

Book review

Shorley, Deborah and Jubb, Michael (Editors). *The future of scholarly communication*. London: Facet, 2013. 224 pp. ISBN: 978-1-85604-817-0

This is not a “library book” in the sense that it is not centred on libraries. In the strict sense only one of the 13 chapters examines issues directly related to libraries. To be exact, there is another chapter that focuses on scholars as library users, investigating their relationship with the academic library. Notwithstanding, such books are intriguing for the academic librarian, and the editors recommend their work to researchers, universities, research institutes, publishers, and – obviously – librarians.

Introductions to similar collections of commentaries are sometimes not much worth reading. The introduction to this book is different. It is not only comprehensive, but goes beyond presenting a table of contents of the book. It is an essay in its own right, even though its main mission is to reflect on the contributions

No doubt, the system of scholarly communication has undergone a series of profound changes in the last decade, and this book comes at a time when a number of its stakeholders are showing unprecedented levels of interest in these developments.

Different chapters reflect the situation and views of these stakeholders. First of all, it is obvious that researchers are central figures in these developments. Accordingly, a number of chapters show that the behaviours and attitudes of researchers are changing. As authors, they are interested in attaining high impact and credit for their work in high-status journals. As readers and users they would require quick and free access, with as few restrictions as possible.

Postdoctoral researchers are an especially interesting cluster of the scholarly community since the pressures of the ‘publish or perish’ culture has an

especially heavy influence on their choices about communicating research. The book offers a picture about that.

One of the perhaps most intriguing issues is the role and importance of social media in new research environments. The analysis shows that researchers usually use social media in ways that do not deviate from their existing priorities and principles and that the extent of using social media tools is discipline specific. It is most prominent in those disciplines that already had a tradition of working in extended collaborations and of sharing draft papers. We know that massive reliance on informal communication has always characterized scholarship. Thus, it is not surprising that social media are often used as a tool to support the conversations between researchers. On the other hand, there is no evidence that social media would function as an alternative way to the formal publishing of research findings.

It is not accidental either that Open Access publishing is addressed in several chapters, as it had deep effects on both the subscription based business model and the way in which the communication of research is being financed.

A contemporary book on research communication would not be complete without paying attention to the questions of Big Data and its open availability, that are affecting all disciplines. There is a chapter addressing these issues.

The more traditional – we can say “evergreen” – topic of peer review is not lacking either.

Besides these issues, some other topics addressed in the book include:

- Changing ways of sharing research in chemistry
- Supporting qualitative research in the humanities and social sciences
- Cybertaxonomy
- The changing role of the publisher in the scholarly communications process
- The changing role of the journal editor
- The view of the research funder
- Changing institutional research strategies

All in all, this is an interesting and valuable book for all those, who want to know more about the present and the future of scholarly communication.

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