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DOCTORAL THESIS
Academic Knowledge Communication
Redefining the Role of University
Presses in the Digital Age

SUMMARY

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Abstract

This dissertation investigates the contemporary transformations of academic publishing from the perspective of communication sciences, approaching publishing not as a purely technical or administrative process, but as an institutional infrastructure for mediating scientific knowledge. The research starts from the identification of a structural discontinuity between the production of scientific knowledge and its effective communication, in the context of evolving communication environments and structural limitations of the book market. In the case of Romania, this discontinuity is amplified by the low level of book consumption and the fragmentation of the reading infrastructure, as well as by the specific characteristics of the academic publishing sector, where editorial production is primarily driven by institutional evaluation criteria, rather than by mechanisms of circulation and reception of knowledge. Against this background, the study examines how the organization of editorial processes within university presses influences the institutionalized communication of knowledge and identifies the structural limitations that hinder their adaptation to contemporary conditions of dissemination. Methodologically, the research employs the Design Science Research (DSR) approach, suitable for the development and evaluation of an organizational artifact. The main contribution of the dissertation consists in the development of a hybrid PM–BPM organizational model, conceptualized as a decision-making infrastructure for academic communication. The model explicitly separates the strategic decision-making level from operational execution and enables the flexible integration of editorial projects within institutionalized processes. The model is evaluated through a comparative analysis between the existing situation (As-Is) and the proposed configuration (To-Be). The results indicate that the effectiveness of scientific knowledge communication depends decisively on the existence of an organizational infrastructure capable of integrating the decision-making dimension of publishing, reducing reliance on informal practices, and supporting adaptation to diverse communication media and audiences.

Chapter 1. General Context of the Research

Over the past few decades, the communication of knowledge has undergone profound structural transformations, driven by the development of digital technologies and the diversification of dissemination media (Borgman, 2007; Fyfe et al., 2017). While for a long period the printed book represented the primary medium for organizing and transmitting knowledge, it now coexists with a variety of alternative formats, such as electronic publications and online

platforms (Eve, 2014; Fyfe et al., 2017). These transformations are reshaping the relationship between content, medium, and audience, calling into question the traditional role of the book as the privileged form for the dissemination of knowledge. Communication can no longer be understood as a linear process (Peters, 2016), but rather as a complex process of selection, adaptation, and distribution.

In Romania, transformations in the communication environment are further amplified by a low level of book consumption. Available data indicate limited participation in reading activities (Eurostat, 2022) and a fragmented publishing market characterized by small print runs and limited distribution. These developments affect the conditions under which knowledge is received and raise questions about the adequacy of the institutional infrastructures that support its dissemination.

Scholarly publishing largely operates as a regulated institutional system in which the publication of academic works is shaped by academic evaluation criteria (Thompson, 2005). Under these conditions, publishing tends to be oriented toward formal validation rather than necessarily toward communication. At the same time, some publications also enter commercial circulation and address specialized audiences (Rayner, Thompson, 2005). The specificity of the sector lies in its hybrid character: different publishing regimes coexist without an explicit organizational differentiation between them.

The analysis of this context reveals a discontinuity between the production of knowledge and its communication (Fyfe et al., 2017; Phillips & Bhaskar, 2019). University presses operate predominantly as operational structures, without systematically integrating the decision-making dimension of communication. The research problem is therefore framed as one of adapting the organizational infrastructures of academic publishing to the current conditions of the communication environment (Peters, 2016).

The problem was investigated through an analysis of editorial activity within a university press, which revealed dysfunctions related to organizational structures and the transmission of organizational knowledge. These findings justify the development of an organizational model capable of integrating the decision-making dimension of communication with editorial processes.

Research questions:

- How can university publishing infrastructures be reorganized to coherently support the communication of scientific knowledge?
- To what extent do existing processes support communication?
- What are their limitations?
- How can the decision-making dimension be integrated?

- Under what conditions can a hybrid organizational model (PM-BPM) support the adaptability of academic publishing

The objective of the research is to analyze how university publishing activity functions as an infrastructure for knowledge communication and to develop an adaptive organizational model. The main contribution lies in reconceptualizing university presses as decision-making infrastructures of mediation and in proposing a hybrid PM-BPM model.

Chapter 2. The Communication of Scientific Knowledge and the Role of University Presses

The second chapter establishes the theoretical framework of the research by examining the communication of scientific knowledge as an institutionally mediated process. From the perspective of communication sciences, scientific knowledge does not circulate directly between author and audience; rather, it is filtered, formatted, and legitimized through organizational structures, editorial rules, and discursive conventions that confer intelligibility and authority upon it. Within this framework, academic publishing is analyzed not as a merely technical stage of research, but as a communication infrastructure that shapes the forms through which knowledge circulates, is recognized, and is used.

The chapter emphasizes that the process of scientific communication involves a plurality of institutional actors — authors, editors, reviewers, editorial structures, and academic audiences — whose roles are distinct yet interdependent. University presses thus emerge as central actors in institutional mediation, as they coordinate the transformation of research outcomes into communicable and legitimate messages. The processes of selection, evaluation, and formalization that precede publication are interpreted as gatekeeping mechanisms through which publishing institutions contribute to defining the relevance, visibility, and authority of knowledge within the academic sphere.

A central idea of the chapter is the distinction between the production of knowledge and its communication. Whereas production is associated with research activity itself, communication entails a distinct set of institutionalized practices through which content is selected, structured, standardized, and adapted to the conventions of the academic environment. From this perspective, the scientific message does not circulate as raw data; rather, it is editorially configured into discursive forms and institutionalized genres that provide coherence, readability, and credibility.

On this basis, the chapter examines editorial production as a form of institutional mediation. Books, journals, edited volumes, and digital platforms are not treated as mere material supports, but as stabilized forms of communication, each governed by its own conventions of organization, validation, and use. At the same time, digital transformations have extended scientific communication beyond the moment of publication to include activities related to visibility, indexing, promotion, and online dissemination. This development requires university presses to move beyond their traditional role in editorial production and to assume strategic communication functions in relation to scholarly output.

Another level of analysis concerns the audiences of scientific communication. The chapter shows that academic publishing does not address a single, homogeneous audience, but rather differentiated categories of recipients — students, academic staff, researchers, professionals, and broader audiences interested in contextualized knowledge. Consequently, the choice of publishing format, the degree of discursive formalization, and the distribution channels must be understood as communication decisions, since they directly influence the production of meaning, the accessibility of knowledge, and its legitimacy. At the same time, the chapter emphasizes that these decisions are shaped not only by the suitability of the message for its intended audience, but also by the institutional constraints of academic evaluation, which strategically influence the choice of publication formats.

In its final section, the analysis leads to a redefinition of the role of university presses as institutional infrastructures for the communication of scientific knowledge. From this perspective, evaluation, editorial decision-making, formal standardization, and dissemination strategies appear as communication practices with symbolic and institutional effects, rather than as mere technical operations. In the context of digitalization, the pluralization of audiences, and the diversification of circulation media, the chapter argues that academic publishing can no longer be understood as a rigid sequence of stages oriented toward the production of a final publishing object. Instead, it should be understood as a process of institutional mediation that must be aligned with the specific characteristics of the content, audiences, and communication media involved.

Against this background, the concept of Adaptive Academic Publishing is introduced and defined as an approach in which editorial decisions are dynamically aligned with scientific content, audiences, and communication media, without privileging a single publication format *a priori*. The chapter thereby establishes the theoretical premise of the entire research: the reorganization of editorial activity is not an autonomous objective, but an institutional response to contemporary transformations in the communication of scientific knowledge.

Chapter 3. The Functional Organization of Publishing Houses: A Traditional Perspective

The third chapter analyzes the functional organization of publishing houses from the perspective of the role it plays in mediating the communication of scientific knowledge. Drawing on established descriptive models of the publishing chain, the chapter highlights that publishing houses have traditionally been organized around distinct functional departments — editorial, production, distribution, marketing, and administrative support — which structure the transformation of a manuscript into a publishing product and its circulation to audiences.

The analysis proposes a reinterpretation of these functions not as mere operational components, but as institutional mechanisms for mediating communication. Each stage of the publishing process is examined in terms of its contribution to the configuration, validation, and circulation of the scientific message. Within this framework, editorial activities are understood as successive interventions upon content through which it is selected, evaluated, structured, standardized, and adapted so as to become intelligible and legitimate within academic communication.

The chapter assigns a central role to the functions of selection and evaluation, interpreted as gatekeeping mechanisms through which publishing houses determine what forms of knowledge enter the circuit of scientific communication. The activity of the readers' panel, the peer-review process, and editorial decision-making are analyzed as institutionalized practices that contribute both to validating and refining the message and to directing it toward particular audiences and contexts of use.

The chapter then examines editorial acquisition functions and the role of the subject editor, emphasizing that these are not limited to managing content flows, but also involve decisions regarding the suitability of the message for the publisher's editorial profile and intended audiences. The subject editor is defined as a pivotal function within scientific communication, since this role integrates the evaluations received, mediates the relationship with authors, and formulates the final publication decision, thereby contributing to the configuration of both the form and legitimacy of the message.

The subsequent stages of the publishing process — editing, technical revision, proofreading, and formal standardization — are interpreted as mechanisms for stabilizing communication, through which the message is brought into a coherent, readable form that conforms to academic standards. These interventions cannot be reduced to technical operations, as they also contribute to the clarity, credibility, and accessibility of the knowledge being communicated.

The chapter also highlights the role of dissemination functions — marketing, distribution, and promotion — as extensions of the communication process through which knowledge is

brought into contact with its audiences. In the digital context, these functions assume increasing importance, contributing to the visibility, circulation, and impact of the scientific message.

Overall, the analysis shows that the traditional functional model of publishing houses organizes the communication of knowledge as a sequence of operational processes within which editorial decisions are implicitly distributed across different stages and actors. Although this model ensures coherence and stability in editorial production, it does not explicitly integrate the decision-making dimension of communication, thereby limiting the capacity of publishing houses to adapt publication formats to the diversity of content, audiences, and dissemination media.

The chapter thus prepares the transition toward a critical analysis of this model in the context of contemporary transformations in academic communication and toward the need to develop organizational frameworks capable of supporting an adaptive approach to publishing.

Chapter 4. Context of the Research Problem

The fourth chapter develops the context of the research problem by analyzing the transformations affecting academic publishing and, implicitly, the capacity of university presses to coherently support the communication of knowledge. The analysis begins with the evolving role of the book in knowledge communication. For centuries, the book represented the principal institutionalized medium for mediating, preserving, and transmitting written knowledge. Digitalization, however, has fundamentally altered this balance, making the book only one among multiple possible forms of dissemination. Under these conditions, publishing can no longer be understood exclusively as book production, but rather as an institutional activity involving the coordination, validation, and strategic dissemination of academic content.

The chapter then highlights the specific characteristics of university presses, with particular emphasis on the role of peer review as a central mechanism for validating and legitimizing scientific content. The analysis shows, however, that although this mechanism is fundamental to the credibility of academic publishing, it is also marked by certain ambivalences: it can generate delays, inconsistencies, and organizational tensions, particularly in institutional contexts characterized by limited resources and uneven implementation of editorial standards. From the perspective of this research, peer review is relevant not only as a quality-control procedure, but also as a gatekeeping practice that influences the selection, form, and timing of publication.

A central component of the chapter is devoted to the contemporary challenges faced by university presses. Accelerated digitalization, changing reading practices, and the fragmentation of attention have altered the conditions under which knowledge is accessed and used, calling into question the automatic suitability of the printed format for all types of academic content. In this context, the choice of dissemination format can no longer be treated as an implicit consequence

of manuscript completion, but rather as a strategic decision that must be made at an early stage, in relation to the actual ways in which the content is expected to be used. The chapter therefore emphasizes that the problem is not the decline of the book itself, but the persistence of product-centered publishing models at the expense of an analysis of the communicative function of publishing.

At the same time, self-publishing and digital platforms have become increasingly accessible alternatives for authors, compelling university presses to redefine their added value. If publishing can also take place outside traditional publishing infrastructures, the relevance of university presses can no longer rest solely on print production, but must derive from their capacity to provide academic validation, strategic guidance, and effective dissemination. This context is further complicated by institutional mechanisms of academic evaluation, which strongly influence authors' choices and may orient publishing toward administrative or bibliometric criteria rather than necessarily toward optimal forms of communication.

The chapter also assigns an important role to authors, showing that they are no longer passive participants in the publishing process, but strategic actors who assess publishers, channels, and publication formats according to visibility, prestige, speed of publication, and academic impact. Under these conditions, the absence of early author involvement in publication decisions may lead to suboptimal editorial solutions, while university presses are increasingly required to develop more transparent and flexible forms of collaboration.

In its final section, the chapter synthesizes the main structural problems and pressures for adaptation. The analysis shows that university presses operate at the intersection of multiple tensions: between the project-based nature of knowledge-creation activities and the standardized character of editorial production; between academic requirements and institutional constraints; between the need for international visibility and the limitations of local infrastructures; and between the stability of organizational routines and the pressure of technological innovation. Overall, the chapter argues that the current difficulties faced by university presses arise not only from external technological change, but also from the inadequacy of organizational mechanisms capable of coherently integrating these transformations. This conclusion supports the need to explore alternative organizational models capable of combining the flexibility of editorial projects with the stability of operational processes.

Chapter 5. The Research Problem and Research Questions

The fifth chapter explicitly formulates the research problem on the basis of the tensions identified in the preceding chapters. The analysis of the literature and of recent transformations

in knowledge communication shows that academic publishing can no longer be understood exclusively as an editorial production activity centered on the printed book, but rather as an institutional process of mediation, validation, and dissemination of knowledge. Nevertheless, the literature rarely addresses in an integrated manner the relationship between scientific communication, the institutional specificity of university presses, and the organizational models capable of supporting their adaptation to the new conditions of the communication environment.

The chapter identifies a twofold gap. On the one hand, research on academic publishing focuses predominantly either on scientific validation or on technological and editorial transformations, without sufficiently integrating the organizational dimension of the institutionalized communication of knowledge. On the other hand, the literature on process management, project management, and knowledge management provides relevant analytical and operational frameworks, but rarely relates them explicitly to the challenges of academic publishing and to the specific characteristics of university presses.

This tension gives rise to the central research problem: the difficulty faced by university presses in coherently adapting their organizational structures and processes to contemporary transformations in the communication of scientific knowledge. In this context, the thesis investigates the possibility of developing a hybrid organizational model based on the integration of Project Management and Process Management principles, capable of functioning as an operational response to this communication problem rather than as an autonomous managerial objective.

The central problem is formulated through the question of how the organizational structures of university presses can be adapted so as to coherently support the institutionalized communication of scientific knowledge in the context of digital transformation, through the integration of a hybrid PM-BPM organizational model. To operationalize this question, the chapter formulates a set of secondary research questions concerning the limitations of existing editorial processes, the Project Management and Process Management principles that can be adapted to the university press context, the conditions required for developing a hybrid organizational framework, and the ways in which such a framework can be validated through a case study.

Through this formulation, the chapter marks the transition from the critical analysis of the context to the development of the organizational artifact proposed in the research.

Chapter 6. Literature Review and Related Work

The sixth chapter provides the theoretical and applied foundation for the research through an analysis of the literature relevant to Business Process Management, Project Management,

knowledge management, and contemporary transformations in academic publishing. The objective of the chapter is to identify the concepts, models, and case studies that can support the development of a hybrid organizational model applicable to university presses, while also highlighting the limitations of these frameworks when transferred to an academic publishing context.

In its first section, the chapter examines the contribution of Business Process Management to the formalization of recurring editorial activities. BPM is discussed not only as a tool for improving operational efficiency, but also as an infrastructure for mediating organizational communication, insofar as processes structure the ways in which information is selected, validated, transformed, and transmitted among institutional actors. At the same time, the analysis highlights the limitations of BPM in knowledge-intensive organizations: although formalized processes support standardization, traceability, and predictability, they capture the interpretive, decision-making, and contextual components of editorial activities only to a limited extent.

The chapter then examines project management in its classical, agile, and hybrid forms. The literature reviewed shows that Project Management is well suited to coordinating unique, temporary activities characterized by uncertainty, while the rigid opposition between predictive and adaptive approaches has become increasingly difficult to sustain. In the context of this research, project-based management is relevant to those phases of editorial activity in which objectives must be defined, options assessed, resources allocated, and successive adjustments managed, before execution has been stabilized within a standardized workflow.

An important component of the chapter concerns the relationship between processes, organizational memory, and knowledge management. The analysis shows that organizational effectiveness cannot be explained solely through process optimization, since continuity of activity also depends on the organization's capacity to preserve and transfer both explicit and tacit knowledge. Phenomena such as corporate amnesia and organizational ignorance are discussed in this respect, as they highlight the vulnerability of organizations that rely on insufficiently formalized practices or on documentation disconnected from actual work. The chapter argues that BPM can support the externalization of operational knowledge, but only insofar as it is complemented by deliberate knowledge-management mechanisms, contextualized documentation, and the transfer of organizational experience.

On this basis, the contribution and limitations of BPMN as a process-modeling instrument are examined. BPMN is presented as a valuable standard for clarifying activities, roles, and information flows, and as a support for onboarding, know-how transfer, and the preservation of organizational memory. However, the chapter emphasizes that BPMN cannot fully capture the rationale underlying decisions, contextual variations, and the situated character of actual

practices, making it insufficient in the absence of complementary forms of documentation and knowledge management.

In its middle section, the chapter examines hybrid PM-BPM models across different fields in order to understand how projects and processes can be articulated within complex organizations. The literature and case studies from IT, business, and education show that projects do not operate in isolation, but in interdependence with existing operational processes. Concepts such as process-oriented project management and Agile BPM describe this convergence and support the idea that projects should be assessed not only in terms of their immediate deliverables, but also in terms of their capacity to generate outcomes that can be sustainably integrated into organizational processes.

The cases discussed illustrate distinct forms of hybridization. In the IT sector, the examples of Spotify, ING Netherlands, and Netflix show that team autonomy can be supported through very different alignment mechanisms: explicit processes of coordination, governance, and compliance in some contexts, and technical architecture and organizational culture in others. These examples confirm the deeply contextual nature of hybrid models and the limitations of direct transfer between domains. In the business sector, the Siemens and Toyota cases demonstrate that processes can generate value-oriented change projects, while continuous improvement emerges at the intersection of stable processes and incremental interventions.

With regard to academic and educational publishing, the chapter shows that content creation and development activities frequently operate according to project logic, being iterative, exploratory, and dependent on successive adjustments, whereas production, validation, and dissemination are supported by standardized processes. The examples analyzed — complex publishing projects, graded textbooks, and the transformation of normative works into digital platforms — support the idea that the final form of publication is not predetermined from the outset, but rather emerges through a process of testing, revision, and stabilization. This observation is essential to the present research because it justifies the separation between the project-based level of editorial decision-making and the process-based level of execution.

The chapter then addresses international transformations in academic publishing, with particular emphasis on digitalization, Open Access, automation, and the scaling of editorial processes. The analysis shows that academic publishing can no longer be understood exclusively as a traditional editorial activity, but rather as a complex system for the production and distribution of knowledge situated at the intersection of technological innovation, public policy, and institutional strategy. The expansion of Open Access models and the growth in publication volume have led publishers to invest in standardized editorial workflows capable of simultaneously accommodating the uniqueness of each manuscript and the efficiency of the

overall process. In this context, the manuscript appears as an individual project absorbed into a stable, repeatable, and scalable process framework.

The analysis of commercial academic publishers highlights the fact that pressure for financial sustainability stimulates organizational innovation, investment in digital infrastructures, and the development of complementary services for authors and institutions. The example of Elsevier and other major commercial publishers shows that automation and artificial intelligence are integrated into well-governed editorial processes, in which digital transformation projects subsequently become part of the organization's ongoing operational infrastructure. The chapter interprets these developments as clear manifestations of hybrid PM-BPM models, in which experimentation and technological innovation are absorbed into stable, repeatable, and auditable processes.

Another major dimension of the analysis concerns competition for symbolic capital in academic publishing. The literature on the *cross-over book* and publisher evaluation shows that the choice of where to publish depends not only on the scientific quality of the work, but also on editorial prestige, visibility, dissemination, and compatibility with institutional evaluation mechanisms. In the Romanian context, CNCS classifications function not only as symbolic indicators, but also as operational mechanisms that directly influence author behavior and reshape the academic publishing field. The chapter argues that these mechanisms favor publishing actors with developed infrastructures, promotional capacity, and international integration, thereby increasing the pressure on traditional university presses and encouraging authors to migrate toward more competitive publishing ecosystems.

In its final section, the chapter synthesizes the literature and identifies the main research gaps. These include the absence of PM-BPM models explicitly adapted to university presses; the insufficient treatment of editorial projects in relation to the organization's process architecture; the limited use of BPMN modeling and process simulation in academic publishing; the insufficient attention paid to preventing the loss of organizational knowledge; and the lack of robust connections between automation, artificial intelligence, and the governance of editorial processes in academic organizations. On the basis of these findings, the research positions itself at the intersection of studies of scientific communication and organizational analyses applied to academic publishing, proposing a hybrid organizational model that treats university presses as institutional infrastructures for knowledge communication and seeks the coherent integration of editorial projects into formalized operational processes.

Chapter 7. Research Methodology

The seventh chapter justifies the choice of research methodology and describes how it is applied to the development and evaluation of the proposed organizational model. Given that the main objective of the thesis is not merely to describe or explain an existing situation, but to design an operationalizable solution for reorganizing university publishing activity, the methodology selected is Design Science Research (DSR). This approach is particularly suitable for research focused on the design of artifacts — models, methods, or systems — intended to address real-world problems by combining practical relevance with theoretical rigor.

In the present research, the artifact developed is a hybrid PM-BPM organizational model for academic publishing, formalized through BPMN modeling and conceived as an instrument for structuring and governing the institutional communication processes involved in the selection, validation, and dissemination of scientific content. The choice of DSR is justified by the applied nature of the problem, the need to formulate a concrete solution, and the gaps identified in the literature, particularly the absence of formal frameworks explicitly adapted to university presses.

The chapter then describes how the specific stages of Design Science Research are applied within the overall structure of the thesis. In the first stage, the research problem is identified on the basis of a preliminary analysis of the existing situation (As-Is) within the university press under study. This analysis reveals a predominant structural orientation toward book publication and a rigidity of editorial processes that limits the exploration of alternative forms of dissemination and the integration of an organizational logic adapted to the diversity of academic content.

Based on these findings, the objectives of the proposed solution are defined: to redesign the organizational framework of the university press so that editorial activity is managed as a planned process of institutional communication, with explicit decisions regarding publication format, workflows, and dissemination strategies. The chapter shows that the proposed solution seeks to decouple decisions concerning the final form of the content from editorial processes narrowly oriented toward book production, to introduce an initial project-based stage, and to integrate recurring editorial activities into a coherent and reusable process framework.

During the design stage, the artifact is developed in the form of a To-Be organizational model in which projects for the dissemination of academic content are integrated into the recurring processes of the university press. This model is formalized through BPMN diagrams describing both the existing situation and the proposed organizational architecture. The chapter emphasizes that the To-Be model introduces a layer of content orchestration prior to the traditional editorial processes, enabling the design of final publication formats and dissemination strategies before production workflows are initiated.

The artifact is demonstrated by applying the model in a real-world case study, using operational data from the activity of the university press under analysis and implementing the

BPMN models in the SAP Signavio environment. This framework makes it possible to simulate editorial workflows and compare the As-Is and To-Be scenarios in order to test the feasibility of the model and its capacity to accommodate diverse forms of dissemination without compromising editorial rigor.

The artifact is evaluated by comparing the performance of the two models using indicators such as processing times, resource utilization, and clarity of responsibilities. The chapter specifies that the purpose of the evaluation is not to achieve absolute performance optimization, but to demonstrate the utility, relevance, and applicability of the proposed model in relation to the identified problem. In this respect, process simulations are used to highlight the impact of early-stage decisions on editorial workflows and the advantages of a model oriented toward content and dissemination strategy rather than exclusively toward the final format of the book.

In its final section, the chapter presents the instruments employed and the nature of the data analyzed. The research is based on BPMN 2.0 modeling, simulations conducted in SAP Signavio, and data processing with auxiliary tools such as Microsoft Excel. The data used are drawn from internal documents of Presa Universitară Clujeană, editorial registers, production records, and information provided by the staff involved, with the analysis conducted exclusively on the basis of the real data available. Overall, the chapter provides the methodological framework that enables the transition from the critical analysis of the existing situation to the systematic development and evaluation of the proposed organizational model.

Chapter 8. Case Study: Analysis of the Existing Situation (As-Is)

The eighth chapter opens the empirical part of the research by analyzing the existing situation (*As-Is*) at Presa Universitară Clujeană, which serves as the principal case study. The objective of the chapter is to describe how editorial processes operate in practice, identify the organizational vulnerabilities associated with them, and provide the empirical basis required for the development of the organizational model proposed in the subsequent sections.

The chapter begins by presenting the organizational context of the university press under analysis. Presa Universitară Clujeană is defined as a university press with an explicit academic mission, focused on publishing scientific, educational, and specialized works intended for a heterogeneous audience consisting of students, academic staff, researchers, and other specialists. Its activity takes place within a regulated institutional framework and a mixed financial context based on institutional funding, author contributions, grants, and other public or private sources. The chapter shows that, although modernization measures have been adopted at the normative

level — such as the introduction of peer review and reorganization by editorial fields — these measures have not been fully translated into current operational practices, revealing a gap between regulation and implementation.

The analysis of the existing situation is conducted through a Business Process Management approach, using BPMN 2.0 modeling in the SAP Signavio environment. The purpose of this analysis is to describe the overall structure of editorial workflows, critical decision points, and relationships among actors without descending to an excessively granular level for each individual task. The data are drawn from internal documents of the university press, editorial registers, production records, and direct observation, allowing the analysis to capture how the organization actually operates beyond its formal rules.

On the basis of this analysis, the main categories of existing editorial processes are identified: the initiation and evaluation of publication proposals; scientific and editorial evaluation; quotation and cost calculation; editorial production; distribution and commercial exploitation; and post-publication processes. The chapter shows that, in the As-Is configuration, these processes are formalized at the logical level but operate within a highly centralized and fragmented system. Essential decisions are concentrated in a limited number of roles, scientific evaluation does not function as an autonomous and sequential process, and production, distribution, and post-publication activities are coordinated largely through ad hoc adjustments and individual experience rather than through integrated planning or formal editorial portfolio management.

To avoid interpreting these problems as exclusively local, the chapter includes a comparative qualitative analysis of four university presses in Romania, based on questionnaires addressed to their management. The analysis is structured along three dimensions: the organization of editorial processes from a project-management perspective; mechanisms for the transfer and preservation of knowledge; and the relationship with authors and the editorial services provided. The results reveal a number of recurring patterns: the absence of a single person responsible for individual publishing titles, predominantly reactive scheduling, limited use of shared monitoring tools, dependence on key individuals, informal transfer of know-how, and the progressive expansion of the university press's role as a provider of complex editorial services.

This comparative analysis suggests the existence of an informal operating model situated between administrative procedure and project-based coordination, yet without benefiting from the advantages of formalized Project Management. Within this framework, Presa Universitară Clujeană does not appear to be an exception, but rather a case in which the effects of structural vulnerabilities are amplified by a high volume of published titles, the diversification of dissemination formats, and the intensification of commercial activity.

The quantitative section of the chapter confirms this organizational pressure. The analysis of the evolution of publishing activity between 2009 and 2024 reveals a substantial increase in the number of titles published without a proportional expansion of human resources. At the same time, the introduction of eBooks and the diversification of dissemination formats have increased the complexity of editorial workflows without an explicit reconfiguration of processes and responsibilities. Moreover, the evolution of turnover and the intensification of commercial activity indicate an increasingly active role in exploiting the publishing list, yet this economic development has been accompanied by a growing overlap of tasks and increasing pressure on staff.

The analysis of average print runs shows that the university press has implicitly developed mechanisms for adjusting to publishing risk and fragmented demand. However, these adaptations remain isolated and dependent on individual experience, rather than being integrated into a coherent framework of Project Management and knowledge management. Overall, publishing contracts, dissemination formats, commercial activity, and print runs describe a quantitatively coherent evolution that is nevertheless organizationally strained. The chapter thus prepares the analysis of operational pressure and the overlap of editorial work, which is further developed in the subsequent sections and supports the need for an integrated PM-BPM organizational model.

Building on the dysfunctions identified in the analysis of the existing situation, the research proposes a hybrid PM-BPM organizational model grounded in the idea that optimizing isolated editorial processes is insufficient for managing the contemporary complexity of academic publishing. Accordingly, the model introduces a higher level of coordination responsible for the strategic design of academic knowledge dissemination.

The conceptual architecture of the model is structured across three distinct levels. At the strategic level, a Knowledge Dissemination Project Coordination Center is defined, responsible for managing the project portfolio and deciding, at an early stage, on the optimal form for disseminating academic content. At the project level, subject-area editors assume the role of project managers, coordinating content development and collaboration with authors and support functions. At the operational level, the university press retains its traditional waterfall-type editorial processes, functioning as the execution unit for previously validated projects. This separation makes it possible to decouple strategic dissemination decisions from process-based execution, thereby preserving operational stability while introducing organizational flexibility.

The model is grounded in a set of managerial principles designed to address the dysfunctions identified in the As-Is analysis. These include separating strategic decision-making from operational execution; introducing a formal mechanism for controlling entry into the

system (*Intake & Triage*); redefining the editor as a content project manager; allowing controlled autonomy in project-level decision-making; repositioning the university press as a BPM execution unit; ensuring the independence of academic evaluation; managing capacity through limits on work in progress; and orienting activity toward dissemination rather than toward a predetermined publication format. Together, these principles establish an adaptive organizational framework capable of integrating diverse forms of publication and responding to technological and institutional change.

The model is operationalized through BPMN modeling of the Intake & Triage process, which functions as a formal mechanism for filtering and prioritizing publication requests. Unlike the existing situation, in which all requests are implicitly treated as editorial projects, the To-Be process introduces a decision-making stage-gate that differentiates between types of requests, evaluates editorial value and complexity, assesses organizational capacity, and enables decisions to accept, defer, or reject submissions. This mechanism helps prevent organizational overload and align editorial activity with institutional objectives and available resources.

The artifact is evaluated through an exploratory BPMN simulation using SAP Signavio, which tests process behavior under varying volumes of requests. The results highlight the distinction between actual working time and decision-related waiting time, while also identifying the editor-project manager role as a point of activity concentration and a potential process bottleneck. This finding confirms the need to introduce capacity-management mechanisms and distribute responsibilities within the proposed model.

The evaluation is exploratory and conceptual in nature, demonstrating the feasibility and utility of the model in relation to the problems identified in the As-Is analysis. Although it does not include full organizational implementation or extensive empirical validation, the BPMN simulation provides a solid basis for arguing that the model can improve the management of request volumes, clarify responsibilities, and enhance operational sustainability. Validation through pilot implementation and stakeholder feedback is identified as a direction for future research.

Chapter 9. Comparative Analysis of As-Is vs. To-Be and the Added Value of the Proposed Model

The ninth chapter provides a systematic comparison between the existing situation (As-Is) and the proposed organizational model (To-Be) in order to assess the extent to which the hybrid PM-BPM model addresses the dysfunctions identified in the case study. The comparative analysis does not aim at incremental optimization of existing processes, but rather at evaluating the

effects of structural reorganization on editorial governance, organizational capacity, and the quality of academic knowledge dissemination.

The comparison shows that the proposed model fundamentally changes the operating logic of the university press. In the As-Is situation, publication requests are implicitly treated as editorial projects, decision-making is informally concentrated at the management level, the editor's role is predominantly operational, peer review is applied inconsistently, budgeting is reactive, resource management has limited visibility, and the university press simultaneously makes decisions and executes them. In the To-Be model, these elements are replaced by a formal Intake & Triage mechanism, portfolio-level decision-making through a Stage-Gate process, the redefinition of the editor as a content project manager, the independence of academic evaluation, preliminary resource estimation, capacity management through WIP limits, and the repositioning of the university press as the execution unit for previously validated processes.

On this basis, the chapter argues that the proposed model generates added value on several levels. First, it introduces a formal governance mechanism that separates strategic decision-making from operational execution, thereby reducing direct pressure on the university press and preventing the uncontrolled accumulation of work simultaneously progressing through different stages of execution. Second, redefining the editor as a content project manager establishes clear responsibility for the relationship with the author, the structure of the project, budget estimation, and resource coordination. Third, by orienting the model toward knowledge dissemination rather than exclusively toward the book format, the university press is able to adapt to contemporary transformations in academic publishing without relinquishing the rigor of traditional editorial processes.

The chapter also emphasizes that the PM-BPM model does not seek either the complete automation of editorial activity or the replacement of existing structures, but rather their reorganization within a coherent framework for managing projects and processes. The application of the model depends on the existence of certain minimum organizational conditions: relatively well-defined roles, a volume of activity sufficient to justify differentiation between recurring processes and editorial projects, acceptance of planning and monitoring practices, the availability of dedicated human resources, and the existence of shared working tools.

The analysis then discusses the applicability of the model according to the size of the university press. In the case of medium-sized and large presses, the model can be implemented more comprehensively through a clear separation of governance, portfolio, resource, and execution functions. In smaller presses, the model is not recommended as a complete system, but rather as a source of organizational principles that can be applied selectively. The chapter nevertheless shows that the conceptual applicability of the model does not depend decisively on

the size of the press, but rather on the existence of an editorial vision oriented toward multiple forms of dissemination and the reuse of content across different media and formats.

In this context, an indirect form of model implementation is also proposed through editorial hub-type structures, in which highly complex functions — portfolio management, process governance, IT infrastructure, and project planning — are concentrated within a central structure, while smaller presses benefit from these mechanisms without bearing the costs of complete internal formalization. This variant is presented as a viable solution for smaller publishing organizations seeking to adopt the principles of the model without radically altering their organizational structure.

Finally, the chapter discusses the economic implications of implementation. Initial costs are associated primarily with organizational formalization, staff training, and the adoption of shared working tools rather than with major financial investment. In organizations with a significant volume of editorial activity, the potential benefits of the model — reducing bottlenecks, clarifying responsibilities, increasing predictability, and improving capacity control — are assessed as outweighing these costs. By contrast, for presses with a lower volume of activity, the selective application of PM-BPM principles or the use of federated solutions appears to be a more realistic option. Overall, the comparative analysis supports the conclusion that the proposed model provides a sustainable framework for modernizing the organization of university presses and adapting them to the contemporary requirements of academic communication.

Chapter 10. Conclusions and Directions for Future Research

The final chapter synthesizes the findings of the research and formulates conclusions regarding the relationship between transformations in scientific communication and the need to reorganize university presses. The research has shown that traditional organizational models, implicitly oriented toward book publication and toward the management of editorial activity as a standardized process, encounter difficulties in coherently, legitimately, and effectively supporting the dissemination of academic knowledge in the current context of digitalization, Open Access, and the diversification of publication formats.

The analysis of the existing situation (*As-Is*) revealed a series of recurring vulnerabilities: the late involvement of dissemination functions, the absence of formal mechanisms for prioritization and capacity management, overlapping decision-making responsibilities, dependence on key individuals, and the uneven application of academic evaluation. Within this framework, operational risks are combined with communication and reputational risks, affecting both the predictability of editorial workflows and the coherence of scientific content dissemination.

To address this problem, the research employed the Design Science Research methodology, within which an organizational artifact was developed in the form of a hybrid PM-BPM model. The proposed model does not pursue managerial optimization as an end in itself, but rather seeks to support the institutionalized communication of knowledge by integrating the flexibility of editorial projects with the stability of recurring processes. To this end, it explicitly separates the level of governance and decision-making concerning dissemination from the level of operational execution, which consists of standardized editorial processes.

A central element of the model is the redefinition of the editor as a content *project manager*, responsible for coordinating the editorial project from its initiation to the validation of the final form of dissemination. Complementing this, the introduction of portfolio management and organizational capacity management mechanisms makes it possible to limit overload and replace a logic of ad hoc reaction with one of institutional planning and prioritization.

The operational feasibility of the model was demonstrated through BPMN modeling of the *To-Be Intake & Triage* process and through the formalization of the associated decision rules using DMN. This architecture replaces the logic of implicit publication with an institutional mechanism for selecting and routing requests based on the specific characteristics of the content, academic validation requirements, organizational capacity, and the suitability of dissemination formats. In this respect, the proposed model produces a structural change in governance rather than merely an incremental optimization of existing editorial workflows.

The contribution of the research is formulated on three levels. From a theoretical perspective, the thesis reconceptualizes university presses as institutional infrastructures for knowledge communication and extends the literature on hybrid PM-BPM models to the field of university-based academic publishing. From a methodological perspective, the research demonstrates the integrated use of BPMN and DMN in the analysis and design of editorial governance. From an applied perspective, it provides an organizational framework for the transition from an exclusive orientation toward the “book” as a product to an orientation toward adaptive dissemination and communicative value.

The findings both confirm and refine the theoretical framework discussed previously. In line with the infrastructural perspective on communication, academic publishing is understood as an institutional infrastructure that conditions the circulation and legitimacy of knowledge. At the same time, the research shows that the organizational mechanisms of publishing do not function merely as administrative support, but actively influence the selection, stabilization, and mediation of scientific communication. In relation to the management literature, the proposed model extends the applicability of the integration between Project Management and Business Process Management to the field of university-based academic publishing, showing that such

hybridization can function not only as a solution for operational efficiency, but also as a strategic mechanism for supporting the communication of knowledge.

The chapter also formulates the limitations of the research. First, the analysis is based on an in-depth case study, which limits the extent to which the conclusions can be directly generalized. Second, the evaluation of the artifact was primarily conceptual and operational *ex ante*, relying on modeling and simulation, without full organizational implementation or longitudinal validation of its effects. Third, the transferability of the model is conceptual and structural rather than procedural: its general principles may be replicated in other university presses, but the specific configuration of roles, processes, and tools depends on the institutional context, organizational culture, and available resources.

On this basis, several directions for future research are proposed. A first direction concerns the development of the extended operational dimension of Adaptive Academic Publishing, including the definition of specialized modules for IT, marketing, and other emerging forms of dissemination. A second direction concerns the operationalization of performance indicators specific to editorial projects and processes, so that portfolio and capacity management can be based on reproducible data. A third direction concerns the integration of process mining techniques and artificial intelligence tools into editorial processes, subject to the definition of clear mechanisms for governance, auditability, and human oversight. A fourth direction involves comparative testing of the model in other university presses and other institutional contexts. Finally, the research also raises the issue of defining communication-oriented criteria for evaluating Adaptive Academic Publishing that go beyond strictly bibliometric and administrative indicators and make it possible to assess the suitability of the relationship between content, format, audience, and dissemination medium.

Overall, the conclusions of the research support the view that the reorganization of university presses should not be understood as a mere managerial reform, but rather as an institutional response to contemporary transformations in scientific communication. The proposed PM-BPM model provides a coherent framework for this transition by articulating governance, processes, and editorial projects in order to support academic publishing that is adaptive, coherent, and sustainable.