



knowledge without boundaries

EIFL Open Access Case Study

My thesis is in open access, what about yours? DOI Serbia Thesis

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INTRODUCTION

In 2005, Department for scientific information (National library of Serbia, NLS), started the programme of assigning the Digital Object Identifiers (DOIs) to Serbian journal articles for identifying them in the digital environment, including where they can be found on the Internet. DOIs are widely used in scientific publishing to cite journal articles. The NLS became an affiliated member of CrossRef – an association of scholarly publishers that develops shared infrastructure to support more effective scholarly communications – as a National DOI agency. In 2015, 29151 articles from 66 Serbian journals were published with DOIs on the open access (OA) portal: <http://www.doiserbia.nb.rs/>.

Having such a positive output – DOI became a magic word in Serbian researchers community – in 2013 a new project was launched to assign DOIs to PhD theses. The aim of the project was to increase the number of OA theses and their discoverability.

Before the project started, there were four universities in Serbia with institutional repositories for OA theses. In 2012 EIFL provided financial support to the University of Belgrade – one of the largest universities in South Eastern Europe – to encourage students and professors of the University of Belgrade to comply with university administration's guidelines that encourage usage and production of OA research outputs in particular, the mandatory submission of electronic versions of all PhD theses completed in 2012 and onwards to the OA repository. See the project results [here](#). As a result of the project, more researchers started practising OA in Serbia, but the amount of OA theses was still low.

The goals of the project were the following:

- to fill existing University OA repositories with Phd theses;
- to promote OA among young researchers;
- to include Serbian theses in European and worldwide harvesters; and
- to disseminate Serbian theses to much larger audience.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACT

- A [national OA portal of PhD theses and dissertations](#) was launched and includes 1,013 OA PhD theses easily citable and searchable (with DOIs).
- Serbian theses are searchable on [DART Europe](#), [OpenDOAR](#) and [OATD](#).
- Social network thumbnails have been added to each thesis so the altmetrics can be tracked – that cover not just citation counts, but also other aspects of the impact of a work, such as views, downloads, or mentions in social media and news media.

- The Minister of Education, Science and Technological Development suggested amendments to the Law on Higher Education in order to establish a national OA repository of theses. On September, 10th, 2014 the National Assembly adopted the law – OA mandate for PhD theses defended in all public and private universities in Serbia.
- Over 100 research managers, PhD students and librarians attended five project events and as a result there is a raised awareness about OA and more theses are available in OA.
- The Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development (the Ministry) acknowledged the significance of the project and pledged to support the development of the project.

ACTIVITIES, STRATEGIES, TACTICS AND TOOLS

At the beginning of the project, NLS and major universities in the country held meetings and agreed to build up a portal of Serbian theses to increase their visibility. At the same time, DOI will be assigned to them along with additional links – which will take them to university repositories (where the full text is located) or the library's OPAC.

A series of meetings have been hosted for the deans and librarians to discuss copyright issues and OA policies and establish the project work-flows that include the following:

- Theses from four universities with OA repositories (University of Belgrade, University of Nis, University of Kragujevac and University of Novi Sad) are harvested by the portal (www.doiserbia.nb.rs/phd).
- Two other universities (University of Kosovska Mitrovica and University of Novi Pazar without OA repositories) received a free storage space on NLS servers to host their theses. The theses have to be submitted as PDF files and NLS uploads them.
- For all theses, the metadata records are reviewed (and corrected if needed) in order to make them compatible and available through OAI-PMH for harvesting by CrossRef, DART, Open DOAR and OATD.

Model documents (deposit agreements) have been produced for PhD authors. All mandatory fields of the deposit agreement (e.g. thesis title, author name, date, university, etc.) are extracted from the union catalogue (COBISS) and librarians just need to print the agreements and ask PhD authors to sign them.

Along with technical meetings, the marketing campaign was implemented to promote OA theses among PhD students. As a part of the marketing campaign transparent-orange tea cups have been designed and produced with the text "My thesis is in open access, what about yours?".

THE FUTURE

NLS will advocate for assigning DOIs to all Serbian PhD theses, old and new (there are about 15 000 theses in Serbia defended after 2000 that they chose to be the cut date). Along the way the impact of every deposited thesis will be measured by citation and by altmetrics. It is expected that the Ministry will support this project (at least paying for DOI numbers). If not, NLS will cover these costs but with a two-year delay by assigning DOIs to older material first (older than two years material at Cross Ref cost only 0,15 USD in comparison to the cost for the new material which is 1 USD). The team is also committed to make sure that every thesis is searchable through DART Europe.

A new OA mandate requires that every University must establish its OA repository, and the National OA PhD repository will be maintained by the Ministry. The Consortium of all Universities (KONUS) requested Computer Center at University of Belgrade to help to establish repositories for those universities that don't have them yet. There are 16 universities in Serbia with PhD programmes and only five of them (four state universities and a private university) already have repositories.

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