

Academic Values and Scholarly Communication

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Project Website and Associated Document Links:

<http://cshe.berkeley.edu/research/scholarlycommunication>

http://escholarship.org/uc/cshe_fsc

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Motivations and Approach

- **Assess the criteria by which faculty decide when and in what venues to communicate the results of scholarly research—at all stages of the scholarly communication lifecycle.**
- **Analyze what roles universities and faculty play in resolution of the perceived “crises” in scholarly communication.”**
- **Talk/listen to scholars and other stakeholders.**

Motivations and Approach

- **Premise: Disciplinary traditions and culture matter.**
- **Distinguish between Archival publishing and what we call In-Progress publishing (2005)**
- **Anthropologist--Not a publisher or librarian**
- **Empirical approach**

***Distinguish: In-progress* communication VS fully peer-reviewed **archival** publication**

A dichotomous situation:

- **Electronic forms of “print” (and other) publications *consumed* heavily.**
- **Perceptions and realities of the reward system = strong adherence to conventional, high-stature archival “print” publications as record for reporting research and **having** it evaluated institutionally.**
- **Promotion depends predominantly upon final, fully peer-reviewed archival publication (arts, professional schools different products).**
- **Making a “reputation” also dependent on where one publishes plus “in-progress” communication activities (e.g., conferences, service/public engagement, etc.)**

Methods

Research Universities

- **45 mostly elite institutions**
- **160+ scholars**
- **12 disciplinary case studies/OA/online**
- **Literature reviews**
- **Daily environmental scans (news, listservs, blogs, twitter, announcements, etc.)**

Planning project. 2005-2006

N=5 Anthropology, Biostatistics, Chemical Engineering, Law and Economics, English-language Literature.

Current project. 2007-2011

N=7 Astrophysics, Archaeology, Biology, Economics, History, Music, Political Science

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Informants

Relevant stakeholders /qualitative/interviews

- **Faculty primarily / R1s.**
- **Range of seniority (tenured, pretenure, postdocs, grad students).**
- **PLUS high level administrators, editors, publishers and librarians.**
- **Many more formal and informal conversations; attendance at meetings, literature and web review, tracking online interchanges.**

Interview Protocols/Topics

- (1) Tenure and promotion, making a name**
- (2) Criteria for disseminating research at various stages
(publication practices, new publication outlets, new genres)**
- (3) Sharing (w/ whom, when, why or why not?)**
- (4) Collaboration (w/ whom, when, why or why not?)**
- (5) Resources created and consumed; Needs**
- (6) Public engagement**
- (7) The Future**

Drivers of Faculty Behavior

- **Career advancement**
- **Moving the field forward**
- **Receiving credit and attribution**

The Current Publishing Landscape

- **Scholars use a range of mechanisms for disseminating scholarship at various stages.**
- **Within any given discipline there may be a variety of publishing strategies available to authors. But...**
- **Scholars in a field can name top 3-5 journals and/or university presses w/o missing a beat.**
- **Credit, Time, and Personality important influences on faculty choices**

Peer Review is the Coin of the Realm

Q's = Where faculty publish and why; how faculty are judged in promotion. We did NOT set out to study peer review. We heard:

- **THE value system supporting assessment of and perceived quality of research.**
- **The primary mechanism through which research quality is nurtured.**
- **The primary mechanism through which research is made both effective and efficient.**
- **Excellent quality filter** for the proliferating mass of scholarly information available on the web.

More difficult for time-pressed scholars to sift through it all.

This will get worse. Result in need for more formal gate-keeping.

Is T&P a Flexible System?

- **Stellar Publication record essential for T&P.**
- **Teaching, Public Engagement (aka Service) are secondary (age and institution dependent).**
- **Criteria: “Groundbreaking, moves field forward, judged of high quality by internal and external reviewers, original”**
- **Quality over quantity. Metrics such as impact factor often viewed w/ suspicion.**
- **Exceptions to the “rules” made—qualitative review is stated ideal.**
- **Databases, cell lines, critical editions, software, public engagement activities, teaching resources: credited in T&P decisions; rarely sole criteria in most fields and are not given equal weight as publications.**
- **New journals (incl. OA), New Genres, etc. are acceptable as long as peer reviewed.**

Peer Review and the Advancement Process

- **Heavy reliance on peer reviewed publications to aid institution/T&P committees and external reviewers in evaluation of scholarly work.**
- **Impt. of external reviews in T&P. Damning: “No one has heard of you.” “High impact” publications are a way of making a name.**
- **New Journals (incl. OA), New Genres are acceptable as long as peer reviewed. Many worry that lack of peer review is associated with newer, untested forms of publication.**
- **Advancement process can and *should* be supportive (and unprejudiced) of non-traditional publishing models, provided that peer review is strongly embedded.**
- **Written policy: New genres should NOT be undervalued in consideration of advancement. Does actual practice vary?**
- **T&P Committees not seeing many examples that deviate from the norm.**

The current publishing landscape (Bio)

- **In Molecular and cell biology a limited range of outlet type (although numerically many more journals in some subfields).**
- **Journal articles reigns and the more prestigious the journal the better from the perspective of faculty at competitive institutions. (e.g., *Nature*, *Cell*, *Science*)**
- **Society Journals (with scholar editors) the most trusted.**
- **Preprint servers are not the norm. Publication lags are exceptionally short.**

Sharing

- **Sharing What? With whom? When?**
- **Personality and disciplinary tradition very impt.**
- **Early “half-baked” work? Universally not shared publicly.**
- **Young scholars especially conservative re sharing work.**

Giving it Away? Sharing Varies by Discipline

- **First w/ trusted circle of colleagues. Modicum of privacy needed.**
- **Conferences/seminars. Impt.**
- **Public Posting of Working Papers in some disciplines (different than post-prints).**
- **Not posted until it has been vetted by inner circle and deemed good enough. “Penultimate” drafts.**

Preprint/Working Paper cultures

High paradigm/quant. fields, e.g., Physics, Astrophys, etc. —arXiv

Econ, Quant Poli Sci –SSRN, IRs, personal websites

Preprints culture non-existent

Bio? Non existent in MCB before publication—commercial potential, uber competitive fields.

History/Arch/Musicology? Early sharing rare.

Public Engagement Service to the Discipline and the Public

- **Engagement with the public valued at the institutional level and occurs in all fields we investigated.**
- **Considered an important part of “service” and is judged by tenure and promotion committees as such.**
- **In disciplines such as biology and astrophysics (and for faculty at publicly funded institutions), scholars feel an “obligation” to give back to the public in return for taxpayer funding.**
- **Important: public engagement is only viewed as appropriate on any appreciable scale once a scholar has been promoted and has made a name in the field.**
- **General public reception of one’s work has little impact on the strength of one’s T&P case, and can sometimes have a negative effect if not accompanied by a stellar research record.**

Public Engagement **Variability in Engagement**

- Degree to which scholars engage with the public varies according to age, personality, and discipline.
- E.g., scholars in highly theoretical fields reported less public interest in their work than scholars in biology, history or archaeology.
- Opportunities for public engagement follow the changing interest in the public arena, as “topical” subjects shift with current events.
- Some manage their own public outreach, but mediators like publishers, press office liaisons, bloggers, and journalists play an important role in some fields to connect scholarly work to the broader public debate.
- Mainstream press does not always appreciate the “nuances” of academic research. Takes time to engage with journalists.
- Several scholars valued the importance of academia as preserving a “pure space” for research, the larger implications of which may not be worked out for some time.

Public Engagement Many Perceived “Publics”

- **Scholars interpreted the question to refer to a wide spectrum of activities and described their own personal “publics.”**
- **One biologist interpreted public engagement as embodied in expanding private industry partnerships.**
- **Political scientists and economists mentioned consulting work with the government and NGOs.**
- **Teaching, public lectures, op-ed pieces, K-12 outreach, performances, websites, TV and radio interviews, etc., were also cited as important mechanisms for engagement.**
- **Online education (OER’s, now MOOCS) important to engagement with public for some.**

Conclusions

- **Scholars want to read a piece of work once. Time is limited and coveted.**
- **In career advancement, distinguish among—open access journals, postprints of published material, well-developed preprints and working papers published on web site, vs blogs and other casual non-peer reviewed postings/activities.**
- **Disciplinary culture and tradition, PLUS individual's imperative to advance his/her career and field will always be important in competitive environments.**
- **Sharing is complex. Building systems that assume early sharing of ideas can be a waste of time if ignorant of culture in a field.**
- **Young scholars? Adopting norms and advice of mentors. They are very conservative in archival publication choices, sharing behavior.**
- **Fear of being scooped and getting off track. Shouldn't expect young scholars to take career risks.**

Academic Values and Scholarly Communication Practices: Faculty Choice and Opinion in Twelve Disciplines

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Scholarly Communication Report

http://escholarship.org/uc/cshe_fsc

Peer Review

<http://cshe.berkeley.edu/publications/publications.php?id=379>

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