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REACHING OUT TO THE PEER COMMUNITY: MEASURING IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS

Abstract

The paper will present results of the research that explores the impact of ICARUS-HR activities through social media campaigns on professional and scholar peer communities. Did social media campaigns influence targeted stakeholders and how? How are those useful in the promotion of archival heritage and where are the pitfalls and challenges? Are they effective in the domain of engagement of archival professionals? The study of impact was designed according to the Europeana Impact Playbook methodology and presents specific case study based on ICARUS-HR activities in archival oriented projects.

Keywords: archives, non-governmental organization, archivists, impact

RAGGIUNGERE LA COMUNITÀ DEI PARI: MISURARE L'IMPATTO DELLE CAMPAGNE SUI SOCIAL MEDIA

Sintesi

Il documento presenterà i risultati della ricerca che esplora l'impatto delle attività di ICARUS-HR attraverso campagne sui social media sulle comunità dei pari di professionisti e studiosi. Le campagne sui social media hanno influenzato le parti interessate mirate e come? Come sono utili nella promozione del patrimonio archivistico e dove sono le insidie e le sfide? Sono efficaci nell'ambito del coinvolgimento dei professionisti dell'archivio? Lo studio di impatto è stato progettato secondo la metodologia Europeana Impact Playbook e presenta casi di studio specifici basati sulle attività di ICARUS-HR in progetti ad archival oriented.

Parole chiave: archivi, organizzazione non governativa, archivisti, impatto

DOSEGANJE VRSTNIŠKE SKUPNOSTI: MERJENJE UČINKA KAMPANJ NA DRUŽBENIH MEDIJIH

Povzetek

V prispevku so predstavljeni rezultati raziskave o vplivu oglaševanja ICARUS-HR na družbenih omrežjih na različne deležnike strokovne in znanstvene vrstniške skupnosti. Ali so kampanje na družbenih omrežjih vplivale na ciljne deležnike in kako? Ali so tovrstne aktivnosti uporabne pri promociji arhivske dediščine, kje so pasti in izzivi? Ali so učinkovite na področju angažiranja arhivskih strokovnjakov? Študija vpliva je bila zasnovana po metodologiji Europeana Impact Playbook in predstavlja specifično študijo primera, ki temelji na dejavnostih ICARUS-HR v arhivsko usmerjenih projektih.

Ključne besede: arhivi, nevladna organizacija, arhivisti, vpliv

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ISKORAK PREMA ZAJEDNICI : MJERENJE UTJECAJA OGLAŠAVANJA NA DRUŠTVENIM MREŽAMA

Sažetak

U radu se donose rezultati istraživanja o utjecaju oglašavanja aktivnosti udruge ICARUS--HRVATSKA na društvenim mrežama na različite dionike iz domene kulturne i znanstvene zajednice. Jesu li oglašavanja aktivnosti na društvenim mrežama utjecala povratno na dionike i na koji način? Koliko su korisne takve aktivnosti u promociji arhivske baštine te u čemu su mogući izazovi i zamke u njihovom planiranju i provedbi? Jesu li oglašavanja uspješna odnosno utječu li povratno na daljnji angažman stručnjaka? Istraživanje je provedeno sukladno metodologiji *Europeana Impact Playbook* te predstavlja studiju slučaja temeljenu na oglašavanju projektnih aktivnosti udruge ICARUS-HR.

Ključne riječi: arhivi, nevladine organizacije, arhivisti, utjecaj

1. INTRODUCTION

Even without the paradigmatic shift within heritage studies (broadly conceived) toward advocacy for more open, transparent, participatory and inclusive modes of heritage institutions' management the ever-so-present networked world made its impact directly and intrusively. One of clearly visible direct consequence of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic is enforced digitization and demands for virtual presence of institutions and organizations in the sector of culture and creative industries. In the last two decades or so heritage institutions and organizations with more and less success implemented various digital and virtual solutions or diverse intentions. Digitization as part of preservation activities, as solution that helps to enable access, as a prerequisite of virtual representations. Although history of digital and virtual adaptation through this last two decades is fascinating topic it is still rather unresearched and would welcome empirical case studies. These should help us with clarifying what was in fact long term societal impact of such digitization efforts. Whilst institutions changed their modus operandi and adapted to new technologies and networked information landscape the users transformed also simultaneously creating expectations that often surpass real business possibilities of institutions in the sector of culture.

The topic of impact of digitization and planning digital business strategies in cultural sector is wide and open to interdisciplinary research and as such too complex to be addressed in this paper. The main objective of this paper is to examine the impact of social media campaigns that are oriented toward archivists and other heritage professionals and whose content and scope is mainly based on archival and documentary heritage. Social media, as one model of cultural institutions' and organisations' communication is part of outreach efforts. It should be noted that the term "documentary heritage" is used here in the context of UNESCO's Recommendation concerning the preservation of, and access to, documentary heritage, including in digital form (UNESCO, 2015).

1.1. OUTREACH THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

The concept of "outreach" itself in the archival world is multifaceted. Among other things, it addresses the issue of how to encourage use and make archives more accessible through a range of activities, lots of them within pedagogic and marketing frameworks. These activities seek to educate the wider public and facilitate research, as well as to make archival holdings available for and accessible to communities and individuals through different media. The concept of outreach also includes audience development, exhibition and other public showcasing of archival content, the active engagement of archivists outside physical repository spaces -- especially through participatory practices and proactive documentary activities -- and a critical reassessment of the role of an archive and archivists in contemporary society. Outreach in an increasingly digital world presents new challenges to all heritage institutions. It is imperative that they research, implement and test new solutions. Certainly, one of the tools to increase outreach toward defined stakeholders is comprehensive communication strategy that includes marketing on social media. The function of social media is manifold. They are widely used as tools for content sharing, for networking and connecting in numerous directions, both on local, national and international levels. Use of social media in marketing is widely acknowledge, they are as marketing expert Seth (2020, pp. 4) facetious assert "social media, after all, is word of mouth (WOM) on steroids". Importance of social media is increasing daily, and manoeuvring among many possibilities becomes more complex. Benefits of social media use in cultural heritage institutions include wide content dissemination (Perrella, 2021), innovative re-design of already existing educational services and content (Rahman *et al.*, 2020), increase of user engagement

in form of active participation in marketing and communication (Constantinides, 2014) and certainly better visibility of some institution or organisation in public (digital) space. Increased visibility is as much challenge and responsibility as it is a direct benefit. One of the most important benefits is possibility of dissemination of authentic, real and truthful content, and that is, in time when we all witness harmfulness of fake news and unverified information, clearly important and socially responsible role of institution or organization. Authenticity of heritage institutions was always their strongpoint in any form of public communication. Statistics for Croatia reveal that in January 2021 around 68,4 % of total population used in some form social media (DataReportal, 2021). Mostly used social media were Facebook and YouTube, then multiplatform messaging apps (such as WhatsApp) and then Instagram (Reuters Institute for the study of journalism, 2020). According to data from February 2021 in Croatia there are more than million Instagram users, most of them in age groups 25 to 34 – 33% (Statista, 2021). Similar to general users' distribution are, more specific, cultural heritage institutions' usage of social media. Prompted by Covd-19 digital upheaval, museums in Croatia in first part of 2021 actively used social media for various business purposes. Most museums used Facebook (94%), Instagram (87%), You-Tube (75%) and Twitter (66%) (Museum booster, 2021). Compared to pre-Covid-19 period, social media usage increased in museum community for 41,9 % (International Council of Museums, 2020). Behind these percentages there are several inevitable preconditions that institutions and organisations need to take into account when planning boost that social media might bring to their businesses. Social media demand consistency in communication, commitment and creativity, educated human resources, authenticity and innovation. Although basic accounts are more or less free of charge, all inputs listed above might be measured in frameworks of working hours and contracts for outsourced services. All percentages listed above also indicate that the potential outreach of information delivered through social media is big and that cultural heritage institutions and organisations might be able to reach a large pool of users. At the same time these numbers can't explain what is the real impact on these users, on audience in focus of institutions' business. What is the impact of social media campaigns and how we can measure it?

2. RESEARCH CASE STUDY AND METHODOLOGY

2.1. CASE STUDY BACKGROUND

Activities in networked world are usually based on efforts invested in real world, as a start at least. Although our digital content, in any shape might become viral and distributed without our inputs, someone has invested time and effort in creating original content. By investing time and other financial resources in creating various digital content we need to examine what is the actual impact of our digital activities to our stakeholders and assess the value of that impact as important factor which, in turn speaks back about all our investments. Here presented case study was undertaken as a pilot research project because of the need to understand and value impact of ICARUS Croatia social media campaigns. The background of the study is acknowledgement that impact might take various manifestations, such as information impact in which user benefit from new information that might influence their knowledge systems. Emotional and affectual impact is increasingly important aspect and heritage community recognized the need to asses these kinds of impacts. Impact, that is in focus of this research, might be conceptualized as networking and engagement impact. ICARUS Croatia is an organisation of heritage professionals and institutions, academics and heritage enthusiasts. The 137 members in 2021 are the organisation's stakeholders on first engagement line. Following these are other stakeholders, institutional or individual, from sectors

of culture and creative industries and science and education. Social media campaigns, designed with the aim to promote projects, activities and archival and documentary heritage, were targeted mainly to these communities of professionals. The networking ambition underlined all social media campaigns efforts. Was this aim successful? Did social media campaigns influence targeted stakeholders and how? How are those useful in the promotion of archival and documentary heritage and where are the pitfalls and challenges? Are social media campaigns effective in the domain of engagement of archival professionals? Does that mean that they have made an impact? Above listed research questions guided study on impact of social media campaigns and main objective was to measure and understand the manifestations of possible impact. "Impact Playbook" defines impact as "Changes that occur for stakeholders or in society as a result of activities (for which the organization is accountable)" (Verwayen, Fallon, Schellenberg and Kyrou, 2017, pp.51). Did our social media efforts make a change?

Social media campaigns that ICARUS Croatia conducted from January of 2021 to November 2021 were oriented toward communities of peers, of heritage professionals. The content of campaigns included mostly promotion of project activities, dissemination of project results and promotion of digital archival and documentary heritage. The primary goal of these campaigns wasn't wide spread reach to general users but outreach toward peers from sector of culture with ambition to increase their participation in ICARUS community. The aim was to create networking digital space. ICARUS Croatia is a non-for-profit association dedicated to the research and promotion of archival and documentary heritage, open access to archives and records' holdings through contemporary ICT, interdisciplinary approach to theory and practice and networking across institutions and cultures. Active ICARUS Croatia projects, whose content and promotion this study inspected, were CReative European ARCHives as innovative cultural hubs (CREARCH), 'They: Live - Student lives revealed through context-based art practices (THEY: LIVE) and We are all together to raise awareness of cultural heritage (WAAT). Beside above listed projects ICARUS Croatia was active in promoting other activities, such as annual conference 6th ICARUS days with central topic "Archives – borders, identities, reflections", in informing community about upcoming events connected with archival and documentary practices, in encouraging to participate actively in ICARUS Croatia activities. One social media action, entitled #StoriesfromArchives has in its basis digitized archival material with the aim of creating storytelling effect around its representation. Lots of digital content was present on daily basis and updated weekly with planned posts, but did these efforts impacted targeted stakeholders?

2.2. EUROPEANA IMPACT PLAYBOOK FRAMEWORK FOR MEASURING IMPACT

Questions such as what is the ROI (Return of Investment) or SROI (Social Return on Investment) are basics for marketing professionals and social media analytics, but seems enormous area to conquer for person outside communication and marketing field. Cultural heritage professionals often facing with questions like that without possibility to employ skilled marketing professional. Measuring ROI is critical component of social media marketing. Same is valid for understanding the social value of social media campaign by representing outcomes as financial values which would give us information about SROI. What if we need to measure and moreover understand non-monetary impact? Increase of audience, higher rates of engagement, wider reach and so forth allow us to understand how did our social media activities impact audience? First, we need to determine what counts as impact, for us? Lots of non-for-profits organisations have goal to generate awareness in specific area, recruit new members and build their profile by creating genuine voice and influencing on the overall personality of the organisation. The standpoint of ICARUS Croatia communication strategy, which includes social media

strategy, is similar in this aspect. By using communication tolls ICARUS Croatia focuses on raising public and professional profile of the organisation, share information, promote and disseminate project activities and building a community of peers and colleagues that would in future participate in ICARUS Croatia activities. We consider social media as tools that we need to employ in a way that would put us on a path to build relationships with members and non-members. These relationships are should take place both in physical and virtual world. Virtual supporters, their voices and engagement are relevant but not enough. Although there are many marketing approaches, techniques and already developed programs to measure engagement rate, reach, conversion the overall question about the real impact of our social media activities demanded slightly different methodological approach. Balanced Value Model that Europeana promoted in its "Impact Playbook: For Museums, Archives, Libraries and Galleries" (Verwayen, Fallon, Schellenberg and Kyrou, 2017) seemed like a framework that might offer detailed insights and yield results about real impact of our activities. Professor Tanner (2012) designed the abovementioned model and its possibilities of use in cultural heritage sector are manifold. "Impact Playbook" defines impact as "the change that has occurred in (or for) stakeholder that your activities have contributed to" (Verwayen, Fallon, Schellenberg and Kyrou, 2017, pp. 34). Impact Assessment is a vital component of, we argue, activities' and programs' sustainability planning. In a long run, are our action impactful for our stakeholders and how are they meaningful? While Impact Assessment in marketing and communication field might be measured and observed with various tools and programs, we decided to investigate impact and try to measure and understand it by testing Europeana's methodology. In this approach the impact assessment is divided in four phases. First three phases are available for public consult (and use) by the end of 2021, while four phase (evaluation) is still under development. Testing methodology at this time might give overall feedback, insights and be useful for further development of fourth phase. First phase is strategic planning of the assessment. During this phase we should set up framework and design our assessment. Questions such as what impact means for our organisations, what kind of information we need to capture and why, and who are our stakeholders should guide our design planning. In the second phase we collect data and in the third phase analyse, assess and interpret them. Fourth phase will be dedicated to the evaluation of our impact assessment. The design as such, as well as methodology and techniques (such as interviews, focus groups, statistical data etc.) mirrors standard mixed methods research from broadly conceived Information and communication sciences. By introducing the Change Pathway and the Value Lenses the Impact Playbook methodology provides specific framework that will steer our research process. The Impact Playbook recognize five Value Lenses: Utility, Learning, Existence, Community and Legacy lenses. Through these lenses we will analyse and interpret our data and "Each of them gives a specific perspective on the value of digital heritage resources, based on the Balanced Value Impact." (Verwayen, Fallon, Schellenberg and Kyrou 2017, pp. 29). The Change Pathway serves as a tool with which we document, describe and represent our inputs, outputs and outcomes and narrate findings about impact. It guides us through our understanding did our activities make impact. In the second phase we should develop indicators that will inform what happened and can be quantified or understand through qualitative data. Indicator is defined as "information that allows us to measure change, that will show us whether the change has happened or not" (Europeana, 2020, pp. 12). Following that we enter the stage of data collection, employ various techniques such as survey, interviews, focus groups and so forth. Completing the process of data collection, we enter the third phase in which we analyse and interpret our data (in November 2021 in beta-phase). Through all these phases team

work, collaborative and group exercises are emphasized as necessary to achieve the results of meaningful impact assessment. That perspective of collaboration is as much as important as challenging. It presumes that there is a team of insiders to gather and discuss. The process itself is conceptualized in detail and straightforward (although iterations as validations are emphasized as important aspect of process itself).

2.3. IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVITIES OF ICARUS CROATIA

The home webpage of ICARUS Croatia is active from 2016 and we keep track on webpage analytics (Čurik, 2021). In the same year we've activated Facebook profile, but other social media waited to be launched until late 2020 and early 2021. We've opened profiles on Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube with several specific aims: to promote project activities and disseminate information, to connect with peers and colleagues on national and international level and to promote archival and documentary heritage. Promotion of archival and documentary heritage on social media is important aspect that potentially might influence wider audience, outside communities of professionals. In this stage of communication and outreach development we've focused mostly on colleagues from sector of culture, education and creative industries as primary stakeholders and beneficiaries of our activities. In this aspect the community lens is the one that guides us and through which we observe our actions. Did our activities impact community of cultural heritage professionals? The learning lens is valuable also in this case because of groups and individuals that are a bit further away from heritage narratives and might benefit from information and content we deliver (teachers from sector of education for example). These kinds of impacts are social, intangible but vivid in the real world, as well as in the virtual space. Community building and impacting on sense of belonging to community of professionals, practitioners and academics, involved with archival and documentary heritage is in our scope of activities. Resources we had for our endeavours solely relied on human resources and working hours invested in social media campaigns. Quantitative data is easily extracted from social media analytics functions (see Figure 1) but qualitative data had to subtracted from content itself (see Figure 2).

Figure 1: Quantitative data from social media activities in 2021.
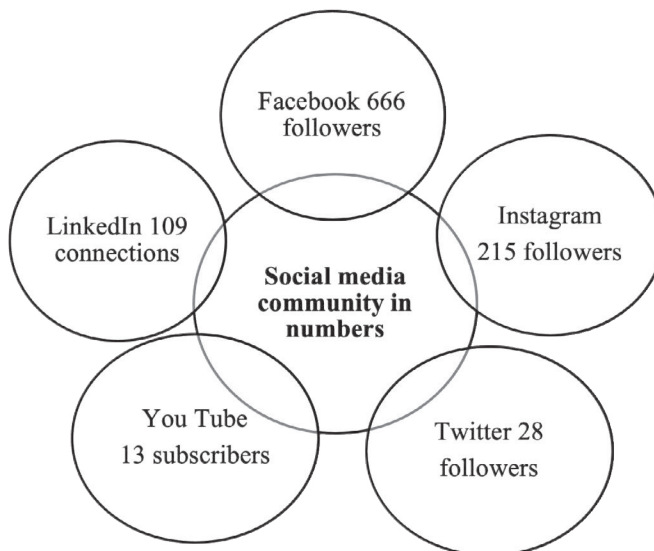
The Facebook and Instagram analytics revealed that most or our followers are women in group range from 35 to 44 years and that come from various countries. The least represented group are young people from 18 to 24 and 25 to 34 years and that is a clear indicator that we need create more successful campaigns which will attract student population and young professionals. With only 13 subscribers on YouTube and 50 videos the 840 views are rather average rate compared with our other social networks. The quickest in growth are Facebook and Instagram so there is potential to reach younger audience on IG (as the SM most used by younger generations). The qualitative data gathered on this occasion will serve as inputs for future assessments, after few years of presence on social media.

Numbers of followers, engagement rate and reach, don't necessarily mean that there is impact in sense of provoked change or lack of it in total community, or lack of it. The outputs of our activities, such as post and stories we published, information shared and archive and documentary material in various digital formats distributed, can also be measured and not just in numbers but instead in content focus. In that case qualitative approach might be more useful (see Figure 2)

Figure 2: Qualitative content analysis results from social media in 2021.
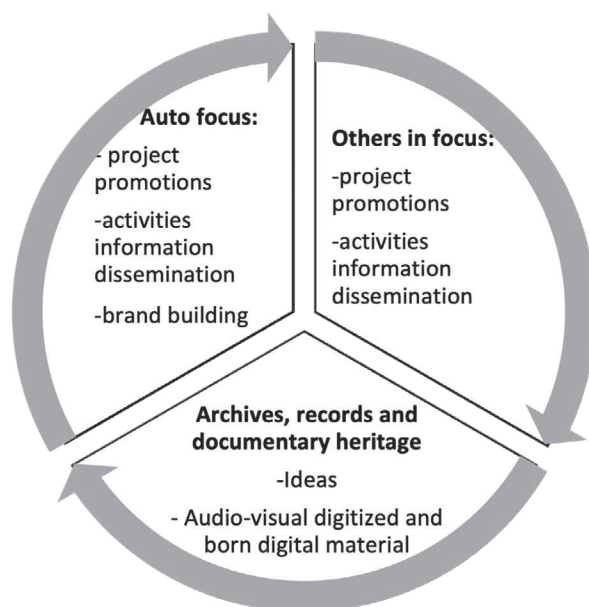
Campaigns on social media were designed based on communication strategies of each project activities and overall communication strategy of the ICARUS Croatia. Overall on all abovementioned social media networks three broad content sets profiled: content delivered through auto-focus, content connected with other institutions, associations and individuals and content that represents archives and documentary heritage.

Some posts received better reactions and engagement, in term of likes and shares, during the observation of reactions during period from January to June 2021 this information were collected. That wasn't dependent on visual content exclusively because in some cases better reactions got posts with more creative and appealing story, and that can be interpreted as the appealing power of storytelling. Content designed in form of short stories and written in affective tone got better attention especially when focused on digitized archival material.

In most cases same followers engaged with the posts, usually coming from cultural institutions and heritage-oriented associations. That suggested that there is a basis of virtual supportive community but constrained in rather narrow range.

Collection of feedback information about our social activity was done within our stakeholder community members that weren't directly involved with creation of the content in June 2021. After short interviews and feedbacks several areas have profiled. Information value of social media activity, brand building value (e.g. raising profile and attractiveness of the organisation) and sentiment value, which was surprising since the content was so heterogeneous but for some of them the sentiment was connected to archives in general and then transferred into potential social media outreach that will present importance of archives and records more widely and to diverse audience. The emphasized team work, underlined in the "Impact Playbook", was put in challenge in this aspect, because of the size of the organisation and active members involved in the process. While *close outsiders* provided valuable feedbacks, there is a noticeable lack of *insiders'* feedback and in this perspective impact assessment drifted from the stipulated methodology from "Impact Playbook". Nevertheless, the next step, considerations of the short and long-term outcomes, based on feedbacks, was the most difficult one. In the context of this study and based on "Impact Playbook" methodology, short term outcome would be bigger engagement, more shares & likes, which wasn't the case. Our social media community didn't engage more so we can conclude that short terms outcomes in this aspect weren't successful. Long term outcomes, again based on "Impact Playbook" guidelines, should be analysed during longer time periods. But different feedback occurred in this time period. In communication with members of ICARUS Croatia community and outsiders (mostly other cultural heritage professionals) in real life occasions many times social media activity was commented as informative, interesting and a task wort pursuing. Furthermore, colleagues outside Croatia commented content available in English as a great tool for networking and visibility of our work. The digital efforts were, in fact, influential after all, but that influence wasn't noticeable in social media communication. Paradoxically, better results digital social media campaign achieved in off-line, real world.

3. DISCUSSION

"Impact Playbook" provided a straightforward, understandable and flexible framework for impact assessment. The process itself is slow and it is important to follow phases and steps and re-evaluate constantly and validate with colleagues. The aspect of group exercises and team work through the whole process was, in our case, challenging due to very fluid structure of organisations and members' activities. Data collection and analysis yielded results that could be interpreted as short outcomes. Long term outcomes (in time frame of one year in this case) of our social media activities might took interesting turn. Due to promotion of archives, records and documentary heritage material, change happened in stakeholder profiles. Lots of teachers and other education workers became more interested in that type of heritage material and as consequence got more involved in planning education activities with archives and records background.

The study started with questions did our social media activities have impact of our defined stakeholders? And if so, could that impact be explained within domain of social impact, the one that drives positive changes in our stakeholders' professional lives.

While elaborating Balanced Value Model (which is in the basis of "Impact Playbook") Tanner (2012) argued that before starting impact assessment we need to know why we want to assess impact, what in fact we want to assess and what will we do with results

and how much is it worth for us to know this information. "Impact Playbook" guided the process that at the end resulted with quantitative outputs and short outcomes which were insufficient to make impact on stakeholders in total. But results also showed that there was change in behaviour in specific group within our stakeholders (i.e. teachers and education workers) as well as change of our own image in wider community of cultural heritage professionals. The community lenses and learning lenses from which we assessed impact helped in focusing to specific values. Lack of short-term outcomes in digital world wasn't noticed in physical networking and more people and members reacted positively, stipulating that it was the impulse from social media from which they've gathered information, reason for positive feedbacks. Still this is still a long-run from actual inclusion in real world as results from social media drivers and calls for actions.

4. CONCLUSION

Cultural heritage professionals could follow "Impact Playbook" guidelines to identify, measure and assess impact and to understand the short comes and insufficiencies of their actions that haven't made impact on stakeholders. Nowadays communication, heritage sector included, relies heavily on social media. Cultural heritage professionals are aware of importance of social media and their influence and it is important for them to be able to assess the efforts invested in social media campaigns but also to measure and understand impact of their activities. The ideal circumstances in which there is an educated person for social media marketing or outsourced services, are often inaccessible to small scale institutions and organisations. And that services don't guarantee real impact, such that is identified in "Impact Playbook". Although "Impact Playbook" isn't directed specifically to social media as digital resources, and methodology might be better suited to analyse impact of other digitization efforts, its' Change Pathway can be used to analyse and understand impact of social network endeavours. The issue to take into consideration is that change happens usually in longer period. Tanner (2012, pp. 69) asserted "One problem is that many of the studies of the impact of digitized resources attempt to measure change over a short period of time (sometimes even as short as one year) and have no baseline metrics against which to assess what may have changed." In case of ICARUS Croatia we'll use these collected data and assessments, continue to work on building better metrics and incorporate findings from this analysis. Impact on our stakeholders is currently *under construction*, but with results that this assessment yielded we can direct our efforts to better suit targets and correct errors. Real impact, as the change that happened in lives of stakeholders due to specific activities, can be conceptualized as outreach results of entity that initiated these activities. In case of social media representation there are intermediator (i.e. users that engage in content) that are the target of initiators' effort but also in the same time, their active agents.

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