

Something old, something new: opening a new path to public engagement with the most traditional of academic tools

by Blog Admin

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Academic communication is changing; it's becoming faster, more interactive, and more open. In response to academia's transition online, the LSE today launches the [LSE Review of Books blog](#). Publishing daily reviews of academic and serious books across the social sciences and providing readers with informative, well written, and timely reviews, the LSE Review of Books' mission is to improve public engagement with the social sciences via involvement with their best written and most accessible products – books and ebooks. Here, editors [Patrick Dunleavy](#) and [Amy Mollett](#) tell us why now is the perfect time to launch the blog.



It will come as no surprise to readers of the Impact blog that academic communication is changing. With coverage from many contributors of the spirited debates on Elsevier and expensive journal pay walls, and the possibilities of making impact via online engagement, it is clear to see that the traditional routes are giving way to new forms of academic discussion.



Within the social sciences, books are an increasingly important means of inter-disciplinary learning and debate. However, existing, highly-siloed academic review channels have typically inhibited cross-disciplinary communication, mostly take months or years to cover new books, and are hidden behind journal pay walls. The LSE Review of Books aims to radically reduce the existing time-lags in getting social science books reviewed, and to bring reviews out from behind pay walls so that they are free for anyone to access worldwide. From the outset the LSE Review of Books is configured for the new epoch when books are primarily published and read in digital forms, and when many more serious non-fiction books are read by an increasingly well-informed and well-educated public.

We aim to eventually review books across all the major social science disciplines, and to cover significant related work in neighbouring areas of the humanities, technology and the physical sciences. But to begin with our reviews are grouped into the following areas: Economics and Business Studies, Environment and Climate Change, Gender Studies, Law and Human Rights, Media and Cultural Studies, Philosophy and the Humanities, Politics and IR, and Sociology and Anthropology.

Improving how we share and exchange knowledge doesn't just mean publishing academic book reviews. Tapping fully into the growing academic community online means that we're going further to encourage discussion at all levels. Each week we will publish an account by a social scientist explaining which books inspired them to go into academia. Our aim is to build up a large archive of interesting and thought provoking accounts on the passion and inspiration that lies behind some of the most important social science work. In the coming months we'll also feature a series of guest posts on what the future holds for academic books.

We're also taking advantage of social media to make the experience of book review discussion and debate much more interactive. We'll be using Pinterest to create collaborative virtual pin boards of photos, archive



material, and videos connected to the social science disciplines. We'll be producing podcasts with academics and authors about their latest books and research, themed around topics including the legacy of the Olympics, feminism in the 21st century, and the importance of the arts. We hope that our regular Twitter and Facebook posts will also continue to create a community around the blog.

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