

A decade of experience in managing an electronic journal as a multifunctional teaching tool

Vladimir Miletić ^{1*} , Željko Rajković ¹ 

¹ Faculty of sport and physical education, University of Belgrade, SERBIA

*Corresponding Author: vladaprof@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

The realization that the modern era is accompanied by the habits of young people spending a lot of time “wandering” on the Internet, using digital technology, reinforcing the negative effects of a sedentary lifestyle, was the basis for the realization of a new idea. Ten years ago, a project was launched to establish and edit an electronic professional journal, Return to Nature, as a supplementary teaching tool for the subject Outdoor activities, at the Faculty of Sports and Physical Education, University of Belgrade. The goal of the research is to examine the impact of digital learning on students, the quality of teaching in the subject, and the self-sustainability of the journal using the method of theoretical analysis. After 10 years of publishing, e-edition, with author's texts and original photographs, the journal has shown that students are happy to use electronic media along with books and textbooks and that the publication has its place and value in the educational system. In parallel with the new editions, the editorial team has also grown, with contributors from several institutions from the country and abroad. The editions have so far recorded several thousand downloads from all over the world. Interest and the quality of teaching have increased significantly because students have also become involved in the work of the journal, who have gone from interested readers, analysts, commentators and proposers to successful authors themselves. Independent confirmation of the value of the journal came from the Faculty of Education in Zagreb, where the journal was recommended to students for use by their professors.

Keywords: outdoor activities, sustainability, e-publication, journal

INTRODUCTION

From Idea to Realization

When considered superficially, the phenomenon of electronic publication is not a significant novelty in the educational process, but if its deeper issues are analyzed, it is possible to reach a more serious understanding of such a project. The use of digital publication can be broad-based, which goes beyond one-way communication seen through writing directed towards the requirements of the reading population. The publication is available to readers via digital devices, on which it can be stored or always accessed online via the platform.

One in a series of examples of the application of digital technology in the educational process is the experimental launch of a professional journal started in 2015, intended primarily for expanding the knowledge base in the form of recommended literature of students in the program of activities in nature, in the third year of basic academic studies, education at the Faculty of Sport and Physical Education, University of Belgrade, but also all other subjects with a narrow specialization. In addition to this, the subject Activities in Nature is studied at the state faculties of sports and physical education both in our country (Novi Sad, Nis, Leposavic, Novi Pazar) and abroad. This issue is studied at over ten private educational institutions.

In the phase of starting the project, the knowledge was taken into account that a certain part of the program of the mentioned subject is studied at several other institutions: at the Faculty of Teacher Education according to the accreditation from 2015 (Faculty of Teacher Education, 2015), the University of Defense – Military Academy and the Criminal Police University. The specific part of the teaching refers to field work and staying in nature, seen through organizational forms such as excursions and camps. Certain faculties also have research visits to nature in the field of ecology, biology, forestry and the like.

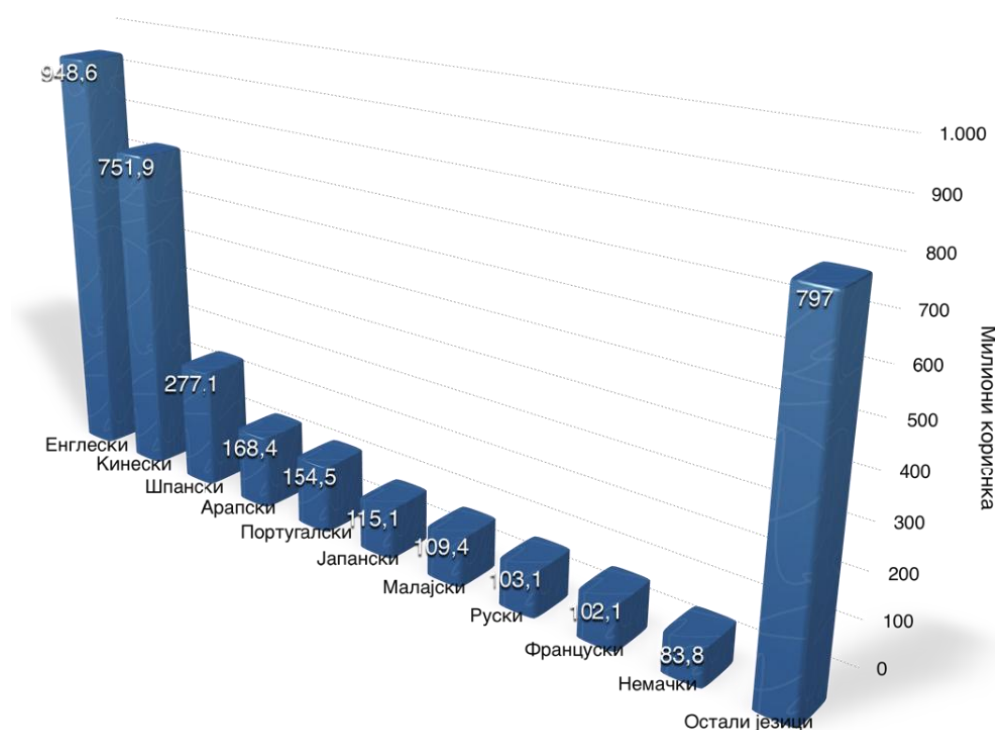


Figure 1. Overview of the hierarchy of languages by use (Rajković et al., 2017)

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Massification of the Reading Population

This publication, in addition to covering the topic of digital technologies in the structure of the educational system, follows modern approaches, and can also be considered a “lobby” of a digital textbook. Thanks to this idea, the mentioned “intellectual product” was created, which had a tendency towards further progress reflected in the sense of expanding the reader's “market” thanks to the initiation of the process of translation into the native language of the target groups. This step began with a natural synergy of the members of the student parliament of the Faculty of Philology in Belgrade and the editorial board, where the retroactive translation of the edition started. The first issue of the magazine has been translated into nine languages: English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Dutch, Greek, Bulgarian and Slovak. This procedure allows access to the contents of the magazine to an incredible number of people.

Previous editions have covered only the Serbian-speaking area. Although some experts will not agree with this statement (because not so long ago the Croatian, Bosniak and Montenegrin languages were defined, assuming a high degree of understanding between Serbian, Macedonian and Slovenian), it covers the territory of the former Yugoslavia, as well as a significant number of people from the diaspora. newly created countries. According to the census data from 2011 to 2015, about twenty million people (not counting Kosovo and Metohija as well as the diaspora) were able to read the author's texts in the magazine in their own language. With the inclusion of 9 new languages, the availability of articles in the magazine Return to Nature jumps to an incredible one billion and 70 million people (native languages only), which is an increase of 53.5 times or an increase of 5250%. The use of language on the Internet is somewhat different, so counting in another way from a total of 3 billion and 611 million Internet users (2016), we can boast that the magazine with translated numbers will cover one billion and 412 million people, which is 39.1 % of the total number of Internet users if only English, Spanish, French and German are counted (**Figure 1**) (Rajković et al., 2016).

The problem in the distribution of translated articles has arisen at the level of information technology, where complex coordination is required in adapting the web presentation, which is a process that is currently under development.

The journal could be characterized as a means of “educational marketing” due to the promotion of subjects through thematic areas of study, and thus institutions, and beyond. The basis of digitalization is a network presentation on which the upload was made in pdf extension, ie the published edition, which is primarily arranged for the purpose of informing students (Aktivnosti u prirodi, n. d.).

Slightly more important than student participation in this project is the possibility of updating information for physical education teachers' employment in preschools, primary and secondary schools, universities, sports clubs and sports federations and organizations. The great influence of the publication as an andragogical tool for those who are not professionally related to the topic itself but can certainly benefit significantly from the acquisition of knowledge and skills described, should not be overlooked. Yet nature still belongs to everyone.



Figure 2. One of the digital editions of the magazine “Return to Nature” (<https://www.aktivnostiuprirodi.com/casopis/>)

Thanks to the topic, the magazine has had the opportunity many times so far to be presented in various media, such as: Portal “Putokaz” from Podgorica (<http://www.putokaz.me/aktuelno/892-povratak-prirodi>), 10th in a row radio show “Out of range” on Radio Laguna (Drobac, 2016), “Radio Serbona” (Mihajlović, 2018), was a media sponsor and co-organizer of the 1st International Scientific Conference in the field of nautical - INKON, “VODEN 2017” (Rajković & Miletić, 2018), is listed in the doctoral dissertation of the founder and editor-in-chief (Miletić, 2018b), as well as in other publications dealing with the problems of outdoor activities (Miletić, 2018a) and co-publishing should be mentioned in the publication *Specification of diving sites in the Adriatic area, sector Mamula – Budva Riviera* (Tomić et al., 2020). The magazine is also linked to online presentations: Rafting club Eko Lim from Priboj, Extreme Sports Club “Tifran” from Belgrade.

The analysis of the mentioned references shows that the spread of the publication through links can be noticed relatively quickly through digital forms.

The importance of marketing is well known, without which today it is practically impossible to imagine any social phenomenon that has a tendency towards expansion. Return to nature is designed so that it has no commercial component and that the circle of readers expands on the basis of a recommendation, unobtrusively, but according to interests that depend exclusively on the readers themselves – users of nature. This started mission has remained to be carried out as such to this day. *Return to Nature* is a publication that has no financial requirements, because it brings together authors who normally deal with nature in their domain and as such record their stays.

Interested authors have the opportunity to write stories about their experiences and thus share them with others.

Shortly after the publication of the first issue, the journal *Return to Nature* became the recommended literature in the elective course “Scouts and School” at the Faculty of Teacher Education, University of Zagreb (Učiteljski fakultet, 2016), which is another clear proof of content covering specific topics.

At the very beginning, the publication found a logical space in multidisciplinary cooperation, where a natural connection was created with several institutions whose representatives make up the editorial office and publish their texts and photographs aimed at a unique topic – Nature.

The criterion for publishing articles can be met by anyone whose profession is moderate in nature.

The editorial board of the magazine is composed of experts from various fields narrowly focused on the natural environment. As this area is extremely wide and covers several different topics, it is due to the attractive, and above all current content of the strengths of this publication at a high level.

Statistical data indicate the following: 5 years of publication (Rajković, 2017), 11 editions have been published so far, presented through 7 issues (of which 4 are double issues).

CALL FOR COOPERATION – WORD OF THE EDITOR

The professional magazine “Return to Nature” (Figure 2) was primarily designed as a publication of the subject Activities in Nature, basic academic studies of sports and physical education, also a “space” intended for professional texts with a rich offer on this topic, to expand students' basic knowledge in this educational program.

The content of the magazine is intended for everyone who believes that they belong to nature and that they are an integral part of it.

“Return to nature” is a space within which all entities of physical culture unite, a place where synergy with scientific disciplines is shown, whose primary task is to study nature and natural phenomena for easier understanding of its functioning, and thus its most correct use.

Living in harmony with nature.

“Return to nature” is a place where sports contents in nature, extreme sports, types of organization of stay in nature, survival skills in nature, applied scientific disciplines: ecology, meteorology, biology and geography, field medicine, etc. are presented. In addition to the above, the magazine offers interesting travelogues that reveal natural destinations hidden away from the view of regular nature visitors, viewed through a completely different dimension: through the eyes of mountaineers, climbers, boaters, divers, rowers, parachutists, flyers...

“Return to Nature” is a space where all activities are united due to the idea of returning to nature.

This is the space in which nature is presented as a means of physical culture, in the same way that physical culture is presented as a means of environmental protection. A place where knowledge and skills of activities in nature and knowledge of nature are directed towards the correct “exploitation” of the environment under the only possible philosophy – the philosophy of sustainability.

Above all with the task of nature conservation.

The magazine has the task to provide information and show interesting experiences of nature visitors, both to students of sports and physical education and to all those whose professional activity is related to staying in the natural environment, and primarily to all sincere nature lovers.

“Return to Nature” is a place where you have the opportunity to share your interesting experiences from nature with other readers.

In the hope that you will remain our loyal readers and find your interest in one of the offered texts from the above areas, we welcome you to a space that can be defined as a “lobby of nature”, which will make it easier for you to become a regular visitor and user.

The basic task, both of the individual contents and the entire topic of the magazine, is to direct the readers to “return” to nature.

Redaction also express it desire and offer the opportunity to become an active contributor to the journal, If reader believes that his suggestion and participation can influence the improvement of the quality of the journal (your texts and photographs) closely related to the idea of this publication.

Always ready to cooperate.

Redaction (Miletić, 2015)

DISCUSSION

Ecological – Economic Profitability

The primary philosophy of all members of the editorial board of the magazine *Return to Nature*, and thus the “policy” of the publication is environmental protection, which manifests itself in two ways: the first is that ecology occupies a significant place in thematic areas of the journal, and the second is its electronic publication, avoiding the printed version, which meets the “E2” criteria, ie criteria environmental and economic viability.

The mission of Redaction is focused on an ecological approach, as indicated by the specific logo (**Figure 3**), but it should certainly be emphasized that the magazine is part of a project called “EKOD - Environmental Protection Program”, the seal of the EKOD project (**Figure 3**). This project is designed and represents a special method in the problem-solving approach and follows all actions that are implemented in full harmony with nature, respecting environmental principles, where in addition to environmental actions, different approaches and protocols are created, as well as electronic publications (not printed).

Areas, ie the matrix according to which the author's texts of the electronic publication are categorized, include the following segments:

- outdoor activities,
- organization of content and stay in nature,
- description of interesting destinations through travel stories,
- ecology,
- tradition related to the natural environment,



Figure 3. Logo of ecological approach and philosophy of electronic publication (left); Signet of the certificate of ecologically correct project, realized according to the EKOD method. *Return to nature* is part of EKOD (right) (<https://www.aktivnostiuprirodi.com/casopis/>)

- description of flora and fauna,
- wildlife survival and
- events and manifestations closely related to nature.

Through the consideration of the problem of publishing the publication, it was concluded that the presented matrix practically offers the sustainability of the journal, both due to the inexhaustibility of the topics and its broad coverage of the topic.

Journal as an Individual Didactic Tool

The journal has a special value of specific gravity. Through the educational process and communication with the student population, students are actively motivated to engage in independent writing of articles from their specialties and interests. In this process, great satisfaction and satisfaction is experienced by students who are irreversibly open to the process of writing motivated by Nature. In the same process, the editorial board and members of the editorial board experience the greatest possible satisfaction in the transfer of knowledge through the awakening of the creation process in their students and readers, thus perceiving the publication as their own. This phenomenon of positive identification enables a constant and continuous contribution of the author to the further progress of the journal.

Digital Technologies in Educational Work – Trends and Tendencies

All forms of digital teaching means have gained significant space in the education system, especially since the beginning of the project Covid-19. Similar procedures are very useful in all forms of local, national and global emergencies. We are not aware that so far anyone has used similar procedures and technologies in a war-torn area although this technology has the capacity to do so. Here it is necessary to list the positive experiences of e-learning in Australia, where due to the great disunity of the population in rural areas, no other system would be sustainable. It is interesting to note that international companies create their own education systems, neglecting and nullifying the static and outdated education system. Namely, the company *Google* organizes *online* courses that are not expensive and after completing the courses offer employment in the company of the same name in any branch on the planet, which completely bypasses the expensive, complicated, long-lasting and corrupt educational system.

The electronic publication *Return to Nature* is a transitional form between the two mentioned educational systems. The quality of the magazine is reflected in its usability as an informal form of education that is not imposed, but its use is approached voluntarily and only the continuous quality of the content ensures the growth of the reading population.

CONCLUSION

The professional journal *Return to Nature* has a multidimensional educational basis, which is reflected primarily through its multidisciplinary content, such as the subject for which it was created. The experiences of experts transferred to this digital space are constantly updated, which means that readers are constantly “refreshed” with new information (author's texts and photographs), through practical examples that can be integrated into the established methodology of teaching the subject. The editorial board of the magazine supports the principle of individuality, whereby the author's texts are published in the original, which respects the author's personality. This procedure achieves freedom of thought, and the texts are not uniform and are not “packaged” in a strict matrix that uniforms the publication. We should not focus narrowly on activities in nature, but on the broader picture covered by this philosophy, which is transferred to each special content from this issue (Miletić et al., 2019).

Examples of environmental philosophy and digital technologies form a logical sustainable journal base.

As a final product that would logically complete the started project, and at the same time follow the development of digital technologies, it would be an application that would be supported by all platforms. The application "Return to Nature" would practically provide a number of benefits for readers who would have the specified brand in the form of an application on their digital devices.

The possibility, which was also considered in addition to making *Return to Nature* a popular journal, is the Editorial Board's aspiration towards the scientific segment and initiating the procedure for its categorization in the near future. The way in which this is possible is the publication of extraordinary editions, as well as the new edition under the auspices of *Return to Nature* or the form of the Proceedings of the planned thematic gatherings. As highly scientific journals have shown their weaknesses in ambiguity and unusability (Vidaković et al., 2017), the editorial board will strive for a mixed type of journal, which will be partly professional and partly scientific.

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