



## EDITORIAL

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# Palgrave Communications – Connecting research in the humanities, social sciences and business

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Here we introduce the first edition of *Palgrave Communications*, a high-quality peer-reviewed open access journal for research in all areas of the humanities, the social sciences (HSS) and business. The scope of the journal, the first multidisciplinary title from Palgrave Macmillan, reflects the publisher's strengths in these areas. In addition to our multidisciplinary position, *Palgrave Communications* particularly welcomes interdisciplinary research, which fosters interaction, creativity and reflection between disciplines. *Palgrave Communications* aspires to be the definitive peer-reviewed outlet for open access academic research in and between our subjects. We discuss the need for a journal like *Palgrave Communications* in academic research, our editorial standards, our aims and scope, and present the journal's first articles.

### Championing interdisciplinary research

Global problems do not come in neat packages: the stresses of transnational migrations present questions for international lawyers, transport experts and conflict analysts alike, and the impacts of water scarcity equally call on civil engineers, anthropologists and natural hazard specialists. The disciplinary boundaries that are cemented in the academic world are regularly questioned by the “real world”. While not necessarily antidisciplinary, interdisciplinary research is today crucial in helping to solve global social, environmental and economic problems. Yet traditional academic research assessment practices can incentivize approaches to research that lack the interdisciplinary flexibility to engage with challenges like migration, water scarcity and many others. This is exemplified, for instance, by the common placing of greater values and attentions on publications in discipline-specific journals or on particular orders of authorship on a paper, rather than a paper's content and real-world value of its arguments.

Nevertheless, the orientation of some research might be changing. There are today many emerging examples of interdisciplinary research. Professor Nikolas Rose, a member of our Editorial Board, King's College London, launched the Urban Brain Lab (<http://www.kcl.ac.uk/sspp/departments/sshm/research/Research-Groups/Biomedicine-Ethics-and-Social-Justice/BESJ-Projects/Urban-Brain-Lab.aspx>), which looks at the relations between

sociological and neurobiological sciences, with a focus on mental health. Likewise, the University of Oxford's Bioproperty project (<http://www.bioproperty.ox.ac.uk>), led by Dr Javier Lezaun, has been working across property rights, biomedical research and science and technology studies to unpack the dynamics of tropical disease, human/animal interactions and medical patenting.

Indeed, “interdisciplinary” has been an increasingly common buzzword for academia and the broader ecosystem of science-policy institutions. Governmental research councils such as the ESRC and the EPSRC in the United Kingdom push towards greater “exploratory” methods and “cross-domain” interactions to integrate various modes of scholarly enquiry. International and regional institutions linking universities and inter-state cooperation bodies, like the European Research Council, promote grant funding and research initiatives based on collaborative modes of engagement between disciplines and subdisciplines.

The challenges of interdisciplinary research are, nonetheless, momentous and certainly more and more pressing as this demand grows. Typically, interdisciplinary research is confronted by a challenge of effective and productive communication. Even in the twenty-first century, academic disciplines remain siloed into relatively different linguistic styles and terminologies, presenting substantial barriers to direct and productive cross-disciplinary discussions. Further, there are pressures from resource scarcity and changing funding models for higher education, along with the continued push for publishing in “high-impact” journals. Hybridization of academic research with policy and corporate research can also result in quick and superficial interdisciplinary collaborations mostly aimed at attracting funding rather than exploring true and long-term innovation. Practically, we need stable, innovative and courageous steps towards developing a more systematic and widely recognizable interdisciplinary agenda.

As well as being a multi-disciplinary journal, *Palgrave Communications* is seeking to offer a space for more in-depth and professionalized interdisciplinarity to flourish. The journal offers a venue for different scholarly arenas to connect. Developing truly collaborative research takes time—something that can have little appreciation in funding and policy demands—and dialogue,

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but is something we hope *Palgrave Communications* can help with.

Journals and publishing are just part of the answer, of course, and education should follow suit. The more extensive Comment by Jacobs, in this first edition of *Palgrave Communications*, further discusses interdisciplinary research trends in higher education (Jacobs, 2015). Jacobs' article is the first in a series of articles that will explore the need and drive for interdisciplinary research from different perspectives.

### A multidisciplinary open access journal with impact

*Palgrave Communications* provides immediate, free online access to and dissemination of all articles, which are published under a Creative Commons attribution licence (CC BY) by default (with other licences available on request).

To provide immediate open access to all articles without charging readers a subscription, authors of accepted papers are asked to pay an article-processing charge (APC; <http://www.palgrave-journals.com/palcomms/about/openaccess>). Costs are involved in all stages of the publication process and the APC includes coordination of peer review, typesetting, web hosting, copy editing, production, archiving and promotion of content. The APC is a flat, one-off charge and authors are not faced with additional charges for longer articles or particular numbers of pages, tables or figures.

While we focus here on the journal's content, scope and goals, we cannot ignore the ongoing debate about the role of open access journals in HSS and business. Access to funding for APCs, and who pays these in the long term, is still to be determined in HSS and we will undoubtedly be part of the ongoing debate.

*Palgrave Communications* is not the first peer-reviewed, fully open access journal for researchers in HSS and business. With our multidisciplinary scope we may be compared with open access "megajournals"—a phrase established in the 2000s with the rise of broad scope open access journals that judge research on methodological rigour but ignore impact and importance of works (of which there are now more than 20; Solomon, 2014). *Palgrave Communications* differs from most of these journals as our criteria for publication require peer reviewers to assess novelty and importance of works—as well as checking they are methodologically sound (<http://www.palgrave-journals.com/palcomms/referees>). In general, to be acceptable, a paper should represent an advance in understanding likely to influence thinking in the field.

This publication policy and our scope is a response to the opinions of HSS researchers, which suggested that a high-quality open access journal was missing from the literature. A 2011 survey by Palgrave Macmillan of HSS researchers found the majority (82%) of respondents (659) would publish in open access journals if it was offered by the best or most appropriate journal (NPG, 2014a). This perceived lack of a high-quality open access option is echoed in the large (53, 890 responses) 2011 European Commission Study of Open Access Publishing (Dallmeier-Tiessen *et al.*, 2011). Now, with the publication of the first articles, *Palgrave Communications* will likely be judged on the quality of its content and its relevance to its audience (NPG, 2014b).

Being born a digital, as well as open access, journal provides numerous opportunities. *Palgrave Communications* is committed to providing an efficient service for authors, reviewers and readers. An online peer review and manuscript submission system, together with the support of a large and diverse Editorial Board, enables us to make rapid and fair publication decisions.

We use continuous online publication to promptly disseminate accepted papers—to Palgrave Macmillan's wide readership and

beyond. Published manuscripts are enhanced by innovative web technologies, including a modern article template for reading on a variety of devices and platforms. Rich information about the readership, reuse and discussion of each article is provided—article-level metrics. This enables readers and authors to rapidly assess who is talking about research online, where and in what fora, as well as measuring citation impact. The journal's use of this technology reflects a broader movement in both research assessment at research institutions and in publishing to assess the impact of research at the individual—articles and authors—rather than journal level (Neylon and Wu, 2009). Studies in various academic disciplines, including in Economics (Wohlrabe and Birkmeier, 2014) have shown that open access articles may be more highly cited than similar articles only available to subscribers (for a bibliography of studies, see <http://opcit.eprints.org/ocitation-biblio.html>).

### Beyond open access

The digital format of *Palgrave Communications* offers a chance to help tackle other problems in research communication, such as the reproducibility of results. The journal has strong editorial and ethical policies which include sharing of research data and materials as a condition of publication. We, also, strongly encourage data citation—an important driver of cultural change in scholarly research to give more credit for transparency and reproducibility (Hahnel, 2013). The need to increase reproducibility applies to all areas of research—and has been hotly debated in the social (Miguel *et al.*, 2014) and political (<http://datacommunity.icpsr.umich.edu/da-rt-workshop>) sciences in the past year.

We believe the journal is well placed to promote and facilitate digital scholarship more generally—which is equally important in the humanities as it is in the sciences. Lack of recognition of digital publications, from data to articles, has been seen as a barrier to recognition and adoption of digital approaches in the humanities (Holm *et al.*, 2014).

Also in support of transparency and recognition in digital scholarship, *Palgrave Communications* does not consider advance sharing of abstracts and preprints to compromise novelty. By establishing ourselves as a credible peer-reviewed outlet for open access academic research, in and between our subjects, we hope to contribute to a shift in perceptions about digital scholarship—as well as online only, open access journals.

### Our first articles

Our first articles include articles from the research fields of Development and International Political Economy (Shaw, 2015), Literature (Bennett, 2015), Political Science and International Studies (Tsang, 2015) and Operational Research (Spyridonis *et al.*, 2015). We have received a wide variety of submissions, from the majority of disciplines within our scope. We will also, in the coming months, be announcing several articles collections (known as special issues, in traditional publications) in 2015. These will focus in detail on new developments in a specific topic in a discipline within our scope, as we seek to grow our presence and relevance to the wide range of research communities we serve. *Palgrave Communications* is open to all theoretical and methodological perspectives and we welcome proposals for article collections and article presubmission enquiries by e-mail to [palcomms@palgrave.com](mailto:palcomms@palgrave.com).

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Some of the text of this editorial was previously published on a blog, co-written by Michele Acuto and first published in May 2014 (<http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2014/05/20/finding-a-home-for-interdisciplinary-research/>).

## Additional information

**Competing interests:** Iain Hrynaszkiewicz is employed by Nature Publishing Group/Palgrave Macmillan, which publishes *Palgrave Communications*.

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