

Publish, Perish or Go S.e.e. Us

Somos en escrito The Latino Literary Online Journal-Magazine

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The Case for “Open Access Publishing” ala Somos en escrito

As the year draws to a close we can look back at *Somos en escrito* (S.e.e.) and see it filled with erudite, passionate and highly academic materials—more than 500 articles, poems, book excerpts and short stories—covering everything from the Chicano Manifesto to paleontological discoveries to the Plan de Santa Barbara to ideas on how Chicanos can save all of humanity, oh, and, of course, about everybody's Uncle Pancho and abuelita. Many of the authors experiment with forms of the Spanish language, everyday realities, in turn providing us access and insight to some of the world's greatest thought, *lengua franca*. S.e.e. is positioned to become a force in not only American education but also in shaping the American psyche.

S.e.e. is in many ways, priceless, even though each author maintains individual copyright(s). Where else can you read and engage such intellectual materials that both enhance and strengthen critical thinking in a cross-disciplinary way? It's the only modern day Latino-based archive that all at once causes contradictions and a sparkling interchange of ideas. Thus, S.e.e. is a powerful tool for expanding one's intellectual idea-imagination.

Fact is, theorizing S.e.e. might generate collective outcomes and/or come up with a collective search for identity and become the basis for a modern day symbolic crusade, especially now in a world of social media that creates faceless, fleeting and meaningless online relationships and illusions of rapport or true social relations. S.e.e. represents a mix of the social and behavioral sciences, humanities/ethnic/gender studies, arts, natural/hard sciences and music that when viewed alone spur the imagination in specific directions, but when experienced together in an integrated collective fashion cause the mind of the group of contributing authors to take over the mind of the individual authors and new ideas are born.

Take, for example, the many articles found in what S.e.e. refers to as the Chicano Confidential series. In my capacity as an avid reader and one who engages S.e.e. materials just as soon as they are published, I've found myself stimulated to write in areas I would have never thought about writing in the past, from the disambiguation of the self (in a social psychological sense) to community participation for planning purposes to the late Fidel Castro to the design of particle smashers in the world of physics.

Even now as I write this piece I am thinking about how the world of writing is changing for everyone and how people are starting to see value in areas not taken seriously in the past. To be sure one of the largest areas to scrutinize writing in the public sphere is open access.

S.e.e. is a form of open access that is already having a direct impact on how non-peer reviewed articles are beginning to be taken more seriously. In the academic world, libraries are providing a global system that promotes work that is

both peer reviewed and non-peer reviewed on just the same platform as we see in the powerful search engine, Digital Commons.

My sense is that because Digital Commons represents a mix of writings of a professional stature, it is promoted by libraries and features a Google analytic that allows the author to see the regional physical whereabouts of those individuals accessing their articles, it is being viewed as “serious,” “reputable,” even “peer reviewed” and more, millennials certainly think it’s “cool.” We can only theorize that as more and more millennials interpret and access the meaning of open access, the idea behind it will continue to transform the writing landscape on a global basis to be sure.

In the world of Academe, the perennial measure of one’s academic abilities for retention, tenure and/or promotion (RTP) is to conduct research that will make original contributions to one’s field of study and publish one’s findings in a reputable peer reviewed journal. Okay, we get it; problem is, the number of known peer reviewed journals is few, the competition is fierce and politics is always a factor as to who will publish in these journals.

In American society today, it is widely known that a central idea to the culture found in Academe is that you either publish or you perish. However, to earn the right towards retention, tenure and promotion at all 4-year to Ph.D. granting colleges and universities, there is an implicit expectation (in the academic culture) but no explicit directives (how many publications one should produce, in which journals, and how to measure the contributions being made).

Given this widespread situation, it’s no wonder that millennials who serve as professors are beginning to list open access “publications” on their curriculum vitae (resumes). I say, why not, as that is where the world is headed in one form or another! And Latinos who publish in *Somos en escrito* may view this as a professional opportunity. In short, even though S.e.e. clearly falls in the current definition of open access, it can act as a gateway for publication of peer reviewed journal articles that are respectable, intellectually stimulating and academic.

I remain keenly aware that even today many professors in major institutions of higher education often earn tenure and promotion without ever publishing anything at all, nada! Again, even in a culture of “publish or perish” university professors are going into administrative positions and being reviewed on the basis of their administrative contributions (e.g., serving as the chair of a department) and granted tenure. While it may be the case that publications are not the only measure of review for tenure, peer reviewed publications are by far the strongest measure by far, the one mostly take into account.

This is not to question why professors advance their careers without publishing; I do, however, argue that in a publish-or-perish culture, it is “intellectually and morally wrong” to deny those who truly work hard and publish

in referred journals and to leave them throughout their careers with the sense of having been wronged. Nor am I labeling anyone as “bad people.” I simply want us to recognize the realities of the tenure process situation, but at the same time recognize it, own it, and ask: “If you are not conducting research and if you are not writing about your interests then what are you doing; how do you remain scholarly?” At the very least, for the sake of the students they serve and in the case of Latinos whom many of us serve in Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI) or schools with high numbers of educationally underserved students, we owe them an up-to-date education.

In other words, if a professor earns promotion and/or tenure and does not publish, then let’s encourage them to keep up their research and writings whether or not they are getting published. Hence, we should not drop the expectation that a professor who becomes an administrator is somehow relieved of the cultural expectation or university “requirement” that they publish or perish. Let’s keep the pressure on, even if it means “publishing” in open access entities, such as S.e.e., an excellent venue to air one’s writings and disseminate ideas quickly.

Moreover, whether or not a professor is making an original contribution to the existing stock of knowledge in one’s field of study, a professor should never be exempt from producing written materials (published or not) that reflect their engagement in the current state of play in one’s field of study. There are two primary reasons for this:

One, as millennials come to redefine what constitutes an acceptable recourse for fulfilling the requirement to publish or perish, colleges and universities that assign promotion and/or tenure to professors who have not published will open themselves up to sizeable risk. Said differently, as new faculty who meet the expectation to publish are reviewed by professors/administrators who have not published, the university risks being sued for discriminatory practices.

It doesn’t stop there: professors who are qualified for tenure but do not receive it, may file lawsuits outside the university on personal grounds, leaving peer review committee members at risk on a personal basis. To a large extent, institutional racism is at work here because, since the beginning of the concept, far too many white professors have reviewed other white professors and devised self-justifying rationales for granting them promotion and/or tenure. Note: Professors who become administrators and are given tenure as a result often return to the faculty due to political fall-out.

Second, in no way am I suggesting a degradation ceremony for those who do not publish; rather I am suggesting that we encourage those professors who have never published to consider open access publishing as a gateway to formal publishing, as available in *Somos en escrito*. Even though I have been urging

founder/editor Armando Rendón to present S.e.e. as a “journal” and not just a magazine, he assures me that he is not about to create a peer review committee and become an academic journal in the traditional sense. That is not the mission nor strategy for dissemination of information; he is more interested in the rapid dissemination of ideas, creative writings, and information that would otherwise get bogged down in journal review.

For the coming year, S.e.e. can be viewed as the space for change, promoting change in the publications industry that provides an invitational atmosphere for those to publish even if they are not at risk of perishing. As suggested by the innovative higher education association EDUCAUSE,* entities such as S.e.e. can become a platform for professors to encourage their students to look towards the creation and contribution of new and original ideas, especially for ideas that will help Latino and other educationally underrepresented communities.

Que viva Somos en escrito!

Armando Arias, Ph.d. writes under the general rubric of *historias verdaderas mentiras auténticas—true stories and authentic lies*. He has found this the most effective manner to convey his stories. This gives his stories a unique feel, even a weirdness; at the same time he believes as does the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein says, “Someone who knows too much finds it hard not to lie.” Copyright © Arts & Sciences World Press, 2017.

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