

# Modelling Open Social Scholarship Within the INKE Community

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Volume 3, Number 1, 2019

Methodologies of Understanding and Enacting Open Scholarship

Submitted: 06 September 2017

Accepted: 17 October 2018

Published: 27 February 2019

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1084219ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5334/kula.15>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

University of Victoria Libraries

ISSN

2398-4112 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this article

Arbuckle, A. & Maxwell, J. (2019). Modelling Open Social Scholarship Within the INKE Community. *KULA*, 3(1), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.5334/kula.15>

Article abstract

Given the current state of digital technology, there is a clear opportunity to revamp scholarly communication into a multi-faceted, open system that integrates and takes advantage of the near-ubiquitous global network. In doing so, the values of collaboration, sharing, and transparency inherent to open social scholarship can be integrated into knowledge dissemination methods. The Implementing New Knowledge Environments (INKE) community is currently organized around the idea of open social scholarship, but putting this into practice will involve assessing and revising INKE's own scholarly communication processes. In this paper, we explore the current state of open access to academic research and ruminate on next steps, beyond open access. We consider the role of collaboration in contemporary academic practice, and the importance of transparency in regards to multiplayer work. Further, we examine the standard scholarly communication model, especially as it pertains to INKE. Finally, we make recommendations and suggest alternatives for transforming our stock scholarly communication models into open social scholarship practices.

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## METHOD

# Modelling Open Social Scholarship Within the INKE Community

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Given the current state of digital technology, there is a clear opportunity to revamp scholarly communication into a multi-faceted, open system that integrates and takes advantage of the near-ubiquitous global network. In doing so, the values of collaboration, sharing, and transparency inherent to open social scholarship can be integrated into knowledge dissemination methods. The Implementing New Knowledge Environments (INKE) community is currently organized around the idea of open social scholarship, but putting this into practice will involve assessing and revising INKE's own scholarly communication processes. In this paper, we explore the current state of open access to academic research and ruminate on next steps, beyond open access. We consider the role of collaboration in contemporary academic practice, and the importance of transparency in regards to multiplayer work. Further, we examine the standard scholarly communication model, especially as it pertains to INKE. Finally, we make recommendations and suggest alternatives for transforming our stock scholarly communication models into open social scholarship practices.

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**Keywords:** open access; open scholarship; scholarly communication; publishing

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*Were the spirit willing, the technology is ready.*

– John Willinsky, *The Access Principle*

Our current scholarly communication cycle has deep roots, reaching back to the 17th century and the introduction of early scientific journals like the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*. Four centuries later, the academy has begun to show signs of transformation in response to an increasingly networked world. The standard scholarly communication cycle, however, lags behind digital media transformations in the communications landscape—not just in terms of channels, but in the very form and nature of discourse. There is a clear opportunity to remake scholarly communication into a multi-faceted, open system that integrates and takes advantage of the reach and fluidity of our near-ubiquitous global network. In doing so, many hope to integrate the values of collaboration, sharing, and transparency inherent to open social scholarship into our knowledge dissemination methods.

*Open social scholarship* is potent in so far as it is both an intellectual concept and an on-the-ground practice. The Implementing New Knowledge Environments (INKE) community is currently organized around the idea of open social scholarship, but putting this into practice will involve assessing and revising INKE's own scholarly communication processes. By addressing limitations in our own academic practice, we hope to open up possibilities for ongoing collaboration and dynamic conversation. At the very least, enhanced collaboration within our own community will bear richer citation and interlinking within an annual cycle, opposed to the current practice of merely citing what members wrote about in previous years. Such a change would make inter-INKE citation possible within an annual cycle, versus citation from cycle to cycle, year to year. Moreover, it opens our community for broader publics to take part in the conversation.

In this paper, we explore the current state of open access to academic research and ruminate on next steps, *beyond* open access. We consider the role of collaboration in contemporary academic practice, and the importance of transparency in regards to multiplayer work. Further, we examine the current scholarly communication model, especially as it pertains to INKE, and highlight elements of this process that may be unnecessarily linear, brittle, or cumbersome. Finally, we make recommendations and suggest alternatives for transforming stock scholarly communication models into open social scholarship practices.

## Mere Access to Research Does Not Suffice

The contemporary movement toward digital open access to research is not new. Indeed, it is already nearly three decades old, beginning in the late 1980s with scientists self-archiving and sharing their research data electronically, and continued in the 1990s with the release of the first open access scholarly journals (Madalli, Sharma & Mishra 2015). Although we are still far from universal open access, the movement has formalized into a widely respected system of content development and dissemination.

This formalization has included the naming, by Stevan Harnad, of the two major forms of open access: *green* (repositories) and *gold* (journals). Incumbent publishers have responded to the open access movement with resourceful new funding and release models, including article processing charges (APCs), delayed open access, hybrid journals, or embargo periods. University libraries around the world have set up institutional repositories for their researchers to deposit pre- or post-print work. The movement has not one, but three internationally-recognized charters, signed in Berlin (2003), Bethesda (2003), and Budapest (2002). The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has developed open access curricula, released in 2015. Funding agencies have developed open access policies for the work they support, like the *Tri-Agency Policy on Open Access to Publications* in Canada (Government of Canada 2015), the *Institute of Education Policy Regarding Public Access to Research* in the United States (U.S. Department of Education 2016), and the *Wellcome Trust Open Access Policy* in the United Kingdom (Wellcome Trust 2012). Open access as a concept (or, dare we say, field) has established its own set of prominent researchers, including Harnad, Martin Paul Eve, Peter Suber, and John Willinsky—all of whom have published extensively on the topic. They are but a handful of scholars in a much larger community of open access advocates, scholars, and organizations, too numerous to name individually.

All of these activities point to the seeming inevitability of widespread open access to research output. Due to the increasing ubiquity of information networks the ‘how’ is now in place, and the ‘why’ is becoming more and more obvious: in general, knowledge is considered a public good, and scholarship relies on the free flow of ideas; in particular, research that has been funded by public dollars should be available for public consumption. The diligent effort of open access advocates, researchers, and organizations has created an environment where open access is increasingly the norm. As the torch gets passed from one generation of thinkers and movers to the next, it behooves us to ask: what can we do with all this access? Is access to scholarship enough? Is it an end in itself, or a component of a larger movement?

Straightforward access to research materials is a benefit that many have worked tirelessly for, and it is not something to be taken for granted. But in a future, ideal world of universal access, how do we evolve the focus from *access* to *engagement*? As Heidi McGregor and Kevin Guthrie (2015) suggest in ‘Delivering Impact of Scholarly Information: Is Access Enough?’, a more comprehensive understanding of interaction with scholarly materials is necessary in order to facilitate ‘access’ in a much broader sense of the word. Indeed, researchers and publishers need to make research materials freely available online; they should, however, also consider what other elements are involved for more meaningful interaction with such materials. McGregor and Guthrie call this ‘productive use’ and they argue that literacy, technology, awareness, access, and training are all necessary to facilitate such use (n.p.).

In recent years, INKE has been exploring, conceptually, the idea of *open social scholarship*. For INKE, open social scholarship involves the creation, dissemination, and engagement of research and research technologies that are accessible and significant to a broad audience—INKE’s own version of ‘productive use.’ This concept looks beyond straightforward access to research output. It follows John Maxwell’s exhortation in ‘Beyond Open Access to Open Scholarship’ (2015): ‘What kind of scholarly discourse will we see when the outputs of our work become not only accessible, but truly open: reviewable, revisable, reusable, remixable, by an unanticipated audience? This is the larger promise of truly open scholarship’ (8). We take this question as a starting place in order to explore open social scholarship in action, as well as how the larger community might model scholarly behaviour that is inherently open, inclusive, and innovative.

## Recovering Collaboration

By definition, open social scholarship is not an isolated activity. At the heart of the concept lies the word 'social,' which connects 'open' and 'scholarship'—it pushes further than open scholarship, and accentuates collaborative interaction with other people. An emphasis on collaboration has been central to INKE since its inception. At time of writing INKE member Lynne Siemens has conducted six annual surveys with INKE researchers and graduate research assistants exploring the practice of working together in an international humanities-based research group (2012a, 2012b, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016). This sort of self-conscious recordkeeping is critical for INKE to be reflexive about its practices and modes of interaction. It also supplies a corpus of evidence that reveals the value of collaboration in humanities endeavours, as many survey respondents discuss the modes in which INKE members interact.

Collaboration, however, is considered a second-class activity in certain academic circles. The rise of collaborative scholarship in the humanities can be misapprehended as an attack on 'traditional' scholarly rigour and the model of the individual scholar living or dying by the merits of their work. In contrast to this misconception, we consider the current focus on collaboration in the INKE community, and the humanities more generally, as a proper recognition of academic practices *that are already collaborative in nature*, and a commitment to exploring opportunities for collaboration within, across, and beyond the academy. Scholars collaborate when they attend meetings, when they work with research assistants and postdoctoral fellows on projects, when they respond to listservs, when they read and offer feedback on their colleagues' outputs, and when they engage in conference discussions, among many other activities—not just when they write together in a Google Doc or compile lists of co-authors for a project. Many of these discursive practices are entrenched so deeply in the fabric of the academic profession that they go unremarked upon. Collaboration is not the 'next big thing' nor an attempt at professional subterfuge; it has always been there. More critically, it is a call to researchers to be more self-reflective and transparent about their professional practices, which inevitably involve working with many different people, and to consider how collaborative practices might be nourished. Taken one step further, collaborative scholars might recognize and share the social and intellectual value that is derived from such acts, as Siemens has (2012a, 2012b, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016). If we are already collaborating with our immediate circles of colleagues, and increasing the value of our work from doing so, how can we better reflect that in both our recognized outputs and in the published record?

The INKE community provides an opportunity to encourage pragmatic collaboration as well as to identify and put into practice ways in which the many modes of collaborative scholarly activity can be nurtured, enhanced, and fully recognized. As an organized scholarly community, INKE stands not only to gain internally from such an emphasis, but to contribute to a wider articulation of the virtues of collaborative—that is, social—scholarship.

## After 'Punctuation': Whither Social Scholarship?

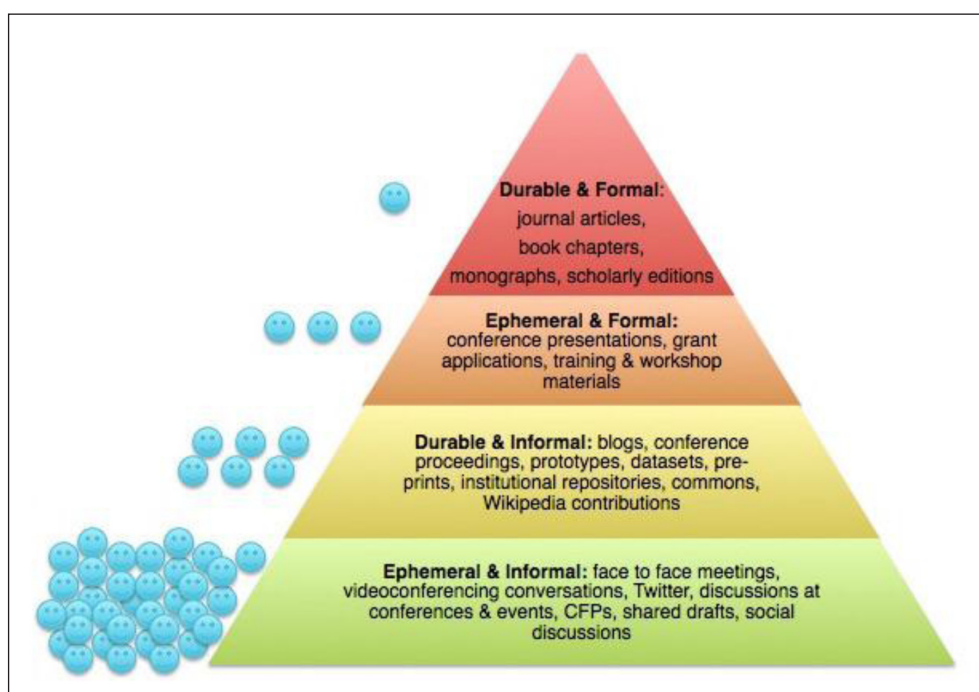
Scholarship may be inherently collaborative, but research outputs and publication formats in the humanities are often oriented to, or present a discrete version of, individual scholarship. Co-authorship has become common in the sciences, but has lagged in the humanities. And, when evaluated by tenure and review committees, co-authorship seems to pass only as a kind of extension of the single author norm. But in either case, in consideration of scholarly output, what academics have traditionally thought of as publications do not represent research and scholarship *directly*. Rather, they reflect, in a punctuated way, on research and scholarship by presenting a summative report in the form of an article, chapter, or book, typically written after the fact—like a period at the end of a sentence. Often, these forms of reportage and the way they are credited (i.e., to a single author) efface the collaborative practices inherent to knowledge production. Indeed, to extend the punctuation metaphor, if most traditional scholarly publications are the period at the end of the sentence (rather than the sentence itself), they are a far cry from actual scholarly discourse—riddled, as it is, with figurative and literal question marks, exclamation points, hash marks, dashes, and ellipses.

A research cycle periodically punctuated by published outputs made eminent sense in the age of print. In the print paradigm, the work of preparing, manufacturing, and circulating scholarly works is hard, labour- and capital-intensive work, and moves relatively slowly—typically over a period of months or even years. The necessary formality of scholarly publications is the result of an economy of scarcity. The laying down of the scholarly record involves the significant, skilled production of filtering and editing, as well as the critically status-conscious dissemination of results in institutionally consecrated venues. In such a model, the work of preparing scholarly work for publication is a high-stakes process that demands painstaking preparation, and conservative approaches to form and genre. As a result, academics have internalized the

value of *exclusivity* as the basic guarantor of quality. The internal logic of this model, shaped at the outset by the economics of print and the relative scarcity of opportunity, has now incorporated further innovations: blind peer review, the fetishization of high rejection rates, and metrics-like h-indexes and their kin.

We do not live, exclusively or even primarily, in the world of print anymore. But elements of the print-based model continue to dictate the process, mechanism, and progress of scholarly work and life.<sup>1</sup> Due to the industrial necessities of print publication, we have come to accept a particular vision of scholarly rigour, quality, and status as de facto elements of academic practice, rather than as products of the way researchers work and make that work known. From a broader perspective, the full spectrum of scholarly communication already includes a considerable range of articulations, although not all are equally recognized in the academy. Of course, there is more to scholarly communication than single-authored journal articles, conference papers, and monographs, but those artifacts are privileged far above other modes of knowledge creation and dissemination.

We have attempted to visually represent this spectrum of scholarly communication artifacts and activities in **Figure 1**, below. The base of scholarly communication includes a broadly pluralistic, inclusive, open, online milieu of informal and largely ephemeral discourse. Up a level, and more durable yet still largely informal, are modes that look more like publications but are not yet fully recognized as such in the academy. Third, more formal, but largely ephemeral modes are found in institutionally consecrated social genres, such as conferences, workshops, and grant application processes. At the top of the pyramid are the artifacts that are most highly privileged and rewarded in the scholarly communication system: journal articles, book chapters, monographs, and scholarly editions. Note that the apex of the pyramid is also, arguably, the least social—especially in an environment where the collaboration behind scholarly production is often effaced by a single author label. The activities included in the diagram below are not exhaustive, and do not represent all of the various forms scholarly communication can take; we have also incorporated only a smattering of common scholarly communication activities that cut across disciplines. There are various activities, especially in the creative arts, that could also be included in this representation but are not currently. Moreover, the boundaries between each level can be much more porous than we have illustrated. Regardless, visualizing



**Figure 1:** Scholarly communication pyramid, noting the transition from populous but informal scholarly communication activities and artifacts to those that are more formal but arguably less social.

<sup>1</sup> Essentially, this is the argument that Kathleen Fitzpatrick puts forth in her seminal book *Planned Obsolescence: Publishing, Technology, and the Future of the Academy* (2011).



scholarly communication in this way does provide an opportunity to reflect on who is involved in what sorts of activities, and how these activities are valued widely.

Our aim in this paper is not to pillory this pyramid and the norms and practices of scholarship and the academy it encompasses. Rather, we argue that there is more value in the layers of this pyramid—and more intertextual play between them—than traditionally recognized. This represents a great opportunity to expand the idea of publication to be more than the period at the end of a long sentence. By embracing open social scholarship, we subscribe and commit to certain core virtues and values:

- *collaboration* as a basic modality of scholarly production, both in regards to working with others and to making the ongoing work more pronounced and visible;
- ‘*ongoingness*,’ or the sense that public work somehow represents research or scholarship in action, as opposed to summative reportage;
- the *durability and citability* of the work, in so far as all scholarly communication modes could be valued in similar ways;
- *archiving of and access to* scholarly material;
- privileging *inquiry, dialogue, knowledge mobilization, engagement, and abundance* rather than merely rigour, exclusivity, reproducibility, criticism, and scarcity.

By upholding these virtues and values, it becomes possible to envision modes of scholarly communication and discourse that fully embrace digital networked technology. In this way, knowledge production takes active, collaborative, immediate, ongoing, discursive forms. In our conception of the term, this is what is meant by open social scholarship.

### Pragmatics, and a Call to Action for INKE

Given the principles outlined above, there is a practical opportunity to bring the regular, extant practices of the INKE community deeper into the potential of open social scholarship. How can this scholarly community—already conversant and generatively engaged with these ideas—transform the ways in which we conduct, circulate, and assess our ongoing work, given the facilities and affordances of the network and the values of open, social scholarship? We would like to make a series of gentle provocations to the INKE community, proposing some changes to how this group manages its discourse.

The INKE community has met annually since 2009, and over those eight years a standard cycle of scholarly communication has emerged (see **Figure 2**). It is a scholarly communication cycle like many others, composed of conferences, papers, journals, and a good deal of less formal communication and circulation. In basic structure, the yearly cycle goes something like this:

If you have participated in an INKE gathering previously, you will likely recognize this cycle; indeed, many members of our community had the opportunity to read the present paper in its first iteration in the compiled PDF of draft, pre-circulated papers prior to the 2017 annual winter INKE gathering. Some will encounter this text during peer review. Still others will find it in the final published proceedings. Our knowledge output circulates in traditional modes at these three instances. There is also the face-to-face interaction at the gathering itself, although the four-minute lightning format may, in some cases, serve more as an advertisement for the circulated papers and a prompt to conversation than as a substantial exchange of scholarship in itself. Over the course of this annual cycle, however, there is a lot of other scholarly activity, beginning with the research work that underpins the papers and presentations. There is the business of composing an abstract in response to the fall Call for Papers (CFP), and then there is the writing of the full paper—increasingly a collaborative effort itself, as fully half of all annual INKE gathering papers and presentations are attributed to more than one author. Later, there is the preparation and review for final publication in a special journal issue, as well as in other journals that our community publishes in. And as a friendly and close-knit scholarly community, we also talk, email, and tweet about our work through the year. There is, on a year-to-year basis, a good amount of citation of one another’s work, although this typically looks back to the previous year’s contributions—the exception being the yeoman effort put in by many presenters at the annual INKE gathering in January to read and refer, more or less on the fly, to other presenters with whom they share the stage.

In this typical INKE-specific scholarly communication cycle, a year’s worth of scholarly activity is reduced to one or two formal outputs. Below, we offer a number of possibilities that we consider to be ‘low-hanging fruit,’ requiring no radical interventions in our current practices, but rather a simple orientation and



**Figure 2:** INKE scholarly communication cycle.

commitment to being more open and more social about this particular collection of scholarship, in this specific community.

Proposed Additions to the INKE Scholarly Communication Cycle:

#### Before the gathering

- *Circulate the abstracts* as close as possible to the fall CFP deadline; make all of the abstracts available and searchable publicly on an INKE web page; and publicize the URL (at the very least to the INKE community), in order to get people engaging with each other's work as early as possible.
- *Make the compilation of pre-gathering full papers Open Access* by posting the compiled PDF of draft papers on the INKE website, or *Publish the full papers online individually* by curating and promoting the pre-gathering full papers as 'preprints' and by presenting them in an organized and accessible way; not as an omnibus PDF, but as individual papers hosted online in a web-native manner.
- *Make the pre-gathering circulated papers shorter* and less formal, and thereby more shareable (both within and beyond the community that attends the gathering on the day of).

#### On the day of the annual gathering

- *Publish the lightning talks and digital demonstrations* by aggregating all the slides and notes on the talks on (or before) the day of, and make these available on the INKE website.
- *Live-stream the gathering* as a running video stream of the day's proceedings for those who are unable to attend the gathering in person, and for other interested parties.
- *Record the individual talks*, and post online for future reference and accessibility.
- *Live-tweet the gathering* via text and images; save and archive (with a URL) material tagged with the appropriate hashtags.

#### After the gathering

- *Conduct 'open' peer review for the conference proceedings* instead of—or in addition to—the current closed, blind review.

- *Experiment with alternative publication venues* of varying public visibility (e.g., INKE's own website, Humanities Commons, Medium, Iter Community) in addition to recognized academic journals.
- *Facilitate and encourage commentary and review* within the journal publication, using Hypothes.is, CommentPress, or other tools.

Beyond these few ready to hand strategies, there are undoubtedly myriad other ways in which INKE scholarship might be conducted and communicated in a more open and social mode, raising interesting questions about web hosting and archiving, ephemerality and durability, and public and private modalities. These questions are partly technical, but mostly cultural. Overall, they beg the question: is the INKE community ready to practice open social scholarship in a larger network?

In Victoria in January 2017, we took the opportunity to ask the assembled members of the INKE community the following three questions, as a way of kick-starting the process of moving our practices forward:

1. Would you support a more open process for submitting and circulating the pre-gathering papers, including the possibility of posting shorter, less formal submissions?
2. Would you support making the materials from the gathering itself available, in part or in whole?
3. Do you support an open peer review process for the formal publication of INKE papers after the meeting?

Our informal survey confirmed that the community members do indeed support the general thrust of open social scholarship in practice, and the preparations for the 2018 INKE gathering will reflect this. Two concerns were also raised in the context of this inquiry. First, that junior scholars, who are often in a position of relying on traditionally peer-reviewed formal journal articles for the purposes of getting hired, as well as tenure and review, require some sort of opportunity to publish in traditionally recognized outputs. We should, therefore, not do away with these publications, even if we add new opportunities for more social interaction. The second concern had to do with the coterie circulation of drafts in advance of the annual gathering. Here, some expressed concern that ideas in formation are not yet ready to be shared with a potentially global audience, and that the protected space of advance drafts needs to be treated with sensitivity. These two concerns can, we think, be addressed while moving forward with the agenda of opening up the process with an eye to encouraging more collaboration and 'cross-pollination' within the annual cycle.

The promise of open social scholarship has been articulated many times and in many different ways by the INKE community: in articles and presentations, in a number of high-profile grant applications, and in the orientation of related research projects. The idea and the rhetoric around it have proved to have both currency and appeal, both to scholars and to funders. The opportunity now is to put into practice on a regular basis the principles of being truly open and social in our scholarly work.

## Competing Interests

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

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**How to cite this article:** Arbuckle, Alyssa and John Maxwell. 2019. Modelling Open Social Scholarship Within the INKE Community. *KULA: knowledge creation, dissemination, and preservation studies* 3(1): 2. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5334/kula.15>

**Submitted:** 06 September 2017

**Accepted:** 17 October 2018

**Published:** 27 February 2019

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