Scholarly Publishing across the Disciplines: *Interviews with Geneseo Faculty*

**Part IV: Faculty value of scholarly collaboration, communications and output**

By Kate Pitcher

**Overview**

The changing nature of scholars’ experiences with the shifting publishing landscape and the increasing demands for publication as part of the tenure and promotions processes are evident in Geneseo faculty members’ feelings and relationship with the scholarly communications process and the different outputs of this process. As the number of publication venues and outlets increase with the explosion of digital information, scholars still depend on reliable and standardized dissemination vehicles: journals, books and conference presentations.

In our interviews with the 87 Geneseo faculty members, we asked a set of five questions which explored our faculty’s perception of the value and methods of scholarly collaboration, communications, output and their motivations for publishing at Geneseo.

**Collaboration**

Scholarly collaboration is a phrase often heard and mostly assumed — we were curious about these assumptions and wanted to talk with faculty about whether or not Geneseo scholars were collaborating with peers inside the institution; locally outside Geneseo; nationally; or with colleagues in other disciplines. We asked the question, “*How are you collaborating with other scholars?*” (See figure 1). We did not ask faculty specifically to address which other institutions or with whom they were collaborating, but our question did lead to conversations about collaborations within and outside of Geneseo.
Fifty-one percent of all faculty interviewed collaborate in some way with other scholars at Geneseo, many within their own department or discipline. However, about 28% of all the interviewees collaborate across disciplines, with the highest cross-disciplinary collaborations occurring within the Sciences and Social Sciences. One faculty member from the social sciences noted, that in cross-disciplinary collaboration there is numerous “...benefits of expanding beyond your discipline versus the limitations that professors face when they are confined simply to their own field.” Even amongst humanities scholars (37%) there is collaboration within Geneseo on publishing endeavors, pedagogical work and other scholarship projects.

The types of collaborations vary; in the sciences, some faculty indicated that collaborations were simply troubleshooting in nature, “...I have this problem, can you help me out...” One professor in the social sciences, when asked about potential collaborations with colleagues in other disciplines said, “Depends on topic and the topic depends on who I am collaborating with!” This sentiment was repeated in various ways by other faculty, who collaborate very specifically on a case-by-case basis.

Motivations for publishing
Some of the most revelatory answers we received were to the question, “What motivates you to publish?” (See figure 2). Not surprisingly, a majority of faculty in all three meta-discipline areas are motivated by the intellectual engagement they find with research and scholarship.
Tenure and promotion are (unsurprisingly) strong motivators, with 29% of all interviewed faculty mentioning the tenure process as a driver of their publishing behavior. Thirty percent of all Geneseo scholars interviewed are motivated by the contributions they make to the discipline through their publishing and scholarship. As one faculty member made clear, “If you collect the info, it should be disseminated. We have a responsibility to publish so other scholars can learn and share their findings.” Although faculty members may not report active writing and research collaboration with other scholars in the field, they do engage with, and value the scholarly communication life cycle, by sharing and publishing their work via all types of dissemination methods. Geneseo faculty are active contributors to the scholarly publishing landscape.

SUNY Geneseo’s focus on teaching and learning is reflected in faculty motivations to publish. Across campus, 15% of all faculty indicated modeling and working with students as a primary motivator of their publishing output. This was highest amongst the faculty in the sciences, where 28% of interviewed faculty indicated they are motivated by modelling for students, “This is an important part of the research process, we emphasize this to students and so model this behavior.” Another faculty member added, “Working with students is the driving force” behind his publishing and research. Another member of the social sciences faculty commented, “Primary motivation for participating in scholarly activity is teaching and working with students.”

![Motivations for publishing](image)

**Figure 2: Common factors that motivate SUNY Geneseo faculty to publish.**
Types of scholarly output at SUNY Geneseo

Faculty were asked, “What kinds of scholarly output are there in your discipline?” Responses widely varied (see table 1), but across all disciplines, journal articles and books were the most consistent type of output amongst the faculty interviewed (96% of all faculty reported publishing in journals).

Table 1: The widely varied types of scholarly works produced by SUNY Geneseo faculty.

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<th>Abstracts</th>
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<td>Research articles</td>
<td>Short stories</td>
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<td>Pedagogical articles</td>
<td>Creative works</td>
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<td>Review articles</td>
<td>Blogging</td>
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<td>Commentaries</td>
<td>Field guides &amp; guidebooks</td>
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<td>Books</td>
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<td>Book chapters</td>
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<td>Reviews</td>
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<td>Reference works</td>
<td>Juried exhibitions</td>
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<td>Conference presentations &amp; papers</td>
<td>Exhibition catalogs</td>
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<td>Technical reports</td>
<td>Musical compositions</td>
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<td>Posters</td>
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<td>Textbooks</td>
<td>Performances</td>
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<td>Data sets</td>
<td>Orchestration &amp; transcriptions</td>
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Many faculty, especially those in the humanities, mentioned that types of output vary by faculty status. Depending on discipline, many junior faculty may have a wealth of conference presentations and papers submitted, as one faculty member stated, “…conference presentations, especially when you are starting out, [are] also useful in finding authors to write essays for a book you want to edit.” Geneseo scholars use conference presentations and papers as a vehicle for networking and soliciting material as well as for sparking ideas and generating new research collaborations. As one social sciences faculty member noted, “…conference presentations are important, as they are essential to getting widespread access to your work & ideas and then helping you to get published.” So although the more experienced faculty saw less value in conference presentations as output, many junior faculty expressed the high value of conference presentations early in their career, as a method of gaining reputation and recognition and giving them access to external opportunities.

It was noted by a faculty member in a social sciences discipline that the luxury of time is often only available to those with tenure, suggesting it is rare to see a faculty member in her department with a published monograph, “…The department has published one book in nine years, and almost always books are written post-tenure... they simply take too long to write and publish. [I] know someone who missed out on tenure because they tried to write a book pre-tenure.” Another tenured professor noted that he, “…prefers publishing in books over journal articles because of length of time. I have the flexibility and time to publish books rather than articles. “For Geneseo faculty members, it is status and rank, timing of publication, and career
Scholarly publishing across the Disciplines: Scholarly collaboration, communications, and output

stage that are crucial elements in how they choose to disseminate their research and scholarship.

Value of scholarly output

Librarians asked faculty about specific types of scholarly output and how they were valued: “How are they [kinds of scholarly output] valued in your department?” (See figure 3). Overwhelmingly, journal articles (and in particular, research articles) were noted as the “highly-valued” output of a discipline or department, closely followed by books and conference presentations. Of the total faculty interviewed, 95% (96% sciences; 94% social sciences; 96% humanities) published journal articles, while the next highest source of scholarly output were books published, at 57% of faculty interviewed. Conference presentations and papers also accounted for 57% of the total faculty interviewed.

The biggest disciplinary differences were seen in the importance of books, creative works and review articles. While articles were universally valued, books held little value for faculty in the sciences but were highly valued by humanities faculty. The “pace” of the discipline can influence the publication venue. As one science faculty member put it, “This is a fast paced field - by the time you publish a book it is out of date.” As a result of the value of books in the humanities and social sciences, book reviews were also valued more by these disciplines than by faculty in the sciences. Conversely, creative works were valued most by humanities and social sciences faculty and were not mentioned by faculty in the sciences.

Figure 3: Various types of scholarly works hold different value for each discipline.
While many faculty had strong ideas about the value of different publication types, others were more concerned about process. Peer reviewed conference presentations, maps and other refereed venues were highly valued by some departments.

**Publication influences**

In addition to questions about general publishing and scholarly communication behavior, we asked faculty about their current research projects, where they hoped to publish and where they have published in the past. Most importantly, however, we are curious about why faculty members choose one journal or publication outlet over another. This precipitated the question, "What influences this [choice of publication outlet]?" (See figure 4).

![Influences on publication choices](image)

**Figure 4:** Influences on faculty choices for publication venue, by meta-discipline area.

Overwhelmingly (especially in 80% of Social Sciences faculty interviewed) subject matter is a top consideration of where to publish. For the faculty in the Sciences, they are more evenly split between subject matter and reputation of publication (28% and 32%, respectively). Prestige and reputation were next in importance, followed by impact factor and audience. A full professor stated, “...as a tenured, full professor, the status/prestige of a journal is less of a concern. I will always strive for journals that undergo a rigorous peer-review process, but most important is that the source reaches a wide enough readership by a population who will benefit most from the written work...” Readership, audience and impact were highly valued by 16% of the entire faculty interviewed.

Open access was not considered a factor except by 14% of the Social Sciences faculty, but even then, as put by one faculty member, “Open access is not as necessary to me as credibility
of journal.” Most faculty interviewed were either unaware of Open Access as an option, or in the words of one faculty member, “I don’t care much about Open Access.”¹

Conclusion
What can we conclude from our interviews with Geneseo faculty as it relates to scholarly communication, output and publishing methods? How might the library assist faculty as they make decisions about how to share their scholarship?

SUNY Geneseo faculty-scholars are actively engaged in producing, disseminating and sharing the results of their research and teaching. Our faculty are motivated by intellectual engagement; modeling for their students; and the contributions they can make to their discipline and field. Our faculty choose certain publication outlets for a variety of reasons, but most often for subject matter and reputation, but closely followed by prestige, acceptance rates and impact of the work. Faculty highly value journal articles, books and conference presentations as the primary methods of dissemination, but are publishing in a wide variety of venues and producing many different types of scholarship. One important takeaway is that every single faculty member interviewed was publishing -- whether a book review, conference presentation, grant proposals, producing videos, preparing art installations or writing research articles - our faculty are producing scholarship and engaging with their discipline and furthering research in the field.

As Milne Library develops and tailors services to meet faculty scholarship creation and production, one of the best ways to meet the scholarly communication needs of our faculty is create publishing and author services designed to serve the scholarly output of our faculty, whether by creating resources to help faculty find publication venues; provide scholarship support services to publish faculty work; or promote, curate and preserve the vast quantity of our faculty scholarly output. One of the gaps in faculty needs may be in the Open Access arena, where our faculty are not currently publishing, but which may change in the near future as the sharing and dissemination of research changes in many disciplines. Milne Library can be an active supporter and host of open journal publishing and open monograph platforms that will create opportunities for faculty interested in exploring Open Access and this new form of scholarly dissemination.

One way the library may meet these emerging needs is through the development of scholarship support services. In January of 2014, Milne Library will launch a Scholarship and Publishing website, providing an array of services to support faculty publishing and scholarly output needs, including journal and book production and implementation of scholarship support resources to assist faculty with the publishing process.

¹ For further information on Open Access and local practices at SUNY Geneseo, please see Bonnie Swoger’s report, Scholarly Publishing in the Disciplines, Interviews with Geneseo Faculty: Part III, Sharing Scholarly Work: Open Access Knowledge and Practice, retrieved at http://lgdata.s3-website-us-east-1.amazonaws.com/docs/888/321630/FacultyInterviewsReportOpenAccess.pdf