Benefits and Challenges of Publishing Undergraduate Students’ Writing

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Editor-in-Chief, Inscribe
Outline:
Publishing undergraduate research and writing
Context: Hong Kong and PolyU
Our journal: Benefits and challenges
Best practices
Q & A discussion
# Publishing UG research and writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Boyer Commission report (1998)</th>
<th>Pedagogical changes; Focus on real world results</th>
<th>Changes in scholarly publishing</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Desire of students to publish</td>
<td>Pervasive digital publishing</td>
<td>Libraries</td>
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<td>- Information literacy</td>
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<td>- Institutional repositories (IRs)</td>
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<td>- Open access</td>
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UG journals – some numbers

• “...Emerging campus synergy in support of UR, engaged learning and publishing” (Caprio, 2014, p. 150)

- 170+ undergraduate journals in the US (Stone, Benson & Beech, 2016)

- 1/3 of US institutions have 1+ online or print UG research journal (Kaitlin, as cited in Stone et al., 2016)

- 50% faculty-led / 50% student-run in the UK (Walkington, Edwards-Jones & Gresty, cited in Stone et al., 2016)

- Issues of sustainability: 50%+ with broken links/old current issue in 2009 (Weiner & Watkinson, 2014)
Rationale / aims of journals

- “Legitimate outlets for the **publication and celebration** of outstanding student research” (Ho, 2011, p. 2)

- **Promotion** of student research or **encouragement** of student publication (80% of journal missions) (Ng, Lari & Chan, 2017)

- Low-risk opportunity to engage in scholarly writing and critical appraisal of evidence

- Develop writing and critical thinking skills

- Develop leadership and critical appraisal skills (editorial board) (Ng et al., 2017)
## Student Journal Possibilities

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Types and sources of writing</th>
<th>Management and editing*</th>
<th>Technology and hosting</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Research / STEM, medicine, law, multidisciplinary, etc.</td>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>Libraries</td>
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<tr>
<td>Senior thesis</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>IT department support</td>
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<tr>
<td>Course or program</td>
<td>Mix of faculty and students</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Humanities &amp; general education</td>
<td>* reviewers, editors, advisers, proofreaders, editor-in-chief</td>
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Hong Kong
Hong Kong youth feel powerless in politics

Exclusion from city’s policy development process has led to a fall in young peoples’ outlook, according to a university study

Insecure and uncertain, Hong Kong youth are struggling to cope with the transition to adulthood
For many Hong Kong students, over-drilling for exams denies them the joy of learning.

When will Hong Kong realise that its exam-focused culture is failing our children?
PolyU, ELC and GE / WAC

Founded 1937; university status in 1994
QS rankings in 2018: 95\textsuperscript{th} in the world / 27\textsuperscript{th} in Asia

28,499 students:
- 16,355 undergrads; 10,101 post-grads; 2,134 sub-degree
- 80\% Hong Kong; 18\% mainland China; 2.5\% international

English Language Centre:
- 90+ academic staff
- Teach compulsory first-year English & discipline-specific English courses

2012: implementation of General Education / Writing Across the Curriculum
- ELC teachers provide pedagogical support and individual feedback and consultations to students (> 5000 students, 20 assignment genres yearly)
The establishment of *Inscribe*

- An objective of grant to establish GE/WAC program

Rationale:

- Motivation for students to engage in WAC and writing
- Acknowledgement of students’ GE writing
- Development of a writing community on campus

- Open access, multi-disciplinary, published yearly
- Focuses on GE and ELC courses
- Open call for submission & emails to GE and ELC teachers
- No funding; minor time-off compensation for Editor-in-Chief
- Faculty support: 6 reviewers, 6 editors, 6 proofreaders
Revolution: The Right Way

- By Anoushka Mahar, Accounting & Finance student
- Persuasive writing course offered by ELC
- Manifesto – a call to action
- www.inscribe.elc.polyu.edu.hk
Students’ Top Benefits

1. Editing process / working with the editor (5/6)
   - “the more you edit the more you learn; it was something I really enjoyed”
   - “Meeting people who really enjoy writing”; “the interaction with the editor”

2. Learning / improving my writing (3/6)
   - “The best part was improving my writing skills”
   - “It added more to my arsenal of writing”

3. Finishing / satisfaction (2/6)
   - “When I finally finished, I felt very satisfied”; “when everything ended”

4. Confidence (2/6)
   - “Working with EIC and Editor... improved my confidence and interest in writing”

5. Enjoyment (1/6); Interest in writing (1/6)
   - “No academic deadline, no stress”
Students’ Biggest Challenges

1. Language (3/6)
   - “A specific paragraph. I kept editing it but it never seemed to be understandable. My audience was struggling to understand”
   - “Choosing the right words. I have a feeling and I don’t know how to express it.”
   - “…tiny but important words; how to recognise language errors”

2. Negotiations with the editor (2/6)
   - “Getting your message across to editors who...share a different perspective”
   - “The editor didn’t teach this subject before... We had disagreements”

3. Negative comments from the editor (1/6)
   - “The comments on the first editing draft... emotional barriers you try to overcome. ‘Unclear’, ‘Can’t picture that’ – it feels bad”
Faculty Challenges

• Interaction with the students
  - “Being patient with the students”
  - “Writing is a very personal thing... students have to be open to quite objective and critical feedback and learn to be editors”
  - “Committing students to revise”

• Unfamiliar genres of writing
  - “Some texts are quite technical”; “specific, unfamiliar genres”

• Workload
  - “Proofreading can be quite tedious, especially references and citations”
Faculty’s perceived benefits

- Publicity / promotion of ELC
- Showcase to the wider community (PolyU is more than vocational ed.)
- Motivating students to read and write
- “We become more aware of the students’ expression, awareness, writing and how teachers can help”

How more benefits can be realized:

- needs more promotion outside the ELC
- expand the profile and readership
- embedded in a course
- genre guidelines and vocabulary resources
## Institutional Challenges

Cost, administrative and QC concerns (Walkington & Jenkins, 2017)

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<th>Administrative</th>
<th>QC</th>
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<td>- Funding issues, and showing the impact</td>
<td>- “Lateral impacts” (Waye &amp; Simpson, 2016, p. 2); faculty pressure and workload</td>
<td>- Sources of quality work</td>
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<td>- Financial sustainability of the hosting service</td>
<td>- Monitoring and oversight</td>
<td>- Students may need encouragement to submit</td>
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<td>- Publication costs</td>
<td>- Poor timing (semesters, graduation, summers)</td>
<td>- Systems of submission, editing, review</td>
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Institutional Challenges

Cost, administrative and QC concerns (Walkington & Jenkins, 2017)

“can seem like a never-ending, precarious project, without funds securely set aside to ensure its longevity” (Waye & Simpson, 2016, p. 2)
Conclusions

_inscribe_ is a unique and rich experience for students.

- Evidence of students’ benefits
- Supports aims of the ELC and PolyU
- Wider benefits to student body unknown
  - Students whose scripts are rejected?
- Clearer perspective on possibilities and ways of overcoming challenges
Student Journals: Best Practices

• Broaden your view & consider different possibilities
• Sufficient resources to enable sustainability (Mariani, 2011)
• Involve the library (see Caprio, 2014 and Weiner & Watkinson, 2014)
• Carefully plan assessment (see Weiner & Watkinson, 2014 - Purdue)
• Embed publishing in the student experience
• Create scaffolding support for all phases of publishing (videos, guides)
• Learn from the literature
References


Mariani, M., Buckley, F., Reidy, T., & Witmer, R. (2013). Promoting student learning and scholarship through undergraduate research journals. PS: Political Science & Politics, 46(4), 830-835.


Q & A
Discussion / Suggestions
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