Quo Vadis German Scholarly Communication in Economics?

Dr. Athanasios Mazarakis, Prof. Dr. Isabella Peters
We find Social Media everywhere
But:
Do we miss its full potential? Or:
Does it bridge the gap between academia and society?
open discourse
Science 2.0 allows for a richer dialogue, …, or an open discourse of critiquing, suggesting, sharing of ideas and data [Waldrop 2008]

communication
Science 2.0 … federates a variety of communication channels to ease … communication within … scientific network [Gillet 2009]

collaboration
new technologies [that] continue to reorder whole disciplines, as increased collaboration [Shneiderman 2008]

participation
technology-enhanced participatory science [Underwood et al. 2009]
Scholarly activities are increasingly performed online
[Van Noorden 2014]

The uptake of social media tools varies greatly between different disciplines
[Holmberg and Thelwall 2014]
What is the status quo for German researchers in Economics and Business Studies?

Three methods applied:

- Online survey
- Focus group interviews
- Panel discussions
Study 1: Data and Methods

- Online survey in December 2013
- Personalized E-Mail for 10,297 subjects in Economics and Business Studies
- 766 complete and valid data sets remained for analysis
- Average age: 39 years (SD = 11.48)

Full survey available at booth of Research Alliance Science 2.0 or:
Study 1: Results for most and least usage

- 15 different social media services to select from
- Mixed usage (professional and private)
- Wikipedia: 79 %
- Video/Image hosting services: 77 %
- Video conference systems: 75 %
- Social bookmarking systems: 7 %
Study 1: Results for professional usage

- Learning management systems: 55%
- Reference management systems: 42%
- Professional and academic social networks: 32%
- Content sharing services: 22%
- Other wikis: 22%
- Wikipedia: 6%
- Microblogging tools: 3%
- Social bookmarking systems: 3%
Study 1: Results for teaching and research

• Teaching
  • Wikipedia: 58 %
  • Learning management systems: 52 %

• Research
  • Wikipedia: 51 %
  • Content sharing services: 47 %
  • Reference management systems: 43 %
  • Internet forums: 33 %
  • Video conferences: 33 %
  • Microblogging: 3 %
  • Social bookmarking: 3 %
Study 1: Results for scholarly communication

- Less than half of the German economists routinely use social media for scholarly communication
- Professional and academic networks: 37 %
- Video conferences: 27 %
- Weblogs: 7 %
- Microblogs: 4 %
Study 1: Results for motives about usage

• “because its convenient“
• “because it makes work or communication easier and/or faster“

• Wikipedia with 61 % most convenient social media tool
• Content sharing tool convenient for 47 %
• Internet forums convenient for 41 %

→ Real or perceived benefit determines usage!
Study 1: Results for motives about non-usage

- „because I don't see a benefit in using this tool“
- „because I have no need“
- „because I haven't looked into it yet“

- Microblogging tools: 58 %
- Reference management system: 26 %
- Social bookmarking service: 26 %
- Other wikis than Wikipedia: 20 %
- Web-based real-time text editors: 19 %
Study 1: Results for channels providing information on new social media tools

- Colleagues: 87%
- Friends: 77%
- Presentations: 23%
- Other social media services: 20%
- Academic journals (own discipline): 20%
- IT journals: 16%
- Other: 7%
Summary for Study 1 (Online Surveys)

- Most professional usage: Learning management systems
- Most usage for scholarly communication: Professional and academic networks
- Wikipedia most convenient social media tool
- Microblogging tools are not used
- Colleagues and friends most important to learn about new social media tools
Study 2: Data and Methods

- Two focus group interviews consisting of 5-10 experts
- Two full days each in April and September 2014
- Different age groups and career levels
- First group: economists
- Second group: researchers in business studies
Study 2: Results

• Google for literature search
• Discipline-specific databases mostly unknown
• Social media for random search and staying up-to-date
→ but: quality assessment is perceived difficult

• Free access to research results most important
• Open access publications are questioned regarding quality
  • Believe in lack of peer review
  • Perceived lower impact and credit → early career researchers refuse to publish in open access journals

• Overall confirmation of online survey results and former studies
Study 3: Data and Methods

- Three panellists in September 2014
- VfS Jahrestagung in Hamburg
- Economists and active social media users
- Maintain own blogs or Twitter channels
- Professors and other responsible people for social media activities in universities or organizations
Study 3: Results

• Social media valuable to inform the general public and allow participation in actual economical topics on the web
• But actually no scholarly communication on blogs or in social media
• Missing credit from academe is perceived as greatest obstacle for social media activities

• Passive use of social media is prevalent
• Active use of collaborative writing tools and content sharing services
• Social media might be helpful to attract future students
Discussion of results

• In general: reputation of sources is important
  • Who says this?
  • Is that information trustworthy?

• Many tools like social bookmarking systems are still unknown
• Perception of tools’ quality and actual usage widely divergent
  • 6 % use Wikipedia in a professional context
  • 58 % use Wikipedia for teaching
  • 51 % use Wikipedia for research

• Professional usage often result of „external pressure“
• „no benefit“ and „lack of time“ dominant drivers of non-usage
• But: often passive usage of social media
Future?

- Digitization of society with smartphones and other devices
  - instant access to social media from everywhere
  - Digital Natives
- Open access initiatives worldwide
  - Open Science
  - Science 2.0
  - Open Peer Review
- MOOCs
- FOMO (Fear Of Missing Out)?
Thank you very much for your attention!

Prof. Dr. Isabella Peters  
ZBW - Leibniz-Informationszentrum Wirtschaft & CAU Kiel  
i.peters@zbw.eu  
@isabella83