

Summary

Survey of the authors of the books published in the FNP Monographs series in 2010-2022

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The aim of this study was to examine the views and opinions regarding the FNP Monographs series from the perspectives of authors who have published their works in this series.

The FNP Monographs programme was established in 1994 and aims to provide funding of publication of original works in the field of humanities and social scientists. In order for the submitted works to qualify to be published in the series, works must be novel, original, of high scientific standard, presenting findings in such a way that the work is accessible not solely to those who specialise in a given scientific area. The works are selected in a competition.

The FNP Monograph funding covers the costs of publishing the book and offers each author a royalty. Since 2011, The Nicolaus Copernicus University Press has been the publisher for the series. Book promotion services are also offered to the authors as a part of this funding scheme. Some of the promotion services such as the promotion of the book during book fairs or author meetings are delegated to the university press, while the Foundation promotes the books on its webpage and Facebook FanPage and through meetings with the authors (Wielogłos o Monografiach) and radio broadcasts. The promotion services, offered by the Foundation as well as by The Nicolaus Copernicus University Press are tailored to each book, which means that not all works are being promoted in the same way and that not all promotional services might be offered to each author. The suitability of promotional services is based on whether the work and its topic is suitable for the given promotional method.

In addition, programme beneficiaries may apply to obtain funding for translation of their work. A condition for applying for a subvention is documented interest from a recognised foreign publisher in publication and distribution of the work.

Since 1994, 238 books have been published in the FNP Monograph series. This study was an online survey and authors who have published in the series between 2010 and 2022 were invited to take part. The main research questions concerned: reasons for applying to the programme, experience of the application process, experience of the publishing process (collaboration in this regard with the university press), rating of the book promotional activities by the Foundation and by the publisher, the effects of publishing the book in the series and also general views regarding the series. Between 2010 and 2022, 113 works have been published by 104 authors. All these authors have received an email inviting them to take part in the survey. 70 responses have been received (67,3% response rate). Among the respondents the majority constituted representatives of the humanities, in particular literary studies, philosophy, history and cultural and religious studies.

Conclusions

The majority of respondents were familiar with the Monograph series before applying for the funding and, in large proportion, they were familiar with the series from their own reading. Only two persons had not heard about the series before applying for funding.

Asked about the reasons for applying, the respondents indicated the prestige of the series as the main reason. Three quarters also felt the royalty offered was an important factor when considering application, and just under half of respondents thought that the promotional activities were also important. Less common reasons for applying were points that could be gained as a result of publishing a book that would be useful for individual academic review. The possibility of applying for translation into a major language of a work previously published in the FNP Monographs was also perceived as a significant contributing factor. Some respondents felt prompted to apply to the programme because they could not find a suitable publisher (e.g. other publishers would not publish books that were over a certain word limit).

The received responses indicated that the majority were satisfied regarding collaboration with the university press as well as the Foundation. The level of satisfaction with the funding application process was high and the majority of respondents felt the information provided regarding the funding call were clear and informative. The majority of respondents did not encounter problems while submitting their application. Most respondents reported high levels of satisfaction with the quality of their works' reviews and felt these were useful and informative. The evidence obtained also showed that reviews of the works received were rated higher compared with other reviews received in similar circumstances. The feedback received also showed that majority of respondents felt the procedure for scoring of submitted works and the criteria on whether the works will pass to the next stage, are clear. While the majority of respondents felt the application and rating stage are of appropriate lengths, some felt this was process was lengthy. Next set of questions in the survey concerned the process of publishing a book. Views that time required to release a book in the series was a slow process or negative views regarding collaboration with the university press during the publication process, remained very rare.

A high share of respondents highly rated other books from the same scientific area published in the FNP Monographs in terms of their scientific value. Half of the respondents read these books frequently, and the remaining half - from time to time. Books from other scientific areas seem to be

less popular among the respondents – only 16% of those surveyed read those often, half of the respondents - from time to time, and one third - infrequently. According to the majority of respondents, books published in the FNP Monographs are accessible to those from the humanities and social sciences, however these works might be less accessible to those who are not researchers.

Asked about the sources of information regarding new publications in the FNP Monograph series, respondents selected the FNP website and FNP Facebook FanPage as the two most commonly used sources. Next, respondents were asked about promotional activities done by the Foundations as well as by the university press. While overall levels of satisfaction with the promotional activities offered by the Foundation as well as by the university press seem equally high, the rating of individual activities appeared problematic, as a high share of respondents did not engage with these activities. Based on the results of this survey, it is difficult to ascertain whether respondents had not engaged with these activities as these have not been offered as not suitable for a given work or whether the authors have made the decision not to engage with these activities despite receiving an offer regarding their book promotion. Comments left by respondents also highlight the lack of clear understanding regarding the availability and suitability of each of these promotional activities.

According to the majority of respondents, having published a book in the FNP Monograph series had a positive impact on their academic career: it has strengthened their position in academic environment; helped them in their academic career development and improved their chances of receiving more research funding. Survey also posed questions regarding non-direct effects of having a book published in the FNP Monographs – do they perceive that the book has become recognised within the academia, as well as beyond the academic circles. The feedback received showed that majority felt the book has become recognised in the academic circle, while less than a half of respondents felt it is also known beyond academia.