GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY

Gatecrashing the Research Paradigm: Effective Integration of Online Technologies in Maximising Research Impact and Engagement in Legal Education

Author

Galloway, Kathrine, Greaves, Kristoffer, Castan, Melissa

Published

2013

Journal Title

Journal of the Australasian Law Teachers Association

Version

Version of Record (VoR)

Downloaded from

http://hdl.handle.net/10072/403568

Link to published version

http://www6.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/viewdoc/au/journals/JlALawTA/2013/10.html

Griffith Research Online

https://research-repository.griffith.edu.au

GATECRASHING THE RESEARCH PARADIGM: EFFECTIVE INTEGRATION OF ONLINE TECHNOLOGIES IN MAXIMISING RESEARCH IMPACT AND ENGAGEMENT IN LEGAL EDUCATION

KATE GALLOWAY,* KRISTOFFER GREAVES** AND MELISSA CASTAN†

ABSTRACT

Legal academics are not only teachers but also creators of knowledge. The role of an academic includes a responsibility to share this knowledge through engagement not just of their students, but also of the wider community. In addition, there is increasing emphasis on legal academics having to account for the so-called 'impact' of research. In selecting both the topic of their research and the mode of publication of their knowledge, legal academics act as gatekeepers. There is an increasing critique of the existing paradigm of research publication and its emphasis on the metrics of impact. This critique recognises the limitations of the commercial publication paradigm in the present context of open access and the vast array of citizen-mediated platforms for dissemination of legal knowledge and innovation. Susskind (Tomorrow's Lawyers 2013) for example identifies expert crowd-sourced legal information as breaking down barriers to access to justice. Tracking their experience with publication of a paper on social media in legal education from the ALTA conference in 2012, the authors share an auto-ethnographic account of their insights into the potential for both impact and engagement of a diverse audience in their research. This highlights the ways in which various media can be used strategically to redefine the role of the gatekeeper.

1. INTRODUCTION

As law teachers, we wear many hats. We teach law but inevitably, research law as part of our teaching, or as research in iself. We may even practise law. In any event, we are communicators of law. In this regard, what we say and how we say it positions us as gatekeepers, whether expressed orally or in writing. We decide the topic of our communication, and the medium in which it is presented. These choices have important implications for our capacity to communicate effectively with our audience – colleagues in the academy, the profession, our students and the general public.[1] That is, our choices affect our practice as academics. In this, our combined auto-ethnographic account, we disclose how we chose to embrace social media as an extension of our scholarly work.

Boyer proposes a fourfold approach to better understanding of the scope and diversity of the academic's role: 'the scholarship of discovery … of integration … of application and … of teaching'.[2] By reformulating our notions of what constitutes and is valued in terms of academic

* Senior Lecturer, School of Law, James Cook University.

** PhD Candidate at Deakin University.

† Senior Lecturer and Deputy Director for the Castan Centre for Human Rights Law at the Faculty of Law, Monash University.

1 Chris Gibson and Leah Gibbs, 'Social Media Experiments: Scholarly Practice and Collegiality' (2013) 3(1) *Dialogues in Human Geography* 87.

2 Ernest Boyer, *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate* (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1990), 16.

life, he argues, higher education can provide a flexible and varied career path for academics, while meeting the university's obligation to serve society.[3]

Boyer's work articulates the domains of the academic's role and suggests strategies for recognising each of these domains as scholarly endeavour.[4] While he recognises the 'mosaic of talent', implying differently skilled individuals within the institution,[5] he also acknowledges the evolution of academic interests and focus over time as a necessary part of promoting faculty renewal and, ultimately, creativity within the institution.[6]

Following Boyer, Glassick identifies six necessary 'themes' in scholarly work: 'clear goals', 'adequate' preparation', 'appropriate methods', 'significant results', 'effective presentation' and 'reflective critique'.[7] Trigwell et al contribute a 'multi-dimensional model' that involves an 'informed dimension', a 'reflection dimension', a 'communication dimension' and a 'conception dimension'. Within these dimensions are 'qualitative variations' of how individuals engage with a dimension of scholarship.[8]

One of the challenges facing academics is to align the scholarly work they do in each of these roles. Even focusing on a teaching−research nexus, it is not always clear on how we might best integrate our research within the domain of teaching.[9] Additionally, institutional emphasis on research *outputs* requires the academic subsequently to publicise their work for general consumption – though they are assisted in this by university marketing departments.

Despite early career researcher ('ECR') development and training programs and regular injunctions to publish or perish for all academics,[10] and despite recent literature within some disciplines[11] on the possibilities social media hold for the academic, there appears to be little institutional direction for academics on the use of social media. Yet these tools may assist us to achieve scholarly outputs and community engagement as well as offering a way to measure the impact of research and engagement. Ignoring these possible benefits is surely gatekeeping at its most restrictive − keeping the academic within the university's own paradigm of 'excellence' without supporting what might be regarded as a more democratic approach to scholarship.

This paper suggests that our institutions' existing emphasis on the narrow metrics of 'recognised' research (i.e. peer reviewed articles and grants) acts as a gatekeeper in two ways: by limiting the potential reach of the ECR who is attempting to forge a reputation;[12] and by limiting

3 Ibid, 43, 77.
4 Ibid, 61.
5 Ibid, 27.
6 Ibid, 43.
7 Charles E Glassick, 'Boyer's Expanded Definitions of Scholarship, the Standards for Assessing scholarship, and the Elusiveness of the Scholarship of Teaching' (2000) 75(9) *Academic Medicine: Journal of the Association of American Medical Colleges* 877.
8 Keith Trigwell et al, 'Scholarship of Teaching: A Model' (2000) 19(2) *Higher Education Research and Development* 155, 163.
9 Indeed, Boshier observed that 'most … academic staff do not know what [scholarship of teaching and learning] means': Roger Boshier, 'Why is the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Such a Hard Sell?' (2009) 28(1) *Higher Education Research & Development* 1. It is a view shared by Kathleen McKinney, 'Attitudinal and Structural Factors Contributing to Challenges in the Work of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning' (2006) 2006(129) *New Directions for Institutional Research* 37, 38, and Carolin Kreber, 'Conceptualizing the Scholarship of Teaching and Identifying Unresolved Issues: The Framework for This Volume' (2001) (86) *New Directions for Teaching & Learning* 1.
10 See, for example, William F Laurance et al, 'Predicting Publication Success for Biologists' (2013) 63(10) *BioScience* 817. Interestingly, this research was featured also in the academic online platform *The Conversation* as William Laurance et al, 'Predicting Who Will Publish or Perish as Career Academics' *The Conversation* 26 September 2013 <http://theconversation.com/predicting-who-will-publish-or-perish-as-career-academics-18473>. For a critique, see Eric Anthony Grollman 'Want to be Successful? Just Publish "Dude"' *Conditionally Accepted: A Space for Scholars on the Margins of Academia* 7 October 2013 <http://conditionallyaccepted.com/2013/10/07/just-publish-dude/>.
11 See, for example, Article Forum 2 in (2013) 3(1) *Dialogues in Human Geography*; Holly M Bik and Miriam C Goldstein, 'An Introduction to Social Media for Scientists' (2013) 11(4) *Plos Biology* <http://www.plosbiology.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pbio.1001535>.
12 In contrast, see the call for ECR engagement in the open access movement: Nick Shockey 'Berlin 11 Satellite Conference Encourages Students and Early Stage Researchers to Influence Shift Towards Open Access' *LSE Impact of Social Sciences Blog* 9 October 2013 <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2013/10/09/berlin-11-satellite-conference-students-open-access/>.

academics' capacity to engage more broadly, thus inhibiting an aligned and full expression of Boyer's domains in the service of the public. Through narrative auto-ethnographic accounts[13] it will use the authors' own practice and experiences experimenting with online media to offer a model of academic practice that demonstrates the potential for these tools to assist in the alignment of the scholarly domains of our work. Support for this model is provided through reference to traditional publications as well as scholarly online sources which themselves partly demonstrate the role that can be played by these media. Based on these experiences and the ongoing online critique of existing mainstream norms of 'recognised' research, we argue in favour of both an individual and an institutional embrace of a wider range of tools to serve these domains, thus 'gatecrashing' the existing research framework.

II. Using Social Media

The authors are interested in advancing a discussion about the utility of social media as a democratising form of communication of scholarly work in law that meets Boyer's own dimensions of the work of the academic in the service of the public, and encompasses the themes and dimensions described by Glassick and Trigwell et al. This has potential, we believe, to enhance our armoury of tools for publication and external scrutiny of primary work and engage diverse audiences in our work. The latter involves our own direct involvement in a network, or community, which exists far beyond our geographical location and includes our own students.

This paper offers auto-ethnographic accounts based on our own experiences and observations, to illustrate the reach of our scholarly communications via social media – and how we measure this reach. We acknowledge that there are limitations to the metrics of social media reach – and of auto-ethnographic accounts – but we point out that there is an ample literature also on the limitations of the existing system of metrics of 'quality' of research.[14] Both conventional and emergent measurements of engagement, quality and impact require continuous improvement. We simply suggest there is a world beyond publication in the A* journal − one that enhances research, research development, teaching, collaboration and communication.

A. *Experts Blogging*

A blog (from 'web log') is an online discussion or information site consisting of individual articles, or 'posts' in reverse chronological order. They require little technical knowledge to create, and bloggers can sign up for free blogging platforms ready to be personalised.[15] Blogs differ from regular static websites in that most allow comments, giving bloggers the ability to build social relations with their readers and with other bloggers. The use of microblogging (such as Twitter) assists in integrating blogs within social news streams. Blogs are therefore regarded as *social* media.[16]

Blogging enjoys a somewhat mixed reputation. For those in the 'blogosphere' it can replace mainstream media sources of news and information. Indeed, many mainstream media outlets

13 Ellis, Adams and Bochner describe 'auto-ethnography' as 'an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze ... personal experience ... in order to understand cultural experience': Carolyn Ellis, Tony E Adams and Arthur P Bochner, 'Autoethnography: An Overview' (2011) 12(1) *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 1.

14 Cameron Neylon and Shirley Wu, 'Article-Level Metrics and the Evolution of Scientific Impact' (2009) 7(11) *Plos Biology* <http://www.plosbiology.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pbio.1000242>; Gunther Eysenbach, 'Can Tweets Predict Citations? Metrics of Social Impact Based on Twitter and Correlation with Traditional Metrics of Scientific Impact' (2011) 13(4) *Journal of Medical Internet Research* 123; David Laband, 'The Usefulness of Citation Counts Depends Heavily on the Context of an Individual's Publishing Community' *LSE Impact of Social Sciences Blog* 26 September 2013 <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2013/09/26/citations-caution-context-common-sense/>.

15 See, for example, *Wordpress* <wordpress.com>.

16 For an explanation of blogging and microblogging, see, for example, Kate Galloway, Kristoffer Greaves and Melissa Castan, 'Interconnectedness, Multiplexity and the Global Student: The Role of Blogging and Micro Blogging in Opening Students' Horizons' (2012) 20 *Journal of the Australasian Law Teachers Association* 177.

now have their own 'live blogs' built into their static sites. This reflects the immediacy of the medium and the accessibility of the platform for both the blogger (the author) and the reader.

On the other hand, many are skeptical of the quality of the posts and the absence of conventional review processes. Posts on contemporary issues tend to be produced quickly, with little time for the external scrutiny of 'traditional' research – although blog posts can of course be more reflective and considered, reporting on scholarly works in progress. Inevitably, however, as new information formats arise, the quality or accuracy of a post becomes a question of information literacy – 'the ability to search for, select, critically evaluate and use information for solving problems in various contexts.'[17]

In the context of electronic environments, Todd points out that 'fluidity replaces fixity as a dominant characteristic of resource creation and use.'[18] The fluidity of the electronic medium of the blog challenges the existing academic culture that equates authority with peer review. In terms of legal research, Hutchinson observes that 'expanded legal research frameworks … are well-accepted extensions to the overall legal [doctrinal] research "paradigm".'[19] Against this backdrop, we suggest that the blog can be a tool of scholarly and academic rigour but also that it is a necessary tool to meet contemporary demands for high quality information – as well as a means of broader engagement in our role as academics. Blogs we describe here are not those that discuss personal weight-loss journeys or the pitfalls of fashion-forward looks for the Spring Racing Carnival – often the kind of blog that is the target of attempts to discredit social media as a 'valid' source of information.[20] Our focus is on legal blogs (sometimes called blawgs) that engage in legal topics of contemporary interest.[21] The assessment here is the application of principles of information literacy. Outside the parameters of peer review, we illustrate the 'quality' of legal blogs through their authorship and their application.

Kevin O'Keefe, a US legal blogger, has written of the value of legal blogs. In a recent post, he cites Justice Kennedy of the US Supreme Court in his praise of the legal blog.[22] Kennedy J, in a discussion about the utility of law reviews (journals), said that:

> Professors are back in the act with the blogs. Orin Kerr, one of my former clerks, with criminal procedure [and] the internet area, Mike Dorf, Jack Goldsmith. So the professors within 72 hours have a comment on the court opinion, which is helpful, and they are beginning to comment on when the certs are granted. And I like that.

While there does not yet appear to be a systematic review of judicial use of blogs in Australia,[23] in the US context, O'Keefe predicts that law blogs will have a 'growing influence with the courts'. He believes that:

> [law reviews] will still play a role, but legal commentary has been democratized with open publishing available to practicing (sic) lawyers. Blogs don't have the gatekeepers law reviews do that limit commentary to primarily law professors and law students.

17 Louise Limberg, Olof Sundin and Sanna Talja, 'Three Theoretical Perspectives on Information Literacy' (2012) 11(2) *Human IT* 93, 96.

18 Ross Todd, 'Information Literacy in Electronic Environments: Fantasies, Facts and Futures' (Paper presented at International Association of Scientific and Technological University Libraries Conference, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, 3−7 July, 2000), 2.

19 Terry Hutchinson, *Researching and Writing in Law* (Lawbook Co, 2nd ed, 2006), 21.

20 See, for example, the critique in Andrew Keen, *The Cult of the Amateur* (Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2008).

21 There is an online compendium of Australian legal blogs on Amicae Curiae: Girlfriends of the Court <http: amicaecuriae.com>.

22 Kevin O'Keefe, Supreme Court Justice Kennedy on the Value of Law Blogs' *Kevin O'Keefe's Real Lawyers Have Blogs* 10 October 2013 <http://kevin.lexblog.com/2013/10/10/supreme-court-justice-kennedy-on-the-value-of-law-blogs/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+KevinOKeefe%2FRealLawyersHaveBlogs+%28Real+Lawyers+Have+Blogs%29>.

23 But see a recent review of the Australian courts and their use of social media in Alysia Blackham and George Williams, 'Australian Courts and Social Media' (2013) 38 (3) *Alternative Law Journal* 175.

Indeed blogs are increasingly cited in US decisions,[24] and have recently started to be cited in Canada also.[25] This reflects the 'nimbleness and speed' of the medium, increasing the likelihood of its being the 'first or only available analysis'. The medium is also 'a valuable means for discussing micro-discoveries, ideas that might otherwise go unmentioned and undeveloped in longer articles.'[26] Kennedy J also points out that there are quality academic (and professional) legal blogs that offer case or issues analysis sometimes within days (or hours) of a major decision being handed down. The *Castan Centre for Human Rights* blog,[27] for example, publishes posts by professors and interns alike on current human rights issues. Melbourne University public law academics post on a collaborative constitutional law blog.[28] Helen Irving at Sydney University Law School posts on constitutional law also.[29]

In light of the authorship of these blogs – namely by recognised academics writing in their field – they represent scholarly quality. While the ideas are not tested as they would be through peer review, the ideas are put into the public domain inviting discussion. This social aspect of the medium offers an alternative to the peer review of the academic journal.

All of these blogs are immediate and freely accessible. Many are written by known experts in their field. For the writers, they offer the opportunity to work through contemporary issues or ideas by writing. In this sense, the blog post probably represents a different medium from the refereed journal – nonetheless this can be taken into account in assessing the nature and quality of the work. However, posts will often form part of a larger body of research that the writer can corral into a journal article or some other 'recognised' research output.

This illustrates the use of the blog as a component in a bigger research strategy. While advice to ECRs seems often to stress *publishing*, there is not necessarily a scaffolded strategy about how to do it. In our experience, regular blogging is one way to engage constructively in the writing process that may result in the outputs sought.[30]

In the meantime, these ideas are available for discussion with, feedback from and instruction for the reader. They are ideal sources for students, modelling legal thinking and analysis on topics that are a long way from reaching the journal or the textbook. They also break down the barrier between student (or member of the public) and the academic, through the 'comment' function in the blog. This is the *social* aspect of social media.

The immediacy and accessibility of this medium for both author and reader is a vast improvement on the static model of publishing in refereed journals and in books. Additionally, it integrates the domains of academic scholarship, giving scope for communication of discoveries and ideas from new perspectives to a broad audience. This is particularly the case for law, where current events and recent decisions can be analysed and quickly disseminated as a precursor to a more in-depth analysis. However, perhaps the most interesting aspect of the blog as a medium is its reach and capacity to connect.

B. *Audience Reach and Metrics*

Greaves blogs about his PhD research;[31] it involves PLT practitioners' engagement with scholarship of teaching, a niche field. He also creates content shared on sites such as YouTube, SlideShare, ResearchGate, SSRN, and Deakin University's institutional digital repository.

24 J Robert Brown, 'Law Faculty Blogs and Disruptive Innovation' (2012) 2(3) *Journal of Law* 525; Lee F Peoples, 'Citation of Blogs in Judicial Opinions' (2010) 13 *Tulane Journal of Technology and Intellectual Property* 39.

25 Nate Russell, 'Law Blogs: The Refuge of Compulsive Exhibitionists No More' *The Stream: Courthouse Libraries BC Blog* 16 May 2013 <http://www.courthouselibrary.ca/training/stream/13-05-16/Law_blogs_the_refuge_of_compulsive_exhibitionists_no_more.aspx>.

26 Ibid.

27 *Castan Centre for Human Rights Law* <http://castancentre.com/>.

28 *Opinions on High* Melbourne Law School <http://blogs.unimelb.edu.au/opinionsonhigh/>.

29 Helen Irving *A Woman's Constitution: Reflections on Constitutional Law and Scholarship from a Woman Law Professor's Perspective* University of Sydney <http://blogs.usyd.edu.au/womansconstitution/>.

30 See for example the discussion by Jessie Daniels, 'From Tweet to Blogpost to Peer Reviewed Article; How to be a Scholar Now' *LSE Impact for Social Sciences Blog* 25 September 2013 <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2013/09/25/how-to-be-a-scholar-daniels/>.

31 PleagleTrainer Blog: Lawyer, Practical Legal Training, PhD candidate in Professional Education and Training, Research, Scholarship, Eclectic Interests, Best Practice <http://thekglawyerblog.com/ptblog/>.

Items on the blog, YouTube and SlideShare have attracted nearly 40,000 views or contacts over a period of 2 years. While raw counts tell us nothing about the quality of content, engagement or impact and must be treated cautiously, this content has led to direct interactions with legal and education academics, generating a collaborative environment within which to further his research. Despite the limitations of the raw data, in terms of universities' focus on the metrics of impact and engagement, the fact that genuine interactions arise from these views indicates the potential both for the blog and for other electronic publication as a means of sharing ideas − but also for metrics in the longer term.

Making sense of this data is the information science of altmetrics, which seeks to measure 'the use of social media, particularly Web 2.0 media, in assessing the influence of researchers on all type of users.'[32] The field is an emerging one.[33] As Priem, Piwowar and Hemminger point out, there remains a lot of work to do to 'reduc[e] noise that obscures the impact signal'. They suggest that different types of impacts on different audiences need to be isolated and identified, 'to understand what the events informing alternative metrics actually *mean*.' They point out that this process follows the example set by early investigators of citation.[34] This indicates the limitations of altmetrics but it also demonstrates the potential for such measurements. Importantly also, it highlights that social media have enormous reach and impact, even though we are as yet unable to capture this in a neat metric.

While such authors are at the technical end of measuring what we the academics do, publication in social media and in traditional form, and measurement of research 'output' or 'excellence' or 'quality', all exist within a culture. So long as the academy remains mistrustful (and perhaps ignorant) of the potential of these media, fulfilling our potential as academics − including serving as wide a community as possible − remains outside the parameters accepted by the institution. Additionally, at least part of the potential of social media lies in supporting the evolution of academic interests and focus and promoting faculty renewal and ultimately creativity within the institution.[35]

While the important technical work on measurement continues, it is therefore up to academics to embrace the potential of social media and up to our institutions to support this. To do so we need to rethink the paradigms of our practice to incorporate appropriate tools. Entrenched assumptions, such as that peer-reviewed publication and its associated metrics are the best or only way to expose research to external scrutiny and to understand engagement, quality, and impact, might deprive us of important insights and opportunities for engagement.

Fresh thinking could, for example, harness fresh approaches to collaboration and peer review through social media. Tapscott and Williams write of 'workplace peering' and 'ideagoras' – using social media to harness creativity and innovation from 'uniquely qualified minds'.[36] While their context is the world of business, they provide a compelling argument for an open source environment that resonates within the collegial context of academia. In the legal practice context, Susskind identifies expert crowd-sourced legal information as breaking down barriers to access to justice and argues that the lawyer of tomorrow will require skills across a number of platforms and media – skills far beyond traditional problem solving and advocacy. He sees collaboration within and across task-oriented specialist teams, mediated by diverse technologies.[37]

Likewise, Sunstein observes that 'bloggers frequently deliberate with one another, exchanging information and perspectives.'[38] He cites by way of example Nobel Prize winner

32 Ronald Rousseau and Fred Y Ye, 'A Multi-metric Approach for Research Evaluations' (2013) 58 (26) *Chinese Science Bulletin* 3288, 3288.

33 Jason Priem, Heather A Piwowar, Bradley M Hemminger, 'Altmetrics in the Wild: Using Social Media to Explore Scholarly Impact' [cs.DL] 20 Mar 2012 <http://arxiv.org/html/1203.4745>; Lucy Ayre, 'Libraries Can Embrace the Use of Altmetrics as a Means to Strengthen the Functionality of Institutional Repositories' *LSE Impact for Social Sciences Blog* 22 August 2013 <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2013/08/22/altmetrics-why-the-library-can-embrace-them/>.

34 Priem, Piwowar and Hemminger, above n 33.

35 Boyer, above n 2, 43.

36 Don Tapscott and Anthony D Williams, *Wikinomics* (Atlantic Books, 2006).

37 Richard Susskind, *Tomorrow's Lawyers* (Oxford University Press, 2013).

38 Cass R Sunstein, *Infotopia: How Many Minds Produce Knowledge* (Oxford University Press, 2006), 184.

Gary Becker and court of appeals judge Richard A Posner, who regularly debate issues on their blog,[39] and the *Volokh Conspiracy*, to which a number of law professors contribute and where disagreement is common.[40] Sunstein also suggests that 'when bloggers err on legal questions, their errors are often corrected … If the analysis seems to go wrong, the author is immediately notified, and a correction or debate usually ensues.'[41] It might be messy and difficult and challenge dominant epistemologies underlying existing metrics and the culture they serve. But it should be worthwhile; it could further interdisciplinary connections yielding new insights from researchers outside of one's own field and make peer review more transparent.[42]

Existing structures provide a degree of comfort for those who might fear exposure to a wider, possibly more democratic, robust scrutiny. Inevitably, new tools developed to understand quality, engagement and impact factors in this context would be incomplete and demand refinement before becoming authoritative. Indeed, the development process itself could be an open source collaborative project to counter managerialist control of these tools. Messy, confronting, noisy – would it be worth it? For those with quantitative leanings, imagine if just one per cent of 40,000 contacts produced meaningful insights about research quality, impact and engagement: that would be a fairly interesting number.

Blogging is not the only social medium through which to promote research and collaboration, and altmetrics is being applied across various platforms. A variety of other media can also further spread the scholarly word.

C. *Spreading the Word: Twitter and Repositories*

Blogs will be picked up via Google searches and through your university's e-publications if included there – many university repositories are already accepting blog posts as 'outputs' – but these are not the only ways of publicising a blog or a post.

The authors wrote in 2012 on the use of twitter to develop a community of scholars, academics, professionals and members of the public.[43] This community is receptive to reading work published in blogs and in journal articles. Twitter – whether your own account or that of your Faculty or University – is an ideal medium for communicating your ideas and your research. It is also an ideal medium for generating research that responds to matters of interest expressed on Twitter (and the online 'community' more broadly). While Twitter has been described as an 'echo chamber'[44] this can be used to the advantage of an academic wishing to engage in scholarly thinking about contemporary issues, with a globally distributed and interested audience.

In other words, it means research can have impact.

We offer the example of our own experience of the 'echo chamber' of Twitter earlier this year. As legal academics and doctoral students, we experience the culture of the academy and the profession in terms of the quality of information. The primacy of 'authorised' sources of law, the hierarchy inherent in the profession and the pressure to publish in A* journals following institutional research protocols, is our reality. Each of us, however, has challenged this culture through our engagement on social media. Each of us blogs and tweets,[45] and we each use a variety of other online social media and repositories to share our research and the ideas that precede it.

While recognition within our institutions is dependent upon engagement with its own metrics and the imperative of traditional forms of publishing, through our experiences we can

39 *The Becker-Posner Blog* <http://www.becker-posner-blog.com/>.

40 *The Volokh Conspiracy* <http://www.volokh.com/>.

41 Sunstein, above n 38, 184.

42 See, for example, Daniels, above n 30.

43 Galloway, Greaves and Castan, above n 16.

44 See, for example, Lauren Kirchner, 'Beware the Twitter Echo Chamber' *Columbia Journalism Review* 10 December 2010 <http://www.cjr.org/the_news_frontier/beware_the_twitter_echo_chambe.php> in which she cites Aaron Smith and Lee Rainie, '8% of Americans use Twitter' (Pew Internet, 2010) <http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2010/Twitter-Update-2010/Findings.aspx>.

45 See Galloway, Greaves and Castan, above n 16.

demonstrate how this culture is limited by its own parameters and also how we have derived professional and personal support within these alternative networks.

At the ALTA conference in 2012 we presented and subsequently published an article in this journal on the use of Twitter and blogs in teaching law. Thanks to JALTA's forward-thinking philosophy of accessibility, we were permitted to upload this article to the research repository Social Science Research Network ('SSRN').[46] SSRN offers free global access to social science papers (including in education and in law) that are uploaded by the authors themselves. It also offers metrics on the number of hits on an abstract, and the number of downloads of the full paper.

Interested to see the effect of using this repository, we tweeted a link to the abstract. This one tweet was retweeted (circulated by others) a number of times. There was, it seems, some interest in the article. It was mainly retweeted by other legal academics around the world – people with whom each of us had fairly regular direct contact, via Twitter. We noticed that we had a considerable number of hits on the abstract on SSRN, and quite a few downloads.

A few days later, Galloway received word from media monitors that we, and our article, had been mentioned in the *Australian Financial Review*. In fact there was an entire article based on our paper.[47] We tweeted the link to the *Australian Financial Review* article, and also again to the SSRN article. By the end of that day, we received notification from SSRN that our article had been in the top ten downloads globally. We do not raise this as a significant accomplishment. Rather we see it as evidence of some sort of connection between our research and people who have a potential interest in our ideas.

Over the coming days we watched as the statistics on hits and downloads went through the roof. The article had, it seems, a life of its own. From modest beginnings, and through modest promotion on Twitter, this article had achieved SSRN top ranking internationally, at least momentarily.

Our story is an example of how a combination of traditional research media (refereed journal articles), open source policy, online repository, mainstream media and social media can work together to spread an idea around the world. This is an example of what Jenkins describes as 'convergence' – 'the circulation of media content across different media systems, competing media economies, and national borders.'[48] He points out that this depends heavily on consumers' active participation – in our case, the retweeting and online discussion of the post. We accept that despite ranking and the number of hits, it could still be that no one has read our article. Perhaps it will never be cited. But it is also possible that the idea it encapsulates may be very widely disseminated. The message of our research, captured even in just the abstract, may well have inspired others to act, or at least to think about the issues involved. We surely broke down the gatekeeper model of publication.

The other side to this story is that of building an academic profile.

D. *Building your Academic Profile as Part of Breaking Down the Barriers*

Academics are told by the contemporary university that we must engage with our 'stakeholders'. Indeed, as Boyer points out, service is integral to the mission of the university,[49] yet sometimes the pressure to be discipline experts, to teach in exciting and innovative ways and to be researchers of renown seems overwhelming. Effective use of social media is one way in which we can integrate the different aspects of our job while developing the profile we need to support these activities.

Our networks on social media put us in touch with people interested in our ideas and so we develop a reputation for knowledge or expertise in these areas that can lead to other opportunities. In the case of established academics such as those mentioned earlier, this

46 At <http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2251736>.

47 Alex Boxsell, 'Law Schools Told to Leap into Social Media' *Australian Financial Review* 31 May 2013 <http://www.afr.com/p/national/legal_affairs/law_schools_told_to_leap_into_social_pAVKdBPkusTlVRPNr71qSL>.

48 Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York University Press, 2006), 3.

49 Boyer, above n 2.

reputation is established already, principally through conventional means, and supplemented and expanded through social media.

For emerging thinkers and academics, social media represents an opportunity to manage your career and to engage in wider conversation. For example when Galloway saw a tweet about an ABC Radio National program on whether religion influences politics, she tweeted a link to a paper she had co-written on the topic.[50] The broadcaster picked up the link.[51]

Other invitations for interview or comment have been received through this medium – either based on tweets or on blog posts shared via Twitter. This has resulted in regular opinion pieces in diverse online media.[52] Each of these pieces builds reputation, while at the same time is 'engagement' in university terms. Each one can be logged on an academic's university's e-repository.

III. Conclusion

How far does your scholarly work travel? If you publish exclusively in refereed journals or book chapters, it may not travel very far at all.[53] Although this meets the university's measures of 'quality' and 'output', it may fail to meet our scholarly obligation of engagement. One way to improve engagement while developing writing, ideas and research is through social media.

As we watched in amazement at the worldwide hits and downloads of our modest paper in JALTA – generated through a combination of a repository, Twitter and mainstream media – Jenkins' analysis of *The Matrix* came to mind. He writes of the phenomenon of *The Matrix* as a prime example of convergence culture, a sophisticated blending of media and platforms in an entertainment context.[54] Surely we were doing the same in an academic context, while drawing together the domains of our academic practice. In one sense, we are at that moment in *The Matrix* where Neo is offered the choice between a red pill and a blue pill. The blue pill would allow him to remain in the fabricated reality of the Matrix. The red pill would lead to his escape from the Matrix and into the 'real world'. Which pill will we take?

We don't suggest that we abandon the traditional mode of publication and framework for research – though there is reason to question its stranglehold over how we arrange our work. We do suggest, however, that we need to open up the avenues for developing and disseminating our research in a way that both aligns the domains of our practice and dissolves the barriers of the current media to true engagement between academic and the public.

50 Corrie Donaghey, and Kate Galloway, 'Analysing Conscience Votes in Parliament: Do Churches Influence the Law?' (2011) 18 *James Cook University Law Review* 84.

51 Kate Galloway (@katgallow) 'Paper on Influence of Churches on the Law: eprints.jcu.edu.au/22336/1/22336-… @ABCReligion @natashamitchell #auslaw #religion' 22 September 2013, 6:04pm; ABC Religion&Ethics (@ABCReligion) '@katgallow @natashamitchell That's a huge help, thank you very much. Why not call in tonight? We'll be taking calls from 10.30: 1300 800 222' 22 September 2013, 7:20 pm.

52 As a consequence of her blogging and activity on Twitter, Galloway, for example, has recently started writing for *Right Now: Human Rights in Australia* <http://rightnow.org.au/> and *Open Forum* <http://www.openforum.com.au/>.

53 Dorothy Bishop, 'How to Bury Your Academic Writing' *LSE Impact for Social Sciences Blog* 29 August 2012 <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2012/08/29/how-to-bury-your-academic-writing/>.

54 See Jenkins, above n 48, chapter 3 on *The Matrix* and transmedia storytelling.