

Form and access

Two pathways of innovation in SSH scholarly communication

PUBMET2021

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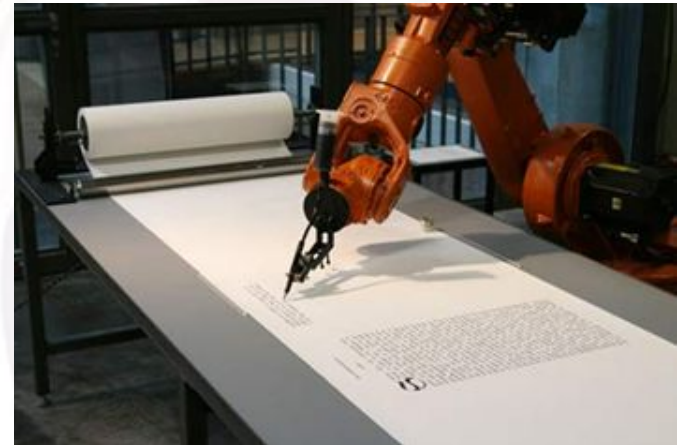


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OPERAS Lab

- **to explore current writing practices**
- **to prototype new solutions**
- **to propose new OPERAS services**



T 6.5 The future of scholarly writing in SSH

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OPERAS-P



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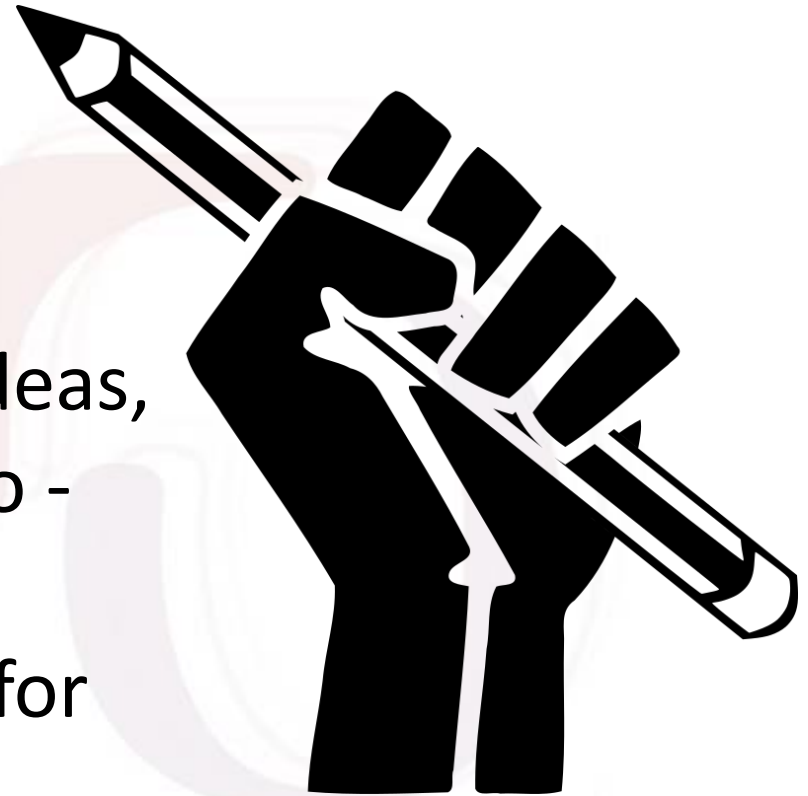
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Scholarly writing

Practices regarding the communication of scholarly ideas, focused on - but not limited to - practices, competences, frameworks and tools crucial for creating scholarly works.



Methodology

- **Literature review**
- **Case studies**
- **Interviews**



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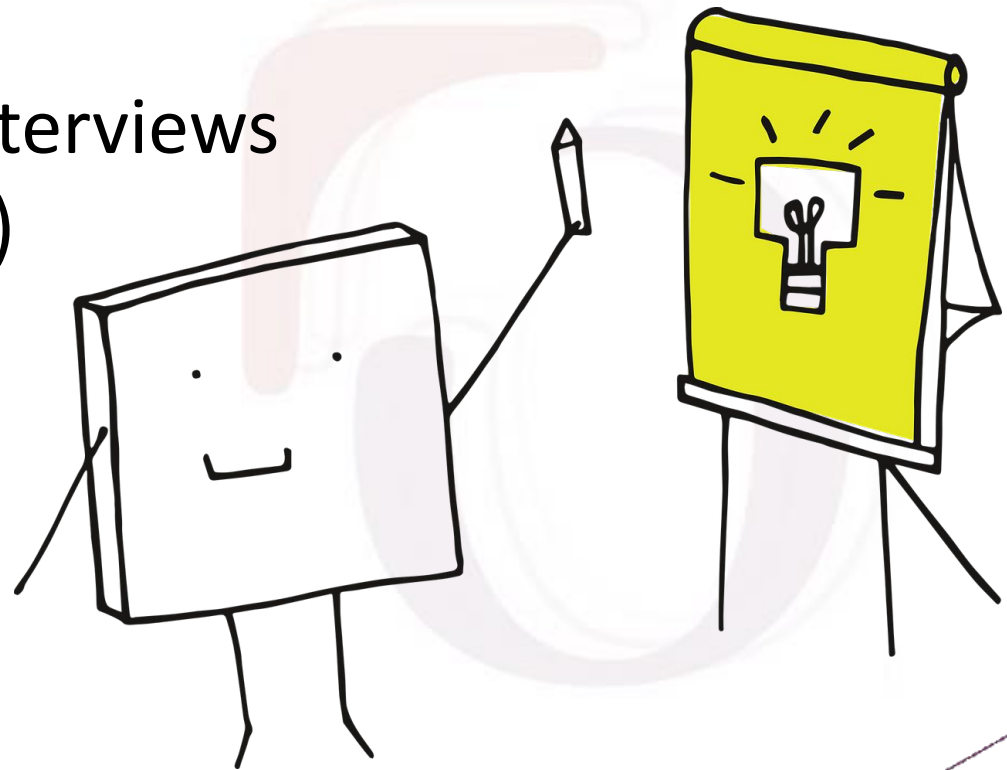
INTERVIEWS



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Interview workflow

1. Preparation
2. Conducting the interviews
3. Coding (MAXQDA)
4. Analysis



Our interviewees

32 full transcripts - **33 interviewees**

Gender: 19 Male, 14 Female

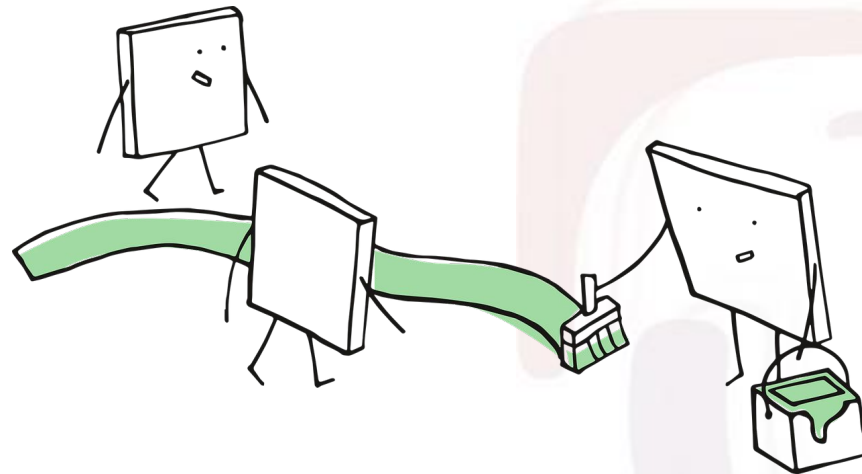


Disciplines represented: Arts and Media, Biblical/Religious Studies, Cultural Studies, Digital Humanities, Education/Computer Sciences, English Studies, History, Information and Communication Science, Linguistics, Literature and Literary Anthropology, Philosophy, Psychology, Science Studies, Sociology, Other SSH



Our interviewees

Career stage: PhD candidate (5), ECR/Post-doc (11), Senior (13), Other (4)

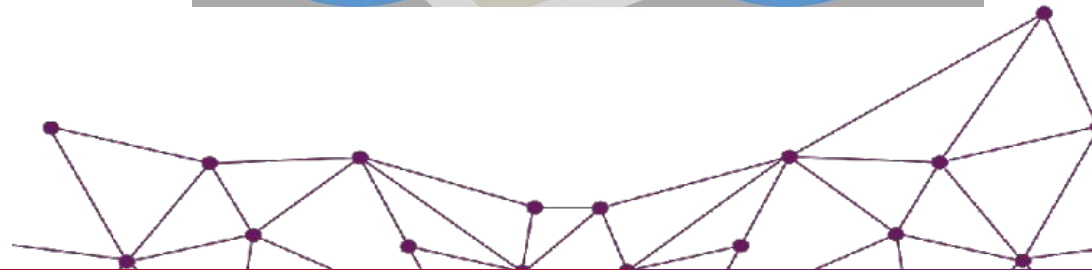
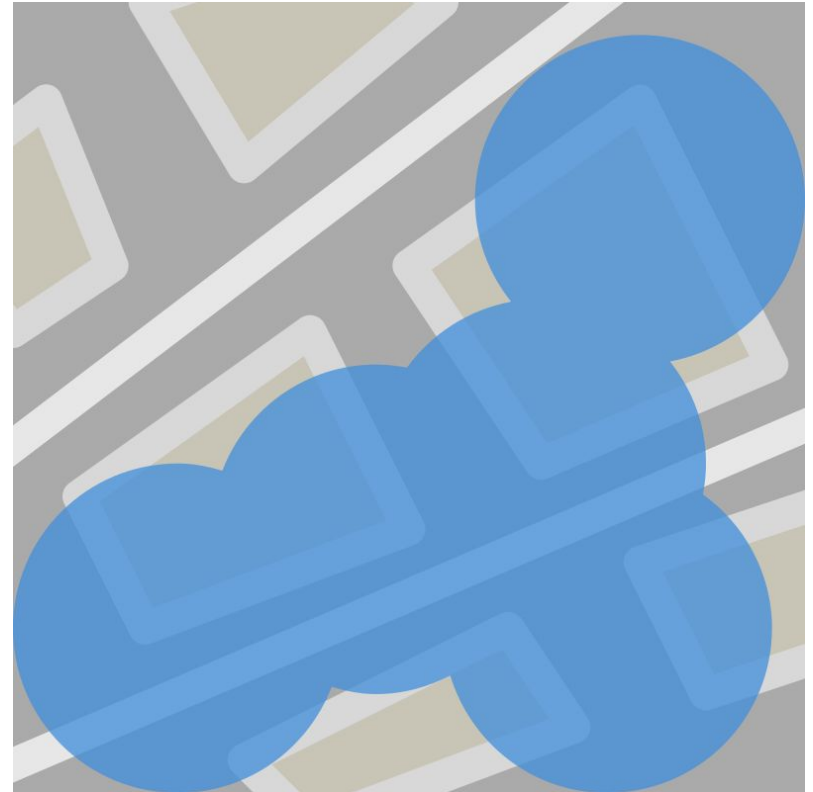


Countries: Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Switzerland, the UK, the USA



KEY AREAS

- Specificity of SSH
- Writing processes
- Publishing processes
- Innovative vs. traditional forms and genres
- Prestige and power structures
- Open access
- Evaluation
- Research Data
- Peer review practices
- Tools
- Collaboration
- Audiences





What is innvoation?



- experimenting in order to find a better way of doing something.
- unsettling the way things have been
- providing room for improvement and novelty
- using scholarly content seamlessly by unnecessary obstacles



What is innovation?

I think, these days it's the changes that have to do with the Internet being the main platform for our communication; so it's much easier to share things now and so I think that innovation basically means catching up with opportunities that technology offers. (OP16)



Two types of innovation

I think that innovation comes in a number of ways. One is innovation and access, so moving beyond the model of the paywall or moving beyond the model of subscriptions to get scholarship out there [...].

Two, there is innovation in terms of modes of scholarly output, incorporating images incorporating websites, etc., into scholarly output. (OP24)



Access

I see that most innovation has been done in the area of the distribution of scholarly work and sharing scholarly work, either between people or between machines. That part is actually pretty innovative compared to previous phases or stages of scholarly communication. (OP32)

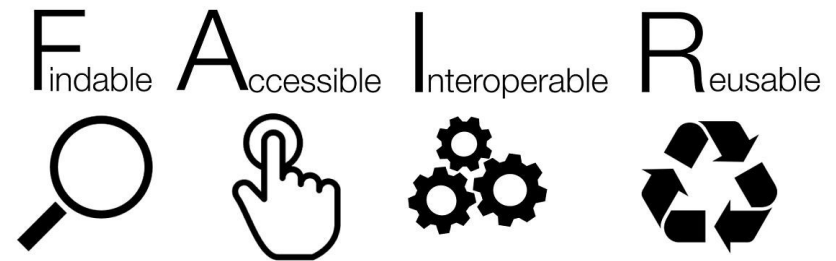


Access

- the most “tangible” innovation
- providing access to more traditional types of outputs
- usually described in “negative” terms, i.e., as removing some of the obstacles rather than providing new value
- access through non-paywalled resources, repositories and shadow libraries



Access to data



I'm very much in favour of there actually being digital data repositories that allow as much data as possible to be accessed by people who are interested. I think that [...] the accessibility part of the data should be increased online [...]. The problem is that the research data is only relevant to a very small portion of the readers. That is to say that, in fact, it's like footnotes, footnotes are very important for the epistemological and ethical guarantee of the work. (OP25)



Formal innovations: moving beyond traditional formats

Each field has its article model, and these models evolve over several decades. That is to say that today, in the humanities and social sciences, it is not quite the same texts as 50 years ago, 100 years ago, but it is an unconscious, collective, and very slow evolution that is not the subject of specific deliberation. (OP25)



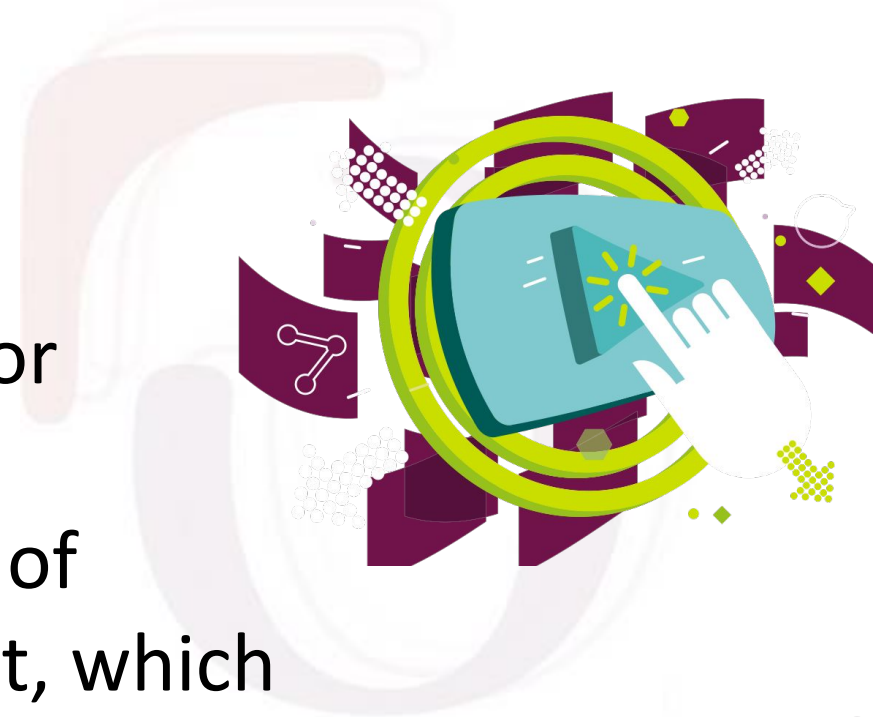
Formal innovations

- Allowing new types of interaction with the text
- linking text and source material (code and data)
- incorporating other types of content
- move beyond the mere written word, i.e., accepting expression in other media forms as valid scholarly outputs.



Consequences of innovation

- allowing access to the underlying content for validation, replication, or further interaction
- providing a novel level of interaction with content, which is impossible in static texts



Innovative forms

- **blogs**
- **web-book**, computational essay, living book
- **podcast**
- **videos**, visual commentary
- **slides**
- **social media** (twitter)
- **collaborative text**
- **digital scholarly edition**



Computational essay

So you've written some research in a programming notebook and not only have you done that, but you provide it in a format that also leverages that functionality So, for example, people can see that there's a parameter in an experiment that's been used to produce a graph and they have a little checkbox that they can use to make the parameter vary and see the graph update. That sort of thing for me is innovative, not in terms of technology, because it's quite old, actually [...]. It's just that publishing systems don't use it. (OP17)



Challenges and obstacles

- Lack of quality-assessment mechanisms for novel content
- lack of recognition of innovative forms as scholarly texts
- paradoxically, the format of the work influences the assessment of the quality of its content
- scholars are afraid to experiment because they want to publish in prestigious venues, which in turn results in a lower number of innovative works and low prestige



“Catching the original intent of scholarly communication”: transformation of audiences, power structures, and prestige

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Areas of interest

Innovative forms, traditional publications

Scholarly communication in SSH

Choosing a publication type

Incentives and rewards

Scholarly writing

Openness

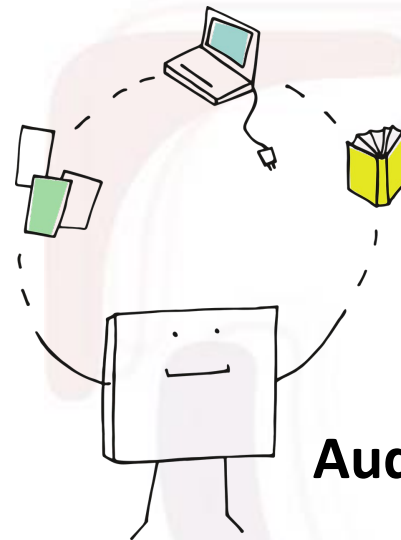
Prestige

Digital tools

Publishing

Audiences

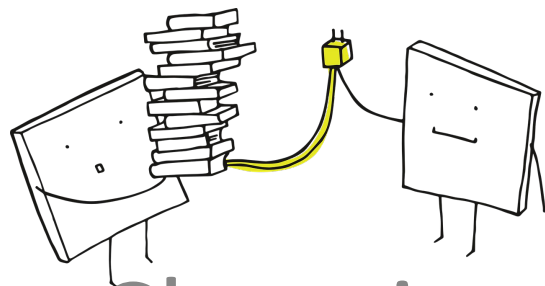
Power structures



What happens when an author is
choosing the type and venue for their
next publication?



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Choosing a publication type

- Authors have to make several decisions:
 - to publish in print or digital (or parallel)?
 - to opt (and sometimes pay) for Open Access?
 - which format/genre to go for?

- What to consider when making the decision?
 What are the motives, incentives to choose a particular form or publishing venue?

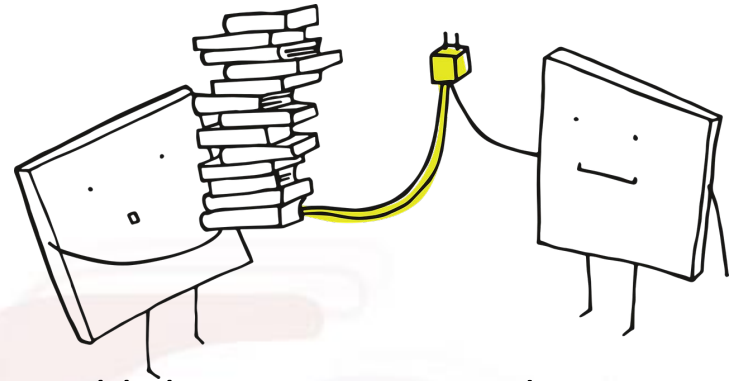


Choosing a publication type

- **Appropriateness** of the form to the content:
“we could have written you know, three or four journal articles. But actually, it was nicer to package it together within a single narrative space of a book” (M, ECR, Literature).
- **Community (and thematic) relevance and status:**
“there's a perception that the book chapters are of less importance than journal articles are. I tend to think that's a little misguided in part because I think that edited volumes frequently have a really important impact on their fields” (F, Senior, English Studies)
- Expected future **discoverability and visibility** (because they will determine the size of the readership):
“not everything is indexed in every possible platform and therefore journals that might not be indexed in the major databases like Scopus or Web of Science. Those will be problematic in terms of like how much of a reach it will have in the scholarly community” (M, ECR, Cultural Studies)



Choosing a publication type

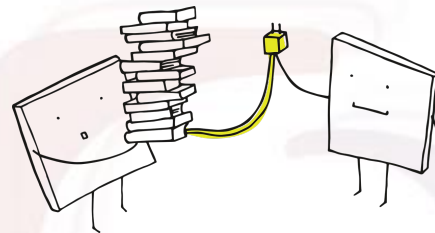


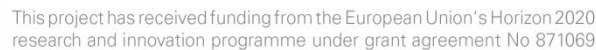
- The **economy** of publishing
 - *“It's definitely a problem if you want to publish open access and you don't have a grant and you don't have funding in the grant that is specified for article process in charge, then of course your choices are limited.”* (M, ECR, Science Studies)
- **Bibliometric indicators** (often imposed by the formal assessment criteria)
 - *“I normally aim for the highest ranked journal in my disciplinary topical area.”* (F, ECR, Digital Humanities);
 - *“increasingly for the past couple of years, those metrics which have been used for natural sciences have been adopted by and adapted to the humanities and social sciences.”* (F, Senior, Cultural Memory Studies)



Choosing a publication type

- **Publisher reputation** -
“the good series, of course, are also with the good publishing houses.”
(M, Senior, Early Modern History)
- Favouring **Open Access**
- **Invitation** by editors - especially for senior scholars, often for special issues
“now I usually get invited to write things, which was not the case doing my PhD” (F, ECR, Linguistics)
- Different situation of **early career vs. senior scholars**
- **Others: peer networks, acquaintances, past experiences, speed of publication, language** (in relation to intended audience), pure coincidence!





Thinking about an audience

“[A] scholarly work is a pure kind of expression that doesn't necessarily have to have an audience in mind. It's just – these are my thoughts, these are my data, whatever, I'm going to put them out there.”
(M, ECR, Information Studies)



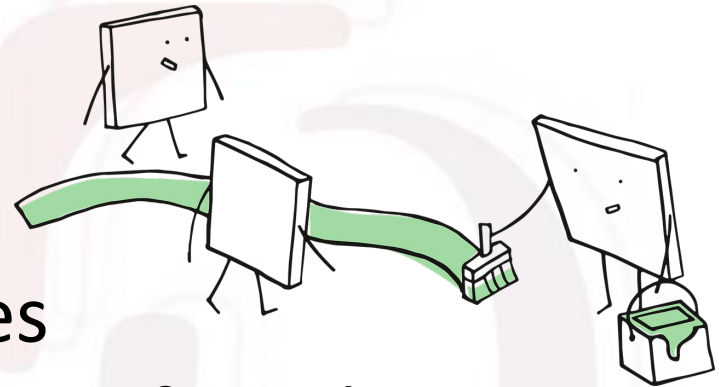
Reaching wider audiences as a field of innovation

- Who are the audiences of a scholarly output, is a scholarly text “for scholars, by scholars”?
- Are there incentives for expanding the circle of potential audiences?



Who are the audiences of a scholarly output?

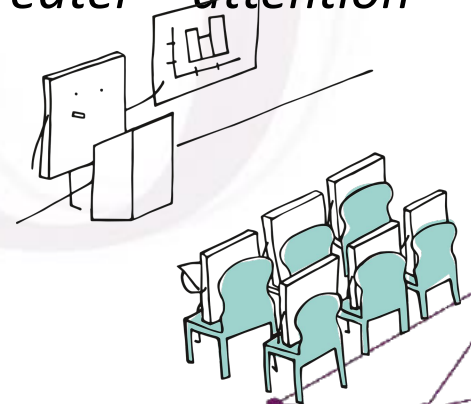
- Scholarly communities
- Professional communities
- “Society” - the importance of reaching out outside of the academic circles



Audiences

- Increasing value of the **audience outreach**:

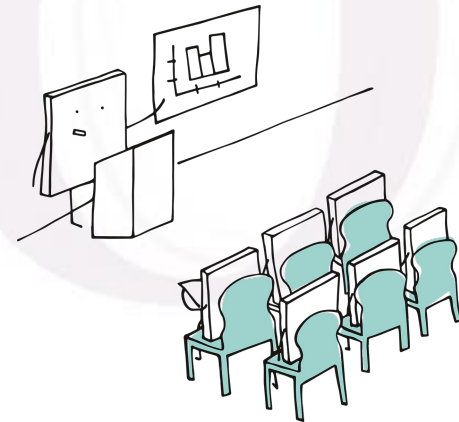
“it is becoming increasingly important within an academic context to write for a non-scholarly audience. I think there are a lot of scholars who are beginning to recognize that publishing in more public venues can actually bring a greater readership and it can bring greater attention”
(F, Senior, English Studies)



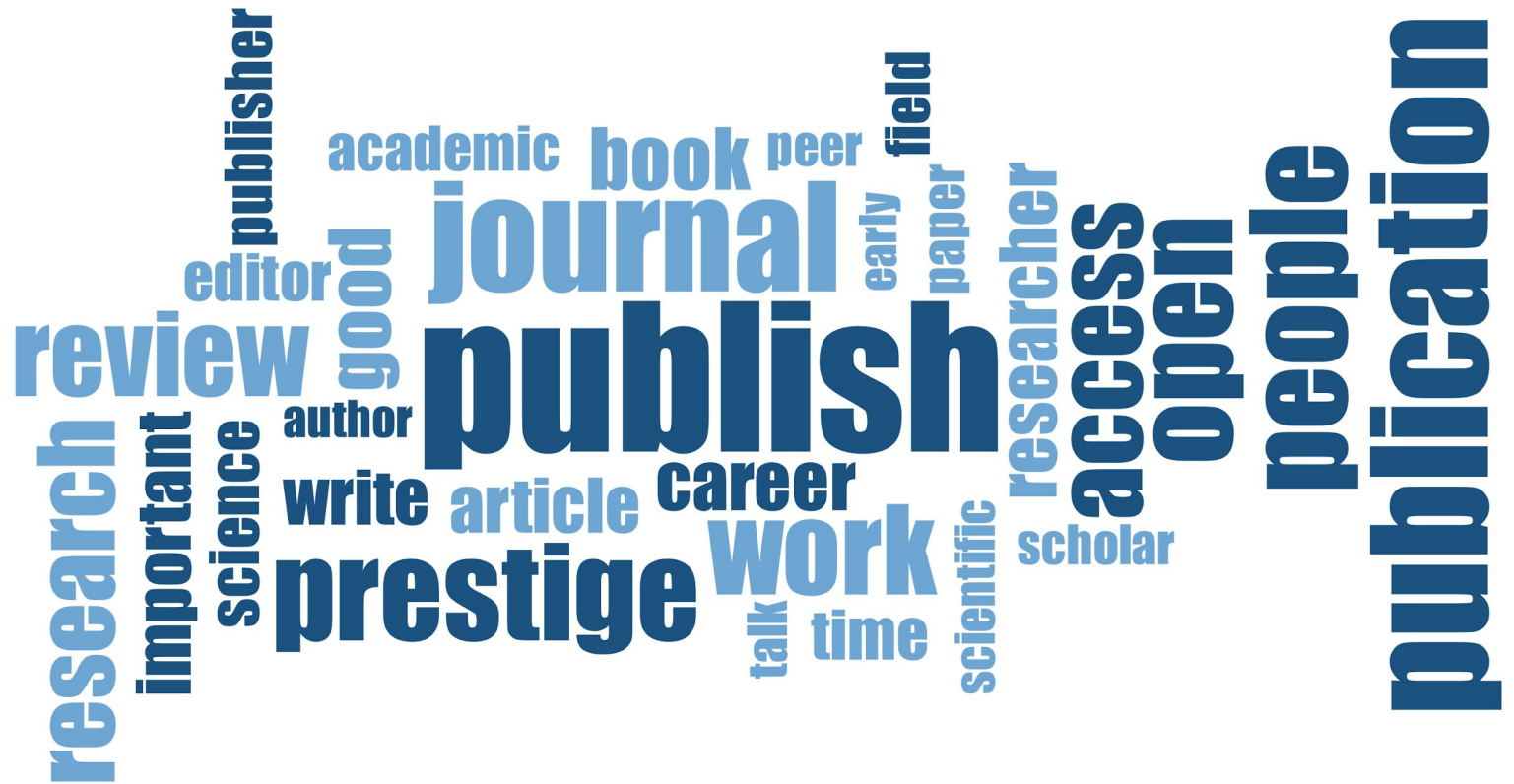
- Potential of **innovative forms in reaching new audiences:**

“Scholarship in the traditional sense, I think, is a dying art. So I think one of the great goals of the innovative scholarship is to grow an audience and to demonstrate the relevance of the work for the non-academic audience.”

(M, ECR, Biblical Studies)



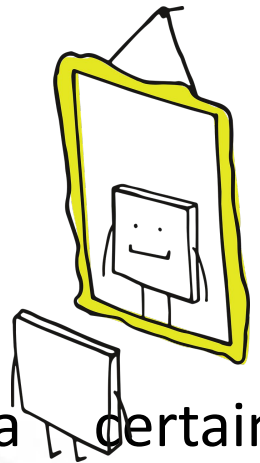
Prestige



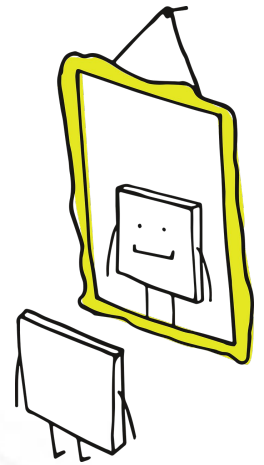
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Prestige

- The **notion of prestige more general** than strict bibliometrics and official evaluations: “at a certain stage, what counts more is the place measured by non-parametric prestige” (M, ECR, Philosophy)
- Publication prestige and career advancement: many decisions are made in strict consideration of the **evaluation process and the perceived importance/prestige of the publishing venue**, even sometimes resulting with a move made against one's own values.



Prestige



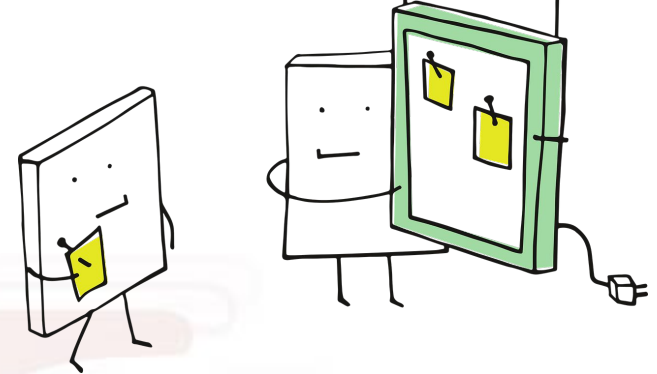
- Prestige of a publication is linked to the ideas of **scarcity** and **trustworthiness**.
- **Unclear prestige of innovative forms** is often related to the problem of **recognition** (also perceived by “innovators”).
- **Monograph is still the queen/king of the SSH:**
“...regardless of the type of scholarship, the output is still the monograph and the journal article” (M, ECR, Biblical Studies).



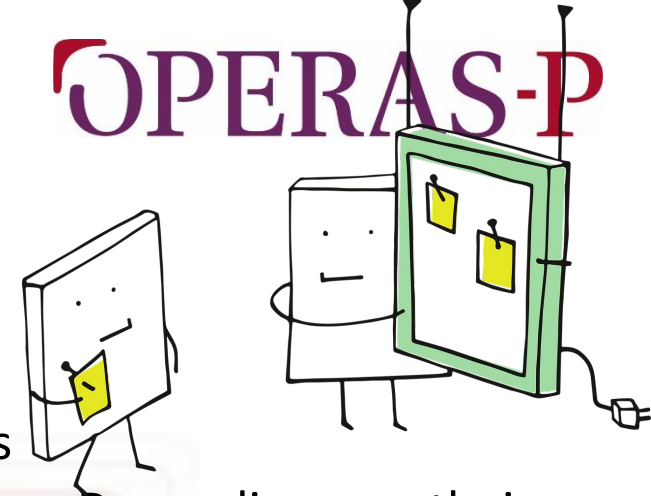
Power structures

- **Crucial role in scholarly communication.**
- **Diverse understandings on which group ‘holds the most power’ in the academic publishing landscape:**

“What funder used to fund is key in shaping what the future of discipline looks like. But that is determined by researchers who conduct the peer review. And they conduct that at different stages in their career, facing different pressures at different points. I think, you know, in some disciplines, there are editors at particular book series, who have huge influence on what is published and shaped the discipline in that space. In other disciplines, it's a journal peer review process that really doesn't have that single point of editorial acquisition or oversight.” (M, ECR, Literature)



Power structures



- **Researchers themselves**, or the community more broadly, are recognised as important actors in the SSH scholarly communication landscape. Depending on their approach, they can play the role of guardians of the status quo or innovation facilitators
- **Editors** select the reviewers for scholarly texts and tend to make the final decisions.
- **Early career researchers** are defined as the **most vulnerable**.
- **Innovative forms** of writing could **challenge the traditional structures**, giving more gatekeeping power to the wider community of readers (example of blogosphere).



Conclusion: innovation vs. audiences, prestige, and power structures

- Novel forms allow scholars to **reach new audiences** but their enthusiasm for writing for non-specialised audiences varies.
- While the prestige of **innovative genres** is unclear, many scholars see them as important. There is, however, a pressing need for such outputs to be **recognised by official evaluation frameworks**.
- There are strong **power structures** within scholarly communication but they can be **shifted/disrupted by digital outputs** that invite wider involvement from the audiences (especially communities underrepresented in the existing scholarly communication system).

