

## AN OVERVIEW OF SOME OF THE FIRST WEBSITES WITH RELIGIOUS CONTENT IN ROMANIA

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**Abstract:** In 2010, even though the official websites of the Romanian Orthodox Church were making progress - especially the websites of the Patriarchate, the Metropolis of Moldavia and Bukovina and the Romanian Orthodox Metropolis of Western and Southern Europe - they were still far from having the popularity of non-official or private religious websites such as *crestinortodox.ro*, *calendar-ortodox.ro*, *resursecrestine.ro*, *sfaturiortodoxe.ro*, *razbointrucuvant.ro*, *ro.orthodoxwiki.org*. As smartphone apps (iPhone and Android) have become more popular, the Bible, the Lives of the Saints and the Orthodox Christian calendar have been seen as sources of financial opportunity by some Romanian entrepreneurs, who have developed private websites and apps using religious content. My study analysis some of these main non-official and private websites, with an overview of the Christian Web in Romania in its early years.

**Keywords:** religious websites, private websites, religion online, *crestinortodox.ro*, religious content, Christian web

### 1. Introduction

Churches have always been, for the most part, living and active social communities, and so it was inevitable that with the emergence of cyberspace, virtual religious communities would also emerge. Regarding these communities and how they are created or transferred from real to virtual mediums, a first distinction must be made between *religion online*, which can be seen as the manifestation of different religions in cyberspace, and *online religion*, which is the interactive medium for the user in cyberspace, where they can experience different forms of worship, ritual or fellowship (Helland, 2005). Of course, in cyberspace, a form of “religion” can be produced by almost anyone, whether or not they have the necessary competence and authority, can be supported by many followers, ignoring interpersonal

dynamics, and can exist in the form of *chat rooms*. It is the perfect place for religious pluralism and new religious movements, becoming an ideal resource for religious leaders and self-proclaimed mystics, who can become popular and more easily followed in the virtual world than in the real one. (Dawson & Douglas, 2004).

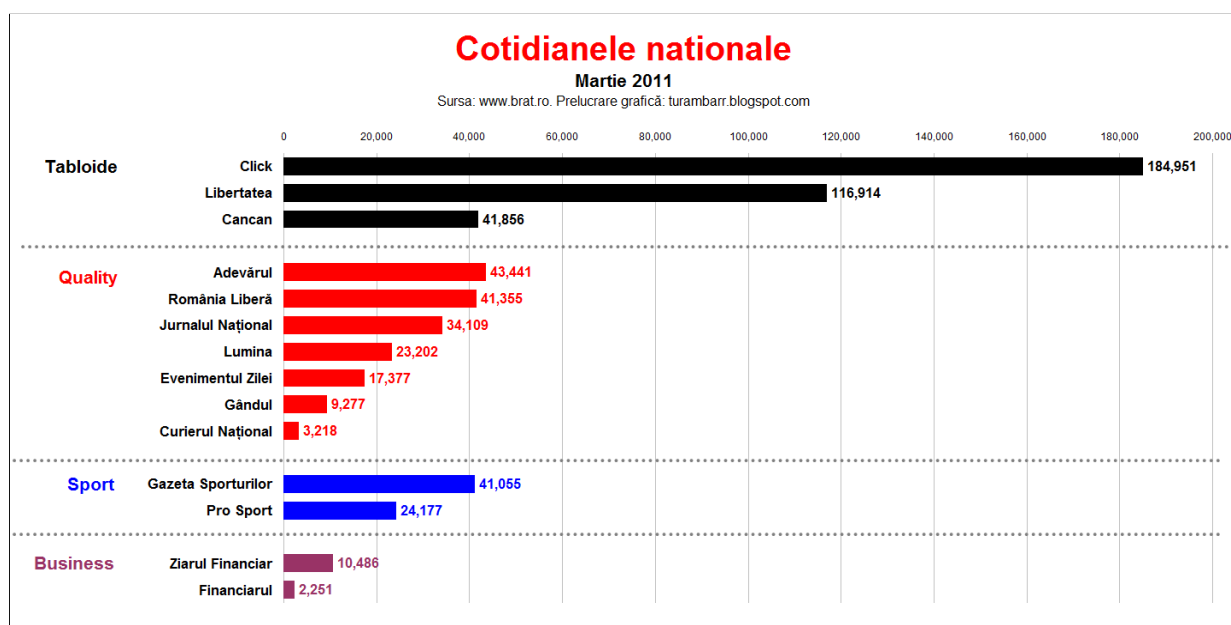
The first worldwide apparition of religious information in the online media took place in 1980 and was due to a group of Web enthusiasts. Seeking to use the Internet to transmit religious data, an online forum called *net.religion* was set up, where debates on religious and ethical issues about the moral implications of the actions people take took place (Stout, 1997). The first religious service streamed online was the memorial service for those who died in the 1986 explosion of the American ship *Challenger*. The event showed the power of the online medium to bring a community together in difficult times transcending geographical boundaries (Lochhead, 1997). The beginning of *cyber-religiosity* can be related to the website *Partenia* created by former French Roman Catholic Bishop Jacques Gaillot, who declared himself “bishop of cyberspace”, for all those who contact him in his virtual parish. In his 2001 book “Give me that online religion”, Brasher explains that the reason for the *Partenia*’s founding was Gaillot’s conflict with the Vatican. After using French television to criticise the traditional Catholic position on issues such as the marriage of priests, Gaillot was assigned from the French diocese of Évreux to *Partenia*, a diocese without borders. Officially, the first recognized cyber-church in history was created by the Presbyterian pastor and web specialist Charles Henderson in 1992, called the *First Church of Cyberspace* (<http://godweb.org/>), a consortium of ecumenical churches and individuals who meet online every Sunday evening for conversations, sermons and recorded religious songs (Neagu, 2012).

## **2. Official websites. 2010 data**

Romanian Orthodox Christian online content first appeared in the mid-90s and has expanded rapidly in the years since. Regarding the official institutional communication, Romanian Orthodox Church started to emerge online in 2002, with the possibility of accessing *Trinitas Radio* from a webpage (Mleşniţe, 2017). The culmination of institutional online communication was the establishment, on 27 October 2007, of the *Basilica Media Centre* of the Romanian Patriarchate, with its five branches: *Trinitas Radio*, *Trinitas Television*, *Ziarul Lumina* (*The Light daily newspaper*), *Basilica News Agency* and *Press and Public Relations Office* of the Romanian Patriarchate (Dascălu, 2012). The departments for Internet mission came in response to a real necessity at that time (Nistea, 2010).

## 2.1. ziarullumina.ro

*Ziarul Lumina* was the first Christian daily newspaper in Romania and the only Christian Orthodox daily newspaper in the world. It was founded in February 2005, in Iași, by a team of theologians from the *TRINITAS Cultural Missionary Institute of the Metropolis of Moldavia and Bukovina* and journalists who had previously worked especially at the *Lumea ieșeanului* daily newspaper. Lumina was presented as a “newspaper of reportage, information and commentaries published from a Christian perspective - the edition for Iași county” (Dascălu, 2022). An initiative of the Orthodox laity of Iași, the daily *LUMINA*, as it was called at the beginning, was financially supported by the Metropolis of Moldavia and Bukovina, headed at the time by the current Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church, His Beatitude Daniel, who gave it its name and decided the date of its first publication (Dascălu, 2010). For more than two years, *LUMINA* had a local and regional coverage, being distributed by the Romanian Post Office in several counties of Moldova: Iași, Neamț, Botoșani, Suceava, Vaslui, Vrancea, Galați and Bacău. After its integration into the *Basilica Media Centre* of the Romanian Patriarchate, *LUMINA* began to be distributed in Bucharest, under an improved format and a new name - *Ziarul Lumina* - joining the category of national newspapers, being audited by the Romanian Circulation Audit Bureau (BRAT), printed in a circulation of over 23,000 copies and distributed in 39 counties in the country. For the online edition, *Ziarul Lumina* was also audited by the Audience and Internet Traffic Service (SATI). According to a BRAT report published in March 2011, *Ziarul Lumina* ranked 4th in the



national quality daily newspaper subscription ranking.

Fig. 1: The national quality daily newspaper subscription ranking (March 2011)

About this aspect, it is important to mention that the Romanian Patriarchate's units and parishes are obligated by the Statute for the Organization and Functioning of the Romanian Orthodox Church, to subscribe to the central Church publications, which includes *Ziarul Lumina*.

In August 2005, *Ziarul Lumina* started to be published online. By 2010, the web look of the *Lumina* newspaper had changed three times, the last time on 12 February 2010, on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the continuous publication of the daily newspaper, when the new website of the *Lumina* publications was launched, namely *www.ziarullumina.ro*. The new *ziarullumina.ro* website was intended to be a portal with news posted in real-time, with a platform that, in time, could be expanded almost indefinitely, to strengthen its status as a virtual library that gives free access to the teaching of the Church, but also as a memory of the most important ecclesiastical and social events of the actual time. With the web technologies and graphics that brought it up to the standards of the quality newspaper websites, *ziarullumina.ro* registered over 500,000 visitors from over 130 countries in 2010. They made more than 1,000,000 visits, accessing the site's database, which at that time contained over 46,000 articles (*Al VI-lea an de apariție neîntreruptă a publicațiilor „Lumina”*, 2010). Although in 2010 the newspaper *Lumina* was among the top Romanian newspapers in terms of the number of copies printed per issue (Dinu, 2010) - around 23,000 copies - the number of unique visitors to *ziarullumina.ro* was approximately 5,000 daily.

## **2.2. basilica.ro**

Another official website present online in 2010 was that of the *Basilica News Agency*, which was established at the initiative of Patriarch Daniel Ciobotea, on the feast of Saint Demetrios the New, Protector of Bucharest, on 27 October 2007, as part of the Basilica Media Centre of the Romanian Patriarchate. The official launch of the *Basilica News Agency* took place on 16 June 2008 (Ionescu, 2017), on the Feast of the Most Holy Trinity, with the motto: "The good news shared with all". The event took place after the celebration of the Te Deum service in the Europa Christiana Hall of the Patriarchal Palace (Dascălu, 2008).

The role of the agency, since its launch, has been to present - in the form of news and mass media articles - the institutions, activities and opinions of the Romanian Orthodox Church, as well as other Churches, on various current issues (Iftimiu, 2021). The selection and systematization of the news were done following the principles of Christian morality and the

rules of journalistic ethics. The news and information were organized in digital format, including data on Church life at the national and foreign level: the activity of the Patriarch of Romania, the decisions of the Holy Synod, the activities of dioceses, monasteries and parishes, theological schools and church associations, the Church's dialogue with society, inter-Orthodox cooperation, interfaith and interconfessional dialogue.

The missionary role of the *Basilica News Agency* website was already proven in 2010 by the dissemination in the virtual space of religious information, linked to the values of the sacred, perceived and experienced both by the interviewees and readers. "The Church's mission realized through the media is to spread the Gospel and invite people to holy communion. [...] By spreading the message of faith from the place of worship to the homes and souls of people who are far from one another, it gathers their souls in the same faith, in the same prayerful spirit and the same light of the good acts. The daily transmission of the Holy Liturgy on *Trinitas Radio* and *Trinitas TV*, the broadcasts of Christian spirituality, culture, music and art, the news, messages and documentaries broadcast through the *Basilica News Agency* or the articles published in the pages of the daily newspaper *Ziarul Lumina*, the weekly newspaper *Lumina de Duminică* or the monthly magazine *Vestitorul Ortodoxiei* are missionary activities that contribute to the promotion of Christian faith and culture in society. In an age in which the strongest influence on public opinion is exercised through the mass media (including the Internet), the Church uses these instruments to promote Gospel values in society, but also to make known its many activities..." (Daniel, Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church, *Gratitude for the sacred mission*", address at the Feast of the Most Holy Trinity 2009).

In 2010, on *basilica.ro* readers could find daily news from dioceses in the country and diaspora, which revealed the dynamics of Romanian Orthodox ecclesial life. The religious information presented on *basilica.ro* was intended to be journalistic information, being managed according to the usual criteria of search, selection, analysis and publication in the interest of the audience. As news, the religious information presented on the agency's website reported recent events at all levels of the Romanian Orthodox Church.



The website structure of *basilica.ro* has been complex since its launch, and the information has been easily accessible to a wide range of users. In 2010, the site was at a high level in performance, graphics and reliability, with a user-friendly interface. The site had facilities such as fast loading speed, good database querying and graphical usability by the standards of cyberspace at that time. In terms of content organization, it had two main sections, one focused on news from the central level of the Romanian Patriarchate and the other on news from the Romanian Orthodox Church's dioceses, both in the country and abroad. These two sections presented religious events within the Romanian Patriarchate's eparchies, official press releases of the Romanian Orthodox Church, documentaries, as well as ample articles treating different religious, social and cultural topics (Dascălu, 2008).

Fig. 2: The *Basilica News Agency* website (2012 version)

Since its launch, the *Basilica News Agency* has been a voice of the Romanian Orthodox Church also at the international level, as the *basilica.ro* website also has an English interface. The main events in the Romanian Patriarchate were thus reported in the main international language so that the Good News could be shared with everyone: "The English-language version of the news is proving increasingly useful because these events are also being reported by the international media, which is reproducing the information posted on the *basilica.ro*, the official news source of the Romanian Patriarchate" (His Beatitude Daniel, Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church, *Church and family united through media in the love of the Holy Trinity*, speech at the Feast of the Most Holy Trinity 2011)

In 2010, *basilica.ro* was the most important online source of news on the life of the Romanian Orthodox Church, confirmed by the fact that most of the publications and media in Romania, as well as most of the ecclesiastical press in the country and abroad, were using the *Basilica News Agency*'s website to provide official information on the important aspects of Romanian Orthodox Church. *Basilica.ro* had also a news archive, which made it easier for users to access the information posted on the site in chronological order. Through *basilica.ro*, the news could also be viewed by an audience that was far from Romania

In addition, the *Basilica News Agency* website was a convergence point for the other four components of the Basilica Press Centre (*Trinitas Radio*, *Trinitas TV*, the *Lumina* publications and the *Press and Public Relations Office*), because the site concentrated information on the Church's life in a precise form and content, in which image, sound and the written word were combined. In 2010, *basilica.ro* had approximately 60,000 unique visitors per month.

### **2.3. doxologia. ro**

Another noteworthy website of the Romanian Orthodox Church, although in 2010 it was just developing its new platform, is *doxologia.ro*, the official web portal of the Metropolis of Moldavia and Bukovina. The Doxologia Media software development department existed since the autumn of 2009, but with no substantial results. Since 1 November 2010, when the coordination of Doxologia Media became the responsibility of Deacon Nicolae Hulpoi, the new platform was designed around the idea that a website cannot be absolutely traditionalist, neither Orthodox nor spiritual and that there is no medium of communication incompatible with the "Good News" - the Gospels (Rusu, 2022). A major achievement for *doxologia.ro* was in August 2011, when the Facebook "Like" button was implemented on the front page, next to the article headlines. At that time, only *gândul.info* had implemented in Romania the new Facebook system. The integration of Facebook in *doxologia.ro* turned out to be a very inspired one and contributed a lot to increasing traffic and popularising the Doxologia brand. Another impressive project of Doxologia Media, developed during 2011-2012, was the Network of Archdiocese of Iași parishes sites. The Network of Archdiocese of Iași parishes sites was built to have its own content, but at the same time to publish news from *doxologia.ro*. In turn, the Doxologia portal included the news posted by priests on their parish web pages. It was a typical *win-win* content relationship.

### **3. Non-official or private religious websites**

In 2010, even though the official websites of the Romanian Orthodox Church were making progress, they were still lagging behind in comparison with unofficial or private religious websites such as *crestinortodox.ro*, *calendar-ortodox.ro*, *resursecrestine.ro*, *sfaturiortodoxe.ro*, *razbointrucuvant.ro*, *noutati-ortodoxe.ro*, *credo.ro*, *ro.orthodoxwiki.org*.

### 3.1. crestinortodox.ro

In 2010, according to statistics on Traffic.ro, the first position in the “Spirituality” category was occupied by the website *www.crestinortodox.ro*, developed by the company Active Soft, with average monthly traffic of 500,000 unique visitors.

Net Index Spiritualitate: 157,74 (↑ 12,57%)

Ora Zi Saptamana Luna Octombrie 2010 Real-time

#	Website	Vizitatori unici ↓	Vizite ↓	Afisiari ↓
1	<a href="http://www.crestinortodox.ro">www.crestinortodox.ro</a> CrestinOrtodox.ro - portal crestin-ortodox, biblia on-line, forum, stiri, rugaciuni, galerie foto, ... Locul 108 In Clasamentul General   <a href="http://www.crestinortodox.ro">www.crestinortodox.ro</a>	440.354 ↑ 104.709 32,99%	786.575 ↑ 162.254	3.122.748 ↑ 520.494
2	<a href="http://www.calendar-ortodox.ro">www.calendar-ortodox.ro</a> CALENDARUL Crestin-Ortodox 2011: Sinaxar, Sfintii zilei, Vietile Sfintilor, sarbatori ortodoxe; sor... Locul 333 In Clasamentul General   <a href="http://www.calendar-ortodox.ro">www.calendar-ortodox.ro</a>	141.381 ↑ 26.895 10,59%	185.045 ↑ 31.956	420.993 ↑ 94.218
3	<a href="http://www.resursecrestine.ro">www.resursecrestine.ro</a> Resurse crestine: predici audio video mp3 download, muzica audio mp3, cantari, poezii, eseuri, maxi... Locul 467 In Clasamentul General   <a href="http://www.resursecrestine.ro">www.resursecrestine.ro</a>	93.418 ↑ 13.790 7,00%	258.019 ↑ 35.244	1.850.525 ↑ 251.434
4	<a href="http://www.sfaturiortodoxe.ro">www.sfaturiortodoxe.ro</a> SFATURI ORTODOXE - Despre noile buletine 666, dreapta credinta ortodoxa, SECTE, YOGA, vrajitorie, b... Locul 704 In Clasamentul General   <a href="http://www.sfaturiortodoxe.ro">www.sfaturiortodoxe.ro</a>	55.667 ↑ 7.903 4,17%	75.583 ↑ 9.599	187.223 ↑ 15.862
5	<a href="http://razbointrucuvant.ro">razbointrucuvant.ro</a> Razboi intru Cuvant - Un site ortodox dedicat celor care doresc sa poarte lupta duhovniceasca intru... Locul 734 In Clasamentul General   <a href="http://razbointrucuvant.ro">razbointrucuvant.ro</a>	53.465 ↑ 7.056 4,01%	146.007 ↑ 8.588	367.222 ↑ 5.575

Fig. 3: Ranking of “Spirituality” websites in October 2010 (source: Traffic.ro)

*Crestinortodox.ro* contained in 2010 (and still does) teachings of the Christian Orthodox faith, its history, prayers, sermons, presentations of monasteries and churches, interviews with priests and spiritual people, information about sacred places from Romania and the world, information about customs and traditions on major feasts, also describing the differences and similarities between the world’s major religions. At the same time, *crestinortodox.ro* has presented since its launch information from various theological disciplines: Morals, Liturgics, Dogmatics, and Church Law.

According to the administrators of Active Soft, *crestinortodox.ro* provides useful information about feasts, saints and traditions, a guide to Baptism, weddings and funerals, images and descriptions of the most unique religious places in the world, the best place to sell and buy icons, religious books, liturgical garments and objects, a platform to create parish websites, answers and advice on matters of faith, and, according to the developers, the largest Christian Orthodox community. In addition to educational resources such as articles, references, and dictionaries, the website *crestinortodox.ro* also contained in the 2010 year the most developed multimedia section in the Spirituality category: pictures, audio, and video.



Fig. 4: *www.crestinortodox.ro* (2010)

Founded in 2001, Active Soft is the company that developed the *www.crestinortodox.ro* project, was a member of the New Century Holdings Group, had grown in 2010 from 2 to 200 employees and was developing 20 online projects at that time. Active Soft was present in 2010 in 11 categories according to Trafic.ro, had 9 projects in the top 3 audiences by category according to Trafic.ro, 4 million absolute unique visitors were visiting its sites and 100 million pages were accessed monthly. In 2009, according to the Internet Worlds Stats study, Active Soft covered more than 50% of the absolute number of Internet users in Romania. Based on the audience generated by its 20 websites in its portfolio, Active Soft was the leader in the online youth segment in 2010. The company's most popular projects were *ziare.com*, *copilul.ro*, *studentie.ro*, *220.ro*, *ele.ro*, *referat.ro*, *clopotel.ro*, *calificativ.ro*, *sfatulmedicului.ro*.

### 3.2. **razbointrucuvant.ro**

Another private website proposed for review, *razbointrucuvant.ro*, was at the top of the “Spirituality” category on Trafic.ro in 2010, with average monthly traffic of 50,000 unique visitors.

In the *About Us* section, *razbointrucuvant.ro* presented themselves as “ordinary lay brothers in Christ, members of the Romanian Orthodox Church”, their aim being “exclusively one of mission and spiritual formation”. The site’s administrators vehemently rejected any association with a political party or view, saying that those who claim the contrary are detractors whose mission is to slander them, using methods of intoxication specific to the secret services: “Because various people, who seem to be carrying out a mission of diversion on the Internet, of intoxication, specific to the methods of compromising the secret services, are spreading slanderous rumours about the authors of this site, we wish to make it as clear as possible: None of us is, has not been and will not be a member, advisor or even a sympathizer of any political party (parliamentary or non-parliamentary). Furthermore, we do not agree with or recommend to anyone any political party and refuse any such association. In this respect, we totally agree with the words of the Blessed Martyr Mircea Vulcănescu: I don’t believe in politics. I don’t want the happiness of the world by force. I don’t want the abstract man, the abstract humanity, but kindness”.

In explaining the title of the website and the logo consisting of a sword, along with the Greek letters alpha and omega, in the *About Us* section, the authors of *razbointrucuvant.ro* point out that “the spiritual sword is never directed against people and never has any material meaning, but has an exclusively spiritual one, being directed, first of all, against one’s own sins. The weapons of the Christian, as Saint Paul teaches, are the weapons of light, free from every trace of hatred and violence. We firmly and strongly distance ourselves from any ideologization of the faith, as well as from any forms of justification for fanaticism and for violent and revolutionary vigilantism, which seek to cut off the heads of enemies, and we denounce them as attitudes totally outside the spirit and commandments of the Gospel. We also absolutely reject and speak out against any schismatic, rebellious and extremist intentions in the Church, on the apparent pretext of personal self-righteousness. The war against the lie within us and against the lie of the world is always only a war of the truth of the word and the teaching of the Word of God, none other than the Son of God, the Savior Jesus Christ”.

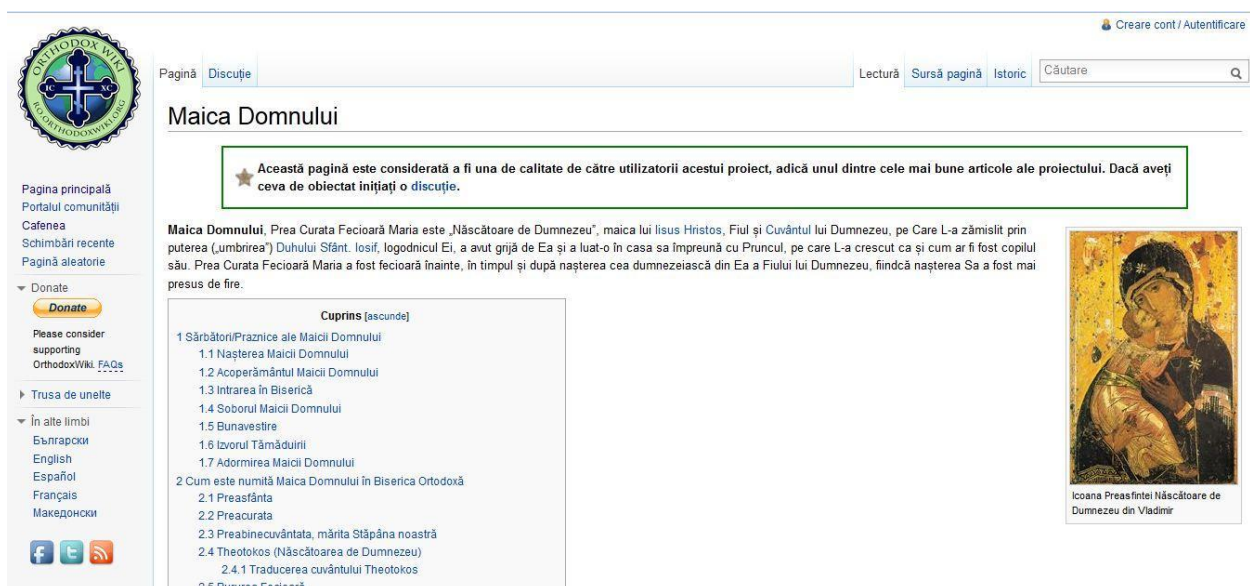


Fig. 5: [www.razbointrucuvant.ro](http://www.razbointrucuvant.ro) (2010)

In 2010, the “warriors with the word” were also constituted as a non-governmental association - the *Orthodox Word Association* - for which they asked for the redirection of 2% of the annual tax. In addition to the 2%, they also asked readers for donations to help the website continue.

The administrators of [razbointrucuvant.ro](http://razbointrucuvant.ro) have never assumed their own identity. There have been several suppositions about the site’s administrators and authors, but as these have never been confirmed, we will not list any. Today the site no longer exists under its original name, continuing its activity on the *cuvantul-ortodox.ro* domain.

### 3.3. [ro.orthodoxwiki.org](http://ro.orthodoxwiki.org)

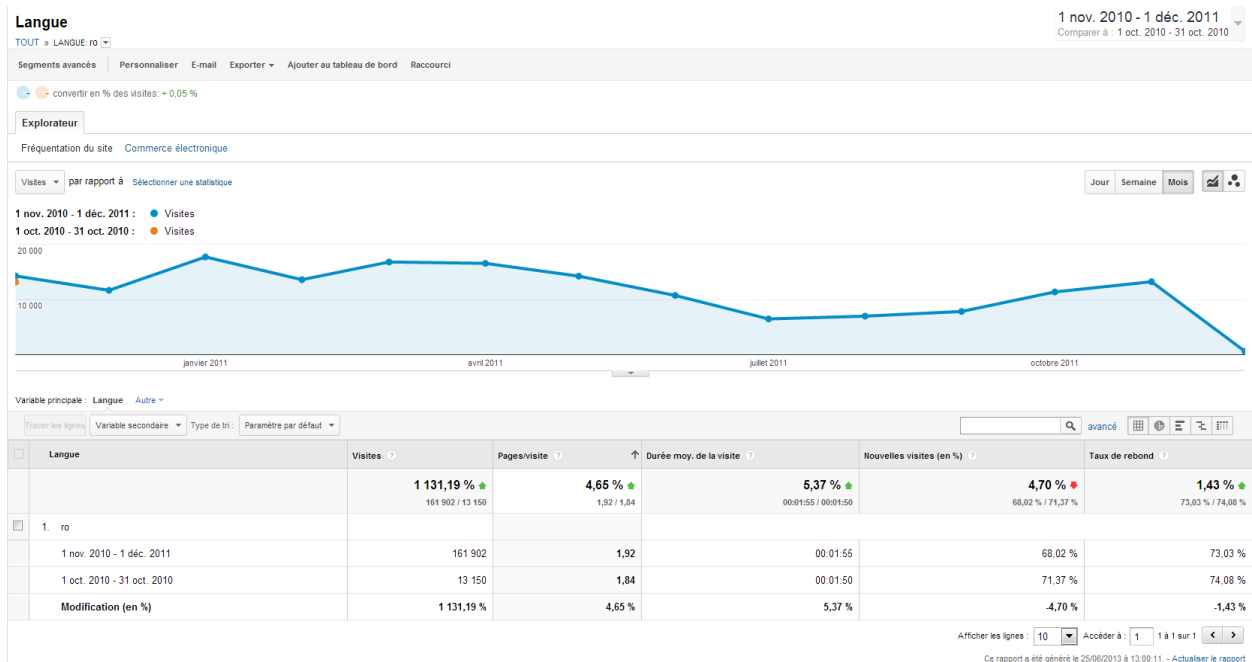


In 2010, *OrthodoxWiki* was an online Orthodox Christian encyclopaedia, available in several languages, based on voluntary contributions. It was inaugurated in November 2004 by American Christian Orthodox priest John Schroedel, and the Romanian language version was

started by a group of members of the Romanian Orthodox webmasters' association OrtodoxRoNet in November 2006 (*OrthodoxWiki:Despre*, n.d.). Ortodoxronet - the Association of Romanian Orthodox Webmasters - was founded as a virtual group in 2000 and as a legally established association in September 2004. Following its objectives, the association develops several kinds of projects: Christian Orthodox websites - the association's websites; resources for Christian Orthodox webmasters, various resources - Christian Orthodox calendars, the Holy Bible, the Pateric Book; consultancy for the Christian Orthodox webmasters - design, usability, promotion, search engine optimization, etc.; articles - analyses, articles, opinions, and attitudes regarding the Orthodox Internet. The association has the blessing of the Christian Orthodox Church but is not institutionally subordinated to it, being an independent, apolitical and non-profit organization (Asociatia Ortodoxronet, n.d.). The *OrthodoxWiki* logo was designed and donated by Zander with copyright to *OrthodoxWiki* and its administrator.

Fig. 6: Online encyclopedia *ro.orthodoxwiki.org* (2010)

*OrthodoxWiki* is a similar project to the famous *Wikipedia* and uses the same software - MediaWiki - a *heckuva wiki* search engine, only that, it is dedicated to the Orthodox world. The wiki system is a collaborative editing system: an article is written and developed through



the collaboration of all interested; each author, even if he or she has no theological knowledge, can contribute additional information or participate in some other way to the quality of an article (spelling or punctuation corrections, and so on). This collaborative system results in articles improving their quality continuously over time. The edits to the wiki

are completely reversible: Nothing is ever deleted, all versions of an article are kept in the site's database and any edits can be undone with a simple click (Nistea, n.d.). *OrthodoxWiki* is not only a multilingual project, but also a pan-Orthodox one, with contributors from all over the Orthodox world enriching the information with the particularities of different Orthodox traditions: Greek, Russian, Romanian, Serbian, Bulgarian, and more. (Ion, 2007). In the *About Us* section, *OrthodoxWiki* states that it is “not an official voice of Orthodoxy - among other things, this means that official documentation from particular Church officials does not constitute binding editorial policy for OrthodoxWiki. In other words, OrthodoxWiki regards itself as a beneficiary of the freedom of the press granted by the country of its server's residence” (*OrthodoxWiki:About*, n.d.). Also, the *Style Manual (Point of View)* explains that “a key concept in the way OrthodoxWiki functions is the «neutral point of view», or «N.P.O.V.». This concept is borrowed from Wikipedia but has been adapted to fit our Orthodox community and confession of faith” (*OrthodoxWiki:Style Manual (Point of View)*, n.d.).

Fig. 7: Google Analytics report of *ro.orthodoxwiki.org* for the period November 1 - December 1, 2010

The administrator of the Romanian version of *OrthodoxWiki* - *ro.orthodoxwiki.org* - as well as the French one - *fr.orthodoxwiki.org* - was in 2010 and continues to be the priest Iulian Nistea, member of *Ortodoxronet* - the Association of Romanian Orthodox Webmasters. Iulian Nistea lives in Paris and is a priest at the “Romanian Church in Paris”, the Metropolitan Cathedral “Saints Archangels Michael, Gabriel and Raphael” (Nistea, n.d.). In 2010, *ro.orthodoxwiki.org* had more than 1,600 articles about Holy Fathers teachings, theologians and Church writers, Christian Orthodox catechetical notions, churches and monasteries, and more. The site currently has 2,831 articles published in the Romanian language.

#### **4. Final remarks**

In 2010, some Romanian non-official and private websites with religious content were more popular than the official websites of the Romanian Orthodox Church. Given the fact that the first worldwide appearance of religious information in the online media was due to a group of Web enthusiasts, who were lay persons, this can be explained. The initial reluctance of the Church authority and distrust of a new communication medium also contributed to this situation, with official Christian Orthodox websites launched and indexed by Google later than private initiatives. If the non-official websites like *ro.orthodoxwiki.org* had the blessing of the Eastern Orthodox Church and were developed by non-profit organizations having a

missionary scope, private websites like *crestinortodox.ro* was developed mainly for financial gain. In recent years, the official websites of the Romanian Orthodox Church have grown in popularity and have been recognized by the general public as credible sources. For example, *crestinortodox.ro*, for a long time the undisputed leader in the “Spirituality” website category, is nowadays exceeded by *Doxologia.ro*, the official website of the Metropolis of Moldavia and Bukovina, which had an average of 97,027 unique users daily in 2021.

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