Publish (Openly) or Perish: reinventing academic publishing in the wake of the University's collapse

– Paul Martin

> The prevailing pragmatism forced upon the academic group is that one must write something and get it into print. Situation imperatives dictate a 'publish or perish' credo within the ranks.
>
> – Logan Wilson, *The Academic Man: A Study in the Sociology of a Profession*

The beaneries are on their knees to these gents. They regard them as Santa Claus. They will do 'research on anything' that Santa Claus approves. They will think his thoughts as long as he will pay the bill for getting them before the public signed by the profesorry-rat. 'Publish or Perish' is the beanery motto. To get published they must be dull, stupid and harmless. (226)

–Marshall McLuhan, letter to Ezra Pound, June 22, 1951

"It's snowing still," said Eeyore gloomily.

"So it is."

"And freezing."

"Is it?"

"Yes," said Eeyore. "However," he said, brightening up a little, "we haven't had an earthquake lately."

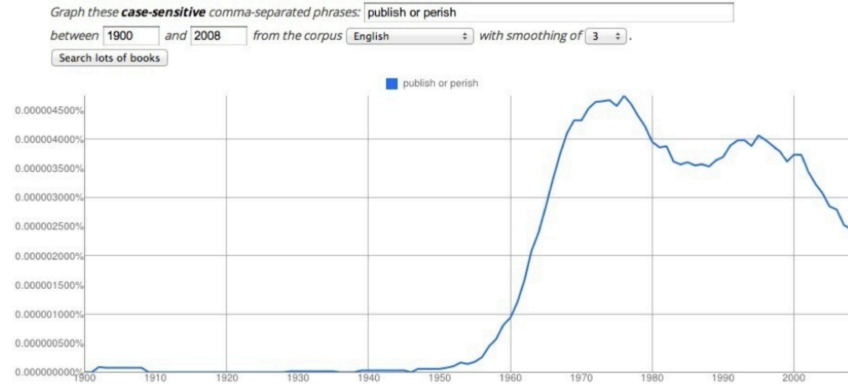
– A. A. Milne, *The House at Pooh Corner* 11

Publish or Perish

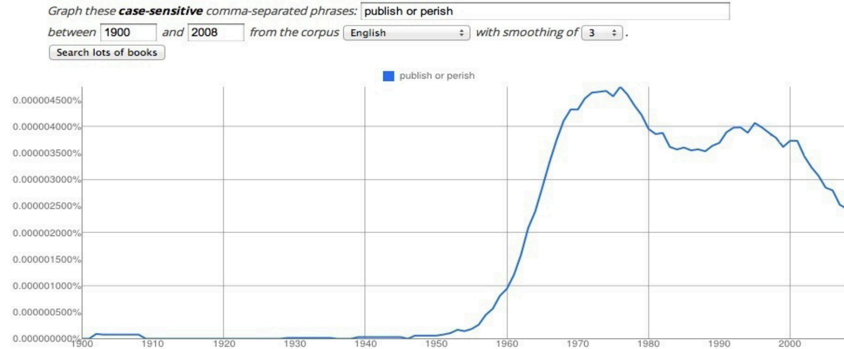
The notion of "publish or perish" is so commonplace that it is one of the few things non-academics will routinely mention when casual conversation occasionally turns to the question of one's own scholarly writing. For a junior faculty member or graduate student, though, this phrase is more than a maxim reminding them that publishing is important; it is the omnipresent, internalized mantra that seems to draw a clear line between the arduous path to academic success and the quick and easy road to, at the very least, failure. While one might imagine the imperative to publish or perish to be a relatively new phenomenon, a symptom of the age of academic hyper-specialization and the ever-growing dismissal of teaching as a university's primary mission, this is far from the case. Although a search of Google Books now reveals to us examples of this phrase being used as early as 1927, attempts to discover the origin of this phrase nearly always cite Logan Wilson's 1942 book *The Academic Man: A Study in the Sociology of a Profession* as the first published instance. Wilson sees this pressure as one that is mostly connected to the acquiring of prestige: "the prevailing pragmatism forced upon the academic group is that one much write something and get it into print" (197). Note in Wilson's description that writing and publishing are two separate activities, seemingly of equal value. He goes on to indicate, however, that the act of publishing is the most crucial for survival: "Situational imperatives dictate a 'publish or perish' credo within the ranks" (197).

A second frequently noted use of this term comes in a 1951 letter from Marshall McLuhan to Ezra Pound in which he mocks the universities (the “beaneries” as he and Pound call them) and their “professory-rat” who will publish anything to please those who will fund their research. The incessant call to publish or perish – “the beanery motto” – does not yield, in McLuhan’s eyes, worthwhile or cutting-edge scholarship; he describes as “dull, stupid and harmless” those who blithely answer this call by publishing unimaginative scholarship solely in order to get work in print (McLuhan 226). One finds throughout the early use of the phrase “publish or persish” the same general idea, though not the savagely critical tone, of McLuhan’s excoriation of those who focus more on the goal of getting published than on the production of sound scholarly work. Indeed, in 1939 there are two instances of this phrase being used in relation to Harvard University after it gained some notoriety for denying reappointment to two faculty members in Economics, ostensibly due to their lack of promise as scholars. In Harvard’s “Report on the terminating appointments of Dr. J.R. Walsh and Dr. A.R. Sweezy,” one of the faculty is said to have argued that “the ‘publish or perish’ legend … has led me to publish material that could have been improved by further research.” This “pressure to publish,” he argued, “is without any question harmful to intellectual development in most cases” in that it “increase[s] quantity at the expense of quality” (58). Two years later, the British review *The Fortnightly* lamented the growing influence in England of those “who introduced the principle of ‘publish or perish’ with a vengeance into America’s oldest university. Indeed English universities, even Oxford and Cambridge,

which have been most scornful toward these German-American methods, are adopting them rather shamefacedly."



As one this report from the Google Books Ngram Viewer reveals, the term "publish or perish" saw a peak in its usage in the 1960s and 1970s as both academia and the popular media began to question increasing professionalization and hyperspecialization of university faculty.



There might be no better example of the popularization of the "publish-or-perish" approach to academic merit and promotion than the Life Magazine feature "A Teacher Sweats it Out" from 1965. The feature, the third part of a series on "College Pressure," follows "crack political scientist" (61) William Gerberding who struggles to complete the book necessary to gain tenure. "In today's pressures for excellence in college education," the article explains, "the professor is the man pressed by everybody. [. . .] Today's ideal college teacher is a powerhouse scholar who is also a mover and a shaker, both on campus and in the outside world" (57). At UCLA, according to Life, of the 175 new instructors hired annually, "nearly half never get tenure" (57). "Unless [Gerberding] finishes [his book] and it is good, he says, 'the university will tell me, 'We've milked you for years, here's your pink slip.''" With the demands of

family, teaching – “STUDENTS PURSUE HIM” a headline proclaims–and the “irrelevant pain in the neck” committee meetings – the odds of winning tenure do not look to be in his favour. Furthermore, his annual salary at UCLA ($9000 a year) is so low for Los Angeles standards that it “leaves nothing over for babysitters, concerts, or liquor” (62).

Though students rate him one of the best at UCLA **TEACHING WON'T GET HIM TENURE**

The students at UCLA in their 1964 yearbook rated Bill Gerberding one of the university's nine top teachers for his twice-a-week American foreign policy course (*right*) and his weekly three-hour seminar in international relations. "I don't teach because I feel a responsibility to educate the youth in our country or anything pretentious like that," he says. "I teach because I love the subject matter. I try to get these kids away from abstract doctrines and make them sharply analytical on concrete problems."

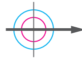
But Gerberding knows teaching is only a minor consideration when it comes to getting tenure. "Good guys, good teachers or good committee members," he says, "don't get promoted. You've got to publish, and rightly so. It's a tough system but I think a good one."

The department head thinks

The story about Professor William Gerberding is followed immediately in the magazine by a further warning of the dark side of academic pressure, this time told by someone who "perished" rather than published. In his piece "It's 'Publish or Perish,'" Woodrow Wilson Sayre, formerly an Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Tufts, argues against the practice of defining "productive scholarship" in terms of the quantity of work someone has published and the discounting of teaching in tenure decisions. The way in which the "publish or perish" approach so heavily weights scholarship over teaching, he contends, has not only diminished the quality of teaching at American universities, it has also produced a surplus of second-rate scholarship: "The publish-or-perish policy does not even help a university toward its avowed goal of expanding knowledge. As the policy is adopted more widely, volume of publication becomes unmanageable and quality deteriorates. There simply is not that much to say that is important; what a hopeless flood of words it would be if every faculty member in United States should publish just one article a year! The volume of most subjects is already so great that the finished material cannot be evaluated or appreciated – or often even found" (66). While Gerberding is pictured over and over again in an extensive photo essay, Sayres is not depicted whatsoever. In fact, the only photograph on the one page devoted to Sayre's take on the issue depicts William Gerberding in a serious conversation with his department chair, Richard Longaker, the caption of the photo noting that the Chair finds Gerberding "brilliant" (66). As the Editor's introduction to this piece remarks, to no one's surprise, the publish or perish policy Sayres attacks is one "which both Bill Gerberding and the officials at UCLA strongly support" (66).

Although Sayres is quite right that the ever-increasing pressure to "publish or perish," whether today or back in 1965, is rooted in the desire by universities for prestige and the appearance of rigor and professionalism, his opinion on the matter seems even then to have been a minority one. After all, who cannot but admire the hard work and dedication of "crack political scientist" Bill Gerberding, who will, undoubtedly, expect the same sacrifices of young faculty who will endeavour to follow in his footsteps. What makes this model so pervasive and so effective in its own self-preservation is, first, its very appeal to that Protestant work ethic and to the American dream; the guarantee is that if one works hard enough and publishes enough then one will be rewarded with tenure, which offers both security and prestige. Second, this system stays in place because of the power that the institution has to insist that young scholars suffer the same trials and rites of initiation their elders underwent. Tenure, by rewarding people with the ultimate job security, also rewards the institution with the certainty that those employees will likely never leave. This helps protect that institution, making it safe from outside or disruptive influences that could challenge the status quo. The power of the tenured professoriate has remained a crucial component to the functioning of universities from their earliest origins of the tenure system. This hegemony, however, I will argue, is in a downward slide from which it may never recover. The reasons for this are twofold: first, because the university's ability to reproduce itself effectively is, admittedly at some institutions more than others, on the verge of collapse and, second, because virtually every university has failed to imagine that this could ever happen.

Between today's anemic academic job market and the increasingly challenged world of academic publishing, the either/or bargain at the heart of "publish or perish" is no longer a certainty. While it is true that few if any current PhD graduates will ever land a tenure-track job without publications in hand and that few faculty members will achieve tenure without "significant" publication, it is also entirely possible (and indeed quite likely) that one might both publish AND perish. Tenure-track jobs continue to diminish in number despite an aging professoriate and growing rates of university attendance. This is because teaching positions at universities throughout North America are increasingly held by adjunct faculty who work on semester-by-semester contracts, often in part-time positions so that universities can further reduce costs by not having to pay any benefits at all (Coalition on the Academic Workforce). Because adjunct faculty are often paid so poorly—in the United States some receive less than two thousand dollars per semester for each course they teach—and are evaluated solely on the effectiveness of their teaching, the challenge to write and publish one's way out of the trenches is frequently insurmountable. To add insult to injury, this temporary workforce is created by the very universities that exploit it; the overproduction of PhDs is necessary at some universities to staff introductory undergraduate courses for even lower wages than those paid to adjunct faculty. In the end, then, one can argue that universities doubly exploit this same group of people; first, by allowing, in some fields, more PhD students than the tenure-track job market will ever be able to accommodate and, second, by continuing to exploit them by hiring them into jobs with poor salaries and no benefits, jobs that adjuncts grudgingly accept in the hope that



they may someday ascend to the vastly more privileged class of tenure track faculty. This vicious circle perfectly illustrates Pierre Bourdieu's contention that the fundamental goal of any institution is to preserve itself, to secure its own future, in other words, by strengthening the power structures already in place. Universities protect their bottom line not only through the low wages and lack of protection they give to non-tenure-track faculty, but also through making the barriers to publication and research so high for these faculty that they are unable to move up the ladder to gain access to both material or symbolic capital held by those with tenure or on the road to achieving it.

For the last twenty or thirty years, this model has been effective in keeping public and, to a lesser extent, private universities afloat. In the United States particularly, we have seen the number of overall university budgets devoted to instruction decrease at the same time as budget allocations for administration are on the rise. One of the ways universities have been able to achieve this and still offer seats to a growing number of students is by reducing their investment in tenure-track faculty; on a purely economic scale, a contingent and, in the employer's eyes, more *agile* workforce offers a better return on investment. By shamelessly continuing to produce more and more PhD graduates in fields with lower outside demand, these universities ensure themselves and non-research institutions a large supply of potential faculty, thus keeping their value low. The neoliberalist approach to higher education today has brought about an increasingly bureaucratized university structure, an approach that has been permitted in part because there are now fewer full-time tenured faculty to fill all sorts of administrative roles. Furthermore, the shrinking number of tenure-

track or tenured faculty are under so much pressure to produce scholarship that those who do serve the university first and their research agenda second are lauded for their efforts, rewarded with more service opportunities, but ultimately punished for their lack of scholarly "productivity." The incentive for faculty to serve the university in any administrative capacity has become incredibly low. Thus, universities find themselves hiring more and more administrators who are disconnected from the concerns of faculty and can therefore more ably run as a business what was once a primarily a school.

So long as universities continue to hold their monopoly on higher education credentialling, tenure-track faculty continue to buy into the "publish or perish" model of career advancement, and non-tenure track faculty remain willing to teach an overwhelming number of students under poor conditions in the blind hope of a tenure-track job in their field, universities will continue to profit from this model and faculty of all types will find themselves more and more removed from positions of administrative power. There are growing signs, however, that we are approaching a point in the history of higher education in North America where none of these three conditions remains a certainty.

The Unthinkable Scenario

In his widely read March 2009 blog post "Newspapers and Thinking the Unthinkable," Clay Shirky proposes that the newspaper industry's current troubles are not due to the fact that they failed to plan for the influence of the Internet. Rather, as he explains in some detail, they considered and acted upon many potential scenarios. They failed, however, to foresee the potential for an unthinkable scenario, one which would turn the industry on its head. Very few people foresaw how walled gardens or other means of enforcing copyright to prevent content sharing would soon become irrelevant to the way users would interact with information. As Shirky writes,

> Revolutions create a curious inversion of perception. In ordinary times, people who do no more than describe the world around them are seen as pragmatists, while those who imagine fabulous alternative futures are viewed as radicals. The last couple of decades haven't been ordinary, however. Inside the papers, the pragmatists were the ones simply looking out the window and noticing that the real world increasingly resembled the unthinkable scenario. These people were treated as if they were barking mad. Meanwhile the people spinning visions of popular walled gardens and enthusiastic micropayment adoption, visions unsupported by reality, were regarded not as charlatans but saviors. ("Newspapers")

For a small but growing number of faculty in universities across North America, it is difficult to read Shirky's piece without wanting to replace the word "newspaper" with "university." The perfect storm, the unthinkable scenario, is on the verge of battering a university system that is almost entirely ill-prepared. This is, in part, because, like newspapers first grappling with the influence of the Internet, many universities are still looking to how they can protect their content, control the dissemination of their research, and, ultimately, limit open access to the resource that the public have funded themselves. As I argued above, universities today can continue to preserve the way they currently do business only so long as they

- continue to maintain a monopoly over the delivery and, more crucially, the standard credentials that demonstrate an agreed-upon level of academic achievement.
- can maintain the status of formal academic publishing as the standard for proving and disseminating academic expertise and highly specialized knowledge.
- ensure that their workforce accept the current hierarchy and differentiation of roles between tenure-track and non tenure-track faculty

It is my contention that all three of these necessary conditions are on the verge of collapse and that this will inevitably have an enormous impact on academic publishing and what we come to see as "scholarship."

Before turning to the effects on (and opportunities for) academic publishing – and by this, to be clear, I mean the publishing of scholarly works, not textbook

publishing – let us consider somewhat briefly the imminent demise of these three assumptions made by most institutions of higher education and their employees. Together these form the unthinkable scenario that is poised to *transform* higher education in a radical way.

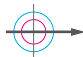
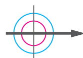
I say transform rather than destroy, for two reasons. First, I do not think universities will altogether disappear. The value, presumed or real, of an interactive, face-to-face post-secondary education is not going to be challenged so profoundly that people altogether stop attending universities and colleges. These institutions will need to transform how they deliver content and credentials, but they and their role in society will not vanish. Second, it is important that we not confuse some of the vast challenges facing the heterogeneous American college and university system with those awaiting university systems in the rest of the world; while some of the issues of course and credential delivery are the same, the real chance that the "higher education bubble" in the United States will burst is rooted in the particularities of its current system and its history. It has long been a widespread belief in the United States that everyone deserves or can benefit from "a college education" (which I place in quotation marks because there is no single definition of what this means) and that going to college will inevitably lead to greater prosperity and opportunity. While government statistics do demonstrate that higher education today still leads to higher earnings and lower chances of unemployment among degree earners, graduating students throughout North America today find themselves increasingly saddled with both student

loan debts in the tens of thousands of dollars[1] and, in many cases, limited job prospects. As both student debt and youth unemployment rise in both Canada and the United States, the economic return on one's investment can seem more questionable today in ways that it has not been in recent memory. The massive Quebec student protests against rising tuition ("Le printemps érable") might be a sign of what is to come for all higher education, but it is also possible that students and society may just begin to search for less expensive and more customized personal learning opportunities. The latter possibility is what should most concern colleges and universities across North Americ

The end (of the monopoly) is nigh

This could be (and has been) the topic of a book unto itself (*Alternative Futures for What We Call Higher Education*?), but it is worth addressing here. North American universities continue to assume that a university education delivered in the traditional manner of requiring courses taught in a face-to-face environment on centralized campuses over the span of three to four years culminating in a degree from an accredited college or university is so unassailably sound that any alternate approaches to this model will only ever be adopted by an insignificant minority. What universities rely on here – and this is one of the core elements of the unthinkable scenario that threatens to shake this model at its core – is a mainstream perception of a university *degree* as the primary indicator of competence and achievement on the part of the

1 In 2012, the amount of student loan debt in the United States reached $904 billion, exceeding consumer credit card debt, an increase of nearly $300 billion since 2008 ("New York Fed Quarterly Report Shows Student Loan Debt Continues to Grow")

student/future member of the workforce. Most have not taken seriously the call by industry and forward thinkers to examine alternate modes of credentialling such as "badges" that could demonstrate competency acquired by students via non-traditional, Open Education models. While many universities openly dismiss these movements as being unable to compete with the "value" of a four-year university degree, industry (including Mozilla, Google, and The Manufacturing Institute), the MacArthur Foundation, and even Arne Duncan, 
the US Secretary of the Department of Education, have argued that the "badge model" could soon provide credential comparable to what was previously only available through colleges and universities. "Badges," proposed Duncan in a 2011 speech announcing a $25,000 prize for the development of a badge prototype aimed at helping veterans seek work, "can help speed the shift from credentials that simply measure seat time, to ones that more accurately measure competency. We must accelerate that transition. And, badges can help account for formal and informal learning in a variety of settings." One can only imagine the chills that went (or should have gone) through the spine of every university president to hear Arne Duncan suggest that a university degree can be seen as something that "simply measures seat time." As Brigham Young University professor and Open Education advocate David Wiley recently told the New York Times, "Who needs a university anymore? […] Employers look at degrees because it's a quick way to evaluate all 300 people who apply for a job. But as soon as there's some other mechanism that can play that role as well as a degree, the jig is up on the monopoly of degrees" ("Beyond the College Degree, Online 
Educational Badges").

Again, one cannot help but be reminded here of Shirky's description of how newspapers strategized about the role the Internet would play in their futures. That someone might someday come up with a way that open and, worse, *free* education could lead to a credential or "badge" (imagine or, for some of us, recall the laughs that have burst from the mouths of university administrators and faculty at the use of this word) that employers might take seriously is one of the unthinkable scenarios that has never come up as North American universities have pondered how they could use the internet to deliver education to paying students who, in their eyes, would automatically pay highly for that privilege. To see why, one only need look for example to the pompous slogan utilized by the University of Alberta in the mid-1990s as part of its fundraising campaign and marketing to potential students. "It makes sense" was derived from an earlier "Research makes sense" campaign and was prominently displayed on campus signs, University websites and letterhead. That the University should ever stoop to explain to the public or to itself why or how it "made sense" (which played on both senses of it creating meaning and simply being a logical thing for Alberta to have, if not also the notion that it literally made money) clearly made sense to no one in the administration or marketing department. The presumption that everyone would agree with this statement epitomizes the arrogant and elitist assumption across many higher education institutions that the value of a higher education and a university degree is self-evident and eternal. Even today, in the face of extensive discussions in the media about badges, open learning, and the perhaps imminent bursting of the higher education bubble in the United States, this

hubris remains pretty much intact. This part of the unthinkable scenario, that the Titanic of the university degree could ever be affected by the iceberg of alternate credentials, remains an unimaginable prospect for most tenure-track academics, who are quite content to rearrange the deck chairs rather than looking for the nearest lifeboat.

The Death of the (Monograph) Author

As my brief history of the phrase "publish or perish" reminds us, it has long been the practice of universities to measure scholarly productivity for tenure and promotion by the amount and, to varying degrees dependent on the institution, the quality of a faculty member's peer-reviewed publication. This is nothing new, but the standards have become more demanding over the last three decades. Furthermore, in many fields, the academic job market is so abysmal that job candidates must already have publications in hand to be at all considered by university hiring committees. Particularly in the Humanities, the standard to achieve tenure is often the publication of a monograph with a reputable, if not esteemed, scholarly press. While the nature of academic publishing in Canada causes our universities to be more flexible in this regard, allowing a number of quality peer-reviewed articles and solid progress toward a book to count for tenure, most universities in the United States require a published, peer-reviewed monograph, if not more, to gain promotion and tenure. This fetishization of the monograph in the Humanities and Social Sciences as the sole valid exemplar of scholarly "productivity" and achievement has been tenable and virtually unquestioned partly because of the willingness

and ability of American scholarly publishers to produce legions of books each year. This is made possible because of the enormous number of university libraries that exist there to help purchase (and thus make profitable) scholarly monographs. With a population of one tenth of the United States and perhaps even a smaller relative number of university libraries, the size of the Canadian market for scholarly presses makes it even more challenging to produce monographs. It has only been in the last decade, with the economic challenges faced by American Universities, that the primacy of the scholarly monograph has come to be openly questioned by influential scholarly societies such as the Modern Language Association.

In 2002, then MLA President Stephen Greenblatt issued a "special letter" to the organization's members to warn of the threat that shrinking budgets at university presses and academic libraries posed to the ability of younger scholars to publish the books required for them to earn tenure:

> "These faculty members find themselves in a maddening double bind. They face a challenge–under inflexible time constraints and with very high stakes–that many of them may be unable to meet successfully, no matter how strong or serious their scholarly achievement, because academic presses simply cannot afford to publish their books. [. . .] We are concerned because people who have spent years of professional training–our students, our colleagues–are at risk. Their careers are in jeopardy, and higher education stands to lose, or at least severely to damage, a generation of young scholars." (Greenblatt)

What is remarkable about Greenblatt's letter is how he goes on to remind members that "the central issue is systemic" and that the diminishing capabilities of traditional academic publishing should be "taken into account" in making future tenure decisions. Greenblatt takes a further step to ask MLA members "Should our departments continue to insist that only books and more books will do?" and to suggest that "[we] could rethink what we need to conduct responsible evaluations of junior faculty members. And if institutions insist on the need for books, perhaps they should provide a first-book subvention, comparable to (though vastly less expensive than) the start-up subvention for scientists" (Greenblatt). From what we know about the ways in which institutions work to preserve themselves with incredible efficiency, it should not be surprising to anyone that, from all accounts, few English departments responded by decreasing or making much more flexible their standards for tenure or to act on Greenblatt's excellent suggestion that institutions assist new faculty with a subvention for publishing costs.

Although, as Greenblatt reminded his members in 2002, "[the] book has only fairly recently emerged as the sine qua non" for tenure, the book's perceived value for demonstrating academic achievement seems only to have gotten stronger. Were there not then and today a huge surplus of recent PhD graduates and non-tenure-track faculty waiting at the gate to replace those scholars who found themselves in the dire situation of which Greenblatt warns, English departments (and universities) might have heeded these warnings in a meaningful way. Particularly when university administrations over the past two decades have seized any opportunity to replace a tenure-track line with

two (or more) lower paid non-tenure-track positions, departments seeking to make such changes may also not have found any sympathetic understanding from their Dean's or Provost's office. So long as there remained enough tenure-track and tenured faculty to publish works that would bring prestige to the institution, what could possibly be the harm of creating a more "agile" (i.e. less expensive and always temporary) workforce to deliver instruction?

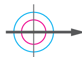
The Rise (and eventual ascendance) of the New Faculty Majority

One of the things that scholars and the broader media have mostly overlooked in connection with the challenges faced by scholarly publishing is the changing dynamic of the academic workforce. While McLuhan was able to joke about the professional ambitions of the "professory-rat" it is hard to imagine that many of his generation would have foreseen the fundamental shift over time to where nearly 70% of faculty teaching today in the United States (with a smaller majority in Canada) are doing so in "adjunct," "sessional," or "non-continuing" positions. Regardless of the nomenclature used by an institution to describe such faculty, they share a common role in the 21st Century university. These "contingent" faculty members provide inexpensive labour and teaching services to institutions both by teaching more and larger classes than the increasingly elite tenure-stream faculty. Universities exploit this "agile" workforce by paying them lower wages and, by hiring them on a part-time or "temporary" basis (many of them must reapply for their jobs each year), by refusing to offer them benefits (healthcare, pensions etc.) comparable to those received by tenure-track faculty. One of the factors that has allowed this

practice to continue (and to grow) is the hope among non-tenure-track faculty that such temporary work will eventually lead to an opportunity to move into a tenure-stream position. This does happen in some cases and has, though mostly in the past, has occurred frequently enough that these faculty, like many PhD students in popular fields like English and History, imagine they could be the exception to the rule and escape from the front-line unscathed. As these faculty are hired to do only teaching and at wages so poor that they must teach many courses in order to support themselves financially, their ability to produce traditional forms of research and publication that might allow them to earn a tenure-stream position elsewhere is severely compromised.

Over the last twenty years, non-tenure-track faculty have become increasingly politically active, pushing to have their work recognized and to be treated fairly by the universities that employ them. More important, they have come to recognize that they are, in fact, the majority of faculty working today and that, as a result, they should hold more power and receive far better treatment than they do; post-secondary institutions in the USA and Canada are relying more heavily than ever on such faculty and yet still have, for the most part, done

little to acknowledge this. Organizations such as the New Faculty Majority coalition and the Adjunct Nation website have helped greatly to publicize these issues, particularly the poor working conditions faced by many non-tenure-track faculty in the United States. The Coalition on the Academic Workforce's



2012 survey (PDF) about the issues faced by part-time faculty drew over 30,000 responses and paints a picture of stagnant wages, little institutional

support for professional development, and, most importantly, a work force that is anything but temporary:

"While over 75% of the respondents reported that they were actively seeking full-time

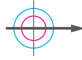
- Over 80% of respondents reported teaching part-time for more than three years, and over half for more than six years. Furthermore, over three-quarters of respondents said they have sought, are now seeking, or will be seeking a full-time tenure-track position, and nearly three-quarters said they would definitely or probably accept a full-time tenure-track position at the institution at which they were currently teaching if such a position were offered" (Coalition on the Academic Workforce 2).
- What this part of the data reveals is that a majority of these faculty are likely to stay connected to academia for a substantial period, despite the tenuous nature of their employment and the lack of advancement opportunities. Although most of the respondents may well be holding out hope for landing the ever-elusive tenure-track position, it is clear that a significant percentage stay in these positions for years, and even decades. Whether recognized or not by department colleagues, chairs, and deans, these faculty, simply by virtue of teaching more courses and students than their tenure-stream colleagues, make an extraordinary contribution to their institutions and to student learning.
- While the shrinking number of tenure-track positions throughout North America continues to serve university leaders managing tight budgets and

an administrative class growing in both numbers and institutional power, the decline in tenured and tenure-track faculty is also an ongoing threat to university presses and, indeed, the future of the scholarly monograph. The scholarly monograph published by a reputable academic press remains, for better or worse, the gold standard for tenure and promotion in fields throughout the social sciences and humanities, especially at research universities. Indeed, receiving tenure and promotion is one of the primary motivators for young faculty to publish monographs at such an early point in their careers. As Stephen Greenblatt reminded MLA members in 2002, financial constraints on university presses and decreasing library acquisition budgets have already made publishing monographs by new scholars more difficult, as such books frequently have a limited financial return on investment for publishers. What may be an even greater challenge for university presses in the not-too-distant future, though, is when the number of tenure-track positions drops to such a degree that there may be more capacity for presses to publish monographs than there are scholars to write them. Even today, the percentage of faculty who are paid to do research alongside their teaching is shockingly low; this undoubtedly has an impact on the volume and type of scholarship being produced, not to mention its potential readership. For those part-time and full-time non-tenure-track faculty who aspire to publish longer scholarly works – and one would imagine that many do – the institutional barriers they face (low pay, high workloads, larger class sizes than tenure-track faculty) make this extraordinarily difficult to achieve. Furthermore, these scholars also

recognize that their institutions, which hire and retain them solely on the basis of their teaching, seldom value or reward them in any way for their publication record. Those non-tenure track faculty who do manage to continue to publish books or articles in peer-reviewed scholarly journals either do so with the aim of earning a tenure-track job and or to satisfy their own needs to make a contribution to their field. Publishing in order to move into a tenure-track position can sometimes be a successful strategy, but it is frequently the exception and not the rule; many faculty on the non-tenure track path are simply unable to maintain a strong, traditional research agenda due to the constraining demands of their significant teaching commitments.

- It is unsurprising that, given the symbiotic nature of their relationship, the health of traditional academic publishing and the numbers of tenure-stream faculty at North American universities have weakened simultaneously over the last thirty years. From a traditional faculty and scholarly perspective, the alternatives to both a robust system of university presses and well-financed scholarly journals and established standards for tenure and promotion have seemed very limited; faculty have viewed the "death of the book" and the gradual demise of tenure as being equally devastating outcomes. Yet, new alternatives to both of these traditions are becoming more viable each day. As the New Faculty Majority movement has shown us, a better future for faculty off the tenure track may not lie in an increase in the number of tenured positions, but rather in more stable, better-paying contracts for "adjunct" faculty that offer a level of job security. Such a

system would be advantageous to both faculty and their departments, making both parties more capable of planning for the future. Similarly, as we have seen with the rise in personal and group academic blogs such as Profhacker, the University of Venus, or British Politics and Policy at LSE, there are considerable opportunities for faculty to share ideas and cutting edge scholarship in new, open, and much more immediate ways than through books or scholarly articles published in traditional ways. As Patrick Dunleavy and Chris Gilson, editors of the multi-author blog "British Politics and Policy at LSE," explain,



- "Blogging (supported by academic tweeting) helps academics break out of all these loops. It's quick to do in real time. It taps academic expertise when it's relevant, and so lets academics look forward and speculate in evidence-based ways. It communicates bottom-line results and 'take aways' in clear language, yet with due regard to methods issues and quality of evidence. In multi-author blogs like this one, and all our blogs, it helps create multi-disciplinary understanding and joining-up of previously siloed knowledge" (London School of Economics and Political Science).
- The move away from associating the value or prestige of scholarly work with how restricted one's access is to it, is one of the ongoing effects of the ubiquity of the Internet. Open Access has made many online journals widely available to more readers and libraries while at the same time demonstrating that they are as rigorous and as valid a site of publication as traditional journals whose articles online are hidden behind costly firewalls. The very notion of very limited peer review before publication as an

unquestioned marker of academic rigor has also been challenged by projects such as the innovative use of open review by *Shakespeare Quarterly* or by Kathleen Fitzpatrick for her book *Planned Obsolescence*. Fitzpatrick boldly envisions a continuous process of "peer-to-peer review" that could use online reviewing and commenting on a text as a form of "post-publication filtering—seeing to it that the best and most important new work receives the attention it deserves. [...] Today, in the current system of print-based scholarship, this work takes the form of reviews, essays, articles, and editions; tomorrow, as new mechanisms allow, these texts might be multimodal remixes, mashing up theories and texts to produce compelling new ideas" (Fitzpatrick 80). As she notes, such an approach could transform our understanding of the work of "publishing" from the labour of an individual or set of individuals (writer, editor, publisher, reviewer) to the contribution and engagement of a scholarly community. Fitzpatrick's vision of "authorship as dialogic, diffuse, and mobile" and of "the need for new publishing structures that reflect a turn from focusing on texts as discrete products to texts as the locus of conversation" (155) is one that also offers a considerable opportunity to reframe the role "scholarship" can play in the work of faculty regardless of whether one is in a tenure-stream position or not.

Universities and those academics employed in tenure-stream positions expound, it seems, at every opportunity on the direct connection between teaching and research; one's writing and publishing, so the argument goes, helps one to become a better teacher and vice versa. The irony is not lost on

non-tenure-track faculty that much teaching at research universities is done by those rarely encouraged or afforded the chance to do research, let alone to publish it; furthermore, non-tenure track faculty who do seize the opportunity to do research are rarely rewarded (or even recognized) by their own institutions. More crucially, the absence at many institutions of Professional Development funding for non-tenure-track faculty makes it difficult and costly for those faculty to attend conferences where they can present their scholarship and network with others in their field. In 2009, Brian Croxall, then a Visiting Assistant Professor at Clemson University, made this very point when he cancelled his attendance at the annual convention of the Modern Language Association. As he shared openly on Twitter, in the few days leading up to the MLA, with a "lack of job interviews, insufficient travel funds, and the low salary of a visiting professor" he simply could not afford to attend ("On Going Viral" B11). Rather than having his paper go unread, the chair of the panel on which Croxall was to speak read it on his behalf; at the same time, Croxall posted the paper on his blog and shared news of his decision on Twitter B11). That paper, entitled "The Absent Presence: Today's Faculty" quickly went viral and became, as the Chronicle of Higher Education described it, "'the most talked about presentation'" at that year's MLA convention (B11).

Croxall's paper, and the explosion of commentary it prompted, is significant for two reasons. First, the paper itself drew real attention to the plight of the "new faculty majority" and how the lack of financial and other support for these faculty members works insidiously to reduce the chances

that they will ever make a successful transition into the diminishing ranks of the tenure-stream professoriate. As Croxall writes, "When the majority of faculty (who are, again, contingent faculty) cannot attend the MLA (or any other conference), it results in a faculty that cannot advance, that does not, in other words, appear to be doing the things that would warrant their conversion to the tenure track. Our placement as contingent faculty quickly becomes a self-fulfilling event" ("Absent Presence"). Croxall's argument and the attention it received help bring new energy to the fight for better conditions for "contingent" faculty. The second reason for the importance of Croxall's paper is even more pertinent to our discussion here. By drawing attention to these issues and his paper through social media, Croxall actually wound up having a far greater impact than he would have had he simply attended the conference. As he explains in a later piece for the Chronicle entitled "On Going Viral at the (Virtual) MLA," "Within 24 hours, some 2000 people had read my paper […]. By the end of the convention, my blog had received over 7000 page views. […] Instead of being heard by a small group of people who attended the panel at which I was to speak, my paper had been read by more people–and colleagues! – than I could ever reasonably expect to read any article or book that I might write in the future" (B11).

Croxall's experience with his own paper and what he calls "the virtual MLA" – where interested people from around the world followed the events of much of the conference via Twitter – leads him to make two key conclusions that are highly pertinent to our discussion of the future of

academic publishing. "First, scholarship will be freely accessible online. […] Second, scholarship in the age of the virtual MLA will become increasingly collaborative and participatory" (B12). There is, I would argue, an important third conclusion one can draw from Croxall's experience of his work (and his situation) going viral: some of the key barriers which have kept contingent faculty from being a greater part of mainstream academic discourse are being lessened significantly thanks to social media and forms of online publishing such as blogs and open access journals. When one of the most resonant presentations at a major international conference can come from the "absent presence" of a member of the new faculty majority, it is clear that a sea of change is underway in how we understand and gain access to scholarship. With the rise of microblogging via Twitter and the sharing by scholars like Croxall of their work online, scholarly conferences and meetings can now be open to broader audiences, including non-specialists and people outside of academia altogether.

The extraordinary reach that Croxall and others have found when openly sharing scholarly work or ideas reminds us that as scholars we have the potential to reach an exponentially larger number of readers online than if we publish our work only in a high-priced scholarly book or in a prestigious journal to which few readers have easy access. Choosing the latter options for publishing have, as we know, been fundamental requirements for tenure in most universities; although many scholars and scholarly associations have lobbied to have less formal types of publishing counted significantly toward tenure decisions, progress on this front has

been very slow. Strong resistance to the free and open sharing of one's work is still found among those faculty pursuing or in possession of tenure. If anything, it would seem that tenure and the quest for it can often be an inhibitor of academic freedom rather than a protector. Many faculty on the tenure-track, in particular, are remarkably hesitant to devote time to writing or working on something that "will not count" (toward tenure); senior colleagues routinely (and perhaps rightly) caution them against such work, and encourage them to submit their work to the more prestigious journals or publishers. Once faculty receive tenure, these practices frequently continue as faculty set their eyes on an even greater prize, that of being a full professor. Those junior tenure-track faculty who eschew these norms, typically do so by making sure that their public, openly shared scholarship is also backed up by work published in the traditional forms which, as any CV reviewer will tell you, should always be listed first. When most traditional academics speak of publishing instead of perishing, then, they are still referring to a very narrow understanding of the act and the point of publishing. One can be a prolific academic blogger and a major contributor to online research communities, but these are not typically viewed by tenure committees or hiring committees for that matter as indicators of scholarly "productivity." The sweet irony here, of course, is that while departments and deans, committees and chairs cling to these ideals of peer-review and sanctioned forms of publication, those faculty either off the tenure track or bold enough to see beyond this limiting vision of scholarly merit are reaching audiences sometimes in the thousands and engaging in enriching, ongoing, and

immediate conversations with scholars of similar interest around the world.

Envisioning "publishing" in this much broader form that includes an open and immediate sharing of one's scholarship can help to reduce *some* of the non-financial inequities of opportunity between non-tenure-track faculty and those in pursuit or possession of that status. Non-tenure-track faculty may actually hold a distinct advantage, in that, for them, the issues of what types of publishing will "count" do not apply. They can publish their work and ideas in a variety of forms purely for the sake of sharing their knowledge and engaging in academic debate.

For a non-tenure track faculty member faced with vastly higher course loads and larger courses, finding the time and space (many do not even receive dedicated office space) to write a lengthy article or book is incredibly challenging. Smaller forms of "publishing," though, are not only more manageable, but can also make a contribution to one's field. A single tweet, blog post, or contribution to a Digital Humanities project such as the modernist versions project can quickly reach thousands of people and, on the merit of her ideas and not her employment status, connect that faculty member to a larger scholarly community. As Paul Fyfe put it in a 2010 presentation he posted simultaneously on his blog, "This is scholarship at warp speed, especially compared with its conventional forms, or with publishing in a 'glass box.' Of course, the compression of time and space isn't necessarily the point. Rather, it is the connections facilitated by the open network, and the cascading productivity of the text and media and people which constellate it" (Fyfe). In this way, one could well argue that

reaching such a vast audience so rapidly is more "productive" and potentially influential than writing an article that might be read by vastly smaller number of readers. Those tenure-track or tenured faculty members who are reticent to share their research openly have, as Dan Cohen argues, misread the shifting direction of our symbolic economy. What "counts," or earns symbolic capital is not – or, at the very least, not always – the exclusivity of your publication or status of your publisher, but instead how many people are reading and discussing your work:

"[…] in their cost-benefit calculus they often forget to factor in the hidden costs of publishing in a closed way. **The largest hidden cost is the invisibility of what you publish.** When you publish somewhere that is behind gates, or in paper only, you are resigning all of that hard work to invisibility in the age of the open web. You may reach a few peers in your field, but you miss out on the broader dissemination of your work" (Cohen).

It is the ease with which non-tenure-track faculty members, the aptly described "new faculty majority," can now enter into the broader scholarly discourse of their fields that is, I propose, the final piece of the "unthinkable scenario" facing North American universities today. As those faculty members who already do the majority of the undergraduate teaching become more actively engaged in their respective scholarly communities, freely sharing their work and ideas online, those tenure and tenure-track colleagues who have staunchly held the line and avoided sharing their work openly may well find themselves struggling to keep up with their contingent

colleagues. Universities and departments have long profited by this separation between the role of those faculty who are paid (more) to do research and teach and those who are paid (far less and with little to no job security) simply to teach. Moreover, as the numbers of contingent faculty continue to grow, there still seems to be little desire on the part of universities to connect more deeply the worlds of teaching and research; this system "makes sense" universities like to tell students and the public, with little more justification than that. But as the financial constraints on universities increase and the rise of competing Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and alternate forms of credential such as badges accelerates, universities will, I anticipate, need to find better ways to share with the public what they do and why they are important. Those faculty who have already been openly sharing the work they do in and out of the classroom will be best suited to lead such efforts. While those who have managed to publish in traditional ways will have avoided perishing, it may be those in the new faculty majority who, having openly published in a variety of forms, have the broader perspective and engagement with the public required to renew the modern university.

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