

2021 In Review: The Culture of Academic Publishing



Responding to the necessities of the COVID-19 pandemic and the accelerating application of the open paradigm to more and more aspects of research, academic publishing and the cultures that support it continue to be in flux in 2021. This review brings together posts focused on the way in which the publication of research has developed in 2021 and its impact on research practices.

[Open Access to academic books creates larger, more diverse and more equitable readerships:](#)



Drawing on findings from one of the largest surveys of its kind to date, **Mithu Lucraft** demonstrates how Open Access to academic books has resulted in significantly larger and more diverse readerships for these books. As governments globally and in the UK reassess their commitments to OA monographs, she argues the findings make a compelling case for resolving the longstanding funding issues surrounding opening access to academic books.

[Reading Peer Review – What a dataset of peer review reports can teach us about changing research culture:](#)

One of the first megajournals, PLOS ONE, has played a significant role in changing scholarly communication and in particular peer review, by placing an emphasis on soundness, as opposed to novelty, in published research. Drawing on a study of peer review reports from PLOS ONE recently published as an [open-access book](#), **Martin Paul Eve, Daniel Paul O'Donnell, Cameron Neylon, Sam Moore, Robert Gadie, Victoria Odeniyi, and Shahina Parvin**, assess PLOS ONE's impact on the culture of peer review and what it can tell us about efforts to change academic culture more broadly.



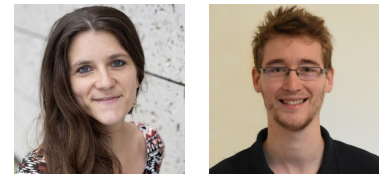
[Review papers and the creative destruction of the research literature:](#)



Review papers play a significant role in curating the scholarly record. Drawing on a study of close to six million research articles, **Peter McMahan**, shows how review papers not only focus and shift attention onto particular papers, but also serve to shape entire research domains by linking them together and outlining core concepts. As such, the constitutive role of review papers and those who write them warrant further attention.

[Has COVID-19 been the making of Open Science?:](#)

One outcome of the COVID-19 pandemic has been to put discussions about open research methods and practices, such as preprints, into the mainstream. Drawing on an recent analysis of the extent to which Open Science principles have been adopted during the COVID-19 pandemic, **Lonni Besançon, Corentin Segalas, Clémence Leyrat**, argue that while the pandemic has accelerated certain forms of Open Science, much work remains to be done to ensure that these principles are engaged with optimally.



[***Designing a useful textbook for an open access audience – Q and A with Filipe Campante, Federico Sturzenegger and Andrés Velasco, authors of Advanced Macroeconomics: An Easy Guide:***](#)

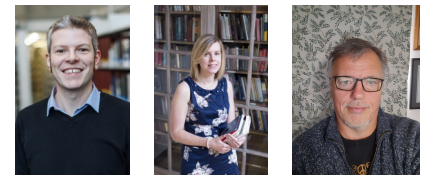


Textbooks play an important role in defining fields of research and summarising key academic ideas for a wider audience. But how do you do this for an open access audience that is potentially unlimited? We talked to **Filipe Campante, Federico Sturzenegger** and **Andrés Velasco**, authors of the recently published LSE Press book [Advanced Macroeconomics: An Easy Guide](#), about how the field has changed in recent times, what makes

their approach to macro-economics distinctive, and what rationales and ambitions lie behind producing an open access textbook.

[***What happens when you find your open access PhD thesis for sale on Amazon?:***](#)

Last year a number of early career academics discovered that their PhD theses, which had been deposited in institutional open access repositories, were being sold for profit via Amazon Seller pages. In this post **Guy Lavender**, with contributions from **Jane Secker** and **Chris Morrison**, discuss the implications of this episode in relation to the protections provided by creative commons licensing for academic work and the extent to which openly published theses constitute prior publication for early career researchers looking to publish their doctoral work as a book.



[***Authors over automation: 3 Steps for better alt-text and image descriptions in academic writing:***](#)



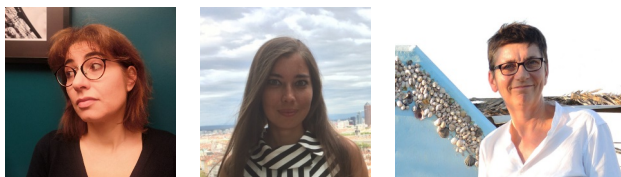
Alt-text is an important and increasingly required element of online publishing that provides accessibility to visual images for those using screen readers to listen to digital publications. Reflecting on a recent experience when writing up her PhD thesis, **Lettie Y. Conrad** discusses the value of author produced alt-text for images in academic writing and shares resources and a three-step guide for authors looking to improve their alt-text practice.

[***Can AI be used ethically to assist peer review?:***](#)

As the rate and volume of academic publications has risen, so too has the pressure on journal editors to quickly find reviewers to assess the quality of academic work. In this context the potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to boost productivity and reduce workload has received significant attention. Drawing on evidence from an experiment utilising AI to learn and assess peer review outcomes, **Alessandro Checco, Lorenzo Bracciale, Pierpaolo Loreti, Stephen Pinfield, and Giuseppe Bianchi**, discuss the prospects for AI for assisting peer review and the potential ethical dilemmas its application might produce.



[***'It could be effective...': Uncertainty and over-promotion in the abstracts of COVID-19 preprints:***](#)



A defining feature of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on scholarly communication has been the brief and intense surge in the production of preprints. This has had significant impacts on the ways in which new research findings have been reported and communicated more broadly and the role played by abstracts in highlighting the meaning and value of new

research. Based on a study of the language deployed in the abstracts of recently published COVID-19 preprints, **Frédérique Bordignon**, **Liana Ermakova** and **Marianne Noël**, argue two defining features of these abstracts are over-promotion and hedging, a deliberate ambiguity that suggests authors should pay greater attention to what they seek to communicate in their abstracts.

[Less 'prestigious' journals can contain more diverse research, by citing them we can shape a more just politics of citation:](#)

Drawing on their recent analysis of journals in the field of Higher Education Studies, which shows that journals with lower impact rankings are more likely to feature research from diverse geographic and linguistic contexts, **Shannon Mason** and **Margaret K. Merga** argue that researchers should adopt more careful citation practices, as a means to broaden and contextualise what counts as 'prestigious' research and create a more equitable publishing environment for research outside of core anglophone countries.



[Now is the time to work together toward open infrastructures for scholarly metadata:](#)

As part of Open Access Week 2021, **Ginny Hendricks**, **Bianca Kramer**, **Catriona J. Maccallum**, **Paolo Manghi**, **Cameron Neylon**, **Silvio Peroni**, **David Shotton**, **Aaron Tay**, and **Ludo Waltman** made the case for community action toward open infrastructures for scholarly metadata. Discussing the impending loss of Microsoft Academic, the need for more sustainable infrastructures and the contributions these can make to research equity, they outline how stakeholders across the scholarly communications ecosystem can contribute to making open metadata a reality now.

Note: This article gives the views of the author, and not the position of the LSE Impact Blog, nor of the London School of Economics. Please review our [comments policy](#) if you have any concerns on posting a comment below.

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