



Interview with Donald Samulack

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KENNEALLY: Researchers often choose to publish in an open access journal to ensure the maximum possible impact of their research findings by making them widely available to peers, the public, and to policymakers. Yet publishing in an OA journal is only the first step on the road to reaching the widest possible audience.

Welcome to Copyright Clearance Center's podcast series. I'm Christopher Kenneally for Beyond the Book. According to Donald Samulack, the importance of promoting research through social media and other means can't be overstated. As head, global stakeholder engagement, at Cactus Communications, Dr. Samulack is actively involved in supporting the publication needs of the academic and publishing communities. Through a new partnership with Cactus division Editage, Copyright Clearance Center's RightsLink platform is now able to facilitate critical research communications solutions. Editage and CCC expect that by leveraging research communication elements, such as a plain-language summary, an infographic, a video summary, or a research news story, the visibility of research is maximized. Donald Samulack, welcome to Beyond the Book.

SAMULACK: Thank you. It's great to be here.

KENNEALLY: Well, we look forward to discussing this. You emphasized that there is – in addition to the OA journal potential of discoverability, it is important to consider visibility, that for researchers particularly, publishing in an OA journal certainly provides them an opportunity to maximize reach, and that is important to them. Tell us more about that.

SAMULACK: Publishing in an open access journal, and publishing in general, I find absolutely fascinating. When I was publishing in my background as an academic, I always thought of publishing in a journal having several facets to it. One is obviously the discoverability. That's why you're publishing in a journal. You want your research to have the greatest reach possible.

But once you publish in an open access journal, the promise of the journal is that the journal is going to help you gain eyeballs because it's open access. And what the journal does – it works on accessibility and adaptability, but I'll call it accessibility, and discoverability. So those are things that the journal is doing.



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What the author needs to take into consideration is this is really only two legs of the stool, so to speak. The third leg of the stool, as you mentioned, is visibility. Visibility leads to reach.

So if you look at accessibility, discoverability, and visibility as three legs of the stool, the author really only has the opportunity to modify the visibility aspect of things, and the publisher does as well. Think of visibility as stopping power. If you want to bring attention to your article, there's various tools that you can use to do that, and we can talk about those. But the reason for the visibility is to bring attention to the article.

With some of the tools that we'll talk about, you can also bring greater visibility to the article in the form of stopping power. Stopping power is sort of a marketing term to say that when you're flipping through a journal or you're flipping through web pages, you have sort of an a-ha moment – oh, that's really neat – and you zoom in and you want to read it. Visualization offers stopping power. The average journal is a pretty bland read. Anything you can do to increase the visibility of that journal and/or the appeal, the visual appeal of what you're reading, gains greater readership.

KENNEALLY: Don Samulack, this is an interesting point in the evolution of scholarly publishing, it seems to me, because for researchers in the past, really it was all about getting the article written and then finding somewhere that would accept it and publish it – the best possible place they could find. But there's now a role, a responsibility that authors have after publication. This is something new. It's been brought to us by the internet and social media particularly. And it is a role that authors really should grasp. I think you urge that. But they need to see the great potential for them and for their research.

SAMULACK: Certainly. Many people say that publishing is the last stage of research. I contend the fact that publishing your article is really only the beginning, because you cite that article in your grants. That article has great importance for you for your tenure and other things as an academic. But once that article is published, it becomes an article of record, so it becomes a centerpiece. Then, you need to shift your attention beyond the OA journal value proposition towards more digital promotion strategies to engage a broader audience.

To engage with your peers by publishing is one thing, but there's adjacent peers who don't necessarily read your literature, and they may very well benefit from the results that you have put forward. So you want to extend your reach to adjacent peers. You certainly want to extend to the public and policymakers and funders. That's the whole value proposition of publishing in an open access journal.



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Everybody has access to this. As you extend that reach into the extended community, you are engaging in author outreach, author engagement, a furthering of openness, which is what the whole open access movement is about.

The movement towards openness in author engagement or researcher engagement with the public and policymakers is somewhat being mandated by certain governments. Certainly in the UK with the REF 2021 guidelines, there is an emphasis on showing impact of your research. Well, the impact of your research is not just the publication or the citations related to the publication. The impact of your research can be measured by downloads and a variety of other metrics. But research has great impact if, in fact, society becomes aware of the research, and it is being talked about in the media and other things. These other types of metrics, of media uptake, of societal use – if your research ends up in government guidelines of some sort, that's extended reach. And many people will not know that the article exists unless you increase its visibility.

KENNEALLY: Let's try to make this real for listeners. What are some of the ways that researchers, authors of scholarly publication articles, are taking advantage of this opportunity? Are there any best practices that you have seen implemented you can pass along? And I wonder, too, does this lend itself more easily to certain fields than others?

SAMULACK: I'll take the second question first – does it lend itself to certain fields versus others? When you visualize something, I will argue that no matter whether you're in the humanities and you're talking about ancient pottery, or you're in life sciences or medicine and you're talking about a surgical procedure, or you're in biology and you're talking about bee pollination, the visualization of this, whatever it is, makes it real to the audience. It certainly makes it real and understandable to the lay audience.

So the initial phase of researcher engagement and outreach to lay audiences used to be, and still is, in lay summaries or plain-language summaries, where you have taken your research and you've written a 300-word abstract that is in very basic terms so that the lay – the average person in the public can understand what the research is about.

Plain-language summaries are very important for that, but it is still words. And in this day and age of internet, where everybody has short attention spans, the visualization of things becomes very important. So things like infographics or graphics that describe the research outcomes or describe the methodology in a very pictorial manner, but in an attractive manner as well, are very popular. An infographic is not only popular. It does offer stopping power, because a picture's



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worth a thousand words. You can lay out your whole research outcomes in a graphic manner that is very attractive.

But that infographic can then be used when you tweet about your research or you tweet the URL to your article of record in the journal. You may have a LinkedIn account. You can do other blog posts reusing, using, reusing the infographic – including in your grants. If you submit that infographic to the publisher and/or if the publisher actually created the infographic for you, the publisher can use and reuse that infographic in all the marketing surrounding the article. So infographics and plain-language summaries are very powerful.

A third opportunity is a video summary. A video summary of, say, one to two minutes – one minute could be a teaser video, two minutes can really have some substance to it – it basically allows you to describe mechanisms of action or give a lot more background as to why the research was done, what its importance is, what the outcomes are, and in a narrative and visual sense, you have that impact. Visual summaries, or visual abstracts, as some people call them, can also be embedded with your tweet, embedded with your LinkedIn post or on Facebook or wherever you go social.

The social strategies are so important. I referred to them as digital strategies earlier. But the social strategies are so important and are often overlooked as to how you can gain greater visibility to your article by tweeting, using plain-language summaries, infographics, video summaries, and other things in a social sense, all linking back to the article of record with the hope that you have gained a greater audience and have influenced people, like adjacent peers, who may not have been aware of the research to begin with.

KENNEALLY: Certainly with open access publishing, Don Samulack, it brings together various parts of the ecosystem that had existed sort of separately, independently in the past, or at least without any direct relationship. Authors, for example, are far closer to their funders and having to follow various mandates and do publishing and reporting and so forth. Do we see the funders and the institutions many of these authors work for picking up this kind of optimized social media programming and also supporting their own work with what the authors have created themselves?

SAMULACK: It's a slow uptick. I'm being honest. Many funders are certainly paying the article processing charges, the APC charges, to have the research published in an open access environment. That was a major funder mandate that was really pushed in one part by researchers, but in another part by the general public who are taxpayers who are absolutely funding the research and who have a right to understand the research. The next logical step is for funders also to at least fund



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infographics, because if the intent is openness and the intent is comprehension at the public level and policymaker level, attention has to be brought to this information in a very easy-to-understand manner, and an infographic is one of the easiest ways to visualize and understand what the research is about.

Picture – just as an example I’ll throw out, because COVID-19 issues are on everybody’s mind, the whole aspect of vaccination and how a vaccine is developed and what the healthcare benefit of a vaccine can be. As a public service announcement, infographics and small video summaries are an excellent tool to bring this knowledge to the general public. To write a paper about it is sort of addressing peers and maybe adjacent peers, but it’s not getting down to the public if it’s a journal paper in an open access journal. Some media may find it very interesting, but it then will be the media that makes it very visual and very catchy. So what I’m saying is let’s take this a step back, and it’s the author’s responsibility somewhat, and the publisher’s responsibility as well, to bring this visibility to the article and make it understandable to the general public.

KENNEALLY: And it seems to me that authors probably hear all this and say it sounds wonderful, but it’s going to be some work. Is this the point of the Copyright Clearance Center and Cactus Communications partnership? The program with Editage really helps to enable authors to accomplish these kinds of additional materials that will be able to increase that visibility and to do so in a way that isn’t going to take them a lot more work and a lot more money.

SAMULACK: Absolutely. The RightsLink platform is an industry standard of where authors can go to pay their article processing charges. They’re invited by the journal once a paper is accepted to go in and pay the APCs and sign off on various things. It’s a standardized workflow. And by Editage and Copyright Clearance Center joining forces and making things like infographics and plain-language summaries and video summaries available as a professional service to the author at the point at which they’re in RightsLink and thinking about, OK, now the paper is about to be published. I’m signing off on it. Now, what do I need to do? Well, what you need to do is start thinking about a digital marketing campaign in order to help build visibility around your paper. So it’s the perfect time to think about, OK, maybe I should contract Editage to help me with an infographic or a plain-language summary or a video summary or a research news story or some other way of building attention to this article which is now about to be published. So the timing is right.

A lot of emphasis has been put on APC fees, and people compare journals against one another based upon the absolute value of the APC fee payment, when in reality, yes, that’s the publishing fee. That’s what one cost of publication is. But



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that is only a piece of the mandate to publish and to get the research out there and visible to the wider community. So at the time of APC payment, which is needed to be done in order to get published, you do need to be thinking about the other types of things that you can or should be doing to help promote that article.

And it's not just the author that needs to be thinking about these things. At the institutional level, too, many large academic institutions have their own communications teams, and they help promote internal research that has come out of the organization. They may or may not have the ability to create these tools, like infographics and video summaries. They may not have the internal resources to do so. So through RightsLink and the platform and the process, authors, institutions, can go in when they're invited to do so and consider tagging on these professional services associated with the publication process.

KENNEALLY: Donald Samulack, head of global stakeholder engagement at Cactus Communications, thank you so much for joining me today on CCC's podcast, Beyond the Book.

SAMULACK: It's been great. Thank you very much.

KENNEALLY: Beyond the Book is produced by Copyright Clearance Center. Our co-producer and recording engineer is Jeremy Brieske of Burst Marketing. Subscribe to the program wherever you go for podcasts and follow us on Twitter and Facebook. The complete Beyond the Book podcast archive is available at beyondthebook.com. I'm Christopher Kenneally. Thanks for listening and join us again soon on CCC's Beyond the Book.

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