

No amount of open access will fix the broken job market: publication strategies for early-career OA advocates in the humanities

[Samuel Moore](#), Ph.D candidate, Department of Digital Humanities, King's College London, UK

Abstract

Publishing is integral to the careers of humanities researchers, shaping many of the practices undertaken within the contemporary university. Despite its importance, humanities publishing is a black box that represents a number of different processes and practices which continue either unquestioned or unexamined by the average humanities researcher. One of these practices is the need for researchers (particularly junior researchers) to publish monographs with 'prestigious' university presses or commercial publishers, which usually prohibits the possibility of open access (OA) forms of publishing. While such a requirement is not the fault of OA per se, the notion of publisher prestige does tend to shape the conversation around OA monographs and inhibits their uptake.

One response to the need for early-career researchers (ECRs) to publish in prestigious venues is to seek to change the guidelines for hiring and promotion in academia. If we can only make hiring committees *reward* open access, the argument goes, then more people will practice it. While admirable in its intention, this strategy treats OA as an end in itself, rather than something promoting more ethical and equitable publishing practices or facilitating new forms of scholarship. Tying open access to job criteria is likely to have the same unintended consequences as article-processing charges and high impact factor-publishing in the sciences. People will rush to the prestige publishers and their commercial dominance will continue.

The root cause of the problem of prestige publishing is simply that there are not enough academic jobs available for ECRs: no amount of open access will fix that. Rather than seeing publishing as a zero-sum game between open and closed, advocates should instead highlight the potential that OA offers for ECRs to experiment with the monograph form and to contribute to a continual reassessment of what publishing in the humanities *means* (with respect to the tools developed through the HIRMEOS project and elsewhere). This paper will discuss the implications of such an understanding of OA for the publication 'strategies' of early-career OA advocates in the humanities and will suggest ways in which these strategies can be supported.