Accelerating the revolution in political science publishing: shorter, faster, more transparent and freely available.

4/10/2014

Editors of the recently launched journal Research and Politics*,* **Catherine de Vries** *and* **Bernard Steunenberg***, provide background on why publishing in political science requires a reboot. Time lags in conventional publishing and the limited accessibility of articles can undermine researchers' attempts to maximise the impact of their work. It is time to add to the publishing repertoire tools and formats that are both available and affordable.*

It is time to unlock the full potential the internet provides to enhance the visibility and accessibility of research findings within political science. While other disciplines are already embracing online and open-access publication of scholarly work – think about PLOS ONE in the sciences for example – political science has not yet followed suit. Although established political science journals increasingly pre-publish articles online, articles remain a copy of their printed version. Online publishing can not only enhance direct access to articles, however, it has the potential to do so much more: articles can be supplemented with replication data, proofs, additional materials, videos and study designs can be pre-registered.

All these things help researcher to support their main claims. Moreover, it can stimulate the norm that authors should put 'all their cards on the table'. The internet provides scholars with an opportunity to engage in a different kind of communication with a variety of stake-holders. Online and open source publishing allows for a shorter, faster and more direct way of communicating with fellow scientists, policy makers, experts and the wider public. In a time where the relevance of socials science in general and political science in particular is often questioned both in Europe and the US, an accelerated pace of interactions with a wider audience seems more important than ever.

The recently launched journal Research and Politics (R&P) has been established to aid political scientists in fully utilizing the internet as a platform to accelerate the impact of their research without sacrificing the rigorous reviewing practices of a leading journal. R&P publishes short, accessible articles of 4,000 words (along with research notes of just 2,000 words), which focus on new findings or insights with a clarification of how the author got to these results. Elsewhere, like in the natural and medical sciences, short and focused articles have become the norm. Within political science successful blogs, like the Monkey Cage or the LSE blogs, show that is possible to present research findings in a meaningful and accessible way, often in less than 2,000 words, and that this enhances widespread readership.

'Shorter, Better, Faster, Free'. Image Credit: Ravenperch (Wikimedia, CC BY-SA)

An additional gap in political science publishing R&P aims to fill is that next to short-format articles it publishes 'null-findings' and replications of existing work. In doing so, it could provide a home for important scientific work that may be less easily placed in traditional venues. Such pieces may not warrant 8,000 word articles, but can easily be communicated in 2,000 words. They shed new light on ideas we have in our discipline, may greatly improve our understanding of social reality and should therefore have an important place in our discipline.

Smaller articles are faster to write and to review which supports faster publication. R&P aims to speed up the reviewing process by working with short externally-sourced reviews (of no more than 500 words) and by cooperating with a global team of committed and extremely talented associate editors selected from every major sub-field. Final decisions based on associate editor recommendations will be made by the cross-national team of general editors consisting of Erik Voeten (Georgetown), Catherine de Vries (Oxford) and Bernard Steunenberg (Leiden). Upon acceptance, a continuous publication model allows articles to be published online as soon as they are through the production process, further reducing the time from submission to public availability.

Rapidity will not be at the expense of quality, however, and R&P's aim is to be rigorous and accept only those papers that genuinely break new ground or otherwise add in a significant way to our understanding of the political sphere. Likewise, by adopting strict academic norms around transparency, ethics and replication, more academics could become involved in public debates without the risk of sacrificing scientific rigour. R&P's cutting-edge replication policy demands the linked, open publication of supplementary information such as proofs, data, code or source information tables and figures for both qualitative and quantitative contributions.

The last central pillar of our project is the open access nature of the journal, which stimulated a more direct and freely available communication within the discipline and other, interested non-academic audiences. Articles will be published under one of the Creative Commons licences. Authors are free to choose which license they like, although we would hope that they prefer 'CC BY' or 'CC BY NC', which allows for other use of the authors' work as long as it is properly referenced.

Of course, being an open access journal brings with it fears of the kind of high article publication charges (APCs) that we see in the natural sciences. This is a very important concern and R&P has taken care to keep our cost base low through online-only publication (PDF and full text) and by spreading the editorial workload across a large team

of academics. Thanks to substantial upfront investments by SAGE, along with support from Georgetown and Leiden Universities, there will be no APCs in the first two years of publication, with the fee thereafter set at an appropriate rate for the political science community. Recently many funders and universities have been developing APC strategies with a trend toward the incorporation of publication fees in research grants; for those in more precarious positions – early career researchers; unaffiliated researchers; researchers from developing countries – full or partial APC waivers will be offered. Additionally, the R&P editorial team is actively developing innovative new ideas around funding that hopefully will also involve professional associations in our field.

It is time to add to our repertoire of tools available to political scientists in order to disseminate their findings. R&P's openness, format and speed to publication will appeal to those wishing to publish cutting edge analyses of current events and debates, predictions about upcoming elections, or evidence-based analyses of new crisis situations. Although accusations of political science being out of touch with the real-world are surely overblown, the time lags in conventional publishing and the limited accessibility of articles can undermine researchers' attempts to maximise the impact of their work. The internet, in this way, can help to change academic communication and its impact on policy-makers and others.

R&P expects to publish its first findings in the Spring of 2014 and full details about the journal and how to submit a manuscript can be found here. Please feel free to ask questions via rap@cdh.leidenuniv.nl and follow R&P on Twitter at @Res_Pol.

Note: This article gives the views of the author, and not the position of the Impact of Social Science blog, nor of the London School of Economics. Please review our Comments Policy if you have any concerns on posting a comment below.

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