

Is There Such a Thing as a Scholarly Publishing Influencer?

Jennifer Regala

YES. Full stop. Period, as the kids would say.

Who is an influencer? Merriam-Webster's description defines this noun as "one who exerts influence: a person who inspires or guides the actions of others... *often, specifically*: a person who is able to generate interest in something (such as a consumer product) by posting about it on social media."

It's no secret that I love social media. I enjoy it on a personal level, sure—I'm currently loving the cucumber guy¹ on TikTok (if you know, you know) and the Olympians on Instagram. Over time, I've had many personal choices influenced by individuals prominent on social media.

I've also been influenced NOT to behave in certain ways. I've seen people sell their homes and turn their minivans into houses on wheels (although I do have a pretty sweet GlamVan), cover their keyboards with Elmer's glue and then douse them with rainbow glitter, and even very publicly quit their jobs in viral posts. Will I choose to do any of these things? No. Was it interesting and informative to interact with these posts? Heck yes.

What does any of this have to do with scholarly publishing, though? As I considered social media influencers and their impact on my personal life, I started thinking about how valuable certain individuals and organizations have been to me in recent years on my career journey. If not for social media, I would not have had access to or awareness of most of these resources. I have learned so much from each of them. I don't always agree with everything these vocal leaders have to say, but I might never have had the opportunity to form an opinion on a topic one way or another without them. We live in a world where community, respect, and understanding are very hard to find. Social media influencers earn followers for a reason. They open our eyes to fascinating new perspectives we would not have been privy to otherwise. Usually, they

have given a lot of thought to what they are presenting, and in many instances, they have the research and receipts to back up what they're dishing.

A recent conversation with someone I consider to be the most outstanding example of a scholarly publishing influencer led me to write this column. More about that conversation in a moment because first, you need some background. James Butcher writes the iconic Journalology (subscribe for free at <https://www.journalology.com/>), a weekly newsletter that curates everything you need to know about our business. Not only does James take the time to collect the most relevant information we all need to read, he provides his own wisdom and experience to apply context for each article, blog post, etc., he shares. Poking around on his website, I found a review² I had written about what Journalology means to me:

The #1 best thing about Journalology is how accessible it is - it is an effortless read that flows exceptionally well and keeps me 100% engaged, which is hard to do in this world of distractions and constant looming deadlines. It's like watching an Olympic skier do the slalom - it looks so easy, and it's a pleasure to watch (plus a little nerve-wracking, just like publishing!). But behind the scenes, the effort that James Butcher puts into these newsletters to give us that user experience is phenomenal. It's my favorite newsletter and it inspires thought-provoking questions each and every week among our American Urological Association publications team.

Who should read this newsletter? That's easy - anybody who wants to not only survive but THRIVE in scholarly publishing. This newsletter is the key to keeping me relevant and knowledgeable in this ever-changing environment.

Thank you, James, for Journalology. I also want to point out to the scholarly publishing community that James interacts on a personal level with his readers. James has picked up the phone to call me, interacted on social media with me, etc. in direct response to my questions and concerns. And he does that for everyone. Not only is the newsletter a tremendous resource, but James is a valuable leader of our community. Thank you!

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James not only writes this newsletter, but he engages with the entire community in a thoughtful and calculated way. I notice he spends a lot of time on LinkedIn, for instance, sharing his newsletter and highlights and commenting on countless posts from others. Most meaningful of all, though, is that James is willing and eager to connect 1-on-1 with his followers. I wrote to James back in the early days of Journalology, and the rest is history. He took the time to chat in person on a video call, and with that, I had a new publishing friend (and a very intelligent one at that). A good influencer is smart, but a great influencer is smart AND generous.

In a recent call, I tried, unsuccessfully, to convince James to become a TikTok/Instagram Reels video influencer. At the time of publication, James was pretty adamant about not exploring that route, but perhaps he'll change his mind soon.

And to get an idea of the wit and sense of humor of James Butcher, check out Journalology #80, "Picket lines."³ If you scroll to the end of the newsletter, James mildly roasts my use of the term "fanny pack" from a prior *Science Editor* article, "The story of the JU fanny pack trilogy: the last rodeo"⁴ and goes on to recount his own swag debacle at a past conference.

Other Influencers to Watch

I'm sharing my favorite scholarly publishing influencers, not to shape your follow list for you, but to encourage you to cultivate your own. Please also note that I'm always focused on growing my sphere of influence, and I encourage you to do the same.

- **Prachee Avasthi.** @PracheeAC on X. Prachee's X bio reads: Scientist. Co-founder & CSO @ArcadiaScience. Head of Open Science @AsteralInstitute. Immigrant. she/her. I follow Prachee for a researcher's perspective on open science and her belief in its essential place in publishing.
- **Elizabeth Bik.** @MicrobiomDigest on X. Elizabeth's bio reads: Science integrity consultant, PhD. #ImageForensics Previously @ Stanford and (gasp!) uBiome. She/her. elisabethbik.bsky <http://patreon.com/elisabethbik>. Along with ~152,000 other followers, I look to Elizabeth to learn anything and everything I can about research integrity, and I am in awe of her ability to use image forensics to identify fraud in publishing.
- **Duncan MacRae.** Duncan MacRae⁵ on LinkedIn. Duncan is the Director, Editorial Strategy and Publishing Policy, Wolters Kluwer. He is an expert at making challenging concepts simple. Read this article explaining JIF to experience his gift yourself: Making Sense of the 2024 Journal Citation Reports.⁶

- **Chhavi Chauvin.** Chhavi Chauhan⁷ on LinkedIn. Chhavi is an AI, research integrity, and editorial policy expert. Most importantly, though, she's scholarly publishing's most positive and kind person. You'll love following her spread joy and positivity in the articles she writes, her extensive volunteer work, and the kind messages she is always leaving for her colleagues.
- **Chirag Jay Patel.** Chirag Jay Patel⁸ on LinkedIn. Jay is the Head of Sales, AI, Research Integrity, Sci Comms, and SDGs and describes himself as being "at the intersection of AI, research integrity, comms, and SDGs." Enough said.
- **The Scholarly Kitchen Cabinet.**⁹ If you're not reading the original scholarly publishing influencer showcase each and every day, you're missing out on staying on top of everything you need to do your job well. And the Chefs are the definition of scholarly publishing influencerhood.

Why Should You Be Interested in What Scholarly Influencers Have to Say?

- **Increase your network.** Observe who these resources are quoting and interacting with and check them out yourself. You'll find that your web of knowledge will grow quickly and exponentially.
- **Enhance your understanding and personal relevance.** If you're not learning from others, you're not growing. You can learn from those more advanced than you and those just starting out in their careers and everyone in between.
- **Let others help you save time.** We have precious little time in our day job schedules. Take advantage of others who are sharing what they know.
- **Build your community.** We only have limited opportunities to mingle in person at conferences and events. Influencers offer windows into worlds beyond your own.

Who's the Most Important Influencer of Them All?

That would be YOU. Yes, YOU. You are an incredible asset to scholarly publishing, and your voice should be heard, too. Only you can decide who to look to for insight as you continue to layer on your foundation of knowledge. And what are you offering back to the world? How can you influence those around you? Which social media tools will you use to do so?

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