November 2013

I Hear the Train A Comin' -- The Rise of China

Greg Tananbaum
Scholar Next, gtananbaum@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/atg
Part of the Library and Information Science Commons

Recommended Citation
DOI: https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.2771

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.
60 percent admitting to copying the work of other scholars (see Paul Mooney’s “Plagued by Plagiarism” in The Chronicle for Higher Education for more on this topic). Whether the changes vowed by Peking University administrators and other Chinese academic officials — including threats of firing and the creation of a master database of plagiarism charges — adequately address the international audience’s wariness of Chinese scholarship will take some time to assess.

How will the scholarly communication adapt to the Chinese influence? What will the composition of academic content creators and consumers look like in a decade’s time? How will standards and expectations change in the face of a more diverse author base? These are fascinating questions I hope to revisit in these pages frequently. I am certain I am not the only one with a vested interest in how this all plays out.

Sparta Public Library is certainly in the spotlight as a result of this innovative (and potentially legally inflammatory) move. Lapsley says she has been interviewed by both American Libraries and the New York Times in the last month, not to mention the two already published write-ups in Library Journal. I checked back with Lapsley at the end of March; despite all of the press, she says she has not heard a thing from Amazon to date, and she prefers it that way. As Francine Fialkoff, Editor-in-Chief of LJ, recently pointed out in an editorial in the March 1, 2008 issue, “If Amazon is smart, Sparta won’t [hear from them].” Fialkoff goes on to explain, “As lenders of hardware and software, including downloadable audiobooks and eBooks and their various players, libraries help promote the very companies that would prevent these same libraries from disseminating their products.”

If you are not prepared to flout Amazon and their attorneys, there may be applications for the Kindle within a library setting without actually circulating the device or the content. In the Winter 2008 issue of netConnect, Christopher Harris floats the idea of a librarian offering roaming reference services equipped with a Kindle, which already includes a dictionary and access to Wikipedia and could be loaded with additional reference resources from the Kindle store.

Reference

Rumors
From page 36

BIG ANNOUNCEMENT! We have been having trouble for some reason with our Conference electronic mailing list. Some of you may have received messages that you were deleted from the list. Be assured that we are working on this problem and you will NOT be deleted from the list. If you have questions please write me <kstrauch@comcast.net>; or David Lyle <david@katina.info>. We are sorry for this, but, hey, you know computers!

And, finally, that’s it for now! Have you gotten your username and password for the ATG News Channel? Many Rumors were already posted there and some are there that are not in the print edition. Check it out or contact me or David (above) if you have issues or problems. www.against-the-grain.com

Much love and see you all in print in June or virtually anytime! Yr. Ed. 🍀
I Hear the Train A Comin’ — The Rise of China

Column Editor: Greg Tananbaum (Consulting Services at the Intersection of Technology, Content, and Academia) <gtananbaum@gmail.com> www.scholarnext.com

In his featured presentation at last November’s Charleston Conference, Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers (ALPSP) Chief Executive Ian Russell spoke persuasively about the “next big thing” in scholarly communication. In Ian’s mind, the rise of China as both a consumer and producer of research would profoundly influence the space in the decade to come. Given the tight 20 minute allotment the Charleston forum provided, it was difficult to delve into this provocative prognostication in substantive detail. The rise of China, a popular topic sure to be ubiquitous as the Beijing Olympic Games approach this summer, is a fascinating subject that deserves a bit more attention in the scholarly communication space.

Let’s start with the basic facts as they pertain to China. The Chinese population exceeds 1.3 billion, more than 20% of the world’s total. Its economy has averaged 9%+ growth for each of the last 20 years. It has more than 2,000 universities and six million enrolled higher education students. (Of less relevance here is the fact that China’s Quantitative Expansion phase: Exponential Growth but Low Impact by Bihui Jin and Ronald Rousseau). Researchers are often rewarded for such publications, an extension of the investments and incentives outlined above.

As yet, this quantitative explosion has not, at least by some key indicators, been matched in quality. To quote Jin and Rousseau, “According to data from ISI’s Essential Science Indicators (ESI) (November 2004) China ranked 9th in the world according to the number of published papers over the period January 1994 to August 2004. It ranked 18th according to the number of received citations. Yet, for the number of citations per paper China ranks only 124th. Such a drastic contrast between these three indexes tells us again that China’s science is only in a ‘quantitative expansion’ phase.”

What are some of the factors holding back the “cite-ability” of Chinese scholarship? Language is certainly one. Through the early 1970s the number of Chinese students learning English was negligible. The older generation of Chinese scientists is less likely to have a firm command of the language. English is now compulsory in Chinese high schools and even some primary schools. The number of Chinese people learning English today is in excess of 100 million. As a nuanced grasp of the English language becomes more widespread, it is reasonable to expect that Chinese-authored papers will improve in readability, quality and, by extension, impact.

Plagiarism is another concern. Harvard mathematician Shing-Tung Yau and Yale evolutionary biologist Stephen Stearns, among others, have called attention to the prevalence of plagiarism within Chinese higher education. Stearns encountered several examples of lifted passages during his stint as a visiting professor at Peking University last year. He wrote a passionate letter to his students (see http://www.xyz.org/xyz/ebooks/others/science/dajia8/heidia8.txt for the full transcript) decrying what he saw as an endemic problem. “Disturbingly, plagiarism fits into a larger pattern of behavior in China. China ignores international intellectual property rights. [Peking University] sees nothing wrong in copying my textbook, for example, in complete violation of international copyright agreements, causing me to lose income, stealing from me quite directly. No one in China seems to care. We cannot do this science if we cannot trust what others publish. There is no reason to try to replicate a result if it cannot be trusted.” This appears not to be an isolated incident. In 2006, the Chinese government released the results of a government survey of 180 Ph.D. holders, in which

continued on page 85