

but through republication they have *thirty-five* million readers. This couldn't have been done without the Creative Commons license, and in Andrew's view, Creative Commons is central to everything the Conversation does.

When readers come across the Conversation, they seem to like what they find and recommend it to their friends, peers, and networks. Readership has grown primarily through word of mouth. While they don't have sales and marketing, they do promote their work through social media (including Twitter and Facebook), and by being an accredited supplier to Google News.

It's usual for the founders of any company to ask themselves what kind of company it should be. It quickly became clear to the founders of the Conversation that they wanted to create a public good rather than make money off of information. Most media companies are working to aggregate as many eyeballs as possible and sell ads. The Conversation founders didn't want this model. It takes no advertising and is a not-for-profit venture.

There are now different editions of the Conversation for Africa, the United Kingdom, France, and the United States, in addition to the one for Australia. All five editions have their own editorial mastheads, advisory boards, and content. The Conversation's global virtual newsroom has roughly ninety staff working with thirty-five thousand academics from over sixteen hundred universities around the world. The Conversation would like to be working with university scholars from even more parts of the world.

Additionally, each edition has its own set of founding partners, strategic partners, and funders. They've received funding from foundations, corporates, institutions, and individual donations, but the Conversation is shifting toward paid memberships by universities and research institutions to sustain operations. This would safeguard the current service and help improve coverage and features.

When professors from member universities write an article, there is some branding of the university associated with the article. On the Conversation website, paying university members are listed as "members and funders." Early participants may be designated as "founding members," with seats on the editorial advisory board.

Academics are not paid for their contributions, but they get free editing from a professional (four to five hours per piece, on average). They also get access to a large audience. Every author and member university has access to a special analytics dashboard where they can check the reach of an article. The metrics include what people are tweeting, the comments, countries the readership represents, where the article is being republished, and the number of readers per article.

The Conversation plans to expand the dashboard to show not just reach but impact. This tracks activities, behaviors, and events that occurred as a result of publication, including things like a scholar being asked to go on a show to discuss their piece, give a talk at a conference, collaborate, submit a journal paper, and consult a company on a topic.

These reach and impact metrics show the benefits of membership. With the Conversation, universities can engage with the public and show why they're of value.

With its tagline, "Academic Rigor, Journalistic Flair," the Conversation represents a new form of journalism that contributes to a more informed citizenry and improved democracy around the world. Its open business model and use of Creative Commons show how it's possible to generate both a public good and operational revenue at the same time.

Web link

1 theconversation.com/us/charter