

Strategies for Supporting New Genres of Scholarship

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The availability of the ARL-Ithaka report described in the preceding article by Maron and Smith offers an opportunity for librarians to reach out to faculty and other campus leaders to increase awareness of new models of digital scholarship and the roles these models are playing in their disciplines' communication systems; to learn how faculty are engaging in creating new model works and contributing content; and to seek opportunities for libraries to provide services that support creation, adoption, and recognition of new models.

Three observations based on the study findings are especially important for librarians, scholars, and researchers to understand:

- New kinds of works appear to have become established in nearly every discipline across the sciences, social sciences, and humanities. Yet the extent of this shift is often unrecognized by scholars and researchers. One study librarian reported a common experience, "It wasn't until we had a fairly unstructured conversation that many faculty remembered sites they use. Initially several said they didn't use newer modes of scholarly communication, when in fact they did." **Recognizing the significance of new kinds of works is a vital first step to acknowledging scholars' contributions and developing appropriate support for new models.**
- Senior scholars and researchers seem to be quite aware of and engaged in supporting many of the examples identified for the study. **Contrary to many popular perceptions, interest in new kinds of scholarly works is not limited to junior scholars.** Many senior scholars are well positioned to appreciate the opportunities provided by new models, to command resources for experimentation, and to tolerate the risks that may

accompany early adoption of a new practice. Senior scholars are also well positioned to create recognition systems that reward all scholars who make valuable contributions via new models.

- Many new model works employ peer review or other traditional editorial control mechanisms that appear to satisfy their contributors and readers. This contradicts a common misconception that network-based communication modes are inherently incompatible with established peer-review practices. In fact, **most new model works are employing entirely familiar mechanisms for quality control.**

How can new kinds of scholarly works be more effectively recognized and supported?

- Scholars and researchers can undertake a variety of actions to advance the use of new models. Reviewing departmental, college, and institutional tenure practices and discussing strategies for evaluating and recognizing contributions made to new kinds of scholarly resources is an important step toward communicating broad acceptance of high-quality work, regardless of the format in which it is disseminated. **A careful examination of metrics used to infer the quality of research publications should be undertaken to consider alternative indicators that reflect the networked communication environment and the need to recognize high-quality new forms of publication.** Journal citation metrics presuppose a restricted focus on journal publishing and, even within that milieu, publications with long track records. Newly available measures, like usage counts, can shed more light on the value of established publications as well as provide opportunities for new venues to demonstrate their mettle early in their lifespan.
- Campus leaders with responsibility for making promotion and tenure decisions should similarly consider their own criteria and practices for identifying excellence in scholarly contributions and **communicate to faculty the broad range of dissemination forms that could fall within renewed criteria.**
- Scholars and researchers can also work with their discipline-based organizations, including scholarly societies, to **develop mechanisms**

such as reviews or awards that publicly recognize high-quality new-model works.

- Finally, librarians can seek out new kinds of works produced at their institutions and offer services to support these efforts. Partnerships, publishing services, and preservation support are a few possibilities.

The report, Current Models of Digital Scholarly Communication, and the accompanying database of examples are freely available at <http://www.arl.org/sc/models/model-pubs/pubstudy/>.

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