

Sociable scholarship: The use of social media in the 21st century academy

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Social media have broken down the distance between scholars and the larger world, enabling lay people to become active participants in the construction of knowledge, through offering ideas and data, recounting experience, and engaging critically with academic research. Academics no longer operate from the safety of ivory towers: they are able to engage with a much wider audience, in a conversation rather than a lecture, through the use of Twitter, Tumblr, blogs, discussion forums, etc. These Web 2.0 tools have broadened academic spaces, enabling the participation of different voices, and addressing the academy's commitment to social justice. Using the feminist theory of intersectionality, we explore the use of social media in academic collaboration and dissemination, and the tensions that may arise as scholars and the academy are reshaped in the 21st century.

Keywords

Sociable scholarship, Intersectionality, 21st century academic

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Introduction

We are feminist academics living in Aotearoa New Zealand who are both scholars, and users of social media. Our interest in the relationship between the two, and the symbiosis and tensions that may arise between them, led us to explore how we use social media in our scholarship, and how we use scholarship in our social media. From this work, we were invited to present a poster at a symposium on 21st Century

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Scholarship, and have facilitated workshops for other faculty, and postgraduate students, on using social media to promote research and develop as a scholar. For both of us, social media engagement informed by scholarship has led to connections with mainstream media, and we are now frequently contacted for comment and analysis. The use of social media has been a catalyst for both scholarly research and engagement in media.

The myriad uses of social media can lead to confusion for scholars and for those who wish to engage with social media about their work. A scholar may use a blog to promote her work, to engage directly with readers, to conduct research, and at the same time, to communicate with family and friends, and to record elements of her personal life. The serious scholarship of a blog may be inextricably interwoven with the personal.

As a blogger, Deborah engaged in an extensive reflection on the nature of work, and the difficulties of combining paid work and unpaid work and personal life for women and for mothers in particular (Russell, 2008). The writing was scholarly and based on research, yet it was presented as a blog, rather than as publishable research. So was it written as a blog post, or as research? And did that make her a blogger, or a researcher?

As a scholar, Cat promotes her field and her scholarship through a blog, a Tumblr, a Facebook page, a YouTube channel, and Twitter. Each of these social media platforms is used to support her academic research, broadcasting the work to a much wider audience, and drawing many more people into discussing and engaging with the research (Pausé, 2014a). A notable outcome of this widespread social media engagement was lay people attending an academic fat studies conference with recognised experience and standing in the field.

Reflecting on this, we realised that we approach the intersection of social media and scholarship from different directions. One of us begins in scholarship and works through to extensive engagement in social media; the other begins in social media and from there develops work that in time becomes scholarship. Cat sees herself as primarily a scholar who also uses social media, while Deborah sees herself as a blogger who from time to time reaches into formal scholarship.

Engaging in social scholarship has blurred our identities, creating a tension within ourselves about our roles. It is a creative and fertile tension, resulting in both more scholarly research, and more engagement in communities beyond the academy. While these tensions would be fruitful for study, and we may come back to them later, our interest in this piece is to engage feminist theory to explore the use of social media in academic dissemination and collaboration. We call this, 'sociable scholarship'. In this essay, we discuss the changing patterns of academic research, looking at how sociable scholarship is changing the process of doing research. We explore some of the different voices that are emerging in academic research, and we advocate for greater recognition of the value of sociable scholarship.

Intersectionality

We use an intersectional lens to explore sociable scholarship (Yuval-Davis, 2006). We argue that sociable scholarship lends itself to intersectionality. Social scholarship is fragmented and dispersed across the internet. This fragmentation creates the possibility of collisions of ideas, and can result in areas of intense specialisation. This is a key insight from an intersectional perspective, that one idea or area of study or experience crossing over with another can create new thinking and new insights. An intersectional lens lends itself to analysing the crossover of social media and scholarship.

First used by black feminists Anna Julia Cooper, The Combahee River Collective, and others to note the importance of the ‘development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking’ (Combahee River Collective, 1978, p. 210), the term intersectionality was coined by Kimberlee Crenshaw (1989, 1991) as a method for ensuring that the experience of one group of women (white women) was not confused with the experience of all groups of women. While it may have begun with the assurance that race was considered as well as gender, it has been broadened by scholars to acknowledge the differing oppressions and lives experienced by those outside of normative class lines, ability lines, size lines, and so on.

Intersectional scholarship acknowledges the ‘multiple axis of differentiation’ in research design, implementation, and analysis (Brah and Phoenix, 2013, p. 76). Hancock (2007) suggests that intersectionality may be considered an approach to scholarship; a philosophical paradigm that grounds the ontological, epistemological, and methodological, assumptions a scholar engages in their work. Commitment to intersectional scholarship requires scholars to acknowledge that dominant epistemologies and methodologies (re)produce normative narratives and marginalise those outside of the norm (Cho, Crenshaw and McCall, 2013). Intersectional scholarship is not, however, an additive approach to analyses: first gender, then race, then class (Bowleg, 2008). And it must be more than reductive as well: take away gender, away race, away class (McCall, 2005). It is an approach that acknowledges the intersections of these identities in an attempt to develop a holistic understanding of the phenomena (Hancock, 2007).

Intersectional scholarship is an especially effective tool for marginalised groups to reject the label of deviant, when their experiences deviate from the dominant group. It allows for a disruption of essentialist positions (Cole, 2009), and a recognition of the rich literature that may be produced when dominant lenses are discarded in favour of authenticity. Intersectional scholarship disrupts hegemony, essentialism, and hierarchies (Brah and Phoenix, 2013; Nash, 2008), making it a path to promoting social justice (Pausé, 2014b).

In this piece, we use the tool of intersectionality in two ways. First, we argue that social media allows for, even encourages, intersectional approaches to scholarship. Second, we make a conscious choice to find and use intersectional examples where possible; voices from the margins (of the world, of their discipline) have been amplified here to ensure that a range of experiences are illuminated (Dzodan, 2011; Pausé, 2015).

Traditional and modern scholarship

Before the ubiquity of the internet, a scholar was someone who was expert in their field, knowing which papers and books were important, and where to find them. They could direct students and fellow researchers to particular books and journals in the library, and help them to find a way through the literature (Brabazon, 2014). Scholarship entailed recalling, reading, and understanding the literature, adding to it in some fashion, and ensuring that the additions were disseminated to a wider audience through conferences, journal publications, and books (Dames, 2010; Onyancha, 2015). A large part of the task was simply knowing a great deal about the literature in a given field or discipline, and being in contact with enough people who also worked in that discipline. Most of these knowers were members of privileged groups, and much of their work (re)produced dominant worldviews (Hancock, 2007). Entry to the scholars' club was gained through completing higher degrees, drawing on and adding to the work of others, and writing a thesis, which in turn generated more journal papers and books (Mead, 2011).

Part of the process of writing those papers and books included compiling bibliographies of previously published work in the area. Researchers would pick up a paper in the area and turn to that paper's bibliography to find yet more work to draw on. The resulting edifices of knowledge were often deeply rooted in one tradition and one tradition alone, because that was the research lode that was being explored. Published journal article built on published journal article, monograph upon monograph, book upon book, in a monument to scholasticism (Mead, 2010).

Contemporary scholarship no longer relies on knowing a lot, but on being able to find and process, integrate and assess knowledge (Brabazon, 2014; Duderstadt, 1997). This is seen most obviously when searching for published work. Instead of digging through physical papers or tracing references from one bibliography to another, scholars conduct searches through academic databases, Google Scholar, even just plain internet searches. Relevant material can be found through searching online rather than thumbing through books. This gives scholars access to a much wider and more complete range of literature than was previously available through library catalogues and colleagues' directions. Within the space of just twenty or so years, the internet has made a profound difference to the way that scholars do scholarship.

The modern researcher has a database, a digital camera, and a laptop, and without moving from his desk he can comb the catalogs of the world's great libraries. Formerly, scholarship was more exhausting. The raw materials of composition could fill a room, a house. Keith Thomas has performed his life's work with scissors and ink, staples, index books, old envelopes, cardboard boxes, and a forest of slips of paper: 'Some of them get loose and blow around the house, turning up months later under a carpet or a cushion.' He admits, 'The sad truth is that much of what it has taken me a lifetime to build up by painful accumulation can now be achieved by a moderately diligent student in the course of a morning (Mantel, 2012, para 14).

Deborah has participated in this change herself. She first wrote a 15,000 word thesis in 1987, when card catalogues were still in use, and computer catalogues were very new, and not networked to other universities. Her supervisor gave her an article to read, and suggested that she follow each reference in the bibliography back to find more references and more relevant research. He directed her to various academic journals which were held in the stacks in the library, and urged her to spend a few days going through them. Completing a dissertation in 1996, in a new field of study, she followed much the same process, except that this time, she was able to hunt through online indices of articles and books, and to search through other universities' catalogues as well as the holdings at her home institution. Just two years later, Google was launched, and academic research was transformed.

Sociable Scholarship

With the advent of social media, scholarship has changed again. Communicating knowledge is immediate via blogs, Twitter, Tumblr, and Facebook, and through using these channels to promote research published in traditional formats. This enables academic scholarship to escape the confines of libraries and journals, making it more immediate, and more accessible (Borgman, 2007). Academics are often urged to promote their research through social media, with advocates pointing out that it increases the impact and reach of research (Green, 2015). For example, a paper written by Puustinen and Edwards (2012) was tweeted by the authors when it became available online. Within 24 hours, the article had been shared 135 times over social media, resulting in 861 downloads before any other promotion of the piece had occurred. Social media enables scholarship to be publicised more widely within the academy, and in addition to that, it enables scholarship to become part of broader social conversations (Maslen, 2011). This broadening of conversations may be an even more profound change than the switch from knowledge being spread from scholar to scholar to knowledge being curated and dispensed by Google. The one way lecture has changed to a multi-layered conversation.

I like the kind of communication blogs foster (as opposed to academic publications). Instead of shaping a kind of 'perfected' output (by incorporating reviewer comments, etc.) which you get very little feedback on, you put out into

the world an acknowledged imperfect piece of writing which can spark dialogue with others who are interested in the same thing. The final product is really the original post and all the comments, so it can be more collaborative.

With the blogs that I write, I like the fact that each post is interesting to a different group of people (rather than trying to write one academic article or book which is of interest to all potential readers). I'd say the main purpose is public engagement and making academic theories/research accessible and relevant, but blogs can also make an excellent starting point for research as they can help us see what topics are important to particular groups, how they are talking about them (megbarkerpsych, as commented on Jacobson, 2012).

Expanding the modes of communicating scholarship has made the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge much more egalitarian, both within and without the academy. Lupton (2014a) suggests that networking through social media has allowed for scholarship to move in 'unpredictable directions and serendipitous ways [that are] also horizontal and democratic' (p. 16). It may also lend itself to being more intersectional. Knowledge was previously held by the elite, disseminated to a few students, and stored in books and journals which were inaccessible to people outside the academy (Jensen 2007). Even researchers within the academy could find it hard to communicate with others. Junior scholars might have little contact with senior people, because they didn't have the resources to attend conferences and seminars and workshops, making the personal connections needed for on-going conversations. In writing about social media changing the face of scholarship, Krugman (2011) writes,

Twenty years ago it was possible and even normal to get research into circulation and have everyone talking about it without having gone through the refereeing process – but you had to be part of a certain circle, and basically had to have graduated from a prestigious department, to be part of that game. Now you can break in from anywhere; although there's still at any given time a sort of magic circle that's hard to get into, it's less formal and less defined by where you sit or where you went to school (para 6).

Researchers within particular academic disciplines and institutions can now find out about and reach across to researchers and students within their own discipline and in other disciplines and other institutions. A professor's journal article can be critically reviewed by a graduate student or a new minted PhD or someone outside of the academy entirely, and that review can be widely disseminated and read, and in turn discussed and criticised. Rohan Maitzen (2012) describes the process, 'Participants discussed work in progress, participated in group readings, posted book reviews and talked passionately about core issues such as the future of academic publishing or the never-ending 'crisis' in the humanities' (p. 349).

Social media has allowed the academy to flatten out and become more egalitarian within the academy (Friedman, 2005). Beyond the academy, social media have enabled scholars to communicate directly with much wider audiences, and have enabled those audiences to engage with and criticise scholars' work. Although

scholars' work can be reported in traditional media, the reporting often reaches for an interesting headline rather than engaging in nuanced analysis. By reporting and publishing their work on social media, scholars have made their work much more accessible, and they have become more accountable.

Accessibility means individuals who are not academically trained are able to learn about a field of research and contribute to it, bringing their own ideas and experiences to the table.[†] And accountability has enabled greater criticism of the process of scholarship and research. Through connecting on social media, marginalised people have been able to gather sufficient force to challenge the conventions of research; to insist on an intersectional perspective. The lived experience of a Māori woman living in Aotearoa New Zealand can challenge the theorised understanding of an academic.[‡] People have objected to being studied, and have demanded the right to participate in framing the discussion. For example, the Health at Every Size® (HAES) movement has largely been led by advocates from within what is known as the Fatosphere (Harding, 2007), prompting research that questions the basic assumptions made about the relationship between body size and health by health scholars and those working in the health field. This both challenges and enriches scholars' research. There is now a rich empirical literature on the efficacy of HAES (Burgard, 2014).

In order to communicate effectively with broad audiences, scholars have moved away from the learned conventions of academic writing. The formality of academic writing persists in work published in traditional formats, but on-line in social media, the language used is less constrained. Academics have learned to explain ideas clearly and simply, without resorting to the jargon that signifies their membership of the club of learned people. For example, *The Conversation* is an online magazine hosted out of Australia (editions are now also hosted out of the United Kingdom, Africa, the United States, and France). It recruits academics to write pieces on relevant topics for a lay audience; the tagline of the magazine is Academic rigour, journalistic flair. Many pieces focus on integrating and synthesizing large amounts of data on a singular trending topic. Websites such as *The Conversation* allow academics to write about their research for lay audiences; synthesizing data on important topics and presenting their arguments in a different voice than is found in most academic journals. It often allows scholars to engage in their important role of critic and conscience of society (Duncan, 2015; New Zealand Education Act, 1989). These articles may also serve as a sounding board for future manuscripts; the immediacy of the publication allows for quick feedback from lay people and scholars alike.

Moreover, social media channels are personal in a way that journal articles are often not: they are written in the first person, locating knowledge in the speaker and

[†] For example, see <http://sciblogs.co.nz/>

[‡] For example, see He Hōaka - <http://starspangledrodeo.blogspot.com>

the conversation, not in some abstract Platonic Form which may be accessed only by the wise. The internet has enabled different voices to be more readily heard, including voices often misheard, forgotten, or ignored (Crenshaw, 1991). Social media enables scholars and thinkers and lay people to engage in conversation, as equals (Chadwick, 2008). In social media, appeals to authority are ignored, and questions and criticisms are readily available for discussion. The hierarchy of authority is not sufficient to carry an argument; scholars must provide the evidence that supports their claims. This means that expertise from outside the academy becomes as valuable as expertise from within the academy in pursuing new ideas. The result is a radical democratisation of scholarly research. When Cat organised a Fat Studies conference, fat bloggers and activists attended and presented papers alongside traditional scholars, testing and adding to scholars' understanding of the experience of being fat. In her conference presentation at Fat Studies: Reflective Intersections, blogger Kath Read (2012) asserted,

It is important for academics and professionals to acknowledge that they are also often in a position of power when working with fat activists. They usually have the decision as to what is published, the ability to choose which media outlets they engage with and resources that grassroots fat activists do not have access to. It is important for academics and professionals to regularly 'check in' with fat activists they are working with, to ensure that they are comfortable with the way they are portrayed in the media, that they consent for personal information to be shared at any time and that they have the right to choose what level of engagement they make.

After all, this is not just research to us, this is our lives. (emphasis ours)

The use of social media democratises and widens the academy, and at the same time it makes the academy much smaller and closer together. Social media connects people all over the world (Friedman, 2005; Procter et al, 2010). A scholar in New Zealand can communicate in real time with people in Ireland, in Canada, in Chile. This has been possible with email for many years now, but social media adds another dimension via open accessible conversations. A scholar waking at 7am in New Zealand can join a conversation that started in New York at midday, and later, her contributions will be read by others in Australia and then India and South Africa and London. Conversations span the world. If a conference is taking place in London, Twitter streams enable researchers who cannot fly to the other side of the world to participate, 'listening' to what is being said, and offering immediate comment. The long extended conversations that go on after conference sessions proper have ended remain important, but being there is no longer the only way to participate. Daniels (2013) notes that the Internet has enabled 'feedback from geographically-remote, institutionally-varied yet digitally-close colleagues' which has changed her scholarship (para 5).

The findings of research can be communicated quickly through on-line publication, and even more immediately through social media. Scholarship can now be performed and communicated via blogs and Twitter and Tumblrs, and in on-line magazines and discussion forums as well as on-line journals. For example, as a scientist and scholar who uses social media, Siouxsie Wiles' practice is to schedule a set of tweets for each talk she gives, which are timed to go out as she gives her presentation (Wiles, 2015a, 2015b). Within social media the world of scholarship has become immediate, and it is no longer constrained by space or even time (Gregorian, 1994). Social media encourages immediacy and originality in scholarship, though the constant demand to write, immediate communication of new ideas, and using different voices for different vehicles. Lindgren (2006) notes, 'the nearly instant blog commentary on recent course cases is replacing the law review case note, which has often appeared over a year after the case has been decided...blog posts may not look or feel like traditional scholarship, but they often serve the same function' (p. 1106). Blog writing is immediate as topics surface quickly in the public eye and then disappear just as quickly. In order to develop a community, bloggers must write often. They move away from the much edited conventions of academic writing and in doing so develop their own distinctive voice, enlivening academic discourse.[§]

Scholars may also use different social media platforms for different purposes. Each engagement may develop its own distinctive flavour, allowing scholars to play with different ways of thinking about, and presenting information. Tumblr is useful for such expression. Tumblr hosts micro-blogs, and integrates a dashboard so users may follow each other and be exposed to the contents of each other's Tumblelogs. Many academics host multiple Tumblrs, each focusing on a different area of their own research enquiry. It allows a quick forum to post thoughts, pictures, videos, etc – and ask for feedback from their audience. In a way, Tumblr is a multi-media version of Twitter. While Cat maintain one Tumblr that reflects her main area of fat studies scholarship (Friend of Marilyn), she also maintains other Tumblrs that reflect her journey as she works to wrap her head around new areas of interest. The Tumblr, Charting the Shifts, is a place where she engages with issues of decolonising methodologies and the ethics of epistemological violence. In this Tumblr, she shares thoughts, images, videos, and quotes that speak to her understanding of this topic. Through following other Tumblrs with similar interests, Cat is able to build on her understanding by engaging with others' understandings, and have this reflected on her space through reblogging. Developing different voices and different spaces for scholarship encourages experimentation. It enables scholars to test new ideas immediately, in settings that are not as formal nor as risky as traditional dissemination spaces like conferences or peer reviewed journals. Ideas may be exchanged and developed quickly and continuously (Gregg, 2006).

[§] For example, see <https://turangawaewae.wordpress.com/2012/06/25/bearers-of-discomfort/>

Sociable scholarship and intersectionality

Perhaps how sociable scholarship best allows for intersectionality is through the amplification of voices on the margins. Crenshaw has noted that ‘intersectionality draws attention to invisibilities’ (Adewunmi, 2014, para 7); sociable scholarship has this same ability. Scholars who are invisible, or engage in scholarship on topics that have historically been invisible, may use sociable scholarship to illuminate their field and themselves. We wonder how different the scientific revolutions of Galileo and Darwin may have been if those scholars had access to the World Wide Web to challenge existing paradigms and share their ideas. Or whether other scholars, of the non-white-male variety, would have had a wide enough reach through sociable scholarship that their work might sit alongside the scientific revolutionaries we acknowledge today?

To promote lesser known scholars, Pacheco-Vega (2012) began #ScholarSunday. Pacheco-Vega encourages users to shine a light on important scholarship through #ScholarSunday, including why they are promoting the scholars selected. Many use #ScholarSunday to draw attention to emerging researchers who are primarily producing through sociable scholarship, and those who may not have been established through traditional vehicles such as academic journals. Hashtags have been tailored for other affordances, such as #PhDChat, #AdjunctChat, and #GetYourManuscriptOut (for a review of curated tags on Twitter, see Pacheco-Vega, 2013). In addition to promoting the work of others, scholars are using social media to hold each other to account in a more transparent way than before.

Within the academy, the use of social media has enabled scholars to challenge conventions within their field. For example, the Gendered Conference Campaign led from the Feminist Philosophers blog has challenged the seemingly unconscious process of inviting only men as key note or lead speakers at conferences.** This has led to much greater recognition of the expertise of women working in Philosophy. More recently, the Tumblr, Congrats, you have an all male panel!†† allows individuals across the world to supply photos and screenshots of all male panels across academia and industry. As noted by mathematician Martin, the likelihood that a panel would be all men randomly is ‘astronomical’ (Bacon, 2015). Using the online tool created by Aanand, the Conference Diversity Distribution Calculator‡‡, individuals can calculate how many women could be expected to be on any given panel/symposium/speaker list. These endeavours, and Martin’s analysis, demonstrate that the underrepresentation of women on panels is not simply something that happens by

** <https://feministphilosophers.wordpress.com/gendered-conference-campaign/>

†† <http://allmalepanels.tumblr.com/>

‡‡ <http://aanandprasad.com/diversity-calculator/?groupName=womenandnumSpeakers=20andpopulationPercentage=10>

chance. And through social media, this can be illuminated in a timely (and real time) manner. These processes have encouraged some conference organisers to work actively to ensure that collections of experts are more diverse. Within Philosophy, many scholars have committed to refusing invitations to give keynote speeches at conferences where no women have been invited to give presentations (Schliesser, 2012).

Counting Sociable scholarship

Social media channels are not yet part of the formal scholarly process of editorial and peer review, but are a distinctive route for disseminating ideas and research (Priem and Hemminger, 2010). They promote research as conversation, and scholars who use them are contributing to an environment in which research is valued and used. The question then is, how much does a blog or a Tumblr or a Facebook page or a Twitter thread count as academic work (Purdy and Walker, 2010)? Is it research, teaching, service; none of the above? All of the above? There is mixed support for social media being recognised as scholarship among academics, with younger academics being much more supportive of formal recognition than their more senior colleagues (Hendricks, 2010). McClain and Neeley (2015) suggest sociable scholarship captures a previous unquantified impact of scholarship. If it is to be recognised as scholarship, how much might it count?

Can I count a blog post as a ‘publication’? Is evidence of peer esteem the number of re-tweets I get on Twitter, or the number of ‘likes’ I have on Facebook. Can I use the number of hits and subscribers I get to this blog as evidence of my contribution to the research environment? (Stewart, 2011, para 4)

Dissemination through social media such as blogging must be recognised as valuable and valid scholarship (Lindgren, 2006; Powell, Jacob, and Chapman, 2012). Quantifying the value of sociable scholarship may be conducted at two levels: internally within the scholar’s institution, and outwardly by an external stakeholder. In recognising the value of sociable scholarship, calls have been made for tertiary institutions to allow for recognition of scholarship in social media to occur at times of appointment, promotion, and tenure (Biswas and Kirchherr, 2015; Purdy and Walker, 2010). The Modern Language Association (2007) has asserted that ‘institutions should recognise the legitimacy of scholarship produced in new media...and create procedures for evaluating these forms of scholarship’ (p. 11). It is unknown, however, whether it is normative for institutions to allow for such consideration. Some seem to be embracing the affordances of social media. At the University of Melbourne Victoria, for example, staff are able to ‘prefill’ their applications by linking to their Facebook or LinkedIn accounts. Potential applicants are also encouraged to provide the URL of any existing blogs or web pages, as well as their Twitter handle, if applicable. The

University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Biological Sciences has updated their tenure guidelines to allow for consideration of outreach through social media (McClain and Neeley, 2015).

In addition to internal assessment, some countries engage in sector wide external research assessments by the government, like the REF in the United Kingdom and the PBRF in New Zealand (Sikes, 2012; Waitere et al 2011). External research assessments are used as a tool of accountability by stakeholders; these same stakeholders determine how both research quantity and research quality is evaluated (Moed and Halevi, 2015). It could be argued research quantity is easy to measure, but this is usually the guardian that excludes social media. It simply is not regarded as research to be counted, much less evaluated for quality.

In New Zealand, for example, every six years tertiary education organisations (TEOs) engage in an external research exercise named Performance Based Research Funding (PBRF) (Waitere et al, 2011). In the most recent round of assessment (2012), socialable scholarship was absent from the guidelines and assessment criteria. At first glance, it appears that this is being updated for the upcoming round. In a 2015 consultation paper on developing evidence portfolios for external research assessment from the Tertiary Education Commission, a single mention of social media is made in reference to allowing of other metrics, such as Altmetrics, to be used as indicators of esteem by others. But altmetrics is used to quantify how traditional forms of scholarships (like peer reviewed articles) are shared via social media, not to quantify or qualify scholarship through social media (Wilson, 2013).

The lack of acknowledgement of sociable scholarship, both internally and externally, may stem from the lack of a standard for counting sociable scholarship as scholarship (McClain and Neeley, 2015; Purdy and Walker, 2010). Purdy and Walker (2010) suggest that sociable scholarship may be evaluated in similar ways as traditional scholarship: by reflecting on what kind of knowledge it produces, how useful the scholarship is, and how much effort it took to create. Downey (2011) suggests that professional organisations, such as the American Anthropological Association, could publish guidelines on how social media can be counted as scholarship; these guidelines could then guide tertiary institutions. In their stead, Downey proposes that scholars ensure to include appropriate mention and praise for social media work when writing letters of recommendation. In this way, he argues, we can begin to build a culture that acknowledges and appropriately recognises sociable scholarship. Letters from peers would establish one of the hallmarks of scholarship: peer review. The function of peer review has long stood as one of the defining characteristics of scholarship^{§§} (Kurdi, 2015). Meyers (2011) has proposed that functionalities like pingbacks, comments, reposts, and comments, may serve the role of peer review for social media scholarship.

^{§§} Many have provided critiques of peer review, see Smith (2006) and Saeidnia and Abdollahi (2015)

Perhaps sociable scholarship will be more broadly acknowledged and counted, as scholarship about social media becomes more established (van Osch and Coursaris, 2014). Or when institutions recognise the monetary benefits to sociable scholarship. A concern then can be raised: if sociable scholarship is to be counted, who delineates what will count and what does not? And can such a system be flexible enough to keep pace with the ever changing nature of the Internet? And to this end, will sociable scholarship be co-opted by institutions and therefore be molded into something else – something that doesn't fit the purpose it was 'created' to fulfil?

For many, it isn't the concern about whether sociable scholarship will be counted, but whether it will be counted against them.

I don't know if 'outing' myself as a blogger will help me or hurt me in the job market, just like I don't know if deciding to support my latest research project through crowdfunding will help me or hurt me. I suspect it depends on the composition of the hiring committee and on my ability to 'sell' new media as reasonable academic writing/fundraising (Killgrove, as commented on Meyers, 2011).

Another commenter in the same thread argued for transparency around sociable scholarship, suggesting that it shouldn't be hidden away:

If this kind of scholarly work is part of your scholarly identity, you shouldn't secret it away like some sort of dirty secret. Present it as part of your scholarly activity, and be damn sure that when it comes to interviews (and it will come up) you can thoughtfully and intelligently articulate why it is important (both to you and the discipline), its impact, its reach, etc (Watrall, as commented on Meyers, 2011).

This concern that sociable scholarship may jeopardise their careers or academic standing is common among both academics using social media and those who are not (Lupton 2014a, 2014b). Concern is especially salient for those who use social media for both academic work and activist work, and often a combination of the two (Grey, 2013). Scholars in Fat Studies, Māori Studies, Women's Studies, Queer Studies, and other areas of research, may use social media to contribute their knowledge to other activists, providing solid theoretical and empirical foundations for the arguments activists make for change (Pausé, 2014a). We both maintain blogs and other forums on social media to play the role of academic activist (Grey, 2013). Deborah, on her blogs, *A Bee of a Certain Age* and *Left Side Story*, challenges patriarchal assumptions and manifestations, among other things (Russell, 2015). Cat, on her blog, *Friend of Marilyn*, promotes fat positivity and challenges normative obesity discourse (Pausé, 2012a, 2012b). Social media may be used by academics for direct activism, challenging arguments made in the popular press, and creating dynamics for change. This directly contributes to universities' role as critic and conscience of society (Duncan, 2015; NZ Education Act, 1989).

Using social movement frameworks, Grey (2013) argues that several factors keep academics from engaging in activism (in any form). These factors include shrinking resources and narrowing of opportunity structures, both which are a result

of evermore managerialism in the tertiary sector. As academics are increasingly pressured to produce more of 'what counts' (i.e., international peer reviewed journal articles and research funding) with less, the opportunities and energies for new venues of scholarship and activism are diminished. Another risk, perhaps, is the conflicts that may arise between an individual's work as an academic and their work as an activist. This threat is often seen as amplified online, as scholars' voices in the World Wide Web may be perceived as reflecting on the reputation of the institution (Grey, 2013). This has resulted, for many, in a quieting of voices in activist spaces, and for others, a careful management of their online profile.

Some organisations have taken proactive steps to manage the social media presence of their employees. The United States Geological Service, for example, requires approval by the Office of Communications and Publisher and an employee's supervisor before said employee may speak about their area of expertise through social media (McClain and Neeley, 2015). The British Medical Association (2011) published professional and ethics guidelines for using social media; these guidelines include taking care not to endanger professional standing or 'compromise public confidence in the medical profession' through social media use (p. 7). The Research Information Network (2011) has published guidelines for academics who engage in social media, but a perusal of these guidelines comes up short in locating material to caution academics of potential dangers around reputation or institutional branding. Individual institutions, however, may have policies in place. Lancaster University, for example, has a webpage dedicated to providing information on social media use by academics. On this page, they note that one should be sure to 'only include material that you are ready to put into the public domain.... If you have any concerns, discuss with your supervisor or a senior colleague before you put material onto the web'***.

Counting the costs of being Sociable

Sociable scholarship enables scholars to reach wide audiences. In turn, it enables wide audiences to reach scholars. This can be very positive: Deborah has received commentary from professional practitioners in her current field whose expertise has added to her research, and Cat has been able to connect with activists and scholars from around the world, allowing for scholarship and activism to respond to one another – and influence one another – in real time. However, our work and presence online has also resulted in hate mail, including vicious threats of bodily harm, and troll forums dedicated to them on channels like Reddit and 4chan. And outside of threats, engaging in sociable scholarship has opened up challenges that extend from an audience larger than our academic peers.

*** See the guide <http://lancaster.libguides.com/content.php?pid=259544&sid=2141903>

Deborah has been at the front of an internet storm in her home country when she commented on a particular issue from the perspective of liberal political theory. Her comment was well understood by other academics, but infuriating to those outside the academy. Nevertheless, the negative commentary expanded her understanding, and improved her subsequent work. Cat has been called out by those outside of the academy for privilege based statements and inappropriate attribution of activist work. While it has been difficult for her to be confronted in these ways, ultimately this has led to her being more accountable for her own privilege, as well as a better appreciation of how modes of knowledge reinforce the intersection of oppressions.

Sociable scholarship also persists in an immediately available form. Traditional scholarship was contained within libraries, and known only to specialists. The long memory of the internet means that conversations long addressed and incorporated into scholarship can be revived again and again, even if they have been exhausted. And past mistakes, or previously held (underdeveloped) views, are easy accessible and brought back into conversations. Lastly, the threat of sociable scholarship going viral means that any mistakes – or missteps – or failures – may have a much broader audience than a handful of individuals who read a poorly constructed journal article or attend a poorly presented conference presentation. These can all create barriers to sociable scholarship, or perhaps, drive sociable scholars away from further engagement in social media.

Conclusion

Sociable scholarship creates new forms of scholarship that challenge scholars and the academy. We both teach and research within the academy, and in many obvious respects we are very similar. Yet one of us is a social media user who engages in scholarship, and the other is a scholar who engages in social media. We suspect this is an important distinction, but one that we haven't explored fully here. Further research is needed to illustrate these differences, and to understand the tensions that may arise between the institution and the sociable scholar, the sociable scholar and their colleagues, and within the sociable scholar themselves as they perform their scholarship in both traditional and innovative ways (for such an exploration, see Walker, 2006).

We have both found that sociable scholarship improves our traditional scholarship, by forcing us to confront the lived reality of people's lives, and by encouraging us to deal with lay people's questions and objections and insights into our work. Looking at other scholars using social media, we see greater diversity and greater impact in their research, impact that reaches beyond the academy. Sociable scholarship creates space for different voices and different ideas to affect and challenge academic research. As noted by Walker (2006), 'Blogging allowed us to circumvent the power structures of academia and geography. We found our voices. We heard

ourselves, we heard each other and we were heard by others. It was exhilarating' (p. 1).

Sociable scholarship is an intersectional approach to scholarship. It is hard to engage in abstract theorising when lived experience reported from the margins tells another story. Sociable scholars cannot ignore such voices. This is what lies at the heart of intersectionality: the imperative for mainstream thinking to allow difference to be heard, and celebrated.

The traditional forms of the academy remain. Research is still reported at formal conferences and in journal articles and books. The primary measure for academics remains published research, and academics can still decline to participate in the on-line world and yet be highly successful. Nevertheless, sociable scholarship is expanding and changing academic landscapes. And we would caution against the privileging of traditional forms of scholarship to the detriment of innovative forms of scholarship within social media.

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