A MODEL OF SCHOLARLY COMMUNICATION IN TOURISM AND AN OPEN ACCESS INITIATIVE

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ABSTRACT

Tourism research has reached a mature stage indicated by the rising number of journals and citation patterns inside the tourism field. However, many challenges exist including the irrelevancy of tourism research to practitioners, increasing subscription cost of academic journals, the long delay in publishing research results, and academic institutions’ limited budget. Academic institutions are also facing the academic publishing paradox in that they are forced to pay high costs to have access to the research results their own scholars produced. The author argues that printed journals as one type of materialization of scholarly communication alone could not fulfill the growing needs for faster scholarly communication and knowledge creation in tourism field. Either in physical or digital form, tourism publications is merely material manifestation of a complex network of collaborative activity of tourism researchers that comprises discovery, ideation, and research of tourism knowledge. Thus, the author provides a model of scholarly publishing in tourism field and promotes the adoption of open-source and open-access scholarly communication among tourism researchers. All materialization of formal and informal communication between tourism scholars should be captured, stored, and disseminated. An open access and open source tourism journal will facilitate future mature of tourism field and speed up the tourism knowledge dissemination. However, the value of this open-source journal will largely depend on the willingness of the participants in the system, publishers, scholars, academic institutions, funding institutions, and others, to adopt new forms of knowledge creation and discovery.

KEYWORDS: Knowledge Creation; Open-Access; Scholarly Communication; Social Network; Tourism Research; Web 2.0.

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INTRODUCTION

Compared with other well-established fields such as physics or chemistry, tourism is a relatively young research field. A number of scholars have argued that it has reached a mature stage, demonstrated by the continuous accumulation of tourism literature, the growth of publication venues, and the expanding of the body of authors and scholars (Ryan, 1997; Xiao and Smith, 2006). In addition, citation percentage of articles from its own field is an indication of the degree of maturation. Xiao and Smith (in press) showed that tourism publications contain a rather large percentage of citations from its own field (around 50%), while the percentages of citations from other fields such as recreation or management are falling. This indicates that tourism has already developed its own identify (Xiao and Smith, in press).

Nonetheless, a few challenges are facing scholarly publishing today in tourism field. First, it seems that there are two distinctive communities: tourism academia and practitioners in tourism industry (Xiao and Smith, 2007). They have different mandates, priorities, norms, and rules (Dunn, 1980; Xiao and Smith, 2007). The field practitioners are rarely aware of the recent development in the tourism research field and they considered the academic studies largely irrelevant (Jordan and Roland, 1999). Second, peer-reviewed journals have been considered as the premier publication venues for tourism research, especially for the top three: "Annals of Tourism Research (ATR), Journal of Travel Research (JTR), and Tourism Management (TM)" (Zhao and Ritchie, in press). However, if you open any one of the three journals and turn to a random paper, you may easily find that twelve months are needed from the initial submission of the paper to its final publishing, if not more. Though on one hand, the long delay was deemed necessary for the rigorous peer-review process, the knowledge creation is dramatically slowed because of the latency between the production of research results and their dissemination. Thirdly, there are also many arguments regarding the prestige of different tourism journals and other publication venues (Zhang and Ritchie, in press). Even with a shorter turnaround time, conference proceedings in tourism field are deems secondary compared to journal papers and may be discounted when the authors are evaluated for tenure or promotion. Fourthly, the imbalance between the rising subscription cost of academic journals and the limited budget of many institution libraries are becoming more and more severe (Van de Sompel et al., 2004). There exists the paradox of scholarly publishing: as a whole, universities and research institutions provide financial support for their scholars to conduct scientific research; the scholars and researchers publish their findings on academic journals usually without any financial rewards; but the institutions need to pay high subscription fees to publishers for the research results their supported scholars produced. The double-payments of the institutions will eventually end in the pockets of commercial academic publishers.

A new conceptualization of scholarly communication is needed in order to address these dilemmas. In this abstract, the author argued that journal papers and other publications are different materialization of communication content between tourism scholars. The advancements in information technologies, such as data capturing, data storage, and data mining techniques along with the proliferation of the Internet technologies afford new ways of facilitating scholarly communication which might be easier, faster, cheaper, more relevant, and could reach a larger audience. In addition, these communication channels should be made free to the public. An open source and open access initiative is proposed in this paper.
THE NATURE OF SCHOLARLY COMMUNICATIONS

From the publication of the first journal, *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London* in 1665, the printed journals have stood at the core of scholarly communication (Hitchcock et al., 2002). Printed journals were made possible by the invention of paper; and they transformed scholarship from a closed group activity which relies on face to face communication to a more democratic and accessible system, which works beyond geographical and institutional boundaries. The functions of printed journals include registration of new research results, certification of their quality, dissemination to peers, documentation for reward mechanisms (e.g. tenure, promotion), and preservation of results for future scholarship (Roosendaal and Guerts, 1997). However, with the dramatic expansion of knowledge and information and the growing body of tourism researchers and scholars in the world, the slow turnaround time of printed journals and higher cost of subscription might not be helpful to the needs of fast scholarly communication of tourism research field today. With the advancements of the Internet technologies, the digital media could afford faster communication with more flexible and interactive content than paper-based venues. Many ephemeral and informal communications between scholars could be captured, stored, and retrieved, such as discussion group messages, emails, and blogs. These information communications may contain valuable insights and findings which need to be shared and discussed.

A MODEL OF SCHOLARLY COMMUNICATION IN TOURISM

We argue that the tourism publications are not the goal in their own right; tourism publications support the scholarly communication in tourism and knowledge creation. Scholarly publishing and communication are both information exchange through artifacts: either formal and materialized artifacts such as tourism journal articles and conference proceedings, or informal and non-conclusive artifacts such as online discussions, informal meetings, and blogs. In order to facilitate the discussion, three classes of documents can be identified: formal documents are officially published journal papers and conference proceedings; semi-formal documents are those from online publication venues which have obtained a certain status in the scholarly publishing world, such as the online version of the tourism journals; and informal documents, which have not been materialized or taken into consideration in the evaluation of scholars, including comments, reviews, discussions, web blogs, and personal web pages.

The official and semi-formal publication systems form tourism document networks (Figure 1). Since journal papers tend to cite published articles in the past, they form directed graphs with citation edges from newer documents to published ones. The development of electronic publishing has collapsed the time dimension of this citation graph: in the past you might only be able to cite papers published in past years; now you can cite contemporaneous papers stored in e-journals. Evaluation of this citation graph reveals popularity of documents and suggests quality (Hitchcock et al., 2003).
Coexisting with the formal tourism document networks, there are social networks composed of tourism authors and researchers. Tourism scholars communicate not only through formal publications and conference proceedings, but also through comments, reviews, email discussions, informal meetings, and chatting over lunch and coffee breaks. These channels of informal communication compose a rich array of information flows, which can help generate original ideas and develop new theories. Figure 2 shows a social network formed by various formal and informal communication channels, in which journal publications are only part of the network.

The intrinsic limitations of formal and semi-formal document networks call for materialization of this less formal communication.
NEW TRENDS IN ONLINE SCHOLARLY INFORMATION SHARING AND AN OPEN ACCESS INITIATIVE

The new model of scholarly communication indicates that we need to capture, store, and disseminate the informal documents as well as formal documents of the content of scholarly communication in tourism. Both types of documents contribute to knowledge creation and the evolution of tourism as a field. The journal legacy has been destabilized due to increasing demand for rapid communication of research results, rising subscription costs in the context of flat library budgets, and concerns about copyright in light of nascent open access models. In recent years, a new open-source and open-access movement has extended from software development domain to scholarly publishing (Van de Sompel et al., 2004). The ethics behind this is that public funded research should be made public; the research results should be deposited in an online repository and made freely available (Jeffery, 2006). Advanced search algorithms and the wide use of the Internet will make it feasible. A number of initial open access technologies have surfaced over the past decade in tourism and other fields (especially in physics and computer science), including e-Print archives (Cogprints, 2007), institutional repositories such as eprints.org, digital library repositories and protocols such as Journal of Digital Information, and electronic journals such as *eReview of Tourism Research*.

However, an open-access and open-source journal will raise numerous questions about how essential characteristics of scholarly communication such as quality, integrity, and reputation will be maintained. The two journals (*ATR* and *TM*) indexed by SSCI (*Social Science Citation Index*) are still the primary publications venues that the leading tourism researchers strive to get in (even though one of the top three tourism journals *JTR* is not indexed by either one). However, in physics field, the online repository arXiv.org has gained status from its initial introduction in early 1990’s. It is now widely cited in the field of physics. In arXiv.org, the submission of paper is free to all and any researchers are welcomed to comment on the papers.
and the authors are free to revise multiple times. It also allows linkage to other types of documents such as datasets and simulations. In the age of Web 2.0, layperson-contributed and free-accessed content can form collective intelligence (Greaves, 2007). The successes of wikipedia.org and Google are great examples of the validity of emerged intelligence of the mass.

The author argues that the basis for formulating new systems of scholarly communication lies in understanding this underlying collaborative social network and exposing it as part of scholarly communication. An open source publication venue, which includes not only formal documents but also informal communications and multi-format data, might in fact provide the basis for better metrics of quality and reputation, more powerful research tools, and better ways of tracking and exploiting developing ideas. For example, PageRank algorithm of Google utilize the link structure of the web can successfully identify valuable information sources even though there is no formal expert reviewers of all the web pages (Brin and Page, 1998). Here the author promotes an initiative to create an open-source tourism journal. This journal will captured not only submitted articles but will also include reviewers’ comments and feedbacks. Furthermore, it will allow multimedia and other types of digital content in the article including podcast, blogs, and YouTube videos. The content of journal will be freely available online; the quality of research will be determined by network algorithm based on citations or downloading times.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the author argues that printed journals as one type of materialization of scholarly communication alone could not fulfill the growing needs for faster scholarly communication and knowledge creation. Either in physical or digital form, tourism publications is merely material manifestation of a complex network of collaborative activity of tourism researchers that comprises discovery, ideation, and research. Thus, the author promotes the adoption of open-source and open-access scholarly communication among tourism researchers. All materialization of formal and informal communication between tourism scholars should be captured, stored, and disseminated. An open access and open source tourism journal will facilitate future mature of tourism field and speed up the tourism knowledge dissemination. However, the value of this open-source journal will largely depend on the willingness of the participants in the system, publishers, scholars, academic institutions, funding institutions, and others, to adopt new tools of knowledge discovery on top of the system.

REFERENCES


