



Publications, Pretensions and Profits: The Open Access Conversation Continues

At its best, the WCU Faculty Forum gets people on campus talking. The August issue was a provocative piece by Nate Kreuter of the English Department, and it got people talking. (Click [here](#) if you missed it.)

Nate argued that for-profit journal publishers such as Elsevier “are ripping off the university community and the taxpayers of North Carolina.” He claimed that the open access publishing movement can break the cycle perpetuated by for-profit academic publishers, with freely available publications.

This month’s issue is a continuation of the conversation he started with three related essays, all supporting the movement to open access publishing.

- Bruce Henderson of the Psychology Department argues that we will have to get out of the prestige game if we are serious about embracing alternative forms of scholarship.
- The Hunter Library Open Access Committee collaborated on a commentary illustrating the ways Hunter Library supports the open access movement. They hope to further the discussion on campus, increase awareness of the issues, and clarify some common misunderstandings about open access. This effort was led by Sarah Steiner, with co-authors, Kristin Calvert, Farzaneh Razzaghi, Liz Skene and Mark Stoffa.
- Finally, Nicholas Passalacqua, from Forensic Anthropology weighs in with questions about the legitimate costs for publications, and he suggests [Academia.edu](#) as a great resource for free access to scholarly work. He and his colleagues are in the process of exploring different options for establishing a new forensic anthropology journal, focusing on online-only options with the lowest subscription rate available.

Abandoning our Pretentions

Bruce Henderson, Psychology

In his August Faculty Forum, Nate Kreuter addressed two complex issues. The first issue is that journal publishers use free faculty labor to make unconscionable profits. Universities cover the overhead for the production and evaluation of knowledge and publishers provide status and prestige to researchers and their universities in return. Dr. Kreuter's analysis itself contains evidence of the power of prestige in his references to MIT, Harvard, and the University of California, in his reference to the high status of online journals in his own field of rhetoric and composition, and in his need to assert that he would continue to publish in traditional outlets. His call for support of open access does provide cheaper paths to prestige, and we should heed his call to encourage open access alternatives. I personally commit not to review for or publish in Elsevier journals unless they agree to profit sharing with Hunter Library (I simply do not know if any of the scores of journals I have published in or reviewed for were Elsevier journals, but I wouldn't be surprised if I had been guilty of participating in the scam in the past).

The other complex issue Dr. Kreuter raises is related to how we evaluate our colleagues' work (I assume in the reappointment, tenure, and promotion process since the regular recognition of reward through merit increases apparently has been abandoned by our state legislature). Dr. Kreuter calls for consideration of a broader set of scholarly products, including the aforementioned open access publishing, alternative forms of scholarship and public engagement. I fully support this call. Yet I am concerned that there is a real danger of reproducing the negative qualities inherent in the evaluation of traditional scholarship in the assessment of these new forms. Dr. Kreuter argues that at WCU we are well positioned to take advantage of the changes brought about by open access and alternative categories of scholarship because of our commitment to the Boyer Model. However, my observations on the implementation of the Boyer Model across universities and the published research of KerryAnn O'Meara both suggest that work in the nontraditional Boyer categories tends to quickly morph into some sort of publishing activity. Indeed, just a few years after the public presentation of the model Boyer and Rice developed, Boyer himself responded to critics of the vagueness of his scheme by admitting that peer reviewed publications would remain the coin of the realm in all categories of scholarship. Over the past 25 years there has been a proliferation of teaching and public service journals.

I am convinced that if we are going to truly embrace alternative forms of scholarship we have to get out of the prestige game. That may be very hard to do because, as Dolores Burke wrote long ago, prestige is "the oxygen of higher education." At comprehensive universities like Western it should not be too hard. The truth is that, with notable exceptions, we have never been effective in the quest for status except in our own pretensions. In an analysis I did with Heidi Buchanan some years ago we showed that while faculty members at comprehensive universities were nearly invisible in the prestigious journals of four disciplines, they had a major role in the pedagogical journals of those same disciplines (and we all know that there is no prestige attached to pedagogy). In a more recent analysis I found that faculty members at comprehensive universities were publishing (in any type of journal) at a rate of 1 to 13 compared to those at

research universities and 1 to 4 compared to those at major liberal arts colleges. Over time these gaps have been increasing. That is pretty good evidence that the prestige game is not for faculty members at comprehensive universities.

If we as a faculty can abandon our pretensions perhaps we can get serious about Dr. Kreuter's suggestions on evaluating nontraditional forms of scholarship. For many years I have argued that the best thing we can do at Western is to get past the evaluation of scholarship with all its historical baggage by shifting to an evaluation of interesting scholarly things. That will take some hard work. It is easier to count publications and assess impact factors. Perhaps the English Department and others have some models that could be used in such a shift. I hope so.

(I have made this argument more fully in an article in *Teacher Scholar*, a journal that comes in print but is available free online at <http://www.fhsu.edu/teacher-scholar/previous/volume1/volume1.html>)

Hunter Library's Role in Supporting Open Access

Sarah Steiner, Kristin Calvert, Farzaneh Razzaghi, Liz Skene, Mark Stoffan

Hunter Library

As librarians at Western Carolina University we are pleased to see Nate Kreuter open a much-needed dialogue on [open access](#) publishing and its impact on the academy. We would like to respond to his excellent summary by expanding on certain concepts and illustrating ways Hunter Library is embracing and supporting the open access movement on campus. Our goal is to further the discussion on campus, increase awareness of the issues, and clarify some common misunderstandings about open access.

Hunter Library has already begun to embrace open access, though a lot more can still be done. We partner with the Coulter Faculty Commons and the library at UNC-Greensboro in publishing using the Open Journal System and we currently host [four peer-reviewed journals](#). In addition, most [theses and dissertations](#) produced at WCU have been open access since 2006 and are available online through [NC-DOCKS](#), a repository of scholarship produced at several UNC institutions. Hunter Library also encourages faculty to self-archive their scholarly works in NC-DOCKS. [By submitting your CV](#) to the library, we will help make your eligible works available anywhere, to anyone, at any time.

As Dr. Kreuter mentions, not only is open access [good for authors and the public](#), it's required in some cases. Federal agencies now require recipients of their grant programs to [host their research data online](#), preserve it over time, and make the datasets readily available to other researchers. Librarians at Hunter Library offer assistance to faculty in [preparing data management plans](#) and hosting datasets online with appropriate open access and long-term curation.

The early days of the open access movement have been fraught with misunderstanding in academia, largely due to the simultaneous rise of aggressive predatory publishers. Predatory publishers, who often claim to be open access, prey on faculty and researchers by requesting money in exchange for publication in their journals. In most cases, the quality of the included works is not vetted, so the final products are questionable. The issue of open access versus predatory is further muddled by the fact that some open access journals do employ a funding model which requires authors to pay the fees associated with reviewing and hosting their works. This model is most common in STEM fields. Librarians and scholars have done a lot of work to identify and separate the predators from credible, high quality open access journals via tools such as [Beall's List](#) and the [Directory of Open Access Publications](#). The [SHERPA/JoMEO](#) database can be used to determine journal copyright policies. Using these freely available databases, scholars may quickly determine whether a journal is predatory or truly open access.

Many institutions are showing increased support for open access publishing in other ways which we would like to see emulated at WCU. A growing percentage is allocating funds to support scholars who publish in reputable open access journals which charge author fees. In most cases, these funds are managed by a committee which thoroughly checks the intended publication venue in order to eliminate predatory publishers. Within North Carolina, Duke University, Eastern Carolina University, UNC Charlotte, UNC Chapel Hill, UNC Greensboro, and Wake Forest University all have open access funds to support authors.

For researchers who support the open access movement but want to publish in commercial journals, one option is to negotiate copyright with the journal to allow the author to deposit a version of the article in [NC DOCKS](#). Librarians can help with this process and we encourage you to browse the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition's resources on [author rights](#).

We would like to elaborate on one point made by Dr. Kreuter in his definitions of “born digital” (i.e., materials which originated in a digital form) and paper journals. Most academic journals today, whether published by commercial publishers or through open access, and peer-reviewed or not, are published electronically. As libraries transitioned to electronic access in recent years, some publishers ceased production of paper versions. It is also conceivable for an open access journal to be produced in a print version. To reduce confusion we suggest using the terms “open access” and “commercial” in place of “online” and “paper” when making this distinction.

Many universities, as Dr. Kreuter points out, have adopted open access resolutions and policies. Colleges and departments may do so as well. Doing so can set an example and help overcome some of the resistance to publishing in OA outlets. We are happy to participate in these discussions and welcome an opportunity to support the open access movement at WCU.

Options and Issues with Open Access Publishing

Nicholas V. Passalacqua, Anthropology & Sociology

I completely agree with Dr. Kreuter in the August Faculty Forum, that the for-profit model of scholarship is problematic. I would love to see the digital "pay-walls" that restrict access to scholarly work torn down. Here, I would like to comment further on some of the topics he raised.

While open access is free to the consumer, the publishing costs typically fall on the authors and this can create ethical issues. Some journals can waive their fees, but that's pretty discipline specific. For forensic anthropology, we strongly encourage student scholarship, but you can't expect students to be able to pay \$300-500 to publish an article, and honestly, I don't think most professionals would either.

Dr. Kreuter mentions the constant annoyance of predatory online journals, those that will publish any article for a fee (<http://scholarlyoa.com/>). Maintaining an online-only journal has associated costs that can be significant. For instance, webhosting and copy editing have associated dollar values which need to be covered for a professional publication to survive, even if editors and reviewers donate their time. To use Elsevier as an example, for an online only, open access journal, authors need to pay between \$300.00 and \$500.00 per article to publish. Once the article is reviewed and published, accessing it is free to everyone. While this figure may be inflated to fit Elsevier's business model, unlike most predatory open access journals, Elsevier is a well-known publisher and their online, open access journals are peer reviewed and reputable. While we at WCU have adopted the Boyer model of scholarship, journal impact factor (which exists for reputable online open access journals) still plays a significant role in publishing practices for certain disciplines.

Like Dr. Kreuter, I have not figured out a solution to these issues. My colleagues and I have been exploring options for establishing a new journal for forensic anthropology, focusing on online-only options with the lowest subscription rate possible. Prior to starting this process, we surveyed professionals and most said their biggest concerns were related to subscription fees, journal impact factor, and time from submission to actual publication.

Finally, I'd like to take this opportunity to note that while not a true alternative to traditional publishing, Academia.edu is a great resource for free access to scholarly work. While the vast majority of the available content has been published elsewhere and is simply hosted through this website by the author, it also encourages posting draft documents for comment, as well as other material the author wants to make available. Nevertheless, I find it to be an underutilized resource which may be a great alternative for public engagement and alternative scholarship.

Editor's Note: The Faculty Forum is published monthly by the Coulter Faculty Commons to provide opportunities for the WCU community to converse about issues of the day ranging from academic matters to policy questions and community concerns.

The Faculty Forum is in its 28th year of publication. While its original purpose was to “spark a lively dialogue about college teaching,” even in its earliest days, the subjects went far beyond teaching tips and techniques. It has often been a catalyst for revealing and resolving campus problems such as salary inequities and the status of fixed-term faculty. See the CFC [publications website](#) to read past issues.

Thanks to this month's writers for continuing the conversation about alternative approaches to scholarship. I hope you will consider writing for the Faculty Forum. Send me your ideas for a lead commentary as well as your responses to the issue of the month.

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