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Open Scholarship and Food Studies

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Yes, You Should Put Your GJFS Article on the Peer-reviewed Section of Your CV!

What are the differences between an online, open-access, scholarly article and a well-reasoned blog post? There are some similarities: both might fall under the category of intellectual discourse; both can freely offer well-articulated and well-researched writing; both might even look similar and show up in a Google search. But just because they may appear similar, doesn't mean they are. In scholarly realms, refereed articles have very different worth. A scholar's impact, notoriety, and originality are often the basis for their job prospects, curriculum vitae, promotions, and tenure. The intent of this piece is to problematize the perception that academic legitimacy lies only within costly publications, printed by commercialized presses, and available exclusively to research institutions. If our academic community can come together and agree upon the political significance and social value of open scholarship, food studies will immediately become a more welcoming, diverse, and less exclusionary academic field. The speed, freedom, and inclusivity of open scholarship combines the speed, freedom, and inclusivity of the web with the authority of academia.

The *Graduate Journal of Food Studies (GJFS)* is one such platform for open scholarship. As the Scholarly Communications Coordinator for the Graduate Association for Food Studies (GAFS), I will explain certain choices we have made with

Marshall Breeding. "EBSCO: mergers and acquisitions 1980-2020." <https://librarytechnology.org/mergers/eb-sco/>. Accessed 4/25/2021.

the *Graduate Journal of Food Studies* to create a model for open food studies scholarship, untethered by academic mores of the past.

A Brief History of How Open Scholarship Came to Be

You may or may not realize it, but the systems within which we conduct bibliographic research are a skeuomorph—something new that includes design features of the past, solely to comfort the user with familiarity. Research in scholarly databases simulates the pre-digital system of publishing, organizing articles within journals, which are chronologically published in volumes and issues. As Larivière, Haustein, and Mongeon stated “the form of the scholarly journal was not changed by the digital revolution. The PDF became the established format of electronic journal articles, mimicking the print format. What *was* [emphasis added] affected by the digital revolution is the economic aspect of academic publishing and the journal market.”^[1] Although publishers continued to control the journal market, without the need to bind and disseminate physical objects, their costs were significantly reduced.

The scholarly information distribution sector has been subject to considerable consolidation since it began to digitize a half century ago. Monopsonist publishers offer little-to-no recompense for (highly-qualified) intellectual labor and turn around and sell this work (along with proprietary information related to it) through technology companies at a ridiculous premium. Like the rest of the publishing and tech industry, companies in both of these industries merge and acquire each other with abandon. Between 1973 and 2013 the market share of the top five largest academic publishers more than doubled, from about 10-15% in 1973 to over 50% four decades later.^[2] This means that since at least 2013, more than half of all academic articles were published by five publishers. The same holds true for vendors who sell access to the scholarship. For example, as of 2020, Cambridge Information Group, which owns the ProQuest brand, holds 50.4% of the entire market share of academic library technology.^[3]

In an effort to loosen the financial chokehold these industries have on academe, many scholars have called for a movement towards openness: open access, open data, open textbook publishing, and more. This openness seeks to demonetize the publishing bottleneck through various means of sharing and distributing information freely on the web.^[4] Open scholarship could allow for the same scholarly impact, importance, and even fame that conventional scholarship does. However instead of manifesting through journal sales, it would manifest through freer, crowdsourced, and collective means: citations, clicks, downloads, and shares. Open scholarship is truly a political act. By

taking our journal content out of the hands of conventional institutions, we are helping to reframe the definition of who can publish and what publishing means.

A Closer Look at Comparing Conventional and Open Scholarship

Let's revisit the comparison of a logically-reasoned blog post and a scholarly article in an online journal. One difference is in its accessibility and discoverability. When deciding on a format for publishing written content, the tried-and-true blog template is familiar, comfortable, and thus an easy choice.^[5] And it makes sense. Blogs are readily searchable and their contents are easy to navigate as posts or pages. The format, so intuitive to our experience with the internet, has become intrinsic to it.

The pathway to navigating scholarly content is different. It generally begins with a library website, often the hub through which one must enter to access institutional subscriptions. Then, one must locate the book or journal that an article is published in. Finally, and this is the strikingly different part of the process, one enters into a journal or e-book database that contains the sought-out article, which can then be read or downloaded. Unlike simply going to *nytimes.com* to read *New York Times* articles, you are going to a third-party platform to find and access the content you need. This third party packages together millions of articles and other materials, and then sells temporary access to them.

This system has some invaluable merits. For example, with their control over what is part of a package, databases have excellent knowledge of what is inside of them and are able to control quality. Peer-reviewed content can be distinguished from popular and trade content. No random crazy uncle can post ravings inside of a database. The information is sought out and vetted.

Although open scholarship splits the difference between academic quality and internet accessibility, it can take many forms. As a movement, there are manifold ways that academic communities have designed how to push the boundaries of academia toward openness. In addition to the form of articles and journals, examples include [open peer-review](#) or [community review](#), manuscript preprint servers, raw data sharing, and open data.^[6]

Our Version of Open Scholarship: The Graduate Journal of Food Studies and PubPub

When I became GAFS' Scholarly Communication Coordinator in 2018, one of my top goals was to fully legitimize and publicize our journal's content while maintaining our

pledge to open access. The goal I set for myself and our organization was to see our content indexed in bibliographic discovery platforms. Why shouldn't our journal's work be discovered alongside that of any other academic journal? Our content is as potent as you might find in any EBSCO or ProQuest database. Our peer-review is as rigorous as many scholarly sources. Why should our scholarly content not exist alongside the same research databases that we and other scholars use to discover food studies articles?

I have used the following roadmap to improve our discoverability, while also maintaining our open scholarship qualities.

Part 1. ISSN:

Filing an International Standard Serial Number (ISSN) for the Graduate Journal of Food Studies with the Library of Congress. An easy, quick, and successful task, this was completed in May 2018 and accepted the following month. Our open-access journal will now forever have its own unique [global identification number \(2578-5583\)](#), which in the words of *GJFS* co-editor, Maya Hey, "officially recognizes *GJFS* as a serial publication and not a one-time rant."[\[7\]](#)

Part 2. PubPub:

More recently, I duplicated publications from the *Graduate Journal for Food Studies* onto the PubPub[\[8\]](#) platform created at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), which can be found at <https://gradfoodstudies.pubpub.org>. Aside from PubPub's simple and beautiful design, at nocost to our association, each article in the journal now has a digital object identifier (DOI) and is indexed according to the professional standard, the crossref system, which provides a lot of added value, discoverability, and accessibility.[\[9\]](#)

Take, for example, my 2017 review for *GJFS* of Samantha Martin-McAuliffe's edited volume *Food and Architecture: At the Table*.[\[10\]](#) Whereas previously it was no more discoverable than any other blog post, as of today, its open-access scholarly duplicate can also be found [here](#) on PubPub. And at its unique DOI address: <https://doi.org/10.21428/92775833.f7d0067c>. And also in [Worldcat](#), the world's largest catalog of bibliographic research. And it's also linked through my [Google Scholar Profile](#), which helps track scholars' citations and associated metrics. It's also associated with my Open Research and Contributor ID ([ORCID](#)), which is a unique identification number for an author that helps parse and properly attribute citations. Last, but not least, my published review is now also automatically

indexed in [my library's discovery system](#), so that I and others can find it in their catalog.

Furthermore, others can now properly cite it (and I can list it on my CV) with the unique identifier, which allows those citations to be tracked:

Malin, James Edward. "Review: Food & Architecture." *Graduate Journal of Food Studies* 04, no. 02 (November 11, 2017). <https://doi.org/10.21428/92775833.f7d0067c>.

Part 3. What's Next:

Our next task—as an academic organization and publication—is to use open infrastructures to ensure that our journal is discoverable in all research libraries' catalogs, and that its articles are indexed in major databases owned by ProQuest and EBSCO. If we can incorporate our journal into the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), our journal's content should be as discoverable as any other. But we will try to push beyond exclusively technical steps forward.

I truly believe that open scholarship is a political act. In addition to its attractive design, and a DOI for your CV, this is a consideration that broadens the definition of what legitimate, academic scholarship can be, beyond the strict and traditional publishing procedures. I believe that the graduate student community in food studies should be fluent with this movement and its growing importance. The scholarship within our nascent, cross-disciplinary, and public-interested field is an ideal candidate for revitalization towards free distribution, collaboration, and lower barriers to entry, all the while maintaining academic integrity.

Biography

James Edward Malin is GAFS' Scholarly Communications Coordinator. He graduated with his Masters in Food Studies from New York University alongside a Master of Library and Information Science from Long Island University. He is currently a science reference associate at NYU's Bobst Library and studies librarianship for multidisciplinary fields, as well as the intersection of science and food histories.

Citations

1. Vincent Larivière, Stefanie Haustein, and Philippe Mongeon, "The Oligopoly of Academic Publishers in the Digital Era," *PLOS ONE* 10, no. 6 (June 10, 2015):

e0127502. [↵](#)

2. Vincent Larivière, Stefanie Haustein, and Philippe Mongeon, “The Oligopoly of Academic Publishers in the Digital Era.” [↵](#)

3. Marshall Breeding’s excellent diagrams show the consolidation of these companies between 1980 and 2020 on his blog. Marshall Breeding, “History of Mergers and Acquisitions in the Library Technology Industry,” *Library Technology Guides* (n.d.), accessed February 9, 2021, <http://librarytechnology.org/mergers>. [↵](#)

4. Remember that when Tim Berners-Lee created the World Wide Web at the European Council for Nuclear Research (CERN) this was the web’s original intent. CERN, “The Birth of the Web,” accessed February 9, 2021, <https://home.cern/science/computing/birth-web>. [↵](#)

5. This should not be surprising. The blog format has overtaken distribution of news media. The websites of many journalistic platforms function the way a blog template does. From the *New York Times Online* to [CNN.com](http://cnn.com) to *The Wall Street Journal* among others. [↵](#)

6.

Interestingly during the COVID-19 pandemic, many of these alternative academic infrastructures were utilized to circumvent the expensive, unhurried, out-of-date academic publishing framework for the health and medical sciences. Data sharing, open access, preprint servers, and many other types of new and open scholarship, have been recognized as integral to fighting the pandemic by several preeminent global health organizations, including: the [World Health Organization](#), [the National Institute of Health](#), and [others around the world](#). Much highly important COVID-19-related information was shared in open environments, including the [CORD-19](#) open dataset, NIH's [LitCovid](#), and WHO's [COVID-19 Global Literature on Coronavirus disease](#) open access databases, and the joint medrxiv and biorxiv [COVID-19 SARS-CoV-2 preprint repository](#) supported by a joint effort between the Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, British Medical Journal, and Yale University. And the effort continues. As recently as January 15, 2021 the *American Association for the Advancement of Science* signed onto "[Plan S](#)," and announced "in a step towards open access, the publisher of *Science* will start allowing some authors publishing in its high-profile subscription journals to share their accepted manuscripts openly online under liberal terms that mean anyone could reproduce or redistribute the work." Richard Van Noorden, "Science Family of Journals Announces Change to Open-Access Policy," *Nature* 589, no. 7843 (January 15, 2021): 505.

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7. Maya Hey (*GJFS* co-editor), Personal communication with the author at a meeting of the Graduate Association for Food Studies, January 21, 2021. ☐

8. To find out more information about [PubPub](#), I invite you to explore their website. Originally a member of Massachusetts Institute of Technology's [Media Lab](#), PubPub is now a member of the [Knowledge Futures Group](#). Unlike some other open platforms, they are committed to open scholarly publishing. PubPub was originally created as the [dissertation project](#) of its founder, Travis Rich. The PubPub team extended his research on the subject in [a 2019 report](#), that explains several open scholarship tools and identifies the specific gap and need for this open journal platform. In the past few years, they have started to gain traction. They've become the platform for some new materials by some big name organizations like the [American Psychological Association](#), [MIT Press](#), and the [Harvard Data Science Initiative](#). ☐

9. DOI's are unique identification numbers given to scholarly work. The use of DOI's makes it easier to track, follow, and find published works as compared to the full citation alone. In a database it also minimizes duplications and improves clarity in a network. A publisher or platform can mint a DOI for any work, and it will encode its citation and the direct URL to access it. [↵](#)

10. James Edward Malin, "Review: Food & Architecture," *Graduate Journal of Food Studies* 04, no. 02 (November 11, 2017). <https://doi.org/10.21428/92775833.f7d0067c>. [↵](#)