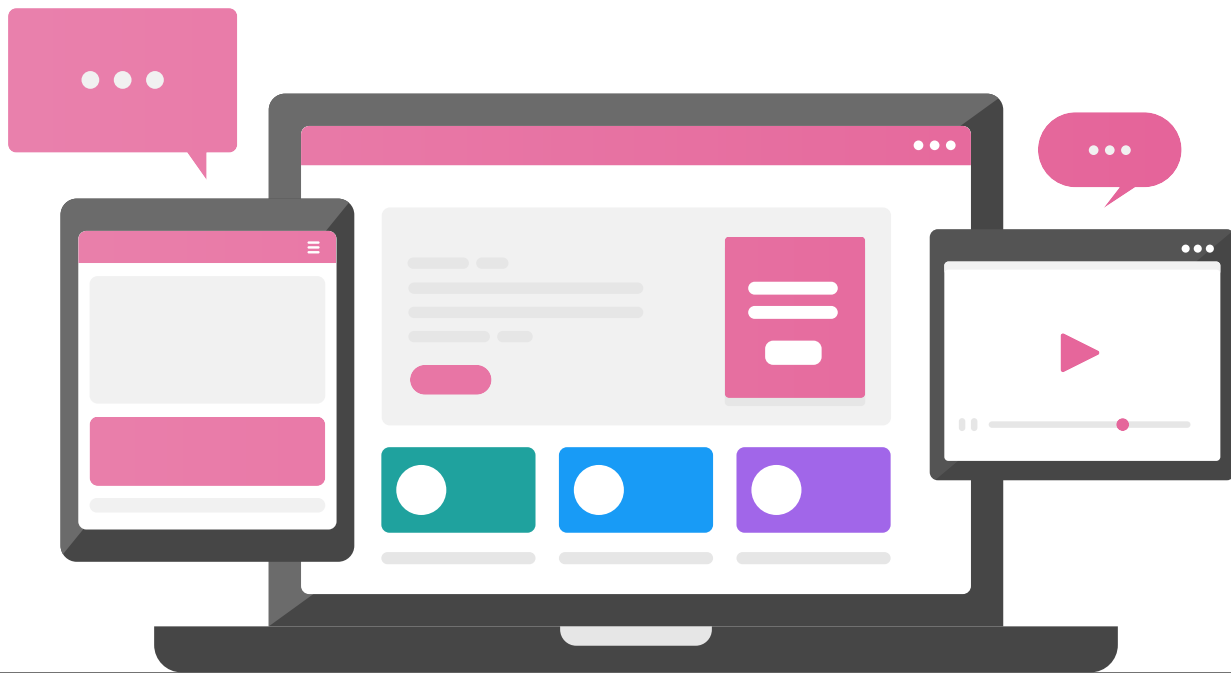


Emerging Content Formats in Scholarly Publishing

E-BRIEF





Advancements in digital technologies have played a vital role in modernizing the entire scholarly publication process.

The future belongs to alternative content formats like videos, podcasts, posters, infographics, plain-language summaries, etc. The majority of users today use smartphones and tablets to access and search for information. Healthcare providers, publishers, and pharmaceutical companies are all embracing alternative content formats to provide users with content customized in the format and platform most preferred by them.

It's time to embrace video into publishing



Video is everywhere these days, and scholarly publishing platforms are no different. While there remain a good number of publishers who are yet to onboard the boat on streaming, there are a handful of established video publishers with big operations. SAGE Publishing, Alexander Street Press, and Infobase for educational collections; JoVE for research methods; while Swank and Kanopy are more generalists, they too sell academic content to libraries. Select societies, generally in the medical sector, have also embraced the video format. With its Orthopedic Video Theater, the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons has made video a central part of its content strategy. PsycTherapy, an extensive collection of demonstration videos, has long been offered by the American Psychological Association. The American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) has been leading the way with its Meeting Library. On the engineering side, SPIE has initiated video integration into its Digital Library. Additionally, most scholarly societies are embracing some form of video for marketing or learning purposes.

The success of virtual conferences is a good example of how the scholarly community is embracing the video platform. Conducting events virtually has widened the reach of academic conferences. With conferences now being well documented, and recordings automatically available, accessing conference content is now easier. It is high time societies, and publishers start publishing video content and think beyond the YouTube channel.

According to industry experts, it is improbable that videos will ever be able to replace scientific books or student lectures. It will, however, serve as an additional outlet for easy and quick knowledge sharing between researchers and private sector professionals.

Podcast - to reach a wider audience

The term ‘Podcast’ was coined over 15 years ago. Podcasting, by every measure, is one of the fastest-growing publishing platforms today. According to Edison Research’s annual Infinite Dial Report, online audio listening has doubled over the last decade to reach nearly 70 percent of the US population. Thanks to Apple updating its iOS to comprise a native, undeletable podcast app, consuming a podcast has become easier.



Podcasting apps have made it easier to listen, subscribe, and download a podcast of choice. An increasing number of academics are now using Podcast to share and showcase their research. A 2017 [RAJAR report](#) sheds light on what is it about podcasting that works well when it comes to sharing research. A [more recent survey](#) conducted in 2019 found that 51% of consumers above 12 years listen to podcasts in the US. This is a significant increase from the 44 percent registered in 2018. Apart from the rise in regular listeners, these podcast listener statistics suggest that a growing number of people in the United States and abroad are trying out podcasting in increasing numbers. Engaging the scientific community through podcasting is a sure-shot way to widen your audience. A researcher can now present his research to academics beyond geographical borders. So long as a researcher can confidently talk about their research, add relevant context and comments wherever possible, podcasts can also help non-academic audiences understand the ideas presented, and also relate to them.

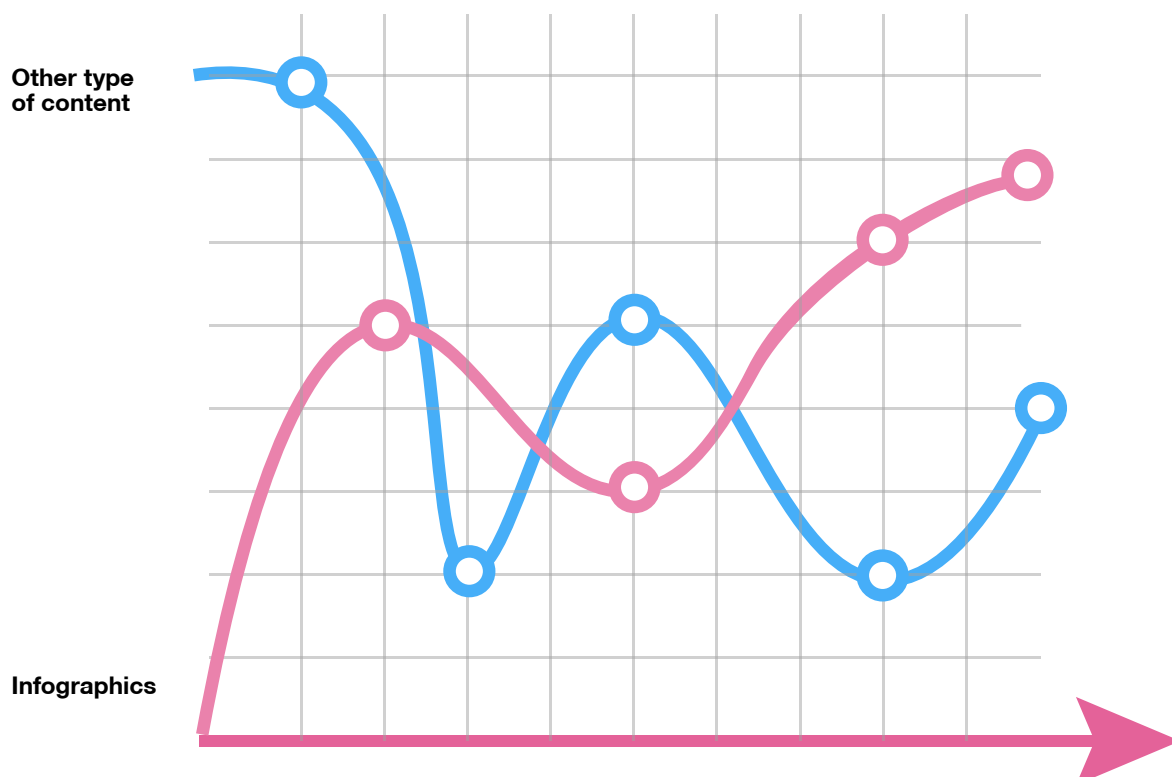
Growth in podcast listening took a hit during the lockdown as ‘Stay Home’ orders disturbed regular listening patterns. However, as people adapted to new routines, the initial drop returned to ‘normal’ levels in April and May.

Infographics can drive traffic to your content

Infographics are a visual version of the content, often used to narrate a story. It can be quite stressful for a reader to go through pages and pages of content. An infographic can connect the audience with the highlights, key data, and direct them to the article to learn more. Considering that 65% of the audience are visual learners, an infographic can help engage new readers, and also help retain your current audience.

Reports indicate that infographics are more liked and shared on social media than any other type of content. An infographic can help spark interest, convey information briefly, and lead the audience to seek further information. They can also be used to understand complex topics more easily.

Infographics are an effective and innovative means of communication with great potential to make information more accessible to the public. While infographics are not appropriate for all types of content, they provide context using visuals to show relationships in anatomy, data, chronology, hierarchy, and geography.



Lay Summaries of Research – how important is it?



A lay summary or a plain-language summary is a brief description of a research project or a research proposal written primarily for non-academic/non-scientific audiences. It presents a framework of the research using non-technical terms, thereby making it easy for the lay person to understand what the research is all about. Plain-language summaries can even be written before conducting the research.

Research funding is becoming increasingly competitive, and hence researchers need to maximize their competitiveness while applying for grants. The lay summary is the first and possibly the only part of a grant application that a busy reviewer will read. Therefore, it is imperative that a lay summary is well written, compelling, and validates the significance of the research.

Researchers worldwide publish millions of articles annually, and there are chances that published research is lost in this sea of information. Several journals are calling on authors to write lay summaries of their research work after it has been accepted or published. The European Union (EU) Clinical Trial Regulation mandates the submission of lay summaries for all clinical trials. While the initial requirement to submit lay summaries began as a result of the EU Clinical Trial Regulation, changing regulations and policies worldwide are determining the future of clinical research disclosure. Complementing other forms of clinical study disclosure such as scientific publications and registry postings, lay summaries help provide greater transparency of clinical study results, encouraging trust, partnership, and patient participation all through the clinical trial phase.

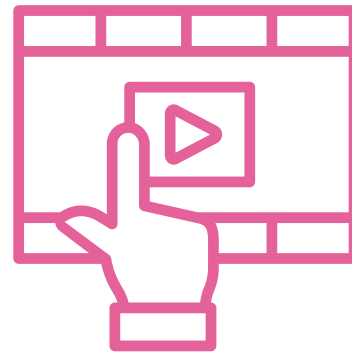
These summaries aim to make published research more visible to non-scientific audiences, raising the influence and likelihood of being quoted.

A key challenge while writing for a wider audience is figuring out how to pitch the language, content, and style of the research material to make it more informative and appealing to those with varying levels of scientific knowledge. Several journals and organizations depend on internal editors to ensure that their plain-language summaries are appropriate for their targeted audiences.



Additionally, the importance of multilingual summaries cannot be ignored. These are used for both text localization and summary calculations. Language translation is still an essential requirement in some parts of the world. Professionals across domains can benefit from high-quality summaries made available in native languages. Multilingual summaries are seen to substantially improve the capabilities of Text Summarisation systems, allowing users to understand the essence of documents in other languages simply by reading their related summaries. Furthermore, the increasing availability of information on the Internet in a growing number of languages necessitates the creation of multilingual summarization techniques that can be applied to documents in multiple languages.

Better engagement with interactive content



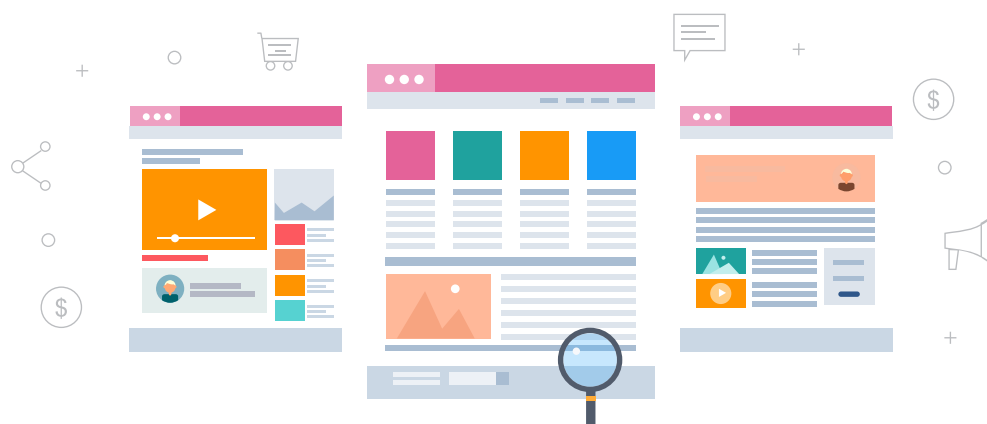
Even the most basic form of interactive content can evoke a response, making it more engaging than a written article. Customers today prefer to view product images, watch videos, and engage with different forms of interactive content.

Graphics and images come in handy to attract the interest of anyone surfing the Web. Using the right color combinations can make it hard to miss. An even better way to make them more noticeable and interactive is by converting them into 3D pictures. 3D pictures often entice people to click on them, and if found interesting, the audience may even leave a reaction, thereby increasing the engagement.

Long-form text-heavy types of content, like e-books and whitepapers, have been losing ground in recent years. The sheer volume of words that these papers have dissuades people from reading through them. Modern-day readers want an easy ride to immediate satisfaction and hence do not prefer to wade through the sea of words to discover what they are looking for.

Making e-books and whitepapers interactive makes it more of a viable choice. People can navigate through the text uniquely. A slick design to break up all the information, animated charts, and catchy illustrations can help make a document highly readable and inviting. More interactive elements like including a list of other sections to skip to the end of each chapter can ensure that other aspects of the content are not overlooked.

Conclusion



Making content easily discoverable is vital to create an impact. Embracing digital transformation is key to survival in the current scenario. The publishing industry is contending with the availability of free content, declining readership, and switching to various content delivery platforms. Forward-looking organizations must embrace the digital revolution to meet changing customer needs.

New and more effective content formats, like infographics, video summaries, etc., can help researchers, particularly those working in multidisciplinary fields, discover more relevant studies. Given how these newer formats are making a substantial difference in addressing real-life impact, it is fair to assume that science communication is due for a paradigm shift.

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