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# I Hear the Train A Comin' -- Article Versioning: The Reality on the Ground

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in the golden era of AM Radio and payola. A limitation of the medium served to facilitate a veritable goldmine for those with the vision to know how to wrest filthy lucre from the scenario.

Then along came the LP, and FM Radio — in stereo, no less, and with relatively high fidelity, and thus was born the commercial broadcasting genre known as “album rock.” Again, commercial success, at least, until the digital compact disk came along. Woah! Watch out! Where cassettes were grudgingly tolerated — the illicit copies were never of threateningly high quality anyway — now suddenly anyone with a CD drive could rip the content right off the disk: a perfect copy, too! The era of the MP3, and the end-user selected playlist, spelled the end of the Album. If the truth be told, it also ushered in (or may yet usher in) a renaissance of indie music, owned and distributed by the artists themselves. This is a Good Thing, right?

Well, let's ask the music publishers what they think.

But Omigosh! What if the same thing happened with authors?! And their publishers?!!

No worries. Big Business will survive. **Apple** will get their 30% cut. **Amazon** will fight for mind share. **Verizon** or **AT&T** will charge for the minutes. **Motorola**, **Samsung**, **LG**, and **Sony** will contend for those scraps of the hardware market not already spoken for by the Cult of Jobs. **Microsoft** will declare success and leave the marketplace to concentrate on their core business, whatever that turns out to be.

But wait. What does any of this really have to do with authors? Well, they'll still be around. Somebody will turn this week's hit into this month's franchise. Maybe somebody will do a screenplay. Once the feature film has run its course in the theatres, there's always the \$5-bin at **Wal-Mart**. See? Who says our culture is imperiled?

Of course, authors — even screenwriters — have to know how to write, right? So we'll still have higher education, and K-12, so presumably we'll still have textbooks. I mean, we can't do everything with wikis, can we?

And more importantly: somewhere, locked away in their rooms, will be the bloody-

minded non-joiners. These are the ones who will be banging away at their keyboards (be they computer or piano), working feverishly to capture the fleeting idea before it escapes them, or holding on for dear life as they're driven forward by it like a galleon under full sail. If they think about monetary rewards at all, it's merely to reflect upon how nice it is to be paid for something they would wish to do anyway. More often, in the throes of battle with the Muses, they don't care a fig for the bucks. They're just trying to get the idea down right.

These are the guys I've got my money on, as well as on the next generation of audience who will discover their works, recognize their genuineness, seek them out, and call for more.

So. Even though this column began as a declamation against the hyped, the derivative, and the over-commercialized, I've written my way back from the wasteland, coming home once again to a stubborn sense of confidence in the resilience, the utter irrepressibility, of the creative soul.

As **Yul Bryner** (or was it **Yogi Bera**?) said, “So let it be written. So let it be done.” 🐦

## I Hear the Train A Comin' — Article Versioning: The Reality on the Ground



Column Editor: **Greg Tananbaum** (Founder and CEO, Anianet) <greg@anianet.com> [www.anianet.com](http://www.anianet.com)

“The reality on the ground” is a phrase I have lately appropriated to separate what is actually happening in our industry from the incredibly nuanced but often largely hypothetical discussions we observe on **Liblicense** or the **Scholarly Kitchen**. We are blessed to have any number of big thinkers in the scholarly communication space — **Joe Esposito**, **Toby Green**, and **ATG's** own **Sandy Thatcher** spring to mind — but we don't necessarily excel in reportage. This means we can debate the implications of Green vs. Gold OA, for example, using incredibly complex and well-reasoned arguments, but we are less successful when it comes to talking about what these theoretical mean in practical application. What is the reality on the ground? What is actually happening, as opposed to what *should* happen or what *might* happen?

When I learned that this issue of *Against the Grain* would be dedicated to the subject of journal article versioning, my first thought was “Who cares?” Now, to be clear, I wasn't asking myself why anyone would be interested in this subject. Rather, I truly wondered if this was an issue that mattered to publishers and librarians, but not to rank-and-file researchers. What is the reality on the ground for this population? We in the academic publishing world devote non-trivial energies to this subject, but should we? It seems to me that if scholars themselves don't particularly care about provenance or versions of record, then this is energy misspent.

With that in mind, I called up three researchers I know. One is a senior professor in the social sciences. The second is a mid-career professor in the humanities. The third is a mid-career professor in the physical sciences. They generously allowed me to pick their brains on the subject of journal article versioning. The results, of course, offer no statistical significance, but they do speak, at least anecdotally, to the reality on the ground.

My first question was blunt — Do you care whether the paper you read is the version of record or some other version? The responses ran the gamut, with the humanist expressing deep concern that any non-definitive version could include subtle errors or differences that might impact the substance of the article. The physical scientist prefers the version of record because it simplifies the citation process, but is happy to use non-definitive copies if he is simply reading a paper for informational purposes. The social scientist just wants to read a paper, and to ensure that anyone who wants to read it can have access to its substance. In that sense, the version of record is not important to him.

Given the era of tight library budgets, how would they feel if their institution were to cancel subscriptions to a journal because its contents could be acquired on the Web for free in non-authoritative form? The social scientist, consistent with his prior answer, would not care, provided he had the ability to cite the paper properly in his own writing (see next question). The physical

scientist indicates he would make due, though he might call upon colleagues at other institutions or the author him/herself to send the version of record on occasion. The humanist would be the most resistant to this change, promising to “raise a fuss like an old grandma at a buffet when they run out of the expensive stuff.” In his opinion, the lack of access to definitive content would be a significant disadvantage in his own research and writing. It would make the authoring process less efficient for him compared to his colleagues at other institutions. He fears that, in a publish-or-perish environment, such inefficiency could (not *would*, he is careful to note, but *could*) substantively damage his career prospects.

Digging a bit deeper, I next asked, “If you had access to a copy of a paper that was not definitive but was substantively the same as the published version (e.g., a postprint), would you use it for your own research or your teaching?” Here, all three professors responded similarly. They strive to use the definitive version of an article for outward-facing activities such as lectures, syllabi, and citations. They do so because they hope to ensure the author gets full and proper credit for his/her work. All three acknowledge that the current tenure and promotion system relies heavily on publishing high-impact articles. As such they do not want to undermine the professional prospects of an author whose work they admire by mis-citing

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him/her. So while they may or may not care what version of a paper they read, they all want to give authors their due by passing along the version of record.

Finally, in large part because I, like **Whitney Houston**, believe the children are our future, I asked the three scholars how they would advise students beginning their own research careers if asked about the acceptability of reading and referencing non-authoritative versions. The humanist feels most strongly that the version of record is what should be both read and cited. His belief is that this is the one copy of the article most likely to be unaltered both today and into the future, and, therefore, the one copy to which all readers can uniformly relate, as it were. The social scientist and the physical scientist were less dogmatic. They acknowledge that if a paper is readily accessible in non-definitive form that this convenience may outweigh the possible negatives of relying on something other than the version of record. They also both teach their students the distinction between reading and referencing. For them, accurate citations to the definitive version matter, a lesson which they pass along to their pupils.

My focus group of three does not put the issue of article versioning to bed once and for all. What it tells me, though, is that three professors I trust actually know about this issue. They have thought about it independent of the questions I posed to them. And they care about it as it fits into larger questions of access and long-term citation trails. The reality on the ground, if we are to extrapolate from this gang of three, is that article versioning matters not just to publishers and librarians, but to the constituents we serve. They balance this concern with a desire to actually get at the content in a quick and painless manner. As we continue to debate this issue at our industry conferences, in our blogs, and on our listservs, we should be mindful of the fragile equilibrium between accessibility and provenance that informs the reality on the ground. 🌻

## against the grain people profile

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**BORN AND LIVED:** I was born in South West London and lived there most of my life until moving to Bristol nine years ago with my lovely husband.

**EARLY LIFE:** I grew up with two younger brothers and a cornucopia of pets. When I was 11, I desperately wanted to be a nurse. I studied English at **Goldsmiths College** in London and did my dissertation on the influence of folklore in women's writing. I have always been passionate about storytelling and its role in formal and social education.

**PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES:** My entire career has been spent in marketing in publishing services or STM in some capacity. I've worked at the **Natural History Museum** in London and at **Elsevier** for *The Lancet* (working particularly on the launches of *The Lancet Oncology* and *The Lancet Neurology*). I joined **IOP Publishing** in 2002 to manage the marketing for journals outside of the Americas, and nine years and two children later, I am now the company PR manager.

**FAMILY:** My husband **Nathan** (who I met when we both worked at **Elsevier**), my son, **Frank** (4) and daughter, **Rosa** (18 months) and two cheeky cats.

**IN MY SPARE TIME:** I wish!

**FAVORITE BOOKS:** *Pride and Prejudice*, *Gone with the Wind*, and *The Collector* by **John Fowles**. I collect Ladybird books partly for my children but mostly for me.

**PET PEEVES:** Smoking and all the bad 'isms'.

**PHILOSOPHY:** A life lived in fear is a life half-lived.

**MOST MEMORABLE CAREER ACHIEVEMENT:** There are lots, as I have been lucky enough to work on some of the best brands in STM. Editing my first issue of the membership magazine for the **Natural History Museum** was definitely a memorable career moment, as was being nominated as a candidate for the STM board for the STM association. Leading on the marketing campaigns for launching the **IOP Journal Archive** and titles like *The Lancet Oncology* and the *Journal of Cosmology and Astroparticle Physics* have also been great personal achievements.

**GOAL I HOPE TO ACHIEVE FIVE YEARS FROM NOW:** For my children to be growing up happy and healthy and to somehow successfully balance all the pressures of being a working mother.

**HOW/WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS:** I've seen a lot of changes in my 15 years in STM publishing, and it is incredibly difficult to predict what is going to be next as there are so many external and internal pressures exerting themselves on the industry. Publishers have a vital role to play in the scholarly communication process, and our goal has to be to demonstrate and communicate that value to our customers whilst responding swiftly to their changing needs. 🌻



## Wandering the Web — Business Research on the Open Web, Served 10 Ways

by **John Gottfried** (Business Librarian, Western Kentucky University Libraries, Bowling Green, KY)

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**Column Editor's Note:** As our Business Librarian in the Department of Library Public Services, **John Gottfried** is a new colleague who has an MBA and a MA in Organizational Management from the **University of Colorado**. **John** is a prolific writer and presenter and is our authority on research in business. — **JM**

**"Searching is half the fun: life is much more manageable when thought of as a scavenger hunt as opposed to a surprise party."** — **Jimmy Buffett**

As anyone who has tried it can confirm, business research is always challenging, sometimes frustrating, and the costs can quickly blast all but the most robust budget to insolvency. In the current business climate, however, timely, accurate information is an absolute imperative for effective decision-making. The payoff, in other words, is normally well worth the pain and the price. Now I can make business research

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