The journal is under siege! The scholarly society will wither and die! Look out -- the librarians are coming up the walls! Aaargh!

Well, no. Nobody has to be in a handbasket, and nobody has to go to hell, and I’m here in spite of all my librarianly common sense to offer some ideas for staying out of the handbasket. For those of you who have checked my background, please be reassured that this is not an open access rant, though it may give you to consider some things about why open access has been gaining traction.

This talk isn’t about web gizmos either; they change every other week anyway. I’m mostly not going to throw URLs and software packages at you. What I am going to try to do is explain how I think today’s web gizmos interrelate with the history and the present situation of the scholarly journal, what today’s scholars *get* out of web gizmos that journals aren’t offering, and how you as scholarly publishers and scholarly societies can encourage scholars to come to *you* (and yes, give you money!) for what they want. Because once you start understanding what they’re after, *then* you can look critically at available technologies to decide how to give them what they need. Which is, after all, what you’re in business to do, no?
What was a journal?

- Communication tool
  - Overcome geographic dispersion
  - Build a discourse community out of a topic of interest
  - Expand the reach of scientific thought beyond the gentleman-scholar
  - Build the market for science books

- Not...
  - A career tool for scholars
  - Quality control
  - A profit center (yet)
  - An in-group/out-group divider

Quiz: what was the first English-language journal, who ran it, and when? Henry Oldenburg: Philosophical Transactions (1665). Before this, Oldenburg had been copying, annotating, translating, and recirculating letters sent to him as Royal Society secretary. The journal enabled many-to-many communication, not mediated through the one, because the one couldn’t handle the load!

So it was a communication tool...

Willinsky (Access Principle): journal was middle ground between public books and private letters. There weren’t career scholars at this time, so there was no publish or perish imperative. No peer review or other quality control; that was what circulating letters was for, and in any case a lot of what was “published” in journals was preliminary and/or garbage (two-headed calves and whatnot). Not for glory; at first the Royal Society barely tolerated it.

And no one quite knew yet whether it would make money, though Oldenburg had hopes! (Correction by Anthony Watkinson to original slide gratefully acknowledged. -DS)

The early journal also didn’t go to a small self-defined group of people; much of the *point* was to expand the audience for science.
Sir Isaac Newton

For believe me Sr I doe not onely esteem it a duty to concurre with them in ye promotion of reall knowledge, but a great privilege that instead of exposing discourses to a prejudic’t & censorious multitude (by whch means many truths have been baffled & lost) I may with freedom apply my self to so judicious & impartiall an Assembly.

When Oldenburg asked to publish Newton’s letter on his optics experiments in the Transactions, this was Newton’s response. Newton was happy to get his work out beyond his nominal colleagues! And he wasn’t interested in peer review, by the Royal Society at any rate! (In the normal course of things, he would read out his letter at a meeting, and it would be replied to by letter.) Pay attention to that; it is a theme that will recur later. Peer review as we currently think of it in the journal context is great, but it’s substantially a career tool, an imprimatur, because the critique-and-improve part of peer review can be accomplished other ways. So peer review is not an author’s sole need for herself and her work at any given moment in time -- and it’s those other needs, those non-peer-review needs, those communicative needs that in my opinion used to be but no longer are the responsibility of the scholarly journal. And it’s those other communicative needs that the Internet is facilitating.
What changed?

- Professionalization of research
  - Standards!
  - Authority!
  - Production quality! (And its associated costs.)
  - Tenure!
  - “The scholarly record”

- Emergence of disciplinary boundaries

- $$$... $$$$$$$... $$$$$$$$$$$$$$!!

What changed this model? Well, primarily, taking research away from the gentleman-scholar to turn it into a profession. Suddenly the scholar has to prove his worth in the marketplace. This means standards of judgment. This means authority. This means higher production quality, with all the cost that implies. This eventually means a tenure system that becomes dependent on journal quality-control mechanisms, and the realization that somebody needs to *keep* all this stuff so researchers can prove their status and don’t reinvent wheels all the time, which is of course the concept of the scholarly record. And as the research enterprise grows, the pie gets so big that it has to be divided up into disciplines; journals become discipline markers, the earth out of which disciplines grow. And all of this costs money. More and more money as time passes!
And so societies and journals became identity markers, for disciplines and for researchers. You are where you publish. You are what you read. You are what you belong to. You weren’t a legitimate discipline unless you had a journal or a society, or preferably both. And in the process, journals multiplied like coat hangers in a closet.

Now, a key part of this transition for our purposes is that journals and societies came to define themselves not by their communicative abilities, not by who they INCLUDED, but by who they EXCLUDED. At first, exclusion wasn’t even a question of subscription or membership money (though hold that thought, because I’ll get to it). Exclusion was defining who you were against a research universe teeming with other researchers and journals and societies! You’re a petroleum geologist, so you’re in AAPG, and all those other geologists are in some other society.
But all of that conversational energy had to go somewhere...

But this self-definition came at a cost in communicative power and efficiency. As journals became more formalized, more authority-driven, more prestige-oriented, more geared toward identity, they lost the raw power of social contact. They stopped becoming primarily communication and knowledge-dissemination tools, as they had been in Oldenburg and Newton’s day.

Now, any society representative here will immediately and correctly remark that conferences did and do fill in some of that communication gap -- but not everyone goes to conferences, and one can’t be at a conference all the time, *and* conferences still have the in-group/out-group problem; they don’t engage related disciplines, much less the wider world, in the research conversation. So...
So now many of these online tools are taking over some of the communicative functions that societies and journals used to have locked up.

Scholars are complaining that journals are slow. Scholars are complaining that -- well, you all know what scholars are complaining about, or you wouldn't be here!

Even the simple act of writing down a citation for later use has suddenly become communicative, with the advent of social-citation tools. We can know what other people are reading, what they value individually and collectively.

So for communication, for idea-bouncing, for news, for zeitgeist, the journal is not the prime venue any longer. The journal still has a lock on career prestige. It’s lost everything else -- and not to go all Clayton Christensen “disruptive innovation” on you, but even that last lock is under siege these days from such measures as impact factors and citation counts, as I’m sure you’re all aware.
For all the years you and I have been in the profession, the only way we could "talk" to each other was if we worked together, if we wrote to each other, if we went to ALA conferences. Or if we wrote an article or a letter an editor would publish. *After* it was edited, of course. What we knew about what was happening in other libraries, about what others were thinking, was filtered through the library press. And there was always a time lag. And a space crunch.

Editors of the library press were the gatekeepers of the conversation, and of the ideas in the form of articles put before us. The editorial was always the last word.

The role of gatekeeper is not in jeopardy; it's gone. Cyberspace has blown it away. The power to edit the words and ideas that go out is gone; cyberspace has erased it. How we learn what's happening is continuing to change, so rapidly that even LJ's new site has not quite figured out how to get ahead of the breaking news.

The library literature is going through this too.

Mary Jane Anderson wrote the above in 1997 to a listserv called PUBLIB-L as a response to a Library Journal editorial by John Berry in which Berry dissed PUBLIB-L members as "gadflies." Notice that what Anderson is talking about is *conversation*, news-passing, and like Newton, she is all about getting out from under the thumbs of the gatekeepers. She isn't concerned with who gets tenure, or who approved what, or which publication has more prestige -- in fact, for her these things positively get in the way of the discussion! So folks who tout journals as the only mode of scholarly communication are ignoring a lot of conversations that scholars want and need to have.

In the Department of Irony, Berry's latest Library Journal column (11/15/06) talked about how the ALA needs to listen better to librarians who understand and participate in these new Internet–based modes of conversation. Not making this up! Check out LJ's site for yourself.
So now what?

The key question: what do societies and publishers do to get back into the conversation? Well, I’m assuming that most if not all of you have already moved ephemeral non-journal communication to the Web from paper. If you haven’t, you certainly should, because paper-based communication is just too SLOW these days. Consider a blog instead of a newsletter, for example. But in the scheme of things, that’s minor. It’s just you talking to your people; you already *know* how to do that. What really counts for you folks is becoming important in the conversations that your audiences have *with each other* and *with the larger world*. How do you do that?
Don’t do this!

“It is reasonable to ask whether lay members of the public—taxpayers whose hard-earned dollars helped to support this research—will gain from their reading of this article any better understanding of the research results. Some certainly will, but I suspect that most will not. For those who do want access, however, many options are available—a reprint request to the author, electronic access through a library, or purchase (for a nominal fee) directly from the APA website.”

Stephen Breckler
American Psychological Association
“Open Access and Public Understanding”
APA Online, April 2006

Do not cut off conversations!

Resist the temptation to play gatekeeper!

Do not insult your readers, both actual and potential!

Do not assume that your current audience is your entire audience!

Well, first, avoid kneecapping yourselves, the way I did just yesterday in an Unfortunate Incident with a carpeted staircase. And let me first apologize to the APA members in the audience; I did not single this statement out because of any onus against the APA. The above was written about the NIH OA plan (check awareness). No. It is NOT reasonable to ask this! It’s playing gatekeeper, being the arbiter of which readers get what knowledge, and let me be crystal clear here, *nobody* has *EVER* asked societies or publishers to vet readers!

I do understand that it’s a temptation. Librarians have had to learn not to play gatekeeper; some of us still try, and when we try, we fail, and the people we purport to serve do end—runs around us. Learn from our mistakes!

Obviously this sort of thing is intended to protect journal revenue; Dr. Breckler gives that away with the “purchase for a nominal fee” bit. It’s also a natural outgrowth of “journal as identity marker,” trying to keep in—group and out—group separate. Unfortunately, calling potential readers, members, and subscribers idiots amounts to cutting off your nose to spite your face. For one thing, Dr. Breckler insulted every academic and public librarian in the United States and Europe! We’re lay readers to be sure, but trust me, we can get some use out of scholarly articles in psychology and psychiatry! Don’t be offended that people want to read your stuff. Rejoice! People want to read your stuff!

See also the American Anthropological Association (check for awareness), which is undergoing civil warfare over FRPAA. This isn’t just weakening their journals. It’s weakening the society itself — splinter groups, bad PR internally and externally, boards that look out of touch. And the AAA’s publishing program is LOSING MONEY, so how useful is the board’s behavior, I ask you?!

A smart publisher or society treats EVERYONE as a potential reader/member. Yes, everyone! Do you know who the next Sir Isaac Newton is? Well, I don’t either -- so I make sure I don’t shut him out of the library or cast aspersions on his capacity.
So that's what not to do. Here are some things to think about. Now, I as a librarian am the enemy here, and I know it. If I get out of here without a liberal application of tar and feathers, I'll call it a win. I want to point out that you have social-structure advantages I don't in reaching a disciplinary audience, and I want to encourage you to think about how to use them to benefit your members.

Me as a librarian: reach out to people in individual departments, sure, but that's not the whole of the discipline, plus that's a lot of departments to reach!

- Researcher loyalty: to discipline first, to institution second
- Mindshare, if you can keep it
- An implicit network of social/professional contacts.

Think about how to use this to benefit your members! It'll definitely help keep them around.
Sine qua non

- If your articles don’t have short, reliable URLs...
- If you’re not producing TOC newsfeeds...
- If your article metadata doesn’t work with...
  - RefWorks / EndNote
  - Metasearch
  - OpenURL
  - COinS / unAPI
  - Connotea
  - CiteULike
  - Zotero
- But what’s the use?

My first recommendation is absolutely essential. If what you publish is going to enter the scholarly conversation, you need to make it easy for scholars to use their conversational tools, the ones I mentioned a few slides back, to find you, keep you, and talk about you. If you can’t allow them this much -- well, there’s a boat in this picture, and you just missed it.

Reliable URLs: Bloggers link. That’s what they do. People follow those links, and so do search engines. If you can’t be linked to, you can’t be talked about, and you’re missing out on readers and impact; it’s that simple. OpenURL is a necessity for the same reason. (In discussion, DOIs, PURLs, and handles came up. These are fine -- but they’re opaque even to folks who grasp the idea of a permalink. Need more transparency!)

TOC newsfeeds: anyone in here who doesn’t have them, or who embargoes access to them, hasn’t just missed the boat, but is already drowning. Sure, most scholars don’t use newsfeeds at this point. *But libraries do*, because they’re easy to transclude onto a library webpage. Don’t miss out on free advertising! *And plenty of highly educated people do*, whether they realize that what they’re using is RSS or not (and plenty of them don’t). Make it easy for them to see what you’re publishing.

To talk about you and your publications, scholars and layfolk need to be able to link to you, hang onto your URL as well as your citation, and put you in their citation manager (whichever one that is) (mention Zotero) without a lot of time-consuming handwork. If they can’t, you’re out of the conversation. Do not pass go, do not collect new subscriptions and memberships, do not increase your journal’s impact factor.

You may well ask yourselves, what’s the use? Aren’t these just conveniences? No. They’re foundational to online conversations. Let’s see how.
Tracking, citing, using

• “I read something a couple weeks ago...”
• “Didn’t somebody write an article about...?”
• “Hey, did you see...”
• “Argh, where’s that citation?!?”
• They’ll **talk about** you and **cite** you if you make it **easy**!
• They’ll **hate** you or **ignore** you if you **don’t**.

Every author is also a reader. Don’t forget that! And don’t forget that your readers don’t exist in isolation -- they talk to each other! They have to track the work you publish in order to use it and recommend it to others. They have to remember it exists, and cite it correctly. Make that easy! Work with OpenURL, RefWorks, EndNote, Zotero, unAPI.
Filtering

• Too much stuff! What’s new, what’s hot?
  What’s just a retread?

• What are the experts reading?

• What are my colleagues reading?

• What do I think my colleagues ought to read?

• What do I want to read later?

• This is good; what else is like it?

Least publishable unit going down these days! Nobody has time to read everything, even everything that’s peer-reviewed, but at the same time, nobody wants to miss out. Librarians are trying to help, but let’s face it, researchers and practitioners trust each other more than they do us. So these are the questions they’re asking themselves. Faculty of 1000 (check awareness) points the way forward, and societies should watch it as a service they can provide. We librarians don’t know who the experts are. You do.
Collaborative filtering

- Tagging, “folksonomy”
  - Lets people use their own mental models and vocabulary, not some librarian’s
  - Lets people know what people they respect are reading
- Reviewing
  - “Open peer review”
  - Really collaborative revision
- Recommending, making connections
- Discussing: the webchat

Social bookmarking and citation tracking, along with all the folksonomy nonsense, really adds up to a similar function: keeping an eye on the zeitgeist. Notice that to work, these services rely on reliable URLs. Make sure you have them!

Much is said of peer review as a filtering mechanism. Well, it is, and that’s important, but it’s not the only filtering mechanism possible or even desirable, and journals’ current way of handling peer review may not be the only viable way. Collaborative filtering before or after publication works too; certainly for filtering, and we’re learning how to make it work for some parts of peer review too. Tools exist for social filtering! del.icio.us, Connotea, CiteULike, Technorati and Blogpulse for blogs. How can you get into the game?

First, treat what’s being called “open peer review” as an opportunity, not a threat. Peer review has two parts: the quality stamp of approval, and the useful critiques that help papers improve. In a lot of disciplines, if you don’t provide a venue on the web for informal paper critiquing, trust me, the researchers will do it without you. So do whatever you can to see that these conversations take place on your turf. And consider: if you create the top open-peer-review site for your discipline, where do you think authors are going to submit the polished papers? What kind of membership fees will authors pay to put their work into play in a proven open-review site?

Next, take a look at the huge datamining opportunities here. If you establish tags for folks to use, or look into what tags folks are already using, and then take the trouble to datamine what turns up in the tag aggregators, you have info that people will pay for!

Don’t overlook the value of discussion, either. Consider sponsoring live webchats (cf CHE) based on what you glean from collaborative filtering tools. If a new author just bubbled to the top of everybody’s awareness, or a new idea has been gaining traction, give the author or the idea a chance to reach people via a webchat you sponsor. Much cheaper and more responsive to the zeitgeist than putting on a conference, and pretty darn attractive to scholars.
• Visibility!
  • Vanity surfing
  • Personal contact
  • Professional networking
  • Career advancement

• More than just impact factors!

• More than just citation tracking!

• So...
  • Offer your authors download stats
  • Offer ways to connect authors and readers
  • Use your authors’ talents!

Journals are starting to produce some egoboo, with journal impact factors and citation tracking. But impact factors are impersonal; people want their own numbers. Citation tracking involves serious lag time -- blogs and link-trackers are faster, so datamine them. Simple things like making author email links clickable (but hopefully not spammable!) create egoboo and make your journal more attractive. Stevan Harnad recently posted an experience he had with an author’s “request an eprint” button -- it had to be disabled because it was too popular and authors got swamped! Hassle factor aside, can you imagine an author “complaining” because their article was “too popular”? Egoboo matters!

Using their talents: maybe you can’t create a blog or a podcast, or helm a webchat, BUT YOUR MEMBERS CAN and probably are. Help them. Lend it your authority and legitimacy, which is a nice egoboo for them. And watch the new members and authors roll in.
These guys? They get it. I didn’t mock up this site; I just grabbed a screenshot. They’re doing these things *now*. Check it out...
Popular searches, popular tags -- zeitgeist! Podcasts, blogs -- user-supplied content, getting Nature content into the usersphere! E-alerts, RSS feeds, subscriptions -- get your stuff where it can be talked about!
But you'll notice they aren't all the way there. Where are the webchats? Where's the open peer review? So, hey, everybody in this room can leapfrog Nature, if they try!
The Future

You guys are going to think I’m making this up, but I’m not. My place of work just snagged a top quantum physicist, and it’s about to build the new Center for Quantum Studies around him. When I was about half-done with this presentation, their website designer (this is a very preliminary design) came to the Library Systems Office to find out what we could do for him. What’s his goal for the site? To be the place where everyone — EVERYONE, not just a few physicists — comes to *talk about* quantum studies. Echoes of Sir Isaac...

What does he want on the site? A web forum. RSS TOC feeds from the relevant journals. A half–repository, half–forum where people can post and critique articles, both published and un–. Yes, I know you’re cringing at the ‘published’ part, and I certainly did tell him that harvesting and reposting publisher PDFs would get him in all kinds of hot water. But from his point of view, it’s quite natural; you need to see something before you can talk about it!

And maybe, eventually, he wants a peer–reviewed journal. He’s still thinking about that one. It’s a matter of priorities, don’t you know, and that’s not the center’s top priority. What is? Communication.

Again, I’m not making this up. I can’t make up stuff this good. It’s the future rushing in! Funny thing is, the future looks a lot like the past: communication retaking center stage in the scholarly universe. And there’s nothing stopping you from joining in.
Thank you!

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