Self-Presentation in Academia Today: From Peer-Reviewed Publications to Social Media

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ABSTRACT
The panel explores the theoretical, practical, and policy aspects of self-presentation in academia given the rapidly changing world of knowledge creation, dissemination and consumption. It offers insights into both the potential and challenges of social media in academia and highlights future directions regarding scholarly communication. The goal of the panel is to start an interactive discussion based on a number of important themes related to social media use and appearance of various stakeholders in academia that will be of interest to scholarly communication researchers, information professionals, librarians and administrators.

Keywords
Self-presentation, impression management, framing, social media, scholarly communication, academia, altmetrics, reputation management, online identity, online behavior.

INTRODUCTION
The primary purpose of scholarly communication is to distribute the results of research and to inform other researchers about what has been studied in order to advance science as a whole. Publications document who carried out the research and, accordingly, who is allowed to claim ownership or intellectual property in this regard. As such, scientific publications are always strongly linked to particular researchers and when taken together reflect their expertise and disciplinary specialization. Hence, by contributing to scholarly communication processes researchers implicitly influence how they are perceived and for what scientific contributions they are recognized by other researchers. There is, however, evidence that researchers communicating in a scholarly manner are not only motivated by the reasons mentioned above, but also by more personal ones, causing Franck to ask in 1999: “Does the vanity of scientists impede the advancement of knowledge, or is the chase after attention - from their peers and from the public - an indispensable part of scientific progress?” (p. 53).

In scholarly communication attention is typically measured by the number of citations a particular publication receives, which indicates how often the publication has influenced other authors and their work. A significant share of informetric and bibliometric analyses considers the output of researchers as well as to what extent it influences their peers, i.e. via citations. Moreover, the cumulated number of publications and citations form a personal profile of the researcher, reflecting the fields in which the researcher performs best, hence, where she is most experienced. And although this kind of profiling is indirect, publications and citations, as well as cited and citing authors, can be seen as a form of self-presentation creating citation identities and reinforcing citation images of others (Cronin & Shaw, 2002). Another way of doing that is through the usage of language, i.e., using the “right” language demonstrates affiliation to a community.
Of course the chances for academic authors to accumulate a high number of citations as “pellet[s] of peer recognition” (Merton, 1988, p. 621) increases with the number of articles they publish, which further contributes to the production and publication of scientific content. This has led to an oversimplification of scientific productivity and influence and caused adverse effects including reducing paper content to the reduction of papers to the least publishable unit, citation cartels, and honorary authorship (Binswanger, 2015; Weingart, 2005).

There are also more direct ways for academics to present themselves such as CVs on websites, staff profiles on university websites, images posted on academic social media sites (e.g. Mendeley or Google Scholar), academic blogs, or people directories (such as Bloomsbury’s Who’s Who). As the Internet and web-based applications have become a ubiquitous part of day-to-day life (Mitzlaff, Atzmueller, Stumme, & Hotho, 2013), social media sites (e.g. Twitter, Facebook, Google+) have increasingly begun to be incorporated into academic life allowing for greater visibility, but also making academic self-presentation more complex and time-consuming. Social media sites are having an impact on the once invisible backstage activity of scholars, as Priem (2014, p. 264) argued, by bringing “the background of scholarship… out onto the [front] stage.” Results of this development have led to the blurring of the boundary between personal and professional on academic social networking platforms (e.g., ResearchGate, Academia.edu), but in particular on general social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Wikipedia). The use of social media by academics as well as the idea to generate metrics based on scholarly social media activity (i.e., altmetrics) places pressure on universities, organizations, and funding agencies to consider how to value the information consumed and disseminated within this context and how to distinguish between what is personal and professional. As the boundaries between public and private blur, universities look to research on this phenomenon to assist them with such procedures as evaluating scholarly production (Bar-Ilan et al., 2012) and crafting social media use policies (Hank et al., 2015; Lough & Samek, 2014).

The panel will explore theoretical, practical, and policy aspects of self-presentation in academia and offer insights into both the challenges and the promising future directions. The goal of the panel is to start a discussion with particular focus on audience interactions around the following themes:

- Providing an overview of academic self-presentation on social media including possibilities and challenges;
- Discussing existing theoretical frameworks useful for addressing the issues surrounding self-presentation in academia (e.g., Goffman, Merton);
- Sharing of insights regarding the techniques and methods used to study self-presentation in academia;
- Discussion of policy implications and role of constituents other than the researchers and scholars themselves.

**FORMAT**

The panel will provide an opportunity for the audience to engage in discussions about the issues surrounding self-presentation in academia. It is particularly aimed at the general audience without extensive informetrics knowledge and expertise in theoretical foundations of self-presentation and scholarly communication. Besides academics, this panel is also relevant for information professionals (e.g., librarians), who can help decide what forms of self-presentation are most effective and how to do it, administrators who need to address policy issues surrounding managing the blurring of personal and professional discourses online, and scholarly communication researchers. Some of the topics are highly controversial, and will allow the panelists to argue both the pros and the cons and the audience to take an active role in these discussions.

The topic will be introduced briefly by the moderator, Isabella Peters, and each panelist will then give a short (approximately 15 min.) presentation in which they outline their views and discuss diverse aspects of the research field. After the presentations by the panelists, the audience will be encouraged to engage with the panel and each other about the topic (e.g., in a world café format). The moderator will facilitate the discussion; issues raised by the panelists will be used as the springboard for the discussion. This format should capitalize on the diverse expertise of the panel and stimulate interactivity and audience engagement.

Specific topics will be discussed by individual panelists:

Judit Bar-Ilan - ResearchGate and academia.edu are two of the most popular academic social media websites. Currently academia.edu reports more than 20 million users, and ResearchGate more than 6 million users. Both sites are very active, send emails to their users often, and encourage them to upload the full texts of their publications. Although most publishers allow to upload preprints or postprints for self-archiving, ResearchGate views itself as a self-archiving repository (see https://explore.researchgate.net/display/news/2009/09/15Self-Archiving+Repository+goes+online) and when the authors want to upload the full text of one of their publications, ResearchGate displays the relevant information from the Sherpa/Romeo site (http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/romeo/) that provides information on publishers copyright policies and self-archiving. Academia.edu is also interested in the full text of the users’ publications and has a page on copyright policy (https://www.academia.edu/copyright), but does not provide any supplementary information when uploading a
Academics can be partitioned into three groups: those who upload without considering copyright rules, those that do not upload anything, and those that read the rules. In my experience the third group is the smallest group. Academics and librarians should be aware of what authors are allowed to do in terms of self-archiving, because allowing free access to their scholarly output enhances their visibility. Scholarly publications are an important aspect of self-presentation of researchers.

Timothy D. Bowman – Davis III, et al. (2012) warned that it is critical for researchers to investigate how organizations, such as higher education institutions, are incorporating, monitoring, and normalizing the use of social media by their employees. Others (Veletsianos, 2012) have identified issues scholars face as they manage their impressions within social media environments. With the use of social media by academia comes an increase in the potential for audience members to misframe messages. For example, scholars have been disciplined, placed on leave, or had their job offer rescinded (Herman, 2014; Jaschik, 2014; Rothschild & Unglesbee, 2013) for information disseminated on social media. Because of this, universities and organizations are crafting policies intended to distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate social media use (Hank et al., 2015; Lough & Samek, 2014; Sugimoto et al., 2015).

Work examining how it is that scholars manage their personal and professional impressions on social media, how they communicate and share information within these contexts, and how the vast potential audience members to whom the information is being disseminated interpret their messages will be discussed. It is important for scholars, information professionals, and universities to consider what types of information are being disseminated by those in academia, as it can be archived, searched, reproduced, and viewed by vast invisible audiences (boyd, 2011). To interpret these phenomena, the concepts of self-presentation, impression management, and framing will be discussed.

Stefanie Haustein - Acts on social media relating to scholarly documents and scholars will be discussed in the light of scholarly norms to interpret the meaning of metrics based on various online events, which are commonly referred to as altmetrics (Priem, 2014). These include Mendeley reader counts, tweets, as well as post-publication peer reviews and online recommendations. As acts leading to online events on social media have been introduced as potential metrics of impact to be applied in research evaluation complementary to citations, they will be discussed using citation theories including the normative approach by Robert K. Merton, the social-constructivist approach, as well as concept symbols by Henry Small. These theories are used to contribute to the understanding of the metrics based on acts related to scholars and scholarly contents on social media (Haustein, Bowman & Costas, in press).

Staša Milojević - Of the various components of textual documents, the titles, and the choice of words in them, are of particular importance. Title words function as “attention triggers” (Bazerman, 1985, 1988). They are devices for capturing interest in the world where information overload is a norm. The words are chosen to “convey credible information for a given population of producer-readers” (Callon et al., 1983, p. 199), and they serve two purposes: They convey information and impose the text by convincing the reader to read it and ultimately use it. Thus, one can observe phrases occurring in the titles as tags and then analyze the tagging behavior both by an individual author and research and scholarly collectives. Self-presentation plays an important role in this tagging behavior. Scholars choose particular tags to denote their alliance with particular communities, sub-communities, and lines of thought. Who are the introducers of new tags and who are the followers? Can we use the usage of terms to identify the influence and “impact” of researchers and scholars?

**PANELISTS AND MODERATOR**

Judit Bar-Ilan is a professor at the Department of Information Science at Bar-Ilan University. Her research focuses on bibliometrics, webometrics, information retrieval, information behavior and semantic networks. In this panel she will discuss the use of academic social media platforms for self-presentation, emphasizing the value of free access to the full texts of publications.

Timothy D. Bowman is a research professional at the Canada Research Chair on the Transformations of Scholarly Communication at the University of Montreal. His research focuses on self-presentation, impression management, framing behaviors, and affordance use of scholars utilizing social media. In this panel he will discuss the use of various social media platforms by scholars and the issues they face when managing personal and professional communications in these environments.

Stefanie Haustein is a post-doctoral researcher at the Canada Research Chair on the Transformations of Scholarly Communication at the University of Montreal. Her research focuses on bibliometrics, informetrics, and computational social science. She currently works on social media in scholarly communication and making sense of so-called “altmetrics”, supported by a grant from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation.

Staša Milojević is associate professor at the School of Computing and Information at Indiana University Bloomington. Her research focuses on scientometrics, informetrics, and computational social science. In this panel she will discuss the choice of research papers’ title words as tagging by authors, with particular focus on self-presentation as an important factor influencing the choices made.
Isabella Peters is professor at the ZBW Leibniz Information Center for Economics and Kiel University where she conducts research on user-generated content in digital libraries and on alternative metrics for research evaluation. She is especially interested in how researchers interact with social media and make use of social media affordances as well as how alternative metrics derived from these interactions are perceived from the users. She will moderate the panel discussion as well as the interactive session.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

ASIS&T SIG for the measurement of information production and use (SIG/MET) sponsors this panel.

REFERENCES


