New Publication Cultures in the Humanities: Exploring the Paradigm Shift

Book Review

New Publication Cultures in the Humanities: Exploring the Paradigm Shift, edited by Péter Dávidházi. Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, 2014, 212 pages, € 79.00 (hardback), ISBN: 9789089645647.

In book "New Publication Cultures in the Humanities: Exploring the Paradigm Shift" Professor Péter Dávidházi takes us to a fascinating journey of disruptive innovations that took place in the publishing world making published literature available and accessible worldwide through the Internet and digital networks. The digital archiving of historically significant materials including the textual documents and images has helped the several hundreds of researchers working in the areas of humanities. The people for generations had been using several kinds of materials for recording human memories and imaginations. However, many of them decayed or destroyed due to natural wear and tear. On the other hand, many epics were survived as those were not actually recorded on papers but have been living with peoples' memory for generations.

It is argued that all texts of centuries' old epics now can be stored on a single flash drive or pen drive. A whole library of religious texts, written till 21st century AD since the BC (Before Christ) era, can also be stored in a similar flash drive. So powerful is the digital media, in terms of compression of information for digital preservation, the domains of humanities get strengthened with the introduction of digital humanities. While the researchers and historians now can count several successful initiatives in digital humanities, digital publishing methods took years to evolve and are still evolving. This book attempts a brief introduction to the evolution of digital humanities and digital curation of published contents in a networked environment. The publishing process now transforms into a new edge when born digital publications dominate the world of academic publishing.

In the beginning, the editor Dávidházi specifies "Publication cultures are systems of social practices held together by the need to publish texts and defined by the dominant paradigms of publishing". However, he explains, "The essays in the present volume are talking neither about paradigms of science, nor of any discipline in the humanities, but rather present paradigms of publication cultures. … Consequently, what we mean by a paradigm is a set of concepts, habits, technologies, institutional norms and regulations, which together govern, directly or otherwise, all our procedures in publishing" (p. 9). The book is structured into three parts containing eleven chapters to discuss diverse aspects of academic publishing and digital humanities. These parts are namely (i) The Digital Enterprise: Views, Philosophical, Historical and Personal, (ii) Changing Models for Textual Editing in Electronic Publication, and (iii) Cutting Edge: New Means of Access, Evaluation and Funding.

In the chapter titled "Too Much of a Good Thing?" Luca Cadignola explains how historians get to access rare books through Google Books, JStor, Project Gutenberg and similar other services without travelling to one of the libraries that possessed the rare work. Some of these libraries are located far apart on another continent, which may hinder the readers to have physical access. The new technologies have empowered the scholars by bringing them close to the source documents they are researching on. While digital technologies bring older texts in their fingertips, the technological obsolescence is progressing in much fast pace making some of the earlier digitized documents unavailable. Nevertheless, new technologies emerge to enlarge public access to digitized and born-digital contents, significant for humanities and social sciences researchers. In this context, the chapter titled "the Future of Publications in the Humanities: Possible Impacts of Research Assessment" elaborates how impacts of digital humanities cannot be measured through bibliometric methods alone, but other parameters as mentioned in the San Francisco Declaration of Research Assessment, or DORA, can be applied for the SSH (social sciences and humanities) domains. Milena Žic Fuchs also argues that the Arts and Humanities Citation Index (A&HCI) has poor coverage for the humanities and thus has limited scope for impact assessment. However, bibliographic control of

SSH literatures is very important that compels the establishment of European Reference Index for the Humanities (ERIH). Fuchs further elaborates the salient features of the SPRU Report titled "Towards a Bibliometric Database for the Social Sciences and Humanities: A European Scoping Project" which evaluated the characteristics of SSH databases such as ERIH.

In chapter "ERIH's Role in the Evaluation of Research Achievements in the Humanities", the author Ferenc Kiefer further argues on the bibliometrics and evaluation in the humanities, which needs to be supplemented for an objective assessment of scholarly outputs. In chapter "Publication Practices in Motion: The Benefits of Open Access Publishing for the Humanities", the authors Adema and Ferwerda identify the new models to assist the humanities scholars, viz., OAPEN.org (Open Access Publishing in European Networks) and the Open Humanities Press (Openhumanitiespress.org). These OA initiatives secured funding supports from the public research funds and research consortia. EBook edition of this publication is now available on OAPEN.org website.

The book is useful for the scholars and research communicators to understand the conceptual frameworks and approaches to the new publication cultures, digital humanities, and e-publishing in the twenty-first century. The book will also help the open science advocates in demonstrating European strategies in open access publishing.

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