Evidence Based Library and Information Practice

LIS Practitioner-focused Research Trends Toward Open Access Journals, Academic-focused Research Toward Traditional Journals

Chang, Y-W. (2017). Comparative study of characteristics of authors between open access and non-open access journals in library and information science. Library & Information Science Research, 39(1), 8-15. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.lisr.2017.01.002

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A Review of:
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Abstract

Objective – To examine the occupational characteristics and publication habits of library and information science (LIS) authors regarding traditional journals and open access journals.

Design – Content analysis.

Setting – English language research articles published in open access (OA) journals and non-open access (non-OA) journals from 2008 to 2013 that are indexed in LIS databases.

Subjects – The authorship characteristics for 3,472 peer-reviewed articles.

Methods – This researcher identified 33 total journals meeting the inclusion criteria by using the LIS categories within 2012 Journal Citation Reports (JCR) to find 13 appropriate non-OA journals, and within the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) to identify 20 appropriate OA journals. They found 1,665 articles by 3,186 authors published in the non-OA journals, and another 1,807 articles by 3,446 authors within the OA journals.

The researcher used author affiliation to determine article authors' occupations using

information included in the articles themselves or by looking for information on the Internet, and excluded articles when occupational information could not be located. Authors were categorized into four occupational categories: Librarians (practitioners), Academics (faculty and researchers), Students (graduate or undergraduate), and Others. Using these categories, the author identified 10 different types of collaborations for co-authored articles.

Main Results – This research involves three primary research questions. The first examined the occupational differences between authors publishing in OA journals versus non-OA journals. Academics (faculty and researchers) more commonly published in non-OA journals (58.1%) compared to OA journals (35.6%). The inverse was true for librarian practitioners, who were more likely to publish in OA journals (53.9%) compared to non-OA journals (25.5%). Student authors, a combined category that included both graduate and undergraduate students, published more in non-OA journals (10.1%) versus in OA journals (5.0%). The final category of "other" saw only a slight difference between non-OA (6.3%) and OA (5.5%) publication venues.

This second research question explored the difference in the proportion of LIS authors who published in OA and non-OA journals. Overall, authors were more likely to publish in OA journals (72.4%) vs. non-OA (64.3%). Librarians tended to be primary authors in OA journals, while LIS academics tend to be primary authors for articles in non-OA publications. Academics from outside the LIS discipline but contributing to the disciplinary literature were more likely to publish in non-OA journals. Regarding trends over time, this research showed a decrease in the percentage of librarian practitioners and "other" authors publishing in OA journals, while academics and students increased their OA contributions rates during the same period.

Finally, the research explored whether authors formed different types of collaborations when publishing in OA journals as compared to non-OA journals. When examining co-authorship

of articles, just over half of all articles published in OA journals (54.4%) and non-OA journals (53.2%) were co-authored. Overall the researcher identified 10 types of collaborative relationships and examined the rates for publishing in OA versus non-OA journals for these relationships. OA journals saw three main relationships, with high levels of collaborations between practitioner librarians (38.6% of collaborations), between librarians and academics (20.5%), and between academics only (18.0%). Non-OA journals saw four main relationships, with collaborations between academics appearing most often (34.1%), along with academic-student collaborations (21.5%), practitioner librarian collaborations (15.5%), and librarian-academic collaborations (13.2%).

Conclusion – LIS practitioner-focused research tends to appear more often in open access journals, while academic-focused researcher tends to appear more often in non-OA journals. These trends also appear in research collaborations, with co-authored works involving librarians appearing more often in OA journals, and collaborations that include academics more likely to appear in non-OA journals.

Commentary

This study furthers our understanding of the trends in OA and non-OA publishing, particularly through the examination of occupational collaborations in combination with publication venue. The value of this research is recognizing that authors continue to explore options about where they choose to publish. By identifying collaborations and exploring how the occupational status of authors and collaborators may affect the selection of publication venue, this study goes beyond the typical analysis of comparing publication venue choice based on academic rank, or by marking the distinction between researchers versus practitioners.

This research concludes that traditional journal publishing is not threatened by open access publishing and that "developments in OA publishing have had little effect on most

academic authors' loyalty to traditional journals" (p. 14). Since this study's methods did not measure perceptions or preferences regarding OA and non-OA publications, it does not include reliable evidence to draw any conclusions about authors' loyalty toward a particular publication model. However, this study does establish evidence that practitioner-based contributions appear more often in OA journals, while researcher-based contributions are more likely to appear in non-OA journals. One implication we can derive from this is that library practitioners should consult both OA and non-OA journals to inform their practice, but do so knowing that OA journals may be more useful venues for discovering practitioner-focused research. These research results may also be informative for researchers and collaborators choosing an appropriate OA or non-OA journal to publish their own research.

The author notes limitations to the study, including the fact that many articles were excluded because author information was unavailable. This brings overall generalizability into question, since there is no way to determine whether excluding these articles resulted in skewed analysis. Also missing from this commentary is information about the strengths and weaknesses of using the JCR and DOAJ to identify the journal sources overall, aside from information about identifying gold OA journals in the DOAJ. With these limitations acknowledged, this study is otherwise valid using Glynn's (2006) appraisal tool. The selection criteria, data collection, and other methods appear sound and appropriate for this study. The author provides the title lists for both OA and non-OA journals included, aiding replicability. Finally, they also point to further areas for research, such as the need to monitor ongoing trends related to authorship, collaborations, and choice of publishing venue. Given the time period being studied (2008-2013), an update to this research to include more recent publication and collaboration trends would be meaningful to practitioners and researchers alike.

References

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