In the second in their series, 'Cite or Site?', **Pat Lockley**
(http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/blog-contributors/#Patrick_Lockley) *and* **Mark
Carrigan (http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/blog-
contributors/#Mark_Carrigan)** *analyse the dominance of academic journals in publishing
despite a drastic change in cultural context, arguing that moving social science research online
should be second nature.*

The journal article has become, over time, the *sine qua non* of a successful academic
profile. Such dominance has meant few have had any motivation to either challenge this or
to explore alternative models. Narrow understandings of what the communication of
academic ideas entails may have been compounded by the fact that, until recently,
alternative modes of dissemination were few and far between.

As a channel for communication (as a wider term than dissemination), the journal paper
presents two distinct problems. The language of journals has tended to find expression
through a dialect which radically reduces the potential readership. Once the linguistic difficulties have been
overcome, the average reader faces the problem of deciding which journal to favour from an ever-
expanding range (how would you explain why one journal is better than another?) and probable commercial
pay walls before they can actually get to the paper.

Furthermore if they are fortunate enough to access open journals, is the software they use comparable in
ease of use and user experience to most common websites? Many of the factors which impede the
communicative impulsive that has traditionally motivated academic publishing are mundane and/or
contingent. But this doesn't mean they're not important.

How inherent in the practice of research is the moral imperative to communicate; to ensure that its results
are communicated as widely as possibly to as many as we can? Organisations such as Openbook
publishers (http://www.google.com/url?
q=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.openbookpublishers.com%2F&sa=D&sntz=1&usg=AFQjCNHMiPnwD7kuZs5PTS-
5btf61movnQ) argue working "openly" is the future for scholars. An approach focused on journals can no
longer be said to fulfil this goal, and is most certainly "one size" which is in no way "one size fits all" – by
its very nature it has become the epitome of Fordism.

We also seem to accept that the preferred form of academic to academic communication is the journal. The
REF and academic publishers stand as comparable to an intellectual monopoly come bottleneck like a
revisionist Worshipful Company of Stationers and Newspaper Makers (http://www.google.com/url?
q=http%3A%2F%2Fen.wikipedia.org%2Fwiki%2FWorshipful_Company_of_Stationers_and_Newspaper_Mak
ers&sa=D&sntz=1&usg=AFQjCNHmsESE_LRbD-T7a8vCjBcfcpbo-Q), blessed by government powers to
control communication. A google search for "Sociology" returns as the first result - The Coming Crisis of
Empirical Sociology (http://www.google.com/url?
q=http%3A%2F%2Fsoc.sagepub.com%2Fcontent%2F41%2F5%2F885.full.pdf%2Bhtml&sa=D&sntz=1&usg
=AFQjCNGyZDmKHd_zWM-No1lgcEPYOle2dg) – which has the following structure in its references:

- Book (eds) (4)
- Whole book (35)
- Journal (8)
- Government report (1)

The most recent article in American Sociological Review - Unions, Norms, and the Rise in U.S. Wage
Inequality (http://www.google.com/url?
q=http%3A%2F%2Fasr.sagepub.com%2Fcontent%2F76%2F4%2F513.full.pdf%2Bhtml&sa=D&sntz=1&usg
=AFQjCNH9SN_heLQ1dwvBfduHuO-OjGsqPw)

- Journal (40)

- Book (22)
- Book (eds) (4)
- Government report (2)

and the most recent Sociology article -Families, Secrets and Memories (http://www.google.com/url?
q=http%3A%2F%2Fsoc.sagepub.com%2Fcontent%2F45%2F4%2F539.full.pdf%2Bhtml&sa=D&sntz=1&usg
=AFQjCNFNCK5Kh9fkj4I_RJx1fHHXGVgYdg)

- Journal (12)
- Book (19)
- Book (eds) (2)
- Government report (0)

So it is in no way apparent that the journal is the de facto unit of communication, even amongst academics. Even this channel and form of communication is perhaps open to discussion. Then we face the issue, as suggested by John Ioannidis in "Why Most Published Research Findings Are False (http://www.google.com/url?
q=http%3A%2F%2Fdx.doi.org%2F10.1371%252Fjournal.pmed.0020124&sa=D&sntz=1&usg=AFQjCNGVTU
3j9d2M5QsnVlOJmvFNcGMyZA)", which argues journal papers aren't working for communicative purposes.

These issues stand in a rapidly evolving cultural context. There is a seemingly growing demand for intellectually challenging content, across a range of audiences, which the physical sciences have thus far tended to fill. But surely the social sciences are innately better suited to the predominantly text-based or info-graphic communication channels which have proliferated on the internet?

These are channels in which we are likely to be already in some way engaged, and the action of taking our research into this domain should be second nature. Yet for the most part it is not. This raises retrospective questions about why this isn't the case but also proactive ones about how it could become so. A cursory glance at the figures shows that there is an enormous hunger, across a diverse populace, suddenly manifesting itself through a variety of online channels.

Apple's iTunes U, as of this time last year (http://www.google.com/url?
q=http%3A%2F%2Ftechcrunch.com%2F2010%2F08%2F24%2Fapple-shares-itunes-u-stats-350000-files-
available-300-million-downloads%2F&sa=D&sntz=1&usg=AFQjCNE_afURIX1Sw2_ACIRx7SVGziQcPg), had 300 million downloads from 350,000 available files. Over 3 and a half million people downloaded LSE podcasts in July alone. The RSA (http://www.google.com/url?
q=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.thersa.org%2F&sa=D&sntz=1&usg=AFQjCNF5rYdFi4rXlQ-7GyAiCuo6lFoe0g),
with its recent catchphrase, "21st century enlightenment", has been an innovator in this area, particularly with its innovative RSA Animate videos, condensing academic talks on Youtube and combining them with fast moving animation, which have proved enormously successful:

- Sir Ken Robinson's video about changing education paradigms (http://www.youtube.com/watch?
  v=zDZFcDGpL4U) has been viewed over 5 million times
- Jeremy Rifkin's talk on the Empathic Civilization
  (http://www.youtube.com/user/theRSAorg#p/u/9/l7AWnfFRc7g) has been viewed over 1.3 million times
- David Harvey's talk on the Crises of Capitalism (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qOP2V_np2c0) has been viewed over 1 million times.
- Slavoj Zizek's talk about his second to last book (http://www.youtube.com/user/theRSAorg?
  blend=1&ob=5#p/u/12/hpAMbpQ8J7g) has been viewed over 600,000 times.

Coupled with these platform-based approaches – often which require overheads that perhaps would invite criticism of suggesting they too are "one size fits all" – how many academics actively take steps to

maximise the exposure of their research? Even working on something as simple as editing a wikipedia article (http://www.google.com/url?
q=http%3A%2F%2Fukwebfocus.wordpress.com%2F2011%2F09%2F09%2Fmicroattributions-wikipedia-and-dissemination%2F&sa=D&sntz=1&usg=AFQjCNGej3Ha41aUK3MsyNA5w7T6iukc3w) may maximise exposure.

The utility of these channels extends beyond public engagement. As the Vice-Chancellor of Warwick University, Nigel Thrift, recently observed (http://www.google.com/url?
q=http%3A%2F%2Fchronicle.com%2Fblogs%2Fworldwise%2Fthe-power-of-blogs-in-forming-new-fields-of-international-study%2F28638&sa=D&sntz=1&usg=AFQjCNGJA_2hmaw306-pl0UUAnhlXBNHfw) (in his eminently readable blog) entire fields of inquiry are beginning to be fermented online, as instantaneous low cost communication has provided a potent environment within which graduate students and early-career researchers, in particular, are able to articulate new directions of thought outside the temporal and editorial constraints of traditional academic structures such as peer-review, which, as Steve Fuller recently argued (http://www.google.com/url?
q=http%3A%2F%2Fsociologicalimagination.org%2Farchives%2F6317&sa=D&sntz=1&usg=AFQjCNHsur10 ewZdaE5DcWoP_7XJMqU2NA), is an important though ultimately backward-looking exercise sometimes inimical to risk-taking and innovation.

As we stated in the first part of this series (http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2011/09/01/cite-or-site-academic-publishing/), we are not advocating that academic journals be abandoned in favour of communicating through social media. Even were this desirable, it would not be feasible for all manner of reasons, not least of all because of the REF. Instead we are suggesting that this unparalleled expansion of communicative opportunities available to researchers demands a creative and on-going re-appraisal of the purpose and practice of academic publishing.

*In the final section of this series, **Pat Lockley** and **Mark Carrigan** will take a practical look at the new tools available to researchers seeking to connect and communicate online, as well as their congruence with existing professional practices within academia.*

Related posts:

1. Don't swap the "Ivory Tower" for a cyber one: public engagement and the internet (http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2011/07/29/dont-swap-ivory-tower-cyber-one-public-engagement/)

2. Cite or Site? The current view of what constitutes 'academic publishing' is too limited. Our published work must become truly public. (http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2011/09/01/cite-or-site-academic-publishing/)

3. A beginner's guide to the different types of impact: why the traditional 'bean-counting' approach is no longer useful in the digital era (http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2011/05/24/a-beginner%e2%80%99s-guide-to-the-different-types-of-impact/)

4. Share your Twitter top tips for a new 'how-to' guide for academics on the merits of academic tweeting (http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2011/06/22/are-you-an-academic-who-loves-to-tweet-share-your-top-tips-for-a-blog-post-on-the-merits-of-academic-tweeting/)

5. Impact zones and the role of publishers: changing the way academic research makes wider impact (http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2011/07/14/publishers-measuring-impact/)