Students of Law and E-Democracy: Are They Information Literate at All?

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E-democracy and e-government

• e-democracy
  – meeting of information technology (IT) and democracy

• e-government
  – part of e-democracy
  – the efficient delivery of government/state information to citizens
E-democracy in Croatia

• right to the access to information
  – regulated by the Constitution and Access to Information Act

• e-democracy and e-government
  – underused but positive trends (E-Citizens portal since May 2014! https://www.gov.hr/#e-gradjani)

• research from 2011 (Digital Information-documentation Agency of the Croatian Government - HIDRA)
  – local admin. websites offer useful information, but poorly organized
  – no online discussion forums with citizens
J. J. Strossmayer University

17 members:
- 11 faculties
- 5 departments
- 1 academy

University of Osijek

Faculties
- the Faculty of Economics
- the Faculty of Electrical Engineering
- the Faculty of Civil Engineering
- the Faculty of Education
- the Faculty of Agriculture
- the Faculty of Law
- the Faculty of Food Technology
- the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering in Slavonski Brod
- the Faculty of Medicine
- the Faculty of Philosophy
- the Catholic Faculty of Theology in Djakovo

Departments
- Department of Mathematics
- Department of Physics
- Department of Chemistry
- Department of Biology
- Department of Cultural Studies

Academy of Arts
Students of law, e-democracy and IL

• small-scale pilot-study conducted among students of law at Osijek University on e-government and e-democracy information, but also on media literacy

• students of law
  – identified as those who are professionally directed to such information and have to be able to find, evaluate and apply it
Instrument, methodology and sample

- May 2014
- paper survey
  - media literacy
  - e-democracy
- 171 law students
  - survey reached 59% of the 1st year population and 64% of the 4th year population enrolled in academic year 2013/2014
Online activities in the sample

6 most represented activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>4th Year</th>
<th>1st Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hobbies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photos</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarships, exams, etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch films</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-mails</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Social networking</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

6 least represented activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>4th Year</th>
<th>1st Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local gov. rep.</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Board</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forums, blogs</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online petitions</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price comparison websites</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-banking</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Active participation in e-democracy activities at various levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>National level</th>
<th>Regional level</th>
<th>Local level</th>
<th>Legal entity with public jurisdiction</th>
<th>No activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; year</td>
<td>4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; year</td>
<td>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; year</td>
<td>4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; year</td>
<td>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise of democratic rights in decision-making processes (issues of public interest)</td>
<td>8 (6.8)</td>
<td>5 (9.4)</td>
<td>5 (4.2)</td>
<td>2 (3.8)</td>
<td>8 (6.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public policy modification</td>
<td>5 (4.3)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3 (2.6)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6 (5.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-consultation</td>
<td>1 (0.8)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2 (1.7)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5 (4.2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Influence on work of public servants

Perception of influence

- Yes: 1%
- Undecided: 28%
- No: 71%
Patterns of official information seeking habits

Preferred sources of information

- HIDRA
- Some other Croatian ministry
- Local county
- Local government
- European Union
- Croatian Ministry of Justice
- Croatian Parliament
- Croatian Government
- Libraries
- The University in Osijek
- Faculty of Law Osijek

ECIL, Dubrovnik, October 20-23, 2014
Level of trust

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Online newspapers and magazines</th>
<th>Social network websites</th>
<th>Webpages of the national, regional, or local government</th>
<th>High level of security and data protection (gov. sites)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean
Satisfaction with information found at the official websites

![Satisfaction Graph]

- **Satisfaction**
- **Ease of access to information**
- **Accuracy**
- **Usefulness**
- **Stability of access to data**

Mean*
Conclusions

• student dedicate majority of their online time to hobbies, leisure, and entertainment

• activities connected with e-democracy – underrepresented

• 4th year students – slightly more active in e-democracy

• interest primarily for issues connected with immediate academic tasks
• students do not exercise their rights (either as citizens or as future legal system workers)
• reasons:
  – perception of no influence on the work of civil servants
  – present curriculum
• survey outcomes:
  – 61.4 % became aware of the issue
  – course instructors decided to dedicate more attention to e-democracy within their courses in following academic years
Thank you for your attention!

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