

RUSSIAN MEDIA STUDIES: REGIONAL PARADIGM

РОССИЙСКИЕ МЕДИАИССЛЕДОВАНИЯ: РЕГИОНАЛЬНАЯ ПАРАДИГМА

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The state of media researches at the Russian regional universities is analyzed in the article. The article presents the analysis of self-presentations and problems of mass media researches of some higher education institutions having taken part in the poll. Additional data were taken from the appropriate universities' sites. The quantitative statistical analysis is accompanied by a qualitative research in which the problem of scientific investigation of the universities in the sphere of mass media studying is analyzed. The article describes serious distinctions between self-presentation of the scientific mass media researches and real researches in their purposes, tasks, used methodology. The article proves the necessity of universal terminology, the common qualifier of scientific researches in mass media studies. The approximate model of such a qualifier which was supported by National Association of Mass Media Researchers (NAMMI) is offered. It is taken now as a basis for the creation of Map of Russian Media Studies of the author of the article and with NAMMI's support.

Key words: *media studies; typology and classification; Russian regional universities; National Association of Mass Media Researchers; Map of Russian Media Studies.*

В статье анализируется состояние медиаисследований в российских региональных университетах. Анализируются самопрезентации направлений, проблем исследований ряда вузов, принявших участие в опросе. Дополнительные данные были взяты из соответствующих разделов сайтов университетов. Количественный статистический анализ сопровождается качественным исследованием, в ходе которого анализируется реальная проблематика научных поисков университетов в сфере изучения масс-медиа. Показываются серьезные различия между самопрезентацией научных направлений и реальными исследовательскими практиками по целям, задачам, используемым методикам. Делается вывод о необходимости выработки профессиональным сообществом универсального терминологического аппарата, единого классификатора научных исследований в области масс-медиа. Предлагается примерная модель такого классификатора, которая была поддержана Национальной ассоциацией исследователей масс медиа (НАММИ) и взята за основу в процессе создающегося сейчас под руководством автора статьи и при поддержке НАММИ «Атласа российских медиаисследований».

Ключевые слова: *медиаисследования; типология и классификация, региональные российские университеты; НАММИ; Атлас российских медиаисследований.*

One of the main tasks of National Association of Mass Media Researchers is to create a full inventory of research works and data provided by specialists in the sphere of mass communications. A serious barrier in implementing new approaches and solving up-to-date problems of this sphere is the lack of cooperation and data sharing between researchers in different regions, universities and cities of Russia. One of the possible explanations of this situation is that the Mass Communications Studies is only at the early stage of its development. The process of transformation of mass communication in the real world is far ahead of Mass Communications Studies development, that

is why it is very important for the professional research community to work out a common thesaurus, classifications and definitions which reflect the real situation. It is important to take into consideration the existing practices and valuable experience of practitioners working in different regions of our country and facing different stages of media development instead of implementing standardized recommendations from one “think tank”. It goes without saying that we should undergo the unification process and work out some general norms and rules approved and accepted by the professional community. We believe that National Association of Mass Media Researchers should perform the role of the abovementioned “think tank”. In order to become accepted by the professional community the recommendations worked out by National Association of Mass Media Researchers should be based on hands-on material and existing practices of media studies of the whole country.

The Board of National Association of Mass Media Researchers supported these ideas and introduced the project *Map of Russian Media Studies* at one of its first meetings (Interv’yu s Alexandrom Chernovym o proekte NAMMI “Atlas rossiiskikh mediaissledovaniy”, 2012).

The article discusses the process of shaping the pilot study within this project. The suggested structure of the study is as follows:

- the universities with journalism as a major which carry out the research in the sphere of mass media are listed;
- the list includes only regional universities, while the universities of Moscow and St-Petersburg are excluded;
- only the academic research is taken into account in the study, while monitoring, analytical and information centers which conduct media measurements are excluded;
- all these restrictions are purely technical and can be explained by the narrow-focused approach chosen for the study; in case the project is a success and is to be continued, Moscow and St-Petersburg universities as well as research centers will be also included into the list.

The form and research methods include: a questionnaire for representatives of universities, the members of Educational and Methodological Council on Journalism at Moscow State University; sample analysis

of websites of higher education institutions; analysis of official data on journalism development; analysis of reference data published lately.

The main problem complicating the research in this sphere is the lack of complete and trustworthy statistics. Thus, for example, it turned out that a simple question: how many universities suggest journalism as a major, was not easy to answer. The directory “Journalism Education in Russia” includes 94 higher education institutions, but only 83 Departments of Journalism are included into its appendix (*Zhurnalistskoe obrazovanie v Rossii. Spravochnik*, 2007), whereas 120 higher education institutions are mentioned in various research works and articles. Moreover, 110 Universities applied to the Ministry of Education and Science to provide them with state-funded places for journalism as a major in 2012.

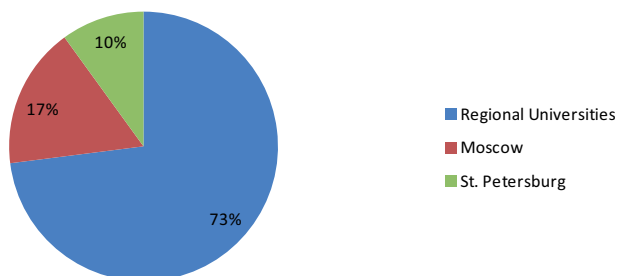
We have chosen to rely in our research on the database provided by Russian Accreditation Agency as the most trustworthy source. Russian Accreditation Agency is the governmental body within the Ministry of Education and Science, and it is authorized to control the quality of education and its correspondence to state standards. The Agency also informs university applicants whether the university has the state accreditation in a given major.

The electronic directory “All Higher Education Institutions of Russia” contains such information as the graduation degree (specialist, bachelor, master) and the state accreditation of the universities where journalism is a major course. It is important to keep in mind that a curriculum can be accredited only after the first enrollment of students completes the education and graduates and that the process of accreditation takes the whole academic year, that is why the information in the database is constantly changing. For example, according to this database by June, 1 there were 149 Universities with Journalism as a major whereas by June, 10 this number increased to 169. It means that not the number of Universities with Journalism as a major but the number of accredited curriculums increased. Accordingly, the ratio of Journalism Departments in regional universities and universities of Moscow and St- Petersburg is changing. These data are not provided, therefore we can rely only on our own conclusions and observations. For example, according to the data provided by the directory by June, 1, 2012, we can see

that 15 out of the abovementioned 149 universities are situated in St-Petersburg, and 25 are in Moscow. Thus, the rest 109 are in regional universities.

Figure 1

Accredited higher education institutiois with Journalism as a major



This ratio reflects the general state of affairs in the sphere of training a new generation of journalists.

At the first, pilot stage, the research was focused on the regional segment. A short questionnaire (Atlas rossiiskikh mediaissledovanii, 2012) was developed. It contained the following questions:

- Full name, title, institution, contact information (mailing address, phone number, e-mail);
- Full name of the department or chair at your institution, where research projects are being conducted;
- A few most important achievements of your institution in studying media and communications;
- A few influential scholars in the sphere of media and communications belonging to your institution;
- Full name, phone number, e-mail of a contact person from your institution who can provide further information on research projects conducted at your institution;
- If for some reason you do not know who is a contact person at your institution, please, provide contact information of the department, where research projects are being conducted

At the regular session of Educational and Methodological Council on Journalism at Moscow State University in February, 2012 50 representatives of Russian universities were asked to answer these questions. Unfortunately neither these nor any other questionnaire data can reflect the real state of affairs. Nevertheless, the analysis of these data allows to see the most significant research tendencies. The results were summed up and included into a database by NAMMI's Executive Director, Dr. Irina Zhilavskaya. However, many respondents failed to provide the detailed information. thus we had to browse the sites of the universities participating in various projects and to study the lists of published works and the titles of theses defended on journalism. 84 directions of research works and academic interests were mentioned by the respondents. The questionnaire revealed the spheres of interests and general lines of research activities common for all universities. As different researchers use different terminology to define the lines of research, we suggest the general taxonomy based on the subject and the sphere of research.

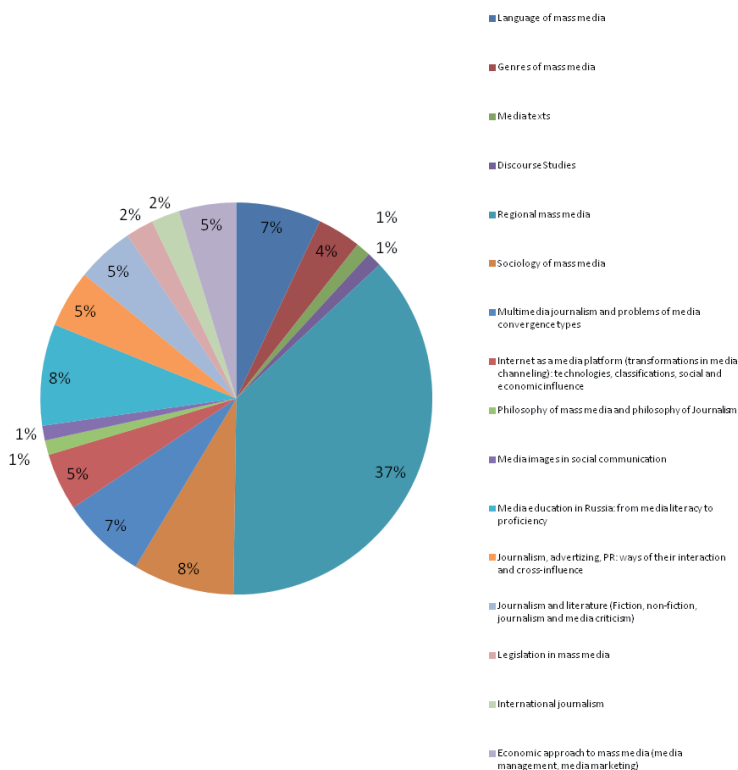
The 16 main lines of research mentioned by the representatives of the Universities are:

1. Language of mass media – 5 universities (6,96%);
2. Genres of mass media – 3 universities (3,57%);
3. Media texts – 1 university (1,2%);
4. Discourse Studies – 1 university (1,2%);
5. Regional mass media (as a part of the topic of the university research) – 31 universities (36,9%);
6. Economic approach to mass media (media management, media marketing) – 4 universities (4,7%);
7. Sociology of mass media – 7 universities (8,3%);
8. Multimedia journalism and problems of media convergence types – 5 universities (6,96%);
9. Internet as a media platform (transformations in media channeling): technologies, classifications, social and economic influence – 4 universities (4,7%);
10. Philosophy of mass media and philosophy of journalism – 1 university (1,2%);

11. Media images in social communication – 3 universities (1,2%);
 12. Media education in Russia: from media literacy to proficiency – 7 universities (8,3%);
 13. Journalism, advertizing, PR: ways of their interaction and cross-influence – 4 universities (4,7%);
 14. Journalism and literature (fiction, non-fiction, journalism and media criticism) – 4 universities (4,7%);
 15. Legislation in mass media – 2 universities (2,3%);
 16. International journalism – 2 universities (2,3%);
- You can see these results in the pie chart (figure 2):

Figure 2

The directions of research in regional Universities



Some conclusions:

1. Many research spheres in journalism have philology at their core. The vast majority of Journalism Departments cooperate with Philology Departments in their research work. Such topics as *Language of Mass Media* (6,96%), *Genres of Mass Media* (3,57%), *Media Texts* (1,2%), *Discourse Studies* (1,2%) are studied in most universities, for example, Samara State University, Stavropol State University, Mari State University, Perm State National Research University, Smolensk, Vyatka, Novgorod, Altai, Belgorod, Orel, Cherepovets and some other universities.

2. Many universities try to develop methods and methodology of media education. South Ural State University, Tyumen State University, Belgorod State University, Perm State Institute Of Art And Culture, Orenburg State Teacher's Institute claim *Media Education in Russia: From Media Literacy to Proficiency* (8,3%) as their priority.

3. The analysis reflects close attention to *The Problems of Multimedia Journalism and the Problems of Media Convergence Types* (6,96%). This is a priority research area in the Far East Federal University, Vyatka State University, Altai State University, South Ural University, etc.

4. A crucial though not widespread research area is *Sociology of Mass Media* (8,3%). It is a priority research area in Saratov State University, South Ural State University, Samara State University, Togliatti State University, Cherepovets State University, Novgorod University, Smolensk State University, etc.

5. The level of interest to such research area as *Economic Approach to Mass Media (Media Management, Media Marketing)* (4,7%) is rather low. Altay State University, Stavropol State University and some other universities mention that they are interested in this area but the analysis shows that it seems to be only a declaration of intent.

6. The same level of interest is observed in the research area *Internet as a Media Platform (Transformations in Media Channeling): Technologies, Classifications, Social and Economic Influence* (4,7%). Only Vyatka State University, Stavropol State University, Voronezh University and Altai University mention that they are interested in this area.

The largest segment *Regional Media Studies* (37%) presents the most challenging task for analysis, as it is the most diffuse one. Browsing web-pages of the universities which state that it is their prior research area, and analyzing the lists of published research works of university scholars and research teams, one can notice that one of the main problems is the lack of precision in definitions, as the declared works differ in their field and subject matter. It is possible to distinguish two approaches to *Regional Media Studies*: a) regional media in the context of national media, and b) studies of the specific character of regional media, regional media functioning, regional identity, peculiarities of regional media markets, different types of regional media, etc.

The research spheres in these two approaches differ greatly, and one can clearly discern between research objectives of the two abovementioned approaches. On the one hand, one can see such projects as “Peculiarities of Development of Regional Mass Media in the Far East” (the Far East Federal University), “History of Television of the Volga Region Republics”, “History of Journalism in Chuvashia” (Chuvash State University), “History of Regional Journalism in Perm Region” (Perm State University), “History of Smolensk Region Journalism”, “The Directory “Journalism in Tambov” and similar projects in Arkhangelsk, Chuvashia, Voronezh, etc. A number of textbooks and manuals on the history of journalism in different regions have been published. On the other hand, there are such projects as “Ethnic, National and Cross-ethnic Aspects of Mass Media (Russian-Komi and Finno-Ugric-Russian Cross-ethnic Cultural Contexts)” (Syktyvkar State University), “National Mass Media and the Press of the Volga Region Republics/ of North Caucasus/ of Siberia/ of the Far East”, etc.

The desire to diversify a large segment of research, which the scholars and participants of the projects define as *Regional Media Studies* showed at least ten directions of research. Thus, within this segment (taken as 100%) the following directions can be distinguished:

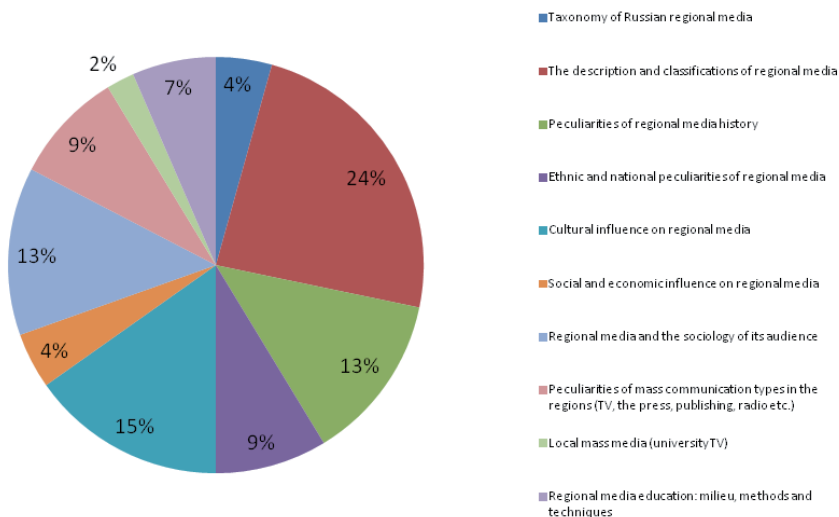
1. Taxonomy of Russian regional media – 2 universities (6,5%);
2. The description and classifications of regional media – 11 universities (35,5%);

3. Peculiarities of regional media history – 6 universities (19,3%);
4. Ethnic and national peculiarities of regional media – 4 universities (12,9%);
5. Cultural influence on regional media – 7 universities (22,6%);
6. Social and economic influence on regional media – 2 universities (6,4%);
7. Regional media and the sociology of its audience – 6 universities (19,3%);
8. Peculiarities of mass communication types in the regions (TV, press, publishing, radio, etc.) – 4 universities (12,9%);
9. Local mass media (university TV) – 1 university (3,2%);
10. Regional media education: milieu, methods and techniques – 3 universities (9,6%).

The chart reflects these results (figure 3):

Figure 3

Directions of Regional Media Studies



The analysis of the most considerable segment of studies in the regions highlighted the following problems:

- need for uniformity in terms and definitions;
- need for the general norms for the degree of research activity assessment;
- need for the transparency, which can be achieved through effective communication in the Russian professional community.

The first pilot stage of the project not only revealed these problems but also pinpointed the ways to solve them. At the next stage the following two tasks will be crucial: 1) to create the taxonomy of the existed research which should be approved by the professional community, and 2) to work out the criteria of research activity assessment accepted by the majority of media researchers.

Regarding the first task, it would be sensible to use the classification suggested by National Association of Mass Media Researchers as the basis, and to add Regional Media Studies into it. It will include the following directions:

1. Mass Media as a Social Institution;
2. Mass Media Management;
3. Mass Media Audience;
4. Mass Media Influence;
5. Professional Journalism in the Age of Digital Media;
6. Mass Media Texts;
7. Regional Media Studies

As for the second task concerning the research activity assessment, the matrix format can be suggested. In the down column the directions of research are stated while in the horizontal row the achievements of the researcher and results of the work (from field research to monographs) are reflected.

Results and intensity Direction of research	Published monograph	Collection of articles	Published articles	Articles published in Russian peer-reviewed journals	Articles published in the journals included into Citation Index	Field research	Presentation at a conference	Implementation of the results
Mass Media as a Social Institution (theory of communication and journalism, media imagery in social communications, media and law, mass media and media communication history)								
Mass Media Management (media economy, media management, media marketing)								

Mass Media Audience (transformation (including historical), classification, the level of media literacy, information literacy, media behavior, media activity, media education)									
Mass Media Influence (media psychology, media sociology, media measurement)									
Professional Journalism in the Age of Digital Media and multimedia and convergence in the current media practice, innovation in training).									

<p>Mass Media Texts (media criticism, mass media discourse and media texts, journalism and literature (fiction and nonfiction, including political essays), etc.</p>									
<p>Regional Media Studies (objective processes of media regionalization, including the impact of globalization)</p>									

In the conclusion we can suggest the following:

1. Research within the project *Map of Russian Media Studies* should be continued;
2. It is important to define research tools and to coordinate research activities in the country;
3. It is necessary to inform the professional community about the project and promote its ideas and objectives.

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