Open Media Scholarship:
The Case for Open Access in Media Studies

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This commentary, after outlining the broader rationale for open access in scholarly publishing, makes three arguments to support the claim that media and communication scholars should be at the forefront of the open access movement: (1) The topics that we write about are inescapably multimedia, so our publishing platforms should be capable—at the very least—of embedding the objects that we study; (2) media studies, owing to their fragmentation and marginality, can sidestep the prestige "penalty" that drags down other disciplines' open access efforts; and (3) our rich research traditions on popular media dynamics are begging to be applied (and perhaps rethought) in the context of scholarly communication.

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In 2002, a small group of scholars and foundation officers gathered in Hungary to talk about the nascent movement for "open access" in scholarship. The document they signed, the Budapest Open Access Initiative, began, "An old tradition and a new technology have converged to make possible an unprecedented public good." The old tradition, they explained, is scholars' willingness to write for free. The new technology, of course, was the Internet. Scholarship, the signers wrote, should be freely accessible to the entire world—to "all scientists, scholars, teachers, students, and other curious minds" (Chan et al., 2002, para. 1).

In the decade-plus since the Budapest declaration, the open access (OA) movement has registered in every discipline. The uptake, however, has been swiftest in the natural and physical sciences. The humanities and social sciences are relative laggards, including the bundle of fields that make up media and communication research. This should change. Communication scholars have good reasons to adopt OA principles, and we are also poised to make useful contributions back to the OA community.

Communication researchers have a pair of distinctive reasons to publish OA work. The first is that the topics we write about are inescapably multimedia, so our publishing platforms should be capable—at the very least—of embedding the stuff that we study. Our familiarity with the changing modalities of communication, moreover, makes us good candidates for publishing-format alternatives to the printed page and the PDF. OA is not inherently experimental in its publishing models, it is true, but nearly every attempt to rethink the standard scientific article presumes OA as a baseline. We should be among the experimenters.

A second, mostly untapped opportunity has to do with our fields' profound heterogeneity. The polyglot nature of film, media, and communication studies has complex roots in overlapping institutional and intellectual dynamics. The resulting disorder may or may not be a good thing (Peters, 2011), but for OA purposes, it is a gigantic boon. Most other disciplines are locked into flagship journals that confer status and signal tenure quality. Young scholars in particular have no choice but to publish in their disciplines' high-prestige titles, which—owing to longevity and professional society deals with commercial publishers—are almost always tolled. Communication studies, thanks to its madcap fragmentation, do not have a well-defined center or any of its reputational trappings such as a clear-cut hierarchy of journals or an established bundle of methods. In practice, this means less clannish exclusivity: The media fields' tether to tolled-journal prestige is weaker (Pooley, 2015). Witness the remarkable rise in citation-based journal-impact rankings of the OA *International Journal of Communication* (Google Scholar Metrics, n.d.. We can, in short, sidestep the prestige "penalty" that drags down other disciplines' OA efforts.

Media scholars are also in a strong position to contribute to the conversation around OA. We have generated rich research traditions on popular media dynamics that are begging to be applied (and perhaps rethought) in the context of scholarly communication. Although the U.S. field's speech/rhetoric wing has a vibrant rhetoric of science subfield (Fahnestock, 2013) and science communication as a research area is also thriving (Bucchi & Trench, 2014), neither has paid much attention to scholarly publishing per se. Those subfields, along with the longstanding tradition of work on the diffusion of messages (including so-called memology), might join the OA conversation across its multiple venues, scholarly and otherwise.

Media scholars are also poised to apply our understanding of media dynamics to the cartel-like scholarly publishing industry and to the proliferating likes-and-comments culture of OA. We havetraditions of media industry analysis that could, for example, help make sense of the concentrated scholarly publishing market. Why not swap Disney for SAGE? Likewise, we already critique the profits that media companies extract from user-generated content on YouTube and Facebook. The analogy to donated academic labor is waiting to be drawn.

Our analytic scrutiny, moreover, could be aimed at aspects of OA itself, including legacy-publisher opportunism and the dynamics of social media popularity. Postpublication peer-review sites such as PubPeer (http://pubpeer.com) and PubMed Commons (http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmedcommons/), for example, are adopting the standard visibility tropes of social media, including most-shared leaderboards, comments, and favorite buttons. Venture-capital-backed platforms Academia.edu (http://academia.edu) and ResearchGate (http://researchgate.net) have full-fledged analytics dashboards, algorithmically generated "top 1%" badges, and the like. Media scholars are especially well equipped to study (and critique) the scholarly attention economy now emerging in tandem with OA.

Why Open Access?

The argument for OA is simple, with three main justifications. The first is moral: We all signed on to the scholarly enterprise to make and share knowledge. The idea that scholarship ought to be openly circulated is a defining principle of the university tradition. The classic Mertonian (Merton, 1942) catalog of

scientific norms does not qualify "communalism" for those affiliated with institutions that can afford a $15,000 a year subscription to *Cell*. Knowledge sharing is a means to make more and better knowledge, to be sure, but it is also an end in itself. We rightly recoil from proprietary knowledge cultures, such as those in industry, which hoard ideas as competitive advantage.

So, the principle of openness is not new. The key development is that some of the old, practical barriers to spreading our work have fallen away. We shelved journal volumes in dusty stacks for centuries because the printed codex was—had been—the best means to widen access over, say, the chain libraries of medieval monasteries. Now that the open Internet has relegated the bound journal volume to chain-library status, we have the opportunity, and the ethical obligation, to widen access still further.

This first justification—the principle of openness—is the moral backdrop to the second. The main point is that there is a systemic mismatch between the existing, paywalled publishing arrangements and the promise of worldwide access. The villain is the for-profit scholarly publishing conglomerate, which extracts windfall profits through extortionate subscription fees. In an eerie echo of the octopus-like media-consolidation charts of the 1990s, just five companies publish most of what scholars produce. Fully two-thirds of all social science papers are published by the Big Five: Elsevier, SAGE, Springer Nature, Wiley-Blackwell, and Taylor & Francis. That is up from just 15% in the early 1970s (Larivière, Haustein, & Mongeon, 2015). The five companies generate profit margins that Fortune 500 CEOs would slobber all over. Elsevier, for example, cleared $1 billion in profit in 2014—an astonishing 34% margin (Cookson, 2015). The galling bit is that all those profits are nothing but our labor. Scholars, in an honorable tradition, donate intellectual work and lend expertise to review and edit one another. Springer Nature, Wiley, and the other oligopolists bundle that labor and then sell it back to us—to our universities—for budget-crushing prices. Many academic institutions, especially outside the rich West, cannot afford the entrance fees. Even the wealthiest schools, including Harvard and Stanford, are struggling to keep pace with the annual subscription hikes (Sample, 2012); over the past 40 years, as the for-profit oligopoly took hold, more and more library resources have gone to serials, with the predictable result that everything else, including monograph budgets, has suffered proportional declines (Odlyzko, 2015). The result is a locked gate for much of the world, including vast stretches of academia and every last member of the curious public. In exchange for depleted library budgets and labor exploitation that would make Engels blush, we get outsourced copyediting and formatted tables. Behind a paywall.[1]

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[1] Some commercial publisher defenders have pointed to the rise of "Big Deal" contracts that libraries negotiate with publishers, usually involving multiyear commitments and a large bundle of journals. The argument is that the Big Deal trend has greatly expanded access to serials (see Odlyzko, 2015, pp. 132–133, 142–144). Although it is true that the Big Deal trend has widened access to journals, thanks to dynamic pricing and discounts to smaller and poorer institutions, the business practice—which resembles the block-booking strategy of movie studios, outlawed by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1948—is shrouded in secrecy and likely serves to "entrance the publishers, their profits, and their inefficiency" (Odlyzko, 2015, p. 146). The Big Deal, in other words, is an additional hurdle in the effort to provide unfettered access to scholarship (Edlin & Rubinfeld, 2004).

On these grounds, more than 15,000 academics have pledged to boycott Elsevier, perhaps the most egregious profiteer among the Big Five (http://thecostofknowledge.com). The entrenchment of the existing system, ironically, is abetted by our own scholarly societies, which typically derive a large share of their budgets from subscription revenues. In fact, in most cases, the actual publishing of association-sponsored journals—often venerable flagships—has been outsourced to the same stable of information conglomerates (Willinsky, 2004). Now dependent on all that closed-access cash, these nonprofit societies stand as an ironic impediment to the spread of their own members' scholarship.

OA publishing is not costless, but all the best estimates suggest that the publishing expense of typesetting, copyediting, and the rest represents a small fraction of the oligopolists' subscription prices (Wexler, 2015). It is true that there are problems with the prevailing model of OA funding—*author-processing charges*, often-steep fees that submitting authors (or their funders) pay to cover publication expenses (Solomon & Björk, 2012)—but cheaper and fairer models are gaining traction.[2] There will always be costs associated with publication, but the Budapest declaration's two points—cheaper, worldwide distribution via the Internet hitched to scholars' principled willingness to write and edit for free—mean that much broader access can be obtained for a fraction of the billions of dollars sloshing around in the existing tolled system. The savings, realized and potential, from online publication and digital workflows have not been returned to the academic community (Odlyzko, 2015). These have gone instead to the shareholders of Springer Nature and Taylor & Francis. The publishers, perversely, have answered online efficiencies with steep subscription price hikes (Association of Research Libraries, 2011).

The third and final justification for OA is venal: Scholarship that is freely accessible gets cited more. The reading and citation bump from OA publication is significant for the natural sciences (McCabe & Snyder, 2014; Wang, Liu, Mao, & Fang, 2015).[3] What is fascinating is that social scientists appear to benefit much more than their natural science counterparts, perhaps because a slimmer proportion of all social science is published openly, leading those works to stand out. A recently published study of citation patterns in political science found a "clear OA citation advantage" (Atchison & Bull, 2015, p. 136). Another recently published study, this one on law-review articles, found a giant citation uptick for OA publications. "For every two citations an article would otherwise receive," the authors wrote, "it can expect a third when made freely available on the Internet" (Donovan, Watson, & Osborne, 2015, p. 1). A 2014 study of leading economics journals, meanwhile, found a "significant OA effect" across the 13 titles, "robust across three different bibliometric databases" (Wohlrabe & Birkmeier, 2014, p. 8). Communication research, too:

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[2] See, for example, the exciting model being pioneered by the Open Library of Humanities, which relies on subsidies from academic libraries (https://www.openlibhums.org).

[3] As an anonymous reviewer noted, some of these citation advantages might be explained by scholars' (presumed) preference to publish only their most groundbreaking work as open access, which would then account for some or all of the measured citation boost. This potential self-selection confound is addressed in Ottaviani's (2016) recent, elegantly designed study of postembargo citation rates. Once-paywalled articles in an institutional repository that, via publisher embargo policy and not author choice, had sunsetted into OA status were compared with paywalled articles that remain subscriber-only. The study found a "real, measurable, open access citation advantage with a lower bound of approximately 20%" (p. 10).

An analysis of OA citation rates in the discipline (Schultz, 2016) found that OA articles garnered twice as many cites as their tolled counterparts. There is nothing shameful about this boost or the underlying motive for individual researchers to expand their scholarly visibility. In theory at least, a scholar's private interest in recognition and reputation should align with (and thereby motor) the growth of high-quality knowledge. In the OA case, the reward-system principle seems to hold, especially given that the citation gains are presumably the result of wider access.

The case for OA is compelling across the academic world. If anything, the media and communication fields should find these developments even more persuasive. We have field-specific reasons to engage with OA and attendant experimentations in what is, after all, scholarly communication.

New Publishing Platforms

A case that makes the point is MediaCommons (http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org), the "digital scholarly network" founded nearly 10 years ago by the Institute for the Future of the Book (Fitzpatrick & Santo, 2006). The still-flourishing project was, from its inception, explicitly focused on the "field of media studies." The key figures in the initiative, Kathleen Fitzpatrick and Avi Santo, cited a number of reasons for singling out media scholars. On the intellectual side, they cannily observed that media researchers already study the tools that MediaCommons would deploy, permitting a "productive self-reflexivity." They also pointed to media scholars' unique need for multimedia affordances to produce media-related work: We must "quote" from the many-formatted artifacts we study, after all, and perhaps even analyze in kind. Their final rationale, they wrote in the initiative's announcement was "structural":

> We're convinced that media studies scholars will need to lead the way in convincing tenure and promotion committees that new modes of publishing like this network are not simply valid but important. As media scholars can make the "form must follow content" argument convincingly, and as tenure qualifications in media studies often include work done in media other than print already, we hope that media studies will provide a key point of entry for a broader reshaping of publishing in the humanities. (Fitzpatrick & Santo, 2006, para. 3)

Fitzpatrick and Santo, in other words, saw media scholars as ambassadors, out to convince hidebound colleagues and administrators that multimedia and other "alternative" scholarship is legitimate and tenure-worthy. Even if that tack—media studies as a field-specific beachhead—has yet to win over many evaluation committees, the reasoning applies to OA experimentation in general. We really do have a plausible rationale for experimenting with OA-based alternatives to the hardcover monograph and tolled journal article.

In the 10 years since its founding, MediaCommons has piloted a number of mold-breaking publishing models. The most exciting, perhaps, is the group's use of *open peer review*, in which fellow scholars comment on a draft manuscript, with inline replies (and credited revisions) from the author posted on the public Web. The idea was developed at MediaCommons's parent, the Institute for the Future of the Book, using McKenzie Wark's (2007) *Gamer Theory* as guinea pig

(http://www.futureofthebook.org/gamertheory2.0/). Fitzpatrick herself, in a fittingly reflexive gesture, hosted drafts of her 2011 *Planned Obsolescence: Publishing Technology and the Future of the Academy* on the MediaCommons site for open comment and review (http://mcpress.media-commons.org/plannedobsolescence). Since then, MediaCommons Press has "published" more than a dozen works shaped by this model of open "peer-to-peer" review—including a lengthy report on *Open Review* itself, released by Fitzpatrick and Santo in 2012 (http://mcpress.media-commons.org/open-review/).

The site has also dismantled the fence around what counts as scholarship in the first place, most notably with its In Media Res project (http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/imr/). In frequent posts, often bundled with others by theme, scholar-curators submit a short clip alongside a few hundred words of commentating riff. The short, media-rich format is deliberate: Posts (and themed weeks) are always timely, cleanly written, and designed to engage (via comments) fellow academics and the curious public. In a similar spirit, MediaCommons hosts *The New Everyday*, a journal-like platform that, however, departs from traditional publishing in a pair of innovative ways (http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/tne/). The site has no editorial gatekeeping; anyone with a free MediaCommons account can publish a standalone piece or curate a "cluster" of themed posts. They call it "publish-then-filter": The idea is for comments, sharing, and endorsements to serve as a postpublication editorial sieve. The second departure is *The New Everyday*'s standard post length. The site aims for contributions of 900 to 1,500 words—a "middle state" longer than a blog post, but shorter than a journal article.

With its journal *inTransition*, finally, MediaCommons has retained peer review, but has taken aim at the scholarly "writing" itself (http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/intransition/). The journal, collaboratively published with the U.S. film studies association Society for Cinema and Media Studies, hosts video "essays" as analogue to the traditional, 8,000-word journal article. The tie-in with media studies—the reason this field should be experimenting with scholarly form—is given a muscular defense. With audiovisual formats, media scholars can write "using the same very materials that constitute their objects of study" ([in]Transition, n.d., para. 2). The fascinating claim is that shared form offers a special kind of insight: making sense of a moving-image culture through moving images.

Motley by design, this stable of MediaCommons experiments makes an in-kind argument for media and communication researchers to take up new scholarly formats, with OA as their baseline. If anything, the MediaCommons projects are circumscribed by their focus on just one of the U.S. field's four scholarly cultures, the one with roots in film studies (cf. Pooley, 2016). As a result, the initiative's exploratory efforts have not registered much with the other academic formations that study media, which include not just humanists but also social science–oriented scholars in speech, in the media research field centered on the mass communication trades (housed in journalism schools), and another detached from those trades (e.g., at the two Annenberg Schools). The interdisciplinary field of film studies—which has over the past decade adopted the "and media studies" label with alacrity—is populated by scholars trained in literary and aesthetic analysis, with many located in traditional language (e.g., English, German) disciplines. Arguably, the most exciting embrace of MediaCommons has been among the small, humanities-centric world rethinking scholarly publication in the age of digital humanities, exemplified by Fitzpatrick's own Office of Scholarly Communication within the Modern Language Association. This is all for

the good, but MediaCommons and its form-breaking experiments should furnish models (and harbor work) by scholars from the other cultures too.

Another frontier in the OA space that media scholars are already tapping is the OA monograph. The pioneering publisher for open monographs is the University of Michigan Press, which—under the leadership of Phil Pochoda—launched a series of publishing experiments over the past decade. In 2006— the same year that MediaCommons got under way—Michigan established its first all-digital, OA monograph imprint, digitalculturebooks (http://www.digitalculture.org/). The new imprint was explicitly media-centric from the beginning, aiming to publish work on the "social, cultural and political impact of new media" (Bailey, 2007, para. 1). Michigan—the leading big-university OA trailblazer—had chosen media studies as the topical focus for its self-described "incubator" imprint, meant to "develop an open and participatory publishing model" and "new modes of collaboration" between reader and writer (Bailey, 2007, paras. 3, 6). The imprint was also an explicit test of library–press cooperation, with the university's library system a key partner in the digital culture initiative (see Faisal, Schleif, Washington, & York, 2007, p. iii).

By 2009, the University of Michigan Press announced that its scholarly monographs would, going forward, get published digitally, with print-on-demand as a secondary option for paper holdouts (Jaschik, 2009). The same year, the press effectively merged with the university's library, forming Michigan Publishing (http://www.publishing.umich.edu/about/) as its scholarly publications hub (Swanson, 2009). Digitalculturebooks, the hub's designated progenitor, has published more than 50 OA digital titles, including the landmark 2013 edited collection *Hacking the Academy* (Cohen & Scheinfeldt, 2013), across nine book series such as Landmark Video Games and New Media World. Many of the imprint's titles have nontraditional formats and open "peer-to-peer" review, including Sidonie Smith's (2015) *Manifesto for the Humanities: Transforming Doctoral Education in Good Enough Times*. Michigan's choice to use media scholarship as its test bed for publishing innovation makes sense for the same reflexive reasons cited by MediaCommons: We study the fast-shifting, multimedia formats that digitalculturebooks has incorporated into its reimagined monograph. *New Media & Society*, for similar reasons, was the natural home for Pochoda's (2013) manifesto on academic book publishing, "The Big One: The Epistemic System Break in Scholarly Monograph Publishing."

Useful Marginality

Media and communication studies, as a bundle of fields, support more than 20 OA journals. What is far more striking, however, is the rapid climb of OA titles in terms of citation metrics and other measures of influence. Two of the top 10 "Communication" titles, as indexed by Google Scholar Metrics, are fully OA: the *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* (founded in 1995) and the *International Journal of Communication* (founded in 2007; Google Scholar Metrics, n.d.. The five mainline social science disciplines—anthropology, economics, political science, psychology, and sociology—count just two OA titles among their top 10 Google Scholar Metrics rankings. (One of these, *Cultural Anthropology*, is a venerable journal that converted to OA in 2013.) There are no OA top 10 journals in core humanities fields such as English, history, philosophy, and religion studies. In other words, two of the top-cited journals in media and communication are OA, matching the combined total among the better-established disciplines. The

discrepancy holds for Thomson Reuters's Journal Citation Reports, Elsevier's Scopus, Eigenfactor, and other citation measures.

What accounts for this strange anomaly? As I have argued elsewhere (Pooley, 2015), the media and communication fields' lowly reputation—normally a handicap—in the OA context is actually an advantage. Disciplines with secure legitimacy, relatively clear boundaries, and entrenched center–periphery dynamics also have designated flagships and stable journal hierarchies. That is part of the package. No tenure-eligible political scientist or economist would dare turn down publication in the *American Political Science Review* or the *American Economic Review* on OA principle. Career suicide for a mainline social scientist is, for a communication scholar, a far less risky move—if only because the field has no real flagships or any settled ranking of titles of the kind that other disciplines impart through graduate-school osmosis.

The silver-lined upshot is that publishing in an OA journal does not come with the same reputational hit. The field's journal landscape is flattened and dispersed, without the peaks and valleys that scholars in other fields traverse. Flagship status in other disciplines is frozen in place by history and the self-feeding trough of high-volume, prestige-seeking submissions. It is hard to imagine the *American Sociological Review*—sponsored by the American Sociological Association, but long since signed over to SAGE—getting knocked from its elevated perch. In media studies, the (competing) association-sponsored "flagships" are outsourced to SAGE et al. too, but they have nothing like the *American Sociological Review*'s gold-plated gravitas to lean on. The prestige boost from publishing in, say, *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* (the flagship of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication) is negligible. The same is true for the Society for Cinema and Media Studies's *Cinema Journal* or the National Communication Association's *Quarterly Journal of Speech*. Yes, the International Communication Association's *Journal of Communication* is a partial exception, but even this would-be flagship registers with just one of the four media studies cultures. Thanks to the media fields' untidy dispersal, we have won a measure of freedom from the straitjacket of journal title status. We can afford to make the principled choice for OA. The apparent readership and citation advantages of OA, especially for social scientists, make the decision even more appealing. As individual articles come unbundled from the journals that publish them—with the advent of the so-called "articles economy," as per-article citation, readership, and share counts liberate papers from their journal-status enclosures—the cost–benefit calculus will tilt further still. Media and communication scholars, in short, are in a unique position to flip the field to OA.

Critique and Understanding

So, media scholars have good reason to embrace OA. Our involvement should not, however, end in mere adoption—in submitting to, and reviewing for, OA journals. We are also poised to contribute to the study of academic knowledge-sharing. Media researchers, after all, have an overpacked quiver of analytic tools to make sense of the scholarly publishing landscape—concepts and approaches that we have developed to scrutinize popular media. With care, these lines of critique and analysis could be delivered to the sibling domain of scholarly communication. With notable exceptions, media and communication scholars have opted out of the cross-disciplinary conversation on the future of academic knowledge-

sharing. That conversation, sustained by peer-reviewed articles, blog posts, foundation-supported reports, and even Twitter, welcomes contributions from an admirably broad range of disciplines. Library and information science is well represented, of course, but holds nothing like a monopoly. Media studies figures such as Ted Striphas, Leah Lieuvrouw, Gary Hall, Timothy Stephen, and Kathleen Fitzpatrick are rule-proving exceptions who directly engage on OA and related topics. Nevertheless, so much untapped insight is waiting to be adapted to the academic publishing context.

The multistranded political economy of communication tradition is a good example. The incumbent, cartel-like scholarly publishing industry deserves a thorough-going political economy of communication-style analysis in the mold of the 1990s media-consolidation studies of Robert McChesney and Janet Wasko. The later work of Herbert Schiller, with its focus on the commodification of information, could be refracted through the self-styled information conglomerates such as Informa (parent company of Taylor & Francis) and the RELX Group (Elsevier's parent, known as Reed-Elsevier until a 2015 rebranding). Both are London-based, publicly traded giants with diverse "information solutions" expected to generate maximized profits and upbeat Wall Street whispers. RELX boasts about its 90 million data transactions per hour, and Informa sprawls across four "Operating Divisions," each "owning a portfolio of leading brands" (RELX Group, n.d., para. 3). The companies' real competitors are in the equally merger-happy news-and-data business, such as Canada's Thomson Reuters, News Corp. (with Dow Jones), and Bloomberg. Some of the information-industry froth surfaced in Thomson Reuters's sale, in summer 2016, of the citation database Web of Science (and related businesses) to private equity firms for more than $3 billion (Butler, 2016). Schiller's (1989) *Culture, Inc.* is badly in need of an update.

There is an analogy to be drawn, too, with Dallas Smythe's notion of the audience commodity. Back in the late 1970s, Smythe (1977) made the startling but compelling point that couch-bound TV viewers are a product that broadcast networks sell to advertisers. All that television programming, he wrote, amounts to a "free lunch" exchanged for the viewers' work of watching. If Smythe's point that audience attention is labor was an arguable stretch, the multibillion dollar valuations of Silicon Valley startups vindicated the Canadian political economist's core insight decades later. In this respect, SAGE is not all that different from Facebook: Our journal submissions are uncompensated, user-generated content that—like Facebook posts—get aggregated, repackaged, and sold back to us. Although the publishers' main rent-skimming tactic is subscriptions, not tailored ads, the basic dynamic is shared. Media industry scholars already have the analytic toolkit to draw these parallels.

Wiley and Elsevier are a big part of the story. We should also train our scholarly scrutiny on the dizzying, buzzy array of new models and experiments themselves. After all, OA—especially in its author-pays incarnations—could substitute one kind of inequality (pay-to-publish) for the other (pay-to-read). Even respected nonprofit initiatives such as the Public Library of Science's stable of natural science titles charge author fees that come close to an adjunct professor's pay for an entire course.[4] There are other OA

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[4] Indeed, the Big Five publishers have all "embraced" OA with brazen cynicism. In addition to a small number of OA journals with usurious author-processing charges, SAGE and the rest dangle the option to unlock individual articles, for a hefty charge. The result is *double-dipping*—a new OA profit layer on top of subscription revenue.

models, including the Open Library of Humanities's successful library-subsidy scheme (https://about.openlibhums.org/libraries/supporting-institutions/), but the OA world—brave and new as it is—would benefit from media scholars' critical takes.

Fellow-traveling developments such as altmetrics and postpublication peer review should also claim some of our attention. Media researchers are in a good position to do some of this analysis, if only because we have already produced rich understandings of all-too-relevant analogues: the media industry's digital makeover, for one, and also the rise of social media microcelebrity. One way to understand the dynamics at work in scholarly communication, after all, is in terms of *unbundling*. The journal-issue package that has, since the 17th century, grouped articles is already coming undone. The very idea of a "periodical"—of regular, batched release under an ongoing publication title—is a blend of inherited convention and the affordances of print. In the academic world, journal prestige and discipline-specific flagship status have long served as quality-signaling proxies to fellow scholars as well as tenure-review committees. This system is already under strain, and not only because of mounting (and compelling) criticism of the journal impact factor. Paper- and scholar-specific measures—some qualitative, but most captured numerically—are suddenly everywhere: journal-site download counts, Google Scholar citation tallies, and "view" totals on Academia.edu. Type a book or article title into the new Open Syllabus Explorer, and you will get back a "teaching score"—a scaled, 1–100 measure of how often a reading appears in the project's 1 million–syllabi database—with a 99.9 for Plato's *Republic* and a meager 0.8 for Elihu Katz and Paul Lazarsfeld's (1955) *Personal Influence* (http://explorer.opensyllabusproject.org). As with other scholarly communication developments, the natural sciences are a step ahead. Postpublication review sites such as PubPeer publish anonymous comments (from published scholars) on individual papers, and the U.S. government's own PubMed Commons highlights "trending articles"—"those with recent increases in activity" (PubMed Commons, n.d., para. 4). Recommendation aggregators such as Faculty of 1000 feature "Current Top 10" and "All Time Top 10" leaderboards.

To a media scholar's ear, all of this sounds eerily familiar. Take the article-unbundling phenomenon: For years now, we have been tracking how search, social shares, recommendation algorithms, and other "side doors" have, in effect, untethered the individual story from its publisher. The old, bundled model of legacy media—exemplified by newspapers—relied on the blunt metrics of subscriptions and newsstand sales. Editors and publishers knew that the comics were probably subsidizing their foreign bureaus, but bundled consumption kept these cross-subsidies fuzzy. Real-time analytics—down to automated headline A/B testing—and social media content hosting have eviscerated the editor-curated, periodic "publication" model. Now, journalists and editors are glued to their Chartbeat dashboards, tracking second-by-second audience tallies by author and article. Success means a video ricocheting around Facebook, which may well host the media file on its server.

Another strand of media scholarship has, of course, catalogued the lava-like overspread of celebrity culture into everyday life, with the means of production (smartphones) and distribution (social media) in the hands of ordinary people. The "demotic turn," to use Graeme Turner's (2009) phrase, has fed the adoption of visibility strategies once confined to film and music stars. Social media microcelebrities, as Brooke Erin Duffy (2016) has documented, carefully monitor follower counts and likes-

and-comments tallies and mete out packaged bits of authenticity to keep their audiences "engaged." It is fame on a smaller scale, but it is *metricized* fame propelled by rich-get-richer algorithmic dynamics.

As media researchers, we can bring this work to bear on scholarly communication. Academics, after all, are already "publishing" on social media, with journal article shares on Twitter the quintessential "altmetric." There is, moreover, a parallel universe of academic microcelebrities who have amassed large followings on social media and, to a lesser extent, blogs. The sociology of academic reputation—traditionally fixated on citations and mass-media visibility—should be updated to account for the "demotic turn" in scholarly life. Indeed, the most compelling applications of media scholarship will take up the academic world analogues to Instagram and Snapchat. Academic social networks such as Academia.edu and ResearchGate, although generating some high-profile criticism, have largely escaped scholarly scrutiny. Yet, both networks have powerful and partially overlapping purchase, with Academia.edu boasting about 36 million unique monthly visitors and even more many academic members (Academia.edu, n.d.).

These networks represent a notable extension of the unbundling dynamics, as they shift the center of gravity from, say, institution or journal title to the scholar herself. Academia.edu and ResearchGate also serve as thinly veiled PDF-sharing repositories, akin to Napster circa 1994. Together with piracy sites such as Sci-Hub, the pair of aca-networks are establishing a de facto regime of OA.[5] Most fascinating of all is the manner by which the two sites mimic core social media conventions, down to follower counts and activity notifications. Curated profiles with pics, a News Feed-like scrollable bulletin of followers' uploads, a "Bookmark" analogue to the social media heart button, and even incessant prompts to "import contacts" ("Get More Followers")—all the trappings of a Silicon Valley social app. Like Twitter and LinkedIn, but with more goading, Academia.edu showcases user "Analytics": followers, "Total Views," and percentile rankings. Members get e-mailed whenever a Google search lands on one of their papers, complete with prompts to view a full "Analytics" page that resembles a flight control panel. (Users even have the option to make their Analytics page "Public.") With an obvious nod to Google's PageRank and Facebook's EdgeRank algorithms, Academia.edu recently introduced article-specific PaperRank scores, which are used to compute a scholar's overall AuthorRank.[6] We have, in other words, a scholarly Klout score, each of us (see Duffy & Pooley, forthcoming).

Perhaps it is not surprising that both academic social networks are backed by Silicon Valley venture capital firms. Academia.edu boasts about raising $17.7 million from "a range of investors,"

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[5] Academia.edu, on its landing page, is unabashed: "Academia is the easiest way to share papers with millions of people across the world for free. A study recently published in *PLoS ONE* found that papers uploaded to Academia receive a 69% boost in citations over 5 years." The cited paper is by Niyazov et al. (2016). One of the paper's coauthors is Richard Price, founder and CEO of Academia.edu, and five other coauthors are employees of the network (Academia.edu, n.d.).

[6] AuthorRank is a function of the PaperRanks of the papers on the author's profile. PaperRank is a function of the number of recommendations a paper has received, weighted by the AuthorRanks of the recommenders. For more details on the algorithms, see Academia.edu's explanation page, http://support.academia.edu/customer/en/portal/articles/2201342-what-are-authorrank-and-paperrank-.

including four venture capital firms such as Khosla Ventures (Academia.edu, n.d.), which is headquartered along the same famous stretch of Sand Hill Road as one of ResearchGate's backers, Benchmark Capital. Academia.edu is headquartered in nearby San Francisco, where ResearchGate (based in Berlin) also has an office. Both networks resemble the Silicon Valley startups that surround them, and not just for their venture funding: "Perks and Benefits" for working at Academia.edu include a Foosball table, free lunch, and stock options; and ResearchGate touts its "healthy snacks, in-house yoga, [and] relaxation rooms" (ResearchGate, n.d., para. 28). The Valley's hacky-sack-at-break culture is one that media academics have critiqued in a series of excellent studies that are begging to be applied to Academia.edu and ResearchGate. The venture capital context deserves special scrutiny: Menlo Park firms are placing bets that they hope will yield the proverbial "1000×" returns. Academia.edu, ResearchGate, and other scholarly communication companies backed by venture capitalists—including the innovative writing platform Authorea, data-sharing site Figshare, and the eponymous Altmetric—are not merely for profit. They will all have their reckoning with the unique ferocity of venture capitalist profit expectations.

The push for OA is not responsible for academic social networks, most–e-mailed leaderboards, or even postpublication peer review. Unbundling is happening at tolled journals too, and most Academia.edu papers are anything but OA. Nevertheless, the OA movement is hitched to these developments, in practice and by perception, in the same sense that exciting experiments in new publishing formats are often faithful to OA ideals. The changes roiling the way we share knowledge are tied up in, for better and worse, the push for OA. As media scholars, we have a unique bundle of concepts, traditions, and methods to scrutinize the new publishing landscape—venture capital warts and all.

Conclusion

Why haven't media and communication researchers already taken up the OA cause in large numbers? Many OA innovations have sprung from our fields, after all, and we have less to lose, arguably, from abandoning the legacy journal system. We also have the analytic traditions to scrutinize, and perhaps improve, the way academics go about sharing knowledge. So why has the OA promise gone (mostly) unfulfilled in communication research? The main explanation is that, as a bundle of humanities and social science fields, media studies reflect the wider gap between the natural sciences and everyone else on OA adoption and support. Article-sharing cultures and infrastructures, such as physicists' arXiv, were established decades ago, driven in part by these sciences' fast-moving "urban" communication needs (Becher & Trowler, 2001). It is also true that, especially in the more humanities-oriented media fields, the monograph is prized above the journal article. For economic and historical reasons, the overwhelming focus of OA initiatives, until recently, has centered on serials to the exclusion of books (Maron, Mulhern, Rossman, & Schmelzinger, 2016).

The biggest challenge for OA, across the academy and not just in media research, is the dead weight of the past—the accretions of prestige that coat the oldest (and invariably tolled) publications. A flagship journal's reputation is congealed sentiment, preserved by submission habits and self-feeding "impact factor" metrics. Its status depends on collective belief that is, in circular fashion, affirmed by the effects of that belief. High rejection rates boost quality and win over tenure committees—outcomes that double back to the title's prestige.

The problem, of course, is that the professional associations that own these titles rely on the rents they extract from Wiley, SAGE, and the others. A discipline's scholars could all walk away—train their attention, and submit their papers, elsewhere—but they would all need to leave at the same moment. This has happened; recall the mass defection of *Lingua*'s editorial staff, who left Elsevier in late 2015 to establish an OA alternative, *Glossa* (Moody, 2015). A similar strategy is to transform existing tolled publications into OA titles. Harvard's Office for Scholarly Communication recently published a report on "journal-flipping," with an aggressive "major goal": to "identify specific scenarios that have been used or proposed for transitioning subscription journals to OA so that these scenarios can provide options for others seeking to 'flip' their journals to OA" (Solomon, Laakso, & Björk, 2016, p. 10). There is something cinematic and thrilling about journal flipping as an answer to OA's hobbling collective action problem. Submitting to a low-prestige OA title is an act of quixotic self-sacrifice, whereas flipping a journal gets at the main thing propping up a publication's status: the ongoing labor and attention scholars invest.

Still, such an extraction effort will prove long and costly for most disciplines, if the effort succeeds at all. In media studies, we hold a paradoxical advantage. Spread out and polyglot, marginal even, we have no real journal hierarchy to topple. We can take the OA plunge without the same reputational chill. Tenured scholars, in particular, have the academic indemnity to divert their article submissions to OA journals and to press book publishers to release their monographs as print-on-demand/free-download hybrids. New OA titles, such as *Media Industries* (established in 2013), have gained quick and citation-validated traction. Sure, we might flip some journals to OA, but our opportunity—our reward for arriving late, out on the university's periphery—is that we have a whole field to flip.

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