



Early Career Researchers: How the Pandemic Shaped Their Views on Publishing and the Library

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Early Career Researchers as Harbingers of Change

- Part of an ongoing international project looking at Early Career Researchers (ECRs)
- Scholarly communication behaviors and attitudes
- Currently focusing on how the pandemic may be affecting their careers and use of information resources



Harbingers Part 2

- Funded by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation
- Led by CIBER Research in the UK and UT in the US
- Team of researchers in 8 countries

CIBER-research...



Method



Harbingers 1

2015 – 2018 Pre-pandemic



Harbingers 2

2020 – 2021 Pandemic

2022 – Post-pandemic?



Today highlights from ECRs:

- What are perceptions of the role of the library in US? (David)



- What are attitudes towards scholarly communication and journals in US ECRs? (Suzie)



- Some differences between the US, UK, & internationally (Anthony)



Insights for libraries



- David Sims, Research Associate and Post-Doctoral Researcher, Center for Information and Communication Studies, University of Tennessee

What role will libraries have for researchers in 5 years' time?



- A tale of two extremes...

I think libraries are probably more critical than ever, because you have to have someone sort of help you sift through all of this... It's not as easy as just going into PubMed anymore.

”



Libraries will primarily serve as a gateway to the journals and a place for people to put their dissertations that no one ever reads. I don't know why we have libraries.

”

And now, the rest of the story

- Specific services continuing
- Very little thought given to the question
- Little use for libraries
- Specific needs

Specific services continuing

- Locating / obtaining information
 - Subscriptions, interlibrary loan
 - Search tools and guidance with information searching
 - Journals and e-books
- Continuing digital journals, digitizing articles, increasing virtual services
- Supporting faculty and informing grant applications

Little thought expressed

- Generic statements
- Lack of specific services
- Positive, neutral, negative sentiments

“ I think [libraries] will be just as important or more important, and they’ll continue in their importance in the future. ”

Little use for libraries

- Less role for libraries due to open access:

“ It's still important we'll have access to [journals] ... [But] if everything has its open access model, then that will become less important. ”

- Unsure of any needed change due to no research interactions with library:

“ I'm not sure how [the library is] going to affect or...be related to research. ”

Specific needs

- Related to data organization for future services of the library
 - More robust, easy to use data repositories
 - Indexing data

The story doesn't end here

- Already seeing unexpected change
 - From extreme negative comment to...



“

It's becoming very difficult to keep up-- even in a subfield--with just finding papers related to your work within a journal you follow. And maybe libraries will start providing some service on that and sort of breaking down papers, because there's just there's too many.

”

Insights for publishing

Suzie Allard, Chancellor's
Professor and Associate Dean
for Research, College of
Communication and Information,
University of Tennessee



During your academic career, have your attitudes toward established scholarly communication practices changed?

- Most said “no change”
- Those who mentioned change noted:
 - Using more social media to promote research
 - “Shifted more towards being understandable and disseminated more broadly” beyond academic world
 - Focus on greater interdisciplinarity leading to shift from conferences to journals

“ I was much more pro-open-access as a graduate student, and I have a much bigger appreciation for how a really fancy publication can help your career as a post-doc. But now that I’m transitioning to this next role, I’m starting to appreciate more how publishing something quickly can be really valuable. ”

If practices changed: Have there been more changes because of the pandemic?

- Most said no
- For those who said yes:
 - More time to write
 - Dissemination all digital rather than face-to-face

Big opportunities for change by ECRs?

“ We have an opportunity to make [some of these activities] the new norm [so] that everything is shared more freely. ”

“ [We’re doing] a better job of communicating our science or our findings and outputs in diverse platforms..[as a result] training in how to do that is becoming a more formal thing. ”

Some say NO because the system is too entrenched.

When choosing a journal to submit to, what ranks highest?

#1 Appropriateness of the audience

#2 Much prestige in the discipline

#3 High impact factor journal

#4 High standards of peer review

#5 Speed from submission to publication

#6 Open access

#7 Geographical location of journal or publisher

Fundamental changes?

- Slow change due to publications prominent in scholar assessments
- Social media / altmetrics seem more enhancements rather than fundamental change
- Many ECRs express hope for fundamental change in current scholarly communication system

Possible changes to scholarly communications system

- Larger role of social media
- Improving peer review
- Reduction of researcher burdens
- More openness of research outputs

Will journals still have central role in 5 years?

- 5 years is too short for major change:

“ academia doesn't move that swiftly. ”

- Journals:

“ [provide] a reputable place to publish ”

“ [are] our academic currency [and are] inherent to the academic culture [and maintain] an established canon of papers for a discipline. ”

- Major publishers will continue to dominate

International variations



- Anthony Watkinson, Principal Consultant, CIBER Research, visiting researcher UTK, former Lecturer at University College London, Charleston Conference Director

Bottom line is that US and UK ECRs have very similar attitudes and practices but some other of our countries differ

Insights for libraries

- The majority of UK ECRs are lukewarm about the role/future of libraries – as long as journals keep flowing. As in US some polarised. France overall negative and Malaysia positive.
- Only one ECR mentioned a library training role
- Only one ECR ascribed a data management role to libraries
- No role in discovery. Overload not a worry
- In some countries, not the UK, a Starbucks role was perceived as a purpose. UK kept away

Insights for publishing

- Journals remain central for dissemination
- Peer review is the reason
- Preprints regarded as positive but not sufficient except perhaps in France
- ECRs in both countries saw ongoing increasing role for other informal dissemination with social media = twitter
- ECRs loved OA gold but hated APCs

Recent big developments

1. ECRs in most countries (not UK or France) must teach online cutting research time = stress:
<https://doi.org/10.31124/advance.16870627.v1>
2. Choice of journal to publish in, UK put audience top but all ECRs rated prestige/high IF as key criteria and OA low
3. Outreach including to public important for UK ECRs
4. UK ECRs miss face to face networking but some are finding virtual workarounds
5. UK ECRs will not publish gold unless funding available but some now benefitting from transformative deals

Questions?

For more information see
Ciber-research.com/Harbingers-2