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<http://blog.melchua.com/2012/01/12/why-oa-makes-a-bigger-difference-to-little-teaching-schools-debunking-the-3-major-theories-of-open-access-impact-and-arxive/>

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That paper I [mentioned yesterday](#) on open access legal scholarship? There's more. At the very end, the authors explain how they think that good articles in smaller and less prestigious publications – “diamonds in the rough” – will benefit the most from the “OA effect” [of increased citations] since stuff in the prestigious publications will be read and cited anyway.

Bells started to go off in my head. It sounds like they're saying that the academic institutions that have the most to gain from open access are small ones, less research-based ones... teaching institutions. The same types of schools we keep on seeing in [Teaching Open Source](#). The same professors that show up summer after summer at [POSSE](#). These places aren't heavily populated by the “traditional” tech research powerhouses like MIT or Carnegie Mellon; we get *teaching* faculty. They're little liberal arts schools, they're satellite campuses, they're places where professors spend more time in classrooms than in labs.

And yet these same faculty do have to publish *something*, or they *will* perish. Could open access – or something about it, habits like it – have a turbo-boost effect on these professors and make it easier for them to meet and surpass what they're expected to do for research? (The other two things faculty are traditionally evaluated on are “teaching” – self explanatory – and “service,” which means committees, advising, and other administrative duties.) It looks like there's an article on exactly that - [Open Access and Liberal Arts Colleges: Looking Beyond Research Institutions](#). I'll be reading it next week – I'm curious what it'll say.

Other bits and pieces I found useful:

The literature has proposed three major theories to explain why open access increases the impact of scholarship.

*The **Open Access Postulate** theorizes that because open access articles are more easily accessed, they are read more often. Convenient access alone, according to this argument, increases the likelihood of citation.*

*The **Early Access Postulate** suggests that articles benefit from their quicker “start out of the gate” over competing articles on the same topic, and therefore the citation rate is higher for articles that are posted early in the publication process.*

*The third offered explanation is the **Self-selection Bias Postulate**, which argues that authors self-select to publish their best articles online thus increasing their citation rate, assuming that these are also the “better” articles in their respective subject areas.*

from [“Citation Advantage of Open Access Legal Scholarship”](#)

The article swiftly goes on to disagree with each of them. My summaries:

- The Open Access Postulate doesn't hold true for legal scholarship; legal researchers have access to all this material already without open access, since their libraries have

subscriptions. So it's not that these are information-impooverished law faculty who desperately seek access to *any* legal papers whatsoever. (That's the conclusion of the authors – I don't quite buy this, because access and *really* easy access are two different things; the water fountain may be right outside my office door, but my hydration rate increased dramatically when I started putting a water bottle on my desk.)

- The Early Access Postulate also doesn't hold true, since the data used in this study comes from both before and after the “we can archive preprints of our work online!” revolution in law, and doesn't show any correlation of citation rate to whether articles were put online preprint or much later.
- The Self-selection Bias Postulate looks like it may also not hold true; as more papers get placed online by default, it seems to have no effect on the increased citation rate.

Finally, when I was asking about the spread of OA through various disciplines (did Law pick up on OA faster than, say, English? Much later than Chemistry? Why? What factors influence the speed of OA adoption in a community?) Amy and Dana responded by saying “hrm, perhaps you could parse some [arXiv](#) data to find that out.” I scratched my head. “What's arXiv?”

Turns out it's an archive for electronic [preprints](#) of [scientific papers](#) in the fields of [mathematics](#), [physics](#), [astronomy](#), [computer science](#), quantitative [biology](#), [statistics](#), and quantitative [finance](#) which can be accessed online.” (Thank you, [Wikipedia](#)). It's big, it's historic (for the internet – it's 20 years old), it's awesome and impressive – and I immediately burst out laughing. “That's a more open, non-web-2.0 version of [Scribd](#)!” (Note that I use Scribd as an example mostly because it's what people will know – it's definitely not as openly accessible as I want it to be.)

If you think about it, though – they both host pdfs so they're easier to find and access, they deliberately don't count as “publishers” so it's really about the access... sure, arXiv provides more scholarly-flavored metadata fields, but you could pretty much use an existing service like Scribd to build an arXiv of your own. (Although the point of arXiv is that there weren't existing services at the time – it predates Scribd.)

So it's a lot of fun, seeing what's out there. Now I'm off to the humanities library to see if someone can help me figure out good search terms for answering the question “are there any information-management habits common to successful scholars?” because... I'm swimming in so much learning and information now that my coping strategies are straining, and I desperately need new ones.

Hup!