Introduction

Recent art history has experienced a proliferation of e-journals; at the same time, the acceptance of e-journals within the academia is still rather low compared to print publications. In part, this may simply reflect challenges any new journal inevitably faces, irrespective of its medium: after all, e-journals are usually new journals whereas the relevant print journals are generally well established. But it is also, and maybe in the first place, still a matter of print vs. online.

The disproportion between the ever growing number of new e-journals on the one hand and the persisting scepticism against them on the other is only one of several paradoxes and disparities that mark the field of digital humanities. Thus, for instance, while social networks and private blogs flourish, museums or other institutions struggle to get their audiences participate in their newly installed web 2.0 services; while production costs of online publications are significantly lower than those for print publications, fees for image permissions are often significantly higher; and while more and more universities encourage their students and faculty to publish their research online, at the same time online publications often do not count when it comes to applying for academic positions.

There are, however, also significant differences among different countries regarding the acceptance of e-journals, partly due to differences in their academic systems and publishing cultures. Editing a journal like RIHA Journal provides a showcase for this.
Launched in April 2010, *RIHA Journal* (www.riha-journal.org) is an international peer-reviewed Open Access journal featuring high-quality research articles in the history of art and related fields of research. It is edited by the member institutes of RIHA, the *International Association of Research Institutes in the History of Art* (www.riha-institutes.org). A joint project of 28 research institutes all over Europe and the US, *RIHA Journal* is unique in its international editorial structure. By the same token, it exemplifies the diversity of academic publishing cultures across Europe – notably as regards the state of and attitudes towards online publishing. This in itself makes the editing of *RIHA Journal* an exciting, if challenging, experiment in its own right.

The following miniature case study is divided into two parts. In the first part, we will sketch the peculiar editorial structure of *RIHA Journal*, give a general outline of the journal’s main features, and point out some of the challenges involved in the project. The second part takes a closer look at the situation of online publishing specifically in Poland from the perspective of one of the participating RIHA institutes, the International Cultural Center (ICC) in Krakow.

1. *RIHA Journal*

1.1 Editorial Structure

*RIHA Journal* is based upon an international editorial structure that makes it a particularly ambitious, and unprecedented, publishing project. Edited by the *International Association of Research Institutes in the History of Art* (RIHA), the journal is a joint international project of currently 28 research institutes in 18 European countries and the US. Moreover, these 28 RIHA Institutes do not just formally figure as the editors of *RIHA Journal*, but the editorial workflow itself is organized in a de-centralized, peripheral way: unlike with other journals,
instead of one single editorial office, each of the institutes is locally responsible for the editorial processes, including, e.g., acquiring and selecting submissions, organizing the peer reviews, organizing translations of articles, and copy editing. In addition, the Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte (ZI) in Munich has taken the responsibility for managing the journal. It coordinates the contributions, takes care of the shared Content Management System, does the final formatting of the articles and finally releases them. In workshops, the ›Local Editors‹ who take care of the journal at their respective RIHA institute are introduced to the technical aspects of the shared Content Management System and exchange and discuss their experiences, proposals and ideas on online publishing in general and RIHA Journal in particular.

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As of January 2011, the following research institutes are members of RIHA and, hence, involved in the editing of RIHA Journal:

Austria: Kommission für Kunstgeschichte der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Vienna

Belgium: Institut Royal du Patrimoine Artistique – Koninklijk Instituut voor het Kunstpatrimonium (IRPA-KIK) (Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage), Brussels

Croatia: Institut za povijest umjetnosti (Institute of Art History), Zagreb

Czech Republic: Ústav dějin umění AV ČR, v.v.i (Institute of Art History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic), Prague

Denmark: Danmarks Kunstbibliotek (The Danish National Art Library), Copenhagen

France: Deutsches Forum für Kunstgeschichte – Centre allemand d'histoire de l'art, Paris; Institut national d'histoire de l'art (INHA), Paris

Germany: Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte (ZI), Munich

Hungary: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Művészettörténeti Kutatóintézet (Research Institute for Art History, Hungarian Academy of Sciences), Budapest

Italy: Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – Max-Planck-Institut (KHI), Florence; Bibliotheca Hertziana – Max-Planck-Institut für Kunstgeschichte, Rome; Istituto Nazionale di Archeologia e Storia dell'Arte, Rome; Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Instituto di Storia dell'Arte, Venice
The Netherlands: Rijksbureau voor Kunsthistorische Documentatie (RDK) (Netherlands Institute for Art History), The Hague

Poland: Międzynarodowe Centrum Kultury (MCK) / International Cultural Centre (ICC), Krakow; Instytut Sztuki Polskiej Akademii Nauk (ISPA) (Institute of Art of the Polish Academy of Sciences), Warsaw

Romania: Institutul de Istoria Artei »George Oprescu«, Academia Română (George Oprescu Institute of Art History, Romanian Academy), Bucharest

Slovakia: Ústav dejín umenia SAV (Institute for Art History, Slovak Academy of Sciences), Bratislava

Slovenia: Umetnostnozgodovinski inštitut Franceta Steleta Znanstvenoraziskovalni center Slovenske akademije znanosti in umetnosti (France Stele Institute of Art History, Scientific Research Center of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts), Ljubljana

Spain: Instituto Amatller de Arte Hispánico (Amatller Institute of Hispanic Art), Barcelona

Sweden: Nationalmuseum Stockholm

Switzerland: Schweizerisches Institut für Kunstwissenschaft (SIK-ISEA) Zurich


USA: The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles; Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts (CASVA), Washington, D.C.; The Clark Art Institute, Williamstown

With its de-centralized editorial structure, *RIHA Journal* is exploring new paths of international institutional cooperation. From the editors’ point of view, this also means, not only coordinating, but integrating a heterogenous group of 28 very different institutes with different capacities and experiences, different expectations regarding *RIHA Journal*, and rooted in different academic publishing cultures.

For all their diversity, with respect to *RIHA Journal* the institutes are joined together in their commitment to a shared set of aims and standards, summarized in the following section.
1.2 Key Features and Main Advantages of RIHA Journal

The general purpose of the journal is to provide an international publishing platform that combines the advantages of online publishing with the highest standards of scholarly quality. In details, this includes:

Peer Review:

RIHA Journal features both original contributions and translations of important articles previously published elsewhere. All original contributions published in RIHA Journal have passed a double blind peer review process organized by the responsible RIHA institutes. The names of the respective reviewers are published as well, along with the published article.

Variety:

Seeking to reflect the manifold dimensions of the discipline – and to counterbalance the increasing over-specialization of scholarly journals – RIHA Journal is open to all approaches to and topics in the history of art and related fields of research.

Multiple Languages:

RIHA Journal is a multi-language journal. Preferred article languages are English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish (the five official languages of CIHA, the Comité International d'Histoire de l'Art http://www.esteticas.unam.mx/CIHA/); however, since November 2010 articles in other languages are accepted as well as far as the languages are used at the RIHA institutes. If applicable, articles may also be published both in the author’s native language and translated into in one of the five major languages.

Quick Publication:

RIHA Journal publishes articles quickly, possibly within three to four months from submission, i.e., significantly faster than traditional print publishers. Accordingly, there are no periodical issues, but articles are released one at a time, as soon as an article is ready for publication. Authors can thus publish their research results almost immediately. Moreover, whereas the ›author pays‹ model becomes more and more popular among commercial publishers,4 RIHA Journal does not charge any author fees.
Article Length Negotiable:

Being a pure e-journal, *RIHA Journal* can be much less restrictive with regard to article length than print publishers. Also comprehensive articles that would have difficulties being accepted for a print journal can be published. This is another major advantage for authors, notably for those whose articles are accompanied by appendices with archival or other source material.

Technical Possibilities:

*RIHA Journal* offers the common technical possibilities of the digital medium, like embedding internal and external links, audio and video files, etc.

Availability:

Committed to the principles of Open Access, *RIHA Journal* makes all articles available free of charge (both as web page and as PDF for download). Unless otherwise arranged with the authors, the texts are provided under the terms of the Creative Commons License CC attribution-non commercial-no derives.

In addition to the URL, each article gets its own URN as such that the articles can be persistently identified in the web and, thus, is ›citable‹. Long-term archiving of the PDFs is provided by the German National Library.

Direct Contact to Local Editors:

Thanks to its de-centralized, peripheral editorial structure, *RIHA Journal* offers direct contact to, and immediate assistance by, about 30 local editors and the managing editor.

Visibility:

Being an Open Access journal and hence easily accessible is not only convenient for readers, especially to those who do not have access to libraries; it is also a major advantage for authors whose articles profit from the higher visibility in the web and are generally more frequently cited than articles in print or closed-access journals.5

Publishing with *RIHA Journal* means publishing with research institutions of high international reputation and visibility. Especially to authors based in ›smaller‹ countries with ›smaller‹ national languages, the journal provides the opportunity to present their research on an international platform to an international readership.
In addition, several steps have been taken to raise the visibility of *RIHA Journal* in the web. Thus, entries about *RIHA Journal* and article announcements can be found on relevant mailing lists and platforms as well as in various library catalogues, meta catalogues and journal databases. The journal is also listed in the Directory of Open Access Journals (http://www.doaj.org/).

Funding:

Funding to *RIHA Journal* is provided for four years by the German Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media (Beauftragter der Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien, BKM).

1.3. Technical Realization

Technically, *RIHA Journal* uses the Open Source Content Management System Plone which is based upon the Open Source application server ZOPE. The Content Management System serves both as publishing platform and as the shared virtual work environment supporting the editorial workflow.

Articles are uploaded as office documents and by a transformation engine simultaneously transformed both into a web page and a pdf.

Several technical updates and amendments are in progress, such as implementing an OAI port for facilitating long-term archiving, and adaptation of to e-book readers.

1.4 Challenges

Starting, and maintaining, a new e-journal involves a couple of well-known challenges, ranging from the general problems of establishing and promoting a new journal within a competitive academic publishing landscape to the notorious intricacies of copyright issues.

Probably the most prominent challenge still is the question of acceptance. While the number of e-journals, notably Open Access journals, in the history of art increases, and while authors themselves are generally open minded about publishing their research articles online, the
general acceptance within the scholarly community or academic system is still rather low, at least in some countries (cf. Part II below). Even when peer-reviewed, online journals, especially Open Access journals, are still considered less prestigious and less credible than (well established) print journals and play only a marginal role in scholars’ lists of publications.

Moreover, this is not just a matter of diffuse negative gut feeling; in addition, there is the very palpable institutional problem that in some countries publications in e-journals do not officially count for the academic career, whether for purely formal reasons or due to their lack of impact factor. E.g., in Poland, e-journals do not count if they release articles, not in periodical issues, but one at a time; in the USA, even articles that are published in peer reviewed e-journals may not be allowed to count towards tenure review, which is an extremely important stage for academics in the US.

In times when the importance of impact factors and reference indices increases, new online journals are generally on rather bad terms. No wonder that authors at the beginning or in the middle of their academic career favour publishing in established print journals rather than in new online journals, irrespective of the latters’ advantages and benefits (quick publication, accessibility to wider readership, etc.). (In turn, well established scholars usually show no burning interest to contribute to a new online journal either.)

Certainly, peer-reviewed e-journals can do a good job demonstrating that the question of quality is independent of the question of medium and of access and that Open Access does not mean that anything goes. However, while this may help remove individual prejudices, institutional obstacles usually prove more persistent. This makes it all the more difficult to overcome the phenomenon known as the »prestige paradox«: i.e., that a journal »may not succeed in a competitive environment until it attains sufficient prestige […] , and such may not be attained until the journal succeeds.« — And what holds for prestige, analogously holds for the question of impact factor.

The question of acceptance is also one of the aspects with regard to which national differences among the RIHA institutes become most evident. Both the number of relevant journals and the attitudes towards online publishing diverge significantly among the countries and academic systems represented by the RIHA institutes. Thus, in some countries RIHA
Journal competes with a whole range of already fairly established online journals; in some other countries, by contrast, professional online journals are still virtually non-existent – which, on the one hand, makes RIHA Journal to a certain degree unrivalled (setting aside for a moment other journals of international scope) but, on the other hand, usually goes along with lesser acceptance of online journals.

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Differences in academic cultures also become apparent in other editorial aspects, e.g., concerning the expectations of authors and reviewers. While, as indicated above, more and more international publishers of OA journals favor the ›author pays‹ model (especially big commercial publishing houses like Springer, and especially for STM journals), elsewhere authors rather expect royalty. Similarly, not in all countries is peer reviewing considered an academic matter of course and expected to be done for free; especially where salaries are low and hardly sufficient to earn a living, scholars are understandably reluctant to figure as reviewers without being paid for it.

In the second part of this paper, we will take a closer look at the particular situation in Poland and the opportunities of and challenges to e-publishing in general and RIHA Journal in particular.

2. Perspective of RIHA Journal's Polish editorial section

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In Poland, RIHA Journal was inaugurated simultaneously with the international inauguration of a magazine based in Munich. The International Cultural Centre – RIHA member institution in Krakow, one of two in Poland – was among the first ones to submit an article for publication. We took advantage of the option reserved by the editorial office for non-congress languages speaking countries – the opportunity to publish an important art historical text which had been previously published in Polish.

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During six months after launching the magazine in April, despite nationwide informational campaign we were not able to obtain a single article for publication (by the end of 2010 the ICC received two articles for publication of which one received positive reviews and was published in December, in the very beginning of 2011 two more articles were submitted).
Calls for publication with exhaustive information on *RIHA Journal* were sent in a form of personal letters by the director of the ICC to directors of the art history institutes at universities and research institutions in the field of art history (16), directors and heads of departments of national museums and the most important art museums (23), vice-chancellors and deans of Academies of Fine Arts (8). Following official letters I sent invitations by e-mails to museum employees and academics in the field of art history who might be potential authors (120). Call for articles reached all members of the Polish section of two international organisations: *ICOM* (200) and *AICA* (100), it was published on the website of an online magazine Obieg – one of the most influential opinion-forming magazines of art critique in Poland, and it was sent to national and regional divisions of the Polish organisation of art historians – Association of Art Historians.

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Trying to find reasons for little interest to publish a research article among Polish art historians, one needs to indicate three points, with the last one seeming to determine the current state of affairs:

– Lack of fee for an article – a big number of editorial offices do not pay at all for an article (they do not have financial possibilities to do so) or the fees are very modest (100-150 EUR), and publication is a matter of prestige for an author;

– Necessity for an unpublished text what usually means writing a brand new article specifically for our magazine – this is a common requirement in a segment of scholarly magazines;

– Text is published in the Internet only, without its printed counterpart and hence its prestige is lower.

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This latter factor, especially in relation with the two previous ones, seems to be decisive. Common belief about much lower prestige of a text published in the Internet whose permanence in relation to a printed magazine is (purportedly) not high – even though a printed one has low circulation to which only a narrow group of readers have access – is the reason why scholars prefer to devote time and energy to prepare an article for printing (no matter that the publishing process takes a year or more) than to the Internet magazine.
In Poland there is no Internet-only scholarly magazine in the field of Art History. All titles, e.g. *Biuletyn Historii Sztuki* (Art History Bulletin), *Folia Historiae Artium*, *Artibus et Historiae*, *Ikonotheka* (Institute of Art History, University of Warsaw), *Modus* (Institute of Art History, Jagiellonian University), *Artium Quaestiones* (Institute of Art History, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań), *QUART* (Institute of Art History, University in Wrocław), *Artifex* (Institute of Art History, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw) are published by research institutions and universities as printed magazines with periodicity from quarterly to yearly.

### 2.1 Problems with online presence of cultural magazines

Between 2004-2005 I conducted a research on magazines devoted to art in the Polish press market. Its result was a BA thesis prepared in the faculty of journalism and communication and a research article. I indicated then that it is difficult to make an exhaustive list of Polish art magazines due to the fact that there are not only those included in a nationwide distribution but also (mainly) low-circulation magazines with regional scope, published by exhibition and cultural institutions, as well as magazines published on the Internet. It is also hindered to gather the whole segment due to their big rotation: some are suspended, others renewed.

*Otwarty Kod Kultury Foundation* (Open Code of Culture) is trying to systematize cultural magazines in Poland. Among its statute aims there are e.g. gathering and drawing up information about cultural magazines as well as working for their development.¹¹ Foundation also runs an Internet project called *Witryna Czasopism.pl* (Site of Magazines.pl) which offers extensive information on Polish social-cultural magazines and promotes them – both traditional, printed ones and existing only in the web.¹² *Witryna Czasopism.pl* consists of a database of Polish cultural magazines called *Catalogue of Magazines* which registers magazines which meet the following criteria: they are devoted to cultural issues, they are published cyclically, and they publish original (not reprinted) materials. In May 2005 there were registered 80 magazines devoted strictly to art, in September 2010 – 119, however this number should be regarded only as approximate. Some of the magazines included on this list were suspended, some only partially speak about art, and some are the magazines devoted to art in a very broad meaning (including architecture or technical issues), also a big
number of specialist and academic magazines is not included (these should not be classified at all according to the rules of the service, however, some are included).

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Financing is considered as the main problem of cultural magazines, so people who run them are trying to minimize financial resources needed for publication and thus find new forms of reaching the reader. Open Code of Culture Foundation enumerates problems related to a traditional, printed magazine: »High cost of publishing in a traditional mode [...] is the main reason why even well organized, low-circulation cultural magazines are published irregularly: offset preparation, paper and printing are the most costly entries in a budget. What is worse, a custom to subscribe cultural magazines has almost disappeared in Poland – readers buy them in retail outlets (together with lowering the circulation the price for printing a copy is ascending and it results in inadequate calculation of the whole circulation and additional losses because of returns). Also libraries – the traditional buyer of ambitious cultural periodicals – are themselves in serious financial problems and many of them had to quit subscription of magazines.«

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What seems to be a perfect solution is running a magazine in the Internet. »Internet is a kind of a guarantee that cultural magazines left alone [without permanent state support] will not disappear – those most determined, deprived of larger subsidies will move to the Internet« – writes Konrad C. Kęder. Internet gives access to wider public, »increases their availability, quickens exchange of ideas. Such a magazine is accessible to readers who would not be able to reach a printed magazine due to their location (residents of small towns – it is much easier to connect with www through a telephone line than wait until a variety of ambitious magazines is available in a local traffic – people living abroad.)« indicates Kęder. »Location of a website is both everywhere and nowhere what releases it from the complex of provincialism« – writes Andrzej Wilowski – »Internet environment builds McLuhan’s global village. [...] electronic media are more democratic from traditional ones – if you want to publish a magazine, build your own website. In the worse scenario no one will read it.« Although some people emphasize that still many people do not have access to the Internet or their access is too limited to read such a magazine (not only look through), it seems that profit (new, mainly young readers) is bigger than losses.
From technical points of view, online magazines have advantages only – besides texts and illustrations they can offer services inaccessible in a printed issue, e.g. an archive, wider illustrative material, videos. However, at this point a question of prestige of an online text arises. Magdalena Ujma, art critic, curator and editor, said that when in the 90s such magazines started to emerge, she came across opinions that »a website does not provide such a significance of a text, that an online text is less important than a printed one.« The problem is that Internet as a medium is easily accessible not only for a reader, but also for a writer. Many people are convinced that when a printed magazine does not accept a text for publishing, one can eventually publish it online. They do not understand that the same rules apply to print and to online magazines – the latter also hold editorial meetings where decisions are made about accepting a text for publishing or rejecting it and subject submissions to peer review. Similarly to printed magazines, online magazines can also be divided into more and less prestigious, and – what is obvious – it is more difficult to fight one’s way through to those prestigious. At the same time it is a mistake to make a division into prestigious printed magazines and non-prestigious online magazines without considering the merit of their content. Kęder suspects, what is very true, that if authors of internet texts were to receive regular fees for publications, their prestige would immediately rise.

In the case of an Internet magazine one can also indicate a paradox. Magdalena Ujma, former editor-in-chief of an online magazine teksty.bunkier.com.pl functioning within the website of the Gallery of Contemporary Art Bunkier Sztuki in Krakow, described the formula of her magazine as follows: »Referring to the character of the Internet we decided to dispense with subsequent editions and numbers, and publish texts as they come to the editorial office. This provides possibility of daily updating what – I was hoping – would attract attention of readers.« Although Internet provides such freedom, it has also been squeezed in the institutional frames.

»Reality forces me to make a regularly published magazine« – continues Ujma. »It appears that it is impossible to get financing for a web magazine which does not have regular editions. It explains why other internet magazines in Poland have editions, what is contrary to the character of the medium which is being updated all the time and is continuously accessible. Apparently one needs to stick to fixed division into numbers. There must be
And so it happened, the magazine was reformulated into a regular one and was published until 2008; then it was suspended. Following the regulations concerning the application procedures of a Polish scholarly journal to the published standardized register of academic journals, *RIHA Journal* could not have been included in the register due to failure in complying with formal requirements – it is possible to register an electronic magazine, however, *RIHA Journal* is not a regularly published one (application form names a monthly, quarterly, twice a year and yearly). So, Polish researchers would not be entitled to any points which are important for assessment of one’s academic achievements (contrary to the Philadelphia List – there *RIHA Journal* could be classified as a continuous magazine).

I believe that in the Western countries the situation related to the prestige of a text published on a website is more optimistic – more magazines function exclusively as Internet media. Accustoming the Polish reader to the press text available on the computer screen has been changing quite quickly – there are already all major dailies and weeklies in the Internet, and their online versions are even more extensive from the printed ones. But still the Internet versions only broaden what is available in print. Due to the possibility of fast reacting and universality of access the artistic critique is also established in the web. So the problem arises regarding to the academic text whose value grows when it is published in a printed magazine, supported by a strong brand of a publisher (often an academic institution). What is more, in Poland the view still persists that when something is for free, its value cannot be high. And behind the *RIHA Journal* there is a prestigious, widely known and appreciated institution which is formed of national and international institutions important in the field of art history.

### 2.2 Opportunities of the RIHA Journal on the local market

One of the key elements of *RIHA Journal* which makes it unrivalled compared to other academic and specialist magazines is the quickened editorial process – our author has a
guarantee that there will be up to three months from submitting an article to publishing it on the website (providing there will be two positive reviews). Absolutely the most difficult time for a new magazine is the initial period of running when readers must find it an important and worthy place to have an academic discussion. Then the spiritus movens of acquiring new texts will be the strong position among research magazines, not letters and emails with calls. And this involves and requires efforts by all RIHA institutes.

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I believe that RIHA Journal has a chance – especially in the countries where free market economy and free flow of information was introduced with a delay – of becoming a breakthrough in institutional art history which is still too conservative in Poland. As the first magazine of this kind in Poland, freely available for Polish authors (no language barrier – authors submit articles in Polish and after receiving positive reviews the ICC translates them into English) it can underpin the significance of a text published in the Internet and introduce the academic art historical discourse to the web which is not only cheaper (only fee for a web domain, no printing costs), but also widely accessible.

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This paper is based upon a talk given at the ESF-COST conference Networked Humanities – Art History in the Web, Acquafredda di Maratea, Italy, October 9-14, 2010.

I.e., setting aside established print journals that also make their articles available online.

25 of the 28 institutes are located in Europe, see list below.


Such as, e.g., H-Arthist (http://www.arthist.net/MailD.html) or H-Soz-u-Kult (http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de).

Such as arthistoricum.net (http://www.arthistoricum.net/epublishing; http://blog.arthistoricum.net/) or the Open Access Information Platform (http://open-access.net/).

Including, among others, the catalogue of the German National Library (http://www.d-nb.de/), the joint catalogue of KHI, ZI and Bibliotheca Hertziana, Kubikat (http://www.kubikat.org), the Karlsruher Virtuelle Katalog (http://www.ubka.uni-karlsruhe.de/kvk.html), artlibraries.net (http://www.arthistoricum.net/recherche/recherche/artlibrariesnet), or Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek (http://rzblx1.uni-regensburg.de/ezeit/).


At the same time, editors of online journals often find themselves in a dilemma. After all, the very idea of measuring quality with all its problematic implications and consequences is a controversial matter (Cf. RIHA Resolution on ERIH), and many journal editors are torn between their refusal of any such tools on the one hand, and their responsibility for their journals and their authors whose careers are dependent upon such lists and indices on the other.


Ibidem.


18 K. C. Kęder, op. cit.

19 Interview with Magdalena Ujma, op. cit.