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Library-led Publishing Data and Benchmarks: Journal Data Collected from the Digital Commons Platform

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Library-led Publishing

Data & Benchmarks

Journal Data Collected from the Digital Commons Platform

By the end of 2013, 167 Digital Commons publishers had launched a total of 957 journals on the platform. Digital Commons journals have published 68,430 articles and garnered over fourteen million downloads. We've compiled some data from the institutions publishing within the Digital Commons community, and some exciting trends emerge.

Publishing History: Growth of Journals on Digital Commons

A glance at the history of journal publishing in Digital Commons repositories clearly shows that library-based publishing has increased steadily over the past several years, and the number of journals added each year continues to rise. Two are particularly important: opportunities to offer journal publishing services to their campuses, broadening the scope into once-dormant publications, as well as launching new journals from a variety of different disciplines.

Open Access Eclipses Subscription-based Publishing

At 94%, the overwhelming majority of journals being published on Digital Commons are being made available open access. Only 6% use subscription controls, and almost all of these include some form of open access. Most commonly a "moving wall" subscription model, where all but the most recent issues are openly accessible. Open access journals attract a large readership, enjoying significantly higher download counts than subscription-controlled journals.

A Sustainable Model for Library-based Publishing

Some Digital Commons users have developed comprehensive publishing services for numerous journals, while others are publishing one or two—the combined effect is a thriving, sustainable community of digital publishers. The majority of DC users are publishing between two to four journals, but a growing number of both large and small institutions are successfully supporting 10 or more.

Of the 15 institutions that currently support 10 or more journals, many additionally offer professional publishing services such as registration of DOI's and indexing of published content in various databases and archives. In cases where the library does not have the bandwidth for this type of support, bepress also offers Publishing Services, which may be desirable for journals interested in being in many of the services typically only offered by commercial publishers.

Faculty-edited Research Journals Lead the Charge

In order to better understand what types of journals are being published in Digital Commons, we've divided the journals into some basic categories. Faculty-edited research journals lead the numbers, followed by law reviews and student journals.

Library-based Publishing Opens Doors for Underserved Disciplines

An analysis of the 127 research journals, which account for 47% of all journals published in Digital Commons, reveals how the various disciplines are represented. Some of the disciplines with the highest representation in Digital Commons are disciplines that are generally less well-represented in traditional print publishing models, suggesting that library-based publishing is meeting important previously unmet needs in the academic community. Some of the disciplines with less representation in Digital Commons may suggest opportunities for growth in future publishing.

Increased Readership Proves Success

Another interesting trend that we found is that journals generally tend to publish an increasing amount with each additional year of production. As editors streamline their workflows, they become more efficient and productive, which may increase readership and submissions as a result.

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The number of downloads that an individual article receives can fluctuate quite a bit depending on the topic and the intended audience. Across all active research journals in Digital Commons, the average number of downloads per article was 197 at the end of 2013.

Student Journals Meet Important Needs on Campus

The 143 student journals being published on Digital Commons also cover a wide variety of disciplines, appealing to the demand from students to publish a wide range of content in the publishing process and to have their work published. Student-edited journals give students experience with the editorial and peer-review process as well as a permanent showcase for their work. They also provide prospective students with a glimpse of the type of work that is being done at an institution.

Increased Readership Proves Success

In the world of digital publishing, tracking downloads is one of the most effective ways to show readership. The average number of downloads across all actively publishing research journals on Digital Commons may offer some readership benchmarks for those interested in comparing the readership of their own journals.

Library-published Journals Are Thriving

The journals data that we have collected reflects the publishing experience of so many journals that we realized there was an opportunity to identify specific trends and even suggest benchmarks that publishers might use as reference points. In order to do this, we refined the results of the analysis just presented by removing journals that were no longer actively publishing. The results below give us an idea of the average number of articles being published by active journals in Digital Commons. The average for all active journals is 17 articles per year, and over 80% are publishing at the healthy rate of six articles or more per year.

Average Number of Articles Published per Year

Year | Avg. Articles Posted
--- | ---
Year 0 | 17
Year 1 | 18
Year 2 | 18
Year 3 | 20
Year 4 | 17
Year 5 | 21
Year 6 | 24

Increased Downloads Proves Success

The number of downloads that an individual article receives can fluctuate quite a bit depending on the topic and the intended audience. Across all active research journals in Digital Commons, the average number of downloads per article was 197 at the end of 2013.

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The library-published publishing landscape continues to grow and change, with new publishing models, subject areas, and sources of readership. We look forward to tracking the progress of our publishing community, and sharing the most significant developments, but most importantly, we know what topics are most important to your library.

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