

Opening Up Scholarship in the Humanities: Digital Publishing, Knowledge Translation, and
Public Engagement

by

Alyssa Arbuckle

B.A. Hons, University of British Columbia, 2011

M.A., University of Victoria, 2012

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
in Interdisciplinary Studies

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We acknowledge with respect the Lekwungen peoples on whose traditional territory the
university stands and the Songhees, Esquimalt, and WSÁNEĆ peoples whose historical
relationships with the land continue to this day.

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Abstract

Opening Up Scholarship in the Humanities: Digital Publishing, Knowledge Translation, and Public Engagement considers the concept of humanistic, open, social scholarship and argues for its value in the contemporary academy as both a set of socially oriented activities and an organizing framework for such activities. This endeavour spans the interrelated areas of knowledge creation, public engagement, and open access, and demonstrates the importance of considering this triad as critical for the pursuit of academic work moving forward—especially in the humanities. Under the umbrella of *open social scholarship*, I consider open access as a baseline for public engagement and argue for the vitalness of this sort of work. Moreover, I suggest that there is a strong connection between digital scholarship and social knowledge creation. I explore the knowledge translation lessons that other fields might have for the humanities and include a journalist–humanist case study to this end. I also argue for the value of producing research output in many different forms and formats. Finally, I propose that there are benefits to explicitly popularizing the humanities. In sum, this dissertation speculates on past, current, and future scholarly communication activities, and proposes that such activities might be opened up for wider engagement and, thus, social benefit.

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Introduction: Opening Up, Broadening Out, Building Forward

*If we hope to engage the public with our work, we need to ensure
that it is open in the broadest possible sense...*

-Kathleen Fitzpatrick

Academia is at a crossroads. One of the roads is well trodden: it is a path maintained by institutional structures like tenure and promotion, with clear signposts at every turn marking what, and how, an academic is supposed to produce in order to advance their career. This path is not only straight, but it is walled, and there is a guard at the entry. Largely, the path is walked by academics only; it might even be seen, in detail, by academics only. Other communities primarily see the walls around it. This is an exclusive—and thus exclusionary—path. The other road is not so well worn. It is an alternative path that winds through cities and towns and their public spaces. The alternative path wends in and out of the standard path. This path journeys through online and offline spaces. It has no walls. There are no guards, although there are guardians. The path is in perpetual development; those who walk it put up signposts as they go. This is an inclusive path, a community path. It is the path of open social scholarship.

Opportunities and Possibilities for Opening Up Academia

Which path will the academics of today and generations to come take? In this dissertation, I suggest that there is significant value and possibility both in building and in following the winding path of open social scholarship. I write with the humanities in mind, and the humanities in North America in particular: this is my background and where I feel most at home intellectually. The primary challenge this dissertation grapples with is a self-perpetuating

humanities entrenched in a reward system that encourages exclusionary, academic-only practices; a humanities considered apart from the world. How could this current state of the humanities evolve? Within the specific context of current scholarly communication practices in the humanities, I argue that there is intrinsic value in and untapped potential for opening up such work to more voices and more bodies. A diversification of players engaging in the humanities would benefit both those who work in academia and those who do not. Humanities scholars could find a larger audience for their diligent research and vibrant ideas, as well as receive feedback on areas of study that might be of broader interest to others; those who identify as academic-aligned or non-academic could incorporate humanities research findings and ideas into their own conceptual framework for interpreting and experiencing the world, as well as contribute to collaborative knowledge creation ventures.

Various knowledge exchange opportunities exist already, and they have been given names such as public humanities, knowledge translation, social knowledge creation, citizen science, and pop science. There are also a number of mechanisms for public engagement, including digital publishing, open access, social media, podcasting, and many parts of the GLAM sector—diverse as galleries, libraries, archives, and museums are. Such activities have not yet been drawn together as a cohesive set of practices with a shared goal. I will address this lack by employing the concept of *open social scholarship* as a value-based organizing principle for considering how and where this sort of work is being undertaken, as well as the challenges involved. In doing so, I engage with the (misguided) notion that the Open Access movement is a cure-all for contemporary academia. I attempt to refine such an ambitious claim by focusing on the pragmatic and theoretical approaches that open social scholarship entails—beyond open

access.¹ Open access is critically important; how can humanities researchers ensure that open access materials reach their full potential in terms of audience and engagement?

This dissertation examines the interrelated themes of digital publishing, knowledge translation, and public engagement. Such a unique combination of forces has set the stage for scholarship that integrates accountability, interaction, and openness. In weaving these threads together, I make a claim for the necessity and timeliness of open social scholarship and its potential for academics to share research output more broadly, as well as to co-create knowledge with engaged publics.² I also ask how scholarly communication can become more reflexive of and responsive to the twenty-first century. Although there has been a significant amount of research published on the core facets of open social scholarship, such as open access and contemporary scholarly communication (and I will review much of this research in what follows), there has not yet been a long-form consideration of what open social scholarship itself is and what it could be. I intend to contribute such deliberation and observation in this dissertation.

Conceptual Precedents: Situated and Plural Knowledges Meet Scholarly Communication Reform

Much of the intellectual scaffolding of this dissertation follows the principle that knowledge is situated and plural. Feminist science and technology scholar Donna Haraway first employed the concept of *situated knowledges* in the late 1980s to describe her own understanding or

¹ A note on capitalization: in the literature, the Open Access movement, as a coordinated system, is referred to with capitalization; when the term *open access* is used as a standalone noun (e.g. providing open access to research) or as an adjective in other contexts (e.g. open access materials), it is not capitalized. In keeping with the established norm, I will implement this field standard throughout this dissertation.

² See Chapter 2 for detail on my use of terms like *publics* and *public engagement*.

philosophy of knowledge. For Haraway, knowledge is necessarily embodied, partial, and connected to subjective experience, as well as one's positionality within a larger social context. She locates her argument in the broader conversation of scientific objectivity as well as *epistemology*, or the study of knowledge itself. Haraway writes:

I am arguing for politics and epistemologies of location, positioning, and situating, where partiality and not universality is the condition of being heard to make rational knowledge claims. [...] I am arguing for the view from a body, always a complex, contradictory, structuring, and structured body, versus the view from above, from nowhere, from simplicity. (589)

Within this conception, knowledge cannot be understood as an inanimate object nor can it be defined impartially (the “view from above, from nowhere” [589]); knowledge is created and understood by embodied agents within a historical context and peopled community.

The concept of situated knowledges as a framework through which to interpret the world has been taken up by various scholars in the decades since Haraway published “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective.” For instance, in *Data Feminism* (2020) scholars Catherine D’Ignazio and Lauren F. Klein affirm “all knowledge is partial, meaning no single person or group can claim an objective view of the capital-T Truth” (136), explicitly citing Haraway’s argument. Further, D’Ignazio and Klein clarify:

embracing pluralism, as this concept is often described today, does not mean that everything is relative, nor does it mean that all truth claims have equal weight. [...] It simply means that when people make knowledge, they do so from a particular standpoint: from a situated, embodied location in the world. More than that, by pooling our

standpoints—or positionalities—together, we can arrive at a richer and more robust understanding of the world. (136)

Pluralism or plural knowledges pushes back against a notion that knowledge can be singular or fixed; rather, it is always already situated, contextual, and multifarious.

The concept of situated knowledges has clear roots in feminist science and technology studies, but it bleeds into the work of social historian Peter Burke as well. In *A Social History of Knowledge: From Gutenberg to Diderot* (2000), Burke espouses his goal “to make us [...] more conscious of the ‘knowledge system’ in which we live, by describing and analysing changing systems in the past” (2). For Burke, knowledge systems are characterized by pluralism, and various knowledges develop, intersect, overlap, and evolve concurrently. Burke returns to this concept in *A Social History of Knowledge II: From the Encyclopédie to Wikipedia* (2012), and I engage with his ideas more comprehensively in Chapter 2. Burke does cite Haraway in the earlier volume (9n42), but only in regard to the gendered aspects of her argument in “Situated Knowledges.” Although gender (among other positionalities) does figure in Haraway’s article and has particular ramifications for the concept of engaging with knowledges “ruled by partial sight and limited voice” (Haraway 590)—due to societal constraints—further overlapping ideas exist between Haraway and Burke. Burke is concerned with how various institutions facilitate, mandate, and limit knowledge throughout history; Haraway states, “Situated knowledges are about communities, not about isolated individuals” (590). Contra to the lone genius trope explored further in Chapter 2, both Burke and Haraway consider knowledge to be in-community, shared, processual, and procedural. Throughout this dissertation I grapple with considerations of knowledge creation, and I ask the reader to bear this interpretation of pluralistic, situated knowledges in mind as I do so.

To a lesser extent, another related concept for this dissertation is *epistemic injustice*, a term first coined by philosopher Miranda Fricker in her 2007 book *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*. Fricker's definition of the term is "a wrong done to someone specifically in their capacity as a knower" (1). Epistemic injustice is two-pronged, according to Fricker, as it can take the form of *testimonial injustice*—where a speaker is discredited due to the hearer's prejudice—or *hermeneutical injustice*—where a broader social misunderstanding or conceptual gap puts a speaker at a disadvantage. More recently and more specifically related to this dissertation, the concept of epistemic injustice has been taken up by scholarly communication researchers to critique how the current academic knowledge production system privileges certain voices (those in the Global North) over other voices (those in the Global South). I will draw on this concept in Chapter 1 in relation to the Open Access movement in particular and intend to engage more thoroughly with the role of epistemic injustice in social knowledge creation in future work.

This dissertation requests a seat at the table of scholarly communication reform. The thinking that follows engages with current conversations on how academic work (and humanities work in particular) can be more participatory and more inclusive, and how it might better serve and reflect those in, around, and beyond academia. In taking up such a position, I repeatedly engage with the ideas of scholarly communication expert Kathleen Fitzpatrick. In *Planned Obsolescence: Publishing, Technology, and the Future of the Academy* (2011), Fitzpatrick argues that the current scholarly communication system is broken and that those in the humanities are held hostage by the costly and outdated venture that is monograph production. In *Generous Thinking: A Radical Approach to Saving the University* (2019), she expands her purview to suggest that the entire North American university system requires reform. Fitzpatrick

advocates for a values-based approach that surfaces ideals of generosity, care, empathy, community, receptivity, responsiveness, and even love. This approach, she suggests, would result in a more humane academia that engages with and is valued by broader communities.

Inspired by Fitzpatrick as I am, this dissertation also diverges from the ideas espoused in *Generous Thinking* in a couple of ways. First, Fitzpatrick primarily speaks of and to the American-based system, which has a unique mix of private and public universities, as well as particular funding and governance models. She is overtly concerned with the divisive political and social context of the contemporary United States, including the erosion of social security and public trust in state institutions. Although I am most familiar with the Canadian, and by extension, North American academic system (since this is where I have undertaken my own education, research, and professionalization), the arguments in the material that follows are not made with a national boundary in mind. Rather, I lean into the global interconnectedness of the twenty-first century and try to consider wider contexts than my own geographical location on the west coast of Canada. Fitzpatrick also aims her suggestions at a specific group of knowledge workers: established tenured and tenure-track faculty who have a relatively high degree of power and status. This audience makes sense for her arguments and I appreciate Fitzpatrick's mindfulness in seeking to rectify existing inequities in the academy regarding who does service work and how such work is valued, rather than foisting additional demands on the already overburdened. My own less prescriptive considerations again take a broader view and look to all current and possible agents of humanities knowledge production: academic, academic-aligned, and non-academic. Fitzpatrick also cogitates on how the contemporary university's obsession with competition and critique has alienated the wider communities in which it is situated. Such an argument, powerful as it is, lies outside of the scope of the chapters that follow. Again, this

dissertation seeks a chair at the scholarly communication reform table, a table that Fitzpatrick is most certainly already seated at and with more sharply delineated audiences and end goals than my own.

I pull together the concepts of situated and pluralistic knowledges with scholarly communication reform to consider how academic knowledge production in particular could be more reflective of and responsive to broader discursive communities. Conventional knowledge creation and sharing in academia follows a delineated path and produces predictable output in predictable ways; although there is an inherent efficiency argument to standardization, such a homogenizing approach also closes the door to pluralism and limits outcomes as well as outputs. Open social scholarship is a mechanism through which multiple knowledges and knowledge holders can connect, combine, and collaborate.

The Shape of Things to Come: Open Scholarship Beyond the University

In turning to open social scholarship, I build on the foundations and accomplishments of the Open Access movement, reviewed in more depth in Chapter 1. Open access has significant ramifications for those who engage with knowledge beyond the academic realm. Without access to intellectual and cultural resources, social knowledge creation is limited. Fitzpatrick argues: “Enabling access to scholarly work does not just serve the goal of undoing its commercialization or removing it from a market-driven, competition-based economy, but rather is a first step in facilitating public engagement with the knowledge that universities produce” (*Generous Thinking* 148). According to long-time open access advocate and scholar John Willinsky, academics need to create more welcoming access points than the current scholarly journal in order to advance from an open access base. At the same time, the intellectual rigour and

credibility of the scholarship featured must be maintained. If scholarship is to be truly open, then academics need to stop thinking of their relationship with the public as a one-way street where they provide information for consumption. Rather, scholars should reconsider if, how, and why they are engaging with publics. Openness in academic publishing practices is key if scholars are to continue to pursue interdisciplinary collaboration and produce knowledge with those outside of their own departments, never mind those without an official role anywhere in the higher education apparatus. It is difficult to communicate across communities if one's research output—the vehicle of ideas—is published in a way that prevents access and engagement. I will return to these concepts throughout the dissertation as beacons for my core argument of opening up the humanities.

Beyond the pragmatic and conceptual necessities of straightforward access to academic work, there is also the question of information uptake and mobilization. Citation counts—and thus, arguably, impact—do rise with open access (Eve; Gargouri et al.; Piwowar et al.; Suber “Thoughts on Prestige”).³ But it is misguided to believe that publishing in an open access journal, uploading an article to a commercial academic networking site such as academia.edu or ResearchGate, or setting up a Google Scholar profile automatically constitutes a dramatically increased level of public engagement (McGregor and Guthrie). As digital content creators and public humanities scholars alike will relate, simply posting an article or project on the Internet for free does not immediately garner a sustained audience, meaningful interaction, or engaged community. It is not enough to merely provide access to research as a benevolent gift to imagined others. Rather, if humanities practitioners are intent on creating, co-creating, and

³ For more information on the relationship between open access and citation counts, see Hitchcock and Swan, both of whom aggregate open access citation studies.

sharing knowledge with broader publics, they must admit to the sociality of knowledge production and connect with community groups in the early stages of research in order to build truly collaborative relationships. Digital humanist and literary scholar Laura Mandell articulates this suggestion in *Breaking the Book: Print Humanities in the Digital Age* (2015):

I am arguing that [literary criticism's] social mission has to be enacted knowing that we are not outsiders preaching to benighted objects—perhaps even asking living beings how we can help with social problems via humanities market research, public fora, and other modes of actually addressing the mass audience that we only imagine we have via print. (144)

Fitzpatrick reiterates this concept when she suggests that public engagement should begin as a listening practice in order to ascertain what non-academic needs and interests are and then grow into collaborations that support all involved (*Generous Thinking* 72–76).

Building on the theoretical context developed so far, I will proceed to explore the many facets of and possibilities for open social scholarship throughout the rest of this dissertation. I consider the humanities across the chapters that follow but at times focus more directly on specific fields (such as the digital humanities) or draw on certain traditions (such as literary studies). In Chapter 1, “Open Access Foundations and Connections to Open Social Scholarship,” I provide an overview of the Open Access movement. Open access considerations undergird much of the open social scholarship discussion to come in subsequent chapters. In this first chapter I focus on the history, evolution, and role of the Open Access movement within the larger context of academic publishing. I also scan the standard practical and ethical arguments for open access and consider challenges for this mode of engagement, including where the Open Access movement has perpetuated a colonial agenda.

In Chapter 2, “Publicly Engaged Humanities: Historical Trends and Precedents,” I make a case for the more engaged humanities by emphasizing how and where this type of work is most often occurring, for instance in the public humanities. I present this concept within the context of institutional demands for community engagement as well as responses to austerity measures and education policy. I also look at the arguably outdated figure of the single or solo academic author and consider how the rise and near ubiquity of networked technologies provides a more democratic stage for scholarly knowledge production than previously available.

In the next chapter, “Co-creating Knowledge: Conditions and Challenges for Social Knowledge Creation in the Humanities,” I focus on the concept of social knowledge creation, defined earlier by my colleagues and I as “acts of collaboration in order to engage in or produce shared cultural data and/or knowledge products” (Arbuckle et al. 30). I argue that twenty-first century humanities researchers are adroitly poised to connect and collaborate with broader publics. In part, this is due to increased engagement with digital tools and platforms and the unique characteristics of the now-established field of digital humanities. Moreover, I focus on the emergence of social media and alternative academic publishing, and how these movements open up knowledge creation in interesting ways. In closing, I reiterate ongoing and emerging opportunities for humanities practitioners to take up more social and more open practices.

The underlying premise of Chapter 4, “Lessons from Other Fields for Acknowledging, Broadening, and Diversifying the Circulation of Humanities Research,” is that humanities research does not make its way to broader audiences effectively. Building off this proposition, I present an argument for engaging interdisciplinary techniques such as knowledge brokering or knowledge translation in order to expand the reach of the humanities. In doing so, I study how the fields of health and social sciences have approached these issues, as well as look to other

science communication methods, which are generally much more explicit than humanities communication mechanisms. I also look to where knowledge translation is already present (though largely unnamed) in the humanities and suggest that borrowing concepts from other fields could increase the reach and impact of humanities work. In the affiliated case study that follows (“The Value of Journalist–Academic Collaboration for the Humanities”), I present an experimental undertaking that explores how engaging with a journalist can be a knowledge translation technique. In doing so, I reflect on the benefits of and drawbacks to such a mode of engagement, including lessons learned.

In Chapter 5, “Open+: Generating Variations of Scholarship,” I argue that academics should iterate ideas and research across multiple platforms in order to expand their reach as well as to present their work in ways that are findable and accessible. I suggest that humanities work can be opened up through *variations*: a concept I describe as “the purposeful creation of different iterations of an idea, data, or research findings in overtly distinct forms and formats.” Such a concept rests on the assertion that academic work can and should exist in more places and spaces than a single, long-form, print manifestation.

The final chapter, “A Pop Humanities Approach to Knowledge Sharing and Community Engagement,” explores the rise of public intellectuals who explicitly create humanities-based content for a diverse, popular audience. Tracing the footsteps of pop science and pop psychology, I employ the term *pop humanities* as a model for intellectual engagement that enables a larger reach than conventional research output. To explore this concept, I profile three contemporary writers (Roxane Gay, Rebecca Solnit, and Maria Popova) who embody such a mode of knowledge creation and sharing. I also include an addendum to this chapter: “What Are

the Humanities? Where Are They?” which is a variation on Chapter 6 in order to enact the argument of Chapter 5 (“Open+: Generating Variations of Scholarship”).

I conclude the dissertation with “Open Social Scholarship and the Scholarly Communication Tradition,” where I position open social scholarship in the longer historical trajectory of scholarly communication. There, I suggest that although open social scholarship is very much of a tradition, it offers new opportunities for academic activity as well.

In part, my exploration of and argument for open social scholarship is an explicit vouching for the necessity of open access to humanities research *as well as* the necessity of moving beyond mere access. At an Implementing New Knowledge Environments (INKE) Partnership conference in January 2018, Heather Joseph of the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC) presented a keynote titled “Open in Order to...” where she calls on the academic community to move beyond the idea of open access for the sake of open access and expresses the importance of articulating what open access can allow academics to do that they could not do in a more traditional, closed scholarly communication system—that straight and standard academic road. My *open in order to* argument is this: by embracing and enacting open social scholarship, academics can reorient the university’s values toward a more inclusionary and publicly engaged future.

Chapter 1. Open Access Foundations and Connections to Open Social Scholarship

Open access is the foundation of open social scholarship; it is the pre-requisite for this type of work. As Christine Borgman writes in *Scholarship in the Digital Age: Information, Infrastructure, and the Internet* (2007), “open scholarship depend[s] on access to publications, and often to the data on which they are based” (115). Open social scholarship enables the creation, sharing, and engagement of research by specialists and non-specialists in accessible and significant ways, as my colleagues and I have expressed through the INKE Partnership (Powell, Mauro, and Arbuckle 3). This work is unfeasible without a baseline of access to research materials. In *Open Access* (2012), Peter Suber, Director of the Harvard Open Access Initiative, defines open access as “digital, online, free of charge, and free of most copyright and licensing restrictions” (4).⁴ Suber is not overtly radical in his premise or approach in this touchstone book of definitions, survey of the field, and quick, palatable argument for opening up research; he does, however, call for a rethinking of scholarly production to benefit authors and readers rather than intermediaries: “There are no good reasons to put the thriving of incumbent toll-access journals and publishers ahead of the thriving of research itself” (161). At various points throughout this dissertation, I lean on Suber as a guide for open scholarship activities involving research output, and I adhere, in particular, to his maxim to scholars: “Make your work as usable and useful as it can possibly be” (75).

⁴ Open access research generally falls into two categories: *green access* (via a repository, be that field or institutional) or *gold access* (via journals). Heather Piwowar et al. have also named a subset of open access articles *bronze*, which they consider to be, “Free to read on the publisher page, but without an [*sic*] clearly identifiable license” (5). The term *platinum access* distinguishes between gold open access articles that are published in journals for a fee (known as an Article Processing Charge [APC]) and articles that are available permanently, for free, without the author paying an APC (Machovec). Research that is not open access is known as *toll access* (Suber, *Open Access*).

In this first chapter I will provide an overview of open access since it is central to the idea and practice of open social scholarship. To begin, I will trace the last few decades of history of the Open Access movement, including early advocates and communities of practice. I will outline how the larger context of academic publishing and purchasing affected the evolution of open practices in the university system. I will then provide a review of critical (and often political) arguments for the Open Access movement. Within the context of embracing plural knowledges and social knowledge creation, I will point to current conversations regarding the colonial aspects of open access. I will also acknowledge a selection of other open access challenges. Looking toward the coming chapters of this dissertation, I will connect open access and open social scholarship more explicitly and trace future lines of discussion.

For Context: Reviewing the History and Evolution of Open Access

In the late 1980s, scientists began to take advantage of the connective and collaborative possibilities of networked technology to digitize and share their findings more widely with colleagues. This is often pinpointed as the beginning of the Open Access movement. There have been varying degrees of openness in scholarly communication and infrastructure for centuries, but I am discussing the current inception of open access, as per Suber's definition. Early open access proponents like Stevan Harnad (founder of the first electronic journal *Psycology* in 1990) and Paul Ginsparg (founder, in 1991, of the pre-print repository now known as arxiv.org) believed that the Internet provided an opportunity to enhance and increase the speed of the core function of scholarly communication: sharing knowledge (Okerson and O'Donnell). Throughout the 1990s, whether a discipline adopted open access practices was a community-based decision,

and only specific groups digitized and published their research openly (e.g. particle physicists on arxiv.org [Ginsparg]).

In the 1990s–2000s, the pressure on university library budgets continued to increase. Mounting financial pressure became a key factor in the transition from the relatively small-scale Open Access movement into a much more international paradigm shift spanning a wider range of disciplines (Guédon). Library budget pressure is commonly attributed to what is known as the “serials crisis” or “serials pricing crisis,” a state of affairs where journal subscriptions have become increasingly more expensive as the small group of well-heeled commercial academic publishers who own them raise costs. In 1997, Rowland Lorimer explained the serials crisis as follows:

Academic and research librarians and librarians of large urban public institutions [...] pay STM [Science Technology, and Medicine] publishers enormous amounts to buy back value-added intellectual property that is donated to them by researchers employed with public funds, usually employees of these purchasing institutions. For their trouble, STM publishers make an enormous return on investment (around 25% of gross revenues). [...] Such overcharging has forced many cancellations of STM journal subscriptions by even the best and most-well-endowed universities. (“Introduction” n.p.)

Scholars like Jean-Claude Guédon are unequivocal about who is responsible for the serials crisis: “Documented by librarians, denied by commercial publishers, [the serials pricing crisis] reality has finally been established as common knowledge and the behavior of commercial publishers and a few learned societies has been singled out as its major cause” (1). The serials crisis led to budgetary adjustments in a range of areas for libraries, perhaps most dramatically in the transition of funds from monograph purchases to subscriptions budgets. Such challenges

encouraged libraries to seek and promote a less cost-intensive economic model—like open access—for securing research for their patrons.⁵

In part, the serials crisis is also a consequence of the growing number of journals and journal articles published every year, as well as the increase in higher education institutions around the world. More research institutions, more researchers, and more research published means more to subscribe to for libraries. Sociologists Evan Schofer and John W. Meyer comment on the expansion of higher education: “In 1900, roughly 500,000 students were enrolled in higher education institutions worldwide [...] By 2000, the number of tertiary students had grown two-hundredfold to approximately 100 million people” (898). Following the conclusion of the Second World War there was a steady influx of journal publishing, too (Guédon); according to *Nature*, global scientific output now doubles every nine years (Van Noorden). In a 2015 report for the International Association of Scientific, Technical and Medical Publishers, Mark Ware and Michael Wabe indicate that researchers worldwide are publishing around 2.5 million articles per year, largely via ~35,000 peer reviewed academic journals. In the same report, Ware and Wabe suggest that “the number of articles published each year and the number of journals have both grown steadily for over two centuries, by about 3% and 3.5% per year, respectively, though there are some indications that growth has accelerated in recent years” (6). There is a clear connection between the expansion of higher education and research output,

⁵ It is important to acknowledge that libraries did not only support the Open Access movement for its potential to lower costs; many librarians were early supporters of and advocates for the ethical imperatives and pragmatic advantages of open access as well. This commitment is evinced by librarian participation on foundational awareness-raising projects around the turn of the century, including Fred Friend (then Librarian and Director of Scholarly Communication, University College London) with the Budapest Open Access Initiative (2002), Friedrich Geisselmann (then Chairman of the Deutscher Bibliotheksverband) with the Berlin Declaration on Open Access to Knowledge in the Sciences and Humanities (2003), and Linda Watson (then Director of the Claude Moore Health Sciences Library at the University of Virginia) with the Bethesda Statement on Open Access Publishing (2003). Friend, Geisselmann, and Watson were all original signatories on the statements they are affiliated with.

but such growth is also linked to the publish or perish paradigm of the contemporary academic world.

The increasing amount of scholarly content and the rush to digitize journals in the 1990s also led many scholarly societies to enter into agreements with, or become acquired by, those who had the economic and technological wherewithal to undertake digital journal production—that is, commercial publishers (Larivière, Haustein, and Mongeon, “Big Publishers” 106). At present, these commercial entities publish the majority of vetted academic research and sell this product back to university libraries at exorbitant costs via subscription-based journals. Often, this occurs through a practice known as *bundling*, where multiple journals are packaged together in keeping with the cable television model of content provision, and regardless of whether a library has need for all of the journals in a package (Larivière, Haustein, and Mongeon, “The Oligopoly” n.p.). Adding insult to injury, the subscription costs of electronic journals tend to match the historic pricing of print journals, irrespective of the format and cost efficiencies of online publication.

Academic Publishing is Big Business

Higher education institutions do not, by and large, control the means of their own knowledge production. Large, profit-driven commercial academic publishers like Reed Elsevier and Springer run the majority of prestige journals, including many academic society journals, and thus set the terms of how research is shared and accessed. In *Open Access and the Humanities: Contexts, Controversies, and the Future* (2014), Martin Paul Eve outlines the degree of profit accrued by large academic publishers: “[Reed Elsevier] reported a 37% profit with ‘a revenue stream of £2.06 billion and a profit level of £780 million’ in 2012” (34). As he goes on to

explain, large oil companies' profit margins usually fall around 6.5% (34). To oversimplify the issue, universities are, in a sense, double-paying for research: a university hires a research-stream faculty member and pays their salary under the agreement that they will publish; then, when the author does publish with a toll-access publication, universities must pay again to secure access to the research, often via a journal subscription. Journal subscription costs have grown at a staggering rate: as Eve reports, "Various studies based on statistics from the Association of Research Libraries show that the cost to academic libraries of subscribing to journals has outstripped inflation by over 300% since 1986" (13). This has created an untenable financial situation for university libraries, many of whom are forced to reduce other budget lines dramatically in order to meet the research needs of their faculty and students.

A critical element to draw attention to within this context is the question of what commercial academic publishers pay for and what they do not. Notably, commercial publishers do not financially remunerate journal article authors or peer reviewers for their labour. Authors provide the written product to publishers for zero cost, and often sign away their intellectual property rights (and thus their future sharing rights) as well. The fact that authors do not get paid by publishers for their work is acceptable within a well-functioning scholarly ecosystem; by *well-functioning* I mean a situation where said authors are hired as faculty members at universities and these salaried university contracts include the expectation that the faculty member will publish their research. But such an arrangement is quickly problematized when one considers mounting contingent faculty rates where academic authors do not have steady income that is relative to their degree of labour or includes compensation for publishing. Drawing on Keith Hoeller's research in *Equality for Contingent Faculty: Overcoming the Two-Tier System* (2014), Eve quotes the contingent faculty rate at 75% in the United States (57); scholarly

communication researcher Katina Rogers suggests this is closer to 70%, as cited in a 2015–2016 report from the American Association of University Professors (24). Regardless of the minor variation between these two sources, such figures indicate that more than two-thirds of faculty in the United States are not in permanent, secure roles at their respective institutions. Many other academic authors are graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, or between academic positions, so are therefore unlikely to be compensated for their writerly labour in the same way as someone with a research contract. This argument can be expanded to include the engagement of peer reviewers in the academic knowledge production system as well, which follows a similar pattern: in an ideal world, this labour is already compensated. In the world as is, this labour is often not compensated and expectations of academic service by way of peer review provides an easy entry for exploitation.

Open access advocates are pushing for a more just system where peer-reviewed research is openly shared across institutional and national boundaries (Suber, *Open Access*; Willinsky). An entirely open access scholarly communication system seems more likely now than ever before, although it does not necessarily match the open access visions from three decades ago. In part this progress is due to the development and September 2018 announcement of “Plan S” by cOAlition S, a primarily European-based group of funding agencies who have committed to restricting the publication of the research they fund to open access journals with immediate publication (i.e. without embargo periods). At the time of writing, over 20 funding agencies have signed on to the agreement.⁶ Plan S is the firmest multisignatory, multinational policy on open access that has developed to date, and society-based or national funding agency policies

⁶ See www.coalition-s.org/ for further details on Plan S.

published prior to the September 2018 announcement pale by comparison in terms of expectations and enforceability.⁷ One of the reasons that Plan S is well-positioned to affect change is that its member constituency consists of funding agencies exclusively, rather than individual institutions or federal governments. As Suber extrapolates in a 2009 blogpost, reprinted in his more recent collection *Knowledge Unbound: Selected Writings on Open Access, 2002–2011*, this is an effective strategy because funders are “upstream” (6) from publishers. Moreover, Suber argues, “Authors sign funding contracts before they sign publishing contracts. If the funding contract requires authors to retain key rights and use them to authorize [open access], then the author’s eventual publisher comes on the scene too late to interfere” (6). Funding agencies are able to use their unique position to meaningfully influence researcher publishing behaviour.

Plan S has caused substantial ripples in the academic publishing pond in recent times, but clear policy directives around open access have been called for over the span of many years—perhaps most notably in the United Kingdom by Janet Finch in the eponymously known “Finch Report,” as well as by long-time open access advocate Harnad (“Optimizing Open”; “United Kingdom”). In the Canadian context, the authors of the 2017 Canadian Scholarly Publishing Working Group report recommend a coordinated and well-funded approach to scholarly

⁷ Open access policies vary significantly around the world, within nations, and between institutions. In looking at North America, the Canadian Tri-Agency—the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC), and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)—released the “Tri-Agency Policy Open Access Policy on Publications” (Government of Canada; Donaldson, Ryan, and Samman), which outlines funding agency requests for open access and is likely a response to reports like those compiled by Kathleen Shearer and Heather Morrison et al. The Tri-Agency has not, as of the time of writing, become a member of cOAlition S. Even closer to home, the University of Victoria does not have an institution-wide open access policy, but the University of Victoria Libraries feature a statement of commitment to open access on their website (“OA Statement”). For an American example of open access policy, see the Association of College and Research Libraries’ “ACRL Policy Statement on Open Access to Scholarship by Academic Librarians.” Of note, the US-based Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation signed on to cOAlition S/Plan S in 2018.

publishing in Canada that spans primary research outputs including journals, monographs, and born-digital artifacts. This report is the latest in a line of recommendations on the importance of developing robust approaches to digital infrastructure and open scholarship in Canada (e.g. Asmah; Leadership Council for Digital Research Infrastructure; Morrison et al.; Shearer). Organized pushback against commercial publishers around the world has also increased, with significant negotiations occurring in the Netherlands, France, and Germany throughout 2017–2018. The University of California system’s decision to end their subscription contract with Elsevier in February 2019 is further evidence of a growing tide of action-based opposition to commercial publishers’ practices (Lowe).⁸ Although open access action is formalizing at an increasing rate, there remain questions around how open access is being regulated, what publisher compliance should look like, how to transition fully to an open access system, and, perhaps most significantly for this dissertation, what happens after open access.

Open Access: A Scholarly Communication Solution?

Recent policy changes and publisher agreement negotiations—and defections—stem from the fact that open access holds significant benefit for academic libraries, researchers, and students, as well as many members of the broader community including primary and secondary school teachers, health practitioners, government officials, non-profit organizations, and citizen scholars. Although different actors—researchers, librarians, administrators, policymakers, and

⁸ In March 2021, the University of California and Elsevier successfully reached a new arrangement, touted as “the largest deal for open-access publishing in scholarly journals in North America” (Brainard n.p.). Unlike negotiations in 2019 that led to the cancellation of the University of California’s subscription deal with Elsevier, the new deal provides substantial access to many of Elsevier’s journals (including science touchstones such as *Cell* and *The Lancet*) and will not require University of California authors to pay additional charges to publish open access with Elsevier. For the University of California, the new deal will also “cost its libraries’ budget 7% less than what they would have paid had [the University of California] extended its old contract with Elsevier” (Brainard n.p.).

publishers—may have different ideas of what road to open access is most appropriate (green, bronze, gold, platinum, or something else entirely; *see footnote 4*), they still agree on the necessity of opening up academic research.

An open system has the potential to disrupt the current cost-intensive academic publishing system that libraries are beholden to, as that system is largely dictated by the burdensome expense of journal subscriptions. Broad open access could also eliminate the needless duplication of research and increase access to much more literature on a specific subject. Writing from his experience at Harvard University, Suber outlines the reality of institutional access:

Even the wealthiest academic libraries in the world suffer serious access gaps. [...] Access gaps are worse [than Harvard's] at other affluent institutions, and worse still in the developing world. In 2008, Harvard subscribed to 98,900 serials and Yale to 73,900. The best-funded research library in India, at the Indian Institute of Science, subscribed to 10,600. Several sub-Saharan African university libraries subscribed to zero, offering their patrons access to no conventional journals except those donated by publishers. (*Open Access* 30–32)

The denial of research is an immediate and pressing issue for academic institutions. But this lack of access has ramifications beyond the scholarly realm, too. Without access to the full range of researched arguments and findings on a topic, governments are in danger of making under-informed policy decisions. Members of the larger public are even less likely to have substantial access to research. In part, this is due to the high cost of an individual subscription.

Disconnection between non-academic communities and university libraries that do have select research access exacerbates this issue as well. A lack of broad access can paint an incomplete picture of scientific and humanistic research and potentially lead to assumptions or misunderstandings of larger systems and their historical precedents. Indeed, Daniel J. Cohen

calls open access publishing “a more simple—and virtuous—model for the future of scholarly communication” (n.p.). There are significant efficiencies in and quantifiable benefits to this mode of knowledge production.

Nuanced, long-form arguments for the importance of open access have been available for some time now. In his touchstone book *The Access Principle: The Case for Open Access to Research and Scholarship* (2006), Director of the Public Knowledge Project John Willinsky makes a compelling case for open access to scholarly journals, in particular, although he does consider the larger scholarly production ecosystem as well. He argues that knowledge is a public good and as such the public should have unequivocal access to it. Willinsky’s core message is this: “A commitment to the value and quality of research carries with it a responsibility to extend the circulation of such work as far as possible and ideally to all who are interested in it and all who might profit by it” (xxii)—a less pithy predecessor to Suber’s “make your work as useful and as usable as it can possibly be” (*Open Access* 75). Willinsky posits open access as a more just and fair choice for scholarly knowledge production, citing its place “in a tradition bent on increasing the democratic circulation of knowledge” (30) and its role in facilitating shared decision making between experts and non-experts (114). He outlines the inequities of global access to research, which effectively widens the wealth and knowledge gap between developing and developed nations. In case studies of specific African and Indian universities, Willinsky demonstrates that researchers at these institutions are unable to reach the same degree of success and credibility as their North American and European colleagues, as they often do not have access to some of the highest quality or most recent literature in their field. Open access to all scholarly material is certainly possible from a technical standpoint; as Willinsky reminds his

reader, it is the cultural and economic framework that needs to adjust in order for the broad implementation of open access to occur.

Many open advocates put forth a variation of the public good argument as evidence of the necessity for open access; that is, access to research is a public good and publicly funded research should be publicly available. As an example, one can look again to Willinsky, who writes:

What makes research and scholarship such a natural topic for thinking about setting up knowledge commons and publishing cooperatives devoted to providing open access is this work's standing as a *public good*. A public good, in economic terms, is something that is regarded as beneficial and can be provided to everyone who seeks it, without their use of it diminishing its value. (9, *emphasis original*)

Open access to research is a public good because it benefits many, and one's use of online research does not prohibit or take away from anyone else's access to that research. Knowledge, and online information in particular, is a non-rivalrous resource (Suber, *Open Access* 45). Many researchers also consider the purpose of academic work to be the development and sharing of knowledge. As Open Education advocate Rajiv S. Jhangiani writes in the concluding chapter of the edited collection *Open: The Philosophy and Practices That Are Revolutionizing Education and Science* (2017), "both education and science are about service through creation, sharing, and application of knowledge" (276). If access to research is a public good and the goal of academia is to facilitate this public good, then it follows that all should have equal access to knowledge as articulated by those working in higher education.

Unrealized Potential, Unintended Consequences: Colonial Aspects of Open Access

Despite best intentions to create a more ethical scholarly communication system through broadening access to research materials, the Open Access movement has engendered certain unintended consequences as well. In a sense, the influx of open access research has actually exacerbated inequities in academia worldwide. In a piece titled “Postcolonial Open Access,” anthropologist and ethicist Florence Piron suggests that the Open Access movement has resulted in the over-availability and promotion of open access research from the Global North at the expense of research from the Global South, which might not be digitized or otherwise available online in open formats. If research from the Global North is more readily available online, then those authors will be read more, cited more, and their research will gain prominence over those who do not have the opportunity to publish in the same way. These concepts are crystallized by Leslie Chan et al. in a 2020 report to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization titled *Open Science Beyond Open Access: For and With Communities. A Step Towards the Decolonization of Knowledge*, where the authors warn of the dangers of excluding knowledges from Indigenous communities, those who reside in the Global South, and other marginalized groups.

A skewed open research corpus reveals that the Open Access movement has yet to comprehensively consider equity concerns in both the access to and creation of open access materials. This reality also sheds light on what could be considered colonial or paternalistic undertones of earlier open access advocacy. From this standpoint, there are potentially savioursque elements in the focus on African and Indian *access to* Global North research without a fuller consideration of contextual, community-based academic practices in those

locales, as articulated in Suber's *Open Access* and referenced in the previous section.⁹ In the introduction and "Development" chapter of the *Access Principle* Willinsky considers Global South academic contexts more deeply, but still suggests the Global North has somewhat of a rescuer role to play:

As connectivity in African universities (as well as those elsewhere in the world) slowly improves, it then falls to the academic research community to ensure that the knowledge gap is further reduced through a ready ability to access online resources. It is time for researchers in the developed world to consider just how easily they can contribute to the research capacity of the developing world by moving to a more open approach to scholarly publishing. (97–98)

Moreover, Willinsky writes, "in Africa there is [...] a struggle underway to support the development of research capacities amid scarce access to the scholarly literature" (99). These frameworks do not acknowledge African and Indian academics as *producers* of knowledge first and foremost, but rather as *consumers* of knowledge who are disadvantaged by their lack of access to Global North research. Global open access to all research is critically important, as I have reiterated throughout this dissertation. But such a lopsided perspective fails to recognize the critical situated knowledges of those living and working outside of North American and European-centric academic contexts as well.¹⁰

⁹ Again, Suber writes: "[In 2008 the] best-funded research library in India, at the Indian Institute of Science, subscribed to 10,600 [journals]. Several sub-Saharan African university libraries subscribed to zero, offering their patrons access to no conventional journals except those donated by publishers" (*Open Access* 30–32).

¹⁰ The Public Knowledge Project, which Willinsky directs, has made much more action-oriented strides in engaging with knowledge creators in the Global South, especially through their Open Journal Systems (OJS) initiative. As open access critic Richard Poynder writes for the London School of Economics blog, "OJS is already widely used in the Global South. In 2016, Latin America and the Caribbean accounted for 3,295 OJS-hosted journals, making it the largest region of use. The second largest region is East Asia and the Pacific. In addition, African Journals Online (AJOL) uses OJS to host 523 journals from the African continent. In India a crowd-sourced project is putting together a list of local journals, with thousands already identified" (n.p.).

Increasingly, scholarly communication critics are grappling with the colonial aspects of open access. Equity concerns are raised in multiple chapters of the recent book collection *Reassembling Scholarly Communications: Histories, Politics, and Global Politics of Open Access* (2020), edited by Eve and fellow digital scholarship expert Jonathan Gray. With a specific focus on the African continent, public communication researcher Thomas Hervé Mboa Nkoudou argues that open access has been more detrimental than helpful to this region. He cites the pressure to publish in English in a foreign open access journal and outlines how this activity reinscribes a colonial approach to knowledge production in its waylaying of local and Indigenous knowledge creation and sharing. In another chapter, Denisse Albornoz, Angela Okune, and Leslie Chan challenge the idea that open access has made *all* knowledge more available. In line with Piron's argument, Albornoz, Okune, and Chan reiterate that open access has indeed made research undertaken by scholars in the Global North more available, but that this has been to the detriment and increased obscuration of research by scholars in the Global South. The authors argue that "open systems may potentially replicate the very values and power imbalances that the movement initially sought to change" (65), in particular regarding the replication of epistemic injustice, which, building on Miranda Fricker's coinage of the term a decade earlier, they consider to be "the devaluing of someone's knowledge or capacity as a knower" (65). Albornoz, Okune, and Chan also outline institutional forces that have invalidated certain types of knowledge, including academic publishing, the primacy of the English language, and professional advancement criteria. They conclude with four recommendations for open research: 1) scholars in the Global North should recognize their privilege, 2) open scholarship practitioners should challenge the current standards and norms that promote epistemic injustice, 3) open scholarship practitioners should learn from ongoing projects that are already seeking to address

injustice, and 4) open access should be a more radical movement with direct responsibility for undoing structural oppression. By undertaking these recommendations across the open scholarship landscape, the depth, breadth, and diversity of open access material would increase, as would the benefits from this form of publication.

At the same time, it is critical to acknowledge that Indigenous knowledge takes many different forms and that not all Indigenous knowledge is appropriate to be accessed openly by everyone. Robin Wall Kimmerer writes in her book-length reconciliation of scientific and Indigenous knowledges, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants*: “Coupled to the impulse to share is the mandate to protect. Indigenous knowledge has to often been appropriated by its abductors, so the gift of knowledge must be tightly bound to responsibility for that knowledge” (xii). For instance, there is sacred knowledge, community-specific knowledge, or knowledge that is shared through particular protocols and ceremonies; knowledge that comes with a certain responsibility and is intended for specific receivers. In the scholarly communication context, the specificity of Indigenous knowledge has been acknowledged by initiatives like Mukurtu (a content management system designed with and for Indigenous communities) and the related Local Contexts group. Local Contexts have developed a set of intellectual property distinctions called Traditional Knowledge licenses and labels. These licenses and labels are geared toward the development, access, and reuse of cultural materials and Indigenous cultural heritage materials in particular.¹¹

¹¹ For a list of Traditional Knowledge labels see localcontexts.org/tk-labels/ and for licenses, localcontexts.org/tk-licenses/. As per the Local Contexts website, “The [Traditional Knowledge] TK Labels are a tool for Indigenous communities to add existing local protocols for access and use to recorded cultural heritage that is digitally circulating outside community contexts. The TK Labels offer an educative and informational strategy to help non-community users of this cultural heritage understand its importance and significance to the communities from where it derives and continues to have meaning. TK Labeling is designed to identify and clarify which material has community-specific restrictions regarding access and use” (“Home”). Regarding Traditional Knowledge licenses,

Researchers have begun to process other inequities inherent to open scholarship in its current form, too. Librarian Laura Francabandera, for example, questions whether the Open Access movement is truly an arbiter of social justice. Francabandera suggests that by taking an intersectional approach to assessing open access, one can see that the movement has far to go in terms of equity. She bases this suggestion primarily on a study of the representation of Black women within open access research. Additional avenues beside topic representation could be considered within this framework, too. One could ask, who holds the most power in scholarly publishing, and what is their commitment to equity and diversity? Where are marginalized voices participating in and shaping academic publishing conversations, and where are these voices muted or ignored? Where has open access publishing perpetuated hegemonic norms? As librarians Charlotte Roh, Harrison W. Inefuku, and Emily Drabinski suggest, “Scholarly communications is a series of material practices that could be constructed otherwise—rooted in equity and justice rather than [*sic*] colonization and dominance” (49). A shift toward more social knowledge creation and epistemic justice could help to reorient these material practices toward more inclusive and more varied scholarly communication.

Further Challenges for Open Access

Beyond the ethical ramifications of open access, there are other persistent challenges of the movement that require recognition. In what follows, I will outline a handful of difficulties for the Open Access movement: profit, misunderstanding of intellectual property laws, piracy,

the Local Contexts group indicates: “our goal was to develop a new and complementary set of licenses that addressed the diversity of Indigenous needs in relation to intellectual property” (“TK Licenses”).

humanities practices, monographs, the prestige economy, misconceptions regarding quality, and emerging business strategies.

Profit: Unsurprisingly, the degree of profit that commercial academic publishers make is a challenge to the success of the Open Access movement. It has been notoriously difficult to come to an agreed-upon figure for how much academic publishing costs, in large part due to “the complex and opaque network of financial flows between public bodies, higher educational institutions, research councils, researchers and publishers,” as Stuart Lawson, Gray, and Michele Mauri assert (n.p.). Heather Joseph emphasizes that the science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) journal industry costs US\$10 billion per year—a figure also quoted in the 2015 International Association of Scientific, Technical and Medical Publishers report on scholarly communication (Ware and Wabe).¹² In 2015, Lawson, Ben Meghreblian, and Michelle Brook conducted a study into how much money had been paid by higher education institutions in the United Kingdom to ten major publishers for access to academic journals. The authors concluded that between 2010 and 2014 the total amount was over 430 million pounds; nearly 50% of that expenditure was provided to Elsevier alone (Lawson, Meghreblian, and Brook n.p.). Eve reports corporate profit margins between 35–40%: far above many wealth-generating industries. Taken together, these data demonstrate that a small number of commercial academic publishers control and profit from most academic publishing worldwide and that this is very lucrative business. Predictably, the academic publishing profiteers did not initially look kindly on open access approaches intended to disrupt their significant financial holdings and future profit opportunities;

¹² Academic and research libraries make up 80% of the customer base for these journals (Joseph), which means they are paying US\$8 billion per year for access to STEM research.

below, I will outline how these same publishers have begun to develop their own income generating open access business strategies.

Intellectual property: Another challenge lies in the arena of intellectual property and copyright, and the many misunderstandings around how intellectual property rights work.¹³ Historically, academics have often signed away their intellectual property rights, making universal retroactive open access impossible at this time. The Open Access movement does not require the abolition of intellectual property rights like copyright. Rather, open access supporters advocate for the retention of author rights and the use of open licences to assert such rights (Wiley). The FAIR (findable, accessible, interoperable, reusable) guidelines for research output have become a community standard (Wilkinson et al.) and the use of open licenses is integral to following the FAIR guidelines. Open education scholars like David Wiley assert that unlicensed content is not actually open access, even if it is available for free.¹⁴ The most common licenses employed in this way are Creative Commons licenses, and as noted above Traditional Knowledge licenses have emerged recently as well.¹⁵ Regardless of these options, many academics misunderstand alternative licensing as being equivalent to giving away all of the rights to their work. As Eve suggests,

Among the arguments surrounding open access in the humanities that have caused controversy, few have been so fierce as those concerning open licensing. Sceptics believe that liberal reuse rights will fuel an epidemic of plagiarism-like practices, will allow

¹³ Copyright has also become a contentious topic for those scholars who believe that the current intellectual property regime is overly restrictive and poorly suited for the Internet age (e.g. Boon; Boyle; David; Lessig). It is unclear whether marked stances against intellectual property law have helped or hindered the Open Access movement.

¹⁴ Wiley describes open content as “copyrightable work [...] that is licensed in a manner that provides users with free and perpetual permission to engage in the 5R activities” (n.p.). Wiley’s 5Rs are retain, reuse, revise, remix, and redistribute.

¹⁵ For a list and description of Creative Commons licenses, see creativecommons.org/licenses/

commercial re-enclosure of academic work and will fundamentally violate the moral rights of the academic author. (86)¹⁶

In fact, alternative, open licenses allow creators to determine how their work may be used in the future and do not by any means replace copyright (Eve 86, 92). Through open licences authors could completely give up all rights associated with the content or they could impose extremely restrictive guidelines on how their materials can be used (and of course there are many other options between these two poles). Open licenses can provide more authorial control over research output than many restrictive contracts with academic publishers that strip authors (and readers) of future reuse or distribution rights.

Piracy: On a related tack, in part due to restrictive rights agreements between authors and publishers, academic piracy has risen. Lawson briefly explores this phenomenon in a 2017 article titled “Access, Ethics and Piracy,” with a focus on accessing and sharing copyrighted, toll-access research on sites like Alexandra Elbakyan’s SciHub. Drawing from the work of historian Adrian Johns (*Piracy*), Lawson reiterates the idea that intellectual property is not a natural or necessary state and only came about in response to the rampant copying of books in eighteenth-century England. Although Lawson does not identify as anti-piracy, per se (suggesting that sometimes what is ethical is not the same as what is legal), they do argue that “there is one clear avenue available for those publishers, librarians and researchers who wish to make the results of scholarship as widely available as possible without resorting to breaking copyright law, and that is open access” (28). Lawson credits academic pirating sites for proving

¹⁶ See the entirety of Eve’s “Open Licensing” chapter in *Open Access and the Humanities* for a more in-depth engagement with this topic.

that the current, restrictive scholarly communication system is no longer fit for purpose; open access offers a legal alternative.

Humanities: Although it has the potential to affect all corners of academia, the Open Access movement is often discussed in relation to the sciences only, which can be alienating for those who work in non-science disciplines. There are many reasons for the unequal amount of airtime given to the sciences in conversations about open access, including history, time, policy, and cost factors. As noted above, the earliest, largest-scale open access publishing started in physics, where a commitment to sharing work openly via the Internet has persisted for thirty years. There is a sense of urgency when it comes to releasing research results in the sciences, as these results might feed decisions around time-sensitive issues like climate change, land development, or healthcare. Science publications can also be exceedingly expensive and are often far more costly than those of other disciplines. Such a myopic, science-centred view in open access considerations has inaccurately depicted the Open Access movement as irrelevant to those working in the humanities.

In contrast to such a view, open access is considered critically relevant to all fields by many; in regard to the humanities, Eve tackles this issue head-on in *Open Access and the Humanities*. Open access, he argues, is not only relevant to but is in fact crucial for the humanities. The humanities and sciences differ in many ways, but open access practices from the sciences can be translated and applied—as appropriate—for the humanities.¹⁷ Open access can be fraught for the humanities in terms of publication practices, peer review, monographs, economics, licenses, and undigitized cultural heritage material, which makes large-scale

¹⁷ Although Eve does suggest that many open access practices from the sciences can be applied in the humanities context, he is quick to point out differences between the pursuits. Eve also acknowledges humanities-specific considerations like the importance of long-form writing (as evinced by the centrality of the monograph).

implementation challenging. Eve suggests that a possible solution to such challenges is an open access coalition where major libraries come together to negotiate, buy, and make available published material. He concludes with an imperative threaded with optimism: “As the opportunity cost of not venturing into these territories mounts,” Eve writes, “it becomes incumbent on researchers, librarians, publishers and funders not only to enter into dialogue about suitable transition strategies but also to ensure that our thinking is not bounded by what merely exists” (151). Rather, he suggests, through a practical self-criticism inspired by digital humanist Jerome McGann, we must reflect on the current modes of scholarly communication in the humanities and explore what might be possible, especially if it is new, untested, or uncharted. In doing so, Eve throws his hat in with the value of “imagin[ing] what you don’t know” (McGann 82).

Monographs: In the humanities, the cultural primacy of the monograph as a vaulted and even necessary publication for practitioners poses significant issues for open access. The cost of producing a monograph is hefty, especially compared to the relatively low cost of generating online articles. In the 2016 report “The Costs of Publishing Monographs: Toward a Transparent Methodology,” Nancy Maron, Kimberly Schmelzinger, Christine Mulhern, and Daniel Rossman present data on the monograph production costs of 382 titles from 20 university presses in the 2014 fiscal year. The authors conclude that the average cost per monograph is US\$28,747—not an insignificant amount of money and certainly far more expensive than producing an online journal article. Although the cost of production is high, the monograph remains critical to humanities knowledge production at large. This is a challenge for current publishing practices that rely on the efficiencies of digital technologies, as Sara Grimme et al. write in the 2019 Digital Science Report *The State of Open Monographs*:

[Humanities and social sciences] scholars describe the act of “thinking through” and writing a monograph as a formative intellectual exercise, central to the way they give structure to a body of research, test out and analyze arguments, and identify links to other areas of research and directions for future exploration. [...] While monographs continue to be central to the intellectual and professional identity of HSS fields, the technology for publishing them continues to be driven largely by the needs of a print-based market. As a result, monographs remain largely outside the growing digital scholarly information infrastructure. (3)

In *Planned Obsolescence* Kathleen Fitzpatrick draws on another internal contradiction of academic book publishing. She notoriously equates monograph production in the humanities as representing a kind of zombie logic, as the monograph—and the first book in particular—is both untenably expensive to produce and critical for one’s academic career (4). Janneke Adema (“Monograph Crisis”; *Overview of Open*), Michael A. Elliot, and Richard Fisher also consider the relative challenges with monograph production, especially within the open access context.

Prestige: Academia, and academic publishing in particular, is based on a prestige system that many believe has prevented authors from opting for open access. As Eve writes, “Publication forms the core unit of currency in the hiring, firing and promotion ladder” (44). Since hiring and promotion committees do not necessarily have the time (or the subfield-specific expertise) to read through applicants’ publication lists and gauge their relative value to a field, the prestige attached to a well-established journal or publisher is often used as a proxy for quality. And as Suber writes, “Most publishing scholars will choose prestige over OA if they have to choose” (*Open Access* 55). He suggests that toll-access journals are often only more prestigious than open access journals because of longevity and the attraction of established authors and editors over time (“Thoughts on Prestige”). With time, Suber argues, open access

journals will inevitably reach this stage as well. Fitzpatrick, however, contends that the continued relevance and defensibility of such a heavily prestige-oriented system should be re-examined: “In seeking prestige,” she writes, “we reinforce hierarchy and exclusion” (*Generous Thinking* 206).

Promotion guidelines are evolving as more administrators and faculty members become aware of the importance of open access and the implications of toll-access publishing, but there remain many instances where emerging scholars and junior faculty may avoid publishing open access until they have received tenure. A 2020 study by Meredith T. Niles et al. nuances this discussion further: in “Why We Publish Where We Do: Faculty Publishing Values and Their Relationship to Review, Promotion and Tenure Expectations,” Niles et al. focus on the gap between what faculty express as their own publishing values and what they assume their colleagues’ values are. Faculty suggest their own publishing values are community-oriented (e.g. they are concerned with relevance, audience reach, and open access); at the same time, faculty also believe that their colleagues value journal prestige and impact more:

faculty value the readership of a journal over other citation metrics or perceived prestige, but [...] such values may be at odds with what they believe to be valuable in the [research, promotion, and tenure (RPT)] process. However, [...] these same faculty believe that quantity and prestige of publications still dominate RPT decisions and that faculty, especially those who are non-tenured and younger, believe these factors to be the most important, even though the very people serving on RPT committees value these outputs far less. The resulting mismatches are concerning, especially when coupled with the increased volume of research, as it suggests that the factors guiding publication decisions are inconsistent with faculty’s own values. (11)

Such an outcome complicates the widely held notion that tenure and promotion depend on *status* publishing. In order to expedite the transformation of open access into a more viable publication option, the reward mechanisms—and perhaps even the institutional rankings—that guide and regulate scholarly behaviour need to explicitly orient away from maintaining a system that prizes prestige above all else.¹⁸ And as Niles et al. reveal, the disconnect between values and behaviour require remedy as well.

Misconceptions: Misconceptions about the quality of open access journals still prevail. In part, this may stem from their online nature. For established humanities researchers in particular—long-practicing scholars who have built a career on the close study of texts and other tactile cultural materials—the advent of the digital was often looked at askance when it first gained prominence. In “The Digital Text and Beyond,” John Lavagnino notes that Shakespearean scholars in the late 1980s and into the 1990s tended to distrust what was online: “The novelty of digital texts, their intangibility, and the inevitable breakdowns of computer equipment all gave digital things a general air of unreliability” (1642–43). The intangible, unreliable nature of nascent digital technologies undercut their authority for those accustomed to the more static form of the codex—although a book can become tangibly, conceptually, or historically unreliable, too.

Mistrust also derives from the prominence of so-called *predatory publishers*, a term coined by scholarly communications librarian Jeffrey Beall and enshrined by his now-defunct “Beall’s List of Predatory Journals and Publishers.”¹⁹ Predatory publishers accept and publish

¹⁸ Institutional ranking may well be trending in this direction already. For instance, the Centre for Science and Technology Studies (CWTS) Leiden Ranking for 2019 included indicators for both open access publishing and gender diversity alongside the more conventional indicators (Waltman and van Eck).

¹⁹ Historically, the work of exposing predatory publishers was largely done by Beall via this mechanism, referred to in the open access community as “Beall’s List”: an online resource of journals and companies believed to be

work for a fee, and most often without a rigorous peer review process. Frequently, articles published by predatory journals have phony editorial boards if they list an editorial board at all. This unvetted, pay-to-publish scheme has misled some academics to believe that all open access publishing is done under dubious circumstances and thus cannot be trusted, never mind considered prestigious. Acknowledging the credibility of the digital as well as the existence of predatory publishers is critical for the health of the Open Access movement and open scholarship in general.

Implementation: Another significant challenge for open access is in its implementation to date, especially where commercial publishers have developed business strategies for maintaining their revenue streams and substantial profit margins while publishing open access. The two key mechanisms for this approach are article processing charges (APCs) and read-and-publish deals. Librarian and open access advocate Gerald Beasley defines APCs as “the charges levied by publishers from authors for publishing journal articles” (n.p.). In the introduction to *Reassembling Scholarly Communications*, Eve and Gray describe the corporate defense of APCs further: “The logic runs that, if one cannot sell material to readers, then one might instead sell professional publishing services to authors” (3). Despite claims to the contrary, APCs are not actually a standard mechanism for publishing open access. Summarizing a recent study of the prevalence of APCs in open access publishing by the Sustaining the Knowledge Commons group at the University of Ottawa, Heather Morrison writes that “most [open access] journals in [the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ)] do not charge APCs: 10,210 (73%) of the 14,007

predatory. Although Beall took down the original list alongside his scholarly communication-focused blog in 2017, citing pressure from his employer, at the time of writing archived versions are available at beallist.net/ and beallist.weebly.com/. Of note, there is now an insurgence of predatory conferences as well, which also capitalize off of academics' needs to bolster their curricula vitae.

journals in DOAJ as of Nov. 26, 2019 do not have APCs” (“OA APC” n.p.). The APCs that are charged are most often found in journals in the sciences and can range from hundreds to thousands of dollars.

Not only can APCs deter open access publishing, but the imposition of APCs can quickly turn into yet another pay-to-play scenario. Most APCs are paid for by institutions or grants, which means that authors who are employed at institutions with the means to pay APCs are able to, but those who are affiliated with institutions that do not have the funding for such an expense cannot.²⁰ Similarly, if an APC is to be paid out of grant funding, those who have significant funding can allocate money toward APCs, but those who have not won large grants cannot. As Fitzpatrick writes, “In many cases, the author-pays model would literally mean that the author was paying, a significant new barrier to publication” (*Generous Thinking* 147). According to a 2020 study by Anthony J. Olejniczak and Molly J. Wilson titled “Who’s Writing Open Access (OA) Articles?” scholars at prestigious institutions with large budgets are more likely to author open access articles with APCs than scholars at less prestigious institutions. Scholars from high ranking, well-funded institutions are also “more likely to author OA articles overall in every field” (Olejniczak and Wilson 1448). Moreover, in part due to existing inequities in the academic system, most APC-based open access articles are authored by men at these well-resourced universities. The authors conclude: “in most fields, men publish more OA articles than women, an effect that grows stronger when APCs must be paid” (1447). Since citation rates rise with

²⁰ A Mellon Foundation-funded project on the APC system did find that it could be a financially sustainable economic model for open access (with some caveats), but focused only on “large, research-intensive institutions in North America that currently publish the largest share of the world’s research” (University of California Libraries 8).

open access publishing, those who are able to publish open access become more visible and thus more prominent in their discipline.

APCs are another tool of academic privilege, which is arguably antithetical to the democratization of scholarly communication that the Open Access movement purports as a core value. As Beasley argues, “No business model based on APCs as a tool to facilitate the large-scale transition to [open access] can navigate the ethical dilemmas identified by political philosophers as appropriate for the kind of global environment in which scholarly publishing operates” (n.p.). The APC system maintains a status quo where established academics who have been awarded research money and are employed at well-funded institutions are able to publish open access (and reap the benefits of that mode of publication), whereas those who do not hold such status are barred entry from the ability to publish in this way. The APC system also validates the concept that academic publishing should be controlled by corporate entities and should be profit-generating for non-academic groups.²¹

A similar trend is at play in the recent proliferation of read-and-publish deals (e.g. the agreement reached by Carnegie Mellon University and Reed Elsevier in November 2019 [Mattera]). A read-and-publish agreement stipulates that an institution would only pay once for research; they would not pay an APC for an article to be published and then pay again to subscribe to the journal if it is not fully open access already. It is crucial to note that in such an agreement the institution is still providing income to a for-profit company and that such a deal is made on a publisher-by-publisher basis. Since certain fields are underrepresented by the top five

²¹ Moreover, there has been pushback against APCs by librarians who do not believe it falls within their mandate to support researcher publishing. For instance, Heidi Zuniga and Lilian Hoffecker argue that library-based APC funds are time consuming and difficult to manage, and that libraries should not be obligated to provide support for individual author publishing now when this has not been standard practice previously (e.g. for colour printing or image licensing, for which there have been author fees in the past).

publishers, prioritizing read-and-publish deals could lead to less access for non-science disciplines. Read-and-publish deals also assume (and promote) the idea that most open access publishing is funded through APCs and that this is a standard practice; again, less than 30% of journals in the Directory of Open Access Journals do, in fact, charge an APC (Morrison, “OA APC”). As Jefferson Pooley writes, read-and-publish deals exacerbate the inequality that APCs engender, too:

The read-and-publish strategy is making global inequality worse. Nearly all the deals involve wealthy northern European countries or rich North American institutions like the University of California system. The practical effect is to grant selective OA authorship rights—with all their citation and visibility benefits—to scholars from the affluent West. (“Read-and-Publish” n.p.)

Rather than fulfill the equity and access ideals of the Open Access movement, both APCs and read-and-publish deals are profit-generating strategies that enable a business-as-usual approach.

Commercial profit levels and strategies, the cost of monograph publishing, humanities-specific considerations, notions of prestige, an uptick in piracy, and confusion around intellectual property law, open licensing, and quality are not the only barriers to open access uptake. Some academics are more wary of the benefits of open access in general, like Sven Fund, who sees open access as disruptive (in a negative sense) and bemoans the “questionable value of putting a successful revenue stream at risk” (206).²² Other academics lack an understanding of the

²² It behooves me to mention, however, that Fund now has a considerable vested interest in the profit-generating possibilities of open access academic publishing. In linked blogposts (“Knowledge Unlatched Strikes Again”; “Knowledge Unlatched Strikes Again and Again”) Pooley outlines Fund’s current role in the open access world: Fund’s consultancy acquired the open access organization Knowledge Unlatched in 2016 with a marked lack of transparency about the organization’s shift in mandate from not-for-profit to for-profit. Since that time Fund has used Knowledge Unlatched as a vehicle to acquire or spawn further open access infrastructure and incorporate it within an increasingly privatized and profit-generating system.

economics of the current scholarly communication system and what open access is. As Julia A. Lovett et al. conclude, further education still needs to be done in regard to what open access policies entail, the difference between commercial and academic repositories, and the benefits of publishing open access. Allyson Rodriguez argues that scholarly communication librarians need to actively engage their faculty colleagues on the topic in order to normalize open access and that libraries have led solutions to this issue by putting policies and systems into place that encourage and support straightforward open access publishing. Librarian Rick Anderson has been outspoken regarding his concerns about open access, including his worry that an increase in open access material will strain library budgets even farther. Ideally, open access should also infer open, accurate data and metadata (when appropriate to share), as well as transparency around methodology, as the Open Science Framework promotes.²³ These challenges are not insignificant, nor are the concerns unfounded; transforming an entire institutionalized knowledge production system is a substantial undertaking and all substantial undertakings bear anticipated risks and unanticipated consequences.

Conclusion: Messy and Multivocal Knowledge Creation

Open access is broad, multifaceted, and wide-reaching, and as Eve and Gray write, “intensely messy” (10). Even still, open access is only one component in the larger open scholarship ecosystem, which includes open education, open source, open knowledge, open science, and open data as well. For purposes of scope, I focus on open access as a foundation for open social scholarship, but do not wish to downplay the significant work being done in related areas and

²³ See osf.io for more information on the Open Science Framework.

their impact for a more socially engaged academy. Moreover, open access has repercussions far beyond the individual researcher and important literature has been published on the roles of the various actors involved—especially in regard to librarians and publishers (Bailey; Beall; Canadian Scholarly Publishing Working Group; Lorimer, “Good Idea”; Morrison, “From the Field”). Scholarly communication is a network of many actors and all involved have crucial parts to play in the transition to and sustenance of a robust open scholarship system. “Open access is perceived through a set of contested institutional histories, argued over various theoretical terrains in the present, and imagined via diverse potentialities for the future” (10), Eve and Gray write. Such a nuanced perspective on the complexity of open scholarship is crucial for understanding and facilitating contemporary knowledge production as a polyvocal, situated, equitable, social, and open enterprise.

Chapter 2. Publicly Engaged Humanities: Historical Trends and Precedents

For decades there has been pressure on those working in academia in the North American context to engage more seriously with the publics they serve. Steps have been taken in this direction: witness the rise of the public humanities as a movement; the international transition from closed, for-cost publishing to open access models; and the establishment of community engagement priorities in funding agency agendas. Circumstances and opportunities for academic collaboration with wider communities have only improved with the rise of networked technologies and practices (e.g. social media), and the resultant de-centring of authority in regard to who is considered to be an expert on any given subject. In her recent book *Putting the Humanities PhD to Work: Theory, Practice, and Models for Thriving Beyond the Classroom* (2020), Katina Rogers makes an argument for emboldening such attitudes and activities. She claims, “Scholars who take a translational approach, connecting their research with big societal questions or other matters of public interest, help demystify scholarly work and offer a glimpse into the tools of humanistic research and analysis like close reading or archival research” (59). Moreover, Rogers proposes:

Making that work more visible (and rewarding it professionally) may lead to more porous boundaries between the academy and the broader society, which has the potential to reinvigorate humanities disciplines, spark new and meaningful interdisciplinary research in response to complex problems, and build greater esteem for scholarly work in the public eye.

(59)

Through making public-facing work more visible, academia opens up to those who are not conventionally considered to be official knowledge producers.

In what follows, I argue that the humanities are well poised to become more publicly engaged. In broadening their work, humanities practitioners can put into practice the open social scholarship tenant of engaging both specialists and non-specialists. By way of context for my argument, I present an account of certain key historical precedents that have led to current socially oriented facets of academia. I detail the rise of public humanities, currently manifested institutionally in places such as the John Nicholas Brown Center for Public Humanities and Cultural Heritage at Brown University, the Public Humanities Hub at the University of British Columbia, and through relevant programming at the Center for the Humanities at University of Wisconsin – Madison (among other locales), and previously evident in the now-defunct Institute on the Public Humanities for Doctoral Students at the University of Washington. I consider reasons for this emergence, including a look at funding agency-mandated public engagement agendas in the Canadian context. I also trace the evolution away from the lone genius model and suggest that restructured authorial hierarchies can encourage social knowledge creation. Finally, I draw on the prevalence of networked technology in considering a more socially engaged future for the humanities. Overall, I suggest that the elements are in place for a more purposeful shift toward open social scholarship.

Who—or What—Are *Publics*?

Before moving forward, it is necessary to define the terms *publics* and *public engagement*—regardless of the complexity of such a task—as they are used frequently throughout this chapter and the chapters that follow. As literary critic Michael Warner concedes in an article titled “Publics and Counterpublics,” it is difficult to pinpoint who, or what, the public is: “Publics have become an essential fact of the social landscape, but it would tax our understanding to say

exactly what they are” (413). Warner argues that there are three different types of publics: 1) *the public*, considered a largely amorphous social whole; 2) *a public*, a defined community, modified by participation in a shared activity (as an example, he cites “a theatrical public” [413]); and 3) *publics*, constituted by engagement with circulating texts. Warner moves beyond and complicates these categorizations by asserting that a public is formed by virtue of its address; a public comes into being through a discursive relation. This addressed public is still somewhat amorphous, however. Warner writes:

We encounter people in such disparate contexts that the idea of a body to which they all belong, and in which they could be addressed in speech, seems to have something wishful about it. To address a public we don’t go around saying the same thing to all these people. We say it in a venue of indifferent address, and hope that people will find themselves in it. (418)

Warner nuances his argument further by suggesting that a public is not only constituted by virtue of its address, but also by giving attention to the addressor—a public shows up and listens, however passively or distractedly (“people will find themselves in it” [418]). This is not a one-to-one or even one-to-many discursive relationship: “A public is understood to be an ongoing space of encounter for discourse” (420), as Warner writes. Moreover, no one can fully resist participation in a public of some sort. Warner uses the term *counterpublics* to describe those who resist the hegemonic discourse of mainstream address, predicated as it often is on notions of whiteness, heterosexuality, and other homogenizing gestures. But even counterpublics come into being by resisting identification with the assumed public of address or audience. That is, counterpublics are also delineated by public address; instead of forming community through

identification with and receptivity of the address, a counterpublic is constituted through resistance or dissent.

Kathleen Fitzpatrick also considers publics in *Generous Thinking*. She attests that it is problematic to envision the public as a homogenous monolith and, moreover, as a singular group necessarily apart from academic institutions. I embrace Fitzpatrick's suggestion that academics reconsider themselves within the "larger 'us' that we together form" (8), rather than (artificially) holding themselves apart from broader society or Warner's first, all-encompassing public. Fitzpatrick suggests that publics be considered as "a complex collection of communities—not just groups who interact with one another and with us, but groups of which we are in fact a part" (8); hence the plurality of *publics*, an important gesture toward multiplicity and complexity.

To probe deeper, in the specific context of this chapter I consider publics closer to Warner's second category or definition—although I may use the term in a looser, more passive sense than he intends. I employ the word *publics* to describe—to address—a more defined community than the all-encompassing broader society; maintaining, all the while, that this group cannot be truly known as a community of individuals, nor are their wants and needs singular or straightforward. As Warner aptly states, "Publics are different than persons" (418). At any rate, this does align with Warner's view of a public as "exist[ing] in virtue of their address" (417) or being brought into (conceptual) being by discourse. I bear in mind Warner's suggestion that a public must also pay some degree of attention to the address in order to maintain membership in the delineated community; I look to those who wish to engage—at any level, and from any position on the passive to active scale—with humanistic ideas, even if that terminology may not resonate. When I discuss publics, it is to employ a useful delineation, a convenient shorthand for communities who are not necessarily employed or studying at academic institutions as

knowledge workers (although they may be). This is not to push the metaphorical wedge between the academy and the rest of society deeper, or to challenge Fitzpatrick's arguments for situating academics firmly within the *us* of the public as a whole. And it is certainly not to assume that the millions of individuals across North America who do not work at a university should be defined by their status as non-academics. Rather, I aim to emphasize the importance of listening to, collaborating with, and serving those who may not currently be embedded in higher education institutions—an interested public that may or may not hold institutional affiliation.

Taking the same tack, when I use the term *public* as an adjective, as in *public engagement*, I refer to action that is undertaken in the open that includes but also extends beyond the academic workforce or institution—the term can be considered as synonymous with *engaging with publics*. Public engagement is not, here, solely constituted by inter-academic institutional collaboration, regardless of the value of that sort of work, or the fact that those who work in the university setting are members of the broader public as Fitzpatrick aptly reminds her reader. I frame public engagement in this way in order to emphasize the importance of collaborating across as well as beyond institutionalized disciplines, without necessarily paying credence to the false us versus them dichotomy that presumes a division between academics and other communities. Finally, when I use *engage* (as a verb) or *engagement* (as a noun), I gesture toward the experience of academics connecting with publics in significant, demonstrable ways that emphasize democratic, collaborative participation in a shared activity.

I close this deviation into definition by acknowledging that, as Fitzpatrick argues regarding a related term (*community*), “our definitions [...] are always reductive, but [are] also at least potentially useful as organizing tools” (11). My pigeonholing of *public/publics*, *public engagement*, and *engage/engaging* in the ways outlined above is in many ways a construction,

but one that, ideally, allows for a shared terminology, an organizing tool for the discussion to follow.

The Emergence of the Public Humanities

In the humanities, socially oriented practices often fall into the domain of the public humanities. A straightforward definition of public humanities from an academic source is not easy to find. On a webpage previously titled “Defining Public Humanities” the John Nicholas Brown Center for Public Humanities and Cultural Heritage evaded the promised definition by indicating that the centre “defines public humanities through our teaching, projects, and publications” (“About”). Wikipedia provides a more straightforward definition: public humanities is “the work of engaging diverse publics in reflecting on heritage, traditions, and history, and the relevance of the humanities to the current conditions of civic and cultural life” (“Public Humanities”). In the way of a quick descriptor, public humanities scholar Sheila A. Brennan writes that “Public history and humanities practices—in either digital or analog forms—place communities, or other public audiences, at their core” (384). Public humanities can also be seen as an institutionalized response to economic and social pressures facing traditional humanities disciplines. In these varying conceptions of the term, public humanities can be a useful stop in considering historical precedents for the humanities in advancing more social knowledge production.

Some early experiments in this vein have been criticized for being public, but not *social*—that is, for being openly accessible to all, but not purposefully geared toward participation or engagement with non-academic communities. According to public scholar Gregory Jay, “The humanities have tended toward solitary work whose results may be presented publicly but are not designed to be, and which often make the transition awkwardly or in static,

almost ceremonial presentations” (n.p.). Many humanities scholars or departments consider public lectures or opinion pieces as the epitome of their community engagement activities. Such activities, although certainly valuable for sharing and circulating knowledge, tend to manifest as an academic espousing ideas from a podium or editorial page; rarely are such activities opportunities for conversation with other community groups. They are didactic, not dialectic. But as the humanities continue on a trajectory toward more social practices, considerations, and analyses, there are opportunities for academics to actually create knowledge with broader publics. Examples of more collaborative, engaging work can be found in social media discussions, podcasts like *Public Work* (co-created by Jim McGrath and Amelia Golcheski at the John Nicholas Brown Center for Public Humanities and Cultural Heritage),²⁴ public-facing websites that promote commenting like *The Conversation*, analog or digital public exhibits of personal or community-based materials, open access online features such as the Feminist Public Intellectuals Project,²⁵ local mapping projects, Wikipedia, and crowdsourcing initiatives—but these activities have yet to become commonplace in humanities departments.

Pinpointing the exact emergence of the public humanities is difficult and there are differing opinions on its evolution and role in the larger academic sphere. In fact, the details around the development and scope of the public humanities are so nebulous that digital humanists Jeremy Browne and Matthew Wickman surveyed 61 humanities centres in order to

²⁴ For more information and to listen to episodes, see the project page for *Public Work* at blogs.brown.edu/publicworkpodcast/.

²⁵ The Feminist Public Intellectuals Project is an initiative by the journal *Signs*. A description from its project page reads: “In keeping with the consistent mission of *Signs* to matter in the world, the **Feminist Public Intellectuals Project** seeks to engage feminist theorizing with pressing political and social issues via three open-access, online-first initiatives: **Ask a Feminist**, **Short Takes**, and **Feminist Frictions**. Given the fragmentation of feminist activism and the persistent negative freighting of the moniker ‘feminist,’ the **Feminist Public Intellectuals Project** seeks to genuinely reimagine the role a journal can play. This multipronged tack brings into conversation feminist public intellectuals with academic experts, activists with scholars in an effort to spark conversation, debate, and critical feminist discourse” (“Feminist Public Intellectuals”; *emphasis original*).

ascertain just what, exactly, the public humanities are. Wickman reports on the survey results in a 2016 article aptly titled “What Are the Public Humanities? No, Really, What Are They?” where he acknowledges that there is little consensus about the public humanities beyond its purported value for civil society—never mind a clear historical trajectory. Regardless of a lack of consensus, discussions about the need for academics to take on more collaborative work with larger communities can be traced back over more than two and a half decades.

Economic and Policy Factors Related to the Shift Toward Public Engagement

Institutional and governmental funding decisions also affect how academics view their role within the broader social landscape. As early as 1995, David W. Brown, an expert in educational management, published an article titled “The Public/Academic Disconnect,” where he attributed government funding cuts to academics’ unwillingness to engage with publics outside of the university complex. “No doubt the crisis is financial,” Brown concedes—citing competition for research funds, an influx of contingent labour versus secure employment, a growing populace of under-resourced students, and heightening infrastructure maintenance costs—“but it arises, in substantial part, from legislators and taxpayers having second thoughts about the kinds of returns they are getting on their investment” (38).²⁶ For Brown, these legislators and taxpayers could be

²⁶ There is various literature on the oft discussed *crisis in higher education*, especially from a funding perspective (or rather, lack thereof). In regard to the funding crisis in general, how it was exacerbated by the 2008 global recession, and a proposed humanities strategy, see Christopher Newfield, who states “The higher education funding model is experiencing a crisis that has been aggravated by general economic problems but that precedes and transcends it” (273). For emphasis on public higher education institutions, see Brian P. Kapitulik, Hilton Kelly, and Dan Clawson, who argue that “Higher education is in crisis, especially in the public sector. Over the past few years, tuition at state universities across the [United States] has increased dramatically while their budgets have been slashed in favor of other ‘priorities’” (135). Concerning colleges and four-year institutions in particular, see Jeffrey R. Docking with Carmon C. Curton, *Crisis in Higher Education: A Plan to Save Small Liberal Arts Colleges in America* (2015); they write, “There is no dearth of challenges that face American higher education in these early years of the twenty first century” (xi). For an examination of the toll that austerity measures have taken on social equality, with a focus on California and New York, see Michael Fabricant and Stephen Brier, *Austerity Blues:*

convinced of the value of higher education if they were brought into productive dialogue with academics, who would require training in civic engagement. More recent research has echoed Brown's sentiments. Rogers writes:

As state and federal funding for the humanities continues to shrink, the need to share relevant academic thinking outside the university grows ever more important. In today's political rhetoric, higher education has come to be seen as the domain of the elite, antithetical to a swell in populist sentiment. [...] The perceived isolation of the university has contributed to a nationwide mistrust of knowledge and expertise, with a growing sense that the deeper a person dives into specialized knowledge, the further removed they become from the realities of everyday Americans. (57–58)

Further, Rogers concludes, “The lack of public support for higher education is exacerbated when scholarship does not have a public impact” (58). For Rogers, this represents a vicious cycle where publics do not recognize the value of higher education, so rally to decrease support for it; this leads to funding cuts that make it even more difficult for universities to do publicly oriented work, which in turn lessens their visibility to the public, and so on.

Other scholars maintain that the rise of public humanities is a response to the internationally felt austerity measures prompted by the 2008 economic recession, which affected universities as much as any other sector. Citing news articles by Geraldine Fabrikant as well as Caitlan Moran and Reeves Wiedeman, Christopher Newfield claims that “the richest university in the world, Harvard, lost over 22% of its endowment in four months, prompting a hiring freeze

Fighting for the Soul of Public Higher Education (2016). For specific examples of recent funding cuts, see Rogers on Colorado's 48% drop in higher education funding between 2002 and 2010 (58) and Fitzpatrick's reference to the 2016 Kentucky state budget in the United States, where the governor not only introduced significant funding cuts to higher education, but did so unevenly in order to incentivize participation in specific fields (spoiler alert: not the humanities) (*Generous Thinking* 43).

that echoed those at other major universities” (272). Indeed, many governments worldwide reviewed their national social infrastructures and required universities to justify their value and worthiness of public support in response to the global recession (Munck, McQuillan, and Ozarowska). On a related tack, Michael Cuthill (a PhD and social sustainability consultant) argues that the recent marketization of academia inspired academics to think more strategically about the sustainability of their profession. Moreover, he suggests, working with non-academic groups diversifies one’s professional profile and provides some degree of security, either through proven utility to others or additional funding sources for research and development. Cuthill writes that the “development of strong relationships with diverse stakeholders is a pragmatic necessity if [higher education institutions] are to survive in this highly competitive market environment” (86). He continues to employ distinctly corporate language when he argues that “engaged scholarship presents a good business model that helps build strong foundations for a long-term competitive advantage for [higher education institutions]” (86). Kathleen Woodward, founding director of the Institute on the Public Humanities for Doctoral Students at the University of Washington, traces the emergence of the public humanities back much farther than relatively recent economic pressures. Writing in 2009, Woodward argues that there have been “repeated calls over the past twenty-five years for a renewal of the civic mission of higher education” (110); in doing so, she points to the mid-1990s as the inception of the conversation, in keeping with Brown.

Education policy also plays a role in the emergence of the public humanities, and some public humanities scholars focus on funding agencies and their penchant for community-oriented research outcomes (Gibson). In the 2016 strategic plan of the Canadian Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), *Advancing Knowledge for Canada’s Future: Enabling*

Excellence, Building Partnerships, Connecting Research to Canadians, the funding agency lists “Connect Social Sciences and Humanities research with Canadians” as one of three key strategic objectives (9). The compilers of the strategic plan go on to highlight the community engagement and collaboration elements of such an objective (14). SSHRC had already begun moving in this direction prior to 2016, however. In 2014, the funding agency announced the Connection program, focused on interdisciplinary, inter-institutional, and pan-community engagement and initiatives. As quoted on SSHRC’s website, the goal of the program is “to realize the potential of social sciences and humanities research for intellectual, cultural, social and economic influence, benefit and impact on and beyond the campus by supporting specific activities and tools that facilitate the flow and exchange of research knowledge” (“Connection Program”). The funding stream prioritizes concepts like knowledge mobilization and knowledge transfer, and larger awards (e.g. for an “outreach event”) can be funded at over \$50,000; the aligned Partnership program, with grants up to \$2,500,000, includes a Connection stream. SSHRC also encourages grant applicants to respond to or integrate the *Imagining Canada’s Future* global challenges in their funding applications. These challenges include community-oriented considerations such as gender identity, technology-induced asociality, and personal privacy (Government of Canada, “Future Challenge”).²⁷ SSHRC funding opportunities are in part adjudicated based on knowledge mobilization plans, impact, and training and mentoring activities—all of which could be

²⁷ The full list of *Imagining Canada’s Future* 16 global challenges are as follows: Working in the Digital Economy; Global Health and Wellness; The Emerging Asocial Society; Shifting Dynamics of Privacy; Building Better Lives Across the Gender Spectrum; Inhabiting Challenging Environments; Balancing Risks and Benefits in the Emerging Surveillance Society; Humanity+ (e.g. Artificial Intelligence); the Evolving Bio-Age; Living Within Earth’s Carrying Capacity; the Pervasive Contamination of the ‘Natural’; Envisioning Governance Systems that Work; the Changing Nature of Security and Conflict; Truth Under Fire in a Post-Fact World; the Arts Transformed; and Erosion of Culture and History (Government of Canada, “Future Challenge”).

considered as nudging humanities researchers in Canada toward more community-involved work.

The reach of funding agencies in the realm of public engagement is delineated by how conservatively they administer policies, however. As an example, we can look to open scholarship policy in Canada. The three major funding agencies—SSHRC, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC), and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR)—are known collectively as the Tri-Agency and introduced the “Tri-Agency Open Access Policy on Publications” in 2015 (Government of Canada). The goal of such a policy is to ensure researchers make their output openly available as well as to formalize the government’s position on the issue of open access: “The Agencies strongly support open access to research results which promotes the principle of knowledge sharing and mobilization—an essential objective of academia” (“Tri-Agency” n.p.). But on the spectrum of enforceability, the Tri-Agency open access policy falls somewhere between the poles of light recommendation and heavy mandate. This middle road approach to policy enforcement—without carrot nor stick—has led to some of the lowest compliance rates in North America. Vincent Larivière and Cassidy Sugimoto reported in 2018 that only 23% of SSHRC-funded research is open access, despite the Tri-Agency policy being in place since 2015. Progressive public engagement and open scholarship policies will only be impactful if they are adhered to. As evinced by Larivière and Sugimoto, the well-intentioned Tri-Agency open access policy has had a relatively small influence on most authors’ publishing practices to date—perhaps especially given the resistance to open access from some humanities scholars as explored in Chapter 1.

Centring Service: The Vitalness of Public Engagement Work

Demonstrated above, there are conflicting narratives and a general lack of consensus around a historical origin point and subsequent trajectory of the public humanities—never mind an agreement on what the public humanities actually constitutes. But discipline formation is rarely as straightforward as it may appear.²⁸ As Wickman notes, what public humanities advocates do agree on is the value and significance of their work. In general, those who consider themselves public humanities scholars or administrators reiterate the importance of reasserting the civic mission of higher education as an institution created to benefit the public good. Across the literature, there is a distinct focus on community engagement, as well as social integration and support. Ronaldo Munck, Helen McQuillan, and Joanna Ozarowska consider the current economic climate as ideal for transforming the university—not into a business, as some predict, but into a “socially embedded institution” (26). Cynthia M. Gibson suggests that engaged scholarship meets the imperative to reinvigorate the civic mission that is, historically, a driving purpose of the American university. Jay opens his article “The Engaged Humanities: Principles and Practices for Public Scholarship and Teaching” with the provocation: “Will public scholarship and community engagement become central to revitalizing the humanities in the 21st century?” (n.p.). Brenda M. Gourley asserts that higher education needs to reorient toward community engagement in order to effectively respond to the massive changes of the twenty-first century, and to prepare current and future generations to make ethical and sustainable decisions.

²⁸ See Claire Brant, who argues that contrary to standard narratives about scientific discoveries and technological advances, discipline formation is in fact unruly and disorderly; she provides the emergence of ballooning in the eighteenth century and its reception by the scientific community as her example. For another example, see Terry Eagleton, who argues in the chapter “The Rise of English” that the development of English literature as a discipline was in fact a mid-nineteenth century ideological tactic. He suggests that English literature was a form of suppression and control, a device used to educate lower classes “enough” to keep them subservient.

Rogers argues that reorienting toward the public good could have lasting effects for diversity and inclusion efforts.

These weighty social responsibilities and effective rhetorical stances challenge the conception of community engagement (as service) as the *third leg* of the university after research and training. Rather, community engagement could pervade the scholarship continuum as an essential piece of academia (Schuetze; Woodward). The third leg metaphor, Schuetze explains, is often interpreted as a hierarchy, with service (the *third*) being either less important than or distinctly separate from the other two activities, rather than an embedded element of scholarship broadly considered. Fitzpatrick considers the categorization of academic activities and subsequent devaluing of service as one of two key resistance points to publicly engaged scholarship—the second being anxieties around “deprofessionalization” (*Generous Thinking* 36). Rogers champions that “ascribing value to public engagement is an important element in shifting the norms around scholarly work” (59). She opines on the perceived irrelevance or counterproductivity of such work: “Too often when faculty members work toward the kind of community engagement that can extend the impact of scholarship outside the traditional academic orbit, the work is often not counted in the tenure review process—and is sometimes seen even as a distraction” (62). Juan Pablo Alperin et al. confirm this trend in a 2018 study of North American tenure and promotion guidelines that reveals that language around community or public engagement is found primarily in the service category, whereas the more highly valued research category focuses on degree of prestige and quantity of academic publications. Reference to traditional, prestigious academic output is so prevalent across the corpus of tenure and promotion guidelines studied that Alperin et al. suggest “their consistency, and relative ubiquity, shows that if there is one thing that is certain to count towards faculty career progression, it is

producing traditional academic outputs” (15). Johanne Provençal considers the gap between funding agency and individual faculty or department priorities, arguing:

while there is increasing pressure on Canada’s social science and humanities researchers to succeed in mobilizing knowledge *across* the stakeholder communities named by SSHRC—government, media, community organizations, and publics—this comes at the cost of success in contributing to what is recognized as legitimate knowledge *within academic discourse communities*. (v; *emphasis original*)

To reiterate the importance of destabilizing hierarchical views of academic work and prejudice against the public humanities, Jay states that “engagement and publicly-oriented humanities work are forms of *research* and of the *production* of new knowledge” (n.p.; *emphasis mine*).

Underlining the importance of the public humanities, these scholars have purposefully positioned it as not only a moral imperative (the civic mission argument) but also as a crucial scholarly activity, integral to other academic work like research and teaching.

The development of the public humanities and advocacy for it by scholars like Jay and Woodward opens the door for additional socially oriented activities to be taken seriously by the academy—especially activities that move beyond public lectures or op-eds. Although research and teaching may still be considered the two core pillars of the research university, public humanities advocates are working to have academic-public collaborations—which would most often be considered as service—recognized as an essential, equally important academic activity. As Fitzpatrick writes,

As long as faculty success is organized around individual competition—as long as universities’ incentives and rewards structures are largely focussed on valorizing individual

labour toward competitive ends—community-oriented activities will fall to those of lower status and will perpetuate that hierarchy. (*Generous Thinking* 210)

This is key from a pragmatic perspective: academics face high expectations for productivity, usually met by teaching courses, sustaining a publication and presentation record, and winning research grants. If time spent undertaking public engagement activities can be equally weighted in hiring, tenure, and promotion considerations, more academics will be willing to take up such work. In the current economic environment where full time, secure academic positions are few and far between, additional work that cannot be counted is simply too difficult for many scholars to justify undertaking.

De-centring Authority: Literary Traditions and Networked Technologies

Beyond economic pressures, social imperatives, and the development of the public humanities, there are further historical precedents to the ongoing emergence of a more socially engaged humanities. Two other avenues to explore are the reorientation of traditional hierarchies of expertise and the emergence of networked technology. In what follows, I examine both of these issues separately, and then discuss the ways that they intersect conceptually and pragmatically.

I begin with a maxim: expertise and single authorship are frequently conflated in many higher education disciplines and perhaps most especially in the humanities. Often, the curriculum vitae crystallizes one's academic expertise through enumerated single-authored books, articles, and chapters. Among other sources, contemporary academics have inherited notions of authorship from the romantic period, where the celebrity status and purposeful isolation of writers like William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and Percy Bysshe Shelley elevated

individuals to the role of *author-geniuses*.²⁹ These individuals were seen as possessing a unique, uncommon intellect and of being the sole purveyors of their specific creative output (Currie).

The notion of the value of single authorship has pervaded academia. This prioritization is evident in institutional structures like tenure and promotion guidelines that often privilege traditional output: single-authored work over collaborative, multi-authored ventures, or well-known, prestigious publication venues over newer, alternative models (Schimanski and Alperin 2018). As Fitzpatrick argues,

If we encourage faculty members to develop open, innovative, community-focused projects [...] but then continue to privilege conventional forms of scholarly production such as the book and the journal article when it comes to merit reviews, we wind up reinforcing the view that inward-facing communication and traditional markers of excellence are all that really matter. (*Generous Thinking* 224)

University of British Columbia Press acquisitions editor Darcy Cullen explains that this antiquated prioritization of the single academic author is also reinforced in the infrastructure and mechanisms of knowledge production through academic publishing. She writes, in the introduction to *Editors and the Social Text* (2014), “The publishing process is a collaborative one, involving the combined efforts of authors, editors, typesetters, proofreaders, indexers, printers, and marketers, each of which introduces a network of relationships” (3). Cullen argues that the role of the editor in academic publishing has often been overlooked, largely due to the

²⁹ On the emergence of the concept of the genius in the romantic period, see Robert Currie, *Genius: An Ideology in Literature* (1974), and the chapter “The One and the Many in Romanticism” in particular. For a consideration of the role that nineteenth-century literary magazines played in propagating the mythic conception of authors and poets as geniuses in the Romantic period, see David Higgins, *Romantic Genius and the Literary Magazine: Biography, Celebrity, Politics* (2005); on the same effect of twentieth-century biographies, see Julian North, *The Domestication of Genius: Biography and the Romantic Poet* (2009).

author-genius fable and the academy's proclivity to advance and award the individual scholar. Cullen refers to this phenomenon as the "myth of the invisible editor" (7), an internalized conception that editors (and, in fact, all those involved in knowledge production except for the author) should be silent, invisible accomplices to the development of an author's work and that they should not be recognized too prominently for their contributions, as this might devalue the author's aura. Not only is the propagation of the unrealistic author-genius misleading, but it also runs counter to the idea that knowledge creation is a pluralistic, multiplayer endeavour and should be represented—with due credit—as such.

The concept of the lone genius has always been a bit overblown: in reality, knowledge production is not singular, but rather plural, and is intrinsically connected both to the economic, political, intellectual, and social environments in which it develops, as well as the positionalities of the knowledge creators. "There are 'knowledges' in the plural in every culture," (13) historian Peter Burke wrote in 2000; in 2012, he reinforced this by drawing on theorist Michel Foucault to state that "knowledges or knowledge traditions should be imagined in the plural" (5). In his first volume of *A Social History of Knowledge*, Burke continues:

the social history of knowledge [...] is a history of the interaction between outsiders and establishments, between amateurs and professionals, intellectual entrepreneurs and intellectual rentiers. There is also the interplay between innovation and routine, fluidity and fixity, "thawing and freezing trends," official and unofficial knowledge. (51)

Knowledge creation is messy, non-linear, and above all, multiplayer. Contra to the notion of singular scientific knowledge and solo academic knowledge producers (with their "official" knowledge [Burke 51]), Donna Haraway outlines the importance of pluralism from a feminist perspective:

Feminists have stakes in a successor science project that offers a more adequate, richer, better account of the world, in order to live in it well and in critical, reflexive relation to our own as well as others' practises of domination and the unequal parts of privilege and oppression that make up all positions. (579)³⁰

Both Burke and Haraway argue for a more nuanced—and more realistic—portrayal of knowledge creation. Regardless, the notion of the elevated single author persisted for centuries and encouraged the idea that all-knowing authors speak to passive, mute readers, with little opportunity for conversation or collaboration.

The printed book has reinforced the authority of the presumed solo knowledge producer. In *Breaking the Book*, Laura Mandell argues that the academic printed book possesses an inherent authority, in part due to its seemingly unchangeable form: a bound volume of ink on paper, created by a specialist. She criticizes the conventional one-way street of scholarly communication, manifest in the monograph, because it does not encourage engagement or discussion beyond the standard back-and-forth limited to academic authors via peer review, conferences, or book reviews. “With no interchange from the masses welcomed,” Mandell writes, “an academic monograph is an oligarchy not a republic” (39). Textual scholar Robert Darnton pre-empts Mandell’s concerns when he is quoted as admitting, in a 2004 interview with *Eurozine*, “There is one aspect of the conventional codex that I regret: in the case of history books, it gives the impression that we have got history under control, under wraps, packaged safely between covers, fixed in print” (Tamm n.p.). Darnton acknowledges the primacy of print as a cultural authority, although it is evident from addendums, reprintings, contestations, and

³⁰ Here Haraway explicitly draws on fellow feminist science and technology studies scholar Sandra Harding and her concept of *successor science* in *The Science Question in Feminism* (1986), which Haraway’s article is a response to.

withdrawals that printed books can be as prone to error, manipulation, and inaccuracy as any other medium. In fact, according to book historian Adrian Johns, when books began to circulate en masse in Europe in the early modern period there were serious concerns about the authenticity and thus authority of the printed word (*Piracy*). The bound volume of ink on paper appears to have been much less authoritative then than it is now. Johns writes:

The realm of print was one in which the bogus could easily crowd out the genuine, and in which credibility vied with credulousness. Telling the authorized and authentic from the unauthorized and spurious was only one necessary art for thriving in the world of print, but necessary it was. (*Piracy* 9)

Between the early modern period and present day, print took on a more authoritative guise, and contributed to a knowledge production hierarchy with authors of books at the top.

The notion of the cultural primacy of a single author of books has been, in part, upheld by academics for their own purposes, even once the uneven weight of the printed book as an authoritative object (compared to other mediums) has been recognized by scholars like Mandell. As Geoffrey Rockwell argues, “While we never believed that the professoriate should have special legal privileges, we have acted as if we were a special caste of intellectual worker who should be supported by society and protected with administrative mechanisms like tenure” (151). The professoriate—made up of so many solo authors—enjoys a degree of cultural privilege as assumed experts. Mandell considers this as representative of an unspoken predilection to upholding the class system—what she refers to as “unacknowledged, intrinsic aristocracy” (138)—by some faculty members, unconsciously enacted while turning a blind eye to the capitalist structures that actually support them. Being a single author of books pays.

Regardless of its long tail, the notion of the single author has been challenged theoretically. In fact, structuralist Roland Barthes—one of the most acclaimed literary critics of the twentieth century—dismantled the idea of the single author in the 1960s. For Barthes, there is no god-like author expelling original thought; all writing is quotation, and all writers are remixers of previous ideas. He states: “We know now that a text is not a line of words releasing a single ‘theological’ meaning (the ‘message’ of the Author-God) but a multidimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash” (146). Barthes considers the role of the author to be constructed and contrived, heavily imbued as it is with the trappings of individualism and capitalism. Foucault complicates the disappearance of the author further in his 1969 essay “What Is an Author?” where he considers the author to have specific functions, although none of these are necessarily linked to being an individual. “The ‘author-function,’” Foucault writes,

is tied to the legal and institutional systems that circumscribe, determine, and articulate the realm of discourses; it does not operate in a uniform manner in all discourses, at all times, and in any given culture; it is not defined by the spontaneous attribution of a text to its creator, but through a series of precise and complex procedures; it does not refer, purely and simply, to an actual individual insofar as it simultaneously gives rise to a variety of egos and to a series of subjective positions that individuals of any class may come to occupy. (1485)

Both Barthes and Foucault have had significant impact on intellectual thought since the publication of “The Death of the Author” in 1968 and “What Is an Author?” in 1969. Barthes’ work, in particular, is considered central to the turn in literary criticism from focusing on authorial intention to the text of the work itself.

Although there has been a ready acceptance of the death of the author of *literary* works, scholars have not necessarily applied this theory to their own professional identities as academic authors. In *Planned Obsolescence* Fitzpatrick writes: “We have long acknowledged the death of the author—in theory, at least—but have been loath to think about what such a proclamation might mean for our own status as authors, and have certainly been unwilling to part with the lines on the CV that result from publishing” (11). Single-authored work is still the norm in the humanities, and pre-tenured scholars are encouraged to publish as much as they can on their own in order to establish their name in a field. Unlike Barthes’ proclamations against the very existence of originality in writing, and Foucault’s suggestion that the author-function does not refer to an “actual individual” (1485), academic credibility in the humanities is frequently built on the individual scholar making novel, original contributions to a larger discipline—under their own name, and their name only.

From Theory to Practice: How the Digital Refigures Notions of Authority

The digital medium is, in some ways, recalibrating the disconnect between literary theory and professorial practice. The development and prominence of networked technologies in the twenty-first century have reoriented what has often appeared as hierarchical knowledge production (i.e. the intellectual and cultural primacy of the single author) into more pluralistic and democratic activity. Scholarly engagement with networked technologies has begun to alter perspectives and practices into more collaborative modes than traditionally undertaken. Rockwell suggests that online, community-involved projects, including crowdsourcing, offer one way of eliding the elitism that has pervaded the academy. Rogers argues that the conscientious implementation and use of digital technology “can support broader reform efforts to build greater diversity and true

inclusion in the academy” (74). Mandell picks up these threads when she argues that digital forms of scholarship open up the academy and have the ability to force literary and cultural critics out of their echo chambers and into the rest of the world.

Public humanities scholars are also aware of the impact that academic engagement with technology can have. Jay sees the rise of social media, digital humanities, and multimodal communication as a promising opportunity for the humanities to increase community engagement around the texts and topics traditionally at the heart of humanistic inquiry. He writes:

Even in textual form, humanities work can now circulate much more broadly than in the day when it languished in the compact-shelving archive of the library, and social networking means that scholarly collaboration knows no geographical limits. Once introduced into web formats, such scholarship also moves, often unintentionally, in the direction of multimedia, if only through the addition of graphics, illustration, YouTube links, or connections to other related work. (n.p.)

Jay makes an argument for scale—digitization, online circulation, social networking, multimedia, data analysis, and data visualization open the doors to more engagement with scholarship by more people, compared to the relatively small uptake of print monographs sequestered to the “compact-shelving archive of the library” (n.p.). Woodward also acknowledges that digital humanities bears a significant opportunity for public engagement. By way of an example, she highlights “Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History,” a public digital humanities project where University of Washington students worked with members of the larger Seattle community to uncover historical social justice materials and then made their research available on a frequently visited public website.

Networked technologies have the potential to facilitate more engaging, democratic interaction and scholarship—but that does not mean that they automatically will. The prevalence of the digital and online communication opens up possibilities for broader connection and collaborative knowledge production between academic, academic-aligned, and non-academic groups. These possibilities can only become actions if those working in academia purposefully consider how best to take advantage of such an opportunity. Brennan reinforces this notion by arguing that, especially in the digital humanities context, “it is important to recognize that projects and research may be available online, but that status does not inherently make the work digital public humanities or public digital humanities” (384)—the act of merely making one’s work available does not constitute social engagement. Fitzpatrick herself, although a thoroughly dynamic thinker on digital scholarly communication, has posited sharing research online as a benevolent act; she writes, for instance, “Open-access publishing is [...] an altruistic gift to the general public” (*Planned Obsolescence* 161). Wendy Hsu contests framing scholarship as altruism and—drawing on Jesse Stommel—calls out Fitzpatrick in particular for suggesting as much (281).³¹ Rather, Hsu writes, professional encounters with non-academic communities need to be understood as collaborative ventures, not as acts of altruism or a given result of digital scholarly communication. She emphasizes the value of digital humanities practitioners interacting with different community groups to collaboratively share and create knowledge. But Hsu also pushes back against the conception that scholarship is a gift to society or a de facto public good; rather, she argues, “Using the digital to learn from the public is a listening practice,

³¹ Of note, Fitzpatrick revises this thinking in *Generous Thinking*, where she writes: “noblesse oblige stems [...] from a particularly self-aggrandizing form of voluntarism, including in the academic environment: when we focus on the knowledge or resources that *we* [academics] can give *them* [publics], not only do we deepen the divide between us, but we further entrench our own assumption that we inhabit the true center where such knowledge resides” (51).

one that yields more efficacious and engaged public humanities work” (281). Jay reinforces the importance of avoiding the paternalistic or missionary mode of public engagement that assumes scholars are the sole bearers of expertise, and that they are in a position to generously endow the uneducated masses with knowledge.

Just as publishing online does not automatically constitute public engagement, working with technology does not immediately break down ingrained hierarchies. Darnton asserts that electronic books in particular “will create a new relation between reader and author, a new kind of reading, one that empowers the reader, making him or her a collaborator and a critic of the author and opening up endless possibilities” (Tamm n.p.). Contra to what Darnton, among others, might assume, collaboration between authors and readers or between academic and non-academic groups is not inevitable simply because it is possible. The development of digital technologies and their integration in academic practice do open up possibilities for broader collaboration, whether through crowdsourcing, citizen science, open access publishing, annotation, commenting, social media, or other future capabilities yet to emerge. But it is up to those working in academia to explore these prospective collaborations in a way that fairly reflects and encourages the active engagement of the many forces and figures involved in knowledge creation.

Conclusion: The Time is Now

The twenty-first-century humanities are well suited to take on more democratic, socially constituted knowledge production that lessens the gap between the academy and the larger community, or reorients these positions entirely. Key to this transition is the emergence of networked technologies and the academic response as evinced in the robust, international

development of the digital humanities. By immersing themselves in digital technologies, many humanities practitioners—including students, faculty, researchers, and academic staff—gain access to the skills and knowledge necessary to build, or at least meaningfully manipulate, knowledge production platforms and technologies. In doing so, they explore options that bring the reader or the community member into the same knowledge production plane as the author or academic, such as public annotation, commenting, blogging, interactive exhibitions, social bookmarking, and online forums. Fitzpatrick argues in *Planned Obsolescence* that those working in academic institutions need to rethink scholarly communication for the networked world in order to engage with and become more relevant to the publics they serve. She is straightforward in her opinion of what she terms “academic culture’s individualism” (46), or the inherited author-genius role: “What we will need to let go of,” Fitzpatrick writes, is “the illusion that such a voice is ever fully alone” (11). Following Burke and Barthes, she understands that knowledge production is in fact plural, despite a long tail of single-authored publications and presumed passive readers. Fitzpatrick argues that the digital realm brings to light and facilitates such pluralism further:

To some extent, all of the texts published in networked environments will become multi-author by virtue of their interpenetration with the writings of others; our task will be, first, to acknowledge the ways that our work has always been collaborative, relying upon texts that precede and follow, and second, to understand the collective not as the elimination of the individual, but rather as composed of individuals—not as a hive mind within which we all become drones, but as a fertile community composed of multiple intelligences, each of which is always working in relationship with others. (74)

The emergence and near omnipresence of networked technologies are both representative of and conducive to the collaborative nature of knowledge creation—thereby facilitating Fitzpatrick’s concept of “interpenetration” (74). This is achieved through rudimentary web-based features, like hyperlinking, wikis, and forums, as well as more recent developments such as commenting, annotating, and versioning.

As the digital humanities, literary studies, and public humanities scholars quoted here demonstrate, ideas about knowledge production are changing. The de-centring of a presumed single, academic expert is crucial for this transformation. Conceptually, the knowledge production system is rearranging from a one-to-many framework to a many-to-many communication schema that integrates feedback loops. It is arguable that the inherited hierarchy of knowledge production—where author-geniuses espouse work downwards to silent readers via immutable print, or expert scholars are the only people considered to be credible authorities on a subject—is flattening. In such a shifted knowledge production system, all actors become potential collaborators with a role to play in the creation and sharing of knowledge. This shift is central to evolving the public humanities as a movement, where the emphasis is repeatedly placed on academic–community collaborations being on equal footing (Hsu); no one group is *the* knowledge holder, transmitting wisdom to the other or others in a one-way fashion. Instead, publicly oriented work in the humanities must be based on a foundation of mutual respect, consensual, communal, and situated knowledge sharing, and benefit to all.

Chapter 3. Co-creating Knowledge:

Conditions and Challenges for Social Knowledge Creation in the Humanities³²

New pathways are opening up for humanities practitioners to embrace more comprehensive *social knowledge creation* practices. The current scenario has evolved, in part, due to the formalization of the public humanities, shifting knowledge production hierarchies, and the increasing omnipresence of the technologies that make such a destabilization possible, as explored in the previous chapter. In what follows, I will build on that foundation to explore the notion of social knowledge creation in more depth and to make a case for its broad uptake across the humanities. Elsewhere, my colleagues and I have described social knowledge creation as “acts of collaboration in order to engage in or produce shared cultural data and/or knowledge products” (Arbuckle et al. 30)—a theoretical consideration and outcome-oriented manifestation of open scholarship in general and publicly engaged humanities in particular. As a concept, social knowledge creation acknowledges the inherent sociality and situatedness of knowledge work, and that ideas do not appear in a vacuum. But social knowledge creation, as a term, also encourages academics to look beyond the *de facto* collaboration of their regular practices (e.g. teaching students, consulting colleagues, researching, networking, publishing, attending conferences) in order to consider how their work could be more socially oriented, even if, or perhaps especially because, the daily collaborations of academic work “seem so obviously part of our academic life that we have ceased to notice them,” as digital humanist Geoffrey Rockwell claims (136).

³² An early, nascent exploration of some of the ideas in this chapter may be found in “Opportunities for Social Knowledge Creation in the Digital Humanities” (Arbuckle), my contribution to the 2020 collection *Doing More Digital Humanities: Open Approaches to Creation, Growth and Development* (Crompton, Lane, and Siemens).

In this chapter, I consider contemporary factors that encourage social knowledge creation in the humanities, and especially the digital humanities, including collaboration across groups; alternative academic publishing practices; open access; available technology, skills, and humanistic proclivity; and engagement with social media. I also acknowledge the challenges to this kind of work and describe the pushback that socially oriented academics have received in pursuing more open forms of academic pursuit. In closing, I reinforce that regardless of challenges, the current state of the humanities is ideal for social knowledge creation practices to proliferate, and in doing so, to open the humanities further—as long as such practices are undertaken conscientiously and with awareness of risk and opposition. In rising to this timely occasion, humanities practitioners might realize some of the promises of open scholarship and move toward a goal of creating, embracing, and sharing knowledge widely and democratically.

An Opening for Social Knowledge Creation in the Humanities

Knowledge creation is innately iterative and collaborative, and social historian Peter Burke argues that this has been the case since at least the early modern period. Despite the historically dominant narrative that certain European epochs signified “intellectual revolutions,” these instances (e.g. the Renaissance, the Scientific Revolution, or the Enlightenment) were also evidence of “the surfacing into visibility (and more especially into print) of certain kinds of popular or practical knowledge and their legitimation by some more academic establishments” (Burke, *Social History I* 14–15). Martine J. van Ittersum also reflects on the many people involved in knowledge production in the early modern period in particular. In her study of seventeenth-century Dutch scholar Hugo Grotius and his family, van Ittersum argues that scholarly families prevailed as units of knowledge production or *household academies* in the

early modern period. Van Ittersum asserts that such a familial infrastructure of research, support, editing, and promotion ensured Grotius's success. Many different actors are involved in the creation of knowledge, which also relies on building arguments and fostering ideas out of previous knowledge—tacit, practical, academic, traditional, or some combination thereof.

In the twenty-first century, knowledge creation is uniquely positioned in a social, networked environment predicated on rapid communication and collective interaction. Such an environment has brought academics and diverse members of the general public to the same table (or social networking site) at an unprecedented scale. In doing so, multiple communities are now able to communicate and develop knowledge together, as evinced in initiatives like the massive, online, community-produced encyclopedia Wikipedia. This state of interaction is a significant departure from previous assumptions about the university's purported monopoly on official or established knowledge creation. For many, this is a welcome change. As Damien Smith Pfister suggests, many-to-many communication disrupts knowledge practices that depend on specialized experts to produce and share knowledge in carefully regulated channels and institutions. The networked social environment, by contrast, can be a more participatory and representative space—a space better suited for social knowledge creation.

The Digital Humanities/Social Knowledge Creation Connection

Over the past decade or so, digital humanities discussions and initiatives have become more socially oriented. Among other venues, this is emphasized in the thematic community focus of representative collections like *Collaborative Research in the Digital Humanities* (Deegan and McCarty), *Doing Digital Humanities* (Crompton, Lane, and Siemens), and the *Debates in the*

Digital Humanities series (Gold; Gold and Klein, 2016; Gold and Klein, 2019).³³ Many digital humanities practitioners are reconsidering their role in local, national, and international contexts that extend beyond the academic world. As Alison Booth and Miriam Posner write, “few in [the digital humanities] still aspire to the ethos of the tech industry” (11). This is not to say that the digital humanities has accomplished some advanced degree of public engagement, diversity, or inclusion. It hasn’t. Rather, a disciplinary turn toward matters of social justice, collaboration, and social media acknowledges a changing tide of consciousness around how an academic field is constituted, as well as what its role is (or could be) in the larger social sphere.

Opportunities emerge for digital humanities practitioners to create knowledge with each other and with members of the broader public as the humanities become more social and more engaged. Anne Burdick et al. write in “The Social Life of the Digital Humanities”:

New modes of knowledge formation in the digital humanities are dynamically linked to communities vastly larger and more diverse than those to which the academy has been accustomed. These communities increasingly demand and delight in sociable intellectual interactions [...] (75)

I interpret this claim of dynamic linkages, diverse communities, and public demand for interaction as a call to action for digital humanities as a field. The constitution of the digital humanities is well suited to social knowledge creation, and—unlike some other humanities fields—practitioners are lauded for their in-house and interdisciplinary collaborations. Due to early adoption of social media, Twitter has become a surrogate coffeehouse for geographically

³³ Most notably in these collections, all of which are focused on the digital humanities as a field, see Brennan, Hsu on public humanities; S. Brown on collaborative knowledge production; Gil and Ortega, Liu, Ortega, Noble on the necessity of racial, linguistic, and/or geographic diversification and representation; Hockey on cross-community collaboration; Losh on the role of activism; McPherson on inequality; Mandell (“Gender and Cultural”), Wernimont and Losh on the need for feminist approaches; and Williams on the value of accessibility.

dispersed digital humanists, and the latest theoretical, disciplinary, and community discussions often happen publicly and in real time on the platform (Warwick 210–11). Hands-on experimentation with publishing has also flourished, and I will elaborate on this below. The Open Access movement has been widely supported in the digital humanities, even though it has yet to gain traction in some of the more traditional humanities fields, and regardless of the fact that simple access should not be the end goal, or the only goal. Through socially oriented activities, digital humanists are able ask questions and get answers that they otherwise could only speculate on. For instance, in “Crowdsourcing Downunder,” Rachel Hendery and Jason Gibson present two digital humanities projects based in Australia—*Howitt & Fison* and *Mapping Print; Charting Enlightenment*—and reflect on how community engagement played a role in processing data, making historical texts available online, and producing maps, networks, timelines and digital exhibitions of related materials.

In *The Access Principle*, John Willinsky opines, “Were the spirit willing, the technology is ready” (118)—that is, a global open access system that provides free access to all published research is feasible from a technical standpoint; it is the cultural mores, governing policies, commercial interests, and scholarly activities that require transformation. I suggest that the same may be true of social knowledge creation in the digital humanities: *if the spirit is willing, the technology is ready*. In what follows I expand on the interconnected elements of collaboration, social media, publishing, and technology within the larger digital humanities landscape, and explore how these elements contribute to an environment for sustained social knowledge creation.

Living in Collaboration-Ready Environments

The development and sustenance of the networked, social, online environments in which many digital humanities practitioners live and work has emphasized how inherent collaboration is to the field. My purposeful assertion of collaboration as an *inherent quality* of the digital humanities may seem strange to those who work in the sciences, where lab research, group fieldwork, citizen contributions, and co-authorship are accepted as trademarks of the profession. But the collaborative nature of scholarship in the humanities has often been overlooked. If the sciences are identified with a widely accepted vision of well-staffed labs, the humanities are more often fixed in the communal consciousness as lone scholars in dusty studies. This representation is increasingly inaccurate, especially as digital scholarship in the humanities becomes more frequent. In the 2016 chapter “Towards Best Practices in Online Collaborative Knowledge Production,” Canada Research Chair in Collaborative Digital Scholarship Susan Brown provides an overview of effective, digital, collaborative research in the humanities. She calls collaboration in the digital humanities “pervasive” and notes that the most pertinent reasons for this pervasiveness include

the ability to draw on varied skills sets and different disciplinary frameworks, to involve people with different levels of expertise including for pedagogical and mentoring purposes, to scale up research by involving a larger number of people than is usual in humanities research (potentially including citizen scholars from beyond academia), and to allow contributors to work asynchronously and across distances. (49)

In fact, it is difficult to imagine a digital humanities or digital scholarship project that does not rely, to some degree, on working with other people. As Brown notes, digital projects require varied skillsets from different disciplines and areas of the university (e.g. computing services,

libraries, and special collections and archives). Moreover, digital projects are generally far too time- and labour-intensive to be tackled by one person (Rockwell 135). Even those who claim to work individually on a digital humanities project still rely on databases, programming languages, or code libraries that have been developed by others. Alex Gil and Élika Ortega reinforce this notion when they write that digital humanities is “[k]nown and largely valued by its collaborative culture and commitment to openness” (22). It is notable that Brown also references “including citizen scholars from beyond academia” (49) as a collaboration factor in digital humanities work. For Brown, digital humanities projects can engage with larger publics more readily than traditional humanities work, if only because of scale and scope.

The phenomenon of large-scale community engagement is frequently seen in online crowdsourcing projects. Social media scholar George Veletsianos defines crowdsourcing as “the process of gathering contributions from large groups of individuals in order to solve a common problem or tackle a challenge” (40); Rockwell describes it as a practice that “uses social media tools like wikis to enable a ‘crowd’ or group of people to create something of value” (139). Among other projects, this practice is evident in the popular *Transcribe Bentham*, the well-known digital humanities crowdsourcing initiative based out of University College London that relies on amateur volunteers to transcribe digitized versions of philosopher Jeremy Bentham’s writings (Causer and Terras). Questions about the usefulness, appropriateness, and sustainability of crowdsourcing have been asked, however; Hendery and Gibson prefer to consider their crowdsourcing work as “community sourcing” (3), since it is not done with a large, anonymous group of people, but rather a more delineated, select community. British Library digital curator Mia Ridge, in discussing her analysis of various crowdsourcing projects, notes that “some of the less successful projects I have analyzed have failed in part because their initial task was too

complex or required too much domain-specific knowledge” (439). There is also the question of who is available for and interested in this type of collaborative knowledge production. As Lauren F. Klein and Catherine D’Ignazio highlight in *Data Feminism*, drawing on the work of software developer and diversity consultant Ashe Dryden, “People can only help crowdsource if they have the inclination and the time” (180).

Beyond crowdsourcing, university-based groups are also using social media to connect with broader publics, like the Community Research Connections Lab at Royal Roads University that tweets about sustainable community development via their Twitter account @CRC_Research. Collaboration across community groups can happen in person, too. The Electronic Textual Cultures Lab at the University of Victoria started an Open Knowledge Program in 2016, which opens the digital scholarship lab’s doors to anyone in the local Victoria, BC, region to work on socially oriented digital projects. Practicum participants are given in-person support by other lab members, connected to larger on-campus networks, and trained in how to share their work more openly (e.g. on Wikipedia or an open access website).

Social Media as an Opportunity for Real-Time Connection

When academics acknowledge intellectual output as socially created, the rightful recognition and promotion of others’ contributions to knowledge becomes more common. Such a collaborative mindset brings us closer to Kathleen Fitzpatrick’s exhortation in *Planned Obsolescence* that academics must let go of the myth of the solitary scholarly voice, as noted in Chapter 2. Rather, multiplayer knowledge creation is much more representative of the technology-facilitated communication and engagement that has become a distinct pattern on the social fabric of the twenty-first century. On social media platforms in particular, various content creators engage in

the same or adjacent online spaces, where their contributions can be tracked, recorded, and credited. Whether users choose to act as realistic avatars, fantasy alter egos, or anonymous enigmas, their online activity is traceable and archivable, providing a much more realistic sense of the many hands that shape knowledge output. Although a conception of the university as a Members Only ivory tower for the elite persists, social technologies have become both common denominator and accessible amplifier for people of varied backgrounds, geographical locations, educational experiences, and social statuses. The technology is in place, and a more overt acknowledgement of collaboration has developed. How can digital humanities practitioners now extend their collaborative behaviour into working with broader publics via the technological means at their disposal?

Social media platforms can become potent sites of social knowledge creation due to their large, diverse participant base. Although access is technology (and thus resource) dependent, billions of people from all over the world interact online via social media. The existence of a co-located critical mass presents an unprecedented opportunity for wide-scale connection and communication. James O'Sullivan, Christopher P. Long, and Mark A. Mattson argue that social media enables greater professional and public interaction in academia, and in doing so contributes to the current shift toward sociality and openness. Further, they suggest,

When we speak of openness, it is not just a case of liberating publications of economic barriers, it is about sharing, in the broadest sense: social media present scholars with an opportunity to share knowledge, in all of its various forms, be that a 140-character epiphany or a 6,000-word peer-reviewed research article on an esoteric subject matter. (385)

The authors celebrate social media platforms for the varied connection and knowledge circulation opportunities they bear. Certain projects demonstrate the possibilities of social media-

fuelled interaction for scholarly work. For example, *A Social Edition of the Devonshire Manuscript* is a Wikibooks edition of a sixteenth-century verse miscellany that integrates social media in order to open up the Devonshire Manuscript to varied publics (Crompton, Powell, Arbuckle, and Siemens et al. 2014). The edition is open for anyone to read, add to, or edit, and members of the Devonshire Manuscript Editorial Team monitor the edition as well as engage with various publics via the Wikimedia platform and Twitter, where team members interact with Tudor period enthusiasts over the contents of and contributors to the Devonshire Manuscript.

Social media has been celebrated for its interdisciplinary appeal, role in shifting perspectives about academia, and capacity for connecting scholars with each other and with broader publics in ways not possible prior to Web 2.0 technologies. In *Social Media in Academia: Networked Scholars* (2016), Veletsianos considers social media participation as the mark of the networked scholar. He suggests that academic uptake of social media can be understood as a symptom; that is, academics want to connect and share more broadly, so they turn to social media—social media does not cause them to connect and share more. Within this paradigm, academic participation on social media is emblematic of shifting beliefs regarding who should be the knowledge producers in society. As Katina Rogers writes in *Putting the PhD to Work*, “Scholars who cultivate a strong online community are more likely to benefit from the shift toward online public engagement” (64). For Veletsianos, social media could have a positive, lasting effect in this regard; optimistically, he writes: “Online social networks offer much hope for improving and rethinking scholarly communities” (45). In an earlier co-authored article with Royce Kimmons, the authors connect changing professional practices with deeper societal engagement: “We should take an active role in influencing the future of scholarship and establishing ourselves as productive participants in an increasingly networked and participatory

world” (773). Veletsianos calls for a paradigmatic shift from insular thinking in higher education to more socially oriented practices in order to enhance and train for emerging forms of networked scholarship—including via social media.

Despite the benefits of academic uptake of social media, there are significant issues that many scholars remain wary of. Even Veletsianos is critical of social media, suggesting that it can replicate inequality in the academy: those who have access to personal computers, are technologically savvy, and possess a high level of digital literacy gain more popularity and visibility than those who do not have such skills or privileges. Veletsianos also acknowledges the dangers inherent to the hate speech, racism, misogyny, and general harassment that run rampant on popular social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and Reddit. Digital sociologist Tressie McMillan Cottom explores this challenge from a more personal angle, as a Black female blogger and intellectual writing in public spaces. McMillan Cottom argues that despite the current call for social engagement and visibility from colleagues, institutions, and funding agencies alike, not all public intellectuals are treated equally online; women and people of colour (among other marginalized groups) are often targeted and harassed for speaking publicly on platforms like Twitter, Facebook, or their own blogs. She writes: “Put simply, all press is good press for academic microcelebrities if their social locations conform to racist and sexist norms of who should be expert. For black women who do not conform to normative expectations of ‘expert,’ microcelebrity is potentially negative” (n.p.). In her own exploration of the harm that can be caused from a substantial social media presence or viral online incident, Aimée Morrison states: “Internet shitstorms rain down disproportionately, with disproportionate damage, upon the more precarious” (61). Due to the potential for harm, both McMillan Cottom and Morrison argue, technology should not be seen as an automatically positive or compulsory academic initiative.

Rather, engaging with tools like social media can open up the possibility for transformative work, as long as privilege, systemic bias, and harassment are acknowledged.³⁴ Groups like FemTechNet have taken direct action in this regard by creating resources like the *Center for Solutions to Online Violence*, a set of openly available resources for survivors, allies, and perpetrators of online violence, especially in academia. Fitzpatrick also acknowledges that academics with privilege (based on race, gender, class, or a combination of all three) are less likely to contend with the risks that marginalized groups do when sharing work online (*Generous Thinking* 134). But until higher education institutions reconcile their calls for community engagement with the real dangers that online presence and interaction can bring, marginalized groups will be stuck between pressures to engage more openly with broader groups and substantiated concerns about their own safety and well-being while doing so.

Issues aside—important as they are—the potential for fruitful public engagement is written into the design of social media platforms. With an increase in academic online presence, more connections can be forged across the perceived academic/non-academic divide. Although these connections can sometimes be caustic or damaging, as Morrison and McMillan Cottom reveal, they can still be a mechanism for thoughtful community engagement and relationship building.

A More Social Approach to Academic Publishing

Alternative approaches to academic publishing can also facilitate social knowledge creation.

Since the emergence of the scholarly journal and the development of a more formalized book

³⁴ On a related note, Dorothy Kim and Eunsong Kim argue that the labour of women of colour is often exploited on Twitter, where journalists will capitalize off of ideas espoused on the platform or quote users without their explicit permission.

trade in the seventeenth century, academics have relied on a diverse system of other actors and institutions to produce and share their research: namely, scholarly societies, printers, publishers, booksellers, and libraries (Johns, *Nature of the Book*). But in the twenty-first century, networked technology has become increasingly ubiquitous and many working in the academy have developed technical content production skills in service of both traditional and alternative research output. On a parallel current, journal subscription costs have risen to an unprecedented level (most notably in the sciences), effectively denying access to academic research for many libraries that simply cannot afford it, as detailed earlier in Chapter 1. The paywalls attached to much scholarly research means that only those with the resources and know-how can access academic work; in turn, this spurs a widening knowledge gap between the haves and have-nots, never mind between wealthier academic institutions and broader publics. As referenced throughout this dissertation, many believe that the current situation is both untenable and unacceptable, as corporate publishers of academic material continue to make massive profits from publishing publicly funded research and selling it back to libraries that are already dealing with reduced budgets.

This high-pressure environment has led to a rethinking of what the purpose of academic publishing is as well as who should be at the helm of scholarly communication—perhaps most aptly synthesized by Fitzpatrick in *Planned Obsolescence*. She notes that universities in general, and the humanities in particular, must adapt to new networked technologies in order to resist becoming irrelevant to larger society (13–14); moreover, Fitzpatrick writes, “Changing our technologies, our ways of doing research, and our modes of production and distribution of the results of that research are all crucial to the continued vitality of the academy” (*Planned Obsolescence* 10). When the barriers to entry for developing and using diverse digital platforms

lower, and production skills improve, researchers and authors can re-acquaint with the means and modes of their scholarly production. As Willinsky writes, “Online publishing technologies are drawing women and men of knowledge back to the (digital) typeface” (191)—that is, digital publishing encourages academics to re-engage with the production and circulation of their knowledge, as they did in previous centuries (Johns, *Nature of the Book*). Elsewhere, my colleague Alex Christie and I suggest that authors can now “develop and disseminate their research and ideas through various avenues, and in many forms and formats, afforded by digital means” (n.p.) Further, we state, “Scholars can apply critical insight and creative practice to the development of technologies and platforms through which research is shared and disseminated, allowing an unprecedented level of scholarly intervention in intellectual and cultural exchange” (Arbuckle and Christie n.p.). The establishment of digital humanities as a field, the many undergraduate and graduate student, faculty, or librarian-run online journals, the growing momentum of the Open Access movement, and the development of more creative publishing tools and platforms are promising developments on the path to a future academic publishing system with interests shifted from prestige and profit for the few to access and relevance for the many.

Digital humanities practitioners are well positioned to explore alternative academic publishing options, including those predicated on social interaction and/or widespread circulation. For instance, *Manifold Scholarship* is a publishing platform developed by the University of Minnesota Press working with digital humanists Matthew K. Gold and Douglas Armato through the CUNY Graduate Center; *Scalar*, an interactive publishing and visualization platform for multimodal publications, is an Alliance for Networking Visual Culture project

currently led by digital humanist Tara McPherson.³⁵ In part, academic publishing experiments are growing out of the digital humanities because many practitioners have the technical understanding and skill to create or customize online publications and platforms.

Uniquely, digital humanities involves both computational and humanistic proclivity, understanding, and skill. In his book *The Emergence of the Digital Humanities* (2013), Steven E. Jones places the reconstitution of academic knowledge production squarely in the hands of digital humanities practitioners, who he purports are “rethinking the design and use of digital platforms for online scholarly communication and publication, ways to combine social networking, and the sharing of research with peers and colleagues and some portion of a wider public” (147). Rather than relying on scholarly communication systems already in place, practitioners can experiment with different modes, media, and models of publication. They have expertise in humanities subjects as well as extant professional associations and collaborative relationships with other humanities, computer science, and library colleagues. And, as suggested earlier, there is a rising tide of social mindedness in the field.

Hands-on experimentation with publishing has flourished in digital humanities and new media circles over the past couple of decades. Beyond the examples already provided, such explorations are evident in *CommentPress*, a WordPress extension developed by the Institute for the Future of the Book that enables reader responses and conversation on publications (Fitzpatrick, “CommentPress”; Stein); the Modern Language Association’s *Humanities Commons*, an online network for humanities practitioners that includes a subject repository; *Kairos*, edited by Douglas Eyman and others (Ball and Eyman) and the Emory University

³⁵ For Manifold Scholarship, see manifoldapp.org; for Scalar, see scalar.me/anvc/scalar/.

student-run *Southern Spaces*, both of which are online journals that showcase submissions in various media; and *Hypothes.is*, a non-profit group that developed a browser extension that facilitates open web annotation. According to publishing scholar John Maxwell, most scholarly communication platforms are simply a means to expedite and render more efficient traditional writing and publishing practices. This is not entirely negative: it is necessary to explore how technology can make scholarly communication more efficient. Maxwell argues, however, that the potential for creative, agile, and social publication modes is substantial and yet untapped due to hitherto conservative attitudes and methods. A social knowledge creation approach to alternative scholarly communication modes could harness the opportunities of networked technology to create research output that is engaging to many different audiences—instead of appealing only to the small number of scholarly readers who seek out their colleagues' articles.

Many digital humanists have also embraced the Open Access movement. In part due to its emergence as a field over the last few decades (which is relatively recent, in comparison with many other longstanding humanities fields), most of the major digital humanities journals are available as open access or at least hybrid open access (e.g. *Digital Humanities Quarterly*, *Digital Studies/Le champ numériques*, *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities*). Some book collections and monographs are following suit. And digital humanities projects themselves tend to be openly available online if not outright open source. From a discipline formation perspective, this has led to a robust community of researchers who can access and build on each other's output readily.

The digital humanities is not intrinsically public—or more public than other fields—despite its integration with technology and prevalence in online spaces. Nonetheless, the unique position of digital humanities practitioners within these networked, open, social spaces is an

opportunity to rethink scholarly practices and explore possibilities for increased social knowledge creation.

Conclusion: Social as Central

Social knowledge creation activities can put open scholarship in the humanities into action, but such a possibility is not without challenges. There is no single model for academic–public collaborations, nor are emerging scholars trained in how to do this work during their graduate degrees. By interacting and sharing in online spaces like social media platforms, commons, forums, or Wikipedia, various community groups can work together to produce knowledge—but these can also be spaces of damaging behaviour. Creating public digital editions, exhibitions, or mapping projects—either through crowdsourcing or smaller-scale interventions—offers another route for mutual knowledge creation. Unfortunately, these activities are still not considered to be on par with more traditional scholarly outputs, which can have grave consequences for tenure and promotion (Alperin et al.). Networked technology can facilitate virtual coalescence over shared topics of interest, thus providing a mechanism for academics to do more public humanities work; however, without equal regard for public engagement, this becomes *additional* rather than *equivalent* activity.

Regardless of the challenges, the stage is set for the growth of social knowledge creation practices in the humanities and especially in the digital humanities. The development and international establishment of digital humanities as a robust and vibrant field of study has opened further doors; those working in digital humanities often have the proclivity, skills, and aptitude for working with colleagues across disciplines and outside of traditional academic institutions. The prerequisites are in place for socially creating knowledge, collaborating across groups, and

engaging with publics in more comprehensive and sustained ways. So why is social knowledge creation not standard practice for academics?

Active engagement is still required for this sort of work to become more valued and relevant in the public sphere. Scholars, institutions, governments, and publics need to become more attuned to the necessity of open access in order for more academic and cultural material to become available as resources for shared knowledge production. Those outside the academic system cannot learn from, reuse, or contribute to research if it is not only difficult to find but also locked behind paywalls once discovered. As Fitzpatrick writes, “If we hope to engage the public with our work, we need to ensure that it is open in the broadest possible sense: open to response, to participation, to more new thought, more new writing, and more kinds of cultural creation by more kinds of public scholars” (*Generous Thinking* 138). Moreover, Fitzpatrick exhorts, “We need to think not only about the public’s potential consumption of the work that is done by the university, but also about the potential new modes of co-production that involve the surrounding communities in the work of the university” (*Generous Thinking* 138). Digital humanities practitioners can learn from their public humanities colleagues when undertaking publicly integrated initiatives and recognize that community engagement goes beyond creating online projects or sharing a paper on the Internet. Humanities scholars must acknowledge the value and prevalence of collaboration and even seek out ways to foster it, regardless of the departure from traditional or standard practices that this might represent. Researchers can build on their increasing familiarity with the affordances of social media and other online technologies and use such platforms for shared knowledge creation and public engagement. According to [statista.com](https://www.statista.com), in 2020 Facebook boasted 2.6 billion monthly active users (J. Clement). Such a critical mass of people sharing, building, and seeking out information is too substantial to ignore. When scholars

explore alternative scholarly communication modes and methods that deviate from the closed circuit, small audience model of traditional scholarly publishing, the prospect of more innovative, open knowledge production can arise.

Among all the possibilities for social knowledge creation in the humanities, and more specifically the digital humanities, an important lesson remains: the focus on *social* cannot be an afterthought once the paper is published and the CV is updated. It cannot be written off as a service activity that holds little creditable value in the academic system. Nor can we uncritically embrace each new revolution in technology without thinking carefully about its structure, purpose, and affordances, as well as the potential harm certain modes of online interaction can engender, especially for marginalized groups. In order to connect across perceived social, institutional, and disciplinary boundaries, humanities academics must consider opportunities for broad collaboration at the inception of their research initiatives and inquiries, with a full understanding of the possibilities and perils involved. In this way, we might plant seeds for social knowledge creation in the humanities to grow.

Chapter 4. Lessons from Other Fields for Acknowledging, Broadening, and Diversifying the Circulation of Humanities Research³⁶

Throughout history, knowledge related to the study of philosophy, languages, literature, history, human geography, politics, and religion—topics now grouped together under the umbrella of the humanities—has been created and circulated in various ways. Methods of sharing have ranged from the casual and conversational to the institutionalized and regulated. In *The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making* (1998), print historian Adrian Johns charts how an emerging printing industry and its many actors created and directed knowledge production through a “social history of print” (6). In opposition to historians like Elizabeth Eisenstein (and her notion of a singular “print culture”), Johns argues that there are multiple print cultures that emerge in response to local contexts. In his later book, *Piracy: The Intellectual Property Wars from Gutenberg to Gates* (2009), Johns finesses this argument. He undertakes a substantial historical analysis of information piracy and intellectual property from the seventeenth century forward, and concludes that, again, there are multiple, localized forces at work in both the development, guidance, and propagation of knowledge output. In *A Social History of Knowledge: From Gutenberg to Diderot*—a sweeping history of knowledge creation from the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries—Peter Burke outlines how knowledge was constituted, organized, and shared through specific social institutions, with a focus on European intellectuals in the early modern period. As noted in the introduction and in Chapter 2, Burke concludes that knowledge is plural (“knowledges” [13]) and that various knowledges can develop, intersect, and

³⁶ Some of the thinking about humanities knowledge translation in this chapter first appeared in a 2020 article for *Pop! Public. Open. Participatory*. (Arbuckle, “How Can We”).

co-exist;³⁷ Donna Haraway emphasizes the *situatedness* of knowledges, reflecting the embodied positionality of knowledge creators and holders.

Despite evidence of the plurality of knowledge (including academic knowledge), and Johns's, Burke's, and Haraway's suggestions of its varied, context-specific, and even messy propagation, the creation and sharing of humanities knowledge in the twenty-first century appears as much more regulated. The official channels for circulating academic knowledge are now rather narrow. The standardization of the scholarly communication system has resulted in a delineation or homogenization of the ways in which those working in the humanities share knowledge.³⁸ Largely, there is a conception that humanities knowledge is shared only through its teaching in a postsecondary classroom or through its academic publication via print or online academic journals, edited book collections, anthologies, or monographs (Borgman; Fitzpatrick, *Planned Obsolescence*). The ordered lineage of the scholarly communication system is often traced to the introduction of the academic journal in the seventeenth century (see, for example, Guédon), but such a sanitized version of publishing history can be questioned. For instance, digital humanist and literary studies scholar Raymond G. Siemens suggests that it is important to look back even farther than the seventeenth century and the inception of the *Journal des sçavans* in France and the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* in England. Rather, Siemens argues, earlier and less formalized ways of creating and sharing knowledge—including verbal exchanges, epistolary correspondence, and manuscript circulation—are equally important

³⁷ Burke continues this line of argumentation in his follow-up book, *A Social History of Knowledge II: From the Encyclopédie to Wikipedia*, where he expands his scope from the early modern period into the twentieth century.

³⁸ This process has taken place in step with the increasing commercialization of the scholarly communication system since the mid-twentieth century; see Jean-Claude Guédon and discussion in Chapter 1.

precursors for a twenty-first-century scholarly communication system; acknowledging such unofficial precedents could diversify how we share academic work, moving forward.

Within the context of a historical plurality of academic knowledge sharing (as espoused by Johns, Burke, and Siemens), in what follows I suggest that those working in the humanities could both diversify their knowledge creation and circulation practices, as well as identify where humanities knowledge translation is already taking place. In keeping with the overarching aim of this dissertation to make a case for opening up the humanities, and the possibilities of more social engagement around knowledge creation, I will continue to work from a foundation of advocating for access to research for both academics and non-academics. In this chapter, I look to two different mechanisms for expanding the scope of humanities research: the first engages with journalism (and dovetails with the following experimental case study) and the second with knowledge translation. Within the larger consideration of the possibilities of journalism for the humanities, I focus on better support for journalists in accessing scholarship. In my ruminations on knowledge translation, I focus primarily on how it is defined and undertaken in the health and social sciences and how identifying and naming such practices in the humanities could be a useful undertaking. Overall, my goal in drawing together these explorations is to make a case for broadening and adding value to humanities knowledge sharing in Canada, within the framework of open social scholarship.

There is a certain irony in the fact that at a time when mass, global communication is increasing evermore rapidly, the spread of humanities research continues to be restricted by its very mechanism of production. Although the rate of academic journal publishing is staggering—researchers publish 2.5 million articles in journals annually (Ware and Wabe)—most people who are not employed by, studying at, or otherwise affiliated with a postsecondary institution do not

look to this massive corpus for their information-seeking purposes. As Tom Sheldon of the London-based Science Media Centre quips, “Many people still learn about science the same way they learn about Vladimir Putin, Syria or the World Cup: through news sites, television and radio” (n.p.). Others, like philosophy scholars Nicola Mößner and Philip Kitcher, suggest that knowledge is increasingly sought on the more public spaces of the Internet primarily, as the “inclusive technology of the web not only increases the amount of information available, but also allows claims to knowledge to emanate from a more heterogeneous collection of sources than those represented by traditional mass media” (1). Such information seeking may occur on social media sites, the online encyclopedia Wikipedia, news sites, or via the ubiquitous Google search leading to any of the above sources and many others as well.

With such a range of venues and sources at one’s fingertips, it is easy to see how the average knowledge consumer might be content with what is readily available versus what might require specialist knowledge and skills to find and understand. Unfortunately, what is readily available—the top hit of that Google search—is not necessarily the most accurate accounting of a topic or event. The content may be algorithmically relevant to the search, but it is not guaranteed to be verified information. Even more unfortunate still is the prevention of access (on many levels) to the research that would provide a more complete, or more verifiable, picture. In terms of academic publishing, even if a peer-reviewed scholarly article is findable via Google, that does not necessarily mean that the searcher will be able to access and read the work due to the for-pay model currently upheld by many academic publishers.

Contra to the narrative of the university classroom or academic publishing apparatus as the only purveyors of humanities knowledge, there are other spaces where research outputs are being implicitly shared and engaged. This includes such public institutions as national radio

enterprises (e.g. the Canadian Broadcasting Company/Société Radio Canada) as well as many galleries, libraries, archives, and museums, collectively referred to as the GLAM sector. More individual endeavours such as podcasting also serve as mechanisms for humanities knowledge sharing. These organizations and activities, however, are not often considered to be (so-called) *official* channels of academic knowledge circulation.

In the sciences, by contrast, contemporary mechanisms for research access and circulation are much more explicit. Within the sciences, there are related (and sometimes overlapping) roles of science communicators, who are based in an academic institution and often generate press releases regarding new developments or facilitate the connection between the media and researchers; (non-fiction) science writers, who write about science in books or articles; and science journalists, who research, write, and share news about science. In the book *Communicating Popular Science: From Deficit to Democracy* (2013), Sarah Tinker Perrault defines science writing as “science-related writing that is aimed at nonspecialist audiences” (5). Science journalism is a subset of this broader category that encapsulates science writing on news sites and in newspapers, and science journalists are often conceived of as translators or mediators between the public and scientific research.³⁹ The emergence of *knowledge translation*—especially in the health and social sciences—is another formalized mechanism to encourage wider sharing and engagement of academic research.⁴⁰ These named practices—knowledge translation, science communication, science journalism, and science writing—have been an

³⁹ Within the context of science journalism in India, for instance, Rahul Mukherjee argues that journalists are very aware of their role as mediators between scientists and the general public (654). He emphasizes the role of journalists as communicators but remains wary of whether science journalism on contentious issues can ever be considered objective since the only journalists given access to secret or politically sensitive places (such as Mukherjee’s focus, nuclear reactor sites in India) are those who will not assume an activist or contrarian role.

⁴⁰ *n.b.* I define and engage with knowledge translation at length below.

efficient means for the health, social, and so-called “hard” sciences to emphasize the value of that work; if a designated professional is required to undertake the sharing of one’s research then it must be important. The humanities, however, have yet to make explicit the implicit knowledge translation occurring in multiple institutions and integrated across the communities and publics such institutions serve.

Possibilities for Public Engagement Through Science Journalism

Journalists cover a myriad of fields and subjects, but the position of the *science journalist* is specifically delineated and has extended beyond that of a mere translator. As Declan Fahy and Matthew C. Nisbet explore through a series of interviews with prominent US and UK based science journalists, the current state of science journalism is affected by an increase in social media participation and online news sources. Fahy and Nisbet argue that the role of the science journalist has diversified; science journalists are now often characterized as conduits, public intellectuals, agenda-setters, watchdogs, investigative reporters, civic educators, curators, conveners, advocates, or some combination of these roles (780). The authors also comment on the increase in collaboration between journalists and the public, noting that through blogs, commenting, and social media readers are becoming more active knowledge producers; because of this, the authors suggest, “online science news and content has the potential to be highly participatory, social, and collaborative” (782). Online science journalism is now characterized by interactivity and participation by multiple knowledge producers.

Humanities disciplines have no equivalent to science journalism—at least not in a formalized sense.⁴¹ Those working in science communication have become skilled at sharing research results within the scientific community as well as the general public in accessible, approachable ways. Although there are arts and culture journalists who share a beat with humanities researchers, there is no *humanities journalism* as such, i.e. journalists explicitly focused on communicating humanities *research* rather than commenting on humanities *topics*. A lack of mechanisms for university–public communication may well provide fodder for criticism of the humanities as being irrelevant or out of touch with the rest of the citizenry.⁴² Merryn McKinnon et al. write in regard to science communicators and journalists: “There is a need for mediators to bridge the gap between science and the public” (562); I argue that the same need is present in the humanities. An embrace of a more journalistic mode of communication could be a path for sustainable community engagement for humanities disciplines, but this can only occur if the communicators have access to humanities research in the first place.

Incorporating Journalists in Academic Knowledge Production and Sharing: It Starts with Access

Many newspapers have developed creative solutions in order to adapt to the online world and its disruption of print-based business. Approaches include the implementation of freemium access, subscription models, online advertising, and, depending on the outlet, data harvesting. The availability and variation of online news sources means that journalists and editors shape

⁴¹ On a parallel current, in Chapter 6 I explore the notion that pop science and pop psychology are well known and oft referenced, but a comparable *pop humanities* has yet to emerge under such a name.

⁴² The irrelevancy criticism is referenced and considered in more depth in Chapter 2, especially as engaged by Kathleen Fitzpatrick in *Generous Thinking*.

knowledge output and input, as news media can be the first—and sometimes last—stop for those looking for more information on a subject. It is critical that those who have such a high degree of influence on the circulation of knowledge are as informed and up to date as possible. Journalists working in broadly relevant and critical fields (e.g. climate change or public health) require access to vetted, academic research in order to accurately report on current events and advancements, and in doing so inform the public. As noted above, these activities in the sciences have formalized in recent years; in Canada, this group coalesces as the Science Writers and Communicators of Canada.

Individuals would also benefit from increased access to research on other less immediately pressing issues, be that from the sciences, social sciences, humanities, or any other disciplines. But access to academic research can be expensive if not available openly; according to a recent survey undertaken by Stephen Bosch, Barbara Albee, and Sion Romaine, journal subscriptions went up in cost by an average of 6% in 2019 (n.p.). Beyond mounting access rates, even finding articles can be difficult for those who are not directly affiliated with a postsecondary institution or who have not been trained in how to research academic work online (Waller and Knight). Moreover, research articles and data are often locked down by paywalls and only accessible through institutional library websites or other for-pay aggregation services; Bosch, Albee, and Romaine cite that “85% of the world’s scholarly output is still locked behind paywalls” (n.p.). How can journalists comprehensively research a subject and then translate it for public consumption without access to the research they are supposed to report on? In what follows, I consider the relationship between open access and journalism. I build on this consideration in the subsequent case study (Chapter 4.1), where I describe my collaboration with a journalist in order to explore current limitations on journalist access to academic research in

Canada. I discuss the findings and outcomes of this collaboration, as well as ruminate on the benefits and challenges of working in this way.

Open access advocates have articulated the critical value of journalist access to research. In *The Access Principle* John Willinsky argues that open access to research is crucial because of its social impact. He goes as far as to consider access to information a human right, as not having access to current research can have dire consequences for individuals and nations alike—especially in consideration of health (including pharmaceutical) and life sciences research (113–18). Willinsky also focuses on the implications that open access holds for journalists and information consumers. He opens *The Access Principle* with a series of short vignettes that emphasize the wide-reaching implications of open access. One of these examples features Canadian journalist and author Malcolm Gladwell, who wrote such pop psychology bestsellers as *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference* (2000), *Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking* (2005), and *Outliers: The Story of Success* (2008), and, with his company Pushkin Industries, recently launched the popular podcast *Revisionist History*. In a 2003 article for the *New Yorker*, Gladwell reported on the (then) recently announced No Child Left Behind Act in the United States and its overemphasis on test scores. Willinsky argues that such quick and informed reporting on the subject was in part due to the publication of an open access study on the reliability of achievement scores by Robert L. Linn, published just two weeks before Gladwell’s piece and cited therein (xx). Later in the book, Willinsky is more explicit about the potential national-scale impact of open access to research for journalists. He writes, “If citizen and journalist were to have ready access to the relevant research literature on any given political issue, they would be better equipped to participate in policy debates and make substantial contributions” (127). For Willinsky, citizens have a “basic right to know” (125) that

democracy is (or should be) premised on and journalist access to research output would go a long way in accommodating that right. He concludes that journalists can further the scope and impact of open access research, as they can pass on information and results to those who may consume news but do not or cannot search out academic articles.

Commercial publishers, for their part, have also developed mechanisms to share research with journalists. Elsevier, for instance, offers free access to ScienceDirect—their proprietary scientific, technical, and medical research platform—to all “credentialed science journalists” (van Gijlswijk and Boucherie n.p.) who have been verified and provided with an Elsevier media code or access code. Although this is a step in the right direction, it still excludes many freelance journalists who could benefit significantly from access to ScienceDirect but who are not affiliated with an official media venue. As Tom Reller, vice president and head of global corporate relations for Elsevier explains, Elsevier’s solution to the freelancing issue is to “provide a PDF of a specific article” (n.p.) on demand—that is, to grant access to a single, requested article but not to the ScienceDirect platform as a whole. Alternatively, unaffiliated freelancers can gain an Elsevier media code if they join a journalist association that is a paying ScienceDirect member, like the Association of Health Care Journalists, the National Association of Science Writers, Science Writers in Italy, or the Association of British Science Writers. Neither of these workarounds fully address the need for unhindered access to research for unaffiliated journalists. Reller does argue that “[the Elsevier] newsroom has increased efforts to make available for free any article that’s linked to in the media, so the general public doesn’t hit the ‘paywall’ those times when the reporter thinks the actual published article is helpful (often it’s not)” (n.p.). The conclusion at the end of the sentence is indicative of a widely accepted myth that academic research is not interesting or *helpful* to those who do not work in academic fields,

and thus does not need to be made open or public. Earlier in the piece, when discussing embargo periods, Reller quips that one of the factors in deciding the length of an embargo period is “whether the journal content is of interest to the media or public”; again, he qualifies this statement by asserting, dismissively: “The vast majority is not” (n.p.).

Research Communicators as Agents of Democracy

Contrary to the Elsevier Vice-President’s stated opinion on the low interest for and relevance of the research his company publishes, there are many who consider science communication a critical component of a democratic state. Media and journalism scholar J. Scott Brennen examines the role and value of science journalism within the context of the American “post-truth” era in an article in *Communication Theory*. Brennen argues that, critically, science journalists make research public and—through translation—render it more broadly accessible. Brennen concludes that journalists in general have a crucial role to play in the democratic state:

Good journalism, science or otherwise, can escape neither its democratic responsibility to shepherd the relationships and connections that allow truth to circulate across time and space, nor its role in opening up content for public discussion, consideration, and meaning-making—in making things public. (425–26)

For Brennen, science journalists in particular have a “democratic and normative responsibility to (re)produce accurate facts while simultaneously opening science to diverse publics and meanings” (432); Perrault reinforces this concept by acknowledging the effect popular science writing has on democratic engagement (5). Science journalism, in this sense, is a critical tool for informed and varied publics.

Adjacent to the rhetoric of journalist-as-mediator and journalist-as-democratic-agent, journalists are also considered to be *brokers* of information. A knowledge broker is someone who facilitates the creation, sharing, and use of knowledge, according to sociologist Morgan Meyer. Although this is an important function, Meyer considers knowledge brokering to be largely unrecognized, unplanned, and invisible, without substantial support or training mechanisms within the academic world. He also recognizes that the broker is a role across many fields including business, politics, technology, and education (118n1), but, according to Meyer, knowledge brokering involves the following range of practices: “The identification and localization of knowledge, the redistribution and dissemination of knowledge, and the rescaling and transformation of this knowledge” (120). As such, “Brokering knowledge thus means far more than simply moving knowledge—it also means transforming knowledge” (Meyer 120). Communication scholars Nicole Gesualdo, Matthew S. Weber, and Itzhak Yanovitzky argue that journalists are well-suited for the role of knowledge broker because of their intermediary function between academic research and the general public. They write,

In theory, knowledge brokers may facilitate the use of research evidence in public decision-making processes by performing an array of functions: bringing relevant research to the attention of users, interpreting and contextualizing research evidence, facilitating the exchange of research evidence among policy actors, and pushing for the implementation of evidence-based policies and practice. [...] Journalists appear to be well equipped to perform these tasks by virtue of their professional practices and values. (2)

Journalists are portrayed as having many roles in the circulation of knowledge—a sentiment also found in Fahy and Nisbet’s writing—and as being well-poised to play such roles. By drawing

attention to, interpreting, and contextualizing research, journalists become a conduit between research output and various publics.

Over a decade ago, science broadcast journalism professor Kathryn O'Hara criticized Prime Minister Stephen Harper's approach to controlling scientists and science journalism in Canada, especially in regard to climate change research. O'Hara argues that this approach is unacceptable and violates Canadians' right to know about their own country and especially about the research they fund via taxation. "In short," O'Hara writes, "the information policies of Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper are muzzling scientists in their dealings with the media" (n.p.). O'Hara pushes for more freedom to information and for a restraint on government interference in both science and its communication. She is frank in her opinion of the Harper government's attempts to slow or forestall the release of inconvenient research results: "Access to scientific evidence that informs policy is not a luxury. It is an essential part of our right to know" (n.p.). This language echoes Willinsky's stance as well as positions access to knowledge at the centre of the democratic state in keeping with Brennen's arguments.

If science journalists are considered to be a function of democracy and a critical mediator between the scientific and non-scientific worlds, the issue of open access to research becomes more urgent. The Open Access movement will not grow to its full capacity if those who are unfamiliar with the research world do not know how to seek such openly available research, and have difficulty parsing the meaning once they do find research. Brennen in particular advocates for the role of science journalist-as-translator, pushing back against the notion that science journalism is merely an oversimplification of research:

That journalism reduces the level of scientific detail is undeniable. Yet [...] science journalists add something too: they can make new connections, bring in new ideas, and add

new perspectives. [...] It is not enough to recognize the reduction inherent in science journalism—we must attend to its complexification as well. (427)

For Brennen, the translation of science journalism is a critical and important piece of its communication—one that should be valued instead of dismissed. Stuart Allan also pushes back against the notion that science journalists are oversimplifying science for the sake of a more general audience. Instead, he argues that it is not a science journalist’s role to describe an experiment or outcome in high scientific detail; it is their job to communicate what is newsworthy in a way that is broadly understandable. But when Gesualdo, Weber, and Yanovitzky interviewed journalists to deduce how they came across research output, the authors discovered:

most interviewees named researchers themselves as the primary medium [for finding research]: journalists would learn of a study, contact the researcher, and ask for a copy of the original paper. This process allows journalists to circumvent paywalls put up by scholarly databases and journals. Freelance journalists in particular described the need for subscriptions as an obstacle in their process of acquiring research evidence, given the absence of institutional resources. (9)

This quotation demonstrates that journalists are not considering the academic infrastructure of institutional repositories, online and print journals, or publisher websites as their primary source for accessing academic research. Rather, they search for ways to “circumvent paywalls” (9) and subvert for-pay journal subscriptions. Journalists are considered crucial translators, brokers, and intermediaries of research knowledge in the sciences. In order for these communicative processes to happen in the first place, and even to extend to other disciplines beyond the sciences, journalists must be able to find and access research materials—beyond the on-demand,

one-off PDF Elsevier will grant when and if asked. In what follows, I will build off this concept of journalist-as-translator and pivot into the broader topic of knowledge translation, with an explicit focus on how and where it is undertaken in Canada.

Knowledge Translation Lessons from the Health and Social Sciences

In Canada, knowledge translation is a term most often employed in the health sciences. A search for “knowledge translation” in the University of Victoria Libraries online catalogue brings up nearly 18,000 journal articles; when the search is limited to fields relevant to the health sciences, around 14,000 or 78% of the hits remain. Knowledge translation is commonly understood as follows:

an encompassing term that denotes the exchange, synthesis and ethically-sound application of research findings within a complex system of relationships among researchers and knowledge users; the incorporation of research knowledge into policies and practice, thus translating knowledge into improved health of the population. (Kiefer et al. 14).⁴³

⁴³ This definition comes from the article “Fostering Evidence-based Decision-making in Canada: Examining the Need for a Canadian Population and Public Health Evidence Centre and Research Network”; note that the authors of the article prefer the term *knowledge exchange* to knowledge translation. They write, “To suggest the ideally bi-directional flow of information and ideas between research producers and users, this paper will use the term ‘knowledge exchange and uptake’ (KEU) rather than the more common ‘knowledge transfer and uptake’ and ‘knowledge translation’” (Kiefer et al. 4). Kiefer et al. define knowledge exchange as “the interactive and iterative process of imparting meaningful knowledge between research users and producers, such that research users receive information that they perceive as relevant to them and in easily usable formats, and producers receive information about the research needs of the users” (14). This nuancing has gained traction in the knowledge translation literature, as evident in its uptake by Anne E. Marshall and Francis Guennette in their book chapter “Cross-Cultural Journeys: Transferring and Exchanging Knowledge Among Researchers and Community Partners.” They write, “In our team’s [...] context, we prefer the term knowledge transfer and exchange (KTE), as described by Kiefer et al. (2005): the interactive exchange of knowledge between research users and research producers. We believe that the phrase transfer and exchange illustrates the diverse and developing nature of communication about research. Sometimes there is a direct transfer of knowledge, such as giving information or explaining a procedure; at other times, there is a two-way exchange of knowledge, such as a joint discussion of data implications” (37).

Knowledge translation is prominent in the health sciences due to the immediate public relevance of the field (“the improved health of the population” [Kiefer et al. 14]) and the necessity to communicate findings with many different actors without fear of obfuscation or misunderstanding. Although knowledge translation as a general principle is widely accepted to be beneficial and important, there are variations on the term. In their 2008 survey of a collection of health funding agencies from around the world, Jacqueline M. Tetroe et al. deduce that different agencies promote different definitions of knowledge translation, as well as vary in their approaches to incentivizing it. Despite the broad and generic relevance of the definition provided above, Tetroe et al. point out that “a recent Google search (‘definition knowledge translation’), restricted to Canadian web pages, yielded 1,350,000 hits” (126). As the authors acknowledge, many of those websites share a common understanding of knowledge translation and cite the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) definition.⁴⁴

Some academics question the validity and efficacy of knowledge translation, especially given the already significant demands on researcher time and energy. They argue that there is a lack of direction regarding which knowledge translation strategy is most effective in which situation, and that there are very few reports on the success of a knowledge translation activity (Mitton et al.). Acknowledging the need for this kind of direction and reporting, social scientists Elizabeth M. Banister, Bonnie J. Leadbeater, and E. Anne Marshall edited the collection *Knowledge Translation in Context: Indigenous, Policy, and Community Settings* (2011). This collection shifts the conversation away from defining or describing knowledge translation; rather, chapter authors focus on examples of knowledge translation in action or critique the ways

⁴⁴ According to CIHR, “Knowledge Translation is defined as a dynamic and iterative process that includes synthesis, dissemination, exchange and ethically-sound application of knowledge to improve the health of Canadians, provide more effective health services and products and strengthen the health care system” (“About Us”).

in which knowledge translation can fail to live up to its promise. Tetroe et al. reinforce that confusion exists around knowledge translation: “It is [...] not surprising to watch the eyes of health researchers dart around in confusion when [knowledge translation] is marshaled as a reason for them to do even more with their limited time and research grant funds” (152). Within a related framework of knowledge to action (or KTA, as it is known), Ian D. Graham et al. also underline the lack of clarity regarding knowledge translation vocabulary and application:

a recent study we conducted with 33 applied research funding agencies in 9 countries identified 29 terms used to refer to some aspect of the concept of knowledge to action. Some of the more common terms applied to the KTA process are knowledge translation, knowledge transfer, knowledge exchange, research utilization, implementation, dissemination, and diffusion. The situation is further complicated by the use of the terms, often interchangeably. (14)

Mitton et al. also suggest that, at least in Canada, there has been an increase of research articles that claim to have a knowledge transfer element or application due to the influence of the Canadian Health Services Research Foundation (now the Canadian Foundation for Healthcare Improvement) and their prioritization of knowledge translation (734). The authors consider how knowledge transfer and exchange between researchers and non-researchers could be facilitated by someone who is “trained specifically in information exchange and has set aside time for the process” (740): a knowledge broker.

To return to Meyer’s conception, a knowledge broker is someone who facilitates the creation, sharing, and use of knowledge. Cecilia Benoit et al. draw on the work of Jonathan Lomas to offer a more detailed definition:

Knowledge brokers are often paid research staff whose focus is linking community agencies with researchers and facilitating their interaction so that they are able to better understand each other's goals and professional cultures, influence each other's work, forge new partnerships, and promote the use of research-based evidence in decision making. (27)

Gesualdo, Weber, and Yanovitzky consider journalists to be knowledge brokers, but other actors in the scholarly communication system could assume such a role as well. The figure of the knowledge broker emerges variously in the chapters of Bannister, Leadbeater, and Marshall's 2011 collection.⁴⁵ Therein, Benoit et al. reflect on an academic knowledge translation study undertaken with members of the low-income and homeless population in Victoria, BC. The authors emphasize the importance of the knowledge broker as a "bridge individual" (28), a liminal person who can navigate both the academic and non-academic worlds deftly in order to ensure knowledge translation occurs. In part, Benoit et al. consider this role as critical because "practitioners have gaps in their knowledge base, but these seldom translate into research questions that are investigated by health and social scientists" (15). Instead of solely transferring knowledge from academics to non-academics—akin to a publicist in the corporate world—a knowledge broker can serve as the mediator in a conversation between two groups who both have valuable knowledge to share.

Above, I detail the importance of science journalism; later, in Chapter 6, I make a case for popularizing the humanities. I wish to build a bridge between these ideas by suggesting that the role of the knowledge broker—entrenched as it is within the weedy rhetoric of knowledge translation—could be a pivotal one for the humanities in particular.

⁴⁵ See Benoit et al.; McCabe; Wharf Higgins et al.

Where is Humanities Knowledge Brokering and Translation?

Although there is much research on, consideration, and promotion of knowledge translation in the health and social sciences, this same principle is notably absent in the core humanities fields of literature, history, philosophy, languages, human geography, politics, and religion. In the humanities, the nearest term to knowledge translation is *knowledge mobilization*, defined by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) as “an umbrella term encompassing a wide range of activities relating to the production and use of research results, including knowledge synthesis, dissemination, transfer, exchange, and co-creation or co-production by researchers and knowledge users” (“Guidelines for Effective”).⁴⁶ Agency and execution represent further differences between knowledge mobilization in the humanities and knowledge translation in the health and social sciences; in the latter case, there are often designated individuals to undertake such activities. Moreover, without official knowledge translation mechanisms, those in the humanities can become increasingly secluded from the interests of broader publics due to a discursive isolation from these groups. As Banister, Leadbeater, and Marshall write, “There has been increasing awareness of the importance of the users of research knowledge as key contributors to the process of [knowledge translation]” (205). Knowledge translation brings publics and communities together to exchange ideas around specific areas of interest.

Such a lack of contact and communication may contribute to the current under-valuing of the humanities in the public eye, as Kathleen Fitzpatrick suggests throughout *Generous Thinking*. The public disconnect from and questioning of the role of the humanities in the twenty-first

⁴⁶ For a historical review of SSHRC policy and the uptake of concepts like knowledge mobilization since the 1970s, see Johanne Provençal’s dissertation, *Knowledge Mobilization of Social Sciences and Humanities Research: Moving Beyond a “Zero-Sum Language Game.”*

century has, in part, spurred scholars to form fields like the public humanities and the history of the humanities. I scan the former field in Chapter 2; the latter is a relatively recent formulation and is characterized largely by Rens Bod's 2013 book *A New History of the Humanities*, as well as *History of Humanities*, a journal that Bod co-edits alongside Julia Kursell, Jaap Maat, and Thijs Weststeijn.⁴⁷ Bod's goal in *A New History of the Humanities* is to underline the substantial impact of the humanities on the development of civilization over centuries, from Antiquity to present day.⁴⁸ He argues that although there is no one model for the humanities, there are common or shared humanistic methods and practices (4). Bod focuses on principles and patterns across the history of the humanities in order to emphasize their impact on the world—not least of all in the rise and then fall of a Bible-dominated culture in Europe and the resulting Enlightenment. Bod explicitly connects the purported crisis of the humanities with the lack of public knowledge about how impactful the humanities have been over time. He begins *A New History of the Humanities* by stating:

The humanities are under pressure all over the world. Once the pinnacle of education and intellectual development, today they suffer from a serious image problem. Disciplines like philology, art history, linguistics, literary studies, and musicology are seen as a luxury pastime which is of little use to society and even less to the economy. [...] Yet a quick glance at the history of the humanities shows a different picture. Not only did humanistic insights change the world, many of these insights dealt with concrete problems and resulted in

⁴⁷ *History of Humanities* is available from the University of Chicago Press at www.journals.uchicago.edu/toc/hoh/current.

⁴⁸ Bod is specifically considering the humanities as “*the disciplines that investigate the expressions of the human mind*” (1, *emphasis original*), whereby the expressions of the human mind include language, music, art, literature, theatre and poetry, and so the humanities include philology, linguistics, musicology, art history, literary studies, and theatre studies (1).

applications in entirely unexpected fields. As if humanists have no clue about their own history, these insights and applications have been credited to the sciences. (xii)

Largely, Bod argues that the humanities have not only had a significant impact on humankind over centuries, but that this impact has been predominantly positive and beneficial. Scholars like Susan Arndt and Will Bridges have debated this premise in more recent scholarship, arguing that the humanities have also perpetuated the *inhumanities*—primarily through philosophical justifications of slavery and racism.

According to these historians of the humanities, humanistic contributions of the humanities have, in a sense, been overlooked or even subsumed. As Bod writes, “These world-changing insights [...] were ignored for too long and often unjustly credited to the natural sciences” (352). Such a silent integration (purposeful or not) has increased the invisibility of the humanities, and in doing so, the consensus that the humanities are not as valuable as the sciences in the public imagination. Moreover, the significant role of the humanities in developing a critical, engaged citizenry is consequently downplayed. A lack of clear, named mechanisms for humanities knowledge translation heightens these conditions.

Although there may not be *explicit* humanities knowledge translation modes and methods, there are *implicit* mechanisms that have not been named knowledge translation per se. Humanities work has long been integrated into cultural institutions like public radio, art galleries, and museums, and has emerged more recently in popular activities like podcasting. In the Canadian context, the Canadian Broadcasting Company (CBC) is one such institution that has served as a public producer of humanities work. The precursor of the CBC, the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission, was created in 1932 (Macdonald 8), and the CBC has played a knowledge brokering role since at least the middle of the twentieth century. In *The Public Eye*:

Television and the Politics of Canadian Broadcasting 1952–1968 (1979), Frank W. Peers examines the emergence of broadcast television in Canada and its roots in public radio. On the CBC as radio broadcaster in the 1950s he suggests that “it had evolved as a response to the Canadian environment, and it met the most discernible of Canadian needs. The principal features of the system were a product of Canadian history, geography, economic conditions, and elements of the political culture” (xv). The CBC expanded into television broadcasting in the 1950s and has shared humanities work through that medium as well. As communications scholar and Canadian Museum of Immigration research manager Monica Macdonald writes,

History in books or museum exhibitions does not capture mass audiences like history on television. And the CBC is the only television broadcaster, indeed the only form of electronic mass media, that has regularly produced and broadcast Canadian history. For a time the exception was CBC radio, but CBC radio has long since abandoned the prominent role it once played in this regard. (3)⁴⁹

Regardless of the shift in Canadian history programming from radio to television, CBC Radio still integrates humanistic elements. For instance, University of Victoria Chancellor Shelagh Rogers currently hosts and produces *The Next Chapter*, a popular radio show on Canadian writing.⁵⁰ Until his melanoma diagnosis in 2015 Stuart McLean hosted *The Vinyl Café* on CBC Radio, a well-known program featuring fiction and non-fiction stories, essays, and music with a focus on Canadian content.

⁴⁹ Providing further detail and context, Macdonald writes: “in the early days of the CBC, scholars like Donald Creighton, Charles Stacey, Jack Saywell, and Ramsay Cook, along with senior CBC production staff like Eric Koch, Vincent Tovell, and George Robertson, brought Canadian history to television audiences as well. They were all members of a Canadian intelligentsia who worked together based on mutual respect and commitment to the educational and nation-building mandate of the CBC” (4–5).

⁵⁰ See www.cbc.ca/radio/thenextchapter for more information on *The Next Chapter*.

Notably, there are challenges to the CBC's assumption of the role of Canada's knowledge broker. Macdonald connects the emergence of CBC television broadcasting with the nation-building attempts of the 1949 Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences (colloquially known as the Massey Commission) (8). Within this framework, historian Teresa Iacobelli argues against how the CBC has framed and retold Canadians' stories, especially around war experiences. She concludes:

The CBC holds a privileged place within Canadian society. It is true that media and culture are an integral part in forming national identity. Historical documentaries have played a small but important part in helping to form a Canadian consciousness and an awareness of our history. As Canada's national broadcaster, the CBC has traditionally aired radio and television documentaries with very little competition. In this role, the CBC must definitely maintain its arm's length relationship with the government and have an independent approach to its work, yet because its monopoly often remains unchallenged it owes Canadian audiences context and perspective. (345)

In a similar vein, communications scholar Kyle Conway criticizes the CBC's attempts to broach language divides in Canada in *Everyone Says No: Public Service Broadcasting and the Failure of Translation* (2011). Such criticisms demonstrate that knowledge brokering is not neutral and is open to contestation.

Building on the historical form of talk radio, podcasting is another activity through which humanities work is translated to or shared with broader communities beyond academic departments. Shakespeare scholars Devori Kimbro, Michael Noschka, and Geoffrey Way hail academic podcasting for its public engagement potential; they consider podcasting "one of the most popular public-facing means of intellectual engagement since the invention of the printing

press, bringing passion back to our work in the process” (2). Taking their public engagement argument one step farther, the authors state: “Early-career scholars are finding podcasting to be a way to remove ivory-tower perceptions surrounding their research and interests and discuss their work with the public directly—in a way that does not require significant financial or temporal investment by the public” (Kimbrow, Noschka, and Wall 6). Assistant professor of publishing Hannah McGregor hosts or co-hosts three podcasts that integrate humanities work: *Secret Feminist Agenda* (on feminism), *Witch, Please* (on the *Harry Potter* book series), and *Spoken Web* (on literary sound archives). She also co-directs a SSHRC-funded project titled the Amplify Podcast Network, which seeks to develop a framework for peer reviewing—and thus legitimizing, in the academic system—scholarly podcasting.

Although literary studies might seem like an obvious candidate for podcasting due to the prevalence of reading circles, fan fiction, and online book clubs, there are podcasts in many other humanistic fields as well. In her 2019 examination of the role of history podcasts in the Australian context—some overtly academic, some not—Honae H. Cuffe concludes that the history podcast is an important mechanism for translating historical work (and even historiography) to broader publics. Cuffe acknowledges the challenges of history podcasts in the academic context; namely, that there is pushback from those who do not consider translation work worthwhile or intellectually robust enough, and that it is difficult to have such work counted in the current metrics-obsessed academic world. Regardless, Cuffe still suggests that “the value of podcasting is its ability to centre the role of the historian and invite the listener into this process” (555–56). Writing from yet another field—the medical humanities—Dr. Nancy J. Baker discusses a podcast she co-creates with her colleague Dan Johnson in the short article “Poetic Podcasts: The Importance of the Humanities in Medicine.” In their podcast, Baker reads

a poem related to medicine or written by a poet-doctor, and then Johnson and Baker discuss the poem and its larger resonance for the medical world. Baker suggests that beyond providing new insights, Johnson's goal in suggesting that he and Baker undertake this podcast project was because "he hoped the series would offer respite, enjoyment, and perhaps even inspiration for physicians, whom he often saw as encumbered by the volume and complexity of their daily work" (32). Academic podcasts are gaining traction across disciplines, and cultural heritage institutions like the Folger Library and the Globe Theatre are also producing themed podcasts of their own in order to share their humanistic work more broadly (Kimbrow, Noschka, and Way 2–3).

Another source of implicit humanities knowledge transition is the GLAM sector. Although mandate, mission, and approach may vary, many cultural heritage institutions demonstrate a longstanding commitment to humanities work. In fact, such a high degree of humanities knowledge translation occurs in the GLAM sector that it is largely unremarked on; the humanistic pursuit at the core of numerous GLAM organizations is so central that it is assumed. Margaret Salazar-Porzio of the Smithsonian National Museum of American History does comment on the productive connection between the museum and the university, however:

museums can be vital partners and [...] faculty, curators, and students can play major roles in this ecosystem of arts and humanities education. Despite social, cultural, economic, and political differences between and across these kinds of educational institutions, museums and universities have much in common and can have greater impact in the world if their faculty and staff work in tandem to cultivate students' civic skills through the arts and humanities. (277)

Recognizing the enmeshed missions of targeted GLAM institutions and humanities faculties could help to render the humanities more visible. Just as those working in the health and social sciences have developed and implemented to a set of practices deemed *knowledge translation*, established institutions devoted to the public study and engagement of humanities work already exist, too. Salazar-Porzio considers universities and museums to be “cultural bedrocks” (280); how could better acknowledging the role of galleries, libraries, archives, and museums in humanities knowledge sharing increase the perceived value and reach of the humanities more broadly?

Emphasizing knowledge translation in the humanities—that is, acknowledging where humanities knowledge translation is *already happening*—can assist efforts to advocate for the value of the humanities in the twenty-first century. Moreover, these extant knowledge translation mechanisms can serve as a model of where, and how, public engagement around humanities material is effective. Beyond such an acknowledgement, it is critical to, as writer and historian Rebecca Solnit would say, *call things by their true names*; by naming these existing practices *humanities knowledge translation*, one can implicitly make the argument that humanities work is significant and timely—so significant and timely that it requires as much translation to reach broader publics as the sciences do through science communication and journalism. This argument can extend to the figure of the knowledge broker, too. Although health and social science researchers and science communicators acknowledge the significant role of the knowledge broker, no such role exists within the context of the humanities. Without such an entrenched position in humanities departments, the work of sharing and exchanging academic ideas falls on the over-subscribed researcher, the adjacent museum curator, or the journalist, if they are interested and able to access the relevant research. The creation—and/or

acknowledgement—of a subset of the humanities labour force specifically focused on translating and sharing humanities research, as well as integrating non-humanities inquiry and findings into academic discussion, would ensure that those who would benefit most from humanities work—fellow researchers, students, policymakers, secondary school teachers, citizen scholars, and other engaged publics—could access and understand publicly funded research. Furthermore, such a development makes the argument that humanities work is worthy of access, circulation, and translation—that in contrast to Elsevier Vice-President Tom Reller’s stated opinion, academic research is both interesting and helpful.

Conclusion: Accessing, Translating, and Circulating Research Output

Open access to, translation of, and engagement with humanities research is perhaps more critical now than ever before. Since the 2016 American federal election, the growth of *fake news*—untrue information intended to manipulate and even foment a subset of the general population—has become a pressing international issue and is considered to be a threat to the democratic state.⁵¹ Access to vetted and verified research is one component of the fight against the spread of misinformation, which, in terms of fake news, is available for free and in highly public and well-populated social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter. Just as Brennen argues for the need for science journalism during such a contested time, I suggest the same need exists for explicit, named humanities knowledge translation—perhaps even *humanities journalism* that extends beyond humanities topics to humanities research. Heightened access to complex but comprehensible ideas regarding cultural affinity, the history of a nation, and how ideas have been

⁵¹ According to Wikipedia, fake news is “is a form of news consisting of deliberate disinformation or hoaxes spread via traditional news media (print and broadcast) or online social media” (“Fake News”).

expressed in certain eras and then evolved over time could nuance national and international conversations in productive ways. Acknowledging current humanities knowledge translation mechanisms as well as introducing new modes and methods—be that increased collaboration with journalists, opening up access to research in conscientious ways, designating knowledge brokers, or another strategy—could further the critical circulation of humanities research and in doing so contribute to the information needs and engagement of broader publics.

The sheer amount of knowledge translation literature—only a small portion of which is summarized and referenced in this chapter—underscores the need to develop creative strategies to bridge academic and non-academic communities. Moreover, it represents the importance of ensuring that the extensive amount of academic research underway is shared in ways that are broadly accessible, meaning that they are available, comprehensible, and useful to those who are not necessarily trained specialists in a specific academic subfield. By the same token, it is understandable that, as Tetroe et al. point out, academic researchers themselves have resisted requests to add another layer of activity to their research, as they are largely over-subscribed and/or under-resourced already. Due to significant demands on their time, academics who hold precarious positions comprised of short, potentially non-renewable contracts for heavy teaching loads may be especially unable to embark on knowledge translation for any research they are able to find the time and resources to undertake.

The role of the knowledge broker—be that an individual embedded in the academic system already or an adjacent figure like the museum curator or the science journalist—can ensure that critical knowledge translation practices are taking place without additional demands on researcher time. In order for these knowledge brokers to do translation and circulation work effectively, they must have open access to the corpus of academic research. There is national-

scale value in the access to and translation of research; as policy researcher Simon Lenton writes, “There is little point in undertaking policy research if no one who can draft or implement policy is aware of it. All politicians and their advisers read newspapers; few read academic journal articles and reports” (116). Without translation mechanisms, those who are making decisions about the future direction of a community or even an entire country may do so without an understanding of the relevant research for any specific issue.

In the introduction and first chapter of this dissertation, I emphasize the value of open social scholarship. There, I point to the INKE Partnership definition of open social scholarship: “Creating and disseminating research technologies to a broad, interdisciplinary audience of specialists and non-specialists in ways that are both accessible and significant” (Powell, Mauro, and Arbuckle 3). Knowledge brokering is one of the ways to enact such an open ideal regarding the possibilities for scholarship. Through her exploration of the quality and value of community/academic initiatives in the *Knowledge Translation in Context* book collection, New Zealand-based evaluation consultant Kate McKegg writes:

In order for collaboration, meaningful dialogue, critical questioning, and courageous action to take place, there needs to be a climate where people trust each other, where the people and the processes have integrity and relevance to those involved, and where this is a balanced exchange of resources, time, and effort that recognizes and values diverse contributions. (62)

Such an engaged approach to collaborative scholarship aligns well with the concept of open social scholarship. But “collaboration, meaningful dialogue, critical questioning, and courageous action” (McKegg 62) will not necessarily be fueled by simply making academic work openly available online. In order to undertake the action-oriented mandate at the heart of open social scholarship and to realize its full potential for varied publics, academic work must be both

informed by a myriad of voices and translated for the benefit of many, rather than intended only for the narrowed focus of the few. In this way, humanities work can once again resemble the varied and multiple knowledge production that Johns, Burke, and Siemens all point to, and be acknowledged for its substantial impact, as Bod, Bridges, and Arndt implore.

Chapter 4.1. Case Study: The Value of Journalist–Academic Collaboration for the Humanities

with Tracy Giesz-Ramsay

What do journalists themselves think about their degree of access to research? In the preceding chapter there are key voices missing from the conversation on journalist access to research: *journalist* voices. Although John Willinsky makes compelling arguments for the importance of open access for journalists in particular, as referenced in Chapter 4, the same argument has not necessarily arisen from journalists themselves. In order to explore this subject, I began an informal, collaborative case study with a Vancouver-based journalist, Tracy Giesz-Ramsay. We were interested in the amount of research access in Giesz-Ramsay's network of journalist colleagues based in Vancouver, BC, as well as the modes and mechanisms by which they accessed publicly funded research. In casual conversation, many of the journalists we talked to admitted to not accessing the full, for-cost research articles that they drew facts from for their journalism; they simply perused the free abstracts. Some acknowledged that they use others' academic institutional logins to access paywalled materials. As Nicole Gesualdo, Matthew Weber, and Itzhak Yanovitzky also found in their own 2019 study, some journalists wrote directly to academics to request articles or chapters, even if that material is copyrighted and the author has signed the copyright over to a publisher and so, technically, should not be freely sharing it. Many others declined to comment.

In light of these conversations, Giesz-Ramsay and I developed a public facing piece of writing on journalist access to research in Canada. We wanted to share a glimpse into the current state of affairs in order to offer those who are not in the academic or journalistic professions

some insight into the limitations to accessing or circulating publicly funded research, even as a journalist. The project had two goals:

- 1) to gauge journalist access to research in Vancouver;
- 2) to share research on open scholarship in a more socially engaged manner through an online publication.

We spent around four months planning the project, reaching out to Giesz-Ramsay's journalist colleagues, and drafting up content based on these discussions and my own understanding of the issues around open access to research. On 17 June 2018, we successfully published an article with *The National Observer*, a national left-leaning news outlet in Canada that has an online and social media presence. This piece saw broad circulation and discussion on social media and resulted in many discussions with those who were unaware of the challenges inherent to the current scholarly publishing system. Below is a transcript of the *National Observer* piece:

“Their profit margins are bigger than oil and gas. Most people don't know this,” explains Alyssa Arbuckle, Associate Director of a digital humanities lab at the University of Victoria. It was an overcast day and we were sitting across from the Vancouver Public Library, just off the bustling Robson Street—coincidentally, the province's balefire of profit-driven capitalism. The issue we've met to talk about is paywalled access to scholarly journals and the truth about research publication in academia. “The large commercial academic publisher profit margins are around 30%-40%,” she continues. “This is a multi-billion dollar industry we're talking about here.”

The issue is arresting. Academic research in Canada is a public good, like education or roads. We pay for it with our tax dollars. As journalists, we need it to disseminate knowledge, affect public policy, and push for social change. When the public has limited access to research, they can't stay informed about issues that affect their lives. From the health sciences to climate change and even refugee policy, we rely on professional analysis from universities to form valid opinions.

In today's media landscape, online, magazine, and newspaper publishers have tiny—and dwindling—budgets to work with. Freelancers, even less. When these commercial journals charge exorbitant rates to access research, it often leaves independent news media in the dark.

Journalists, however, will often do what they can to work around this. If they receive a press release when hot topic research is published or hear about it from past sources, writers will then reach out to academics to query them on that work. They'll ask hard questions and draw data-based conclusions. Yet, many in the field don't have access to the studies they're interviewing researchers on. This presents both the obvious problem of having only the interview to go on, as well as another less obvious—and lesser known—problem: one that is rarely discussed.

“In many situations, sharing research in that way is technically not allowed,” Arbuckle informs me when we land on the topic of academics freely circulating their own published research, including during media interviews. “For the most part, once a commercial publisher releases a for-pay journal issue, they own the copyright to that material. It is no longer the property of the researcher or their larger team.” Herein lies the predicament. Taxpayers pay for the research, academics produce the research, and then commercial academic publishers turn the research into a money-making machine.

Journal publishing is a business, and a highly profitable one.

Around the world, library subscriptions to academic journals are estimated to cost around \$10 billion per year, as scholar Jefferson Pooley from Muhlenberg College points out. Academic publishing is a relatively large industry. And its profit margins are disproportionately massive. Open access scholar Martin Paul Eve cites research that Elsevier, one of the largest commercial academic publishers, reported a 37% profit in 2012. He puts this into perspective by noting that major oil companies usually make approximately 6.5% in profit, while Big Pharma pulls in around 16%, less than half of what Elsevier is making.

So, why is this business so lucrative and why is that cause for concern?

Namely, publishers don't have to pay for their product. Academic researchers do not get paid by publishers for their journal articles, nor do they make any royalties. If they're employed by a public institution or receive a federal grant, taxpayers help fund their salaries, but researchers are not paid again to publish their findings. Journal publishers solicit articles for free and have them peer-reviewed for free by academics—none of that labour is paid for.

Publishers do handle some editorial work, like copyediting and page layout, as well as managing server space. But zero-cost resources plus limited pre- and post-production handling means big money.

I ask Arbuckle about her colleagues trying to confront this issue. “Commercial publishers are not keen to give up such a unique revenue stream,” she tells me. If all research was open access, they would have nothing to bundle and sell to libraries. “Researchers, students, and anyone else who needed to read that research or use that data, like journalists, would already have access. There is very little impetus to stop publishing in this way, and there is very big impetus to lobby governments to protect the current way of doing business.”

For public consumers, the issue has substantial consequences. Decades of research may point to a shift in the way we understand how the brain works: its plasticity, for example. Or that global warming is caused by human activity. But ideologically opposed news publishers can often infer dramatically different conclusions from the same study if only the study’s abstract is available online, rather than the complete article. If journalists don’t have access to the research beyond the summary of an academic article, they can fall prey to making false—and even dangerous—claims about scientific research.

There is hope for more freely available research in Canada, however. Arbuckle tells me that many librarians, academics, and others who work in higher education around the world are developing strategies and policies to encourage a shift from for-pay access to open access to research. “The three major funding bodies that financially support Canadian research have implemented open access publishing policies, and institutions like Simon Fraser University are following suit,” she says. Although many people who are outside of the university system may be unaware that their tax dollars have funded research they have to pay (again) to access, there is growing momentum in this area and a firm commitment to make the future of research open.

This collaboration was ultimately successful as we met our goals of learning more about journalist access (at least within Giesz-Ramsay’s network) and sharing research on the topic in a popular but trustworthy online Canadian venue. But there were some challenges to this undertaking as well. Many of these challenges arose from the practice-based differences between academic and journalistic writing and publishing processes—that is, the differences between how I was trained to write and publish and how Giesz-Ramsay was trained to write and publish. To

begin with, the editorial processes are markedly different. I learned to develop *pitches*—short, pithy encapsulations of ideas—and watched Giesz-Ramsay workshop these with various editors and publications. She reached out to *The Walrus*, *Vancouver Observer*, *VICE Canada*, *Ricochet Media English*, and *THIS Magazine*. Some editors were interested, and some were not. Only once an editor was interested did we sit down to write, and to engage in significant back and forth with the editor to shape the piece to meet their venue’s expectations. This reflects a significant difference between journalistic and academic article publishing; in the latter system, the author develops a full article and then submits it to a journal. At that stage, the journal issue editor either accepts, suggests revisions for, or declines the full article. In this sense, the journalistic endeavour can be a much more collaborative undertaking, as the editor is involved in the development of the article from an earlier stage: just after the inception and proposal of the idea.

As was expected, a specific tone is required for public-facing writing: one that is less jargon-filled than much academic writing can be. Perhaps predictably, the editor quickly picked up on the more controversial bits of the open access conversation (i.e. massive commercial publisher profit and lack of public access to publicly funded material) and asked us to forefront these parts over the more specific issue of journalist access. The article also needed to incorporate more of a narrative to render it newsworthy—distinctly different from academic writing, which is supposed to be much more objective in tone and is not usually character-driven. This challenge led Giesz-Ramsay and I to reframe the article in a way that was very new for me. Here is how the article ran when it was published:

University of Victoria digital humanities lab expert on the privatization of knowledge

By Tracy Giesz-Ramsay in Opinion | June 17th 2018



Alyssa Arbuckle, photographed by Tracy Giesz-Ramsay, June 2018

Figure 2: Screenshot of the beginning of the *National Observer* article, “University of Victoria Digital Humanities Lab Expert on the Privatization of Knowledge.”

Deleted: /

There are a couple of things to note. To begin with, the title of the article, “University of Victoria Digital Humanities Lab Expert on the Privatization of Knowledge” explicitly situated me as the subject of the article, as well as an expert in the field. Neither Giesz-Ramsay nor I wrote the title; it was developed by the editor at the *National Observer* and, in fact, was not shared with us prior to publication. The article is also headed by a photograph of myself in order to drive home the subject-based content of the work. This decision was made between Giesz-Ramsay and the editor, as she was managing that relationship (as is fitting based on her professional experience). Academic articles, of course, rarely begin with a headshot. Finally, below the title the article is attributed to Giesz-Ramsay in the byline. When we needed to revise the article into more of a narrative, positioning myself as subject/interviewee, it became necessary to attribute the

authorship to Giesz-Ramsay only regardless of my role in the content development of the piece. These choices were made in order to fit our work into the framework of the online news publication. But they push against an academic tradition that is based on objective inquiry and tends toward humility rather than positioning oneself as an active character in an evolving, public narrative.

Although Giesz-Ramsay and I began working together in February 2018, the early months of our collaboration focused on reaching out to journalists, sharing research on scholarly communication and open access, piecing together potential takes on the subject, and developing and submitting pitches to editors. Once we found an editor and venue that was interested in running our article (*The National Observer*), the actual turnaround time was quite quick—a couple of weeks, at most. This is another substantial difference between academic and journalistic publishing; academic publishing generally takes much longer due to peer review, workload, limited resources, uncompensated labour/volunteerism, and serial-, volume-, or issue-based publishing schedules.

Overall, this collaboration was instructive. Working with a journalist provided anecdotal insights into the low levels of access to research for journalists. I also learned how the news publishing world functions in comparison to that of academic publishing. This collaboration was also, in a sense, a *knowledge translation* mechanism, as Giesz-Ramsay acted as a knowledge broker and provided a way for me to share my research and thoughts on open access and the academic publishing world in a more public venue than I am accustomed to; in the humanities, it is not customary to collaborate with a journalist in the same way it can be for the sciences. This experience also informed my understanding of the challenges of knowledge translation. Knowledge translation means, in some cases, doing things differently than taught in graduate

school, and learning to become comfortable with divergent practices from other fields in the service of collaboration and knowledge sharing. Such a conclusion acknowledges that open social scholarship is not only a conceptual reframing of scholarly roles and communication, but that there are practice-based differences with this mode of engagement as well. Open social scholarship is not *business as usual*.

Chapter 5. Open+: Generating Variations of Scholarship⁵²

Universal open access is more possible now than ever before, in part due to near-ubiquitous computing, an increasingly digitized scholarly record, and the emergence of progressive open scholarship policies. Advocates claim that open access will create a more equitable and just society, as people around the world will be able to find, read, and put to use academic research as long as they have access to a device and an Internet connection (Eve; Harnad, “Open Access”; Suber, *Open Access*; Willinsky).⁵³ As explored throughout the preceding sections of this dissertation, open access can be considered as a necessary foundation for more socially engaged work. But what happens after open access to research materials is provided? If research is presented in forms and formats that are unfindable, obscure, or opaque, does this truly meet the ethical and efficiency imperative of open access that librarians and scholars have worked so tirelessly for?⁵⁴ Does it meet the potential for social knowledge creation or public engagement?

In this chapter I suggest that we need to reconsider the form, status, and engagement of open access materials in order to create research output that is accessible in different ways.⁵⁵ Conventional scholarly communication practices have served many well. Such practices have birthed recognizable research output formats such as the journal article and the monograph. These formats represent a community agreement on standardized scholarly communication and

⁵² I first explored notions of versions and variations in a 2019 article published in *KULA: Knowledge Creation, Dissemination, and Preservation Studies* (Arbuckle, “Open+”).

⁵³ See Chapter 1 for discussion of how open access can also perpetuate inequities in the academy.

⁵⁴ These questions have some resonance with the terminological distinction between *gratis* and *libre* open access. Peter Suber describes *gratis* open access as free cost access only and *libre* open access as “remov[ing] price barriers and at least some permission barriers” (65). This distinction acknowledges that the straightforward provision of unpaid access to a resource is only one degree or type of access among many possibilities. There are further steps that need to be taken in order to make that research more usable; in the case of *gratis* versus *libre*, those steps are shaped by how material is licensed in regard to reuse.

⁵⁵ For purposes of scope, I am not venturing into how scholarly communication can be more accessible from a disability studies perspective. This is a critically important consideration, but it lies beyond the arena of this dissertation.

have provided a mechanism for academics to participate in the knowledge creation of a field. By shifting into an open access world, scholarly communication becomes even more efficient and dynamic as researchers do not have to duplicate findings unnecessarily and can participate more easily in current conversations. This is an ideal situation for the academic community. But the advantages of open access to research are less readily applicable for those who are not embedded in an academic institution; these readers may not necessarily be aware of how to find an institutional repository or open access journal, for instance. If research is sequestered from the public eye, it cannot directly impact non-academic communities regardless of whether data and publications are licensed openly for broad circulation or reuse. During this transition period into an open scholarship future, scholars would benefit from reflecting on the limitations of the scholarly communication system for broader public engagement purposes. Moreover, scholars ought to look to alternative practices that can connect those who work in academia with those who do not—beyond the disposal of price barriers.

In what follows, I begin by examining the tension between academic tradition and academic innovation, and I acknowledge key elements of scholarly practice that need not be sacrificed in the name of experimentation and progress. Then, I argue that stopping at straightforward access does not suffice for all readers and that research data and ideas should be presented in ways that colleagues across disciplines, institutions, and publics can find, understand, use, and repurpose. Reconsidering the true meaning of access does not have to come at the cost of scholarly rigour or autonomy. Rather, I propose that creating variations of initial analytical conclusions and research output can facilitate social knowledge creation, public engagement, and broad collaboration—the move from open access to open social scholarship. Moreover, a multi-platform approach to knowledge mobilization may in fact strengthen one's

understanding of their research inquiry by engaging with and considering multiple perspectives. Finally, I examine the challenges of reorienting one’s academic workflow and output to facilitate scholarship that is more open and more social. To provide an example of variation in action, I also include an addendum—“What Are the Humanities? Where Are They?” (pp.179–87)—as a reimagining of the core arguments of the next chapter in a shorter, pithier, and more broadly legible format.

On Not Throwing the Baby Out with the Bathwater

Scholarly communication has evolved since the seventeenth century and continues to shift and change as digital production and sharing becomes more prominent in the twenty-first century. In *Breaking the Book*, Laura Mandell explicitly focuses on this transformation from print to digital and what it means for traditionally analog disciplines like the humanities. Her purpose in doing so is to “write a book about what portions of our discipline we should try to retain in the face of cuts and media transformations—how to shape the digital instantiations of our cultural heritage by keeping, if we can, the best parts of book culture and letting go of the worst” (8). What are the best and worst parts of book culture? What should be retained, and what let go of? A related line of inquiry would examine academic practices that are perhaps unnecessarily conservative (in whole or in part) compared to historic elements that have lasting value for the profession, and I explore this in greater depth below.

In the humanities, the current scholarly communication system centres two major artifacts: monographs and journal articles. Other bookish artifacts such as collected volumes and scholarly editions retain currency in this context as well. An individual artifact’s standing in the collective conscious of an academic field is often judged by the prestige of the venue it is

published in or with and status can be reified through hiring, tenure, and promotion mechanisms.⁵⁶ In a 2018 report titled “How Significant Are the Public Dimensions of Faculty Work in Review, Promotion, and Tenure Documents?” Juan Pablo Alperin et al. argue that tenure and promotion guidelines in North America still tend to privilege research outputs such as the university press-published monograph or the article in a well-known and often toll-access journal with high citation-based metrics. The authors contrast these findings with institutions’ purported commitment to public engagement, which may not be enacted best by publishing research outcomes via monographs and articles geared toward a specialized readership. Of course, there are other scholarly communication outputs than monographs and journal articles, including conference proceedings and presentations, syllabi, and digital scholarship projects. But these outputs are not considered to be as esteemed—that is, as *tenurable*—as their book or article counterparts.

The hegemony of academic output and its implicit hierarchy, supported by tenure and promotion committees, merits examination due to its tangible effects on the stability and progression of an academic career. Moreover, different types of scholarly products have different affordances for engagement, circulation, and reuse. In a paper originally presented at the 2017 INKE Partnership gathering in Victoria, B.C., my colleague John Maxwell and I organize scholarly communication output in the shape of a pyramid (Arbuckle and Maxwell n.p.; see *Figure 1*). We indicate that the artifacts at the tip—the artifacts with the most prestige (e.g. the printed monograph)—are also the artifacts that are the least social, or at least privilege the voice

⁵⁶ Please see Chapter 1 for an engagement with the notion of prestige in the academy—in particular as prestige is related to open access.

of a single person rather than the situated, multivocal experience of a conference or social network.

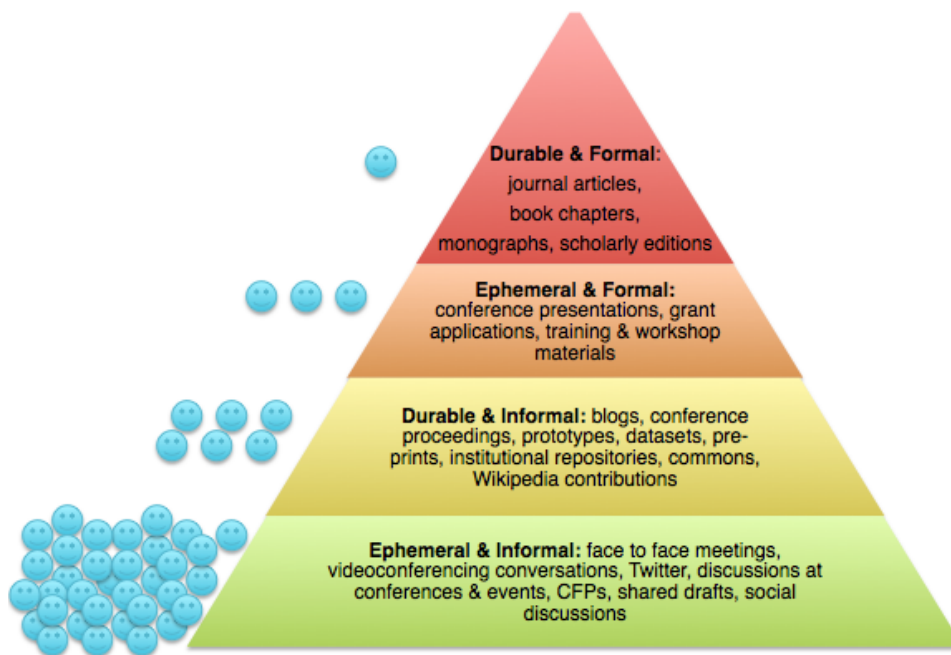


Figure 1: Scholarly communication pyramid (Arbuckle and Maxwell 2019).

In doing so, we build off of Kathleen Fitzpatrick’s argument in *Planned Obsolescence* that the academic monograph—and especially the first book—follows an undead “zombie logic” (4). Fitzpatrick argues that a monograph is, simply put, *expensive*. The monograph is costly to produce since its multistep production process is enormously time-consuming, and yet it rarely recoups these production fees. For university presses with limited budgets and an obligation to financial stability, such an output challenges economic sustainability. On the purchasing side, the standard monograph is also costly for both individual readers and libraries to obtain. Fitzpatrick suggests that, on top of these financial challenges, monographs often do not attract a substantial readership once in the world. Regardless of these substantial impediments, and the labour and financial costs involved, the monograph is perceived as mandatory output in the humanities (4).

The monograph is the tip of the pyramid, at least in humanistic fields. Mandell, too, considers the humanities book to be monstrous, although in a different way than Fitzpatrick does; Mandell argues that a book represents an author's attempt at immortality since their words can outlive them through publication (*Breaking the Book* 165). Regardless of the undead, monstrous status of the academic book, both Fitzpatrick and Mandell defend long-form writing; for Fitzpatrick, "There's a kind of large-scale synthetic work done in the form of the book that's still important to the development of scholarly thought" (7). Despite its impracticalities, the monograph is still a useful tool for humanities scholarship.

There is value in resisting the urge to throw away all conventional practices when it comes to revisioning scholarly communication. Following Mandell's stated goal in *Breaking the Book*, I will consider a small handful of standard academic practices—long-form writing, citation, and peer review—that retain benefit for humanities knowledge production, even in a digital and open world. These are not the only academic practices that have value in an evolving academia, but I will isolate and consider them within this broader context if only as specific examples of the many academic practices that benefit current and future scholars.

Long-form writing has a role beyond its impact on one's curriculum vitae; long-form writing is a mechanism for an author to dive into an ocean of research, sort through the murk, and pick out the pearls. Mandell suggests that certain humanities fields (such as English literature) are "book-based and book-sustained" (8). She goes on to argue that writing books allows an author to slow down or "chill" ideas in order to make space for close study and deep thinking (62). From 2014–2016 the UK-based Academic Book of the Future project team took on a study of long-form writing in order to drill into the current and future status of the academic

monograph.⁵⁷ Among other outputs, the team released their findings in two key reports. In the policy report *Academic Books and Their Future* (2017), research consultant Michael Jubb draws a connection between the importance of long-form writing and discipline:

Since the distinctions between data and interpretation are often more complex in the arts and humanities than in the sciences, there is often a need to present dense and lengthy descriptions of evidence, and to build an extended narrative or exposition of theoretical approaches, much longer than could be handled within the constraints of a journal article, or even a series of articles. The very act of writing in this way is formative in identifying relationships between different pieces of evidence, shaping ideas, and constructing arguments. (29)

Through long-form writing an author can engage with a concept in much greater detail, and the multistep editorial practice often incorporates in-depth collaboration and development via peer and editorial review. In the accompanying *Academic Book of the Future* project report from 2017, digital humanist Marilyn Deegan also comments on the ongoing importance of the academic book. She presents fellow team member Rebecca Lyons' thoughts on the matter:

Lyons argues from her perspective as an early career researcher that academic books, more than any other resource, have helped her to learn how to construct an argument, and, for her, the longer form of the academic monograph allows her to pursue complex and interlinking ideas to their conclusions, something that shorter forms do not permit. (38)

⁵⁷ For more on this project see academicbookfuture.org/.

In this sense, long-form writing is considered to be a training or even professionalization mechanism for emerging scholars. Further, Deegan concludes that the academic monograph still holds substantial value due to

the ability to produce a sustained argument within a more capacious framework than that permitted by the article format; the engagement of the reader at a deep level with such arguments; its central place in career progression in the arts and humanities; its reach beyond the academy (for some titles) into bookshops and into the hands of a wider public. (7)

Drawing connections, shaping ideas, constructing arguments, undertaking capacious work—there is still a strong rationale for the continuation of long-form writing and academic book publishing, concerns about economic sustainability and low readership aside.⁵⁸

Citation is another academic practice with lasting scholarly communication value. As Christine Borgman writes in *Scholarship in the Digital Age*, “Publications [...] embody the relationships between cited and citing authors” (160). Citation remains a key element for scholarly writing, as it provides legitimacy to an argument (Russell). Incorporating a thorough citation network (known as outward citation) in a publication proves that an author has done the work of perusing a research corpus and engaging with the thinking of previous and contemporaneous peers. George Lazaroiu of Addleton Academic Publishers confirms: “The number of outward citations indicates whether the work of a given academic is well grounded in the body of academic research” (587). On a parallel current, being cited by peers (inward

⁵⁸ I do not intend to denigrate shorter forms of academic writing through this defence of long-form academic writing. Shorter journal articles, for instance, have a unique purpose as well; they can be considered the unit of scholarly communication due to their prevalence and portability. Articles are of a length that one can read through one (or several) in a short period of time, while providing enough space for a sufficient citation structure. Articles are often more readily shareable, too, as they are frequently born digital. Moreover, the writing and editing period for an article is usually much shorter than that for a book, so ideas are released into the world much more quickly.

citation) is the mark of research impact.⁵⁹ As quoted in a 2016 article on citation by Steve Baron and Rebekah Russell-Bennett, noted sociologist Robert K. Merton writes in the late 1970s:

Only when he has published his ideas and findings has the scientist made his contribution, and only when he has thus made it part of the public domain of scholarship can he truly lay claim to it as his own. For his claim resides only in the recognition accorded by peers in the social system of science through reference to his work. (257)⁶⁰

Although Merton’s thinking is foundational for much of the sociology of science, Borgman does critique the “neatness” (37) of Merton’s norms as problematic, suggesting that “they tend to oversimplify the mechanisms of science” (37). A robust citation network is indicative of the author’s thoroughness as well as the wider context of the research output; however, one must not ignore the idiosyncrasies of a specific academic community’s research practices and how they may undertake citation.

Community validation through peer review also offers a degree of academic credibility—at least in theory. A truism of peer review claims that if research is vetted blindly by colleagues in the same field, it will be deemed rigorous enough to be taken as a legitimate knowledge output. Peer review has become so central to the mechanism of scholarship and scholarly institutions that Fitzpatrick calls it “intractably established” (*Planned Obsolescence* 23) and the “*sine qua non* of the academy” (*Planned Obsolescence* 16).

⁵⁹ Regardless of the current prevalence of connecting inward citation and impact, it is important to acknowledge that the metricization of academia through citation counts—as with the Journal Impact Factor—has been criticized for its inaccuracy, ability to be gamed, and misrepresentation of the actual academic value of research output (Chang, McAleer, and Oxley; Lazaroiu; Wu, Fu, and Rousseau).

⁶⁰ Evidently a product of the time he was publishing in, I ask that the reader mentally modify Merton’s gender signifiers to better represent the spectrum of individuals who identify as scientists, now and when Merton was writing.

Regardless of peer review's intractability there are well-argued challenges against its ongoing relevance and efficacy. In reviewing the form and function of peer review, Fitzpatrick suggests that conventional peer review is a problematic stand-in for more comprehensive engagement and assessment of academic work—"A convenient means of determining 'value' without all that inconvenient reading and discussion" (*Planned Obsolescence* 49). In the same vein, Borgman also critiques how peer review has been mechanized by tenure and promotion committees: "The use of a publication forum as a proxy measure for the quality of research productivity has distorted the peer-review system so severely that some consider it 'broken'" (60). Cathy Davidson illustrates how peer review can be weaponized as a gatekeeping function in a blogpost titled "'Research': How Peer Review Counts and Doesn't," where she suggests that peer review has been used as a form of overly harsh policing or even bullying (n.p.). In his book-length rumination on scholarly communication Martin Paul Eve suggests that the transition from print to digital opens the door for reconsidering accepted scholarly practices like peer review, especially if, as Eve suggests, peer review is yet another form of academic exclusion (137).

Some academics also point to the challenge of truly anonymous peer review. Often, those who are best suited to review their colleagues' research output already have a sense of who has written a piece of scholarship regardless of whether it is undergoing blind peer review—this is most common in smaller, project-oriented fields such as the digital humanities (Guédon and Siemens 18). Such a lack of purely blind review means that consciously or unconsciously biased reviewers might adjudicate research based on individual grudges (Fitzpatrick, *Planned Obsolescence* 28–29), a desire to dictate who does and does not gain prominence in a field (Davidson), or even proclivities toward nepotism or sexism (Wenneras and Wold).

To return to Mandell’s inquiry—“What portions of our discipline [should we] try to retain in the face of cuts and media transformations [?]” (*Breaking the Book* 8)—I have considered specific scholarly communication outputs and mechanisms with lasting value: long-form writing, citation, and peer review. Within the framework of enduring scholarly activities, John Unsworth takes a more philosophical approach in a well-known talk from 2000, “Scholarly Primitives: What Methods Do Humanities Researchers Have in Common, and How Might Our Tools Reflect This?” He argues that there are seven “basic functions common to scholarly activity across disciplines, over time, and independent of theoretical orientation” (n.p.). According to Unsworth, these basic functions are discovering, annotating, comparing, referring, sampling, illustrating, and representing. He walks through how each function is addressed by a revamp to the online *William Blake Archive*, and in doing so, legitimizes digital humanities work by identifying these shared, codified activities. Although Unsworth is more reflective than forward-looking in this instance, one could assume that he considers these basic functions to be ongoing.

In some ways, asserting that there are essential components or basic functions of scholarship is unnecessarily limiting, regardless of Unsworth’s attempt, in doing so, to solidify the role of digital scholarship within broader academic disciplines. Other scholars have reflected on Unsworth’s suggestions and recommended critical activities they feel should be included on the list. For instance, digital scholarship expert Lisa Spiro advocates for the addition of collaboration as an essential or inherent academic activity. Digital humanist Tanya E. Clement also acknowledges the European Union’s Digital Research Infrastructure for the Arts and Humanities initiative and their Taxonomy of Digital Research Activities in the Humanities (TaDiRAH), which, according to Clement, “in effect extend[s] Unsworth’s list of primitives to

add methods typically employed in a digital context” (158). Listing key disciplinary functions is a slippery slope: on one hand, this may perpetuate an exclusionary environment where only certain types of output have merit. On the other, outlining basic components and then connecting such components to emerging fields and activities—as Unsworth does, and Spiro and Clement nuance further—can raise the profile of such fields and assist in legitimizing new or different modes of knowledge production. Unsworth’s framework is more general than my own consideration of specific academic activities above, but it could still be considered as a demarcation around what should—and should not—be considered scholarly.

To respond in part to her own inquiry, Mandell suggests another defense of standard scholarly communication practices—especially around employing specialized academic language. “There are some arguments against popularizing intellectual ideas developed in the disciplines that hold some weight” (29), she writes. Further:

It is most evident in science, but true in the humanities as well, that specialization leads to greater discovery. If one has to explain everything from scratch, it seems, you cannot get as far in deliberations. On the contrary, if addressing a specialized audience, shorthand can be used to indicate ideas upon which one builds. It is amazing, really, how little one can actually accomplish in one book, and so all the shortcuts that can be taken through gestures and shared specialized languages pave the way to accomplishing more. (Mandell 29)

Fitzpatrick reiterates this concept when she suggests “communication within a discourse community plays a crucial role in that community’s development, and thus there must always be room for expert-to-expert communication of a highly specialized nature” (*Generous Thinking* 159). Whether one thinks of Unsworth’s basic functions of scholarship, my own ruminations on specific academic practices, or Mandell’s and Fitzpatrick’s understanding of the usefulness of

specialization in certain contexts, there is value in reflecting on what should be retained as scholars consider more open and more social practices.

In what follows, I suggest that broadening engagement with intellectual ideas does not have to come at the expense of specialization, basic functions, nor central scholarly activities such as long-form writing, peer review, and citation. Rather, academics can have their cake and eat it too: they can pursue the thinking, writing, reviewing, and network building so key to intellectual development in the humanities, while exploring other venues and forms for ideas that might hold more traction—or different traction—with multiple audiences. Not all audiences will be interested in engaging with the form of the scholarly monograph, but they might find significant value in academic research nonetheless. In fact, such a position aligns well with Mandell’s thinking; in a manifesto section of *Breaking the Book* she calls for humanities practitioners to reorient toward ordinary language and customary thinking (62). She states, “*Either we disciplinarians can change the way books work, the way we work, capitalizing on the affordances offered by digital media, or the disciplines can be dismantled along with traditional academic institutional structures. Those seem to me to be the choices*” (62; *emphasis original*). Perhaps one way to avoid dismantling disciplines entirely is to broaden notions of what academic output can be.

Open Access: It’s a Start

Open scholarship advocates have asserted repeatedly the pressing importance of open access, as cited in Chapter 1. But others suggest that just because a resource is open—just because it is free to use—does not mean that it will see broad uptake necessarily. Reflecting on their work with ITHAKA, a higher education not-for-profit organization best known for the digital library

JSTOR, Heidi McGregor and Kevin Guthrie acknowledge the flaw in considering open access an end unto itself and suggest that the focus should shift to the productive use of research materials. As with many of their peers, they write from the intellectual standpoint that open access to academic research is “an undeniably good thing” (n.p.). But McGregor and Guthrie also consider other factors that are required to truly heighten global research impact.⁶¹ They contest that open access should not end at free access; as the authors write, “Presumably our higher-level aim is not to enable or provide free access for its own sake, but rather to broaden the productive use of scholarly materials for the benefit of students, researchers, and learners all over the world” (n.p.). This sentiment echoes Borgman’s earlier exhortation that research content must be presented in a “useful and usable form” (68). McGregor and Guthrie propose the “Pyramid of Productive Use,” which includes different conditions they deem necessary for useful engagement with research materials: literacy, technology, awareness, access, and training. Of course, there are other even more basic, day-to-day elements required to access research (or rather, to have the time, space, and resources to access research), including financial stability, childcare, and healthcare; the preservation and sustainability of such materials is also required for ongoing access to them. But McGregor and Guthrie gesture in the right direction: free access to resources is not enough to encourage the wide uptake and use of research output.

Other scholars also share the concern with what lies beyond the open access transition. In “Beyond Open Access to Open Publication and Open Scholarship,” Maxwell imagines a humanities-based digital scholarly communication system modeled after prevalent web technologies, practices, and metaphors. He compares the opportunities that such an approach

⁶¹ *n.b.* McGregor and Guthrie primarily consider research impact as the degree to which other academics—not more general publics—engage with research output.

might bear to standard scholarly communication practices and argues that academic resources could be much more *social* than they are traditionally. By social, Maxwell means that “the conversations that make up scholarly discourse do not merely comprise the utterances that are individual articles and books, but rather operate *within and around* these works” (5; *emphasis original*), and that this conversation should be part and parcel of the research artifact. In addition, Maxwell suggests that academic resources could become more open for remixing than they are currently. He writes, “The challenge for scholarly communication is to re-inscribe the relation between works, publications, and discourse more broadly” (5), and engaging with and even reassembling scholarly output is a part of those transitioning relations. Maxwell and I explore these ideas further: we suggest that networked technologies provide an opportunity to revamp the scholarly communication system and to “integrate the values of collaboration, sharing, and transparency inherent to open social scholarship into our knowledge dissemination methods” (Arbuckle and Maxwell n.p.). These suggestions for refiguring scholarly communication build distinctly on the premise that research is available open access and online.

As I explore throughout this dissertation, it does not suffice to simply publish open access as one’s sole public engagement technique. Public humanities scholars like Wendy F. Hsu and Sheila Brennan critique the digital humanities, in particular, for assuming that putting research online constitutes public engagement. Brennan writes: “It is important to recognize that projects and research may be available online, but that status does not inherently make the work digital public humanities or public digital humanities” (384). To engage with the public, both authors argue, one must consider these communities at the inception of a research project, not as an afterthought or, worse, as mute subjects of examination. Even Baron and Russell-Bennett—who consider scholarly communication from a more general standpoint without an explicit focus on

open access—argue that “publication does not guarantee that others will read the work and should not be regarded as an end in itself” (257). Although publishing open access is critical, open access is not enough.

Beyond Open Access: Different Variations for Different Ends

What can be built on a baseline of open access? Looking to alternative scholarly communication practices might allow one to undertake the long-form thinking and writing that is so crucial to scholarship as well as encourage reiteration and collaboration with other community groups, all under the auspices of open scholarship. A specific mode of practice to explore in this regard is *variation*. I use the term *variation* in a specific way following the *Oxford English Dictionary*: “the fact of varying in condition, character, degree, or other quality; the fact of undergoing modification or alteration, especially within certain limits” (“variation, n”). Moreover, my use of the term variation nods to the musical interpretation of the concept as repeating or reusing material in a different form, and in particular Edward Elgar’s late nineteenth-century orchestral composition *Variations on an Original Theme*, better known as the *Enigma Variations*.⁶² For the *Enigma Variations*, Elgar composed fourteen variations on a specific melody (the “original theme” of the composition’s title). Each variation represents members of Elgar’s intimate and social circles, including his wife, friends, and contemporaneous musicians (Rushton 7–9). The melody or original theme persists throughout, but is presented markedly differently from variation to variation, in keeping with its aim to reflect a different personage. Elgar’s variations can serve as a useful metaphor for the variation I argue for within the context of scholarly

⁶² I invite the reader to listen to Elgar’s *Enigma Variations* while reading through the rest of this chapter.

communication: variations as distinct manifestations of a recognizable idea in different styles or modes of address.

To nuance and perhaps complicate the analogy: there is at least one misalignment between musical variation and scholarly communication variation. Where the concept of musical variation suggests there is a single, *original* theme, I suggest that academics look to create variations on ideas, arguments, research data, or early analytical conclusions. No urtext, per se: the variation I advocate for does not presume there is one single *original idea* or *original text* to revise, reprint, or distribute. Ideas do not exist in a vacuum nor do they emerge from an academic's head brand new and fully-formed. Perhaps this brings the concept of variation closer to the more well-known title of Elgar's composition, the *Enigma Variations*; variations that emerge through specific modes of address and are themselves situated, embodied, and context-oriented.

Other researchers have explored the concept of creating different iterations of the same idea within the context of scholarly communication. For instance, in *Planned Obsolescence* Fitzpatrick employs the term *versioning*, in keeping with the document management consideration of the term. Drawing on her own experience of publishing *Planned Obsolescence* first as an online Media Commons project open to commenting and then as a revised print book with New York University Press, Fitzpatrick writes:

Versioning preserves the history of a text, allowing it to live and breathe while maintaining snapshots of the text at key moments, as well as the ability to compare those snapshots, permitting readers to approach a text not just in a finished state, but throughout its process of development. (*Planned Obsolescence* 69)

Although Fitzpatrick acknowledges the mutability of such a practice, the versioned material is still recognizable as iterations of the same document, discrete as those versions may be. The differences between the online Media Commons and paper NYU Press versions of *Planned Obsolescence* are not that significant from a content perspective, for instance—the changes tend to be sentence-level revisions within the same book structure. By contrast, what I term variation in this chapter is the purposeful creation of different iterations of an idea, data, research finding, or analytical conclusion in overtly distinct forms and formats. They may be developed sequentially or concurrently. In my usage of the term, different variations of a work serve different purposes and take visibly different forms.

Scholarly communication expert Janneke Adema explores the concept of scholarly versioning, too. Adema justifies framing her research—and her PhD dissertation in particular—as versions:

This idea of providing different versions of the text which will be available on various platforms, and then remixing and gathering them together again in several other forms and outputs—of which this PhD thesis is one—raises questions about the bound and objectified nature of the PhD thesis, the book and of scholarly research. (33)⁶³

Adema states that “re-assembling the different versions in this PhD thesis,”—as blogposts, conference papers, and co-authored papers, among other manifestations—“provides me with the means to challenge the reliance on the long-form linear argument that much work in the humanities adheres to” (34). For Adema, this engagement allows her to take a more flexible approach to the articulation of the ideas encapsulated in her dissertation. In a 2019 talk in Beirut,

⁶³ Although the Coventry University repository version is cited here, Adema’s dissertation is also available online via www.openreflections.org/.

Lebanon, Adema ruminated further on her conception of versioning, how it is employed in an academic setting, and what the provenance of the term is:

Versioning, as it has come to be used within academic research and publishing, refers to the frequent updating, rewriting or modification of academic material that has been published in a formal or informal way. As a practice it has been adopted from software development, where it is used to distinguish the various instalments of a piece of software. Versioning is also a common feature of many web-based publication forms, from blogs to wikis, based on the potential to quickly revise and save a piece of written material. Although adopted from software development, versioning has been around for a long time and can even be seen as an essential aspect of [writing, publishing, and scholarly communication...] (n.p.)

Such a definition makes more immediate reference to versioning in software development as well as earlier historical resonances in writing and publishing.

Regardless of how I distinguish the term variation from how Adema and Fitzpatrick employ the term versioning, there are similarities across our approaches. For example, Fitzpatrick suggests that “versioning may in some ways be [...] disconcerting for traditional authors, including academics, whose work lives have been organized around writing conceived not as an ongoing action but rather as an act of completing discrete projects” (*Planned Obsolescence* 67); this observation holds true for the arguments in Adema’s dissertation, and resonates in the practices I advocate for throughout this chapter. As I go on to explore below, variations represent a divergence from standard forms of academic production, in keeping with the departure of open social scholarship from more conventional modes of scholarly practice.

Ideas gain depth and traction as they are brought to light, discussed, reviewed, and refuted. This process of refinement is how academics develop convincing arguments. Instead of

thinking of so-called “lowbrow” or popular communication mechanisms as outside of the scholarly communication process, or as a public record or starting point for an idea, multiple variations of research data or an argument could be considered as equally important and requiring of sustained effort and attention.⁶⁴ The seed of any research output is the main idea, argument, or theory; that seed could be sprouted in various venues and forms. One could simultaneously or sequentially publish a long-form argument via an open access academic journal article; work with a journalist or writer colleague to explore the same theme in a more public, online venue; post a truncated version of the theory on a personal blog as an easy referent; record a video summarizing key points and upload it to the web; or create short, pithy social media encapsulations of the main ideas. Each mode of address and engagement will engender different reactions and feedback, as different audiences will collaborate and create knowledge at each interaction point.⁶⁵

Some scholars already enact variation in or for their work. For instance, digital media scholar Jacqueline Wernimont explores and shares her research in various modalities.

Wernimont asserts on her website:

My efforts to understand computing cultures and advance more just approaches extends beyond the writing of traditional academic books into public, engaged scholarship. This has included writing for popular outlets, multimedia installations, and leading projects on

⁶⁴ In the introduction to their edited collection *When Highbrow Meets Lowbrow: Popular Culture and the Rise of Nobrow* (2017) Peter Swirski and Tero Eljas Vanhanen define highbrow versus lowbrow culture and academia’s role in promoting the distinction between them: “Highbrow culture, consumed by library dust-covered academics and other refined tastemakers, reifies the classics. Lowbrow thrives on cheap thrills aimed at the lowest common denominator” (3).

⁶⁵ See the addendum to Chapter 6 for an example of variation in action.

privacy, intersectional approaches to technology and data, and creative communication of computing infrastructures. (“About”)

As a tangible example, Wernimont published an academic book titled *Numbered Lives: Life and Death in Quantum Media* with MIT Press in 2019. When the COVID-19 pandemic emerged in late 2019 and continued into 2020, Wernimont took to her Twitter account to expostulate on the counting of bodies during public health crises, rooted in the research of *Numbered Lives*. On 1 July 2020, she tweeted from her @profwernimont account: “We’re at more than 10.5 million global confirmed cases of #COVID19 and 2.5 million in the US and growing quickly, so why don’t the numbers and behaviors align? A thread from your friendly historian of quantification” (see Figure 2). Within 6 hours the first tweet of the thread had been both liked and retweeted over 100 times.⁶⁶



Figure 2: A tweet from Jacqueline Wernimont regarding the COVID-19 pandemic

⁶⁶ Later in the thread Wernimont tweets “Numbers are rhetorical, they do not simply argue for or make meaning by themselves. It matters how the figures are presented and interpreted. We’re seeing the impact of this in American politics around public health measures, but it’s true elsewhere as well.” She then reflects on the low levels of numerical literacy in the United States. In doing so, she reflects a piece of the argument in this chapter: that straightforward access to research data is not enough; research must be shared in effective ways in order to be useful for varying publics. She nuances this argument further by drawing attention to the at times insidious or manipulative ways data can be presented.

During this same time period Wernimont also contributed a piece titled “The Grim History of Counting the Dead During Plagues” to the popular technology magazine *Wired* in the Ideas section of their online publication. In undertaking such a multi-pronged approach, Wernimont shares her research more broadly and can engage with non-academic or academic-aligned publics more readily. Diversifying research address and engagement can also feed back into one’s research pursuit as varying publics connect and respond in varying ways.

The variation I advocate for and that Wernimont enacts may appear to represent a significant break from the current scholarly communication model and its standardized outputs. A degree of variation already exists in current scholarly practices, however. As Borgman writes, “Scholars shape and reshape the same content for different audiences as oral presentations, technical reports, conference presentations, or papers, and later as journal articles or books” (49). Data preservation studies and initiatives like LOCKSS (Lots of Copies Keeps Stuff Safe) also offer a useful analogy in this regard. Although preserving and storing multiple copies of a document or record is quite different than developing distinct iterations of a research argument or idea, LOCKSS reinforces the value of multiple copies and versions for finding, accessing, and preserving scholarly material in different ways. A 20-page open access research article may be freely available in a university library’s institutional repository, but that does not mean that a community member searching for credible research on health sciences, climate change, urban planning, or any other topic will be able to locate this material—especially so if the repository is not indexed by corporate search engines such as Google or if there is not sufficiently detailed metadata attached to deposited articles.

Beyond mere access and retrieval, there is the deeper challenge of deciphering research without highly specialized, field-specific training. Even those who are academically trained

struggle to decode and fully comprehend the research output of other fields—we are all guilty of writing for our colleagues in shorthand jargon that assumes a shared, prior knowledge.⁶⁷ As acknowledged above by Mandell, the shorthand is useful to those working within a discipline. But it is less useful for those who are not well versed in the historical precedents, theoretical angles, and current arguments of a field. Mandell herself questions the value of specialization that serves to barricade others from accessing certain intellectual debates (*Breaking the Book* 28–29). Independent scholar of physics and philosophy Eduard Kaeser suggests that, among other sources, knowledge gaps emerge from the exponential amount of research published each year: “The pace of scientific research in many fields is so breathtaking that even interested experts in other disciplines often fall by the wayside. Let alone the general public” (565). The rate of research production and its accompanying specialization leads to increasingly siloed fields of scholars who are working on academically significant research that remains uncommunicated beyond the boundaries of a speciality.

As such, there is a pressing need for translation and mobilization work. Not a generic oversimplification of academic content, but a presentation of scholarly ideas in different, purpose-built forms. As Bonnie Stewart and I wrote in a 2017 *Inside Higher Ed* post, “If academic knowledge is going to contribute to and shape public narratives in [the current] information ecosystem, academics will need to evolve some of our communication practices and norms” (n.p.). A possible evolution of these communication practices and norms could be the development of variations of a research inquiry and its outcomes. Moreover, if all of these varied outputs are linked to or otherwise reference each other (via citation, for instance), they can offer

⁶⁷ On the ubiquity of jargon across academic fields Alison Booth and Miriam Posner write: “Many of the nouns and verbs [in digital humanities] are as specialized as they are in the discourse of chemistry” (10).

long-, medium-, or short-form options for different audiences based on the amount of time readers have, and what their reasons are for accessing the research. A fellow colleague in my field may want to carefully scrutinize how I build my argument, confirm that I am well versed in the research literature, and trace my sources for their own intellectual exploration—the journal article or the monograph best serve these purposes. A colleague in another field may be interested in a one line synopsis on Twitter; an administrator may be looking for a paragraph-length high level summary on a professionally geared website; a policymaker may connect with a publicly accessible piece written in a more journalistic tone in an online news source; a community member may latch on to a podcast or YouTube video. Not all research output is used by the same people for the same purposes. Academics can respond to the needs of larger society in a collaboration-ready mode by sharing research widely and embracing the true ethos of access—beyond the simple removal of paywalls.

Challenges to Open Social Scholarship Approaches

Although there is much to commend more open and more social practices, resistance to change and structural inflexibility are prevalent across higher education. For instance, Borgman argues that the forms of books and journal articles have remained “remarkably stable for several centuries” (160), but not necessarily because these are the best or most useful formats for academic publishing. Borgman continues: “Particularly counterintuitive is the fact that existing forms do not necessarily serve scholars well, yet new genres that take advantage of the malleable, mutable, and mobile nature of digital objects have been slow to emerge” (160). Academics have communicated their research in specific ways for centuries (Guédon; Johns, *Nature of the Book*), and discipline-wide change in regard to academic practice can occur at a

slow pace. This is in part due to the high level of bureaucracy ingrained in higher education (and indeed in any sector that is publicly accountable for their expenditures). Moreover, the prestige economy of academia presents a significant barrier to change, as explored in Chapter 1. But it is also because researchers are overworked and have limited time to reinvent their workflows. As the aphorism goes, academics have flexible work hours: they are free to work any 60 hours a week of their choosing. If activities like variation are perceived as unrecognized and uncompensated additional labour rather than a valued and productive endeavour, they may well be less attractive to researchers. Education scholars Carol L. Colbeck and Lisa D. Weaver argue:

During a period when faculty feel ever-increasing pressures to produce more publications, secure more external funding, use innovative pedagogies in the classroom, and engage undergraduates in research, all while making their teaching and service “scholarly,” encouragement to conduct public scholarship may well be perceived by many as yet another impossible expectation. (7)

Time pressure poses a significant hindrance, as researcher buy-in and participation is key to the widespread adoption and sustainability of open scholarship.⁶⁸

There are also pragmatic challenges to opening up scholarship by exploring different forms and formats for academic work. As Borgman suggests, “Making content that was created for one audience useful to another is a complex problem. Each field has its own vocabulary, data structures, and research practices” (10). Graduate training tends to be field-specific and to follow well-established mores on what the standards and expectations of a given discipline are. Moreover, graduate students are not taught to write for a variety of audiences or to take a

⁶⁸ See Chapter 2 for a more in-depth engagement with public scholarship and public humanities in particular.

multiplatform approach to sharing their work. In the humanities, emerging scholars are conditioned to value and produce the types of artifacts (i.e. monographs and peer-reviewed journal articles) that are most highly regarded according to disciplinary standards. In *Putting the Humanities PhD to Work*, Katina Rogers critiques such a reproductive or replicative mode of training that “ascribe[s] value to deeply conservative processes and outcomes” (40). Because of this tendency, Rogers argues, “The way to measure success will always involve looking back toward those who have come before” (40). The current academic system—made up of and perpetuated by codified hiring, tenure, and promotion practices—encourages new scholars to produce knowledge in a specific way and for a delineated audience of academic peers.

Conclusion: Open+

Open access is critically important for the development and circulation of academic research. Those working in the university system can build on the foundation of open access to research in order to explore broader notions of access. Creating variations of one’s ideas and arguments in different forms and formats offers one path for pushing beyond open access to more open and more social scholarship. Experimenting with more public—more popular—forms of writing and knowledge sharing can produce variations of scholarly ideas that are accessible beyond being free to read.

There is lasting value in some of the more conventional scholarly communication practices in the humanities. The longer form of the monograph etches out a space for scholars to amass significant research and develop complex arguments. Citation networks provide evidence of intellectual engagement with a field. Peer review formalizes a feedback loop between an author and their colleagues. These practices have a substantial role in the academy and I do not

suggest that they be discounted or moved away from entirely. Rather, I argue for the embrace of multiple outputs and points of engagement. By following the lead of Fitzpatrick, Adema, Wernimont, and many others who publish their work in various modes and modalities, scholars could employ open scholarship practices across knowledge sharing platforms, and perhaps especially on social media platforms like Twitter or Facebook, or on public facing websites. Of course, such a suggestion raises issues regarding the ownership and manipulation of user data, the location of servers, and the possibility of academic work being monetized by corporate entities, yet again; Adema and Gary Hall acknowledge such challenges in the online collection they edited entitled *Really, We're Helping To Build This . . . Business: The Academia.edu Files* (2015). Indeed, as Adema asked in conversation in spring 2019, what does it mean to do open scholarship on closed, proprietary platforms? The tension around where and how to develop and share variations of one's work is substantial and requires closer scrutiny.

In the twenty-first century, *open* has become a buzzword in academia. The argument for open scholarship is well-established, rooted as it is in the ethical imperative to share knowledge as widely as possible. Open scholarship is considered to be a more efficient method for research and development since sharing results and output leads to less duplication of effort. Now that open practices are becoming more widely accepted, and even heralded in some corners, the next hurdle for the academic community is creative and effective implementation. Creating variations of output is one of the ways that open social scholarship can facilitate further academic and public engagement—because simple access is not always enough.

Chapter 6. A Pop Humanities Approach to Knowledge Sharing and Community Engagement

One of the ways in which academic research can become more open and more social is through the purposeful creation, sharing, and engagement of knowledge in public spaces. As I explore in the previous chapter, the increased visibility of academics and/or their work can encourage collaboration around knowledge creation as well as more uptake and understanding of such work. An example of this type of engagement can be found in the purposeful popularizing of scholarly research, which is not a new or revolutionary practice. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* one of the definitions of *popularize* is “to present (a technical or specialized subject) in a generally intelligible or appealing form” (“popularize, v.”); many working in the sciences and social sciences have undertaken this sort of work for years. To date, however, the same practice has not been as obvious or acknowledged in the humanities.

In this chapter I engage with the literature on and reception of popular or *pop* academic movements, including where there has been resistance to such a mode of engagement. Then, I explore what I term *pop humanities*—a genre akin to pop science or pop psychology—and consider how those who undertake such work are enabling broader access to intellectual materials. In this context, I focus specifically on contemporary writers Roxane Gay, Rebecca Solnit, and Maria Popova. Finally, I point to the benefits of a deeper embrace of popular engagement in meeting open social scholarship goals.

Popular Academic Engagement and its Critics

An obvious starting point for the examination of popular academic movements is popular science, better known as *pop science*. According to independent scholar Eduard Kaeser, pop

science is the latest manifestation of a long tail of popular communication with science (565). He traces this activity back to Galileo's *Dialogues*, "written in 'vulgar' Italian" (565) and cites similar popularizations of scientific theories in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. Now, according to Kaeser, "Pop science is a mixture of public education and popular culture as found in video clips, arts and music" (565). He concedes that public access to scientific knowledge is important; however, the "new cultural, economic and technological conditions that often take the popularisation to extremes" are "troubling" (565) for Kaeser, as they tend—in his opinion—toward entertainment and cultural currency rather than scientific rigour. Kaeser takes further issue with pop science: "Given the incentives of knowledge consumerism, creative minds face the choice of doing research or writing popular books. Science sells" (566). For Kaeser, this kind of engagement distracts scientists from doing their *real* work.

Pop science can be considered irrelevant or worse by academics, and pop psychology is often treated with similar derision. In the journal *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine* Jean-Luc Mommaerts and Dirk Devroey deem the term pop psychology to "encapsulate the host of mass-marketed, superficial, do-it-yourself [healing methods] that fool people into believing that there is an easy recipe for salvation" (275). Commenting on *The Organized Mind* (2014), a contemporary pop science book by McGill University professor Daniel J. Levitin, D. Robert Siemens quips:

The book serves up some self-help to all of us struggling with today's information deluge [...] and throws in enough neuroscience to satisfy those of us who carry a decent amount of suspicion for any pop psychology offerings. Whatever you think of the genre—and no disrespect to the author for the "pop" reference—the book makes several obvious but sobering points. (n.p.)

Although Siemens is praising *The Organized Mind*, he still acknowledges his own and his peers' "suspicion for pop psychology offerings;" that the book makes "obvious" points; and that the "pop" reference" could be interpreted as disrespectful by Levitin (n.p.). Such value statements about work that popularizes academic ideas and findings reveals the challenges and biases in academia around knowledge communication and public engagement. If work that appeals to and is understandable by a wider audience is treated with suspicion and disrespect by colleagues or considered to be a distraction or mere entertainment, then the impetus to do this sort of work is necessarily limited.⁶⁹

Concerns with Objectivity

Although it would be difficult to deduce the myriad reasons why many scholars deride popular academic writing, one possibility is that pop science often centres an author and their experience, thereby reflecting a degree of subjectivity. An embodied author may be easier to relate to than a disembodied one; there is a personal element to a subjective author relaying their experience that is missing from more impersonal accounts of complex ideas. In order to grapple with the issue of scholarly concerns with objectivity, it is useful to consider the historical relationship between this group and the wider world, as well as how scientific values of objectivity have been instrumentalized to exclude specific knowledge creation practices. In a 2020 report to the Canadian Commission for UNESCO on open scholarship, Leslie Chan et al. ruminate on the relative openness and closedness of scholarly activity to broader society, and gloss some of the historical reasons for this relation. They write:

⁶⁹ For a similar acknowledgement of how some authors critique science journalism as an oversimplification of research, see Chapter 4.

The idea that science must be wary of society—especially of anything that seems political—dates back to the first learned societies. It was promoted by scholars to protect themselves from the arbitrariness of power, from threats and punishments against those who challenged religious dogma. It seemed to scientists of the time that only among equals (i.e., male peers) and protected from the whims of rulers and clergy could knowledge of the world advance. Scholarly communities thus closed themselves off from society for protection (or for creative space) in what is sometimes called an “ivory tower.” The result was the exclusion of anything that was not them or like them. It also led to the establishment of complex rituals to gain access to the ivory tower. The doctorate degree is one example. Academics’ use of jargon that outsiders find hard to understand is another isolation tool. (6)

In this account, knowledge workers sought refuge in the university as a space to think critically without fear of censorship or worse from the ruling powers of their time. Chan et al. are quick to point out, however, that such self-protection developed into an exclusionary practice, or a way to gatekeep who is and is not considered expert.

An adherence to the value of objectivity in science can seem, at first glance, noncontroversial and in fact critical to the entire academic undertaking. But many scholars now dispute the importance and even the possibility of objective science. In “Situated Knowledges,” Donna Haraway outlines how science-based claims of rational, disembodied objectivity are faulty. She begins the essay by stating, “Academic and activist feminist inquiry has repeatedly tried to come to terms with the question of what we might mean by the curious and inescapable term ‘objectivity’” (575) and walks through the various responses to such claims by feminist historians and philosophers of science such as herself. Jonathan Y. Tsou, Alan Richardson, and Flavia Padovani introduce a collection titled *Objectivity in Science: New Perspectives in Science*

and *Technology Studies* (2015) by complicating the premise of objectivity in science further:

“While few would question the importance of the objectivity of science for providing a well-supported factual basis upon which policy decisions can be reliably made,” they write, “it is far from clear what scientific objectivity is or how it should be achieved” (1). Moreover, the authors contest,

The standard account of the objectivity of science throughout much of the twentieth century was value-freedom. Science is able to serve as an objective source of unbiased information precisely because either the individual scientist is able—qua scientist—to transcend all social, moral, and political values, or more plausibly, the institution of science is able to insulate itself from social values that would bias it and render it subjective. (2)

Now, in the twenty-first century, science is understood to be value-laden rather than value-free.

Robin Wall Kimmerer writes in *Braiding Sweetgrass* that “science *pretends* to be purely rational, completely neutral, a system of knowledge-making in which the observation is independent of the observer” (19; *emphasis mine*). As Tsou, Richardson, and Padovani demonstrate, in recent decades scholars across disciplines have turned a closer and more critical eye to the concept of science as objective, as well as to the proposition that science is fact-based and value-neutral.

The other contributors to *Objectivity in Science* engage with and nuance the question of objectivity further. Peter Galison—philosopher and co-author of an earlier book titled *Objectivity* (Daston and Galison)—suggests that there are various interpretations of objectivity as a concept.⁷⁰ In exploring the evolution of scientific objectivity Galison centres this “epistemic

⁷⁰ Galison provides the following overview of the history of scientific objectivity: “First, an era starting in the eighteenth century and in some ways continuing to the present (‘truth-to-nature’) in which the objects depicted were not particulars but universals; not your or my skeleton, but the human skeleton in its perfection. [...] Second, an era beginning in the mid-nineteenth century that supplemented but did not eliminate the first. ‘Mechanical Objectivity,’ as we called it, was characterized by a cultivated will to will-lessness—a quieting of our desires and aims, and a

virtue” (58,73) or “conjointly moral and epistemic task” (59) as key to the scientific endeavour of the past few centuries and especially to its pre-occupation with knowledge production.

Galison suggests that approaching the history of objectivity in this way reveals “a continuing, forever unfinished construction of professional selves—through practices of self-abnegation” (68). To be the objective scientist one must transcend the messier, biased identity of the individual.

Beyond the difficulty of effacing the individual, there are other critiques of objectivity. In a chapter entitled “Objectivity for Sciences from Below,” feminist philosopher of science Sandra Harding suggests that the concept of objectivity in science gained prominence in the twentieth century as it was employed in order to resist political or religious travesty—akin to Chan et al.’s argument, above. “Researchers and theorists between the two World Wars and at mid-century saw commitments to value-neutral research as the only reasonable standard of fairness capable of countering the tendency of fascistic and totalitarian ideologies masquerading as scientific to gain immense political power” (38), Harding writes. But she also demonstrates the dark side of so-called value-neutral science:

Theorists in many democratic revolutions since the 1960s have argued that [...] the supposedly value- and interest-neutrality goals and practices of modern Western sciences are not themselves value-neutral at all. Rather, in modern Western bureaucracies already structured by liberal political principles, appeals to neutrality tend to reinforce the

hunt for esthetic perfection. The mechanical site of this form of high objectivity in the sciences made a virtue of attending to particulars, and a vice of idealization [...] Third, an era of trained judgment, in which the right kind of observer was an expert, not by inherent constitution (no genius), but instead by long and careful training that allowed the researcher to effectively re-identify patterns, eliminate artifacts of the apparatus, and categorize the world” (58).

institutional power of elite authority against the equality-seeking claims of economically and politically vulnerable groups. (39)

The concept of objectivity is thus a purposeful, homogenizing tool for maintaining intellectual authority. Harding probes this line of thought further:

Objectivity—or the incapacity for it—has been attributed to individuals or groups of them, such as in uncomplimentary dismissals of women, African Americans, or the indigenous knowers of non-Western cultures as subjective and incapable of producing the reliable knowledge claims that supposedly can men, whites, Westerners, or some other elite group. (40)

Harding demonstrates the ways in which claims of objective or value-neutral science are used to exclude certain knowledge production modes and actors—an argument Kimmerer repeats throughout the pages of *Braiding Sweetgrass* in regard to Indigenous knowledge. Such behaviour represents epistemic injustice: a scenario where the dominant group is unable or unwilling to recognize the knowledge claims of those with a different lived experience from themselves.

The push to remove the personal from academic knowledge creation—the self-abnegation inherent to the creation of a professional, scientific self, as Galison might say—ripples into conceptions of what is and is not legitimate scholarly work. Reflecting on Harding's earlier publication *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge? Thinking From Women's Lives* (1991), Kathleen Fitzpatrick ruminates, "Science—like all forms of academic research—may aspire to objectivity, but it has always been conducted by humans, who are inescapably subjective beings" (*Generous Thinking* 205). Kimmerer agrees: "we are all the product of our world views, even scientists who claim pure objectivity" (159), she writes. A communication form such as popular science that is regularly presented by a prominent author-as-narrator who writes in first person

and references the subjective and the experiential does not align cleanly with the “epistemic virtue” (Galison 58,73) of objective science—even when it is now accepted that the notion of objectivity is fraught and contestable. As Haraway suggests, showing bias in science is “too easy” (578); furthermore, she writes, “Science is a contestable text and a power field” (577).

Popular Academic Engagement and its Supporters

Even amidst any perceived lack of objectivity, some academics do see the value in popular writing. In a study on pop business and pop psychology books, Sean R. McMahon and Laura A. Orr make the case for improving knowledge translation:

scholarly research papers fail to garner widespread utilization, reflecting a gap between practice and knowledge in the business community. Researchers estimate that less than 18% of research is easily accessible to the public, while fewer than half of published papers ever receive a single citation. Moreover, journalists and scholars point out that many professionals do not use scholarly research because it is time consuming and difficult to understand. (195)

Although writing from a context of increasing access to research, McMahon and Orr find that popular business and psychology books are perceived as authoritative by their readers even when the authors employ weak or generic citation practices, or when the books are largely anecdotal rather than evidence based. To address this issue, McMahon and Orr suggest that a new genre of book should be introduced to identify popular books that have academic merit as well. They consider these books valuable because research is not always easy to access, read, or understand; if there were more academically legitimate popular books, those studying, working, or interested in a specific field could access evidence-based arguments more easily. This could, in turn, increase the acceptance of popular writing by other academics who are suspicious of the practice.

Pop science, pop psychology, and pop business books are successful at reaching broad audiences, regardless of academic skepticism. For instance, the books that McMahon and Orr study—*Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead* (2013) by Facebook Chief Operations Officer Sheryl Sandberg; *Outliers: The Story of Success* (2008) by *New York Times* staff writer Malcolm Gladwell; *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (2011) by Princeton University professor emeritus of psychology and public affairs Daniel Kahneman; *The Power of Habit: Why We Do What We Do in Life and Business* (2012) by journalist Charles Duhigg; and *#GIRLBOSS* (2014) by business person Sophia Amoruso—were the bestselling business books of 2014 on the *New York Times*' and *USA Today*'s book lists. The professor who Siemens references, Levitin, is also a *New York Times* bestselling author. On Malcolm Gladwell, David Runciman writes: "He's [...] responsible more than anyone else for the birth of the modern pop-ideas genre, in publishing and beyond" (n.p.). These authors reach and hold appeal for a large audience, and the popularity of their books reflects public interest in non-fiction that popularizes and therefore applies and makes accessible complex theories and concepts.

Taking Cues from Other Fields: A Proposal for Pop Humanities

Humanities practitioners do not have to be exempt from the wide-scale public engagement of knowledge production noted here in the psychology, science, and business worlds. Although not commonly referred to under this term, there is a space for *pop humanities* as well. Some individuals are already undertaking public facing work in the humanities in a sustained and strategic manner.⁷¹ There are writers who build off their humanistic training and writing to share

⁷¹ For engagement with this idea within the context of the public humanities, see Chapter 2. This argument also builds on suggestions in Chapter 5 for the value of developing variations of academic research output.

their ideas more widely with a larger public, while maintaining a distinct degree of intellectual credibility. Following the tradition of pop science and pop psychology, I consider this work to be pop humanities. In what follows I provide three examples of contemporary writers who embody pop humanities ethos and practice: Roxane Gay, Rebecca Solnit, and Maria Popova. It is critical to note two things at this juncture:

- 1) Gay, Solnit, and Popova have not identified as pop humanists publicly; this is a framework I am putting them in to explore the possibilities and tractability of such a concept.
- 2) There is both a long history of the public scholar and many current examples, and I do not mean to elide or diminish such a role. Rather, I want to look at a specific manifestation of intellectually oriented public work involving humanities materials and approaches that mimics trends in other fields.⁷²

With these caveats aside, one can consider how Gay, Solnit, and Popova straddle the divide between the popular and the academic in their respective endeavours. Far from the only work in this arena, Gay, Solnit, and Popova can serve as models for what publicly engaged, popular humanities practice can look like.

As a first example of pop humanities, consider Roxane Gay. Gay is an American writer and academic. At the time of writing, she serves as a visiting Associate Professor at Yale University in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, but she has previously held posts as

⁷² Not only are there many public scholars, but the very existence of such a role can be complicated and even fraught. For instance, the University of Toronto professor Jordan Peterson has developed a public persona that energizes groups like involuntary celibates (colloquially known as *incels*) by espousing his conservative views on gender and women. He has done so online and in print, including through a number one bestselling Canadian non-fiction book for 2018, which was also the ninth bestselling Canadian book of the 2010s according to Booknet Canada (Sparkes).

Associate Professor of English at Purdue University and Assistant Professor of English at Eastern Illinois University; primarily, Gay has taught creative writing at these academic institutions. She is most well-known for her bestselling essay collection *Bad Feminist* (2014) and her memoir *Hunger: A Memoir of (My) Body* (2017). Gay has written or edited many other books as well and has also published in various online and print publications. She recently launched a podcast with digital sociologist Tressie McMillan Cottom called *Hear to Slay*.⁷³ Gay also ran an online publication on Medium titled *Gay Mag* from May 2019 to April 2020.⁷⁴ In January 2021, Gay launched *The Audacity*, a weekly newsletter, and *Audacious*, a book club. She is very active on social media and Twitter in particular where she both tweets regularly and hosts live question and answer broadcasts for her audience base. Writing as a Black queer woman, Gay publicly engages issues and challenges around race, queerness, and gender.

Bad Feminist could be considered one of the turning points in Gay's career from her role as a smaller scale blogger, writer, and academic to a larger public presence. In *Bad Feminist* Gay explores pop culture through a feminist lens. She argues against essentialist notions of feminism and counters that if there is one way (or a best way) to be a feminist, she is a bad one. Rather, Gay suggests, it is more useful to think of feminism in basic terms—as the belief that people of all genders should be equal—rather than to uphold outdated or overly complex notions of what a feminist is. In more blatant terms, Gay simply states that she is a feminist because she “[doesn’t] want to be treated like shit for being a woman” (318). Gay’s engagement with pop culture is

⁷³ For a list of Gay’s publications see www.roxanegay.com/writing/; for *Hear to Slay* navigate to the podcast hosting site Luminary.

⁷⁴ To access *Gay Mag* see gay.medium.com/. In a Letter from the Editor included in the final issue of *Gay Mag*, Gay explains why the magazine only had a one year publication run: “In online publishing, the power is in the numbers and when you don’t have the right numbers, you don’t have enough power to sustain a publishing enterprise” (“Power” n.p.).

wide, focusing on relevant current events, fiction, television shows, and films. This popular engagement—as well as her accessible tone and pushback against more conservative feminism—makes *Bad Feminist* an accessible essay collection for many readers. Although she is academically trained and tenured, Gay has mastered the popularization of her humanities-based work.

The scholarly reception of Gay’s public-facing work has been mixed. Patricia A. Matthew—a researcher on the nineteenth century and 2020–21 Distinguished Visiting Scholar at SUNY-Buffalo’s Center for Diversity Innovation—lauds Gay for her “crossover success” (n.p.) and posits her as a refreshing and critical presence:

Gay’s writing is a new iteration of *écriture féminine* that centers black female experience for its own sake. Gay is writing not only outside of the traditional bounds of the academy, but also outside traditional media structures and against the mainstream feminist demand that black women write only for the greater good. (n.p., *emphasis original*)

A 2016 issue of the feminist journal *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* features a special section of responses to *Bad Feminist* where prominent feminist thinkers comment on the collection (Walters). Carla Kaplan lauds *Bad Feminist* for “the enviable attention it has garnered from mainstream media” (706). She calls Gay’s strategy “feminism for those who don’t like feminists” (Kaplan 706). In a piece titled “On Imperfection and its Comforts,” Patricia J. Williams attributes the book’s appeal to “Gay’s casually colloquial yet highly intellectual takedowns” (708). Jennifer Baumgardner considers Gay’s approach to feminism to be complicated, as Gay both “implicates and empathizes with feminist critics” (703) since she refuses to be included as a member of the arch-feminism of academia nor to be considered as anti-feminist. Brittney Cooper—herself an academic and author of the popular book *Eloquent*

Rage: A Black Feminist Discovers Her Superpower (2018)—is more full-throated in her support of Gay’s work:

What I need as a grown woman feminist in this political moment is a politic that feels livable and breathable and that gives me room to stretch and grow. Roxane Gay’s book makes space for a liberatory politic, and she’s hilarious while doing it. This book captures everything I love about feminism, mostly because her feminism makes space for me to be my very best, badass self. (“Feminism for Badasses” 705)

Well-known feminist Naomi Wolf praises *Bad Feminist* for being both accessible and intellectually adept, but also critiques the very style that makes such an essay collection approachable: “This book is far from perfect; the essays are often too casually structured, suffering from repetition at times—a carelessness that could reflect a younger generation’s acclimation to the essay form through blogs” (711). Throughout these varied responses to *Bad Feminist*, the authors all acknowledge the book’s cultural significance and implications for feminism both inside and outside of the academy.

Gay also offers commentary on her own public persona. In a 2013 article titled “The Danger of Disclosure: Cultural Criticism Online,” she explores the challenge of being a well-known author who writes online frequently. Gay acknowledges the flattery of readers wanting to engage with her professionally and personally, and to hear her opinion on current events. But she also insists that it is important to be selective about online writing. Gay concludes that “sometimes we should write because we feel comfortable having something to say that might inform” (62); by the same token, authors should not feel compelled to write on each and every topic and event.

Rebecca Solnit is another prominent American author who could be considered a pop humanist. She has written numerous non-fiction books and essays since the early 1990s and is active on social media largely through her Facebook page.⁷⁵ The range of topics Solnit engages is broad, but in recent years she has tended to focus more primarily on issues around gender in the North American context. Although trained at the graduate level through the journalism program at the University of California Berkeley, Solnit does not identify as an academic or hold an academic post. In a 2017 *New York Times Style Magazine* feature, Alice Gregory describes Solnit's output and impact as follows:

Her work—both new and old—is much discussed on Twitter and cited in op-eds, and the books themselves—she's published 10 in the last 10 years—hold prime real estate at bookstores across the country. Solnit writes a column for *Harper's Magazine* and contributes regularly to *The Guardian* and the *London Review of Books*, as well as to Literary Hub, a website that she, at 56 and widely celebrated, has no reason to even know exists. She agrees to interviews, and posts long, magazine-ready treatises on Facebook, which are read and shared, effusively and often histrionically, by her 100,000-plus followers. (n.p.)

Similar to Gay, however, Solnit crossed over from being a notable figure in literary circles to becoming the much more mainstream commentator Gregory depicts when she engaged contemporary feminism through her book *Men Explain Things to Me* (2014).

In *Men Explain Things to Me* Solnit focuses on misogyny and male violence, especially in contemporary American society: "There is [...] a pattern of violence against women that's broad and deep and horrific and incessantly overlooked" (20), she writes. Solnit argues that

⁷⁵ For a list of Solnit's publications see rebeccasolnit.net/.

contemporary society has not considered adequately why men in particular are so violent and why the everyday violence, rape, sexual harassment, and murder that women face at the hands of men is not taken more seriously as evidence of a larger, dangerous social ill. She peppers the work with sobering statistics on rape, femicide, and domestic violence. Solnit also references various high profile cases of harassment or violence against women, including the 1991 Anita Hill testimony, the 2012 gang rape of Jyoti Singh, and the 2014 Isla Vista massacre. Solnit continues these explorations in a 2017 book titled *The Mother of All Questions*. She resumes her appraisal of the current conversation around gender in America, and most especially the relationship between gender and violence. “Rape is so common in our culture it’s fair to call it an epidemic” (*The Mother* 91), Solnit attests. She argues that women are under perpetual threat and that regardless of the published evidence men are still not acknowledged to be, by and large, the perpetrators of that threat. As with *Men Explain Things to Me*, Solnit contextualizes the argument of *The Mother of All Questions* within larger events, narratives, and conversations happening in American society and popular culture.

Solnit’s lengthy publication record reverberates in an interdisciplinary citation network: she is referenced in research from fields as diverse as sustainable human–computer interaction (Bendor) to critical or applied geography (Cresswell; Evans and Jones; Waite) to urban development (Hollands) to theology (Pihkala) to biopolitics (Wrangel). Meliz Ergin engages Solnit’s work more comprehensively in the book *The Ecopoetics of Entanglement in Contemporary Turkish and American Literatures* (2017). Moreover, in 2004 Solnit was awarded with both the Sally Hacker Prize from the Society for the History of Technology and Harvard University’s Mark Lynton History Prize for *River of Shadows: Eadweard Muybridge and the Technological Wild West* (2003). Some academics focus more primarily on Solnit’s writing style

than her research, content, or argumentation. For instance, journalism scholar Marcus O'Donnell deems Solnit a “freelance intellectual” (937) and frames her writing style as “polyphonic open journalism” (937).

The more mainstream press features commentary on Solnit's work, too, and Solnit is also an active contributor to this discursive arena. In a 2007 interview with Solnit, Peter Terzian condones “the effortless way she crosses the borders of disciplines and genres” (n.p.) and calls her prolific, noting the many different venues and publishers she has worked with over the years. To emphasize her writing style, Terzian quotes Solnit herself from the introduction to her book *Storming the Gates of Paradise* (2007):

The straight line of conventional narrative is too often an elevated freeway permitting no unplanned encounters or necessary detours. It is not how our thoughts travel, nor does it allow us to map the whole world rather than one streamlined trajectory across it. I wanted more, more scope, more nuance, more inclusion of the crucial details and associations that are conventionally excluded. (n.p.)

Susanna Rustin also interviewed Solnit, this time in relation to the publication of her book *The Faraway Nearby* (2013). This interview highlights Solnit's unique style, which Rustin terms “literary prose” (n.p.); further, Rustin writes, “Solnit is also the champion of a style of writing that loops, circles, changes direction” (n.p.). Rustin quotes the author on her own writing style, which Solnit deems a “fluidity from first-person to narrative historical things” (n.p.). Finally, Rustin comments on Solnit's degree of mainstream success and self-sufficiency as an independent writer.

As a third example of pop humanities, Maria Popova is a Bulgarian-born writer based in New York who is best known for her creation of the literary website Brain Pickings.⁷⁶ Popova has written for mainstream publications such as *The New York Times*, *Wired UK*, and *The Atlantic*. In 2019 she published a print book titled *Figuring* that provides a social history of late nineteenth-century American intelligentsia, with a focus on queer women who have been overshadowed by their male counterparts. Generally, Popova's scope is broad, and she tends to write on any and all things literary on Brain Pickings including the connection between art and science. She also weaves in personal anecdotes from her own experience as a queer immigrant woman living in the United States. Popova's career trajectory differs from that of Solnit and Gay; where the latter writers published various book-length works prior to tipping into the public eye, the former became well known through her website Brain Pickings first.

Brain Pickings is a curatorial and editorial literary website where Popova develops essays on specific cultural works and figures, both contemporary and historic. She often reviews texts within the larger context of a social movement, an idea, or a philosophical approach. As an example of the work featured on Brain Pickings, at the end of each year Popova publishes "The Best of Brain Pickings." She defines the segment as follows: "In this annual review, as usual, 'best' is a composite measure of what I most enjoyed thinking and writing about, and what readers most enjoyed reading and sharing" (Popova, "The Best"). In 2018, the top feature of this segment was an article titled "The Difficult Art of Giving Space in Love: Rilke on Freedom, Togetherness, and the Secret to a Good Marriage." Other features included ruminations on and literary references to grief, the colour blue, the cosmos, and identity politics, among other

⁷⁶ Brain Pickings is available at www.brainpickings.org/.

subjects. Brain Pickings is free to access, as are the generated Sunday and mid-week newsletters from the site. The website is supported by donors and is a part of the Amazon Services LLC Associates Program, whereby Popova generates some income by linking out to Amazon: a method that was publicly criticized by techworker Tom Bleymaier as misleading and potentially unethical and, in response, defended by Popova herself (Salmon). Brain Pickings was also “included in the Library of Congress permanent web archive in 2012” (Popova, “About”). Popova has received no recognition from the academic world for her approach to literary studies and her earnest and sustained public engagement around humanities materials.

Although they write from varied backgrounds and occupy different roles in the contemporary cultural sphere, Gay, Solnit, and Popova share a core activity: they engage publics over humanities work. In part, these authors are able to do so by publishing in mainstream venues or with non-academic publishers, and at standard commercial price points. The University of California Press did publish Solnit’s *Storming the Gates of Paradise*, but Haymarket Books published her more recent books and Viking Press published *River of Shadows*, *The Faraway Nearby*, and the 2020 release of Solnit’s memoir, *Recollections of My Nonexistence*. Harper Perennial published Gay’s *Bad Feminist*; HarperCollins published *Hunger*. Popova’s Brain Pickings has always been openly available on the web. Otherwise, she has published in mainstream and well-read publications and divisions of Penguin Random House published *Figuring*. Notably, all three authors are active in online, dialogic spaces where they engage with readers.

Gay, Solnit, and Popova tend to gravitate to the personal essay—an accessible form that does not erase the author or her experiences from the output. Although the three authors are most often writing nonfiction, they emphasize narrative, and their tone is distinctly literary. In the

previous chapter I cite a tweet by Jacqueline Wernimont where she offers a provocation around why many Americans were not following health authority guidelines during the COVID-19 pandemic despite rapidly growing case numbers. Later in that thread, Wernimont explicitly connects a lack of numerical literacy with popular behaviour: “Numbers are rhetorical,” she tweets, “they do not simply argue for or make meaning by themselves. It matters how the figures are presented and interpreted. We’re seeing the impact of this in American politics around public health measures, but it’s true elsewhere as well” (@profwernimont). Wernimont then suggests that narrative and first- or second-hand experience (e.g. knowing someone who has contracted the COVID-19 virus) is much more impactful than raw data. In *Figuring*, Popova picks up this same thread when she writes of famed seventeenth-century mathematician and scientist Johannes Kepler. In order to publicize his work on heliocentrism, Kepler created what Popova and others consider to be the first science fiction work: *Somnium*, or *The Dream* (written ~1608–1609 and published in 1634). In choosing to present his theories in this way, Popova argues, Kepler had

realized something crucial and abiding about human psychology: The scientific proof was too complex, too cumbersome, too abstract to persuade even his peers, much less the scientifically illiterate public; it wasn’t data that would dismantle their celestial parochialism, but storytelling. [...] Kepler knew that whatever the composition of the universe might be, its understanding was indeed the work of stories, not science—that what he needed was a new rhetoric by which to illustrate, in a simple yet compelling way, that the Earth is indeed in motion. (16)

Later in the book, Popova also interprets German writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and American environmentalist Rachel Carson as occupying similar knowledge translation roles. She suggests Goethe was a “passionate and mediocre” (113) scientist, but that “his greatest

contribution lies not in original scientific discoveries but in synthesizing and popularizing science, in wresting from it powerful metaphors that would lodge themselves in the popular imagination for centuries” (113). On Carson, Popova writes that her success and impact with the ocean-focused book *The Sea Around Us* in the 1950s “earned Carson the National Book Award and established her as a singular bridge figure between serious science and serious literature, with Galileo’s rigor and Thoreau’s poetic gift” (411–12). Moreover, Popova enthuses,

It was a revelation that science could be a literary subject, that it could speak—nay, sing—to the common reader with melodic might, so gracefully and graciously rejecting the false trade-off between the authority of science and the splendor of literary art. Rachel Carson would model for generations of writers the dignified refusal to give up either in the service of the other. (423)

With both *Figuring* and *Brain Pickings*, Popova herself takes on humanities knowledge translation through narrative form; she shares the complex theories and histories of numerous authors, artists, mathematicians, and scientists in ways that are findable and digestible by various publics.

Pop Feminism versus Public Feminism: Select Critiques

Although there has been a generally positive reception of Solnit and Gay, in particular, there has also been an interrogation of public approaches to knowledge sharing and creation from some feminists. For instance, writing for Canadian magazine *The Walrus*, Viviane Fairbank explicitly critiques Solnit for writing “pop feminism” (n.p.). Following the criticisms of pop science and pop psychology cited above, Fairbanks uses this label in a dismissive way in order to suggest that Solnit engages with feminist issues and current events superficially. Fairbank critiques

Solnit for being a generalist and argues that she uses social media to connect with mass publics on contemporary issues without adding to the conversation in any substantial way. Fairbank argues that pop feminism “makes feminism more accessible than ever, while simultaneously trivializing the cause” (n.p.) and that Solnit is a proponent of this behaviour. Fairbank claims that Solnit “never makes it past anecdotal evidence” (n.p.) and that she ignores basic considerations of contemporary feminism like intersectionality, affirmative action, body image, and sex work. There is much to discredit Fairbank’s claims; most notably Solnit’s engagement with those topics across many essays and books, and especially in *Men Explain Things to Me* and *The Mother of All Questions*. But Fairbank insists on Solnit’s “moral simplicity and naivete” (n.p.), despite published evidence to the contrary.

Criticism of pop feminism reverberates in more recent feminist scholarship, too. A 2020 special issue of *Signs* titled “Public Feminisms” showcases articles that engage deliberately with how feminism is enacted beyond the academy. In the introduction to this issue, the line between public feminist scholarship and pop feminism is drawn; editor Susanna Danuta Walters indicates that *Signs*—as a discursive space—inhabits “the world of feminism in the academy” (785) in contrast to “a vibrant new wave of popular feminist writing” (785). Although Walters seems to celebrate these separate feminisms at first, she quickly purports that

scholars writing about feminism [...] focus more on structures of resistance than on individual actors even as, ironically, we live in an era of celebrity feminism where feminist bloggers and essayists craft their public personas with a canny and calculating eye, revealing excruciatingly personal details in a bid for more retweets and likes... (788–89)

Walters’ criticism of engaging publicly and sharing personal details is telling; such an approach is “canny and calculating” (789) in contrast to, assumedly, the more noble work of academic

feminism, focused as it is on “structures of resistance” (788). Later in the issue, in an article titled “On Making Academic Feminism More Public,” civic studies scholar Margaret McGladrey examines the rise of public feminist engagement. She challenges modes of communication such as blogs and social media that have made pop feminism possible, asserting “this interest in making academic feminism more public should be tempered with a critical analysis of the commercially mediated public discourse in the United States” (1035). Further, McGladrey writes:

Despite the clear potential for digital platforms to circulate feminist ideas and [mobilize] innovative forms of protest, commercially mediated channels present risks in terms of abstracting academic feminist “talk” from its grounding in the “walk” of service provision and organizing; widening the divide between academic feminist theory and popular feminist conversations; and reproducing the individualizing, competitive mix of the attention economy or knowledge production and communication. (1035)

Later in the article, McGladrey acknowledges Gay’s role as a public feminist and attributes her commercial success to Gay’s “fearless embrace of the many contradictions between her professed feminist values and her everyday life” that “mirrored her efforts to reconcile her experiences as a feminist both inside and outside the academy” (1042). Ironically, given that Gay is heralded by both Walters and McGladrey, the latter authors’ delineations of the right or better way to do feminism is exactly what Gay pushes back against in *Bad Feminist*.

Conclusion: Pop Humanities Can Be an Avenue for Greater Public Engagement if We Want It

Criticisms of pop science and pop psychology—and even pop feminism—abound, as noted above, and there is a more unspoken shunning of these activities through a lack of sustained and serious academic engagement with writers like Popova.⁷⁷ Scholarly consideration of and connection to pop academic movements is relatively minimal considering the substantial audience for this sort of work and thus its high social and cultural impact. Gay, Solnit, and Popova provide an alternative approach to knowledge production than the typical walled, academic mode. In doing so, they engage with wider publics, extend their interpretations of complex ideas, and share their substantial humanities-based research in forms and formats that are findable, usable, and above all, accessible to many who seek to engage with such work. If pop humanities contributions were taken more seriously by those working in academia, perhaps these more open and more social practices could be adopted as an active public engagement strategy for the humanities.

⁷⁷ In the humanities, there is some interest in more popular literature or historically low- or middlebrow literary practices, and there is also increasing focus on fan fiction and self publishing. See for instance Melanie Ramdarshan Bold, “The Return of the Social Author: Negotiating Authority and Influence on Wattpad”; Kristina Busse, *Framing Fan Fiction: Literary and Social Practices in Fan Fiction Communities*; Karen Hellekson and Kristina Busse, *The Fan Fiction Studies Reader*; Angela Thomas, “Fan Fiction Online: Engagement, Critical Response, and Affective Play through Writing.”

Addendum: “What Are the Humanities? Where Are They?”⁷⁸

When I’m at a dinner party or a family reunion and I tell people I work in the humanities, I’m often met with a blank stare. No one ever comes out and asks me directly: what exactly are the humanities? They feel like they should know. But they don’t.

This isn’t my dinner companions’ fault, necessarily. The humanities form a large umbrella that encompasses the study of history, literature, philosophy, anthropology, politics and many other topics that people engage with energetically over meals, coffee, online, and just about everywhere else. The problem isn’t disinterest in the humanities. The problem is that the humanities have a marketing issue.

Frankly, this shouldn’t be a huge surprise. It makes sense that a group of people trained to uphold left of centre—if not explicitly Marxist—ideals would be anti-marketing. Especially since said group of people have witnessed the increasing corporatization of the university since the 2008 economic crash and are often actively fighting against encroaching neoliberalism. At its best, marketing could be thought of as the considerate translation of important messages to broader publics. At its worst, marketing is seen as a key piece of the propaganda machine that enriches corporate powers and contradicts core academic values. Needless to say, anything that smacks of something as crass as capitalism makes the literary scholars and art historians quiver. And perhaps rightly so.

⁷⁸ This addendum is intended as an example of the practice of *variation* that I advocate for earlier. It is a shorter, more public-facing variation of this chapter.

In addition to such anti-capitalist tendencies, there is—to risk pathologizing multiple academic disciplines—a sort of anxiety around image and perception. Most humanities scholars seem to fear the spotlight. To jump into it would prove that you are not a toiling intellectual monk searching for pure knowledge, knowledge for knowledge's sake; you are a self-promoting egoist, just like every other Instagram influencer.

But in refusing to tell their own stories, those working in the humanities contribute to the significant undervaluing and obscuring of their disciplines. In doing so, they add to the current condition where many outside of the university sphere do not understand just what the humanities are.

There's more at stake than humility, though. There is also a communally agreed upon notion that to be more public with your work is to be less objective with it. Reaching out beyond the walls of the ivory tower suggests that actual human hands have written that research article. A person with their own messy, biased, complex life is muddling with pure knowledge. This cuts against one of the one of academia's key values: objectivity.

The roots of academic objectivity go back centuries, to a time when scientists had to claim that their research was unbiased truthseeking—just the facts and nothing but the facts—in order to avoid religious or political persecution. To be objective was to be protected. It wasn't your personal views that went against what the bible or the king said. It was the science.

Scientific objectivity can seem, at first glance, noncontroversial and in fact critical to the entire academic undertaking. But in more recent decades, many scholars have turned a closer and more critical eye to the concept of science as objective and to the proposition that research is fact-based and value-neutral. As well-known science and technology scholar Donna Haraway once suggested, showing bias in science is simply *too easy*.

The push to remove the personal from the academic ripples into opinions about what is and is not legitimate scholarly work. Pop science and pop psychology books, for instance, are regularly presented by a prominent author-as-narrator who writes in the first person and references their own and others' lived experiences; think of Malcom Gladwell or Bill Nye. This approach does not match up with the virtue of objective science, even when we now know that the notion of objectivity in academia is fraught and contestable.

Pop science and pop psychology can be considered irrelevant or even dangerous by academics. In the journal *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine*, Jean-Luc Mommaerts and Dirk Devroey deem the term pop psychology to “encapsulate the host of mass-marketed, superficial, do-it-yourself [healing methods] that fool people into believing that there is an easy recipe for salvation.” Such value statements about work that popularizes academic ideas reveals the challenges and biases in academia around both communicating knowledge and engaging with non-academics. If work that appeals to and is understandable by a wider audience is treated with suspicion and disrespect by colleagues, or considered to be a distraction or mere entertainment, what self-respecting scholar is going to do this work?

Regardless of academic perception, pop science and pop psychology books are very successful at reaching broad audiences. Many of them—such as Gladwell’s *Blink* or *The Tipping Point*—are national or even international bestsellers. These books reach and hold appeal for a large audience. Their popularity reflects public interest in non-fiction that applies complex theories and concepts in understandable, accessible ways.

Many working in the sciences and social sciences have undertaken this sort of writing for some time now. To date, however, the same practice has not been as obvious or acknowledged in the humanities. Again, the humanities have a marketing problem and this resistance to popularizing humanities ideas has brought us to the present day where the word *humanities* doesn’t even ring a bell for many people.

The irony, however, is that *pop humanities* is happening already: it just hasn’t been called this before. There are writers who build off of their humanistic training to share their ideas more widely with a larger public, while maintaining a distinct degree of intellectual credibility. Following the tradition of pop science and pop psychology, this is pop humanities.

Let’s take a look at a handful of examples of contemporary writers who embody pop humanities ethos and practice: Roxane Gay, Rebecca Solnit, and Maria Popova. All three straddle the divide between the popular and the academic in their respective endeavours.

Consider American writer and academic Roxane Gay. She is currently a visiting Associate Professor at Yale University in Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (and has previously

taught in English departments at Purdue and Eastern Illinois University). In the realm of the university, Gay has held quite prestigious academic positions, and yet, she is most well-known for her bestselling 2014 essay collection *Bad Feminist* and her 2017 memoir *Hunger: A Memoir of (My) Body*. Gay has written and edited many other books as well and has also published in various online and print publications. She recently launched a podcast with digital sociologist Tressie McMillan Cottom called *Hear to Slay* and ran an online publication on Medium titled *Gay Mag* from May 2019 to April 2020. In January 2021, Gay launched *The Audacity*, a weekly newsletter, and *Audacious*, a book club. She tweets regularly and hosts live Q&A broadcasts for her audience base. Writing as a Black queer woman, Gay publicly engages issues around race, sexuality, and gender.

Bad Feminist could be considered one of the turning points in Gay's career from her role as a smaller scale blogger, writer, and academic to a larger public presence. In *Bad Feminist*, Gay explores pop culture through a feminist lens. She argues against essentialist notions of feminism and counters that if there is one way (or a best way) to be a feminist, she is a bad one. Rather, Gay suggests, it is more useful to think of feminism in basic terms—as the belief that people of all genders should be equal—rather than to uphold outdated or overly complex notions of what a feminist is. In more blatant terms, Gay simply states that she is a feminist because she doesn't "want to be treated like shit for being a woman." Gay centres her own experiences and interpretations while she engages with relevant current events, fiction, television shows, and films. Her subject matter, tone, and pushback against more conservative feminism makes *Bad Feminist* an accessible essay collection for many readers. Although she is academically trained and tenured, Gay has mastered the popularization of her humanities-based work.

The scholarly reception of Gay's public-facing work has been mixed, however. Some academics—like highly visible feminist Naomi Wolf—consider her work too casual. Others, like Brittney Cooper (author of *Eloquent Rage: A Black Feminist Discovers Her Superpower*)—are full-throated in their support of Gay's work.

Moving to Rebecca Solnit, another prominent American author: Solnit has written numerous non-fiction books and essays since the early 1990s and is active on social media largely through her Facebook page. The range of topics Solnit engages is broad, but in recent years she has tended to focus more primarily on issues around gender and Western society. Although trained at the graduate level through the journalism program at Berkeley, Solnit does not identify as an academic or hold an academic post.

Similar to Gay, Solnit crossed over from being a notable figure in literary circles to becoming a much more mainstream commentator when she engaged contemporary feminism through her 2014 book *Men Explain Things to Me*. Here, Solnit focuses on misogyny and male violence, especially in contemporary American society: there is “a pattern of violence against women that's broad and deep and horrific and incessantly overlooked,” she writes. Solnit argues that contemporary society has not adequately considered why men in particular are so violent, and why the everyday violence, rape, sexual harassment, and murder that women face at the hands of men is not taken more seriously as evidence of a larger, dangerous social ill. She stirs in personal anecdote while peppering the work with sobering statistics on rape, femicide, and domestic violence. Solnit also references various high-profile cases of harassment or violence against

women, including the 1991 Anita Hill testimony, the 2012 gang rape of Jyoti Singh, and the 2014 Isla Vista massacre. Solnit continues these explorations in her 2017 book *The Mother of All Questions*. She continues the conversation around gender in America and most especially the relationship between gender and violence—attesting that rape is so common in America it should be called an epidemic. Solnit argues that women are under perpetual threat and that regardless of the published evidence men are still not acknowledged to be, by and large, the perpetrators of that threat.

Solnit has been cited by numerous academics across disciplines and is also featured in and commented on in more mainstream press. Not all of the press is positive, though. Viviane Fairbank, writing for Canadian magazine *The Walrus*, explicitly critiques Solnit for her “pop feminism.” Fairbanks uses this label in a dismissive way. She suggests that Solnit engages with feminist issues and current events superficially, and that she is a generalist who uses social media to connect with mass audiences on contemporary issues without adding to the conversation in any substantial way. (There is much to discredit Fairbank’s claims, of course; most notably Solnit’s sustained and nuanced engagement with feminist topics across many essays and books, and especially in *Men Explain Things to Me* and *The Mother of All Questions*.)

As a third example, Maria Popova is a Bulgarian-born writer based in New York who is best known for her creation of the literary website Brain Pickings. Popova has written for *The New York Times*, *Wired UK*, and *The Atlantic*, and in 2019 she published a book titled *Figuring* that provides a social history of late nineteenth-century American intelligentsia, with a focus on queer women who have been historically overshadowed by their male counterparts.

Generally, Popova's scope is broad, and she tends to write on any and all things literary on Brain Pickings including the connection between art and science. She also weaves in personal anecdotes from her own experience as a queer immigrant woman living in the United States. There has been no academic engagement with Popova's work to date. Popova's career trajectory differs from that of Solnit and Gay, too—where the latter writers published various book-length works prior to tipping into the public eye, the former became well known through her website Brain Pickings first.

Although they write from varied backgrounds and occupy different roles in the contemporary cultural sphere, Gay, Solnit, and Popova share a core activity: they engage people—both academic and non-academic—over humanities work. In part, these authors are able to do so by publishing in mainstream venues. All three authors tend to gravitate toward the personal essay. They have a knack of sharing complex theories and histories in ways that are findable and digestible by a lot of different people. And, not least of all, they are very active online where they connect with readers in real time. Call this savvy public relations, if you will: it works.

Criticisms of pop science, pop psychology, and even pop feminism abound, and there is a more unspoken shunning of these activities through a lack of sustained and serious academic engagement with writers like Maria Popova. Scholarly consideration of and connection to pop academic movements is relatively minimal considering the substantial audience for this sort of work and its high social and cultural impact. Gay, Solnit, and Popova provide an alternative approach to creating and sharing knowledge than the typical walled, academic mode. In doing

so, they engage with wider publics, extend their interpretations of complex ideas, and share their substantial humanities-based research in forms and formats that are findable, usable, and above all, accessible to many. If pop humanities contributions were taken more seriously by those working in academia, perhaps more people would get to know what the humanities are—and how important they are for an informed citizenry.

Conclusion: Open Social Scholarship and the Scholarly Communication Tradition

This dissertation begins with an image: the two paths of scholarly communication, one staid and walled off, the other open and populated. Such a framework is useful for thinking through the possibilities of scholarly communication in a more open, networked world; it also draws attention to the ways in which conventional knowledge production in the academy can be unapproachable or alienating for those who are not ingrained in the higher education system. As Kathleen Fitzpatrick writes in *Planned Obsolescence*,

We must remind ourselves why we're setting out down this path: our established ways of working are becoming increasingly untenable, and the culture that surrounds us—that *funds* us—demands that we rethink our approach to communication, both among ourselves and with the rest of the world. (194; *emphasis original*)

Fitzpatrick emphasizes the importance of re-visioning academic work within a more networked context. There is intrinsic value in opening up the humanities: in doing so, academics can reposition themselves in the service of the creation and sharing of knowledge and, thus, in the service of the world at large. Many are already undertaking more open and more social creation, translation, exchange, sharing, or circulation of humanistic knowledge—but this subset of activities has yet to be drawn together under an umbrella term. The concept of open social scholarship can be such an umbrella.

Open access advocates often push the metaphor of the two separate paths of scholarship—open versus closed—and frame open scholarship as a fundamental break from the scholarly communication tradition, or even, as the Radical Open Access Coalition puts it, “a radical challenge to free market capitalism and its forces of co-optation” (n.p.). To conclude this dissertation, I hope to nuance this distinction; I draw on Christine Borgman, Adrian Johns,

Cameron Neylon, and John Willinsky to demonstrate that there have always been varying degrees of openness in scholarly knowledge sharing, even if this value is not overtly evident in the current, for-profit academic publishing world. After all, “It is the histories of academic publishing that shape current practice and determine the possibilities for academic discourse, and, therefore, communication” (138), as Martin Paul Eve states. Eve builds on this assertion further in his co-edited collection with Jonathan Gray, where they suggest: “For publishing, the digital environment is at once a rupture and a continuation, reformed by ‘new’ accelerating technologies, recapitulated by ‘old’ traditions of the academy” (1). In what follows I reference the praxis of twenty-first-century scholarly communication and how it precedes and interacts with open social scholarship activities. As a part of this summation, I reflect on the evolving role of scholarly communication artifacts within the open social scholarship paradigm. Open social scholarship may be a recent development in the scholarly communication trajectory, and it may represent an alternative conceptual framework to current academic norms, but it is far from ahistoric. Rather, such a modality reveals and opens up different pathways and opportunities for those working within, alongside, and beyond the academy, rooted in traditions of knowledge sharing.

Open Academic Knowledge Production Precedents

Historically, there have been varying degrees of openness in scholarly communication. Twenty-first-century technologies have allowed those working in and alongside the academy to scale up these elements of openness into a full-blown movement under the moniker of open access. In 2014, Caroline Sutton (now Director of Open Research at Taylor & Francis) gave an interview on open access publishing. In that conversation she claims: “Now that the ‘fight’ for open access

has more or less been won, we are able to move beyond open access and work to create a new ecosystem and infrastructure for scholarly publications and communications” (n.p.). In saying as much, Sutton infers that open access is a separate, alternative option to the conventional scholarly communication system, underlined by her suggestion that we can now “create a *new* ecosystem and infrastructure” (n.p., *emphasis mine*). Sutton is not the only one to frame open scholarship in this way, and of course an evolution in infrastructure is required for an entirely open access scholarly communication system. But the claim of openness in scholarship as an entirely new phenomenon is inaccurate.

The Open Access movement is not, in fact, an ahistorical phenomenon. The current trend toward openness in academia can be considered as a recent phase in the historical trajectory of scholarly communication. Willinsky writes, “Efforts to improve access to knowledge have a long and venerable history. Open access could be the next step in a tradition that includes the printing press and penny post, public libraries and public schools” (30). He purposefully positions open access “in a tradition bent on increasing the democratic circulation of knowledge” (30) and in doing so, gestures toward a long tail of socially oriented knowledge production. Borgman picks up this thread in *Scholarship in the Digital Age*, but criticizes Willinsky for not acknowledging the scholarly history of openness more explicitly in an earlier edition of *The Access Principle* (Borgman 242–43). Borgman herself recognizes the traditional centrality of openness to scholarship, as well as its deep historical precedence: “This notion of ‘open science’ arises early in Western thought, dating back to Saint Augustine in the fourth and fifth centuries” (35)—far earlier than Johannes Gutenberg’s engagement with the printing press in the fifteenth century. Further, Borgman argues, “Emerging models of scholarship such as open access publishing and knowledge commons reflect efforts to reinstate the fundamental principles of open science” (36).

Regardless of the differences in timescale, both Borgman and Willinsky suggest that open access is historically rooted in the knowledge production tradition.

Many scholars trace the origins of contemporary scholarly communication back to the seventeenth century and the establishment of the first scientific journals, the *Journal des sçavans* in France and the *Philosophical Transactions* by Henry Oldenburg of the Royal Society in England. Historian Adrian Johns can be counted among this group, and in his book *Piracy* he portrays scholarly communication from the 1600s onward as messy, prone to piracy, and riddled with debate about who should control intellectual output. Johns is unequivocal on this point: “Piracy was central to the emergence of the information society” (401), he claims. As Johns reveals, scholarly communication has rarely been characterized by clear distinctions regarding who owns what intellectual property, how knowledge should spread, and which groups should have access. There have been open and social facets of knowledge production for centuries.

The emergence of networked technologies and practices in the late twentieth century allowed those in the academy to scale up open elements of scholarly communication to unprecedented levels. Where the communication of science in the seventeenth century via the *Philosophical Transactions* only extended to those who could read and were involved in the Royal Society (i.e. men of a certain class), the increasing universality of access to technology four centuries later opens up knowledge sharing to many more people. Of course, it is important to acknowledge that complete global connectivity has yet to be achieved, and this is a significant hindrance for knowledge circulation more generally and the Open Access movement in particular (Ahmed). From a more theoretical perspective, however, the emergence of the Internet and its near-global reach has created a platform for knowledge sharing at hitherto unimaginable proportions. Open access is predicated on networked technologies, as evinced in Peter Suber’s

widely accepted definition of open access literature as “digital, online, free of charge, and free of most copyright and licensing restrictions” (*Open Access* 4). The engagement of academic institutions with networked technologies has facilitated even broader sharing of scholarly work.

As Willinsky writes,

it is well within the capacity of the information technology provided by [universities’ technical] infrastructure to provide greater public access to this public good known as research and scholarship, without diminishing its quality and quantity. The universities’ capacity to make this work widely available is part of what drives this call for open access.

(10)

Open access depends on the Internet, in particular, because it enables non-rivalrous access to resources for those who are geographically dispersed around the world. Moreover, many people already rely on the Internet for information access and communication. Digital literacy rates do vary across national, social, and generational lines; regardless, Internet usage is increasing globally, with 3.2 billion people online as of 2015 according to the International Telecommunication Union (“ITU Releases”) and over 4.6 billion people online as of October 2020, according to [statista.com](https://www.statista.com) (“Global Digital Population”). Not only does this common information sharing network allow for wider participation, but it also accelerates the speed at which researchers can share output and circulate ideas.

The Internet in and of itself is not the only technological development that has facilitated contemporary open scholarship practices. The open source movement—evolving from the free software movement of the late 1980s and especially the release of the GNU General Public Licence (Keltz)—has popularized a philosophy based on peer sharing that runs counter to notions of owning or hoarding knowledge. Steve Weber, a professor in the School of Information

and the Department of Political Science at the University of California Berkeley, writes: “Open source-style conceptions of property are [...] organized around property notions more closely connected to *stewardship* or *guardianship* than to exclusion, and in particular to stewardship combined with distribution” (228; *emphasis original*). Concepts of “*stewardship* or *guardianship*” (228) are closely aligned with the university—in particular with the library—and they resonate in open access discussions. In *Two Bits: The Cultural Significance of Free Software* (2008), Christopher Kelty goes one step farther and argues that the unique conglomerate of hackers, academics, industry, and policy makers involved in the free software movement reorganize the knowledge production hierarchy: “Free Software exemplifies a considerable reorientation of knowledge and power in contemporary society—a reorientation of power with respect to the creation, dissemination, and authorization of knowledge in the era of the Internet” (2). Despite this recapitulation of ownership and access, open source is not in contrast to copyright or intellectual property, *per se*; rather, open source uses the framework of copyright to legally instate wide knowledge sharing via open licensing (Kelty 179). Johns also speaks to the role open source plays in the larger context of knowledge sharing: “Claims for a new economics of creativity center overtly on the phenomenon of open-source software [...] But they also draw support from deeper convictions about how knowledge is properly generated, distributed, and preserved” (*Piracy* 509). Johns argues that ideas around intellectual property are changing: intellectual property is no longer solely understood as a mere profit-generating ownership mechanism. He points to the emergence of the open source software movement as fodder for this intellectual shift.

Scholarly Communication Today

Many working in academia have trained a close eye on the ways in which knowledge is produced, shared, and circulated in our current era, and I have attempted to bring together and draw on several of those scholars throughout this dissertation; in doing so, I follow Eve's justification for the value of thinking about academic publishing as being "a form of reflexive critique" (138). Given the prominence of networked technology in the academy and, indeed, in many information systems worldwide, these conversations often focus on digital scholarship in particular. This is evident in the Council for Library and Information Resources report *Building Expertise to Support Digital Scholarship: A Global Perspective* (2015), compiled by Vivian Lewis et al. The authors ask, "What skills, competencies, knowledge, and mindsets should digital scholars possess? How are such attributes—which we group under the term *expertise*—best cultivated? Does the shape of expertise vary around the world?" (1; *emphasis original*). Lewis et al. argue that it behooves the academy at large to understand and reflect on how to foster digital scholarship at the institutional level. To support this claim, the authors focus on gathering information about digital scholarship expertise, institutional structures, and requisite competencies.

Digital scholarship—and open digital scholarship in particular—has been engaged with from a more critical angle, too. To take one example of many, in a self-declared "open access pamphlet" titled *The Poethics of Scholarship* (2018), Kaja Marczewska, Janneke Adema, Frances McDonald, and Whitney Trettien frame their own critical approach within the concept of a scholarly *poethics*, or an ethical poetics. This conception is present throughout the three short essays that make up the pamphlet. Marczewska offers "The Horizon of the Publishable in/as Open Access: From Poethics to Praxis," where she rails against the co-opting and corporatization

of the Open Access movement and argues for more action-oriented open scholarship. In “The Poethics of Openness,” Adema advocates for a return to critical, experimental approaches to open scholarship; more specifically, she calls for “a form of doing scholarship that pays specific attention to the relation between context and content, ethics and aesthetics; between the methods and theories informing our scholarship and the media formats and graphic spaces we communicate through” (23). For Adema, such a modality would involve

scholars taking responsibility for the practices and systems they are part of and often uncritically repeat, but also for the potential they have to perform them differently; to take risks, to take a wager on exploring other communication forms and practices, or on a thinking that breaks through formalisations of thought. (23)

In the final essay, “Diffractive Publishing,” McDonald and Trettien vouch for an informal, boundary-object approach to digital scholarship. As an example, they discuss the *thresholds* project, which purposefully features unfinished or in-development works. Overall, the authors suggest that the future of open, digital scholarship might benefit from returning to its messier past—a past that put less emphasis on the production of clean and portable PDFs that fit tidily into emerging neoliberal evaluation schemes.

Other players in the scholarly communication system have voiced their thoughts on open digital scholarship, too. For instance, in 2017 six *Journal of Librarianship and Scholarly Communication* Editorial Board members responded to a series of prompts around scholarly communication issues in “From the Ground Up: A Group Editorial on the Most Pressing Issues in Scholarly Communication” (Agate et al.). Aligned with the concerns of *The Poethics of Scholarship*, responses range from the critical opposition of profit-making publishing to open access (Jen Waller), to the value of working with non-traditional publication formats (Sam

Searle), to the “business problems” of current approaches to open access in libraries (Leah Vanderjagt). Nicky Agate takes a marked stance, suggesting that “the encroachment of capital and profit on all of our labor” (5) is one of the greatest challenges to scholarly communication, whereas Danny Kingsley provides an introspective response on the lack of recognition that scholarly communication gets as a field unto itself. Gail Clement argues that a more mindful approach to collaborating with authors would improve scholarly communication. This editorial provides a concise, multi-perspective meditation on challenges to scholarly communication in the twenty-first century. Necessarily slanted toward library perspectives, given the venue, the issues raised in this group editorial affect all roles in the scholarly communication cycle and draw attention to actions required for successful change. Adjacently, Jonathan Tennant et al. present and explore ten oft-debated issues in scholarly communication, in particular around open access publishing. They suggest that there are various misconceptions and differing opinions floating around in this realm and aim to tackle some of these issues in order to bring more clarity to the discussion.⁷⁹

Although closed, toll-access publications proliferate and the threat of the corporatization of open access publishing is real, as Waller, Marczewska, and Tennant et al. point out, there are

⁷⁹ Tennant et al.’s selected topics include:

1. Will preprints get your research ‘scooped’?
2. Do the Journal Impact Factor and journal brand measure the quality of authors and their research?
3. Does approval by peer review prove that you can trust a research paper, its data and the reported conclusions?
4. Will the quality of the scientific literature suffer without journal-imposed peer review?
5. Is Open Access responsible for creating predatory publishers?
6. Is copyright transfer required to publish and protect authors?
7. Does gold Open Access have to cost a lot of money for authors, and is it synonymous with the APC business model?
8. Are embargo periods on ‘green’ OA needed to sustain publishers?
9. Are Web of Science and Scopus global platforms of knowledge?
10. Do publishers add value to the scholarly communication process?

many instances of more open, and more social, scholarship in our current scholarly communication ecosystem. The most common and straightforward model of open access academic publishing is the online journal licensed in a way that facilitates access, sharing, and reuse. But there are more unique artifacts as well, and in what follows I will draw attention to a handful of online initiatives that demonstrate the many possibilities for opening up scholarship, some of which I referenced previously in Chapter 3.

The *Journal of Electronic Publishing* is an online, open access journal for the study of digital publishing.⁸⁰ It can be considered a model for open social scholarship as it features highlighting, annotation, and commenting, thus promoting more conversational interaction with the articles. The *Journal of Electronic Publishing* also integrates Altmetrics, a tool that visualizes global, online engagement with an article through social media (see *Figure 1*). *Southern Spaces* is another example of an open access, online publication that improves on the PDF model of digital publishing.⁸¹ *Southern Spaces* is a largely student-run project out of Emory University that publishes research related to the American South. The publication incorporates various media, including video, images, and maps, as well as different scholarship formats such as blogs, reviews, and articles (see *Figure 2*). Another online, open access journal is *Hybrid Pedagogy*, which publishes both articles and podcasts.⁸² Beyond expanding content types in the online journal, *Hybrid Pedagogy* also incorporates a transparent attribution system that includes the names of the peer reviewers of any given piece (see *Figure 3*).

⁸⁰ See journalofelectronicpublishing.org.

⁸¹ See southernspaces.org.

⁸² See hybridpedagogy.org.



the journal of
electronic
publishing

CURRENT
ARCHIVE
ABOUT
EDITORS
SUBMIT

Peer reviewing: a private affair between the individual researcher and the publishing houses, or a responsibility of the university?

Leif Longva
UIT THE ARCTIC UNIVERSITY OF NORWAY. UNIVERSITY LIBRARY.

Eirik Reierth
UIT THE ARCTIC UNIVERSITY OF NORWAY. UNIVERSITY LIBRARY.

Lars Moksness
UIT THE ARCTIC UNIVERSITY OF NORWAY. UNIVERSITY LIBRARY AND SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS.

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34


Figure 1: An article from the Journal of Electronic Publishing

Southern Spaces
BROWSE ABOUT EDITORS SUBMIT CONTACT
Q

Southern Spaces

A JOURNAL ABOUT REAL AND IMAGINED SPACES AND PLACES OF THE US SOUTH AND THEIR GLOBAL CONNECTIONS


ARTICLES
MONOGRAPHS
INTERVIEWS
PHOTO ESSAYS
VIDEOS
PRESENTATIONS
REVIEWS
BLOG POSTS
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES



Envisioning Faulkner and Southern Literature

CANDACE WAID


ARTICLE



Ways of Unseeing: Crowdsourcing the Frame in Roger May's *Looking at Appalachia*

MARK NUNES

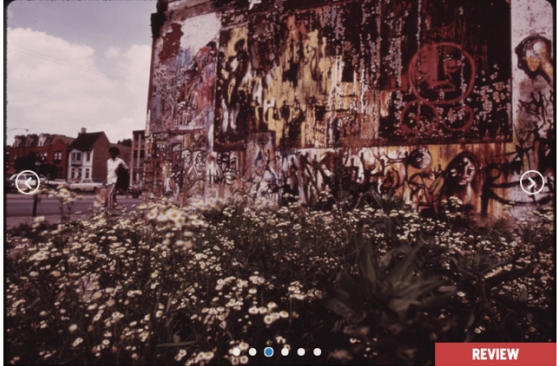
ARTICLE




Let Me Do My Thang: Rebirth Brass Band

KEITH REYNAUD JR.

VIDEO



REVIEW

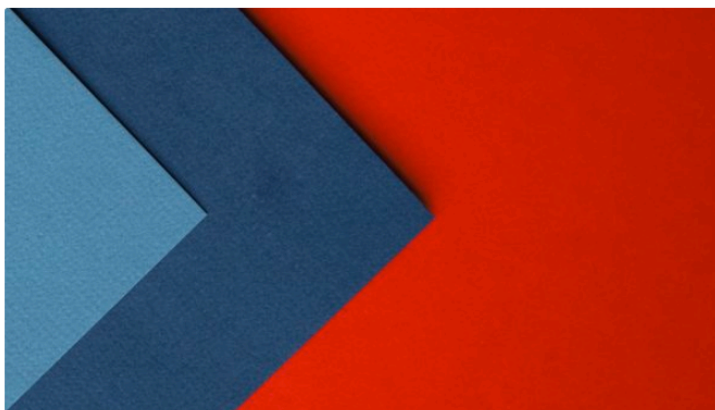


Call for Blog Posts: Voting, Politics, and Similar Subjects

Staff and Editorial Board
Southern Spaces

Southern Spaces requests blog post submissions on voting, politics, political organizing, and similar subjects, emphasizing spatial interpretation and digital media.

Figure 2: A portion of the homepage of Southern Spaces



HYBRID PEDAGOGY PUBLISHING

Critical Digital Pedagogy: A Collection

A new edited collection, the first peer-reviewed book centered on the theory and practice of critical digital pedagogy.

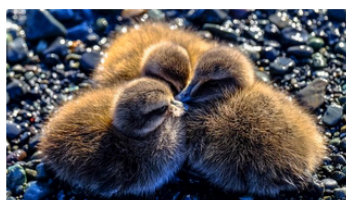


TWITTER ESSAY

The #OthelloSyllabus: Twitter as Play

ELIZABETH TAVARES · SIENNA BALLOU

In a class on critical race theory and hashtag activism, Twitter's paradoxical mix of anonymity and public writing developed students' cultural competency.



PEER REVIEW

Double-Open Peer Review: Shaping the Teaching Community

CHRIS FRIEND

Hybrid Pedagogy uses double-open peer review, strategically crafting teaching communities by pairing authors and reviewers with intention.



HYBRID PEDAGOGY PUBLISHING

A Foreword to Critical Digital Pedagogy

RUHA BENJAMIN

I am convinced that without a deep engagement with critical digital pedagogy, as individuals and institutions, we will almost certainly drag outmoded ways of thinking and doing things with us.

Figure 3: A portion of the homepage of Hybrid Pedagogy

Various academic publishing platforms and software have emerged over the last several years as well. For example, *Media Commons* is an initiative by the Institute for the Future of the Book, directed by Bob Stein.⁸³ In its early days, *Media Commons* was most well-known for hosting the online, pre-print version of Fitzpatrick's *Planned Obsolescence*. The *Media Commons* version of *Planned Obsolescence* was open for commenting and conversation, and Fitzpatrick used the online feedback she received to revise and eventually publish a print version

⁸³ See mediacommons.org.

of the book with New York University Press. *Manifold Scholarship* is a more recent venture by the University of Minnesota Press working with the Digital Scholarship Lab at the City University of New York and most specifically with Doug Armato and Matthew K. Gold.⁸⁴ *Manifold Scholarship* is open source software that anyone can use to produce online books. It includes options to change the display of the text depending on device used and personal preference and integrates the hypothes.is plugin for annotation purposes. More recently still, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press released *PubPub*: open source publishing software well suited for online, open access journals.⁸⁵ These are only a handful of examples within a much broader and more comprehensive landscape of open academic knowledge production.⁸⁶

As evinced by the examples above, open forms of academic knowledge are increasing. The academy is still working, however, to broaden out its public engagement activities. One such initiative in this vein is *The Conversation*: an online news site that publishes short, web-native articles by academics meant for more general rather than specialist consumption.⁸⁷ Digital humanist Steven E. Jones suggests that open scholarship stakeholders should draw on the skills and expertise of digital humanities scholars to build knowledge creation and sharing platforms. But humanities-specific platforms may do little to meet publics where they already are; that is, where individuals are searching for, consuming, and interacting with information presently. Jones's suggestion of a humanities-first approach may well be at the cost of communicating with broader publics if such a system is purposefully separate from other knowledge circulation and connection opportunities. Rather, as explored earlier, scholars could follow the lead of authors

⁸⁴ See manifoldapp.org.

⁸⁵ See pubpub.org.

⁸⁶ For a fuller engagement with models for online academic publishing, please see the Mellon-funded report *Mind the Gap: A Landscape Analysis of Open Source Publishing Tools and Platforms* (Maxwell et al.).

⁸⁷ See theconversation.com.

like Roxane Gay, Rebecca Solnit, and Maria Popova (who I deem *pop humanists*) and consider how open scholarship can be humanities-inflected *regardless of the platform where it resides*, and perhaps especially on social media sites, openly accessible websites, newsletters, or communal knowledge creation projects such as Wikipedia. What if digital scholarship advocates like Jones moved away from asking whether academics can create a platform for this kind of work in the humanities and turned instead to how humanities scholarship can and is being done in the open, in various extant spaces? Such a question may well diverge from the work of scholars like Johanna Drucker, who argues for humanities-centred design of digital knowledge environments, or Lori Emerson and Julia Bullard, who insist on the importance of acknowledging the implications and limitations of how interfaces and platforms are designed, respectively. These are critical considerations, but it is also provocative to consider how humanities priorities might reign while research output is integrated in venues that have not *necessarily* been created with academic knowledge mobilization in mind—but can still serve this purpose.

Open is Not New, but it is Different

Openness in scholarly knowledge production is not a new concept. As such, open access is perhaps not as radical as many have claimed when they depict the “access revolution” (Suber, *Open Access 2*) as disrupting an otherwise straightforward affair between creators and consumers of knowledge. In such debates, traditional scholarly communication is painted as exclusive, expensive, closed, and even elitist; by contrast, open access is portrayed as a social, democratic approach to research production. Is this juxtaposition 100% accurate? Of course not, as the scholars cited above demonstrate. Regardless, articulating open access as new, and radical, does

have benefits—especially in the face of significant opposition by commercial publishers and the general lack of awareness about the cost of scholarly publishing and what open access actually is. Open access has been shaped in powerful ways rhetorically in order to distinguish it as a movement and to entice scholars around the world to rethink their publishing practices. Cameron Neylon argues that, in fact, the dramatic rhetoric of the Open Access movement is no longer fit for purpose. Instead, advocates should reframe open scholarship as a core, and moreover old, value—as something inherently conservative and traditional, rather than inherently revolutionary (Neylon).

Sutton may claim that the fight for open access has “more or less been won” (n.p.), but this is not the case worldwide. Despite promising developments, no coordinated, wholly international open access approach exists as of yet.⁸⁸ Regardless, her positioning of open access as a *given* is another valuable gesture. Sutton cements the importance and pervasiveness of open access by claiming that it is a *fait accompli*. She also creates a space for open scholarship to develop and build on an open access foundation. Scholars like John Maxwell as well as Heidi McGregor and Kevin Guthrie have reiterated this argument. Borgman also gestures in this direction by suggesting that “open science and open scholarship depend on access to publications, and often to the data on which they are based” (115). In a nutshell, there is no open scholarship without open access. The public engagement, textual analysis, data mining, publishing experiments, and other activities that fall under the open scholarship rubric are simply not possible without a baseline of access to research output.

⁸⁸ See Chapter 1 for a select overview of open access policies and guidelines worldwide, including the Europe-based Plan S.

The specific articulation of open access as novel, and something worth fighting for, has been a crucial rhetorical move. This characterization mobilizes academics, librarians, and policymakers to facilitate open practices, and unlocks the door for further experimentation with open scholarship. It is not entirely fair to assume that the tradition of scholarly communication has been completely inaccessible or that knowledge has been trapped in the “closed cloisters of privileged, well-endowed university campuses” (33), as Willinsky suggests.⁸⁹ But open scholarship alone will not “create a new ecosystem and infrastructure” (n.p.) either, as Sutton proposes it might. Open scholarship integrates with the extant scholarly communication ecosystem, in part evinced by the ongoing preservation of traditional activities like peer review, monograph production, academic society membership, and journal article publication. Many of the actors remain the same as well: librarians, authors, editors, publishers, and administrators all continue to have a role to play.⁹⁰ In the collaboratively written book *Open Knowledge Institutions: Reinventing Universities* (2019), Lucy Montgomery et al. argue that

universities are failing in their basic mission: to serve as open institutions capable of providing the knowledge and innovations needed by a world in which change and uncertainty are inescapable realities. [...] If universities are to survive and prosper they need to shift away from operating as closed centres of knowledge production and become open knowledge institutions. (n.p.)

The scholarly communication system—historical and messy as it is—is now evolving in a way that prioritizes this vision of openness, as I have noted across the preceding chapters.

⁸⁹ See Chapter 4 for an engagement with public institutions that have played a role in the open circulation of humanities knowledge for decades.

⁹⁰ It is important to note, however, that these roles are shifting. For instance, as Anthony Cond, the managing director of Liverpool University Press, acknowledges, “One in six university presses now reports to a library” (47).

Final Thoughts

The aim of this dissertation is to consider, in whole, the concept of humanistic, open, social, scholarship, and to argue for its value in the contemporary academy as both a set of socially oriented activities and an organizing framework for such activities. I approached this goal from many angles: from considering open access as a baseline for public engagement and arguing for the vitalness of this sort of work; to suggesting that there is a strong connection between digital scholarship and social knowledge creation; to exploring the knowledge translation lessons that other fields might have for the humanities; to including a journalist–humanist case study; to arguing for the value of producing research output in many different forms and formats; and, finally, to considering what the benefits of explicitly popularizing the humanities might be. In sum, this dissertation speculates on past, current, and future scholarly communication activities, with an ardent hope that such activities might be opened up for wider engagement and, thus, social benefit.

Which path will the academics of today and generations to come take?—this is a key question in the introduction to this dissertation. Will humanities practitioners continue undertaking conventional modes and methods for academic work that limit social knowledge creation? Or will they “take risks, [...] take a wager on exploring other communication forms and practices, or on a thinking that breaks through formalisations of thought” (“Poethics of Openness” 23) as Adema implores? It is beyond the scope of a dissertation to predict the unknowable future; I can, however, offer an argument for the value of pursuing open social scholarship, especially in a humanities context. In doing so, I draw together the interrelated areas of humanities knowledge creation, public engagement, and open access, and demonstrate the importance of considering these as a critical triad for the pursuit of academic work moving

forward. I hope that my acknowledgement throughout these pages of the many ways to open up the humanities—including but not limited to podcasting, GLAM institutions, popular writing, knowledge translation, science communication, social knowledge creation, journalism, public radio, and digital publishing—is useful to those in academia who seek more social paths for their work. Although similarities run through the entirety of academic knowledge production, what is unique is that scholars today can engage broad communities at a scale not possible before the emergence of networked technologies—they can undertake open social scholarship.

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