

The web of the senses – Online methods of presenting academic research results

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The PAS Institute of Literary Research has developed a multimedia website containing several hundred concise articles on the representations of the senses in Polish culture. This interdisciplinary project is the first of its size within the Polish humanities to employ online presentation of academic research results (“digital” humanities). It must be pointed out, however, that the method does not merely consist in *uploading* the text, but in *applying Internet logic* to the arrangement and organization of research data, which facilitates users’ access to the desired content.

The website is the outcome of a research and developmental project entitled *Sensuality in Polish Culture: Representations of the Human Senses in Language, Literature, and Art from the Middle Ages to the Present* (NCBiR No. 17 0005 06/2009), conducted

between 2010 and 2012 by the Department of Historical Poetics (PAS Institute of Literary Research). The team consists of Prof. Włodzimierz Bolecki (project manager), Dr. Tamara Brzostowska-Tereszkiewicz, Maciej Maryl, Dr. Magdalena Rembowska-Pluciennik, and Dr. Beata Śniecikowska.

Representations of the human senses (sight, hearing, taste, touch, smell, and physicality) underlie both the conceptualization of the human being as a sentient, cognitively oriented subject, and the description of social events, insofar as the human sensorium is always inscribed into all cultural production. The team’s research has focused on the presence of historical forms of sensuality in Polish literature and art (from the Middle Ages to the present), language (in etymology, semantics, grammar; also in their historical forms), folk culture,



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theater, the discourse of the humanities (literary theory, translation, art criticism) as well as the new media (radio and internet literature).

The project's fundamental goal has been to establish an innovative online digital platform, serving as a thematic, specialized, multimedia compendium, available only in the form of a website. Collaboration between humanities scholars and computer scientists has resulted in a non-standard research tool, applicable to the humanities and social sciences, enabling new ways of doing research and disseminating results. This tool allows authors to systematically update prior research results, broaden the spectrum of subjects as well as develop cooperation in Poland and beyond, relying on digital technology as a supranational medium of communication.

The publication of each article (entry) online enables them to be hyperlinked to other texts and multimedia material already available on the website, as well as to extraneous web resources directly or less directly related to the topic (e.g. in the field of history, politics, philosophy, or religious studies). Only such fluid and multidirectional navigation of multifariously presented entries addressing diverse subjects can aptly demonstrate that the history of sensuality encompasses all fields of a culture. Such presentation of research results heightens the activity of the recipients, who acquire knowledge

through simultaneous access to freely selected websites, text directories, or files, containing graphics, music, or film.

The project has brought together 175 scholars from 30 universities and institutes of the Polish Academy of Sciences. Within 13 previously established thematic areas, 957 entries have been produced, half of which are already available on the website, whereas the remainder are in the process of being uploaded. Over 2,500 multimedia files have been collected, relating directly to the content of particular entries and to the project's overarching theme. The overall volume of the entries / articles, excluding the multimedia files, roughly equals 15 books of average length. The project's research potential has already inspired great interest among humanities scholars; consequently, the project is bound to be continued, i.e. supplemented, expanded as well as modernized in terms of digital structure.

The website is available at the following address: www.sensualnosc.ibl.waw.pl

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