

Beyond Impact and Towards Engaged Research - Transcription

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Prepared for the 2022 Congress of Humanities and Social Sciences Career Corner Session

<https://www.federationhss.ca/en/congress/beyond-impact-engaged-research-and-publication-hss>

Hello everyone and welcome to Beyond Impact and Towards Engaged Publication. I am Kath Burton and I work on portfolio development for Routledge humanities journals.

And I am Vicky Gardner, Director of policy at Taylor & Francis

In this video, we're going to walk you through some of the points we'll be discussing in our career corner workshop at the Federation's 2022 Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences.

We're delighted to have been asked to host this career corner session focusing on impact and publication and are grateful to everyone at the Federation for support and guidance as we have prepared this session.

This video provides a very brief introduction to the workshop where we will be exploring existing impact and publication pathways and how we might re-imagine these pathways to support more targeted engagement.

We think that this re-imagination acknowledges the true richness, or 'messiness' of the research and publishing pathway, compared to the traditional way of conceptualizing this as a linear process. I like to think of this as imagining the research process and its outcomes as a tree, rather than a railway track.

We will touch on the intersections between impact and publication across the research cycle.

This interactive workshop will help you identify how your research is engaging with societal challenges and how as researchers you can engage with publishers, external stakeholders and impact professionals to develop a richer pathway to research impact through publication.

Why do we want to focus on impact and engagement in the humanities and social sciences?

Our central thesis is that while HSS scholarship advances community life, and promotes diversity and inclusivity of scholarship, publication options that fully accommodate scholars' publication ambitions aren't always available. Impact – the who/why/what of research design – is not always fully embedded in the research process across the lifetime of a project.

For instance, humanities researchers who are engaging wide-ranging communities in their scholarship – as audiences, as partners, and as co-creators often find that the breadth of that scholarship and the many forms that it takes don't traditionally form part of a project's evaluation or aren't accommodated in existing books and journals workflows.

For instance, a historian working alongside a community to inform sustainable development of community resources may collect and analyze oral history interviews, produce documents and travelling exhibitions based on their lived experiences. The historian may also produce and maintain a blog alongside the project, along with videos and other multimedia content of and about their research and/or created by participants. However, little of this may be incorporated into a traditional academic book or journal article.

Or count in any evaluation or recognition of research impact.

We'll look at some examples of how publishing models are starting to evolve, but first, why is it important that we focus on research impact and publication?

Impact – the the benefit that research has on society and the economy - is often seen as something that is tagged on after a project has completed, or something that requires engagement after the fact

Perhaps to produce case studies as evidence of research output or for use in evaluations

As you can see from the comments on screen, impact is crucial to supporting researchers and other research stakeholders make the case for the new knowledge being created

It's the who/what/why of your research design, as we just heard. And Impact is not going away.

While case studies provide a good way of consolidating the research activities, publications and engagements for evaluation purposes, they don't always include the full range of work being done across the course of a research cycle or the who/what/why in full

Before we look at some of the solutions, what are the challenges and how do they affect HSS researchers?

Vicky...

Thanks, Kath.

The increased metrification of research assessment has presented challenges for HSS researchers and the wider community. Although using quantifiable metrics such as citations, grant funding, and publication counts make it easier to assess research or researchers, these measures also provide a much narrower concept of impact and arguably, don't measure the real value or contribution of research.

This has led to a downplaying of the value of HSS, as quantitative evaluation systems and rubrics for measuring impact can't easily fit the messy, open ended and hugely valuable qualitative research emerging from HSS communities. This rich HSS research often has significant value and impact on local communities, on health and well being, and on broader quality of life.

Research stakeholders increasingly acknowledge the issues with the current quantitative research assessment system, in tandem with the role that HSS research and practice has to play in addressing complex issues and responding to some of the world's biggest challenges.

However, the research assessment landscape is changing. Initiatives such as the Declaration on Research Assessment, and the Narrative CV have arisen as organizations, funders, and policy makers realize the need for assessment of research and researchers on a broader set of qualitative, value-based elements.

More qualitative measures allow for a more complete picture of impact to be painted, beyond the traditional linear concept, so rather than the train track, we have a tree, with branches that lead to new ideas, but also branches that are dead ends and roots that grow deep into the ground.

So, we are seeing a broader concept of impact being embraced, but what does this mean for HSS publishing pathways?

How might we develop more engaged publishing models that incorporate all facets of research engagement including the complex and sometimes messy discovery and design processes?

And how can we capture and connect all of the new knowledge that emerges from engaged research projects (including its failures) that often goes underserved and under-recognised in current publishing structures and impact evaluation systems?

Kath...

Publishing plays a crucial role in connecting new knowledge to its audience and for furthering academic careers. However, as we have just heard, there is a disconnect between what research is being conducted, what emerges in publication and subsequent impact.

Where researchers are engaging deeply within and for communities, arguably impact is much more embedded and the engaged researcher specifically concerned with doing work that addresses the who/what/why of a problem to be solved.

For instance, engaged scholars are

- Working with diverse ideas, activities and outcomes – such as community-based resource building, immersive workshops and longitudinal changes
- Involving a wide range of academic and public partners – this may mean more messy process steps, and an expectation of failure
- Creating content in multimodal forms – projects may contain many born digital items that aren't easily incorporated into a book

Some publishers are already starting to offer publishing pathways that support engaged scholars

The Humanities and Public Life series offers a space for scholars to publish their work in book format making it clear that the project narrative and impact are central features of any publication and encouraging authors to “develop an argument about the nature and possibilities for the humanities and the role the humanities can play in addressing social issues, strengthening communities, and deepening understanding”

And RavenSpace – from the University of British Columbia – is a platform for the publication of collaboratively produced indigenous knowledge, created with and for academic communities and their partners. It is entirely digital and uses digital tools “in imaginative ways to make knowledge accessible and shareable across communities and generations”.

So while some publication options exist to support more engaged research and publication, some questions still remain:

How might we continue to ensure that the messiness (or complexity) of engaged scholarship just described is captured in more publishing practices that render this complexity with as much clarity as possible?

Can we imagine a publication pathway for engaged research adding how and when to the who/what/why fundamentals of impact so publishing is more baked into the design of the research?

And a model where participants' voices are heard and the publication format better matches the more developed forms of impact achieved through engaged research?

Does the messy, non-linear engagement activity required from working collaboratively with non-academic partners lead to greater, faster and more inclusive forms of impact?

We present the design you see on screen now as a framework for you to think about when considering your research question, approach, and possible outputs. We challenge you to think ‘beyond the book’ and rather than to think about how your research fits the current publishing paradigm, to think about how best to express your research problem, not just in terms of outcomes, but how you designed your work so that it would make a difference.

And here’s what you can expect to learn if you come along to the workshop!

In the workshop, we will highlight the diverse publication formats for arts and humanities researchers and where these fit into the research cycle, as well as critiquing the role of traditional publication in research impact. As a participant in this workshop you will learn how to:

- identify how your research engages with real-world problems
- define publishing objectives for meaningful research impact within and beyond academia
- determine what, when and how to publish your work for maximum impact
- view your work from the perspective of multiple external stakeholders

For early career researchers, especially, engaging with impact during the course of your work can be a challenge, as often impact is perceived as a final ‘add on’ to a research project or publication.

We hope that this workshop will help you to identify and then overcome some of the challenges of doing engaged research and provide you with some tools to take the products of your engaged research forward into publications that enhance and extend impact.

We look forward to welcoming you to the workshop!

We’ll start by asking you to think about a research problem

Then run through the ‘5 Ws’ – a common technique for problem-statement building – the questions you can see on screen now

We’ll demonstrate how to craft a strong problem statement and provide you with some tips for engaging with colleagues about getting started on your engaged research journey.

Please feel free to reach out to us if you have any questions before then and see you at the Congress!

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