

NEWS RELEASE



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New Tenopir survey shows importance of journal ‘brand’ to readers

A new study by Tenopir, King and others shows that researchers attach high importance to reading articles from recognised peer-reviewed journals.

‘These are very valuable findings’ said Bob Campbell, Chairman of the Publishing Research Consortium (PRC), which commissioned the study. ‘They confirm what most publishers already believe – that the investment and effort that the community put into establishing journals of quality is well-appreciated by researchers when they come to use the literature.

Of course, in any search, it’s imperative that relevant results are retrieved, and that papers are accessible online at no personal cost to the reader – and publishers have an array of mechanisms to achieve this.’

Campbell continued: ‘it’s always been clear that authors attach a lot of value to the journal in which they choose to publish, but until now we’ve been lacking solid, objective evidence that readers value them too. So to have world-leading researchers like Carol Tenopir and her colleagues establish this, as well as a range of other interacting criteria, on a sound basis, should be helpful to everyone in the scholarly community.’

Tenopir, who led the research team, said: ‘readers of scholarly articles have an abundance of articles to choose from. In addition to topic, they use a variety of criteria and quality clues to choose which articles to read. This study reveals which of those clues are most important to readers from many different disciplines. For topically relevant articles that are available online at no personal cost to the reader, the quality of the authors and the journals in which the articles appear are important criteria in helping readers choose from among alternatives.’

About the study:

The study surveyed over 400 faculty and researchers from 12 countries and asked about article characteristics, reading choices and patterns. Both direct ranking of characteristics and ‘conjoint analysis’ were used. Conjoint analysis is a well-established technique from market research which can examine the interaction between or relative values of various attributes.

On direct characteristics the need for relevance of the article topic, and that it should be available at no personal cost, came out top. Next came the source of the article (e.g. on a range from top peer-reviewed journal to un-refereed and not published in a journal) and journal title.

For the conjoint analysis, respondents were asked to consider 16 article profiles and rate them on a ten point scale. On this analysis, whereas ‘accessible online at no personal cost’ still came out top, second was ‘author’ of the article –e.g. they would prefer even an unknown author to one known to be weak. On type of journal, their preference for peer review was very strong, such that they would be more likely to read an article that is not in a journal, rather than one in non peer-reviewed journal.

Overall, the top profile was 'written by an author I recognize as a top scholar, in a top-tier peer reviewed journal, and available online at no (personal) cost'

The report also contains analyses on respondent demographics , including age, gender, discipline, as well as recording responses on other journal characteristics which indicate that such things as readability, editing and good graphic design can be important.

The study is available, without charge, from the PRC website at :

<http://www.publishingresearch.net>

Research Publication Characteristics and Their Relative Values

A Report for the Publishing Research Consortium. Sep 2010

C Tenopir, S Allard, B Bates, K J Levine, D W King, B Birch, R Mays and C Caldwell.

(CICS)

PRC November 2010. 51pp

About The Publishing Research Consortium (PRC):

The PRC is a group representing publishers and associations supporting global research into scholarly communication in order to enable evidence-based discussion and objective analysis (<http://www.publishingresearch.net>). PRC's objective is to support work that is scientific and pro-scholarship, in order to promote an understanding of the role of publishing and its impact on research and teaching.

About The Center for Communication and Information Studies (CICS):

CICS at the University of Tennessee conducts applied research in areas such as information usage, communication patterns, information system design and scientific communication. CICS works with private and public organizations, governmental agencies and corporations. It provides skills such as information architecture design and evaluation, systems programming, database design, survey research, technology training, and usability testing for its clients. Established in 1989, CICS is now the research arm of the University of Tennessee's College of Communication and Information.

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