Evaluation of Books: Introducti
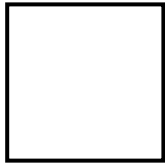
Ochsner, Michael

ABSTRACT

Evaluation of Social Sciences and Humanities in Europe. Hcéres Colloquium Proceedings - Paris IAS, 16-17 May 2022. Ses

Context

Books and outputs related to books (book chapters, reports etc.) are an import; humanities. As reported in the previous session, therefore, books need to pla evaluation is to provide meaningful results. This opens the next question: how, reasons: First, evaluation is a time-consuming activity (if it is done properly) an could benefit from taking into account the evaluation used during the publicatio and studying how books are evaluated by those who publish them means bene evaluating books.

So, by reflecting on how books are evaluated today and in the past, in differen roles of the book in scientific communication, what are ways how a book is co how are peers reading and assessing those books. We might also identify differ publishers, authors and reviewers (e.g., books for career advancements, books t of works into a coherent bigger picture, books to present the state of the art of a

Obviously, like academic publishing and research in general, book publishing is a hot topic as well as Open Access. Somehow, it seems that there is no link be but still these themes are often discussed together. Generally, it seems that tl evaluations) is not scrutinised enough. While there is bibliometric research on bo [Gorraiz et al., 2013](#)), other aspects of the links between books and evaluations forward that seem to me of need for conceptual scrutiny: On the one hand, bo publishers' prestige, thus committing the same errors as focusing on Impac confounding of Open Access, digitalisation, and prestige when discussing the little attention is paid to actual commercial aspects of publishing, including tł demand of books by the general population or by professionals ([Giménez-Toled](#) scrutiny on what Open Access means and how it can be achieved, i.e. there is a money with scholarly publishing vs. all scientific output must be immediat

worthwhile discussing whether it would be more advantageous to perceive
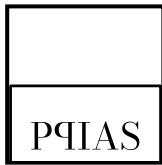discussion will also have to include reflections on the turn from "pay to read" to

Publishers' Prestige

Scholars publish books to present the outcomes of their research. Most ofter
projects and complex issues investigated from various perspectives. In many SS
that the author(s) have spent considerable time and effort on the subject. S
advancement, which also works a little against the books as prestigious re
(quasi)book. Still, books serve to prove that the author is an expert on the top
their thesis).

However, profiles of publishers and their reputation differ sometimes strongly
[Mannana-Rodriguez & Giménez-Toledo, 2018](#)). Books can fulfil different roles;
non-academic books is sometimes difficult to make. Some publishers specialis
(e.g., communication of research results to the profession in local language vs.
specific topics in an academic discipline). Evaluations of the books are necessa
fulfil in knowledge dissemination. The publishers' prestige also changes accord
dissemination process. Therefore, assuming that the scrutiny of evaluation of m
seems a contested issue as reputation and evaluation varies across the functions
dissemination process. What strikes in the discussion of prestige and Open Acc
given (that actually also applies to journals but I think the situation regarding
experience): a prestigious publisher is a prestigious publisher and a new one is
and is more stable than is functional, prestige is a result of merit. If a repute
prestige will drop; consequently, if a new publisher appears, consistently pul
publisher. Therefore, the discussion on OA and prestige seems often to be weird
change according to practice, as a function of whether the publisher will prov
books in evaluations, it is obvious that using the publishers' prestige as a pro
reasons as the Impact Factor: it is an ecological fallacy. Not all books published
not all books published by less prestigious publishers are bad.

Open Access and Digitalisation

Another interesting point lacking scrutiny is the non-discrimination of Open Acc
happen without Open Access (and that's a point that is indeed undisputed), but
can be made available to the public without digitalisation. Very obviously, digit
(open as well as closed access), furthermore, the change that comes with digi
other changes, like Open Access. But confounding the two transformations mig
Digitalisation and Open Access can take. If this discussion also involves prestige
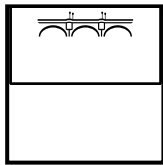
With regard to the SSH, it is interesting that Open Access seems to be conceptua
argument is that research is publicly funded, so it should be available to the pu
that the product "book" is made without any price and that publishers don't do a
free to anyone, anytime, it might also be considered that research needs to be av
This would render visible that libraries are a form of Open Access for printe
available for free comes with paying for services the publishers provide. Such se
are ready to pay for them are even less discussed. Digitalisation comes with cl
idea to make research results accessible. Both processes are separate and meri
what we are negotiating. Instead of thinking Open Access rather than Digitalis
Digitalisation and what services are provided by whom, and then what costs c
things accessible to the relevant audience can be discussed. Basically, after
through digitalisation, we can reconceptualise "Library" with regard to those ne
of negotiation with publishers.

With regard to the evaluation of books, it seems that it is often perceived t
important to acknowledge that Digitalisation and Open Access are not linked
Rather, books fulfil many different roles in knowledge production and di
requirements regarding accessibility (both from perspective of digitalisation as
meant for being printed, some books are clearly meant to be sold, some books
physically). This also means that the manuscripts should be evaluated regardin
Open Access has become relevant and Digitalisation has become dominant, boc
have been publishers taking advantage of the need of scholars to publish thei
further evaluation. Regardless of Digitalisation and Open Access, it is relevant
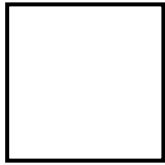publishing.

Open Access and publishing

This reflection leads straight to the next point: Oftentimes, there is a dichotomy
for anyone anytime) and the bad (commercial publishers gaining ridiculous amo
is put in front of those two options and needs to decide. However, it seems to r
of a continuum. There are several ways of making scientific research publicly
(Plan S) is not the only possible one, and not the first (Debat & Babini, 2019
several meetings on Open Access with EC representatives in which I participate
agenda's main goal was to regain the central role of Europe in the international r
recently. More interestingly, the EC envisages to allow funding for APC also fc
the context of Horizon Europe (e.g., for a special issue or an edited vol
discriminatory. However, the funding is possible under the condition that the
"European Values". While we might agree on the relevance of some basic val
several interesting issues: who controls? which values exactly? What if we want
are organised across the world but cannot include contributions from autocrat

values? If non-European researchers need the agreement of European funders
journals, this puts academic freedom quite into question and, ironically, inclu
European value "non-discrimination" as well).

Because an important focus lies on keeping Europe on top regarding visible re
current agenda simply moves from a "pay to read" to a "pay to publish" model
saves money because the focus is not on the prices for specific services or
consumer of the content pays for the distribution ([Armstrong, 2021](#)). It is to be
to circumvent for researchers: a mail to the author was usually all it needed to
publish" is much more difficult to circumvent. There is the idea of waivers ap
publishers. But in many cases, they publish in "special issues" where, for exam
for the SSH because SSH scholars usually have smaller funds and special issue
Europe, and many colleagues from Eastern Europe might not be able to get the
excluded from the special issue, as I had to experience as an editor of such a s
of political power and control of Plan S is discussed and seen much more crit
[2018](#); [Debat & Babini, 2019](#)).

Another aspect that is not often discussed is that not all research necessarily
research results are presented in a specialised manner only intelligible to speciali
the non-academic audience. Publishing is not just making things available. Pu
editing, layout, making it available in print or on screen; but it also includes dist
etc. The importance of those aspects of publishing is not to be underestimated b
that a text is written and available does not mean that the text will be found, re
presented, advertised etc. Not to forget audience-targeted presentation (and that
not be written in the same way as to specialist peers). Small publishers are
relevant for SSH disciplines: some SSH research addresses professional practiti
of new research, some address the wider public where even more efforts are
relevant as whether the research is published in Open Access or for a fee. The p
in reading each research result, quite the opposite: they talked of the cacophony
while others said B, so how can both be scientific if A contradicts B? Open Ac
to the wider public. This brings us back to the topic of evaluation: The Open A
research instead of quality of research, quality of presentation and efficient
comes with changes as to how research is evaluated for different purposes beca
also changes incentives for authors and readers ([Armstrong, 2021](#)). These cha
Access and the focus on availability and prices needs to be expanded to a m
Access brings. Finally, Open Access and Digitalisation also come with potential
Digitalisation, Open Access, and evaluation needs further scrutiny going beyond
books open the possibility of "new" open peer review; or the opposite: printed
pay for publish without any quality assurance. The processes are complex, but
with technological change; dissemination entails commercial aspects and serv
needs to take changes in publishing, dissemination and the societal needs into
clearer separation of the processes would help finding new options.

Conclusions

The evaluation of books undergoes radical changes, not only because the evaluat[...] the book-oriented disciplines of the humanities ([Guillory, 2005](#), p. 34). Rather, [...] Digitalisation, Open Science and, specifically, Open Access impacts how books [...] are evaluated. In this short introduction, I have argued that the discourse on Op[...] pay how much for research to be published. The scientific community sho[...] dissemination of research results to different audiences, the roles publishers ca[...] services should be. The evaluation process of books must be part of this discussi[...]

The contributions in this session of the conference and its proceedings canno[...] specialist insights into some selected aspects, i.e. Open Access, reputation [...] opportunities, risks and limitations of Open Access in the humanities.
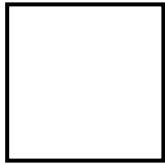
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