

PhD2Published as transformative online space: Platforms for pedagogical innovation, career progression and critical examinations of academic publishing.

Introduction

This paper introduces and critically explores the blog site PhD2Published as an online space with the potential to transform academic knowledge production, networking and pedagogy. This assessment of PhD2Published considers the importance of the site as a form of Web 2.0 technology that relies on knowledge production and consumption about academic publishing through the medium of blogging. The ethos and functioning of PhD2Published are introduced first for context, followed by some tentative reflection and consideration of the theoretical and pedagogical implications of such online spaces as well as the opportunities and challenges it provides for academic career progression.

What is PhD2Published?

At its most fundamental, PhD2Published is a website founded by Dr Charlotte Frost in early 2010, designed to publicly teach herself how to get published and to open up frank discussion about the challenges of academic life. The collection of blog posts on the site provide a catalogue of academic publishing advice for early career academics (written by them, senior academics and publishers), although Twitter messaging and other online communication indicate that it supports academics engaged in publishing more widely. Advice and guidance is offered on a range of topics including but not limited to pitching to publishers, designing publishing strategies, writing articles, books and grant proposals, using social media and current and possible future states of publishing. Since publishing a book, and proving that the site can 'work', Charlotte has handed over the control of the platform, as well as the blueprints, to successive Managing Editors, who are responsible for researching the diverse world of academic publishing, particularly in the e-age, finding and working with guest bloggers and scheduling content. Based

on an identification of the closed nature of academic publishing, the site has a specific, 'open source' ethos, and is an open source pedagogical model, allowing methodologies for academic publishing to be shared openly and publicly. This was developed to challenge the traditionally closed nature of academic publishing in broader academic pedagogy and research career training.

Beyond the day to day running and USP of the site, PhD2Published has evolved into a unique online platform designed to aid the Managing Editor (currently me) and other contributors in career progression. They can do this not only by researching the academic publishing they want to do, but also by networking with people and publishers they might want to work with and establishing an online presence where academic communities are now being built more frequently and to greater effect. Essentially it facilitates a peer-to-peer mentoring scheme and online participatory culture (Jenkins et al 2006) in which early career academics are involved in both the creation of content and knowledge as well its consumption. This has blurred the consumer/producer relationship creating academic learners also defined as 'prosumers' (Kennedy et al 2007). In essence it is simultaneously a space for the advancement of critical knowledge's about academic publishing and a platform for supported career progression.

Transforming academic pedagogy, knowledge production and career progression

PhD2Published then is a productive and creative pedagogical tool for academics that affords sharing, communication and information discovery (McLoughlin and Lee, 2007) providing greater potential for altering the ways in which early career academics in particular, learn how to publish and consequently pursue their future careers. Significantly the site is not formally regulated and the content is not subject to peer review. In this sense it is one of the feral spaces that this symposium seeks to consider.

The clearly defined benefits and ethos of PhD2Published suggests that rather than feral and untamed however, we can

think about these spaces as potentially transformative to contemporary modes of academic publishing and pedagogy as well as empowering to those who consider themselves outside the normal distribution of knowledge in the academy. This is important given the current neo-liberalisation of higher education and increased pressures on early career academics with regards to pursuing more permanent academic careers, and the increasing need for academics to reskill and update labour practices in the face of technological innovation (Gill 2009). The implications of engagement in this kind of knowledge production for career development and progression are currently under theorised, perhaps given the relatively recent nature of Web 2.0 technology uptake. However the potential for sites such as PhD2Published to transform and encourage effective publications and research impacts are encouraging. Surprisingly little literature has focused on academic learning spaces beyond student learning (although see Proctor et al 2010) yet the uptake and interest in the site indicates broader issues with traditional knowledge production in the academy and the desire for early career academics to extend and openly share their continuous learning practices and scholarly communication.

In this context I would argue that blogs such as PhD2Published provide exciting potential to break down and blur established hierarchies in the academy, providing a space of opportunity and possibility for academics at all career stages and of all backgrounds (social and academic) to shape knowledge production, pursue their own agendas (if they are online of course) and enter this new online world. While there are debates about the value of such unregulated and public material online, that is both produced and consumed by diverse audiences, the site can, and is, beginning to transform social relations between academics of different career stages through collaborative knowledge sharing.

These spaces are not unproblematic however and interesting to question are the notable absences from these sites. Uptake of social media amongst academics may vary by career stage and attitude to these new 'ferral' spaces. Similarly while its

Managing Editors and founder have found the site to 'work', there is a greater need to understand the challenges of managing and contributing to such a space as an early career academic, as well as the opportunities it affords in career progression.

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