Academic BRASS

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Business Librarians and Publishing Opportunities: Part II: E-journals, etc. and tenure

Originally, I expected to discuss the role of non-traditional venues for publishing, such as the *Academic BRASS* newsletter and how much e-journals and other electronic formats counted in the tenure process. Yet, as I started the research for this article, I decided to include thoughts on the conflicting expectations of publishing between library professionals and faculty in other academic departments. From talking to my colleagues in business librarianship, faculty in the business field and reading the literature, I believe that the library profession has embraced the electronic format as an option for publishing at a rate similar to many academic departments. In relation to some departments, I expect we are even ahead of the curve.

When researching this issue, I discovered articles debating whether librarians should publish at all and a number of articles written about the changes (or reluctance to change) in publishing requirements with the explosion of electronic opportunities.

In 1995, Blaise Cronin writes of surveying institutions as to their publishing and tenure guidelines concerning electronic publications. Most institutions surveyed had no specific guidelines for publishing format although comments by administrators suggested that there were "inconsistencies in interpretation and practice, both within and across institutions". (*Journal of the American Society for Information Science*, 46(9): 700-703, 1995)

More recently, Richard Atkinson (retired president of the University of California) argues that academic institutions need to support new models of scholarly publishing and that "faculty members should recognize and reward colleagues who choose alternative ways to disseminate their research". He feels researchers should take advantage of the opportunities that are offered by scholarly electronic publications. (*The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Nov 7, 2003)

As a tenure-track librarian at American University in Washington, DC, I have found that the main pressure surrounding publishing lies in the conflicting expectations coming from the library versus the university. Our library has its own Library Faculty Manual and no where does it rule out publishing in electronic journals, nor does it state that a specific number of articles need to

be published in peer reviewed journals. It is mentioned in the manual that the "creative, scholarly and professional development" component of the tenure file may be fulfilled in a number of ways, such as publishing scholarly articles, public presentations, book reviews, participation in professional organizations and creative production and performance. Our library has a tenure committee that reviews files and then forwards them on to the University tenure committee. Since the University committee is made up of faculty across a wide range of disciplines, the expectations concerning publishing may vary depending on the faculty experience. Faculty in the performing arts or communications, for example, usually have different requirements for publishing than those in the more traditional academic fields. Librarians are not teaching faculty but sometimes I think the bias from faculty on the tenure committee is that all files should be held to the same standard of publishing requirements. Since the members of the University tenure committee change from year to year, there will always be different interpretations of the requirements. In the case of the American University Library, publishing in e-journals or electronic format is just one of many options available for librarians but may not necessarily be the case for other departments on campus.

American University's business school, The Kogod School of Business has six departments (Accounting, Finance, Information Technology, International Business, Management and Marketing). Curious as to whether some departments considered electronic publishing in their tenure requirements, I spoke to a faculty member in the Finance department and another in the Information Technology department. The following paragraph summarizes their experiences.

The Finance professor believes the publishing requirements for his department have become more rigorous over the years. Currently, the tenure policy manual requires faculty in the Finance department to publish 4-5 articles in "A" level journals of the field over essentially a 5 year process for tenure. "A" level journals are defined as those journals that are ranked highly in the *Journal Citation Reports.* Alternatively, one could publish 2 articles in an "A" journal and 3 articles in a "B" journal. Five years ago, the requirements were for 3-4 articles in an "A" journal. Surprisingly, electronic journals are ignored as an option as they are too new to be ranked by the traditional ranking sources. According to this faculty member, the Finance field is slow to incorporate the electronic environment and the traditional journal sources are the only ones acceptable for publishing.

My faculty contact in the Information Technology department states that in his department, e-journals do count as a publishing option but it depends on the journal. As with print journals, some e-journals are more highly regarded than others. Since the electronic journal field is so new, many journals do not yet have an established reputation. In this faculty member's opinion, those journals that are not easily accessible (such as print journals) will lose their impact over the long run. Electronic journals provide much easier access and therefore will become increasingly more important in the academic publishing world.

I decided to poll my colleagues on BUSLIB-L concerning tenure requirements at their institutions. The following outlines the process at three universities:

- One ACRL school librarian responded that involvement at the state and national library association level counted, including workshops and presentations. Book reviews were counted as long as it was an ongoing commitment. At this university web guides and tutorials are counted but they must be substantial work.
- Another research university emphasized peer-reviewed journals but did not distinguish by format. Electronic journals are given the same weight as print journals as long as they are peer-reviewed. At this university, there are 3 publishing levels with level 1 being peer-reviewed journals, level 2 being poster sessions and workshops and level 3 being book reviews. More weight is given to level 1 publications.
- Another respondent from a large university said his school also had levels of requirements with peer-reviewed journals counting the most. This respondent also commented that though there were no specific numbers of peer-reviewed articles that a librarian had to publish, the teaching faculty reviewing the files liked to see these articles.

Even with the confusion over what constitutes valid publishing outlets, I think the library profession has embraced the proliferation of electronic opportunities more than the traditional academic business fields. The list of publishing opportunities that appeared in Part I of this article includes several examples of electronic formats. While Electronic publications may be more acceptable in the library field, it would be more helpful for those on the tenure track if faculty manuals were more specific in encouraging the use of electronic publishing opportunities.