

THE CENTRALIZED ORIGINALITY CHECK OF THE DOCTORAL DISSERTATIONS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BELGRADE: A MODEL OF A CONTROLLED AND TRANSPARENT PROCEDURE



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QUESTIONS
HOW TO ESTABLISH A INTEGRATED SYSTEM OF ORIGINALITY CHECK OF PH.D. THESES AT LARGE UNIVERSITY?
HOW TO MAKE THAT SYSTEM SUSTAINABLE, TRANSPARENT AND EASILY CONDUCTED?
HOW TO PROVIDE THE FULLY COMPETENT EVALUATION OF THE ORIGINALITY REPORT?

UNIVERSITY LEGISLATION

Before 2018 the procedure of originality check at the University of Belgrade was conducted partially and non-systematically. Some faculty members were conducted such procedure under their local regulations of the originality check of all kinds of students' papers.

In June 2018 the Senate of the University of Belgrade has adopted The Rule of procedure for verification of originality of doctoral dissertations that are defended at the University of Belgrade. The Rule prescribed that from October 2018 new step in the procedure of evaluation of Ph.D. theses. All dissertations in the process of evaluation have to be checked using the service of originality check provided by the University (in this case it is system iThenticate). The institution in charge for that process is the Central Library of the University, University Library "Svetozar Marković", which is the deposit library for the Ph.D. theses defended at the University and which possess the largest collection of dissertations in the country.

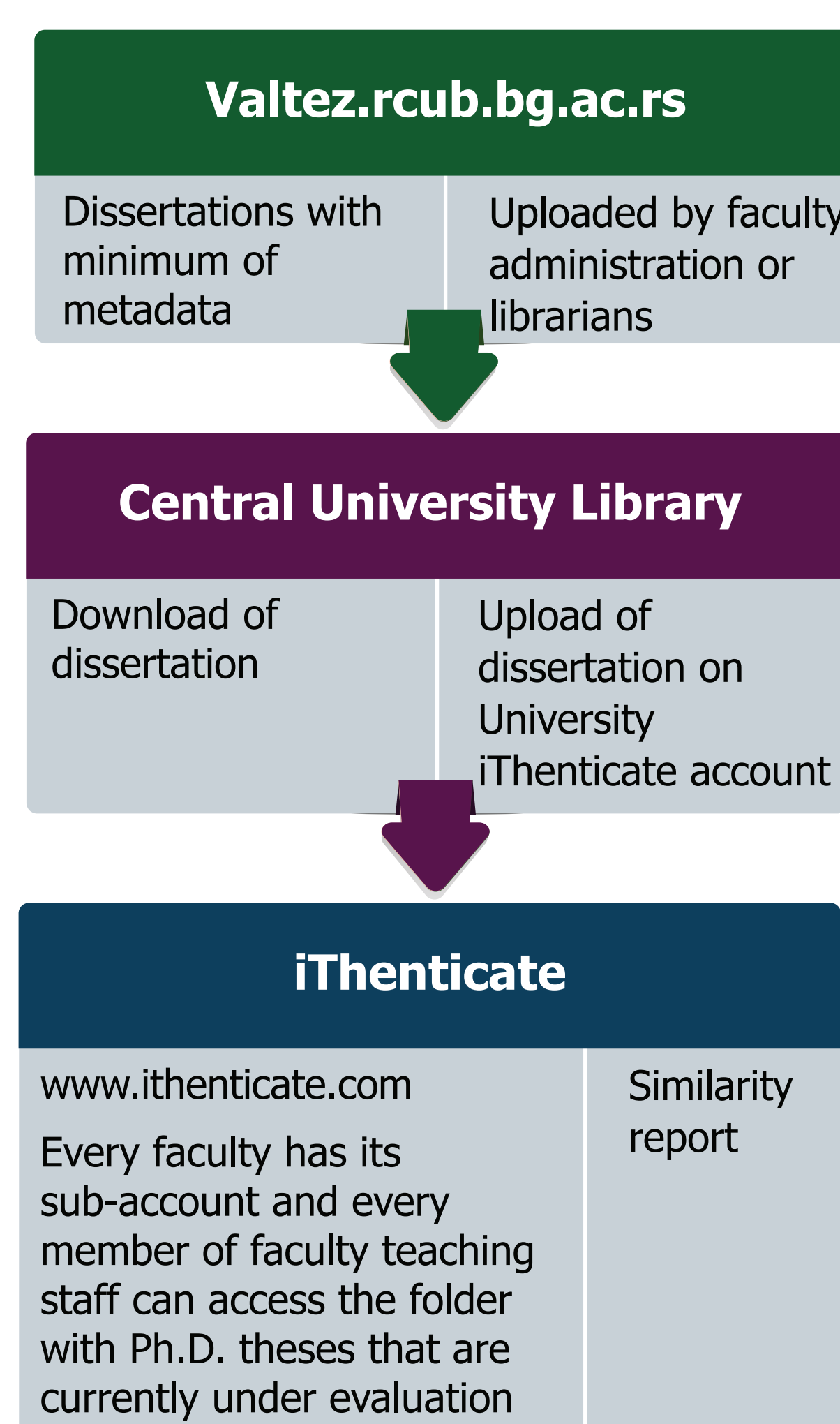
THE PROCEDURE

The procedure of verification of originality includes the following steps:

- 1) Student is delivering a completely finished doctoral dissertation to the students' service at his/her faculty for the process of evaluation.
- 2) The official at the faculty uploads the thesis to the specially established system (Valtez - DSpace repository, created by the University of Belgrade Computer Centre) as a central infrastructure for the exchange of the information and documentation. This entry has to contain the most necessary information: the name of the candidate, the title of the dissertation, the name and the mail of the mentor.
- 3) The person in charge at the Central library will download the document and perform the originality check using the service iThenticate.
- 4) After getting a similarity report, the librarian will enter this relevant data back into Valtez system: link to the similarity report, and the date when the check is performed.
- 5) Valtez system will generate standardized mail for mentors with important information and additional useful data. The main information within this mail contains, besides a link, also credentials for access to the report.

6) A copy of that mail is sent to the Central Library at the address of the person in charge, providing the control of the process.

Valtez system: DSpace based repository with non-publicly accessible content. In this context, it became the hub for the exchange of documents and information on originality check.



LEGAL ASPECT OR HOW TO EVALUATE THE SIMILARITY REPORT

The main guidelines for mentors how to evaluate the received report are elaborated in article 9 of the Rule of procedure for verification of originality. This part of legislation underlines that the similarity index itself, without proper evaluation, is not enough to doubt the originality of dissertation, and that certain percentage of similarity is inevitable (due to citations, bibliographic data, common used phrases, etc. or previously published papers by Ph.D. student). That is why Rule does not contain some acceptable similarity index, forcing mentors to

examine carefully indicated similarities and to analyze if these marked parts of the dissertations are showing inadequate citations or copy of other works without proper attribution.

TRANSPARENCY

Within the settings of the University iThenticate account, each faculty member of the University is registered as a single iThenticate user, but only with the privilege to read and share folders, without the possibility to upload the documents. Each one of the University's 31 faculties is related to one folder of the iThenticate, and all dissertations from that faculty are uploaded into this particular folder only.

The faculty folder contains current dissertations that are in the middle of the process of evaluation, and after 30 days these theses have to be moved into Archives - folders not visible to faculty users. Besides the administrator and performer of this procedure in the Central Library, who has access to all folders and University account, the same privileges are related to the Rectorate of the University of Belgrade.

In other words, two centralized institutions of the University (the Rectorate and the Library) have access to the whole procedure, having full insight into the process and control over it. On the other side, faculties have also insight into all current theses that should be defended by that faculty.

ADVANTAGES

This structure of the procedure has several advantages, both technical and structural:

- 1) It enables full university control over the process.
- 2) Being results visible not only for the mentor but for all the other faculty staff, it enables internal control and transparency inside of the academic institution.
- 3) It puts the Central library in the middle of the process, enabling it to make a stronger connection with the kind of material that it, at the end of the process, archives permanently.

4) Central library becomes important education center for academic society organizing the trainings and workshops about the procedure, copyright issues and academic writing.

4) Valtez system makes the exchange of information and documents simple, quick, and easy to adjust which is necessary since the whole process includes a relatively large number of participants (employees at the faculties, mentors, etc.); it also enables better control over final parts of the procedure (like sending generated mail with the information about the check to the mentor, and sending the copy of that mail to librarian).

5) Since mentors can easily access the iThenticate report online, and use all available tools that such service provides, they can understand much better the results of the check and evaluate them properly.

MORE ADVANTAGES

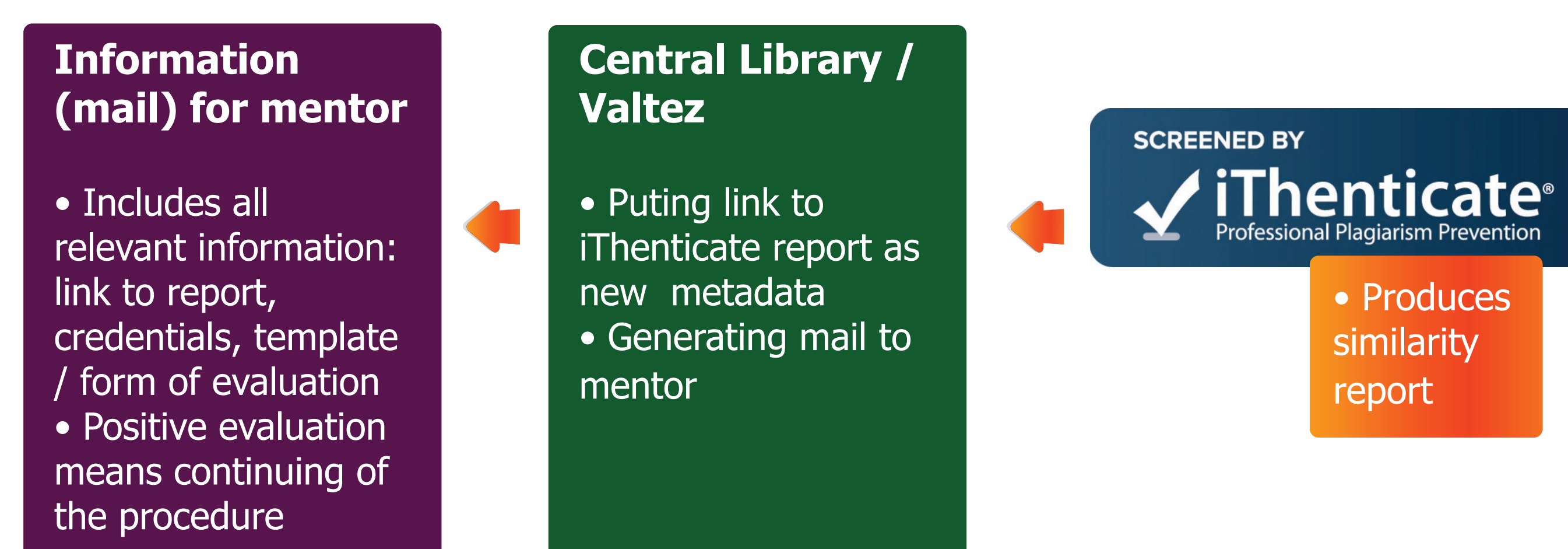
6) The centralized procedure enables an easier approach to the aspect of purchasing the iThenticate credits, which is since 2020 also centralized and realized by the Ministry of education for the purpose of all universities in Serbia.

7) The whole procedure does not discourage other possible ways of originality check, since the Rules clearly indicated that this part of the procedure is only indication of the originality.

CONCLUSION

Described model of centralized checked is an example of compilation of particular concept supported with technical infrastructure (repository) for collecting, organizing and sharing the information, and, finally, rooted in well formulated legislation with encourage adequate evaluation of the results and optimal use of the tool such as a system for originality check. The procedure is making the connection between two separate systems – global system for originality check (iThenticate), and local system for specific use within the University (Valtez), putting at the same time the Central library in the middle of that process.

This model of centralized check could be modified in some parts, but the core of the process (including the access to results that are limited for particular faculty) remains a basis of such transparency and supervision and it could be applicable for other universities, especially large ones.



References

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