

Librarian Authors Appear to Favour Open Access Journals, while Academic Authors Appear to Favour Non-Open Access Journals

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Evidence Summary

Librarian Authors Appear to Favour Open Access Journals, while Academic Authors Appear to Favour Non-Open Access Journals

A Review of:

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Abstract

Objective – To compare the characteristics of authors publishing in open access and non-open access library and information science (LIS) journals.

Design – Comparative analysis of published journal articles.

Setting – Academic journals.

Subjects – Articles published in selected LIS journals between 2008-2013.

Methods – Journals included in the Library Science and Information Science category in the 2012 edition of *Journal Citation Reports* and those listed in the Library and Information Science category of the *Directory of Open Access Journals* as of May 2013 were included in the analysis. Articles were examined and coded for author occupation, academic rank, and type of collaboration.

Main Results – The author analyzed 1,807 articles from 20 open access journals and 1,665 articles from 13 non-open access journals. An

unknown number of articles were excluded because they lacked required author information. Over half (53.9%) of the authors who published in the open access journals were practitioners. Over half (58.1%) of the authors who published in the non-open access journals were academics. Librarian-librarian collaboration was the most common type (38.6%) of collaboration found in the open access journals. Academic-academic collaboration was the most common type (34.1%) of collaboration found in the non-open access journals. Collaboration between librarians and academics was seen in 20.5% of open access articles and 13.2% of non-open access articles.

Conclusion – In general, librarian-authored research was found more often in open access journals, while the “latest research topics and ideas” (p. 14) were found most often in non-open access journals.

Commentary

A research-practice divide has been said to exist in library and information science (LIS) for decades (Booth, 2003). This study appears to confirm the divide.

The study was evaluated using two critical appraisal tools (Perryman, 2009; Perryman & Rathbun-Grubb, 2014). Despite some weaknesses, the study and its findings are worth considering.

The literature review was useful and supported the research objectives and methodology. The methods used were a logical fit for the research questions.

The author outlined her process with enough detail to allow others to replicate it. Further, she reported her findings clearly and made good use of tables and figures. Additionally, she discussed at least some of the study’s limitations.

Yet, a few points remain obscure. The author stated that journals had to meet six criteria, including being “indexed by at least two of four LIS databases” (p. 10). She then stated that

she selected journals from *Journal Citation Reports* and *Directory of Open Access Journals*. The overlap between these requirements is unclear. Additionally, the author did not disclose how many articles did not meet inclusion criteria.

Findings of this study appear to be at variance with those of Dalton (2013). Through an online questionnaire, Dalton found no significant difference in the open access publishing preferences of librarians and LIS academics. The author of the present study did not discuss this apparent discrepancy. In fact, she appeared to assume publication outcomes were solely based on author preferences and “loyalty” (p.14). Manuscripts, however, are not necessarily published in the first journal to which they are submitted. Thus, submission behaviour and journal rejection rates should also be considered.

Regrettably, the most recent articles analyzed in the study are from 2013. Thus, considering the rapid rate of change in the scholarly publishing landscape, it is doubtful these findings are relevant to present-day publishing practices. Transferability to disciplines outside of LIS is uncertain.

This study will be of interest to any librarian who has a high degree of interest in open access publishing. An update, however, is needed. Understanding how recent initiatives, such as the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (American Society for Cell Biology, 2013), have affected LIS publishing preferences and practices could prove illuminating. It would also be worthwhile to expand the analysis to include a wider selection of journals. Further, it may be useful to consider submission behaviour and journal rejection rates in any future analysis.

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