ISSUE NO. 4

Introduction: Publication & Its Discontents: Peer Review, Publishing, and the Politics of the Open

Bryce Peake
Karen Estlund

Public service, personal achievement, pedagogical resource, the advancement of knowledge: these are the some of the many aspirations of publication for authors, administrators, libraries, and publishers.

Recent debates over open access and open peer review (what we call here 'the open'), however, have revealed the extent to which publication has also long been a site of symbolic and commercial antagonisms. Authors approach 'the open' politically, as a way to democratize access to research and scholarship beyond the ivory tower (**Koh** (https://adanewmedia.org/2014/04/issue4-koh/) , **Risam** (https://adanewmedia.org/2014/04/issue4-risam/)). Publishers and other traditional gatekeepers have approached 'the open' economically, looking to it as a way of generating social media buzz, revealing new paths to profit, and creating sustainability for a decaying industry. [1] Set up as a fabricated social division, each side has its champions, publicly visible across a range of disciplines. Nigel Thrift, on the one hand, asks if the surge in open journals is truly "good," as these 'inferior and exploitative' publications take resources (aka free labor) from the "good journals." [2] On the other side of the debate, Christopher Shea has written about the ethics of a publishing industry that uses state- and tuition-funded labor and continues to set high costs for reaping the written fruits of that research. [3] The conflict is played out through constant debates about the virtues of capitalism within a great battle between good and evil. Invisible in this debate, however is the labor force that provides the manual work that goes into physically and intellectually producing the publication (**McLaughlin** (https://adanewmedia.org/2014/04/issue4-mclaughlin/)). The invisibility of this group highlights the degree to which scholar-publisher antagonisms are not a grand battle of good versus evil, but, rather, a fight within two parts of a relatively privileged social class (**Kember** (https://adanewmedia.org/2014/04/issue4-kember/)). [4]

With this understanding in mind, our issue of Ada starts with a deceptively simple question: how do feminist and critical academics make sense of the ideological and material contradictions of publishing in the contemporary moment? Materially, publishing requires hours of free labor editing, writing, and reviewing, which is then classified and feminized through the category of "service," and discounted in many ways by the academy (see **McLaughlin** (https://adanewmedia.org/2014/04/issue4-mclaughlin/)). For

feminist authors in particular, ideological contradictions arise when producing — freely — surplus value for an industry that is often financially intertwined with anti-Choice, pro-War political campaigns around the world. [5] Authors are faced with choosing between their politics or their careers. This is publication and its discontents.

In "Publication and its Discontents: Peer Review, Publishing, and the Politics of the Open," authors provide a range of perspectives on publishing and the 'open.' The pieces confront the norms of publishing and the publication industry head-on, historicizing (**Pontille & Torny** (https://adanewmedia.org/2014/04/issue4-pontilletorny) , **Jackson** (https://adanewmedia.org/2014/04/issue4-jackson)), criticizing (**Kember** (https://adanewmedia.org/2014/04/issue4-kember)), re-orienting (**Koh** (https://adanewmedia.org/2014/04/issue4-koh) , **Risam** (https://adanewmedia.org/2014/04/issue4-risam)), and speaking truth to power by revealing the inner mechanics of commercial academic publishing (**McLaughlin** (https://adanewmedia.org/2014/04/issue4-mclaughlin)). Rather than engaging in the trivial war of always already compromised positions, the pieces we present here are intended to provoke new and exciting maneuvers on the part of authors and the publishing projects that support them.

In the spirit with which Fembot and *Ada* began, we invite you to participate in a dialogue with the articles and to continue the conversation by tweeting, sharing, and citing. Through collective participation, we hope you, the reader, will move with us toward an acknowledged, open, and reciprocal system of publication.

—CITATION—

Peake, B. and Estlund, K. (2014) Introduction. *Ada: A Journal of Gender, New Media, and Technology, No.4.* **doi:10.7264/N3HD7SZG** (http://dx.doi.org/10.7264/N3HD7SZG)

This article has been openly peer reviewed at **Ada Review** (http://adareview.fembotcollective.org) .

Footnotes   (returns to text)

1. See: "Celebrate Open Access Week 2013 with Routledge and Taylor & Francis!" **http://tandf.msgfocus.com/q/1He1DZiovRfHXtOXL34dl/wv** (http://tandf.msgfocus.com/q/1He1DZiovRfHXtOXL34dl/wv)

2. See "Do We Really need More Journals?" **http://chronicle.com/blogs/worldwise/do-we-really-need-more-journals/30041** (http://chronicle.com/blogs/worldwise/do-we-really-need-more-journals/30041)

3. See: "Librarians Accuse Harvard Business Publishing of Unfair Prices," **http://chronicle.com/article/Librarians-Accuse-Harvard/142947/** (http://chronicle.com/article/Librarians-Accuse-Harvard/142947/)

4. Antagonisms also exist between academic publishers and new media platforms. Take for example, the contestations between Taylor and Francis and Academia.edu, which drove T&F to revise their Green OA Policy on April 14, 2014, to allow *finished* articles to be posted on personal and academic departments (while maintaining an embargo for institutional repositories, aggregators, and social media sites). **http://editorresources.taylorandfrancisgroup.com/?p=5604** (http://editorresources.taylorandfrancisgroup.com/?p=5604)

5. See: Reed Elsevier campaign donations via Influence Explorer: **http://influenceexplorer.com/organization/reed-elsevier-inc/2ba2255d154f4e3d9d04e8952ef32d62** (http://influenceexplorer.com/organization/reed-elsevier-inc/2ba2255d154f4e3d9d04e8952ef32d62)

Bryce Peake (https://adanewmedia.org/author/brycepeake)
Bryce Peake is an Assistant Professor of Media & Communication Studies at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC). A media anthropologist and historian of

communication technology, his research focuses on media technosciences, information politics, feminist social theory, and research praxis in politically contested spaces. His work has been published in 'Cultural Studies,' 'Communication & Critical Cultural Studies,' AnthropologyNOW, and 'Ada: A Journal of Gender, New Media, and Technology.'

Karen Estlund (https://adanewmedia.org/author/kestlund)

Karen Estlund is the Head of the Digital Scholarship Center for the University of Oregon Libraries. Prior to arriving in Oregon, Karen was a technology instruction librarian and oversaw the digital collections and institutional repository at the University of Utah, where she also taught web design in the Communication Department. Karen oversees open access publishing efforts, digital humanities support, and digital collections. She is also a founding member of the Fembot Collective and serves on the editorial board for the open peer-reviewed journal, Ada: a Journal of Gender, New Media, and Technology.

Ada: A Journal of Gender, New Media, and Technology
ISSN 2325-0496