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The Future of Scholarly Communication, edited by Deborah Shorley and Michael Jubb

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BOOK REVIEW

The Future of Scholarly Communication

Deborah Shorley and Michael Jubb, editors

2013 | Facet Publishing | 224 pages, paperback | ISBN: 978-1-85604-817-0 | U.K. £49.95

Stakeholders in today's tumultuous scholarly communication world struggle constantly to make sense of that environment. Whether one is a researcher at any given stage of the investigatory process, a library leader determining strategic priorities, or a funder seeking to maximize the impact of an investment, the resources, policies, and even the expectations of colleagues and the broader community are constantly changing. In such an exciting but unruly context, where something just imagined today may very well transform our environment tomorrow, any effort to anticipate what the future may hold is of great interest.

Editors Debra Shorely and Michael Jubb have attempted to shine a light in just that direction with the recently published collection of essays, *The Future of Scholarly Communication*. This volume brings together mostly U.K. but some U.S. representatives from key vantage points along the scholarly communication spectrum, with contributions by researchers, librarians, publishers, funders and end-user proxies. Given the natural inclination to remain trapped inside our invisible intellectual geographies, inclusion of authors from outside the U.S./U.K. circuit would have added welcomed unique and important linguistic, cultural and political perspectives.

The editors' preface asserts that *The Future of Scholarly Communication* is intended as an overview and indeed the book covers an impressive span of issues in easily-digested short chapters that will give a reader new to this area a strong sense of the vast and volatile nature of the terrain. However, that same reader will walk away with unfortunate knowledge gaps regarding some crucial points, such as the deleterious impact of sustained funding cuts in higher education institutions on everything from collection development to support for publishing activities and the significant differences between scholars in distinct areas of study. In regard to the latter, the excellent chapter on the evolution in chemistry scholarship and the chapter on the use of the Mass Observation Data by humanists could as a pair stand in for each pole of the disciplinary spectrum. However, these pieces are explorations of particular fields and are not tied together in a way that explicitly surfaces the variance in scholarly practices or the differing impact the digital transformation has had across diverse communities within the sciences, social sciences, and humanities.

If a new reader will acquire uneven levels of knowledge about the topics addressed, the more informed reader will find herself alternately engaged and frustrated. Many of the contributions in this work are extremely thought-provoking, with the authors sketching out areas deserving more exploration. The excellent discussion on the "data deluge," for instance, could only gesture to the interesting rise of new roles such as data scientist and citizen scientist. The fascinating insider perspective of a journal editor was likewise disappointingly constrained by space. Those areas of extended rumination are where the experienced reader will want to go and where a newcomer could follow if provided a sufficiently solid foundation. The strongest chapters in this book could easily have fulfilled that promise of rich exploration for novices and experts alike, which perhaps the editors will meet with a future volume.

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