

Transition time for HSS

Sharon Davies discovers some of the recent developments, challenges and emerging trends around Humanities and Social Sciences research

There have been a number of recent developments around HSS research communication – particularly around monograph publishing and open access (OA).

The importance of monographs in HSS publishing is highlighted in Jisc’s 2014 OAPen-UK HSS Researcher Survey, part of a Jisc AHRC-funded project, which reported that 84 per cent of the 2,231 UK-based HSS researchers surveyed considered it important to produce monographs.

In comparison with the more affluent STM communities, HSS research struggles to show a return on investment to funders as it is harder to quantify. Little or no investment from the corporate sector and fewer citations in HSS journals when compared to STM subjects are two of the challenges faced by HSS authors in their attempts to have their research and work recognised.

The importance placed on monographs by HSS researchers also brings with it challenges particularly around the issue of OA.

Open access in HSS

Martin Paul Eve, co-director of the Open Library of Humanities (OLH), observed: ‘The current situation with respect to open access in the humanities disciplines is one of transition. Universities in the UK and Europe are scrambling to implement green open access provisions stipulated by funders.

‘This is a mode under which researchers publish wherever they choose and then deposit a copy of their accepted manuscript in their institution’s repository, sometimes with an embargo stipulated by the publisher, claimed

as necessary in order to protect their [the publisher’s] revenue stream. This movement is far slower in nations like the United States where there are no centralised funder mandates to normalise the practice.’

Eve continued: ‘By contrast, gold open access, often (but not necessarily) implemented by a mode of author/institution-facing charges, is struggling to find traction in the HSS disciplines. The problem is that this route, if worked through these charges, is usually more expensive and unaffordable for these disciplines because it concentrates costs. This has been coupled with researcher resistance for fears that they will not be able to publish work with this business model – important because it is used as the criteria for

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hiring/promotions. This business model is not intrinsic to gold OA but it is the route that many traditional publishers are implementing.’

Eve added: ‘The situation for books – which play an important role in the HSS disciplines for the communication of a long-form argument – is ever trickier. While Geoffrey Crossick’s important report for HEFCE [Monographs and Open Access 2015] earlier this year, on which I served as an expert advisor, noted that open access for many books is likely to be a significant part of the future, we

are at an early stage and we need a range of experiments with business models and forms to ensure a transition that does the least damage. The current situation for OA for books is that we have a sustainable but not scalable solution.’

Caren Milloy, head of projects at Jisc, added: ‘We know that HSS researchers are finding getting published very hard. In the 2014 OAPEN-UK survey, of respondents who said that it was important or very important for their career to publish monographs, 50 per cent felt that it was difficult or very difficult for someone at their career stage and in their discipline to do so. Academics early in their careers felt this particularly strongly and this is something that open access must address – early-career academics need to feel able to take the open





'While a move towards publishing open access papers has been adopted by many STM communities for some time – with encouragement from funding bodies and governments – many HSS communities are only now having to adapt to a system whereby the author pays an article processing charge (APC) to make their research readily available to everyone rather than just journal subscribers.'

New OA initiatives

But things are moving forward in relation to HSS research communication, as observed by Milloy at Jisc: 'We're currently in a period of experimentation where publishers, institutions, libraries, research funders, learned societies and researchers are all collaborating. Together we're exploring all kinds of ways to transition to OA to bring forward all the best bits of the traditional model, whilst also enabling the innovation we need.'

'A couple of examples include how HEFCE is working on taking forward the recommendations from the Crossick Report working with Research Councils on policies related to OA monographs and the future REFs – lots more engagement and consultation to come here. Also, the project Academic Book of the Future is being run by teams at the University College London and Kings College London, exploring key questions like "what is an academic book?" "who reads them?", "what can technology do to help make academic books more accessible?" and "how can we make sure academic books, whether print or electronic, are kept safe, and don't disappear?'

After listening to the needs and suggestions from the different HSS subject communities, Emerald has made the decision to trial a zero-month embargo period for all articles submitted to *Library and Information Science* and selected information and knowledge management journals. This is to say that, once accepted by a journal following the peer-review process – an author's paper will be made available via their institutions' own repository.

Emerald has also formed the Librarian Advisory Group to listen and react to that community's concerns and suggestions. Meanwhile, the company's publishers also work with their respective subject communities, listen to what they need and trial any further initiatives in order to find a sustainable way forward for all involved.

Developing this point of new initiatives,

Eve of OLH observed: 'A range of initiatives have emerged, often funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, that seek to implement alternative business models for open access in the humanities and social sciences. These are the important experiments, in my mind. For instance, Collabra at UC Press aims to sensitise academics to the fact that they add value through their labour at multiple points in the chain by allowing them to "pay it forward", thereby enabling long-term economic change through information awareness.'

Eve continued: 'Our own initiative, the OLH, funded by Mellon, seeks to pool library funds so that submission is not dependent on authors having recourse to a publication fund of their own. So far we have almost 100 libraries supporting us and seven journals scheduled to join the platform at launch. This also involves converting subscription journals to fee-free OA through our model (one of our first journals used to be subscription and

'How do we make sure that libraries are aware that there is an open access version?'

we're in discussion with two more for early next year.)' See RI's May 2015 news story *Open access transition easier through OLH/Jisc agreement for further information on OLH.*

Discussing new university presses, Eve observed: 'An aspect that I've noticed, and of which I remain moderately critical, is that there seem to be a range of new university press launches on the near-horizon that take advantage of low-cost technological setups to provide open access. While the OA aspect is to be lauded, I worry that these startups often have no business model beyond article processing charges (which I do not believe have huge traction in the humanities) and that they are being coopted as brand outlets for universities to entrench their teaching positions for the next round of marketisation.'

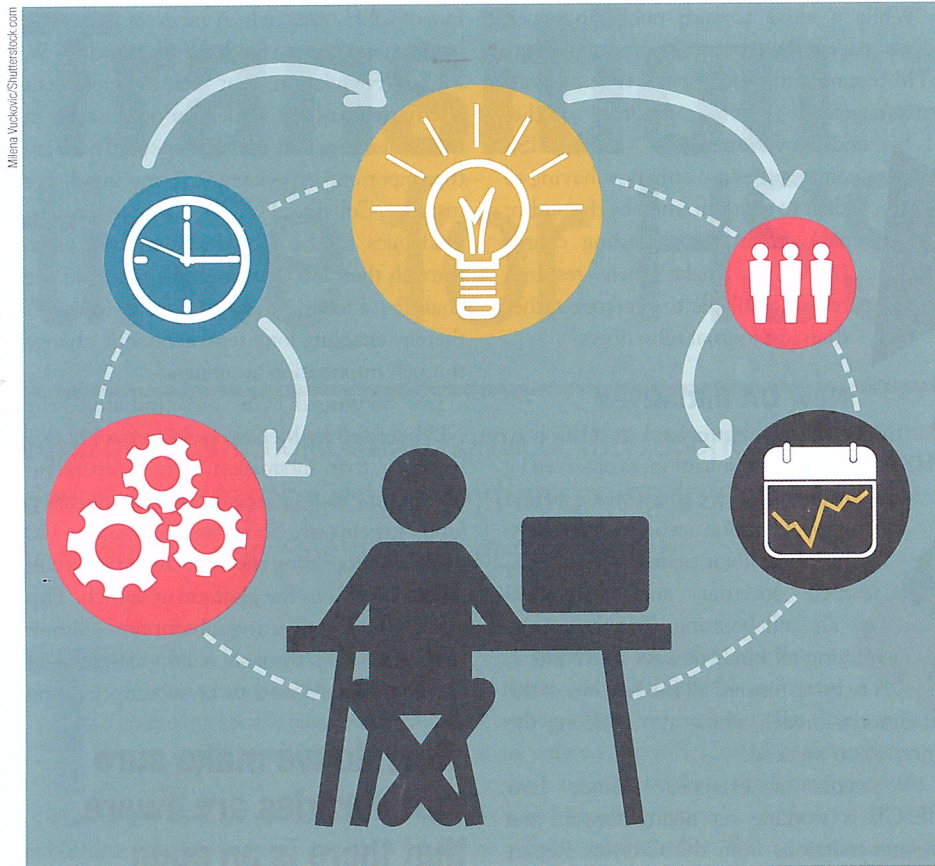
Other HSS initiatives

Herman Pabbruwe, chief executive officer at Brill, highlights an initiative recently launched at Brill. He observed: 'It is becoming more and more difficult for scholars to stay current on a variety of subjects, even within their own discipline. This is why we have developed Brill Research Perspectives. Designed for research communities and educators in the HSS, these ▶

access route and in doing so, that their monograph will be treated with the same credibility.'

David Sleeman, executive publisher at Emerald Group Publishing, continued: 'As part of a value added service to show the importance of HSS research and to increase the impact of authors work, Emerald took the decision 10 years ago to publish structured abstracts alongside each article. This assists authors by giving their manuscripts a better chance of being discovered by search engines and in turn increases usage (in terms of downloads), and therefore increases the paper's impact.'

'Once an article has been published, Emerald is then able to measure the impact of the work and provide the author with analytical feedback to show interest from within a given community to see where they need support and which ideas should be progressed further.'



► publications distil the vast body of literature in a subject area into a more digestible format.

‘Written by top people in the field, each issue will provide a snapshot of the state of scholarship with author’s commentary and analysis. Taken together the numerous issues of Brill Research Perspectives will constitute a multidisciplinary reference library for research and classroom use.’ Due to be launched in 2016 with 13 journals, Brill Research Perspectives will publish two to six issues annually across multiple subject areas. Each journal issue will also be available as a book in both print and electronic format.

After a successful trial period in 2014, Emerald extended its partnership with the online platform Kudos to help increase the impact of published articles and implement a value add service for Emerald authors. Kudos provides a valuable set of resources towards helping academic authors achieve their goal of illustrating the value of their work to the wider society and extend their impact and visibility.

The use of other platforms such as Figshare increase the scrutiny of data, however also allow the ability for content users to preview the data before they access the whole article. This helps the author determine the impact of their research as their paper may have been

downloaded if the user found the data of use.

Casalini Libri’s Digital Division has also launched a new initiative by offering a New Title Information service for both print and electronic format to institutions, resulting in the supply of ebooks to the same level of service which they traditionally have been supplying paper format titles. The addition of records for digital editions to the normal workflow will facilitate the selection and acquisition of single e-books for libraries. A special feature has been added to the Casalini Libri website to allow searches to be filtered for print or electronic publications.

Looking ahead

So what is the future for HSS research publishing?

Emerald’s Sleeman said: ‘The future may be uncertain and slightly confusing for researchers publishing from the HSS communities, but Emerald will continue to strive to assist authors, institutions and faculties who need to work within the new Research Excellence Framework (REF) last conducted in 2014.

‘The primary purpose of REF 2014 was to assess the quality of research and produce outcomes for each submission made by institutions by informing the selective

allocation of their grant for research to the institutions which they fund, with effect from 2015-16.

‘It also provides accountability for public investment in research and produces evidence of the benefits of this investment while benchmarking information and establishing reputational yardsticks, for use within the higher education (HE) sector and for public information. HSS plays a key role in these activities and Emerald is dedicated to optimising their impact.’

Caren Milloy of Jisc concluded: ‘Open access will likely create new opportunities, new models and help researchers share their research with a wider readership. We’re keeping researchers up to date on open access through the OAPEN-UK Guide to Open Access Monograph Publishing for Arts, Humanities and Social Science Researchers. We need to develop standards to support open access monograph publishing – and make it easy.

‘Imagine that say, Oxford University Press has implemented an open access model – how does the monograph that has been made open access get into the institutions repository? How do researchers who are looking on Amazon or in the library catalogue know that there is an open access version of the book available?

‘How do we make sure that libraries, who purchase the print and electronic copies, are aware that there is an open access version?’

‘We are at an early stage and we need a range of experiments with business models’

How does the researcher know what licence the book is available under and where they can get alternate formats? These are some of the areas that Jisc Collections in partnership with OAPEN Foundation are exploring in their Investigating Open Access Monograph Services project – and the answers will be critical to the uptake of open access monograph publishing.’

Also there is positive news around HSS funding, particularly in relation to Horizon 2020. When announcing the Horizon 2020 budget recently, the European Commission acknowledged the importance of funding for HSS, thus helping the delivery of future HSS research. ■