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Abstract

The Cupola actively serves as a resistance to the academic publishing system that makes knowledge exclusive to the wealthy and privileged who have the ability to access it. Instead of keeping scholarship “behind the paywall” with high subscription costs, *The Cupola* and the other open repositories keep the knowledge freely accessible to everyone at any time, anywhere in the world. *The Cupola* has only existed since April 2012, but we have already reached 1 million downloads (...). To find out more about how *The Cupola* is perceived on the campus and how to make more students interested in student nominations, I talked to professors, current students and alumni from Gettysburg College. We discussed the issues of representation in writing and publishing and the role of *The Cupola* in comparison. Thus, this article is a collection of various accounts on the importance of student scholarship and a collection of advice on how to use *The Cupola* to your benefit. [excerpt]

Keywords

The Cupola, Student Scholarship, Open Access, Open Education, Scholarly Communications

Disciplines

Information Literacy | Scholarly Communication | Scholarly Publishing

Comments

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Build Your Resume and Leave an Impact: Publish in The Cupola

By Hana Huskic, Student Assistant for Scholarly Communications

Here is a scenario: You write a quality paper that your professor likes. They recommend it for publishing in *The Cupola*. Excited and proud, you update your resume with the publication. You run to tell your friends and they try to be happy for you, but they cannot hide their “*The Cupola*, what is that even?” face.

So what is *The Cupola* and why publish there?

I am a student assistant for the Scholarly Communications department of Musselman Library where we mostly work on scholarly publishing, open access and open education. Our department works on [The Cupola](#), Gettysburg College’s open access institutional repository that hosts faculty and student research. *The Cupola* actively serves as a resistance to the academic publishing system that makes knowledge exclusive to the wealthy and privileged who have the ability to access it. Instead of keeping scholarship “behind the paywall” with high subscription costs, *The Cupola* and the other open repositories keep the knowledge freely accessible to everyone at any time, anywhere in the world. *The Cupola* has only existed since April 2012, but we have already reached 1 million downloads.

After talking to many of my peers during Open Access and Open Education Week, I noticed that students are concerned about issues of textbook affordability and the high cost of access to scholarship but often do not know how to turn this discourse into an effective change.

To find out more about how *The Cupola* is perceived on the campus and how to make more students interested in student nominations, I talked to professors, current students and alumni from Gettysburg College. We discussed the issues of representation in writing and publishing and the role of *The Cupola* in comparison. Thus, this article is a collection of various accounts on the importance of student scholarship and a collection of advice on how to use *The Cupola* to your benefit

1. **with future hiring opportunities,**
2. **to develop skills useful for applying for graduate programs,**
3. **to be a part of a scholarly conversation,**
4. **to cultivate your interest in research,**
5. **to share your knowledge with hundreds of countries around the world, and**
6. **to make stronger connections with the library.**

What happens in *The Cupola*?

Each of the professors that I talked to defined *The Cupola* in their own words.

For Robert Stevens, Emerging Writer Lecturer in the English department, *The Cupola* is “neat because it is a place where students can be published alongside their professors.”

While our students have access to many scholarly journals, Stevens finds importance in accessing the ideas created by people around you. Scholarship posted in *The Cupola* is “vetted and local” which “narrows the information and makes it easier to access.” This way, publishing is not some foreign and distant concept, but something people closest to you engage in and you could too.

For Environmental Studies Professor Rud Platt, *The Cupola* is “also a great communication tool” because it shows the “diversity of interests in the department to prospective students and parents.”

Visiting Professor in Africana Studies Ty Redden described *The Cupola* as a “practitioner” for graduate school. She sees publications in *The Cupola* as an addition “to students’ competitiveness and in any case, regardless of their career path, that is helpful” in defining “how they’re seeing the world and the application of the conceptual theories and frameworks.”

Similarly, Art and Art History Professor Felicia Else sees *The Cupola* nominations “a bit like an award beyond a good grade...it conveys to the student the idea that research is relevant beyond a particular classroom or a course requirement.”

Why would professors nominate your work exactly?

While professors have different teaching styles, syllabi and grading criteria, Assistant Professor in Management Alice M. Brawley Newlin argues that the criteria for *The Cupola* nomination is primarily “about the quality of the work done as well as the quality of the presentation (e.g., written clearly, in an engaging style).”

As Professor Rud Platt mostly nominates senior theses, he expects students' research to go beyond "just for practice" because at that level, students are already "engaged in research that often has real-world implications."

While *The Cupola* mostly shares research, it is also a platform for creative writing and other forms of art. Professor Stevens discussed the position of creative writing in publishing and how it is often not taken as seriously as other disciplines. That is why, when nominating, he tries to "pick a representative...to spread across the genres poetry, nonfiction and fiction." Stevens managed to connect all the disciplines with one criteria: "I nominate student work that I just remember."

To create a memorable work (essays, posters, audio files, and visual works) you might find this simple equation useful: *attention grabbing topic + clear and concise presentation = quality work*

Choose a topic that will push you to be creative with your research. Professor Redden looked back on the papers she previously nominated, and while all of them had completely different ideas, what they had in common were "strong thesis arguments that are well researched and have variety of scholarly research to back them up and have a certain degree of articulation." Having these points checked off the list raises the chance for a professor to nominate your work. Once that happens, a paper you wrote for a class can suddenly leave a much bigger impact than you initially anticipated.

How can you be a part of the impact?

Current students and alumni reflected on how *The Cupola* helped them develop their interests further but also to discover what kind of impact they want to leave in the world.

Alumna Alyssa Bosold '13 reflected, "Developing papers for publication helped to cultivate my interest in research."

Similarly, Veronica Rosenberger '13, whose thesis "What Makes a Monster and What Makes a Man? Exploring the Relationship between the Creator and the Creation in Three Gothic Novels" has been the most downloaded student paper for years, reflected on her publication: "I feel incredibly honored to know that people across the world have downloaded and read my thesis." For her, the publication "as well as its consistent spot at the top of the downloads list is one of my biggest academic accomplishments."

Often the most exciting part of the publication comes once the work is up on *The Cupola*. Then the author can track where and when their work had been downloaded. For example, Bosold saw her paper, “Challenging the ‘man’ in mangroves: the missing role of women in mangrove conservation,” “cited in different papers and reports online.” She was also “contacted by an employee from a conservation organization and friends who work in wetland conservation that used her paper to inform their works.” However, the time in which you will start noticing the effects and the influence of your publication might vary. Rosenberger emphasized the fact that “the line doesn’t directly go from A to B” but that her thesis and its inclusion in *The Cupola* “have certainly informed her current work.” You might not see all the benefits of the publications immediately, but the alumni claim that you will definitely notice them in the future, especially taking in the consideration the motivation to write better, which is a useful quality in all disciplines.

Bosold thanks her interest in research for providing her “with writing and editing skills that are transferable across jobs,” which she “continues to apply to her work today.”

Rosenberger invited current students to “make the most of *The Cupola* in your undergraduate experience” because “publications are such a huge factor when applying for graduate programs, regardless of your field.”

The positive effects of the publication in applications for graduate school is one aspect of *The Cupola* publication that interested Ella Groner '19. Groner had just graduated in December 2018 with an OMS major and Environmental Studies minor, and when applying to graduate schools, she noticed that “sharing links to my research through *The Cupola* adds a higher level of respect and legitimacy to my project and my experiences at Gettysburg College.”

The Cupola and Beyond: Impact and Accessibility

One of the roles of *The Cupola* is making knowledge accessible to everyone, no matter their background. Publishing in *The Cupola*, or other open repositories and platforms, you directly support open access that is essentially a form of social justice. Choosing to put accessibility of knowledge ahead of financial profit, if you can afford it, directly trumps hierarchy of inequalities where the most quality information is exclusive to the wealthy, often white people who are most commonly from western countries.

If they do not have access to it, students will not know how to use their knowledge actively. While many students “are excited about the possibility of directing their own research and are doing really great thought provoking work,” Professor Redden argued that many of them are “simply not knowledgeable enough about channels to which to direct that work.” In this case, the initiative to help students rather than have them navigate college on their own should come from professors. When talking about first generation students, Professor Redden said, “They’re learning as they go.” That is exactly why Professor Redden claimed that it is “the responsibility of faculty to educate our students as much as we can on these different nuances, on these different opportunities. How else would they know?”

It is not a secret that Gettysburg College has a long way to go until it continuously and truthfully offers a welcoming space for everyone. There are many barriers, and they range in sizes for different students. However, Professor Redden claimed, “Those barriers are not inherit, they’re learned behavior.” To have a more tangible change, we need to turn our energy into a focused action. One reason why academia is so homogenous is that we learn that the most important knowledge comes from white men in too many disciplines. Taking this into consideration, it is not surprising that many students of color and women (and these groups intersect) often feel uneasy doing research. If the learned knowledge is distant from their own experience, the chances of relating and feeling comfortable are more likely to be lower.

Professor Redden sees an obvious solution to these issues, yet questions how easy it would be to implement it: “I deliberately seek people of color and women. Others don’t. And my academic career has been shaped by people of color and women. Others don’t have that experience....It’s very normal for POC to have PhDs and write articles. It’s very normal for POC to write articles about POC. That should be a norm, and I think that the more deliberate the educators about normalizing this for their students are, the more effective the breaking down of those epistemological barriers that students may have.”

Some students might have learned in previous educational institutions that their opinions matter less than some others. They will feel more comfortable to speak up, write and publish if they have educators that come from similar backgrounds as them and who are openly acknowledging the issues of representation in academia.

As Professor Redden said, “The diversity that I bring in my classroom is the result of my education and lived experience.”

The more educators from diverse backgrounds, the more diverse the learning process. Yet, to achieve some kind of an immediate change, us as students can learn to practice speaking our voices and taking up the space. One way is definitely to write and publish.

If you're intimidated, read this.

English is not my first language. I grew up in an ethnically-divided country where language became a tool to promote a nationalistic divide between people. Because of it, I learned how language manipulates meaning and how grammar and style often serve as tools to exclude groups of people from the academic and creative circles. Language in academia is often an excuse to alienate minorities: in my country when Roma people use their dialect and here in the United States when people of color use African-Americans Vernacular English.

For instance, take the formula to the quality paper I mentioned before: *attention grabbing topic + clear and concise presentation = quality paper*

The equation is straightforward enough, but getting there is not always, especially when you take into consideration the previous experiences and ways of expressing ourselves that we all bring to the table.

If you worry that your writing is not eloquent enough or complicated enough to be published, I challenge you to talk to your professors and mentors about it. Discuss how you can improve it and why you should. Do not be afraid to ask for more feedback from your professors. Write more, so you will write better.

Useful Links and Platforms

Publishing industry is full of biases, but *The Cupola* is a platform that celebrates all ideas, backgrounds and types of work. Thus, if you are passionate about your research, recommend its publication to your professor, or even self-nominate. Even though the professor has to approve it, you can take the initiative and make the first step. If you are interested in self-nominating for *The Cupola*, follow this

link: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSduzlaCWCft7NU4ifoiD0rUDqM7gYFg2knJFZm_AJq9hL8OBA/viewform For all the help or additional information, the library is there for you.

The Cupola is also a home for student publications in all forms, and so is for the academic journals created by the specific departments. You can find all of the

publications of the current six journals in *The*

Cupola here: https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/peer_review_list.html

For writing, definitely start with The Writing Center or even reaching out to the tenants of The Writing House; talk to your professors and PLAs whose class you are taking. If you are more interested in creative writing and opinion pieces, look into Surge. Even though these options also require the review process and selection, the nomination depends on the individual student and not their professor.

If you are frustrated (in general or about writing), interested in continuing this conversation or would like to hear about the student run Open Education Council (work in progress) that will start in the Fall 2019, please contact me at huskha01@gettysburg.edu