

Scholarly  
Communication in the  
Digital Era for the  
Public Good



# Scholarly Communication in the Digital Era for the Public Good

JustPublics@365

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## About JustPublics@365

JustPublics@365 is a bold experiment in bringing together academics, activists and journalists, across the usual silos, to address social justices issues through the use of digital media. It is our belief that neither the media nor academia nor Internet activists can address the pressing problems of the 21st century by working in isolation.

This e-book is the result of our ongoing efforts to create new synergies around issues of scholarly communication in the digital era for the public good.

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# Who We Are

## WHO WE ARE

### Project Team Leadership &

The project is led by Jessie Daniels, Professor of Public Health, Sociology and Environmental Psychology at the Graduate Center and the CUNY School of Public Health and Polly Thistlethwaite, Chief Librarian at the Mina Rees Library, of the Graduate Center. This series and e-book has benefitted from the contributions of dozens of individuals and we are grateful to them for lending their words to this project.

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MAIN BODY



*Chapter 1*

# Introduction

This is e-book on Scholarly Communication in the Digital Era for the Public Good intended to deepen and extend the conversations we began at our Summit in March, 2013. This e-book is a compilation of a topic series that appeared on the JustPublics@365 blog. As we've done before, we curate a topic series – blog posts, multimedia content like podcasts all around a specific topic – then we compile them into an e-book. In each one, we feature guests and highlight work here across traditional silos of academia, activism and journalism and media.



(Image Source)

In the 20th century, scholars communicated within relatively small fields of other experts and did so primarily through monographs and peer-reviewed journal articles. Those works of schol-

arship were discoverable because they were indexed and sorted into card catalogs and bound reference manuals.

These analog forms of scholarly communication are now joined by new modes of digital expression that augment and occasionally supplant earlier forms. In this final topic series, we will explore changes in the modes and emphases of scholarly communication, examining the shift from book- and journal-centric academic publishing to open access hybrids and alternatives, including film and video.

We'll also explore the ways that social media can serve scholars to connect their work with wider audiences, including non-academic readers, activists, journalists and engaged citizens. What responsibilities do scholars have to shape and reflect public understandings? What can academics do to contribute fully to efforts to enhance the public good?

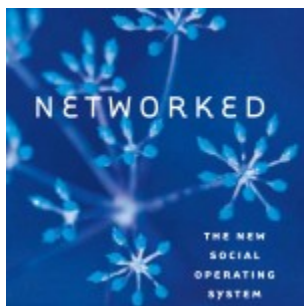
These are some of the questions that we explore in the e-book that follows.

## Chapter 2

# Scholarly Life Transformed by Digital Media

by Jessie Daniels

Scholarly life is being transformed by digital media, changing both how we do our work as scholars and the audiences we can reach with our work.



In their 2012 book *Networked*, authors Barry Wellman and Lee Rainie (Director of the Pew Research Center's Internet and American Life Project) suggest that "Triple Revolution" – the simultaneous rise of the Internet, mobile technology and social networks – has transformed people's relationships with each other and to information. This transformation is

also affecting researchers, according to a new study of a Canadian scholarly association, GRAND – an acronym for Graphics, Animation and New Media. The report states:

"Digital media provides the scholars with enhanced global connectivity with kindred colleagues, including increased visibility, access to specialized GRAND experts, and contact with prestigious senior faculty. Yet, it is the scholars' in-person encounters as collaborators and

conference-goers that create and maintain their online contacts.”

The study also overturns popular assertions (for example, by MIT professor Sherry Turkle) that technology creates social isolation by replacing in-person encounters with online connections: “Rather than digital media luring people away from in-person contact, larger networks make more use of digital media, overall and per capita,” the study concludes.

There is also evidence that being a ‘networked scholar’ increases publications and presentations, as well as also in the informal exchange and advice between colleagues. Collaborative tools and technologies were also a factor in more papers being coauthored within and across disciplines and geographic areas. As a follow-up report internal to GRAND summed up: “In a nutshell, better-connected researchers are more productive.”



(Image Source)

I wrote recently about the way digital media is changing the way I do scholarship. In [this piece](#), I chronicle the way a disgruntled conference Tweet became a blog post, then a series of blog posts, and then an article in a peer-reviewed journal. For me, the use of digital media is transforming how I approach being a scholar. Twitter is not simply a tool for disseminating research, it's a tool I think with and through. Blogging is often the way I compose a first draft of a thought I may develop further for publication elsewhere.



Of course, not every Tweet or blog post goes on to a life in peer-reviewed publication, but every peer-reviewed publication of mine has made a first appearance in some form on digital media.

This way of doing scholarly life has opened up amazing new possibilities for much wider audiences for the knowledge we produce as academics.

Melissa Terras found in a recent study of the relationship between mentions on social media and peer-review papers that:

*The papers that were tweeted and blogged had at least more than 11 times the number of downloads than their sibling paper which was left to its own devices in the institutional repository.*

Terras concludes by saying:

*if you want people to find and read your research, build up a digital presence in your discipline, and use it to promote your work when you have something interesting to share. It's pretty darn obvious, really: If (social media interaction is often) then (Open access + social media = increased downloads).*

Even when scholars choose to publish in journals that are not traditionally open access, there is a positive return on investing time in social media (and may even nudge publishers along the road toward opening their journals). For example, in December 2013 scholars Inger Mewburn and Pat Thomson wrote about their experience with publishing articles about their academic blogging. They write:

As this post is being written, the Taylor and Francis count shows that our "Why do academics blog?" paper has been viewed 1914 times in the seven weeks since it was published (we should point out that this is about seven times less than one of our blogs attracts on a normal weekday).

As their articles drew more attention through social media outlets, it shifted the access their publisher provided. Here again, Mewburn and Thomson:

The link to 50 'free view' copies, which each of us were sent via email, was tweeted once by each of us and placed on the Facebook page connected to one of our blogs. These free copies were rapidly downloaded and people started requesting the article via Twitter and social media. Noting the interest, **Taylor and Francis themselves issued a press release about it and (thankfully) made it gold open access.** An article appeared on the **'Third Degree' blog** attached to the Australian newspaper 'The Age'. Third Degree highlighted some of the more controversial aspects of the findings, which generated yet more hits on the article database.

Here, Mewburn and Thomson point to an important way to shift the routinely closed vaults of a publisher like Taylor & Francis by using social media and legacy media, such as more traditional news outlets. Where Mewburn and Thomson started with the question, "should academics blog?" they answer their own question in this conclusion:

But in our minds the answer to the question "Should I blog?" is now a clear and resounding "Yes", at least, if conventional indicators of academic success are your aim. **Bloggng is now part of a complex online 'attention economy' where social media like Twitter and Facebook are not merely dumb 'echo chambers' but a massive global conversation which can help your work travel much further than you might initially think.**

The research seems to support the claim that scholarly life is being transformed by digital media in a number of ways. How is it transforming your work?

*Jessie Daniels is Professor of Public Health, Sociology and Psychology at the Graduate Center and Hunter College, and the co-director of JustPublics@365.*

*Chapter 3*

# The Unhappy Divorce of Journalism and the Social Sciences

by Arlene Stein

Just about the worst thing you can say about a piece of sociological writing is that it's "journalistic." The term is often used as a criticism, interchangeable at times with "descriptive", "thin," or just plain superficial.

There's good reason many of us have little confidence in journalism: the closer a story comes to our own experience, the easier it is to see its flaws. Take, for example, the article about the proliferation of "hooking up" on college campuses that appeared in *The New York Times* a few years ago.



(Source: [New York Times](#), “Sex on Campus”)

The story claimed that hooking up—sex outside of relationships—is commonplace on college campuses, and is being pursued as actively by women as men. On the basis of interviews with a small number of women at elite schools like the University of Pennsylvania, the article claimed that busy women students didn’t have time for full-blown relationships, so they opted for more superficial sexual liaisons.

It was quickly denounced by sociologists, who charged that the reporter based on claims on flimsy evidence. It was even more roundly criticized on the Internet by college students who felt that the article’s generalizations were unfair or inaccurate. Many of their classmates were indeed pursuing long-term relationships, some argued. A veritable cottage industry of commentary cropped up alongside the article, showing the press’ power to incite and engage. (See, for example <http://goo.gl/vg57t>.)



(Image Source)

“Don’t let the facts get in the way of a good story,” journalists frequently joke. And in fact, for journalists, who must hook the reader in and keep their attention in order to hold onto their jobs, storytelling is an end in itself. Since their audiences are reading for the sheer pleasure of good writing, they write, at least partly, to entertain, and to encourage readers to keep reading.

This is how George Saunders, the award-winning author of nonfiction and short stories, puts it:

"I'm essentially trying to impersonate a first-time reader who has to pick up the story and at every point has to decide whether to continue reading." If an "intelligent person picks it up, they'll keep going. It's an intimate thing between equals. I'm not above you talking down. We're on the same level. You're just as smart, just as worldly, just as curious as I am."

Academic books, in contrast, tend to be written for a finite group of other experts, conveying an argument which is typically based on an extended research project. Writing a first book, which often emerges out of a dissertation, you may envision your audiences as particular professors on a tenure committee. Later on, you're probably addressing experts in your field. While the writing should be persuasive, academics don't particularly care if they're holding the reader's attention or not; they assume that what they say is inherently interesting, and that their potential readers are sufficiently intrigued by the topic to read on—even if the writing is less than scintillating.

Faced with these differences of purpose and audience, some would suggest that we leave storytelling to the journalists, and sociologizing to the sociologists. Let journalists speak to the people, while let sociologists keep working in the trenches, doing the hard work of data collection and analysis. As a graduate student of mine recently told me, "Sociology is supposed to be serious and scientific, not entertaining and story-like."

Sociology and journalism, he was taught, are as different as cows and horses.



(Image Source)

Early in their graduate school careers, students learn that professionalization means performing the role of sociologist, and differentiating oneself from those who value good writing for their own sake, and who write to entertain—writers of fiction and non-fiction. Rather than writing pleasurable prose, they are supposed to be advancing sociological knowledge.

But in fact, sociology and journalism have long existed in relation to one another. For one thing, sociologists know what they know partly through the media. And of course social scientists rely, at times, upon the media to disseminate our ideas to broader publics.

Likewise, journalists regularly mine sociological work for insights on everything from young adults' changing pathways to adulthood, to the question of whether equality diminishes sexual desire, and sociologists are used to being consulted as experts for that telling quote on a variety of subjects. The best journalists do even more: browsing the web and journals for story ideas. They regularly raid our work, popularizing it for others to consume—at times without citing us.

Sociologists and journalists also have in common the fact that they're both in the business of producing representations of social reality—stories—accounts of connected events that unfolds through time, which have characters that interact with another in different settings. Journalists and sociologists have different strate-

gies of storytelling, to be sure. When journalists tell stories about social phenomena, such as hooking up on college campuses and other social trends, they tend to tell them through the lives of individuals—they *show* the reader what is going on, painting portraits of scenes and characters. Sociologists, in contrast, *tell*—they make arguments, drawing on data— numbers if we are quantitative sociologist, or vignettes and thick description if we are ethnographers.

But while we sociologists have been busy honing our rigorous methodological skills and ways of telling, we've ceded the field of translation, which requires showing, to smart journalists. By failing to discuss our work in compelling ways, we limit its impact, placing a wall, in effect, between our work and potential audiences.

Rather than deride “popular sociology” which addresses larger publics, in book-length works of general interest as well as shorter articles and essays –it's time to reclaim it as something to aspire to. Popular sociology offers the general reader a sociological take on something he or she may be curious about. It embodies a hybrid style of writing, bridging journalism and sociology by showing and telling, painting a portrait of a group, a scene, or a trend that unfolds over time, offering thick description while analyzing what is occurring beneath the surface of events.

*Arlene Stein is Professor of Sociology at Rutgers University, and editor of Contexts Magazine*





*Chapter 4*

# Roundup of Responses to Kristof's Call for Professors in the Public Sphere

by Jessie Daniels

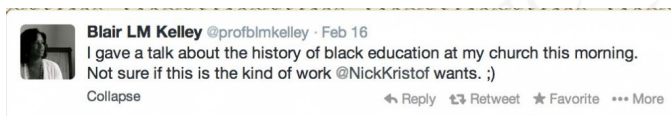
Nick Kristof, columnist for the New York Times, published an *op-ed* on Sunday pointing out the need for professors in the public sphere. His criticism is basically that most academics are not engaged in 'today's great debates':

Some of the smartest thinkers on problems at home and around the world are university professors, but most of them just don't matter in today's great debates. The most stinging dismissal of a point is to say: "That's academic." In other words, to be a scholar is, often, to be irrelevant.

Lots of academics immediately jumped on Twitter using the hashtag *#engagedacademics* (still going strong) and let Kristof know what they thought he got wrong, primarily that many of us are (already) engaged and we're doing it through Twitter. Kristof replied via his Facebook page, saying (in part):

One objection is that in fact there are lots of professors on Twitter. Sure, but there are 1.5 million professors in America, and not nearly enough throw themselves into public engagement.

Basically, the Twitter critics of Kristof came down around a 'cast a wider net for how you define engagement' argument, such as this comment from Professor Blair Kelley (@profblmkelley):



The print edition of the *New York Times* has the **letters to the editors** they selected to respond to Kristof (I see mine didn't make it), with a range of critiques suggesting:

1. more user-inspired, policy-relevant research (Gromes),
2. cast a wider net for defining engagement (Sugrue),
3. change the outputs of scholarly research to include forms intended for public audiences (Iglesias)
4. this is an old attack on academics and is anti-intellectual (Steinberger)
5. think tanks are the answer, though even think tanks have a hard time finding academics who can speak to a broad audience (Selee).

A number of **#engagedacademics** took to longer-than-140 blog post form to post their critiques of Kristof. Here's a roundup of what they had to say, organized very broadly by key arguments (of course, many posts make several arguments, so please do read the linked posts for more nuance than this bulleted list summary).

#### **What academics need is more online navel-gazing:**

- Chuck Pearson, **started the hashtag #EngagedAcademics**, and explains at some length, why he did.

#### **This is an old criticism:**

- Sarah Chinn, **The Public (Anti-)Intellectual**: But beyond the specifics of whether academics do or don't have anything to say in the public square, I'm more interested in the theme itself, which seems to reappear every now and then. In a nutshell, it's this: oh you

eggheaded academics! Why can't you talk to the common person about interesting things? This is hardly a new development. Richard Hofstadter wrote the groundbreaking *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* in 1966, for God's sake, and he traced complaining about people who think they're smarter than everyone else back to the very beginnings of the American Republic.

- Pat Thomson, *academics all write badly..another response to a familiar critique*: In the UK context, Kristof's argument seems like a very cheap shot indeed. Another go at academics for being obscure and difficult. Yes, we all write the odd arcane paper and yes, it is rewarded and yes, it might only be read by three people. But we also try really hard to write other things too. Today's academic writes and publishes for a range of audiences. What's more, and by the way, I thought mentally wagging my finger at Kristof, the UK academy and the public are not as easily cut apart as that.

### **It's the reward structure:**

- Austin Frakt, *"Publish and Vanish"*: academics are generally not directly rewarded professionally for translation and dissemination work, particularly via new and social media. Promotion and tenure is usually based on number and prestige of scholarly publications, classroom teaching, and "service" (e.g., roles on institutional committees). Of these, publishing is the most uncertain and angst-ridden process. "Publish or perish," is a familiar characterization. But, if by publishing

only in obscure academic journals, one disappears from broader, public view, perhaps we should say, “Publish *and vanish*.”

- **Syreeta, UofVenus/Feministing:** Above all, his column and subsequent **blog post** just seem so out-of-touch with the machine of the academy. There are real-life economic interests that drive our intelligentsia towards publishing “gobbledygook...hidden in obscure journals,” which are inextricably linked to a very powerful interest by said academics in securing full-time employment. People need jobs, my dude! And publication is a critical motivator and performance metric for the academic seeking tenure at any private or public institution. Compounded by the rising cost of tuition and the painful underfunding of scholarly research (**the social sciences in particular**), these spots for long-term employment are coveted; in March, **a vote led by Senator Coburn** barred funding for scholarly research in political science that doesn't promote national security or economic interests. Colleges cut tenure lines for departments with a frequency that I'm not able to quantify. Add as a multiplier the growing **adjunct specialized labor underclass**, highly competitive and woefully underpaid posts for emerging academics seeking entry into the academy, who also have to write and publish to gain visibility and survive.
- **Christine Cheng, Academia and Incentives:** The core problem is one of incentives within academia: Academic prestige/tenure/promotion is based

purely on publications. On the surface, this seems like a fair way of gauging merit. But it means that everything else that professors do tends to run a distant second (teaching, administration and service, public engagement). Given the fierce competition for academic posts these days, no one is going to give up their research time for public engagement (unless s/he enjoys doing it if they don't already have tenure).

- Stephen Manning, *Transforming Academia*: There might be another, underutilized way of making academia more progressive and impactful: hiring and promotion policies. Many of us scholars are involved in recruiting new PhD students and faculty every year. And oftentimes – let's be honest – it comes down to a simple question: can this person publish or not? It should be obvious that this selection mechanism will reproduce the very mindset that prevents academia from making a more important impact in this world. Instead, I propose that hiring should be guided by: academic interest, mindset and experience outside academia.
- Janet Stemwedel, *Scientific American*: "...ignores that the current structures of retention, tenure, and promotion, of hiring, of grant-awarding, keep score with metrics like impact factors that entrench the primacy of a conversation in the pages of peer-reviewed journals while making other conversations objectively worthless — at least from the point of view of the evaluation on which one's academic career flourishes or founders."

**I would, but I'm teaching four classes (variation on reward structure):**

- Laura Tanenbaum, *Jacobin*: As *one* of *those* professors teaching four classes at a community college, I do wish I had more time for my (perfectly lucid if I may say so) writing, but I also have a crazy idea that teaching hundreds of working-class, immigrant, and first generation college students every year might be a way of serving the public. I didn't realize the only way to do that was to be a consigliere."

**We're already here (variation on 'cast a wider net'):**

- Erik Voeten, *MonkeyCage*: Yet, the piece is just a merciless exercise in stereotyping. It's like saying that op-ed writers just get their stories from cab drivers and pay little or no attention to facts. There are hundreds of academic political scientists whose research is far from irrelevant and who seek to communicate their insights to the general public via blogs, social media, op-eds, online lectures and so on. *They are easier* to find than ever before. Indeed The New York Times *just found one* to help fill the void of Nate Silver's departure. I am with *Steve Saideman* that political scientists are now probably engaging the public more than ever.
- Erica Chenoweth, *A Note on Academic (Ir)relevance*: This is the part that surprised me the most about Kristof's article: the supposition that our work is only relevant if it directly influences "important people." But what if one's work speaks to people outside of these

traditional halls of power? Is such impact irrelevant? For example, many sociologists, whom Kristof writes off as a bunch of radicals who are hopelessly lost of any relevance, tend to be quite engaged with the problems of our day — just not in the way Kristof seems to privilege. Just check out [Sociologists without Borders](#), or different proponents of [applied sociology](#), and you will find that many sociologists work tirelessly (and often without compensation) to draw on the insights of their work to improve the lives of ordinary people.

**Kristof things the category ‘public intellectual’ is only for white dudes:**

- Raul Pacheco-Vega, [Challenges of Public Engagement for Marginalized Voices](#): he reason that prompted me to write this post was the repeated process where the pieces most retweeted and engaged upon (even by Kristof himself) were those of white males. You could always say that it was only those academics who took it upon themselves to write a piece in response, and I’m grateful that they did. But there were several women who wrote very smart take-downs of Kristof’s column, and I saw less conversation and publicizing of those while I followed the conversation on Twitter.

**Marginalized people are to be saved, not speak for themselves:**

- Corey Robin, [Look Who Kristof’s Saving Now](#): I don’t ever expect Kristof to look to the material sources of this problem; that would require him to raise the sorts

of questions about contemporary capitalism that journalists of his ilk are not inclined—or paid—to raise. But Kristof's a fellow who likes to save the world. So maybe this is something he can do. Instead of writing about the end of public intellectuals, why not devote a column a month to unsung writers who need to be sung?

### Some practical advice for how to be more engaged:

- Robert Kelchen, *What Can We Do?: Work on cultivating a public presence*. Academics who are serious about being public intellectuals should work to develop a strong public presence. If your institution supports a professional website under the faculty directory, be sure to do that. Otherwise, use Twitter, Facebook, or blogging to help create connections with other academics and the general public. One word of caution: if you have strong opinions on other topics, consider a personal and a professional account. **Try to reach out to journalists**. Most journalists are available via social media, and some of them are more than willing to engage with academics doing work of interest to their readers. Providing useful information to journalists and responding to their tweets can result in being their source for articles. *Help a Reporter Out (HARO)*, which sends out regular e-mails about journalists seeking sources on certain topics, is a good resource for academics in some disciplines. I have used HARO to get several interviews in various media outlets regarding financial aid questions.



**Oh, look, we've built an organization (or two) to connect scholars to the public sphere:**

- Amy Fried and Luisa S. Deprez, [Talking Points Memo](#): "...in 2009, when recognizing the gap between those researching possible solutions to pressing policy issues and those in power searching for such answers, Theda Skocpol, a world-renowned professor of government and sociology of Harvard University, led the charge with other top scholars like [Jacob S. Hacker](#) of Yale University, [Lawrence R. Jacobs](#) of the University of Minnesota, and [Suzanne Mettler](#) of Cornell University, to start the Scholars Strategy Network. The organization is a national association of professors and graduate students devoted to sharing their expertise with policymakers and the public to improve public policy and enhance democracy."
- [An Open Letter from the Scholar Strategy Network](#).
- And finally part of my, unpublished, letter to the editor in response to Kristof: PhD's are rarely trained to be public intellectuals. Public engagement garners little reward in tenure and promotion structures that favor publication in journals largely out-of-reach to readers not affiliated with a subscribing university library. Last year, with Ford Foundation support, the Graduate Center, CUNY launched JustPublics@365, a project to connect academics with wider publics. More than 400 (with 1,000 more waiting) attended digital media training. More will train at the American Sociological Association meeting in August. Many

professors want to engage more fully, they just don't know how. It's time for professors to go back to school, and it's time for universities to reward public scholarship.

*Jessie Daniels is Professor of Public Health, Sociology and Psychology at the Graduate Center and Hunter College, and the co-director of Just-Publics@365.*

*Chapter 5*

# Research Without Borders

by Jessie Daniels

Earlier today, Polly and I attended an excellent panel hosted by our cross-town colleagues at the Scholarly Communication Program at Columbia University. The event, “*Research without Borders: Negotiating Constraints and Open Scholarship*,” featured a stellar panel of interesting speakers, including our very own *Leith Mullings* is Distinguished Professor of Anthropology at the Graduate Center, CUNY, *Dennis Tenen* (@dennistenen) is Assistant Professor of Digital Humanities and New Media Studies at Columbia University, and *Lela Prashad* (@lelap) is co-founder and Chief Data Scientist at *Nijel*.

Perhaps not surprisingly, there was also a lively backchannel discussion happening via Twitter. Here’s the Storify of those Tweets:

<http://storify.com/JessieNYC/research-without-borders-negotiating-constraints-a>

*Jessie Daniels is Professor of Public Health, Sociology and Psychology at the Graduate Center and Hunter College, and the co-director of JustPublics@365.*



Chapter 6

# FutureEd Discussion Recap

by Jessie Daniels

Here's a **recap** of some of our discussion last Friday, about the meta-MOOC on the future of higher ed.

<http://storify.com/JessieNYC/futureed-discussion-at-cuny>

There is a new set of lectures for **Week 3** is up on Coursera.

*Jessie Daniels is Professor of Public Health, Sociology and Psychology at the Graduate Center and Hunter College, and the co-director of JustPublics@365.*



*Chapter 7*

# FutureEd Recap: Neoliberalism and Higher Ed

by Polly Thistlethwaite

Our Valentine's Day noontime #FutureEd discussion transcended MOOC platform and performance commentary and got on to the topic of neoliberalism and higher education.

See the JustPublics@365 near blow-by-blow captured in Storify mini-documentary format, featuring live tweets from the discussion.

<http://storify.com/JessieNYC/futureed-discussion-2-14>

As you can tell from the Storify, we identified neoliberal ideas and imperatives that shape and reflect our work in higher education, for example:

- Return on Investment (ROI) is expected, researchers must demonstrate excellence in a framework that factors in profit
- Some higher ed initiatives profit while others do not; administrators balance this
- Higher Ed rewards transcend a likely (or promised) higher salary (and taxable income)
- Education hides its value; benefits are elusive, unpredictable, uncertain
- a recent [LSE Impact Blog](#) points to the limits of neoliberal argument; the greatest imperative to open

access (OA) scholarship isn't that it will save higher ed \$\$

- Is the move to "massify" higher ed necessarily neoliberal?
- Digitization and OA scholarship has opened medieval studies to new, larger audiences
- How do we resist the influence of money in higher ed?

Additionally, we circled back a couple times to the multiple choice test, reading the course's perpetual correct answer "all of the above" as critique of a flawed form.

And, we admired *Michael Wesch's and students' A Vision of Students Today* that crafts a student-reported survey into a cohesive narrative critique of higher ed's lecture format. Form=content.

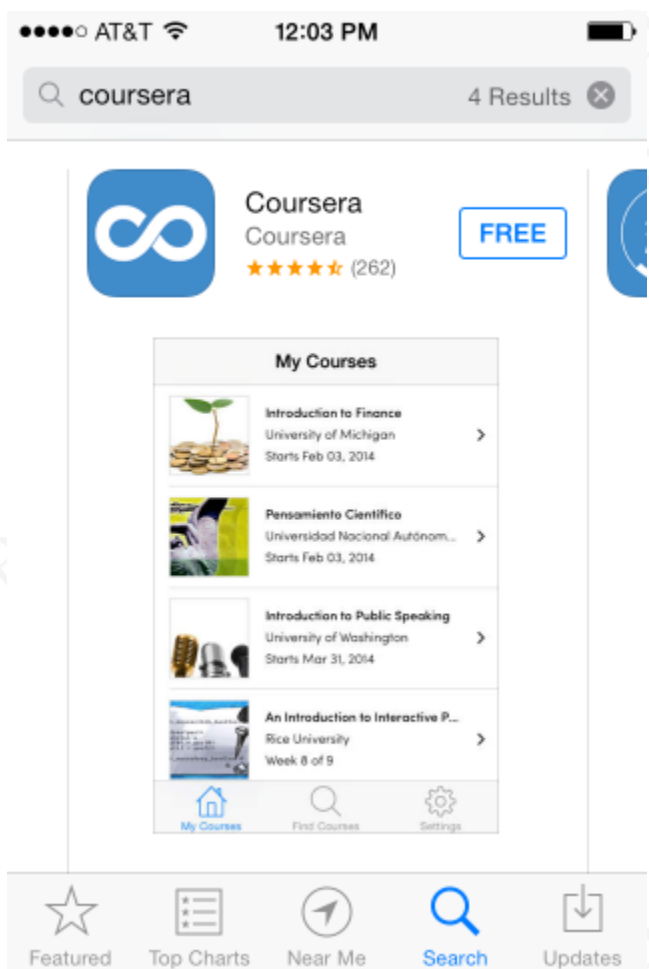
A final tip: the free Coursera mobile app offers an additional platform for the course. It's perfect for watching videos and linking to most readings, but it doesn't fully support all forum interactivity on all devices. Download it to experience another MOOC platform and to do your course work on the subway.

Join us next Friday, 2/21 at noon in the GC Dining Commons (8th Floor) when the word on the street is that Cathy Davidson may, in fact, visit with us in person for our lunchtime chat.

You might also follow the #FutureEd CHE weekly student-centered blog <http://chronicle.com/blogs/future/>. This is the first time that we know of that the Chronicle has created a blog for students, inviting the 21st century learners to talk about their experiences with the massive, open, online platform.

*Polly Thistlethwaite is Chief Librarian at the Mina Rees Library, of the Graduate Center and co-director of JustPublics@365.*





Coursera app from iTunes



*Chapter 8*

# Cathy N. Davidson Visiting In-Person for Lunchtime Discussion of #FutureEd

by Jessie Daniels

How do you unlearn? How do you remove the filters we have – like culture – that may prevent us from learning?

We'll explore these questions and others having to do with the transformation of higher education in the 21st century tomorrow at our [lunchtime discussion section](#) of the meta-MOOC curated by Cathy N. Davidson.

And, as a special treat, tomorrow we'll actually have **Professor Davidson live, in person**, with us at the discussion!

Everyone is welcome (if you don't work at the GC, simply come to the building at 365 Fifth Avenue, at the corner of 34th St., show your photo ID, and proceed to the Dining Commons, 8th Floor). Look for the JustPublics@365 tent cards on tables near the back (the banquettes).

The discussion will be lead by: Lisa Brundage (Director, CUNY Advance), Polly Thistlethwaite (Chief Librarian), and me, Jessie Daniels (Professor, CUNY).

*Jessie Daniels is Professor of Public Health, Sociology and Psychology at the Graduate Center and Hunter College, and the co-director of JustPublics@365.*



*Chapter 9*

# FutureEd Recap: Unlearning

by Jessie Daniels

At our Feb 21 lunchtime **FutureEd discussion**, we had the good fortune to be joined by Cathy Davidson for a chat about unlearning and the state of the MOOC. We opened by each sharing a story that involved unlearning. In examples that ranged from home aquariums to classrooms to social justice, we shared moments of transformation. As far ranging as the specific instances were, what emerged from the group is that unlearning is transformative because it pushes us to have authentic learning experiences and to know by doing, not to know by thin content acquisition. When it comes to our classrooms, this is especially tricky. Academic professions are built around the idea of content mastery in specialized fields, and our students often come the expectation that we will transfer knowledge to them. Even when teachers and students both understand that active, experiential learning yields the best results, we can experience significant resistance on both sides when we leave behind the simple transaction between the lecturer and listener for the wilds of the immersive and experiential. Perhaps what teachers can do for our students is to model how to be comfortable with uncertainty, and take risks ourselves. Our current cultural fascination with technology in the classroom is really just a ruse: technology is the ploy that encourages teachers and students to move out of their comfort zones and into better ways of learning. Professor Davidson echoed this sentiment in sharing what has been the most surprising about teaching a MOOC: it is not the massiveness of the scale, but the

intimacy of human exchanges via the discussion forums, social media, and local groups.

See the Storify of live tweets from the talk:

<https://storify.com/JessieNYC/futureed-discussion-at-cuny-2-21>

*Jessie Daniels is Professor of Public Health, Sociology and Psychology at the Graduate Center and Hunter College, and the co-director of JustPublics@365.*

*Chapter 10*

# FutureEd Recap: the Test

by Polly Thistlethwaite

<http://storify.com/cunyGCLibrary/futureed-recap-the-test>

*Polly Thistlethwaite is Chief Librarian at the CUNY Graduate Center  
and co-director of JustPublics@365*





*Chapter 11*

# FutureEd Recap: The Final Noontime Conversation for Now

by Polly Thistlethwaite

<http://storify.com/cunyGClibrary/futureed-the-final-noontime-gc-conversation-for-no>

*Polly Thistlethwaite is Chief Librarian at the Mina Rees Library, of the Graduate Center and co-director of JustPublics@365.*



# PART II. OPEN ACCESS PUBLISHING: THE KEY TO SCHOLARLY COMMUNICATION IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE

These changes in higher education and scholarly communication are intricately connected to the debates happening around, “[open access](#).”

[Open Access](#) (OA) stands for unrestricted access and reuse. People’s lives can sometimes depend on the work that researchers publish. This is particularly true when it comes to pressing health issues, such as HIV/AIDS. For research that may not be as immediately applicable to human survival, open access is still important. [Here’s more on why that matters](#), from PLOS.

In the U.S., the new [Federal Research Public Access Act \(FRPAA\)](#), now makes it a *requirement* to make publicly-funded research available “free online public access.” The FRPAA requires publications be made open access “as soon as practicable” after publication (Section 4.b.4), but no later than six months after publication.

In this section, a group of experts in the intricacies of open access contribute their insights to this volume.



*Chapter 12*

# Open Access Publishing: Promise and Uncertainties



by Polly Thistlethwaite

## Librarians

have been too successful. We have made it seamless for faculty and students to get to licensed electronic books and articles that are, in fact, locked behind **paywalls**. We render paywalls completely invisible to

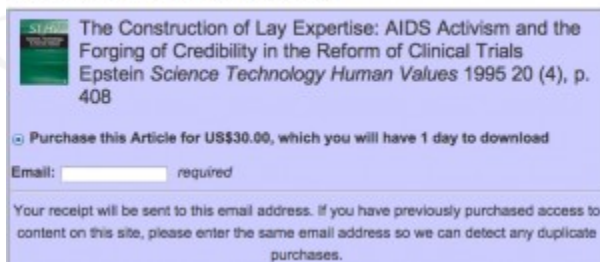
searchers in library IP-space. And off-site users are guided through proxy servers to their information destination with minimal interruption, sometimes only once the first time we login.

We've made it easy, then, for those within academic institutions to not realize that anyone outside, without a research library to go to, without university credentials to unlock access, is blocked from the databases, books, and articles we in higher education enjoy for free.



Well, it's not really free. University readers pay for access with taxes and tuition, not with a credit card like unaffiliated readers must.

### Purchase Short-Term Access



Universal, open access publishing is essential to extending the works and benefits of higher education. Publishing “open access” allows authors to connect with the widest possible audiences, locally and globally.

We in higher ed must rethink how we produce, distribute, and value scholarship. Why do scholars write? Why is scholarly publishing out of reach to so many readers? What evidence signals that scholarship is meaningful?

Some of the pressing questions about open access publishing and scholarly communication include:

1. Can MOOCs succeed without open online scholarship?
2. Does open access publishing threaten university presses, learned societies, the peer review system, and academic life as we know it?
3. How do I guard against predatory publishers trying to make a buck off of OA publication fees?

4. How does an author find an open access journal or publisher?
5. How does an over-extended public university academic actually self-archive work that is already published? Is academia.edu any good?
6. How does an over-extended public university academic editing a peer-reviewed journal make that journal open access without sacrificing all free time to the effort?
7. What started this open access craze, and why are librarians smack in the middle of it? Is it just a fad?
8. How can a CUNY scholar negotiate with a prestigious publisher to retain copyright to a work, and live to tell about it?
9. What are Creative Commons licenses, and what does copyright have to do with open access publishing?
10. What the heck is metadata, and what does it have to do with open access publishing?
11. Do social scientists and humanists really have to worry about open access scholarship? Our journals are not so expensive.
12. If a publisher's prestige isn't as important as the impact of scholarship, how do we evaluate faculty for tenure and promotion?

In this topic series on scholarly communication, I and my CUNY librarian colleagues, will explore open access publishing – its promise and its uncertainties.

*Polly Thistlethwaite is Chief Librarian at the Mina Rees Library, of the Graduate Center and co-director of JustPublics@365.*





*Chapter 13*

# Information Sharing as a Common Good

by Silvia Cho and Beth Posner

## **On the Intersection of Traditional Interlibrary Loan Services and Open Access Publishing**

A scholarly communication system can enable information sharing. It can encourage it. Or, it can make sharing impossible.



Dennis Dillon observes that traditional scholarly publishing, maintained by copyright protections and subscription licensing, exploits and encourages competition. Talent, funding, and resources accrue easily to elite universi-

ties with large budgets and huge libraries. Traditional publishing does little to ensure widespread, unfettered access to academic knowledge. Within this system, however, libraries have devised and improved systems to share and redistribute information otherwise purchased or licensed — at great and increasing expense — for regulated, discrete academic audiences.



Embracing the mission to preserve and to provide meaningful access to the world's cultural record, librarians have developed interlibrary loan (ILL) and cooperative collection management. These innovations defray the individual burdens of cost and preservation, allowing libraries to diversify, to collectively assemble more material, and by opening collections to use by others, to provide greater access to a broader range of library resources for more people.

However, there are significant limitations to what libraries can share under this framework. While no library, even the wealthiest, can afford to purchase everything, neither can libraries perfectly distribute items so that everyone who wants something can get it. Not everything is available via ILL, and some of it is expensive, slow, and troublesome to deliver.

Given the successful interventions libraries have made to democratize access, it is particularly troubling that publishers now increasingly preclude libraries from sharing. ILL has worked well for PDF journal article distribution, and it has not toppled the academic journal subscription system as was once feared. But e-book publishers are threatened by the ease and speed with which PDFs can travel through ILL networks. E-books are not generally distributed in PDF. Instead, publishers license e-books to libraries on an array of proprietary platforms that regulate reader use and prevent sharing. Even those e-book publishers buckling to reader demand for PDF often prohibit libraries from sharing titles via ILL. These anti-sharing licenses force libraries to reduce service again to only those regulated, discrete audiences from the days before the creation of efficient high-speed ILL networks.



Open access publishing, in comparison, epitomizes barrier-free information sharing. It's the scholarly community's best improvement on a publishing system attempting to restrict and

regulate, not to expand and de-regulate, distribution of scholarly work.

As long as all information is not equally available, because of cost, rarity, copyright or license restrictions; as long as it exists in different formats, including print, libraries will continue to facilitate sharing. Our mission – connecting people and information through discovery, evaluation, preservation, print, media and computer access – remains as important as ever. Whatever it takes, we continue to work to build a world where information is freely distributed, scholarship is freely read, and libraries are free to share.

*Silvia Cho is the Interlibrary Loan Supervisor at the Graduate Center, CUNY. Beth Posner is Head of Library Resource Sharing at the Graduate Center, CUNY.*



## Chapter 14

# FutureEd Needs Open Access Publishing

by Polly Thistlethwaite

Open access publishing is crucial for higher education to reach larger publics. MOOCs without strong content can't draw decent audiences. And as much as we can love a charismatic sage-on-the-stage, decent higher education requires, well, doing the homework.



(Image source)

Our [#FutureEd lunchtime discussion last Friday](#) focused for a while on MOOC politics. Cathy Davidson's [Coursera experiment](#) allows registered students access to the texts supporting the course, but students can't link to them from elsewhere else (say,

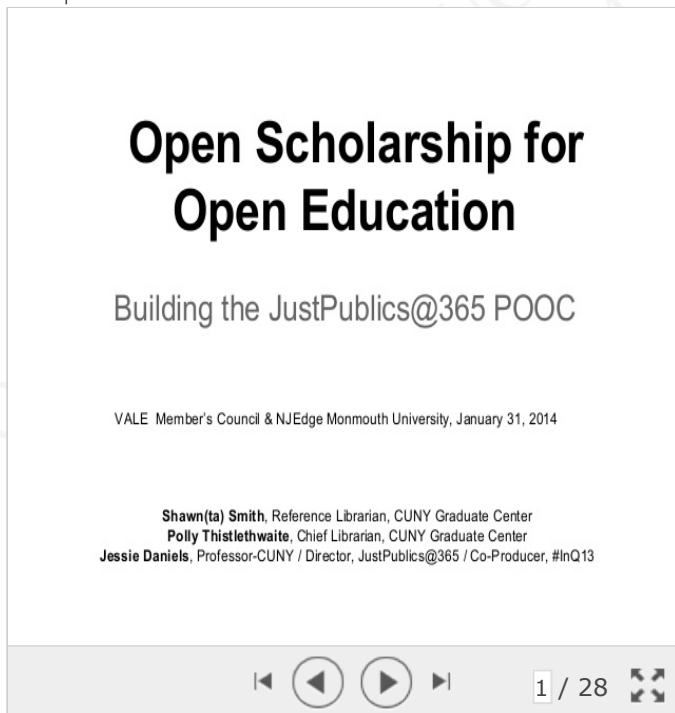
from a blog), and there's no access to the readings after the MOOC is over. MOOCs vary in their degree of openness.

Coursera is a licensed xMOOC platform designed to extend higher ed by lowering costs of delivery and eventually developing a profitable business model. xMOOCs, mostly funded through venture capital now, anticipate income from student consumers, someday, somehow. xMOOCs license text books and library databases to registered Coursera students. Registered students provide a limited audience of readers with limited access to course readings – the articles, books, book chapters, film, and videos assigned. How far can higher ed extend if essential reading continues to be tightly regulated, locked behind paywalls? Not far.

cMOOCs (the 1st “c” is for “connectivist”), on the other hand, involve open source, home-designed platforms that require no course registration. cMOOCs intend to extend peer-to-peer contact and learning without barriers. They are usually wholly accessible in every way without tiers or time-limits to content. cMOOCs have the greatest potential to extend higher education to new audiences. Open access scholarship is at the heart of this effort.

Last spring's JustPublics@365 Participatory Open Online Course was an academic project close in shape and spirit to a cMOOC. Organizers wanted everybody engaged with the course *Reassessing Inequality and Reimagining the 21st Century: East Harlem Focus* – those with a CUNY affiliation or not, those who registered for course credit or not — to have free, complete access to the entire body of presentations, discussions, articles, books, and film. We also wanted the readings and videos to stay available for those coming along after the course finished, here. GC librarian colleague Shawn(ta) Smith performed the journal literature review; I covered the books and book chapters. Out of 117 assigned readings (film, articles, book chapters, books), 65% were either found or forged open online, at least for the duration of the course. 48% of those 117 are now in permanent, permissible open access contexts — in open access journals, posted on author websites, self-archived in institutional or subject repositories. Another small percentage of the 117 are posted on the open web in violation of publisher's licensing agreements. These “rogue postings” are freely discoverable until a publisher decides to issue a take-down notice, as Elsevier did recently in response to articles authors self-archive

on Academia.edu. 65% is pretty good, I guess, but open access work has got to become the norm, not the exception, for higher ed to reach new citizen audiences. For MOOCs to work, open access scholarship must work.



**Open Scholarship for Open Education; or how librarians supported a participatory open online course** from **Polly Thistlethwaite**

(Open Scholarship for Open Education: Building the Just-Publics@365 POOC  
a presentation by Shawn(ta) Smith, Polly Thistlethwaite, and Jessie Daniels)

Authors and librarians can work together to make scholarly work free and available to larger publics, without violating publishers' contracts. Help yourself to **our presentation** on the topic, and watch this space for more.

*Polly Thistlethwaite is Chief Librarian at the Mina Rees Library, of the Graduate Center and co-director of JustPublics@365.*





*Chapter 15*

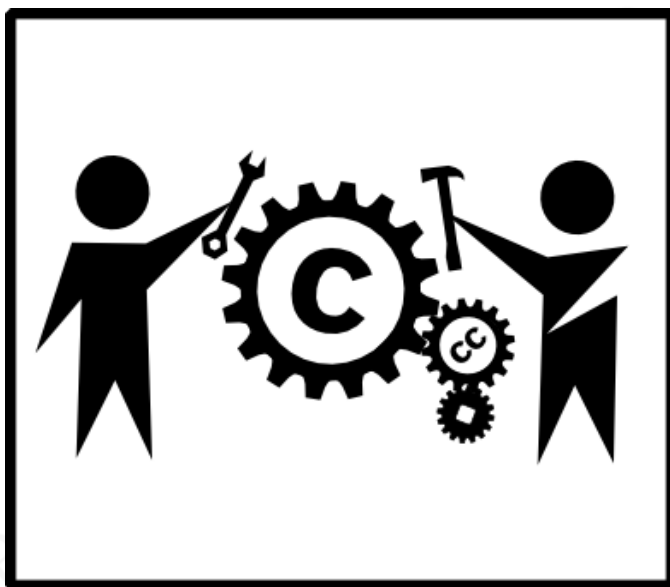
# Unlearning Restrictions Culture

by Alycia Sellie

A few years ago, I was part of a panel called “*Copyright, Fair Use and Open License Tools Online*” at the CUNY IT Conference. What I remember most about this session was the discussion. After my colleagues and I had finished our presentations—which outlined ways to alternatively license a work, Open Access issues, and Fair Use—a CUNY faculty member reflected that they hadn’t realized just how much there was to consider when publishing academic work—from the ways one might use an *open license*, to *negotiating green or gold open access to their work with a publisher*. This participant wondered why the topic of authors’ rights hadn’t been discussed with them before, and how they might now spread the word to colleagues about the many options that are available.

Librarians at CUNY have been working to fill this gap that our colleague inquired about at that panel in 2011. We’ve been offering *authors’ rights workshops* at many campus libraries where we begin conversation about what rights and restrictions we all can investigate and negotiate while sharing our work. But I think a bigger piece of this discussion for me has been to try to foster moments in which we feel free to unlearn or re-learn, or where we might feel confident to challenge the status quo, or to shed hegemonic tendencies that keep us from exploring new futures.

Those of us involved in the MOOC “The History and Future of (mostly) Higher Education” talked about unlearning in particular

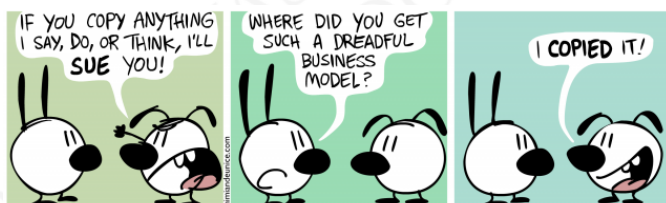


Copyright Machine by doctormo

during our **lunchtime discussion last week**. During these discussions, I've been thinking back to a formative class I took in high school where we explored the history of the United States through a progression of landmark Supreme Court cases. Not only did it teach me quite a bit about a variety of decisions that have set precedent for our laws today, it also strengthened my ability to see these laws as constructs, as conversations, and as works in progress. I remember realizing in that class more than I ever had before that laws are plastic, and that they can (and often should) be altered. I've been feeling really indebted to that teacher (thanks Zanner!) for helping us all to think through what we discussed in that classroom, because our conversations have shaped my approaches since when I contemplate rules, regulations, and governance.

Since last week, I've been thinking about how one can foster un-learning, re-learning, or cultivate tendencies to break from tradition and reset our thinking anew. This can be hard with topics that are ingrained, intimidating—or that can be made to feel more permanent than they are, like the law. Like our colleague described at the CUNY IT Conference, it can be difficult to imagine alterna-

tives at times, or to see the full landscape of an issue, rather than just our one perch's perspective. Copyright is one topic that feels complex and proscribed, and it can be difficult to think our way around all the myriad ways that we have been taught to uphold the sort of permissions culture that it generates. And yet as we move into a world that insists we all become makers and coders and sharers, I think it becomes increasingly important to consider the licenses (or the restrictions, or the permissions) that regulate our activities—not just for the things we make, but also for the things we read, download, share and use.



Mimi & Eunice Dreadful Business Model

I suppose what I'm really asking here is how, and in what ways, should we re-learn, or unlearn standard approaches to copyright? And what role does this conversation have inside of scholarly communications discourses today? And within libraries? How do those of us who believe in open access or free software share what we know without propagandizing or becoming the next thing to forget, and to unlearn?

*Alycia Sellie is a Librarian at the Graduate Center CUNY.*



*Chapter 16*

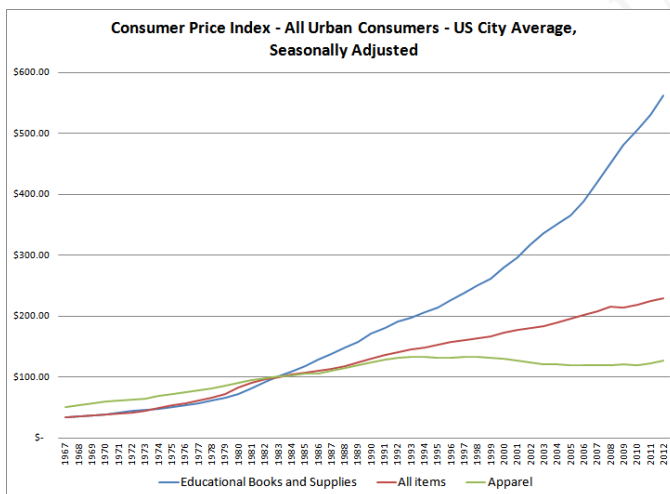
# Open Education Resources Work for Faculty and Students

by Steve Ovadia

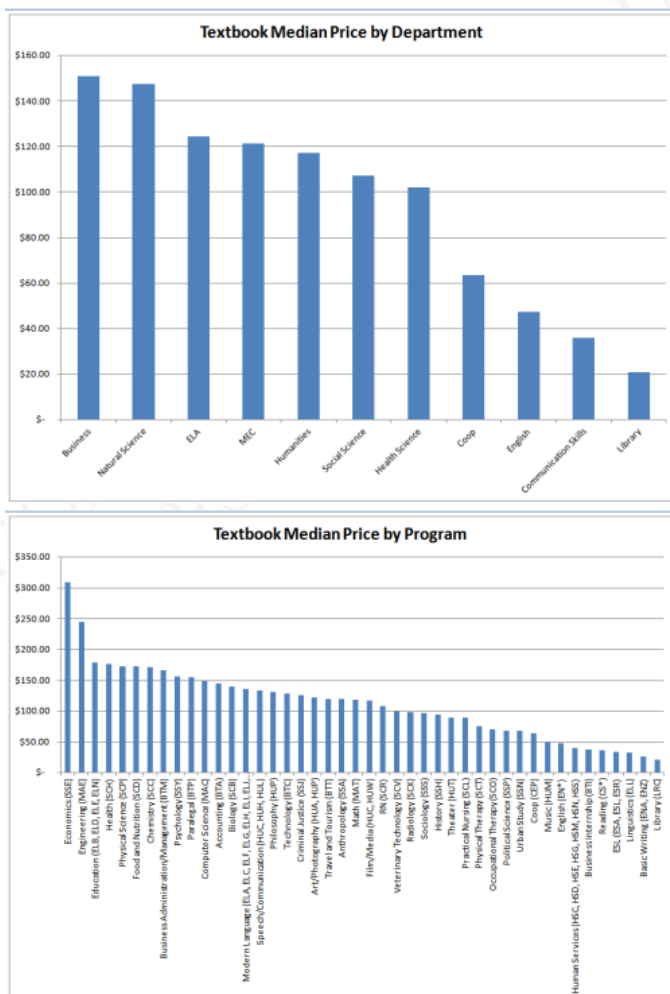
Eben Upton is best known as the man behind the **Raspberry Pi**, a tiny, \$25 computer designed to help turn kids into programmers. Upton priced it at \$25 because he thought that's around what an average textbook cost: "I now understand that's an incorrect estimate. If we had a better idea of what school textbooks cost we would have had an easier job with the engineering over the years," he joked to *Wired* years later.

It's a funny story but also a sad story. Textbooks are expensive. More expensive than most non-students even realize.

**OER From a Student Perspective**



The above chart is national data. But textbook pricing is high, even when examined at the local level. I work at a **public community college**. We recently priced out our reserve collection, which is made up of textbooks for classes. We looked at data for 18 months of checkouts and found the average textbook in our study cost \$109.36 and had a median price of \$107.25. More than half of the programs represented in our reserve collection had a median textbook price of at least \$100. Seven of the 11 academic departments have textbooks with a median cost of at least \$100. **We know** 61% of LaGuardia students living with their parents have family income of less than \$25,000, while 79% of students living away from their parents have family income of less than \$25,000. How are these students supposed to afford prices like these? And how many would love to have the \$25 textbook Upton thought students were stuck with?



If you're wondering what your program costs, do a quick survey of your colleagues about their required textbooks. The results are probably comparable to what we see above.

### OER: The Faculty View

Open education resources (OER) are an attempt to solve the textbook pricing problem by giving students and faculty great content at more reasonable prices — even free, which many consider to be the most reasonable price point of all. You'll often hear OER also referred to as open textbooks, but it's really so much more than freely accessible textbooks — it's freely available class con-

tent. That means textbooks, but it also means course shells, syllabi, class assignments, and slide decks. So while OER discussions often focus on cost from a student perspective, it also has the potential to help faculty develop and refine their own course materials. Student cost savings is but one component of OER.

One of the best ways to describe OER comes from Hilton, Wiley, Stein and Johnson. They define openness in terms of ‘four Rs’: reuse; redistribution; revision; and remix:

- **Reuse:** This one could probably be called use, but it would ruin the alliteration of their thesis. Reuse is simply using content, which implies access, but also implies certain rights, like the ability to download content for later use. Thinking about this in CUNY terms, Blackboard, which so many of us use for managing our courses, makes it tough to share in a broad way. We can provide access to anyone who asks, but what if someone is from outside of CUNY? What if the person doesn't know to ask for access? How can content be reused if it's hidden behind a login and password?
- **Redistribute:** This also has access implications. It's the right to freely share work, either with students or colleagues. OER content needs to be shareable. Also, while it's generally accepted that OER material is always cost-free in digital form, David Wiley hypothesizes there's money to be made in college bookstores printing OER material on-demand.
- **Revise:** OER is more about using static materials. An important part is the right to change material — to change it so it works for your students. We've all worked with a textbook and wished we could change certain parts of it. OER allows you to change those parts that don't work for you. OER allows you to bend course materials to your pedagogy, rather than the other way around.
- **Remix:** This is the right to combine content from disparate sources. Maybe your ideal textbook is built from more than one textbook. Maybe your syllabus is based upon the best aspects of three or four syllabi.



OER lets you build something new on the shoulders of your colleagues around the world. But it also allows faculty to build on your work, also.

OER isn't easy, but it lends itself to scaffolding. It's tough to instantly flip an existing course to entirely OER material, but it can be done incrementally. There's no shortage of OER content; the challenge is not finding material, but rather filtering it. Having said that, a few places to begin discovering resources include:

- [Support Centre for Open Resources in Education](#)
- [OER Commons](#)
- [Connexions](#)
- [OpenStax College](#)
- [Lumen Learning Open Classes](#)

Faculty can also make their work available, either in pieces, via projects like the ones above, or by making an entire class publicly viewable using an open course tool, like [Canvas](#). There are a lot of little things faculty can do to contribute to OER and to integrate it into their teaching.

*The [CUNY Open Education Resources Group](#) has created a short, 20-minute introductory class designed to provide an actionable overview of OER. [The class can found here](#). You can keep up with OER news on the [CUNY OER blog](#).*



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*Steve Ovadia is Web Services Librarian at LaGuardia Community College, CUNY.*



*Chapter 17*

# Getting Academic Research into the Public Sphere: The Rundown on Repositories

by Jill Cirasella

A big focus of JustPublics@365 is getting scholarship into the public sphere. But, how do scholars do that? What, precisely, is the mechanism that academics are supposed to use to share their work with a wider audience?

Open access journals — that is, journals that make their articles freely available online, immediately and permanently — are certainly one way to do this. You may have heard the buzz about the Nobel prize winner who publicly rejected “the tyranny of the luxury journals” and committed himself to supporting, as an author and an editor, open access journals.

## **Open Access is Not Only about Journals**

Discussion about open access often focuses exclusively on open access journals, and often on the extreme ends of the quality spectrum: the really excellent journals and the really awful ones. There’s a lot of fascinating and nuanced and ever-evolving stuff to say about open access journals, but there’s a whole lot more to open access. And today I’m going to talk about open access repositories, freely accessible online databases of articles and other works.

## **What Are Open Access Repositories?**

Thanks to Google (and the irrepressible urge to research

health symptoms), you've almost certainly found and read materials in open access repositories, but you might not have realized that there was anything special about the sites hosting those documents.

One reason open access repositories are special is that they're created and maintained with long-term preservation in mind. They will persist, and offer persistent URLs to documents, much longer than most other sites. In particular, they will outlast authors' personal web pages, which often disappear shortly after retirement, resignation, death, or failure to pay for domain name renewal. So, unlike most free web content, works in open access repositories aren't just open access now and a year from now; they're open access for a very long time to come — ideally, forever.

### **Types of Repositories**

There is no single, universal open access repository, but that's okay because Google and **other tools** search across many repositories and generally do a good job of finding what you're looking for, wherever it may reside. Here are some of the different flavors of open access repositories:

- **Disciplinary repositories** are repositories that welcome submissions in a certain field, regardless of the institutional home of the author(s). Some of the biggest and best-known disciplinary repositories are **arXiv.org** (for physics, math, computer science, and several other sciences), **PubMed Central** (for the biomedical sciences), and the **Social Science Research Network, or SSRN** (for the social sciences). One big benefit of disciplinary repositories is that they collect a large amount of related research in one place, so it's often well worth a researcher's time to go directly to the appropriate repository and browse or search for papers of interest. Of course, some disciplinary repositories are more robust than others, and, while **there are many**, there is not a repository for every field.
- **Institutional repositories** are repositories hosted by an institution (usually a college or university) to make available the works of its researchers. Successful examples include the repositories at **MIT** and the **University of Nebraska–Lincoln**. One big benefit of

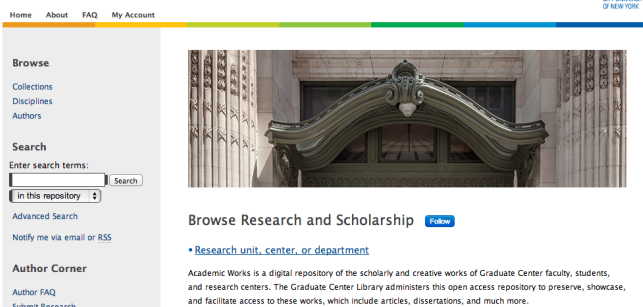
institutional repositories is that they accept all kinds of documents — slideshows, posters, speaker's notes, images, etc. — whereas many disciplinary repositories limit themselves to articles/papers.

- **Commercial networking/profile sites**, such as [Academia.edu](#), [ResearchGate](#), and [Mendeley](#), allow researchers to create profile pages and upload their works. These sites have helped many researchers (including those who don't have an appropriate disciplinary repository or an institutional repository at their disposal) make their works open access, and have connected many others with those works. But the commercial nature of these sites make some worry about what's being done with data about users and contributions, as well as about the longevity of the sites and the fate of the documents if the sites shut.

To explore the universe of repositories, visit [OpenDOAR](#) (Directory of Open Access Repositories) and [ROAR](#) (Registry of Open Access Repositories).

And here's some **really big news**: The CUNY Graduate Center is in the process of [rolling out its own repository](#) — there's almost nothing there yet, but soon it'll have lots of papers, dissertations, master's theses, and other works. And here's **even bigger news**: CUNY will soon be following suit with a university-wide repository!

## Academic Works



Home About FAQ My Account

**Browse**

- Collections
- Disciplines
- Authors

**Search**

Enter search terms:

Search

In this repository

Advanced Search

Notify me via email or RSS

**Author Corner**

- Author FAQ
- Submit Research

**Browse Research and Scholarship** [Follow](#)

- [Research unit, center, or department](#)

Academic Works is a digital repository of the scholarly and creative works of Graduate Center faculty, students, and research centers. The Graduate Center Library administers this open access repository to preserve, showcase, and facilitate access to these works, which include articles, dissertations, and much more.

Sneak peek of the Graduate Center's brand new institutional repository: Graduate Center Academic Works

### Is All This Allowed? Isn't It Pirating?

Sure, researchers can put all sorts of research output online. But what about their journal articles — aren't a lot of journals commercial, and don't journals require authors to transfer their copyright to the journal?

Yes, a lot of journals are for-profit enterprises, and yes, those journals almost always require authors to sign over their copyright. Nevertheless, a majority of journals allow authors to self-archive their articles (usually not the final PDF, but some version) in open access repositories. (Find out which journals allow what at [SHERPA/RoMEO](#).)

So, yep, **all this is allowed**, and, nope, **using repositories is not pirating!**

*Jill Cirasella is the Associate Librarian for Public Services and Scholarly Communication at the Graduate Center, CUNY.*

## Chapter 18

# Tarnished Gold: The Tale of Bohannon, DOAJ, and the Predators

by Monica Berger

Many of us may remember the Sokal hoax of 1996. Alan Sokal, a physics professor, successfully published a hoax article in *Social Text* in order to ridicule humanities scholarship. More recently, last fall, John Bohannon, a journalist for *Science*, sent out a significantly scientifically flawed “spoof” article about a wonder drug. He sent the article to 304 open access journals. The majority of these journals published the “spoof” article. Why did he do this? He wanted to prove that open access journals offer very little or no peer-review. Many of the journals were listed in the main portal for open access journals, the [Directory of Open Access Journals](#) aka DOAJ.

The first question to ask is why so many open access journals accepted the sham article. The answer, although not obvious, is that there is a dark side to open access: predatory publishers.

Predatory publishers have always existed in various guises. Most academics are familiar with the vanity-press style monograph publishers that exist to help authors get their work into print. Even in commercial journal publishing unethical practices are not atypical (try [googling “fake Elsevier journals”](#)). Junket-y conferences are another face of predatory publishing.

Nefarious publishers have always existed but the new twist comes with technology. Anyone can install a free publishing platform and call themselves a journal publisher. This is great but also



[http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/25/Dracula\\_1958\\_c.jpg](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/25/Dracula_1958_c.jpg)

problematic. New “gold” open access journals can be launched easily. Some open access journals charge authors article processing charges to help cover costs. This is most common in the STEM fields where authors build these fees into their grants and/or can get funding from their universities.

As in the past, there is good money to be made on the backs of desperate and/or naïve scholars rushing towards tenure and promotion. Now the process is as simple as submitting a paper online.

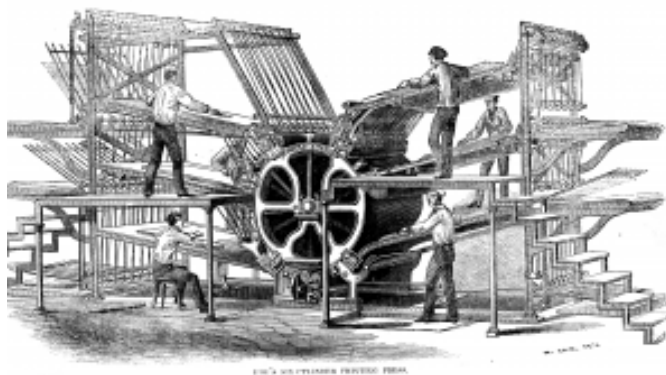


And no revisions to worry about! Visa, MasterCard, or PayPal, please.

Predatory publishers have mushroomed, spinning off vaguely named and copycat titled journals. Spam emails lure in new fish.

Many of us first learned about predatory publishers from a *New York Times* piece about Jeffrey Beall, an academic librarian, and his crusade to save us from the predators by listing them on his blog.





[http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/03/Hoe%27s\\_six-cylinder\\_press.png](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/03/Hoe%27s_six-cylinder_press.png)

Beall's "list" was the A to Z of what we knew about predatory publishing. *And then came Bohannon.*

Bohannon's sting caused a firestorm, but his method was flawed. Why not also probe how many toll-access publishers would accept the article? Bohannon's conclusions were dubious—the majority of journals in the Directory of Open Access Journals actually rejected the article and a majority on Beall's list accepted the article. Yet in the aftermath, there has been considerable hand-wringing. The question was now:

*Who is policing open access?*

*Those creepy predatory journals are giving open access a bad name!*

In response, I recommend that everyone read "On the mark? Responses to a sting" as well as librarian Barbara Fister's thoughtful comments on the issue. There are also helpful organizations including OASPA, COPE, and SPARC Europe Seal for Open Access Journals in addition to the broader SPARC organization.

But what happens when a discovery tool takes on a bigger role?

DOAJ tightened inclusion standards after the sting and now offers a seal of approval. The new standards are not without flaws: (paid) registration with CrossRef is difficult for small and/or one-off open access publishers. However, DOAJ should be lauded for their efforts to keep the predatory publishers at bay. At least 114 journals were removed from DOAJ after the Bohannon scandal.

But Dorothea Salo in the aforementioned group commentary "[On the mark?](#)" notes:

This is progress, but a cursory examination of the new DOAJ criteria shows that they are crediting good practices such as peer review, rather than punishing bad practices such as email spam, falsely-listed editors, and junkety conferences. ... Its program simply does not suffice to eliminate all the scammers and scammy practices.

It's still too early to tell if DOAJ's efforts will make a difference. We need much more public education about gold open access and how it differs entirely from predatory publishing. The [recent scandal involving Springer and IEEE publishing 120 "gibberish" papers](#) is further evidence that scholarly communications based on peer-review needs reform. Is open peer-review the answer? Are predatory publishers just an expression of a transitional period and will they wither as open access grows to the stage where it is widely understood and embraced?

*Monica Berger is a Librarian at New York City College of Technology, CUNY.*

# PART III.

## DOCUMENTARY IN THE DIGITAL AGE: JOINING ART, ACTIVISM AND SCHOLARSHIP

Today, there are simply more documentary films in existence than ever before due to the rise in the independent and documentary film industry, widespread use of digital video cameras by the general public, and the rise of documentary-style television. This presents many advantages for teaching and learning, as well as new forms of activism informed by scholarly research. Innovators in the field of documentary are also exploring the ways that filmmakers might begin to incorporate the idea of impact into their film and social media projects.

In the section that follows, we include interviews with award-winning documentary filmmaker, Dawn Porter, as well as many other contributions from people thinking critically about the role of documentary in the landscape of scholarly communication for the public good, in ways that traverses scholarship, activism, art, and journalism.



## Chapter 19

# Documentaries: Social Justice Storytelling



by Jessie Daniels

Documentary filmmakers are at the forefront of telling stories that help change the world. When the U.S. Congress held hearings on the sexual assault of women in the military, many people pointed to the documentary “Invisible War,” as a powerful mechanism that helped galvanize attention on this issue and support

for the hearings. Indeed, one account speculated that this one film “might change everything” about sexual assault in the military. Indeed, if you look at the [website for this film](#), you’ll find that the filmmakers see the documentary as one component in a larger movement, working to “end sexual assault within the U.S. military and to help survivors of Military Sexual Assault heal.” Their strategy for doing this is to combine research with policy

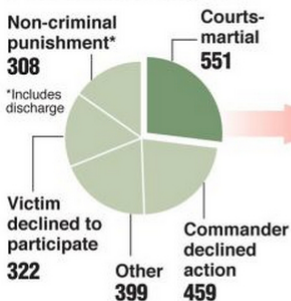
advocacy and good, old-fashioned movement building, augmented by a documentary film and social media campaign.

## Military sexual assault cases

*An analysis by McClatchy of sexual assault allegations in the U.S. military, 2009-10, shows a low conviction rate.*

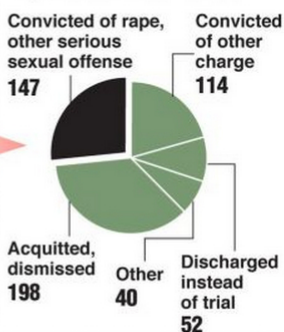
### Overall

What happened to the 2,039 rape and sexual assault allegations



### Courts-martial

Disposition of the 551 cases



Source: A McClatchy analysis of U.S. Department of Defense. Graphic: Judy Treible © 2011 MCT

(From *Not Invisible: Policy*)

This kind of innovative documentary, informed by research, and connected to a social media campaign and focusing on policy change is a 21st century model for how scholars, activists and media-makers can work together for social justice.

On Fridays in our series on scholarly communication, we'll focus on documentaries as examples of art, activism, scholarship and key components of social justice campaigns in the digital era.

*Jessie Daniels is Professor of Public Health, Sociology and Psychology at the Graduate Center and Hunter College, and the co-director of JustPublics@365.*

*Chapter 20*

# Teaching and Learning with Documentaries in the Digital Era

by Jessie Daniels

Young people entering college today have grown up immersed in a multimedia digital environment. Yet, the classroom environment they encounter often reflects nineteenth-century pedagogy of “walk and chalk,” of a lone professor standing in front of a chalk board, professing about their subject. Not surprisingly, emerging research indicates that teens are not engaged by this antiquated mode of instruction. Moreover, the work force our students are entering demand a different kind engaged learner.

[Co-op Educational Opportunity] 



**WANTED:**  
**Multimedia Majors**  
**Journalism Junkies**  
**Social Media Mavens**

(Image Source)

At CUNY, I'm also honored to have a wonderfully diverse student body. That incredible diversity presents some pedagogical challenges. How do you have a conversation, use examples, illustrate points when people don't share a common cultural background? Once in a gender course, I tried to use an exercise about the gendering of Halloween costumes only to have it fall flat when half my class reminded me that they didn't grow up with Halloween and the whole thing still seemed bizarre to them. In another course, the students included one woman who had been a



sargeant in the Bosnian army and another who had fled the famine in Somalia.

This set of challenges required more of me as instructor than writing a new lecture or getting students to put their chairs in a circle. We needed to find a way to have a meaningful, deep discussion about the course material. And, unfortunately, the books and assigned readings were often as much a barrier as they were a gateway to those discussions.

In re-thinking my strategy in the classroom, several years ago I began experimenting with various forms of digital media to engage students in learning the abstract, sometimes difficult, concepts of the basic sociology curriculum. My explorations led me to documentaries, a medium experiencing its own digital revolution, as a mechanism for engaging students, encouraging critical thinking, and enticing them to complete assigned readings.



(Image source)

For at least a decade, educational scholars have urged teaching critical media literacy through popular culture. Popular culture is often an easy pathway to student engagement because it has already captured young peoples' attention, and then instructors can scaffold more difficult concepts around that interest. The images that drive much of popular culture may be part of the key

to this as a pedagogical strategy. Scholars in cognitive psychology are finding that students learn more deeply from visual media (words and pictures) than from words alone (Mayer 2001).

### **Shifting Paradigms: Docs, Digital Media & Distribution**

Today, there are simply more documentary films in existence than ever before due to the rise in the independent and documentary film industry, widespread use of digital video cameras by the general public, and the rise of documentary-style television. Prominent documentarians such as Michael Moore (e.g., *Sicko*, 2007; *Fahrenheit 9/11*, 2005), Davis Guggenheim (*An Inconvenient Truth*, 2006), and Morgan Spurlock (e.g., *Super Size Me*, 2004) have experienced mainstream commercial success with the theatrical release of their films. In addition, documentary-style television shows (e.g., *Discovery Channel* and *A&E* have re-branded their entire programming schedules around these shows) and made-for-television documentary series (e.g., *Transgeneration* for Sundance Channel) abound on cable channels. *HBO Documentaries* led by Sheila Nevins, an arm of the cable powerhouse HBO, has built an impressive archive of documentary entertainment over twenty years, many of those titles concerned with social issues. For instance, in a landmark collaboration between National Institutes of Health and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, HBO launched *Addiction* (2007), an award-winning collection of documentary films by some of the leading directors in the field. The ascendancy of the documentary form has led some commentators to suggest that we are experiencing a "golden age" of documentaries.



(Image Source)

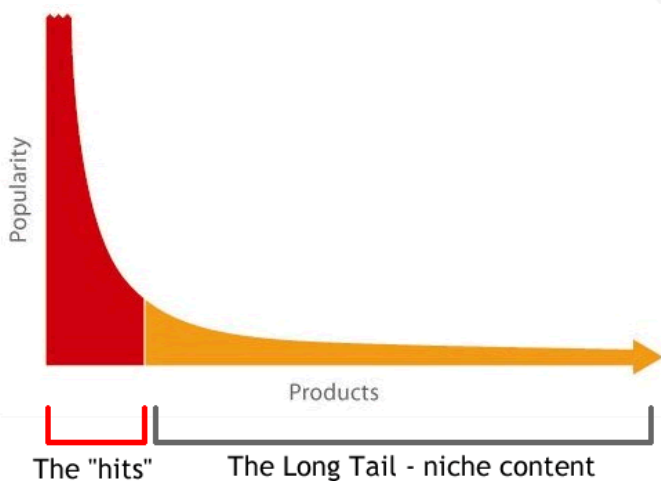
At the same time that professionally produced documentary television and films are rising in prominence, the price of digital video cameras and digital editing software are falling, effectively lowering the barrier to would-be documentarians. The shift from more expensive analog celluloid film stock to less expensive digital video, and the equally important shift to digital editing software, has meant that more people are producing, directing and creating documentaries. Indeed, digital video technologies are becoming commonplace in American households.

The do-it-yourself digital video technology allows almost anyone to document the most microscopic details of their existence and make them available to the larger public, in effect becoming a new, visual form of memoir. This democratization of documentaries further contributes to their wide availability for the sociology classroom and increases the likelihood that beginning students will have some familiarity with the documentary form. Taken together,

the rise in the number and the success of professionally-produced documentaries alongside the DIY (do-it-yourself) documentary and digital video means that today there is an ever increasing array of documentaries from which instructors may choose. Given this greater selection, it is now likely that there is a documentary film that addresses nearly every topic covered in the typical introductory sociology class. Not only is it likely that there is a documentary for each unit in an introductory college class, it is also now possible to acquire said documentaries through a shift in distribution networks.

Distribution networks for films shape the way they are used in the college classroom. Professors have long used feature films as teaching tools in college courses. At least in part, this pedagogical practice was shaped by the distribution networks for feature films produced by Hollywood studios. Conventional distribution networks, such as chain video stores and cable television channels, made feature films widely available to the general public and thus more accessible for sociologists interested in using films in the classroom.

The explosive growth in the production of documentary films means that there are simply more documentaries to distribute. And, the commercial success of a few of those documentaries released in theaters has made distributors more aware of the broad audience for the non-fiction film. Most importantly, vastly diversified distribution networks mean that many of the economics of the “long tail” work to the advantage of documentaries without a wide theatrical release.



(Image Source)

According to [Chris Anderson's theory of the long tail](#), creative products and content of all kinds with a smaller than mass-market appeal can find modest commercial success through distributed networks; so, for example, one can now find obscure tunes via iTunes which would have once been difficult to locate in record stores based on old distribution networks that relied on mass-market appeal.



And, this shift in distribution networks has affected documentaries as well, most notably through the online retailer Netflix which has gained a reputation for distributing relatively hard-to-

find documentaries. In addition, literally millions of short documentary films and clips from longer documentaries are available at no cost through online video portals, such as [Hulu.com](https://www.hulu.com), [PBS.org](https://www.pbs.org), and [YouTube.com](https://www.youtube.com).

Taken together, these shifting trends in digital video technology and distribution networks have led to an increase in the number of non-fiction films being produced, and this increase in the number of films has driven down the overall cost of acquiring documentaries for individual instructors and educational institutions.

### **Transforming (my) College Classroom through Documentaries**

The wider accessibility of documentaries has transformed the way I approach the classroom. Now, I combine documentary films with peer-reviewed articles or other assigned readings around key concepts. My background and training is in sociology and I teach in a public health program, so the content I teach is, broadly, in the area of "[medical sociology](#)."

In courses I design, there is some overlap between the films and the readings, this repetition is meant to reinforce the material for students, as well as provide opportunities for insights about the connection between the films and the readings. In order to highlight the importance of authorship and credibility, near the beginning of the semester I describe for students the process of peer-review for publication and contrast this with the publication process for print-based journalists and for new media journalists, such as bloggers.

In lecture and class discussion, I drive home the importance of peer-reviewed literature and emphasize that this is the research that professionals consult and rely upon for their work. I challenge students to master the ability to find and read the peer-reviewed literature as a basic standard for becoming a college-educated and engaged citizen. As I introduce the first documentary to the class, I revisit the issues of authorship and credibility in visual texts. For each film, I provide students with a "[Video Worksheet](#)" prior to the class the day the film is shown through the a learning management system (e.g., Canvas, Moodle, Blackboard). Students are required to bring the worksheet with them and to complete the assigned reading before the class. The "[Video Worksheet](#)" includes questions about the key concepts, the content of the film, the connec-

tions between the film and the assigned reading, and asks about the mechanisms the filmmaker employs to convey their message.

After the film, class discussion – either in small groups or with the class as a whole – focuses on answering the questions on the worksheet. I collect these worksheets and give participation points based on completion, but do not grade them closely for accuracy; rather I rely on the class discussion following the films to drive home the correct answers. Questions from the worksheets are often adapted as exam and quiz questions. The “**Video Worksheets**” also help scaffold the development of students’ **critical media literacy** skills by helping them understand the “point of view” (POV) of the director by analyzing the component parts that make up the documentary.

### **Can you give me an example?**

As just one example of this approach, I offer this example of one of the more difficult topics I cover: medical sociology and race.

Race, a socially constructed category, is nevertheless an important determinant of health. This can be a difficult concept for students to understand. By providing some historical context for contemporary health disparities, a deeper understanding of racial discrimination in the U.S., as well as the ethical violations in medical experimentation can be an effective strategy for teaching this concept. To address this topic, I show “**The Deadly Deception**” (Denise Di Ianni, writer, producer and director; Films for the Humanities & Sciences, 1993, 60 minutes), a documentary that deals with the **Tuskegee Syphilis Study** conducted by public health officials in the U.S. from 1932 to 1972. The film features first-person accounts of African American men who were enrolled in the study and a number of doctors who were investigators on the study – some of whom objected to the study and one white doctor who still defends the study as a worthwhile scientific endeavor. In addition, the film features archival footage and interviews with experts in medical sociology. The documentary is quite affecting and holds up well even though it is now older than most of the students.

For most traditional-aged college students (born around 1995 or 1996) who are unfamiliar with the history of the Tuskegee study, the film is compelling. For an introductory class, the power of this documentary is further enhanced through the assigned readings and there are a number of articles that work well with this film. For an early undergraduate course, “**The Tuskegee Legacy: AIDS**

and the Black Community," (1992) is a short (three page) article written in easily accessible language. For more advanced classes (and learners), Thomas and Crouse Quinn's article, "The Tuskegee Syphilis Study, 1932 to 1972: Implications for HIV Education and AIDS Risk Education Programs in the Black Community," (1991) works well as a companion reading to the documentary. Both articles provide a connection between the historical background on the Tuskegee study and contemporary distrust of medical intervention on the part of African Americans. Rather than seeing resistance to medical professionals as an artifact of social isolation, lack of education, or cultural superstition, these readings provide students a way of seeing the deeply rooted, systemic racial oppression that pervades the U.S. and the consequences this has for the lives of African Americans. The film students with an engaging and critical background to the history of racial discrimination in the U.S. and its attendant health consequences. The film also raises important questions about the ethics of medical experimentation and about public health research that focuses exclusively on one racial or ethnic group. The peer-reviewed readings take the background provided by the documentary film as a given, and add further complexity by exploring the implications of this history for the health of contemporary African Americans. Without the film, most students unfamiliar with the history of the Tuskegee experiments would have a more difficult time with the peer-reviewed readings; without the peer-reviewed literature, students who only saw the film might erroneously assume that the lessons of Tuskegee were confined to a remote historical period. The "Video Worksheet" and class discussion build on these lessons and introduce students to critical media literacy concepts by asking questions about the point-of-view of the filmmakers and the way they used particular filmic techniques to construct an argument visually.

### **But, is this an effective strategy for teaching and learning?**

I've published a couple of pieces on the results of some research I did on how this teaching method works. The shortest answer is: it seems to work well for increasing student engagement in course material. I have a good deal of data (both quantitative and qualitative) on student responses to this method, but perhaps my favorite is this quote from an undergraduate student:



"The videos helped because they were usually taking a stance on an issue, while the text briefly described the arguments/positions. Seeing and hearing video is much better than reading the text because the historical footage, impassioned speeches, and other interviews are relayed with much more clarity. The videos are easier to watch for 90 minutes than 90 minutes of reading the text, so even if the information was the same, I grasped more of it."

As an instructor, hearing a student say this method of teaching enabled me to "*grasp more of it*" is gratifying.

I measure the effectiveness of this as a teaching strategy in other ways, as well, such as the number of other instructors who have adopted this method. The wiki I set up to catalog documentaries has, at latest count, received more than 67,000 visitors.

We are living in a different era, one that is saturated by multimedia and students come into the classroom expecting to learn this way, but they are often disappointed. This method of combining visual culture through non-fiction films digitally distributed with traditional peer-review literature as a way of teaching critical thinking provides a way forward.

If you'd like some **help getting started** using this teaching method, here are some resources:

- [List of documentaries](#) (add your favorites!)
- [Video Worksheets](#)
- [Background on Critical Media Literacy](#)
- [The Sociological Cinema](#), (featuring shorter than full-length documentary video clips)
- [The Sociological Cinema, Classroom Assignments](#)

Happy doc watching! 😊

*Jessie Daniels is Professor of Public Health, Sociology and Psychology at the Graduate Center and Hunter College, and the co-director of [JustPublics@365](mailto:JustPublics@365).*



*Chapter 21*

# Special Interview with Documentary Filmmaker Dawn Porter

by Heidi Knoblauch

Dawn Porter is a lawyer turned documentary film maker who's film, *Gideon's Army*, follows three public defenders in the Deep South. Her film chronicles the lives of these public defenders and emphasizes the personal stories of their clients to show the realities of, and inequalities in, the criminal justice system. In this interview we talk about how she constructed the film and what impact she hopes it will have.

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[soundcloud url="https://api.soundcloud.com/tracks/137199337" params="color=ff9900&auto\_play=false&hide\_related=false&show\_artwork=true" width="100%" height="166" iframe="true" /]

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**Heidi Knoblauch:** The first question I have is could you share a little bit about yourself, your work on "*Gideon's Army*" and how you think of your work as a documentary filmmaker, as a form of activism, art, or both? A more targeted question would be: when did you decide to become a documentary filmmaker?

**Dawn Porter:** I actually decided I wanted to make a documentary film, which I think is different than deciding I wanted to be a filmmaker. I was working for A&E Television, and I just felt like I wasn't seeing a lot of stories about minorities or stories that I cared about. There were things I was interested in that I thought other

people would be interested in too, and I thought, “You know, I think I could do this.”

When I met Jonathan Rapping and the public defenders I thought, “This is a great story that I have access to, but also that I think I understand as a lawyer.” That’s kind of how it started. I really started out thinking I wanted to make a film. I wasn’t thinking about a whole career shift at first.

**Heidi Knoblauch:** I know that the film is based on the 1963 Gideon v. Wainwright decision, why did you choose to focus on that? What led you to focus on the public defenders?

**Dawn Porter:** I think that, like most people, I didn’t really understand what public defenders do, how critical they are to our system of democracy. I think that most important, I didn’t understand at all why anybody would do their job. It’s just such a tough job, such little pay and long hours. I couldn’t really... I just was really curious, why would anybody want to defend people who are accused of terrible things?

I was really just curious about them. I also felt, once I got to know them, I felt like what they do is so misunderstood and so misrepresented. I thought that doing a film could add to the public conversation about what they do and show people why they do it, but also why it’s so important and why we should all care about it.

**Heidi Knoblauch:** That leads into another question that I had, which is who are your target audiences?

**Dawn Porter:** I think it’s really everybody. I think it’s for the general public, which I put myself in. It’s did you know that 80% of people accused of crimes are represented by public defenders, which leads to the follow-up, that means 80% of people who are being arrested in this country are, if not at poverty level, are very low-income. I think that that’s a striking statistic.

Then I think for public defenders it was to encourage them to explain to people why they do what they do and why it’s important. I think a lot of times public defenders get so much negative publicity that they tend to kind of give up on the general public and not explain what they do, and I think people are open to it if they have those dialogues. For them it was be proud of what you do, you’re so important to our system.

**Heidi Knoblauch:** Cara Mertes, who leads JustFilms at the Ford Foundation, has said “thinking about impact will make your

film better.” Did you think about the impact you wanted this film to have before you made it? How did that shape the film?

**Dawn Porter:** I think, like a lot of people, I thought about it a little bit abstractly. When you’re making a film your first goal is to make a good film, but along the way I think I realized that it could be a really important part of a conversation that’s happening in this country about criminal justice and criminal justice reform.

I think what Cara says is absolutely right. We should be thinking all along the way for opportunities to spread the message and also who our audiences are, who are allies might be, who might be the microphones for our film, who might use it to make social change.

I think I came to it a little bit later than she was talking about, but along the way that was a really critical part of what we were doing, engaging the public defenders, the ACLU, other social justice, criminal justice outfits. They’ve been fantastic in hosting screenings and publicizing the film and that, I think, has led to a really successful rollout, culminating on HBO.

**Heidi Knoblauch:** What do you think the film says about the criminal justice system in our country?

**Dawn Porter:** I think it says that there’s a whole class of people who are invisible and that we have a criminal justice system that works very differently if you’re poor than if you’re wealthy. Since most of the people being brought into it are poor, I think we should be alarmed and horrified by what passes for justice. I think the young people who are featured, who are the lawyers in the film ... The other thing I think it says is, “Those are patriots. Those are people who love our Constitution, love our country. They are doing the unpopular thing, but they are also the last protection for people accused of serious crimes.”

There’s almost nothing more serious that you can do than to lock somebody up and strip them of their rights. To make sure that we do that properly... And that’s why we started this film with Travis saying, “If you’re going to take my liberty, you’ve got to do it right.” It’s just one of the most important things we can do. We see, across the world, people are fighting for the ability to have fair trials and free speech. That’s what public defenders do. They’re representing people so that they have fair process.

**Heidi Knoblauch:** You mentioned that scene with Travis Williams, and I was really blown away by that scene. Why did you

decide to focus on a few cases that the public defenders were doing rather than emphasize these huge caseloads, 125 cases or something like that, for each of them.

**Dawn Porter:** I think that the numbers start to ... we get immune to the numbers. When you say, "Twelve million people arrested every year, seven million people in the criminal justice system, two million people in prison," people get immune to what that really means. What I wanted to do is say, "That's the backdrop. See how much effort it takes for one of those? Now do the math. Now think about if he has to do this, times 160, what could that possibly be like?"

I think that people, when you slow down and let them understand all that goes into being a good lawyer, I think that it allows them to enter his world and enter his mindset in a way that ... If you just put up a big number, it gets a gasp but it doesn't bring you into his world. If you see actual people ... Prisoners become numbers. People accused become numbers and not real people.

What I wanted to show is every single person they're representing has a family, has a story. If he does his job right he's supposed to get to know that, but how can he possibly do it with those numbers? I wanted to focus on individual people and not have people be numbers.

**Heidi Knoblauch:** A major focus of JustPublics@365 is bringing together academics, activists and media makers in ways that promote social justice, civic engagement and greater democracy, and often academics appear as talking heads in documentary films. How can academics push the boundaries and move beyond the role of the talking head?

**Dawn Porter:** I think that they should really think about what drew them to their work, what made them passionate about their topic in the first place. Don't hesitate to tell those personal stories if you want to be more than a talking head. We can look up facts. We can't look up personal stories and experience, and that's what a person who studies or writes or thinks about really important topics can bring to an interview. That personal experience. Why does this matter? Why do you know it matters? Help us explain to everybody else what you see. I think that's an incredibly important role for an academic.

**Heidi Knoblauch:** What are some key projects that would give documentary filmmakers, activists, and academics opportunities to

work together? In other words, not necessarily working on documentaries about the Civil Rights Movement, but what are the points of intersection for these three sometimes indistinct groups of people?

**Dawn Porter:** We all go through a period of research where we're looking for characters. We're looking for people to help explain a story. If someone has written extensively about a topic, often you know the people that have really good stories. At the research stage, there's a great opportunity for collaboration. I think there's also ... For writing proposals, we often have to have experts review the proposals.

That's a really good collaboration, is finding someone who will read over your submission to the NEH, or National Endowment for the Humanities. It's a really critical ... Foundations and other funders, they want to know that you're tapped into the people who are thinking exclusively about the topic that you're working on. At the research and writing proposal stage, there's a great opportunity to work together with people who are interested in being storytellers.

**Heidi Knoblauch:** Thank you so much for this great interview. It was wonderful.

*Heidi Knoblauch is a Podcast Producer for JustPublics@365*





## Chapter 22

# GIDEON'S ARMY Receives Prestigious Ridenhour Documentary Film Prize

by Heidi Knoblauch

This week, on the anniversary of *Gideon v. Wainwright*, The Ridenhour Prizes announced that GIDEON'S ARMY, directed and produced by Dawn Porter, will receive the 2014 Documentary Film Prize.

The **Ridenhour Prizes** recognize and encourage those who persevere in acts of truth-telling that protect the public interest, promote social justice, or illuminate a more just vision of society.

*Gideon v. Wainwright* (1963) is the landmark Supreme Court decision that unanimously ruled that states are required to provide counsel in criminal cases to represent defendants unable to afford to pay for their own attorneys. GIDEON'S ARMY follows three young public defenders in the Deep South — Travis Williams, Brandy Alexander, and June Hardwick — as they struggle with staggering caseloads, long hours and low pay, trying to balance their commitment to public service with a criminal justice system strained to the breaking point. Here's the trailer (:45): <http://youtu.be/8i47FIF5ITU>.

In reflecting upon its decision, the awards committee said, "We are thrilled to have selected Gideon's Army which celebrates the legion of idealistic young public defenders who are fighting for equal justice for the disenfranchised within our broken and biased legal system, while struggling to stay one step ahead of poverty themselves."



(One of the attorneys featured in the film, Brandy, with a client.

Image source: <http://gideonsarmythefilm.com/photo-gallery/>

GIDEON'S ARMY highlights the work of public defenders while also exposing the subtle and not so subtle ways in which the justice system is complicit in the mismanagement of indigent defense. Rather than taking their chances with a court appointed lawyer — who may have hundreds of other cases — increasing numbers of defendants agree to plea deals or sentences outside of a trial. As a result, between 90 to 95 percent of defendants plead guilty and never receive the right to counsel as guaranteed by the sixth amendment to the Constitution. This disconnect between the promise of *Gideon v. Wainwright* and the reality of the law's implementation has clearly contributed to prison over-crowding, violence, and a reduced chance of rehabilitation.

A study of the 100 most populous counties in the United States found that 82 percent of indigent clients were handled by public defenders. In the most recent year that numbers are available, a mere 964 public defender offices nationwide had to handle nearly 6 million indigent defense cases.

"I am honored and so very grateful to receive the Ridenhour Documentary Film Prize," said director Dawn Porter. "The award will help amplify the critical issues Gideon's Army exposes, and further share the harrowing stories of America's overworked public defenders with audiences across the world. Ron Ridenhour was a man committed to truth-telling and correcting injustice. My hope is

to advance these same ideals, by using Gideon's Army to educate audiences, spark civic debate, and ultimately advance constructive solutions to the problems facing America's criminal justice system. On behalf of the 15,000 public defenders and their clients, and with special thanks to the wonderful lawyers of Gideon's Promise who are the inspiration and heart of the film, I thank the Ridenhour Award Committee."

We here at JustPublics@365, congratulate Dawn Porter on this prestigious award. We're also pleased to have this opportunity to share our recent interview with her.

*Heidi Knoblauch is a Podcast Producer for JustPublics@365*



*Chapter 23*

## Cara Mertes on the Impact of Documentary

Earlier this year, it was announced that Cara Mertes would be leaving her job at the Sundance Institute to take over for Orlando Bagwell at **Ford Foundation's JustFilms**. In a world where foundations are more and more important financial resources for documentary filmmakers and "impact" is the buzzword of the day, Mertes held something of a town hall meeting at **DOC NYC**, in which she frankly asked documentary filmmakers what they needed from foundations like Ford.

As more and more people, especially those circling the **BRIT-**



DOC Foundation with **Impact Producers** and elaborate impact campaigns, **Indiewire**

followed up with Mertes to talk about the concept of impact. Below, she shares how she sees impact as an integral part of the creative force that makes documentaries successful in a wide variety of ways.

**What are you most excited to take on as you start your new job?**

What's exciting to me about the job is the potential for bringing new resources into this field. I'm speaking globally, I want to bring creative, authentic, mostly non-fiction storytelling (as well as digital storytelling).

So the way that impact is being talked about, it's about making sure that the film is doing the work it's meant to do, and it's something that the funders are concerned about, to make sure that their investment is well spent. How do you feel about that perception? [Ed: Dan Cogan of Impact Partners foregrounded this when he spoke at the Toronto International Film Festival earlier this year.]

I think I would reverse the formula that you presented. The question of impact is not driven by measurement and outcomes. The world that I now live in and work in is populated by people who want to make a difference in the world. A reganter and a creative and executive producer. How can we know that you've made a difference in the world? That question leads to better storytelling. That question leads to better resources. Questions about impact vary broadly. Being accountable for change is very important for filmmakers to take seriously. Now that I'm in a philanthropic position, that's an important question for me. It's almost a deep impulse: asking why are these stories told? It's deeply embedded in the way of telling these stories for me.

**But I know when you spoke at DOC NYC in conversation with Thom Powers, you mentioned that you were interested in developing new ways to talk about impact.**

We want to define our terms when we talk about impact. It's a measurement piece — what are the quantifiable? What are we measuring? Who are we talking about? It's multiplicities of audiences. There are many different ways to impact those audiences. You're talking about an extremely dynamic process. We don't have language for and we don't have tools for talking about it. that's an incredibly interesting realm that we're working in. How culture makes change — what we're trying to do at Ford. The kind of work

that we're looking for, the work that Ford supports — of course we need ways of understanding what the numbers are and striving for the appropriate impact. We need more leadership and skill-building in terms of the question of impact. People that understand the mix of numbers with dynamics. Film impact is not predictable — how do we make room for that when we're granting?

My predecessor Orlando Bagwell was working with Jana Diesner at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign on a project, and we're going to do a phase two of funding for that. It's a big data research tool that actually looks at the difference a doc might have made in knowledge and behavior using Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, as well as any publicly available legal files. This search tool has been built to do wide ranging searches for terms, names... you can upload the transcript to your documentary. What's really interesting is when you start applying it longitudinally, you start to see changes geographically and within social networks: What are you saying? Where are you saying it? Who are you saying it to? Is it negative or positive? The tool is open source and it will be free. We want this to be free to the creative community so they have tools that are scientifically validated and robust as commercial entities have.

**When filmmakers approach you, what kinds of things excite you, with regards to the way they talk about impact? What kinds of things do you want to hear?**

On a basic level, you ask them if they're thinking about impact. A lot of people are saying "I'm not thinking about it and I don't want that" — and that's fine. I think it's unfair to rely completely on the creative filmmaker — who has to move from being creative/coordinative — they have to function like a CEO of a corporation that comes into existence very quickly. The leadership tools are not ones that all filmmakers have. You look to them and you see if they can create a team around them that can engage with these issues.

Narrative is creative, but you cannot sacrifice fairness, accuracy, deep research, the forces at play in the issues you're talking about. The filmmakers that are willing to dig in and question their process — can I do more? can I change the narrative in order to highlight something that I now understand better? It's important that your subject changes as you're making the film. As filmmakers, your subjects are changing and the issue is changing. You're managing in multiple dimensions, trying to create these compelling

narratives. You're thinking about audience as well. We want to be vigilant that the creative conversation is paramount. But you can't sacrifice these other elements. You need to be responsible to the subjects — these people that are giving you their lives, for sometimes very difficult access.

**With regards to building a team around you, Jennifer MacArthur published a piece on the POV blog about impact producers. How important is carving out this space for you, for these people that are working on the impact of the film, outside of the production of the film itself?**

A number of us were together in a retreat with US and UK producers with BRITDOC right before she wrote that. Impact is a question you ask at the beginning of your film — it can benefit your funding and the telling of your film. Often the conversation about impact changes your story. We're looking to embed the questions of impact into the production process.

Part of the skill-building piece for this kind of work is to name the skills. These are high-level, sophisticated skills. As Jennifer says in her piece, no, your intern cannot do this. It's building a case that this position needs funding and needs support — that it needs to be a part of film teams. We now have these tools, we can ask the question about impact as these films are being done, by looking at how the issue is changing during production. As you're building and releasing your story, this person will work with the publicist and distributor, to work with the movement and change agenda that's happening around your film.

**What about the people who feel that thinking about impact is limiting? That it impinges on creative freedom?**

For me, any time you decide you're going to be a cultural creator, you're asking people to listen to you and to take seriously what you're creating. If you're expecting people to spend time with you and your creation, you have a responsibility to your audience. You need to take these questions seriously if you want an audience. You're always going to care about what people think. How much time do you want to spend on your impact strategy? There are examples of people who could care less about change but they do want an audience. I can talk to those people on those terms. "What do you want your audience to feel? These are the co-participants in your creative experience. How do you want them to feel?"

What I don't expect is for filmmakers to say it doesn't matter.



A lot of filmmakers point to the fact that they don't have a good answer to the questions that foundations are asking about impact. There is funder education that needs to be done so that funders are not led by the numbers. That's a conversation in the donor world and the foundation world. Is it the means or is it the end? I completely agree with filmmakers who say that some people are led by that. The creative needs to be very strongly present.

**You've spoken before about the need for the different projects and divisions within the Ford Foundation to work together on film projects. What is important about that?**

If you're not partnering, you're not doing it right. I'm looking for partners at the institutional and individual level. Partnership and collaboration is profound. I see the world we live in as heavily networked, through the technology but also socially. There's a phenomenon that the boundaries between disciplines and funding silos are more porous. There's a term in the foundation world — intersectionality — that acknowledges we're all in this together. You can't talk about climate without talking about economy, health, gender. Every time you pull out an issue, you're pulling out a bunch of other issues.

The fact that I see things that way is perfect for this job. We're meant to work with all the other teams and see the commonalities. While our structures may pull out certain things, part of the job of the storytellers is to rebraid and recombine all of the complexities of human experiences that reflect all of these areas. There may be a labor story we tell we can find a gender story, a health story, a LGBT story. Recombining so it looks like a human experience is really important.

\* \* \*

~ *This interview originally appeared on IndieWire, December 13, 2013, and was conducted by Bryce J. Renninger.*



*Chapter 24*

# American Revolutionary: The Evolution of Grace Lee Boggs

by Collette Sosnowy

"You don't choose the times you live in but you do choose who you want to be and how you want to think." This quote from Grace Lee Boggs nicely captures the essence of her life, as does a new documentary.



Activist, writer, and philosopher Grace Lee Boggs has spent more than 70 years involved in the African-American movement, encompassing housing rights, labor, civil rights, Black Power, environmental justice, and urban community development. Boggs, a Chinese-American woman with a Ph.D. in philosophy, makes an unusual portrait of an activist in the Black struggle, but as Angela Davis notes, "Grace has made more contributions to the Black struggle than most Black people have."

*American Revolutionary: The Evolution of Grace Lee Boggs*, a documentary directed by Grace Lee (no relation to Boggs) portrays the story of this remarkable woman's long tenure as an activist. The film was recently screened in New York City, which I attended. The film chronicles Boggs' lifetime of activism and demonstrates the philosophical threads that weave throughout.

When she completed a Ph.D. in philosophy from Bryn Mawr

College in 1940, there was no place for a woman of color in the academy, so she took a low-wage job at the University of Chicago Philosophy Library. Her involvement in the African American movement began when she moved to a low-income, primarily black neighborhood in Chicago. Unable to afford rent, she lived in a co-worker's rat-infested basement in a poor, primarily African-American neighborhood. It was there that she witnessed first-hand the impact of urban poverty. She joined a tenants' rights organization, launching a life of activism that touched on every major social movement in the U.S. in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century into the present, compiling a thick FBI file along the way.



She moved to Detroit in 1953 with her husband Jimmy Boggs, an African-American auto worker and fellow social activist and organizer. They stayed in Detroit as factories closed, unemployment rates soared, white residents moved out of the city, and municipal resources dried up. She remains there today, continuing to engage in creating change through community engagement through Detroit Summer, a multi-generational urban gardening program she founded.

Philosophically, Boggs continually emphasizes the importance of discourse, as well as action, in working for social change. She has said that she often feels that social movements overestimate action and underestimate the role of reflection in creating lasting change and argues that social change needs to be a two-sized transformation: revolution and evolution. "Revolution is evolution toward something much grander in terms of what it means to be

a human being,” she said, “just being outraged does not constitute revolution.”

Boggs puts scholarly communication for the public good into practice everyday by engaging in practical philosophy on the ground through dialogue with others and dogged, dedication to the lengthy process of engaging in community-building and creating social change. Through dialogue and reflection her views and approaches have

altered over time, but what remains is her commitment to the view that engagement and thought are what push us forward in our efforts toward greater equality.

Boggs makes a compelling subject for a documentary, a media which brings the story of this scholar-activist to a broader audience and gives us a better sense of the breadth of her work. This film does an exemplary job placing Boggs in a historical social context, and even provides brief, accessible lessons on Hegel and Marx. Against this background, Boggs’s voice, her perspective on social change and the consistency of her message are heard loud and clear.

*Collette Sosnowy is the Project Manager of JustPublics@365 and Visiting Faculty at Sarah Lawrence College*





# PART IV. MAKING A DIFFERENCE, MEASURING IMPACT

In the last part of our e-book, we consider the **changing landscape of “impact”** in scholarly communication.

The idea of measuring impact within scholarly disciplines has for most of the last century relied on counting the number of citations within peer-reviewed journals. For example, an individual scholar's listing in the Social Sciences Citation Index, which compiles number of citations in journals, has been a frequently consulted resource in tenure and promotion cases. Recently, there's been a move to include “altmetrics,” or alternative measures, of scholarly impact that incorporate social media.

When the focus shifts to measuring impact of scholarship on the broader world, there is no consensus about measuring impact.

In what follows, we explore some of the nuances of the shifting terrain about how to measure the impact of scholarly communication and how to gauge a discernible impact on the public good.





*Chapter 25*

# Scholarly Impact: Measurement, Resistance and Human Need

by Jessie Daniels

Our series on scholarly communication continues with a look at the idea of “*scholarly impact*,” a topic we’ll feature regularly. The central issue at hand: how do we measure the value of scholarly work in a meaningful way?

In today’s Chronicle of Higher Education, Aisha Labi writes about the *resistance among researchers in the UK* to having the impact of their work measured. As Labi describes it:

The fundamental idea is relatively uncontroversial: As government spending in Britain has become more constrained, public investment in research must be shown to have value outside academe. But calculating research’s broader value is a challenge—and a growing number of academics find themselves arguing that the requirements are unduly burdensome and do little to achieve their stated goals.

In the context of the UK, there is something called the *Research Excellence Framework (REF)*, which requires that the impact of research by university departments accounts for 20% of the formula for financing them.

The resistance among UK academics, like Professor Philip

Moriarty quoted in the article, is that while he sees his research in nanotechnology having a broad benefit to society, a focus on impact is a “perversion of the scientific method,” one that emphasizes “near-market” research, designed to generate a speedy economic return for taxpayers, he says.

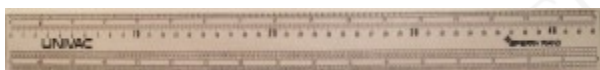
I agree. If the definition of impact of scholarly work is going to be defined in business-school terms about ROI for taxpayers, then that’s not only a “perversion,” it’s a recipe for disaster for higher education as a long-term endeavor.

Resistance though there may be, some in the UK see value in the discussion of impact. The good folks at the [LSE Impact of Social Sciences](#) project are involved in a multi-year project to demonstrate how academic research in the social sciences achieves public policy impacts, contributes to economic prosperity and informs public understanding of policy issues and economic and social changes.

In the US, there’s a much different landscape of higher ed and impact is not (yet) tied to research funding in as systematic a way as in the UK with the [REF](#). This doesn’t mean that academics in the US are uninterested in the impact of scholarly work, quite the contrary. There’s a long history of attempts to measure impact here.

### **How many inches?**

The idea of measuring impact within scholarly disciplines has for most of the last century relied on counting the number of citations within peer-reviewed journals. For example, an individual scholar’s listing in the [Social Sciences Citation Index \(SSCI\)](#), which compiles number of citations in journals, has been a frequently consulted resource in tenure and promotion cases.



(Image source)

I know of stories in the olden days of analog when tenure and promotion committees would graduate student assistants to the library with an actual ruler in order to measure the number of inches a prospective candidate had in the [SSCI](#). Sometimes a ruler is just a ruler, but is this really the best we can do in measuring the impact of our work?

### **Alternative Measures, or “Altmetrics”**

Recently, attention in higher education has turned to new ways of measuring scholarly impact by incorporating the use of social media. The idea behind alternative measures, or “altmetrics,” is that the traditional metrics of citations in peer-reviewed journals (*a la* the (SSCI)) should be joined by new measures, like number of page views, downloads, “likes” and re-tweets on social media. These have spawned a new generation of tools to automate the collection of this data into one platform or indicator (e.g., Almetrics, FigShare, PlumAnalytics, ImpactStory).



However, altmetrics are not yet widely used forms of measurement within academia by things like hiring committees or tenure and promotion committees. In fact, people in higher education don't yet know what to make of these alternative measures and are actively working on how to resolve these issues. I, personally, sit on at least 3 committees within my institution and 1 committee in a professional association, that are all trying to come up with equitable, reasonable and widely understandable ways to measure scholarly work in the digital era.

### **Upworthy is Not the Same as Peer-Review**

Many scholars express concern about the turn to social media as a measure of impact because of the kinds of information that often gets rewarded in an economy of “likes.” We might call this the “upworthy” problem. If you've ever seen this site, or been lulled into clicking on something there, there's a kind of relentless cheer-

iness and warm, touchy-feelingness to all things shared on the site. People who want to endorse content there indicate that it is “upworthy,” meaning worth moving “up” on your pile of things to read and do online. But it’s hard to imagine most of the research I’m familiar with and admire ever getting a vote as “upworthy.”

In a recent piece for the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Jill Lepore turned a critical eye to the problem of using social media as an indicator of scholarly impact. Lepore writes:

“...when publicity, for its own sake, is taken as a measure of worth, then attention replaces citation as the author’s compensation. One trouble here is: Peer review may reward opacity, but a search engine rewards nothing but outrageousness.”

Lepore is right to challenge us to think about what it is that search engines reward. And, I think it’s also critically important to reconsider the value we put in publishing writing that is opaque in journals locked behind paywalls with tiny audiences.

I think where Lepore, and lots of others, get the importance of social media for scholarly work wrong is when they assume that it’s all just “publicity” or self-promotion.

The reality is that many scholars are using social media so that they can have an impact on the world, not just on their peers in academe.

### **There’s a Whole World Beyond Academe**

Many disciplines have traditions of talking about “impact,” but it’s usually in a negative context. I’ll pick on a couple of disciplines that I spend some time in. So, for example, sociologists are very accustomed to pointing out the *negative impacts of social structures and policies on inequality*. Scholars in public health and demography are all about measuring the *impact of lots of things on “mortality rates”* – a serious measure of impact if ever there was one. And, most social scientists of all stripes are perfectly fine with tracing worsening measures of inequality to changes in policy.

Yet, scholars are much less clear, timid even, on how scholarship might affect those laws and social policy.

This is especially ironic given what we know about what scholars want. According to a recent survey *92% of social science scholars said they wanted “more connection to policymakers.”*

Are academics just not capable of thinking about their own

impact on the world? I think we are because, well, because we're human.

### **The Desire to Have an Impact is a Deep, Human Need**

We all, as human beings, want to know that our life matters, that we had an impact. Many scholars, but certainly not all, want to know that the work they spend so much time, training, money and effort into matters in some way beyond the small circle of experts in their chosen field.

Martin Rees, an emeritus professor of cosmology and astrophysics at the University of Cambridge and one of Britain's most noted scholars, quoted in the Chronicle piece mentioned at the top, says:

"Almost all scientists want their work to have an impact beyond academia, either commercial, societal, or broadly cultural, and are delighted when this happens. But they realize, as many administrators and politicians do not, that such successes cannot be planned for and are often best achieved by curiosity-motivated research."

I think Professor Rees is right that most academics want their work to have an impact beyond academia. I don't know that I agree with him that there's no planning for it (more about that another time). The desire for our work to matter is a class-bound one, to be sure, in ways that may not be obvious. Sanitation workers have possibly the most important jobs from a public health perspective (much more important than doctors); they can certainly take comfort in the impact their job is having on promoting the health of large populations of people. It's harder for academics, who trade in ideas, to point to the impact of our work, but I think that the desire is an existential one.

In many ways, the classic Frank Capra film, *"It's a Wonderful Life,"* (1946) is a film about impact. As you may recall, Jimmy Stewart's character, George Bailey, on the verge of suicide, is given the gift of seeing what the world would have been like without him in it. A guardian angel, Clarence, replays key events in his life and then runs the reel of what unfolded because he wasn't there. "Your brother died, George, because you weren't there to save him when he fell in the ice," Clarence explains. As he sees more and more of

this alternative reality without him in it, George Bailey begs, “I want to live again,” and his wish is granted.



(Image source)

The moral of the film, of course, is that we all have a much greater impact than we realize on the lives of others. But it seems to be lesson that is lost on scholars and academics. Perhaps we are too practiced in the art of cynicism and critique to imagine that our research could have an impact.

The place where most academics I know are much clearer about their impact on the world is in the classroom. Academics will joke amongst ourselves about “shaping young minds,” but the joke reveals a truth we hold close: that what we do there matters. It can change lives. In many instances, we are academics because there was a scholar once, somewhere, who changed our lives, and then all we wanted to do was that... talk about ideas in ways that changed peoples’ lives. How do you measure a life? In cups of coffee, or in lectures given, in semesters taught.

### **Can We Work for Justice, Measure Impact, and Resist?**

There are many reasonable arguments on the side of those who want to “resist metrification,” as my colleague [Joan Greenbaum](#) puts it. Governmental, institutional attempts to link research output to business profits are, to my way of thinking, wrong-headed and doomed to fail. We should, and must, resist efforts to

use any form of measurement to surveil and discipline faculty in the service of economic gain.

But, I don't think that's the moment we're in right now in the US.

I think that the moment we're in is one in which academics are beginning to work in new, digitally augmented ways, and most institutions of higher education have no clue how to assess that work or evaluate the impact of a scholar who is up for tenure or promotion with a mostly digital portfolio.

I also think the moment we're in is one of appalling economic inequality, and many, many academics I know want to join their work to the struggle to reduce that inequality. Mostly, they don't know how to go about doing that. And, if they do go about doing that, they wonder: *how will this work "count" for me when it comes time for hiring, tenure or promotion?*

I think the moment we're living in requires us to come up with innovative new ways to measure impact that take into account more kinds of work, including work for the public good. This is not as radical an idea as it sounds. I think we do this in some ways already.

When I write a tenure letter for someone to get promoted, I'm crafting a story about their impact on the world as a scholar, a teacher, and a member of a community. It's very often the case that I will write about scholar up for tenure something like: "This scholar has made a profound impact on her/his community through their work engaging local residents about the topic of her/his research..." and then go on to detail the forms this impact has taken. Quite simply, a tenure letter is a way of crafting a story about impact.

We're left with many questions about scholarly impact in the digital era. Most pressing for me is this rather grand question: *How do you measure an idea that takes hold and changes peoples' lives, changes public policy, and changes the way knowledge is created and shared?*

I don't think we know the answers to this question yet. We are still way before the beginning in understanding how to measure impact in ways that are meaningful.

*Jessie Daniels is Professor of Public Health, Sociology and Psychology at the Graduate Center and Hunter College, and the co-director of JustPublics@365.*





*Chapter 26*

# Transactional and Transformational Measures of Impact

by Jessie Daniels

As we come to the end of the meta-MOOC #FutureEd conversations prompted by [Cathy Davidson](#) and our lunchtime interlocutors here at CUNY, I'm pondering how we measure the impact of such a course, and more broadly, the impact of the work we do as academics.

In a recent [post at \*The Chronicle of Higher Ed\*](#), Douglas Howard considers the unfinished feeling of so much teaching in general:

Did Jim, who talked about becoming a therapist, go on to graduate school in psychology? Did Jessica, who argued so passionately in class against the death penalty, make it as a lawyer? We fill in the blanks about them based upon what we know (or think we know), and tell ourselves that their stories ended the way that we hoped. Teaching, in this regard, is the great open-ended narrative, the romantic fragment, the perpetually unfinished symphony.

The fact is, we almost never know if a course we taught, or a book we wrote, or an article we labored over, has any impact on anyone else.

Mark McGuire has a [thoughtful post at HASTAC](#) about the diffi-

culty in rating transformational experiences specifically in the context of a MOOC, such as the one on #FutureEd:

We rate hotels, music, live performances, movies, etc., so that others are able to make an informed decision about how to best invest their time and money. Rating and reviewing MOOCs seems like a sensible thing to do for similar reasons, and it would not be surprising to see such a practice develop. However, unlike a hotel or restaurant franchise, a living, changing, organic learning experience cannot be packaged, replicated, and sold to consumers who are looking for a satisfying (and predictable) product or service. It can't offer the same experience to the same person twice, and one person's experience may not be a good indicator of the experience another person will have. A transformational learning experience is like a good pot luck dinner party — you might have had the time of your life, but it can never be repeated.

I like the dinner party metaphor for teaching much better than the “unfinished symphony,” perhaps because I'm much more likely to attempt a dinner party than a symphony. I do think that there is a kind of alchemy in teaching, and good dinner parties, that makes it easy to assemble the same people, elements and conditions but difficult to replicate magic when it happens.

It's also difficult to think about how one might measure any of this. Unfortunately, to my way of thinking, the word “measure” has become synonymous with “quantify.” When we think of measurement exclusively in terms of quantification and counting, we lose a great deal of the story of impact.

I want to suggest an alternative way of thinking about impact that includes qualitative measures. In the chart below, you'll see a way of conceptualizing “transactional” measures – quantifiable things we can count, alongside “transformational” measure – qualitative measures, that are more difficult to count but represent more lasting change.

Transactional and Transformational Metrics	
Transactional (quantitative, easier to measure)	Transformational (qualitative, more difficult to measure)
citations, downloads	identify allies, establish relationships
mentions on social media, legacy media	collaborations, co-created projects
changes to public policy	cultural, social changes
(Adapted from Pastor, Ito and Rosner, "Transactions, Transformations and Translations: Metrics that Matter for Building, Scaling and Funding Social Movements," Report, October, 2011, <a href="http://bit.ly/1n9TQGI">http://bit.ly/1n9TQGI</a> ).	

(Chart content from **Bolder Advocacy**, h/t **gabriel sayegh**.

Chart design by **Emily Sherwood**)

In this schema, transactional metrics include both traditional (or “legacy”) academic measures of impact such as citations, along with alternative measures (or “altmetrics”), such as downloads, or mentions on social media. Quantitative, transactional measures of impact can also include lasting social change, such as changes to public policy. One of the things I like about this conceptualization is that it illustrates the incremental change that **altmetrics** represent. In other words, altmetrics are just another way of counting things – downloads and social media mentions, rather than citations – but it’s still just counting things. Counting and quantification can tell us somethings, but it doesn’t tell the whole story.

On the “transformational” side are those things that it’s difficult, perhaps even impossible to measure, but that are so crucial to doing work that has a lasting impact. These include identifying allies, building relationships, establishing collaborations, and co-creating projects. Ultimately, transformational work is about changing lives, changing the broader cultural narrative, and changing society in ways that make it more just and democratic for all. These kinds of transformations demand a different kind of metric, one that relies primarily on storytelling.

How might this work in academia? Well, to some extent, it already does.

To take the example of teaching, you may have gotten the advice – as I did – “save everything” for your tenure file. This advice often goes something like, “everytime a student sends you a thank you card, or writes you an email, or says, ‘this class made all the difference for me’ save that for your tenure file.” That’s part of how we ‘finish the symphony,’ to borrow Doug Howard’s metaphor, we get notes from students, we compile those into a narrative about our teaching. It’s impartial, to be sure, but it’s something. The com-

ments that students add to teaching evaluations are another place we see that impact in narrative form, although these are so skewed by the context of actually sitting in the class that it misses the longer term impact of how that course may have changed someone.

For the diminishing few of us on the other side of the tenure hurdle, think about those letters of recommendation we write for junior scholars. Whether we're writing for someone to get hired, promoted, or granted tenure, what we're doing when we craft those letters is creating a narrative about the candidate's impact on their corner of the academic world so far. Of course, we augment that with quantitative data, "this many articles over this span of time," and "these numbers in teaching evaluations."

The fact is, we already combine transactional and transformational metrics in academia in the way that we do peer evaluations. What we need to consider in academia is expanding how we think about 'impact' and realize the way that we already use both quantitative and qualitative measures to evaluate and assess the impact of our work.

More than this, we need to reclaim storytelling and narrative, augmented by the affordances of digital media, to tell stories of impact that make a difference.

*Jessie Daniels is Professor of Public Health, Sociology and Psychology at the Graduate Center and Hunter College, and the co-director of JustPublics@365.*

*Chapter 27*

# Creating Change with Storytelling

by Jessie Daniels

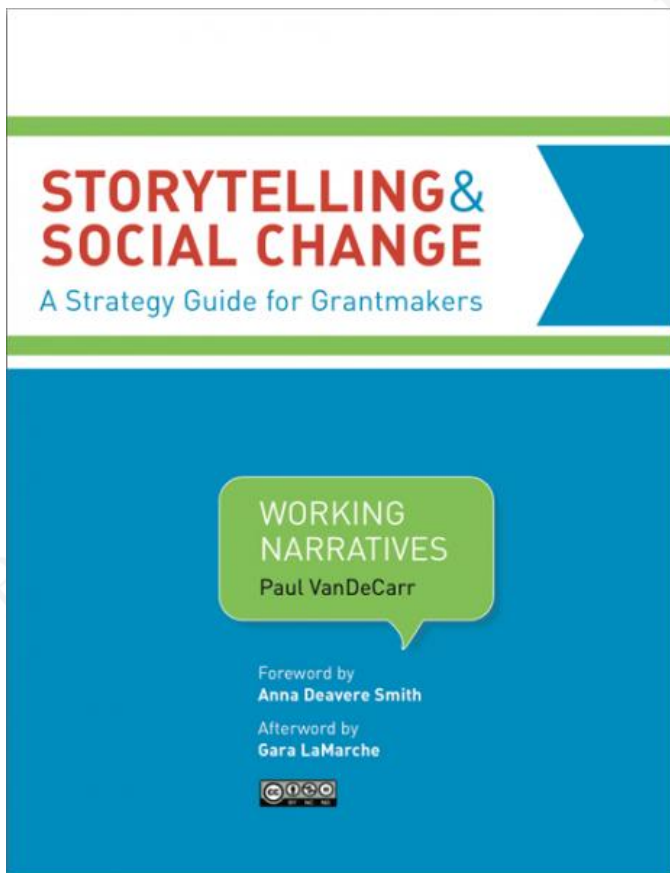
The way we measure impact is changing, whether the “we” is academics, grant makers or activists. Recently, I wrote here about “transactional” and “transformational” metrics. Transactional metrics are things we can quantify and count, including altmetrics.

Transformational metrics have to do with those qualitative changes that are more difficult to measure, such as collaborative projects, changing the conversation about a topic, or really creating social or cultural changes. In order to measure these kinds of changes, what I argue is that we need more kinds of storytelling. We do this already in academia, when we craft recommendations, tenure letters, or make our case to a committee for why someone should be promoted. What we do is tell a story about the impact this scholar has on the field, or the world.

And, storytelling is a crucial part of what makes us human. We have a deep, human desire both to have an impact on the world and to tell stories.



Given that I've been saying this for a while now here, I was delighted to come across this [Storytelling & Social Change: A Strategy Guide for Grantmakers](#) (pdf) by Paul VanDeCarr.



This guide compiles the wisdom of more than 75 storytellers, media-makers, community activists and foundation staffers into a comprehensive overview that's the first of its kind. It's aimed at grant makers, but of use to other change makers as well.

In a recent post, VanDeCarr notes other, less obvious, applications of storytelling that can create real change, such as [Heart & Soul](#), or [Marshall Ganz's "Public Narrative" method](#), adapted by the 2008 Obama campaign. There are also projects designed to educate the public such as [Voice of Witness](#) does with human rights or to advocate a cause such as the grantees of the [Health Media Initiative](#) of the Open Society Foundation.

VanDeCarr also highlights [Nation Inside](#), a project he works on, which hosts a web platform for activists working on mass incar-

ceration to organize around personal stories. VanDeCarr finds that more and more organizations are integrating storytelling into their daily work as a more effective way to meet the demands of the massive challenges they're facing.

Engaging with communities to create innovative social change is finding its way into some universities as well. For example, in 2006 the University of Minnesota established an **Office for Public Engagement (OPE)** to further the integration of public engagement into the University's core mission of research and teaching. Part of the conversation that's happening at University of Minnesota's OPE includes a discussion about **metrics**, in other words, how do you tell if you're successful at "public engagement." And, sure enough, under their menu item "Impact" are **Stories** and **Videos**.

There will be a time, in the not too distant future, in which young scholars, grant seekers and activists, will be compiling videos and multimedia portfolios to tell stories that illustrate their impact on the world. Or, perhaps that future is happening now.

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*Chapter 28*

# Reach, Impact and Scholarly Communication Now

by Jessie Daniels

Academics working today are laboring in a rapidly changing landscape of scholarly communication.

When acclaimed Internet researcher *danah boyd* published her recent book, *"It's Complicated,"* about the social lives of networked teens with the highly reputable academic house Yale University Press, she also put a free PDF of the book up on her own website. She *wrote this about that decision*:

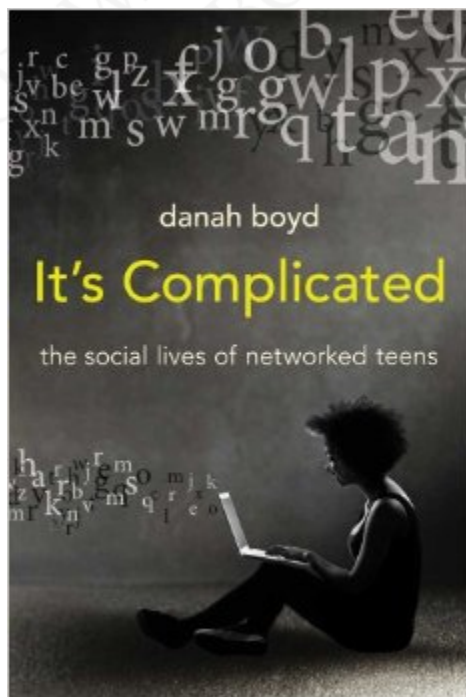
"...I didn't publicize this when I did so. For those who are curious as to why, I want to explain. And I want you to understand the various issues at play for me as an author and a youth advocate.

I didn't write this book to make money. I wrote this book to reach as wide of an audience as I possibly could. This desire to get as many people as engaged as possible drove every decision I made throughout this process. One of the things that drew me to Yale was their willingness to let me put a freely downloadable CC-licensed copy of the book online on the day the book came out. I knew that trade presses wouldn't let a first time author pull that one off. ...But what I started to realize is that when people purchase the book, they signal to outside folks that the book is important. This is

one of the reasons that I asked people who value this book to buy it. Y

**our purchasing decisions help me signal to the powers that be that this book is important, that the message in the book is valuable.**" (emphasis in the original)

It's an important and worthwhile book, and you should buy it and/or download it, depending on what you can manage. What I so appreciate about what she's done here is to find a way to thread the very thin needle of open access and a prominent, scholarly book.



Elsewhere in that post, she describes her experience with the machinery of publishing, and it goes like this:

"If you haven't published a book before, it's pretty unbelievable to see all of the machinery that goes into getting the book out once the book exists in physical form. News organizations want to pro-

mote books that will be influential or spark a conversation, but they are also anxious about having their stories usurped by others. Booksellers make risky decisions about how many copies they think they can sell ahead of time and order accordingly. (And then there's the world of paying for placement which I simply didn't do.) Booksellers' orders – as well as actual presales – are influential in shaping the future of a book, just like first weekend movie sales matter. For example, these sales influence bestseller and recommendation lists. These lists are key to getting broader audiences' attention (and for getting the attention of certain highly influential journalistic enterprises). And, as an author trying to get a message out, I realized that I needed to engage with this ecosystem and I needed all of these actors to believe in my book."

Her experience with publishing is quite different from the traditional academic's experience, but then that might be expected as danah boyd is not a traditional academic. If you're not familiar, danah boyd is something of a celebrity among folks who study the Internet, works as a Principle Researcher at Microsoft, and is starting her own research shop called Data & Society. Her work is also on two areas – the Internet and teenagers — that has wide public appeal.

The reality for most traditional academics is that they produce "Long, complex monographs are expensive to produce yet sell only 150 to 300 copies."

The news is even worse for academic papers published in traditional journals. A study at Indiana University found that:

"as many as 50% of papers are never read by anyone other than their authors, referees and journal editors." That same study concluded that "some 90% of papers that have been published in academic journals are never cited."

This is a certain kind of impact, to be sure, if who you are trying to have an impact on is an elite group of specialists in your field. But this model of publishing is never going to have much of a wider reach.

As Anthony DiMaggio, writing for [CounterPunch](#), notes about his own field of Political Science, that it is dominated by “over-specialization and obscurity” with scholars who carve out “extremely narrow niches” that have “no practical utility.” DiMaggio minces no words as he calls out social science academics broadly for a lack of relevance and what he deems as cowardice:

“Lack of relevance to the political world doesn’t make one’s research interesting or worthwhile, but this message falls on deaf ears in insulated places like high ed social science departments. A main reason for scholars’ contempt for political advocacy is cowardice. The vast majority of scholars have been socialized their entire lives to believe they must always remain ‘objective,’ and that to take a position on an issue would be heretical. Most scholars operate according to a pack mentality – fearful of engaging in unconventional behavior. By producing useful real world research, one is challenging the sacred rules governing ‘objective’ social science that celebrate esoteric research agendas. To step outside that mold would be to endanger one’s prestige, and risk that one will be seen as unprofessional in colleagues’ minds. Such pressures ensure that academics remain part of the problem, not the solution. They fail by design to challenge the political and economic power status quo and injustices that occur around them.”

There’s something to what DiMaggio says here, but I don’t know if it’s cowardice as much as institutional reward structures. Or, perhaps those are two sides of the same coin.

The legacy model of scholarly communication values writing obscure books and papers for tiny audiences makes sense within a certain kind of reward structure. Within legacy academia, the people that sit on hiring, tenure and promotion committees still place value on at things like ‘impact factor’ of little-read journals and the fading prestige of boutique publishers with minuscule runs.

However, the appearance of digitally fluent, hybrid scholars – like danah boyd – who are more interested in reach and impact on

a broader public, point to a new kind of reward structure, one that values influence beyond a small group of specialists.

The real challenge, I think, comes when a researcher that doesn't have the star-power or following of a danah boyd wants to write about something that's much less appealing than what teenagers are doing on the Internet. What kind of broad reach or impact can a relatively unknown scholar writing about a topic that's unpopular expect to have? This remains an open question in this changing landscape of scholarly communication, but it seems to me that the Internet offers a set of opportunities to reach beyond the conventional audiences for academic research.

Still, even when academics use social media there's little to indicate they are doing so in order to reach a broad, general audience. Indeed, we know from recent research that even when academics use social media, such as blogging, they mostly don't do this to engage with a broader public. In [a recent study of 100 academics blogs](#), researchers found that most academics are blogging for professionals peers, rather than for the public in any general sense: 73% of the blogs analyzed were geared toward other academics, while just 38% were designed for general readers.

I can't help but wonder how different academic research would look if we were guided by danah boyd's goal: *"I wrote this book to reach as wide of an audience as I possibly could."*

The counter to this, of course, and one that I often hear in talks I give about this work, is something along the lines of: *"well, small publishers and journals are providing a valuable service for getting academic work published that wouldn't ever be interesting to a wide, public audience. This work is often too complex, theoretical, esoteric, important, too politically unpopular for a wide audience, so we must rely on the obscure publishing options to keep doing what we do as academics."*

There is something to this argument. For example, I write about racism – a thoroughly unpopular topic in the US. My academic books have done ok, but they will never be as popular as the work that danah boyd does. It's also the case that academic presses have published books of mine that probably would not have been picked up by trade presses for a general, public audience. Still, what I also know to be true is that the work I do on racism has gotten a much bigger following from my various social

media outlets than it has from the books and articles I've published.

The skepticism about "reach" for academic work is built on a misconception that there won't be an audience for that work. In fact, I think there are multiple audiences, varied publics and a wide citizenry that's really interested in more substantive contributions about the state of the world than they're currently getting. And, I think academics can step up and make a contribution, if we'll begin to re-think what scholarly communication is now.

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## CONCLUSION

In a recent New York Times op-ed, "Professors We Need You!" (2/15/14) Nicholas Kristof appealed to academics to join the public sphere and resist "self-- marginalization." It is precisely this problem that JustPublics@365, and this e-book, are designed to address.

Scholars are knowledge producers. Today, how scholars produce that knowledge and what form it takes is changing. How and where we teach is being transformed as are the ways that we create knowledge. Old disciplinary boundaries are giving way to interdisciplinary and hybrid fields, at the same time that neoliberal economic models demand to know the ROI on higher learning.

Legacy models of academia demand that scholarship appear in bound volumes, printed by third party, for-profit publishers for a small audience of other experts is challenged by new models of publishing. Digital technologies make publishing easier than ever. Simultaneously, a growing movement for open access to research (both data and publications) have called the question about the long-term viability of traditional publishing models that are draining the budgets of college and university libraries.

The rise of what some have called the "golden age of documentary" due to changing distribution models and the democratization of filmmaking raise interesting opportunities for bringing together scholarship, art and activism. Innovators in the world of documentary are wondering if there are ways to build in the idea of 'impact' to the development of film projects. And, documentary films offer incredible teaching and learning opportunities for students who have grown up saturated by multimedia environments.

New, alternative measures of scholarly output are possible now by using social media to track the reach of academic articles. Many faculty resist such measures as yet another instance of

neoliberal regimes encroaching on faculty autonomy. Still, the deep human desire to have an impact on the world suggests that we want to know that our research, our activism, our lives made a difference somehow. Storytelling, rather than simply counting, may provide an alternative way to assess impact that takes into account the public good.

In the next 10 years, a new landscape of scholarly communication will emerge. The shape that takes, and whose interest that serves, will be up to each of us and our understanding of scholarly communication in the digital era for the public good. We hope that this e-book will provide some guidance.