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Academic publishing in the information age – an editor's observations

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Introduction

I am the editor and founder of the Journal of Information, Communication and Ethics in Society (JICES) published by Emerald Publishing [i]. The journal focuses on the social and ethical issues related to the planning, development, implementation and use of new media, and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). The journal was launched in 2003 by Troubador, an independent UK publisher based in Leicester. In January 2007 the journal was acquired by Emerald its current publisher. Since the inception of JICES, publishing; and academic publishing in particular; have changed beyond all recognition. It has been an evolution which has involved everyone; academic author, editor, reviewer, publisher and of course reader. It is a revolution which reflects technological advances and societal acceptance of such advances together with the associated changes in habit, activity and norms.

Journal history

When JICES was launched communication between the two editors and the publisher tended to be local and face-to-face. The journal was produced in a traditional manner resulting in paper-based editions. Communications between editors, publisher and authors moved quickly to email and sometimes teleconferencing, but the paper-based product prevailed. At the time of Emerald becoming the publisher a major technological change took place in the form of ScholarOne Manuscripts, an electronic submission, reviewing and editing system. This has become the current leading journal and peer review tool for academic publishers. Alongside the paper-based editions an electronic version was introduced which was accessible through, for example, university electronic libraries. As electronic publishing and readership access matured so the move to an electronic only version was inevitable. This happened in 2014. Paper-based versions remain available on demand but at additional cost. The complete publishing cycle was now online.

Academic career progression has always been influenced by publication track-record. However, the demand to publish often and quickly seems to have increased. Linked with this is the need to demonstrate academic influence through citation count. These factors have caused a change in academic publishing. There is a move, JICES included, away from volume/issue as the unit of publishing to academic paper as the unit of publishing. This new approach means that as soon as a paper is accepted it can be made available through online access and so journal volume and issue become of secondary importance.

Virtual space

As can be seen ICT is at the heart of the academic publishing revolution. The online world has become the norm. An extensive virtual network exists in which those involved are all potentially connected. New modes and patterns of interaction and expectation have developed which challenge our social norms and moral integrity. It is within this complex set of relationships that academic publishing exists. Driven by institutional strategy and priority, academics and students undertake research which is written up and submitted for publication. Technology-enabled access to data and literature informs the research and writing processes. Choice of journal, method of submission, process of review and production of publication are similarly technology-enabled. Much of the publishing activity takes place online with many of the players never meeting face-to-face (Rogerson, 2013). Trusting relationships should exist throughout the publishing activity, but in the online world, this can be challenging. We are fundamentally trusting of each other – such trust is destroyed when an incident occurs that demonstrates untrustworthiness. Trusting relationships in the physical real world rely heavily on non-verbal cues such as body language and tactile interaction, but in the online world, such cues rarely exist (ibid).

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4 It is the virtual space which holds the key to developing trusting relationships in the online world.
5 Academic publishing has moved from what Hine (2000) calls the *cultural artefact view* where
6 technological products are developed and used as tools by those involved in the publishing cycle to
7 the *cultural view* where virtual space enables people to form and reform practices and meaning
8 throughout the publishing cycle, for example, the change of unit of publishing as discussed above.
9 Humans have become more intimate with technology in this cycle. In this way humans are extended
10 as they are both physical and digital. In this new situation relationship-building takes place through
11 our *digital selves* as it is unlikely that actors in the publishing cycle will ever physically meet.
12

13 **Editor's digital self**

14 For an editor it is essential to embrace the virtual space. It is the editor's *digital self* which helps to
15 build trustworthiness and demonstrate integrity in the eyes of prospective authors. It also increases
16 journal visibility and promotes it beyond the traditional networks of the past. Emerald has been
17 proactive in using digital self. The main elements are Kudos [ii], ORCID [iii], Twitter [iv] and LinkedIn
18 [v]. However, the *virtual anatomy* of my own digital self goes beyond this and includes
19 ResearchGate, Academia.edu, Wikipedia and Google Scholar.
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22 The closest direct links to JICES are through Kudos and ORCID. Kudos is a web-based service which
23 helps to maximise the visibility and impact of published articles. Emerald encourages editors and
24 authors to use Kudos by linking it to the ScholarOne system. ORCID provides a unique universal
25 identity for individual academics. Part of the registration process for JICES on ScholarOne for editors,
26 reviews and authors includes the ORCID identity code. Those without a code can be directed to the
27 ORCID website to create a code as part of the registration process.
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30 The business social network LinkedIn allows users to create professional profiles, post blogs and
31 interconnect with each other. The *gateway-access approach* to joining LinkedIn helps to build trust
32 among its users. Through LinkedIn [vi] blogs I have been able to inform a wide network of people
33 about JICES papers and news as well as current ethical/social issues related to ICT. Conscious of the
34 modern attention-deficit world of the so-called *Generation Y* or *selfie generation* LinkedIn blogs are
35 turned into microblogs through 140 character tweets on Twitter [vii]. LinkedIn has led to new
36 contacts and new authors for JICES. LinkedIn is a hybrid element of my virtual anatomy as it helps to
37 develop my reputation as an academic editor and the reputation of JICES as a quality publication.
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40 Two platforms, ResearchGate [viii] and Academic.edu [ix] are used to make my own academic
41 publications and activities more widely available. Both platforms, whilst having differences, share
42 the common goal of making research accessible for all. As such they are important elements of my
43 virtual anatomy giving me the potential to connect with colleagues, peers and specialists in field
44 relevant to JICES.
45

46 The editor of a cross-discipline journal such as JICES must be open to submissions from even the
47 most unlikely of sources. Reaching out to unconventional sources is supported by using some of the
48 generalist channels of virtual space. As such I have used Google Scholar Citations [x] which groups
49 my work together in such a way that access to one of my publications is likely to make others visible
50 to the searcher. The second generalist channel which I use is Wikipedia. It remains the Internet's
51 leading encyclopaedia. It may have its critics but when searching for material in virtual space
52 Wikipedia entries will almost certainly be included in the results. Therefore the final element of my
53 virtual anatomy is my Wikipedia biography [xi].
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56 **Future prospect**

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3 In the modern era of academic publishing JICES will flourish because the virtual space has been
4 embraced by both publisher and editor. As its editor the virtual anatomy of my digital self is an
5 interconnected web through which I become credible and creditable and JICES becomes visible and
6 viable.
7

8 **References**

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13

14 **Endnotes**

15 [i] <http://www.emeraldinsight.com/journal/jices>

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17 [iii] <https://orcid.org/>

18 [iv] <https://twitter.com/EmeraldGlobal>

19 [v] <https://www.linkedin.com/company/emerald-group-publishing-limited>

20 [vi] <https://www.linkedin.com/in/profsimonrogerson/>

21 [vii] <https://twitter.com/srogroge>

22 [viii] https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Simon_Rogerson

23 [ix] <https://dmu.academia.edu/SimonRogerson>

24 [x] https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=Fxzz_RQAAAAJ&hl=en

25 [xi] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simon_Rogerson
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