

Publishing or Perishing in the 21st Century

Written by Stephen McGlinchey

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STEPHEN MCGLINCHEY, APR 9 2015

Part of living the life of the modern academic is being able to embody the world ahead in your working practices rather than fearing it and being trapped in the past. Though, as we all know, established practices are often imposed on us that we may feel powerless to resist. To be successful, the young scholar of today needs to satisfy the needs of tradition, but also look like they embody the future so that they are able to adjust to the vast and dizzying changes in the industry – the most important of which looks like the move towards open access which seems to be the slowly gathering academic answer to the internet (yes, the answer took 20 years... welcome to the club!).

All academics know the phrase 'publish or perish'. In days gone by this could be typically realised via an outwardly simple, but actually torturous and long drawn out process:

- Write a working paper
- Take it to a conference and present it
- Get feedback from your more (or less) friendly peer group
- Rework it and submit it to a publisher
- Wait (typically) for 1-2 years for a decision. This can be: Notification of publication; notification to revise and resubmit (delivered with feedback on what is required to make the grade); notification of rejection (then you begin the whole process again).

In the modern era, things are so much different. There are so many other ways that an academic can 'publish' and get feedback. Blogs, journalism, own website/pages, etc. (Examples of mine are hyperlinked for indications of what I mean). However, the established practice that is informed by the past punishes an academic who embodies this new world too much as those publications are not typically 'scholarly' – no matter how high their impact or readership may be, or how open access they are. This, understandably causes frustration for the forward looking academic who wants their work to be read more than by the typically double (maybe triple) digit numbers who will read any typical journal article which is often gated behind prohibitive access fees.

My answer to this (as a forward looking academic) is to follow the 'one for the system, one for me' model. For example, I am bound as a faculty member of an institution that is research active to have a set number of scholarly outputs (in the UK this falls under the REF framework). These outputs are, of course, still bound by the established definitions of what a scholarly work is... a journal article or a research book/monograph most typically. So, in any given period I try to have a range of projects on the go, with at least one being measured as an established scholarly output, and at least one being open access.

In the hope that I can be a bit more specific to help any other young scholars or PhD students reading this post, I'll now give a snapshot of the last 4 weeks of my working life which reflects the ongoing work preparing my publications/research schedule for the next 18-24 months. Obviously I'm not holding myself up as a model for anyone (!!) this is just an example for any interested reader:

1) Developing two open access books with E-International Relations. Both of these I will co-edit and author sections of. One will be a foundational textbook for IR beginners and the other a companion volume introducing IR theory in a novel and accessible way. E-IR will publish both in 2016 as paperback copies with freely available ebooks (like the

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ones here). Neither of these are counted as a scholarly output in the UK as they are not research products – rather, student facing materials. So, this is somewhat ‘one for me’ via the analogy above – but really one for service/vocation.

2) Putting the finishing touches to a co-authored journal article for an established journal. Obviously, this is one for the system. However, something I enjoy doing as I know (hope) that it will be read by those in my own narrow field of specialism. Note, I am also waiting for another article submitted last year to be returned with a decision – so effectively there are two such articles on the boil.

3) Writing posts for this blog and working on other ‘extra-curricular’ activities such as the time I put into running E-IR as its Editor-in-Chief. Again, this is one for me – something I do because I enjoy it and feel it is worthwhile. None of this is paid work or part of an official contract/workload.

Of course, I have also been teaching, grading and doing administration and service at my institution. I have *not* been on research/writing leave! Academia today is really only a place that fits those who have a burning passion for teaching and research to overcome the long working hours and accompanying stress. For those rare creatures, it is worth it, especially when you see the work you do in print so it can be of benefit to others inside and outside of your classroom.

About the author:

Dr Stephen McGlinchey is the Editor-in-Chief and Publisher of E-International Relations and Senior Lecturer of International Relations at UWE Bristol. His publications include *Foundations of International Relations* (Bloomsbury 2022), *International Relations* (2017), *International Relations Theory* (2017) and *US Arms Policies Towards the Shah's Iran* (Routledge 2021, 2014). You can find him on twitter @mcglincheyst or LinkedIn.