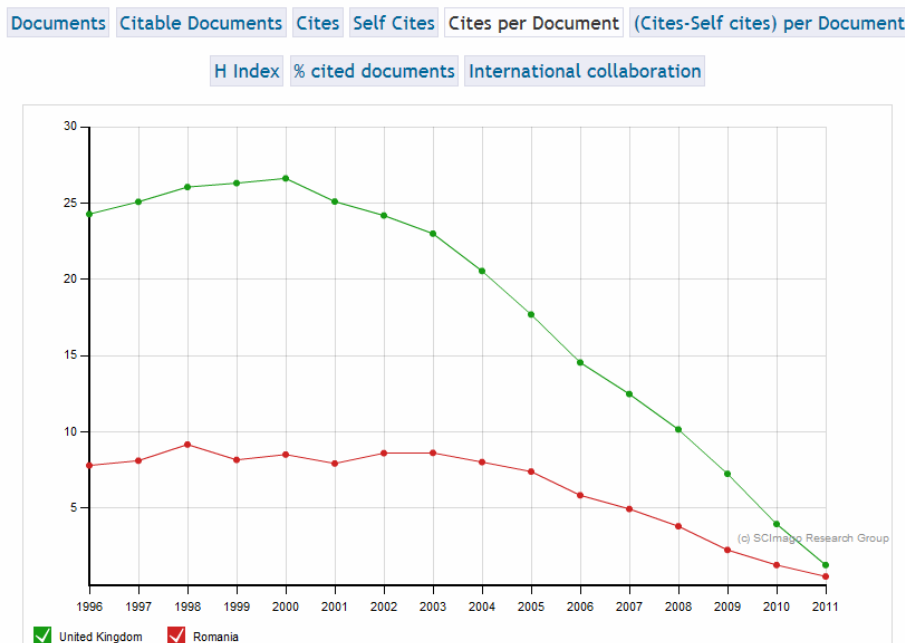


Fig. 2. The statistics of citation per document of the total documents published by authors from UK and Romania (illustrate the value of the documents published) (Source: Scimago Country Rank²⁵).

Electronic or other media vs print publications. In both countries the digitization age^{26,27,28,29,30} created a similar type of preferred media for academic publications: mainly electronic^{31,32,33,34}. Although digital media penetrated also the group of publications of general interest, the print media seem to dominate here. This is due to the fact some readers are not frequent available online, working away from the computer, or due to the conservative behavior of older readers (e.g. it is difficult to separate newspaper and coffee; some readers need to smell the book not only to read the text).

After the typology of the publishers, according to their organization, legislation, their services for the customer. Most British publishers distribute their publications in traditional way: the readers or their institutions or their libraries simply buy the access to information from publishers. This traditional typology implies a lower charge on authors and higher costs for readers/users or intermediary third parties.

On the other extreme are the Open Access (OA) publishers. Their typology is drawn by the policy: 'charge the authors and distribute information for free'³⁵. Having in view that free access to full text of a journal brings a higher number of citations, it can be considered beneficial to both publishers/authors, libraries and readers. Open Access journals are defined as journals that use a funding model that does not charge readers or their institutions for access to articles³⁶. From the Budapest OA Initiative (2001) definition of OA, the open access represents the right of users to read, download, copy,

²⁵ Scimago Country Rank, <http://www.scimagojr.com>

²⁶ Hull et al, 2008; Rhyne, 2010

²⁷ Coleman et al, 2005

²⁸ Conkling et al, 2010

²⁹ Neubauer, W., Viitorul bibliotecilor stiintifice, available at:

<http://www.bcuculuj.ro/bibliorev/arihiva/nr16/biblio1.html> ; See also Neubauer & Piguet, 2009

³⁰ Petrescu-Mag & Covrig, 2013 ab

³¹ See Graham, 2002

³² See Hirtle, 2002

³³ See Nafiz, 2012

³⁴ See Lynch, 2002

³⁵ Petrescu-Mag & Oroian, 2013

³⁶ DOAJ www.doaj.org

distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of these articles. At the global level, according to Laakso et al³⁷, in 2010, an estimated number of 191 000 OA articles were published in 4769 OA journals. Since 2000, the average OA yearly growth rate has been 18% for the number of journals and 30% for the number of articles. This can be contrasted to the reported 3.5% yearly volume increase in journal publishing in general. According to the same source, in 2009, the share of articles in OA journals, of all peer reviewed journal articles, reached 7.7%. Overall, the results of Laakso et al showed a rapid growth in OA journal publishing over the last fifteen years. Based on the sampling results and qualitative data, they suggested a classification of OA history into three distinct periods: The Pioneering years (1993–1999), the Innovation years (2000–2004), and the Consolidation years (2005–2009).

In UK such OA publishers are not very often but in countries such as Romania almost all the publishers which want their publication to be highly visible and cited use this open access policy. However, a large part of the so called open access publishers are not aware about what OA really means and what are the laws regulating OA. Open-access publications are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

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³⁷ See Laakso et al, 2011

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Authors:

Ioan Valentin Petrescu-Mag, University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine Cluj-Napoca, Faculty of Agriculture, 3-5 Calea Mănăştur Street, Cluj-Napoca 400372, Romania, e-mail: zoobiomag2004@yahoo.com

Ion Costel Meseșan, Asociația Județeană a Vânătorilor și Pescarilor Sportivi Cluj, Cluj-Napoca, Cuza Vodă Street, bl. A, Cluj County, Romania, EU, e-mail: ioncostelmesesan@yahoo.com

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