

# A Look Back at 30 Years as an Open Access Publisher

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## Introduction

Imagine the Internet without the Web. Imagine that there is no Google or similar search engine. Imagine that the cutting edge Internet applications are e-mail, LISTSERV, FTP, and Telnet. Imagine that the Internet is made up of a number of different noncommercial networks, and that the connections between them are not always transparent. Imagine that Microsoft only shipped one million copies of the second version of Windows last year, and you are using MS-DOS without a graphical interface instead. Imagine that no established publisher has even experimented with an e-journal. Imagine that the latest mid-range PC has a 6 MHz 16/32-bit 80386SX processor, a 30 MB hard drive, and 2 MB of RAM and costs about \$3,900.

That was the situation in June 1989 when I launched PACS-L, a LISTSERV mailing list. PACS-L was one of the first library-oriented mailing lists, and it was unusual in that it had a broad subject focus (public-access computer systems in libraries). Although PACS-L's greatest contribution may have been in raising librarians' awareness of the importance and potential of the then fledgling Internet, it was also the platform on which my initial scholarly digital publishing efforts were based.

In August 1989, I launched *The Public-Access Computer Systems Review*, one of the first e-journals on the Internet and the first open access journal in the field of library and information science. It was freely available, allowed authors to retain their copyrights, and had special copyright provisions for noncommercial use. Issues were announced via e-mail, and articles were distributed as ASCII files from a LISTSERV.

Starting in 1994, ASCII articles were also distributed via a Gopher server. In 1995, a website was established, and articles were also distributed as HTML files.

I edited the *The Public-Access Computer Systems Review* through 1996. By the end of that year, there had been over 4.2 million requests for the journal's files.

In 1996, I established the *Scholarly Electronic Publishing Bibliography*, an open access e-book that had 79 subsequent versions. It was initially published in the HTML, PDF, and Word formats.

These early digital publishing projects were sponsored by the University of Houston Libraries, which maintains an archive of ASCII articles from *The Public-Access Computer Systems Review* (<http://journals.tdl.org/pacsr/index.php/pacsr>). The Internet Archive includes copies of the entire journal website, including the HTML versions of the articles:

<http://web.archive.org/web/20070124234520/http://epress.lib.uh.edu/pr/pacsrev.html>

All three of these digital publishing ventures were authorized and supported by Robin N. Downes, the visionary Director of the University of Houston Libraries.

In 2005, I established Digital Scholarship (<http://digital-scholarship.org/>), and I began to publish open access works under Creative Commons licenses. Since then, Digital Scholarship has published PDF books, inexpensive paperback books, XHTML bibliographies, weblogs, Twitter streams, and other works.

The last version of the *Scholarly Electronic Publishing Bibliography* was published in 2011 (<http://digital-scholarship.org/sepb/sepb.html>). From 1996 through 2011, the e-book had over 11.9 million file requests.

From April 2005 through May 2019, Digital Scholarship had over 20.5 million visitors from 242 Internet country domains, over 100.7 million file requests, and over 76 million page views. Excluding spiders, there were over 12.2 million visitors from 242 Internet country domains, over 58.9 million file requests, and over 35.9 million page views.

## Chronology

Below is a brief chronology of my digital publishing efforts from June 1989 through May 2018.

1989

- June 29, 1989. Established the PACS-L LISTSERV mailing list, acted as list owner and, later, as its first moderator.
- August 16, 1989. Established *The Public-Access Computer Systems Review* (*PACS Review*, also known as *PACS-R*).

1990

- 1990. Published 3 issues of *The Public-Access Computer Systems Review*, including the one described below.
- January 3, 1990. Published the first issue of *The Public-Access Computer Systems Review*. Articles were selected by the editors. They were distributed as ASCII files using the LISTSERV software; table of contents messages were e-mailed to subscribers.
- March 5, 1990. Established and acted as co-editor with Dana C. Rooks of *Public-Access Computer Systems News*, a free electronic newsletter. Acted as co-editor until the end of 1992. Published 12 issues in 1990. *The Public-Access Computer Systems News* was published by the University of Houston Libraries.
- August 30, 1990. Published the first version of "Library-Oriented BITNET Lists," a directory of mailing lists. Published 3 versions in 1990.

1991

- 1991. Published 2 issues of *The Public-Access Computer Systems Review*, including those described below.
- 1991. Published 11 issues of *Public-Access Computer Systems News*.
- Published 8 versions of "Library-Oriented Computer Conferences and Electronic Serials."
- August 26, 1991. Published the volume 2, no. 1 issue of *The Public-Access Computer Systems Review*. This was a special issue on open access journals, such as *Postmodern Culture* and *Psycology*.
- October 29, 1991. Published the volume 2, no. 2 issue of *The Public-Access Computer Systems Review*. Adopted a more flexible *PACS Review* publication schedule that took advantage of electronic publishing capabilities and reduced article publication time.
- November 11, 1991. Changed *The Public-Access Computer Systems Review* to a peer-reviewed journal.
- November 15, 1991. Announced that I was stepping down as PACS-L moderator. PACS-L had over 3,100 subscribers at the time.

1992

- 1992. Published 8 issues of *The Public-Access Computer Systems Review*.
- 1992. Published 16 issues of *Public-Access Computer Systems News*.
- 1992. Published 9 versions of "Library-Oriented Computer Conferences and Electronic Serials."
- 1992. *The Public-Access Computer Systems Review*, Volume 1, 1990 was published as a paperback by the Library and Information Technology Association. Walt Crawford formatted a digital copy of the book as camera-ready copy for LITA at no cost (he did this for subsequent print versions as well). Printed annual versions were published at the recommendation of the journal's editorial board, which was concerned with the problem of limited Internet access by some readers during this early period.
- 1992. *The Public-Access Computer Systems Review*, Volume 2, 1991 was published as a paperback by the Library and Information Technology Association.
- January 13, 1992. Established the PACS-P mailing list to distribute the University of Houston Libraries electronic publications and *Current Cites*.

1993

- 1993. Published 6 issues of *The Public-Access Computer Systems Review*.
- 1993. Published 4 versions of "Library-Oriented Lists and Electronic Serials."
- 1993. *The Public-Access Computer Systems Review*, Volume 3, 1992 was published as a paperback by the Library and Information Technology Association.

1994

- 1994. Published 7 issues of *The Public-Access Computer Systems Review*.
- 1994. *The Public-Access Computer Systems Review*, Volume 4, 1993 was published as a paperback by the Library and Information Technology Association.
- January 18, 1994. Published my last version of "Library-Oriented Lists and Electronic Serials." Subsequently, Ann Thornton and Steve Bonario maintained the document, then Wei Wu maintained it as a searchable Web site until 2006.
- January 29, 1994. Made *The Public-Access Computer Systems Review* and *Public-Access Computer Systems News* available via a Gopher server.

1995

- 1995. Published 5 issues of *The Public-Access Computer Systems Review*, including the one described below.
- 1995. *The Public-Access Computer Systems Review*, Volume 5, 1994 was published as a paperback by the Library and Information Technology Association.

- 1995. *Research and Development of Scholarly Information Dissemination Systems: Report for the Fiscal Year 1994, a Grant-in-Aid Research by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, Japan for the Year 1994/95* (06302076). Papers from *The Public-Access Computer Systems Review* were translated into Japanese and published as a paperback by the National Institute of Informatics.
- March 21, 1995. Published the volume 6, no. 1 issue of *The Public-Access Computer Systems Review*, the first HTML version of the journal. Established a policy that allowed authors to update articles. This issue was composed of the first version of my "Network-Based Electronic Publishing of Scholarly Works: A Selective Bibliography." Fourteen versions were published in 1995.

## 1996

- 1996. Published 6 issues of *The Public-Access Computer Systems Review*.
- 1996. Published 3 versions of the *Scholarly Electronic Publishing Bibliography*, including the ones described below.
- 1996. Published 12 versions of "Network-Based Electronic Publishing of Scholarly Works: A Selective Bibliography," with the last version (no. 26) being published on October 25, 1996. Starting with version 23 (June 25, 1996), the bibliography was searchable.
- September 12, 1996. Announced that I was stepping down as *PACS Review* Editor-in-Chief at the end of 1996.
- October 25, 1996. Published the first version of the *Scholarly Electronic Publishing Bibliography (SEPB)*, an open access, updated electronic book that provided references to new works related to scholarly electronic publishing, such as books, journal articles, magazine articles, technical reports, and white papers. The HTML bibliography was searchable.
- November 15, 1996. Published version 2 of the *Scholarly Electronic Publishing Bibliography*, adding a Word file version.
- December 17, 1996. Published version 3 of the *Scholarly Electronic Publishing Bibliography*, adding a PDF file version.

## 1997

- 1997. Published 11 versions of the *Scholarly Electronic Publishing Bibliography*, including the one described below.
- September 16, 1997. Published version 12 of the *Scholarly Electronic Publishing Bibliography*. Included the first version of *Scholarly Electronic Publishing Resources*.

## 1998

- 1998. Published 8 versions of the *Scholarly Electronic Publishing Bibliography*.

1999

- 1999. Published 6 versions of the *Scholarly Electronic Publishing Bibliography*.

2000

- 2000. Published 6 versions of the *Scholarly Electronic Publishing Bibliography*.

2001

- 2001. Published 5 versions of the *Scholarly Electronic Publishing Bibliography*.
- June 7, 2001. Began the *Scholarly Electronic Publishing Weblog*. Published posts daily as needed.

2002

- 2002. Published 6 versions of the *Scholarly Electronic Publishing Bibliography*, including the one described below
- 2002. Published *Scholarly Electronic Publishing Weblog* posts daily as needed.
- April 19, 2002. Published version 42 of the *Scholarly Electronic Publishing Bibliography*. Ceased publishing a corresponding Word version.

2003

- 2003. Published 6 versions of the *Scholarly Electronic Publishing Bibliography*.
- 2003. Published *Scholarly Electronic Publishing Weblog* posts weekly as needed.
- September 22, 2003. Established the SEPW@LISTSERV.UH.EDU mailing list and distributed the first ASCII version of the *Scholarly Electronic Publishing Weblog*.

2004

- 2004. Published 4 versions of the *Scholarly Electronic Publishing Bibliography*, including the one described below.
- 2004. Published *Scholarly Electronic Publishing Weblog* posts biweekly as needed.
- July 13, 2004. Published version 54 of the *Scholarly Electronic Publishing Bibliography* under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial License.

2005

- 2005. Published 4 versions of the *Scholarly Electronic Publishing Bibliography*.
- 2005. Published *Scholarly Electronic Publishing Weblog* posts biweekly as needed.

- March 2, 2005. The Association of Research Libraries published my *Open Access Bibliography: Liberating Scholarly Literature with E-Prints and Open Access Journals*. The book included an introduction to open access and references to over 1,300 works about it. It was published under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 2.5 License in print and PDF formats. The PDF version was freely available.
- April 20, 2005. Established Digital Scholarship, a digital press that publishes works about digital copyright, digital curation, digital repository, open access, scholarly communication, and other digital information issues. Digital Scholarship publications, including paperbacks, are under Creative Commons licenses. (Until January 2006, the site was called Escholarlypub.)
- April 20, 2005. Established *DigitalKoans*, a weblog that covers the same topics as Digital Scholarship.
- August 10, 2005. Made a preprint of the "Open Access Weblibliography" available (coauthored with Adrian K. Ho).
- July 8, 2005. Published the first version of the *Electronic Theses and Dissertations Bibliography*.
- October 25, 2005. Published the first version of the *Google Book Search Bibliography*.

## 2006

- 2006. Published 6 versions of the *Scholarly Electronic Publishing Bibliography*, including the one described below.
- 2006. Published *Scholarly Electronic Publishing Weblog* posts biweekly as needed.
- 2006. Published *DigitalKoans* posts.
- January 8, 2006. Established the digital-scholarship.com domain to replace the escholarlypub.com domain.
- February 6, 2006. Published the *Open Access Bibliography Author Index* and the *Open Access Bibliography Title Index*.
- March 22, 2006. Published an HTML version of the *Open Access Bibliography: Liberating Scholarly Literature with E-Prints and Open Access Journals*.
- April 28, 2006. Published version 62 of the *Scholarly Electronic Publishing Bibliography*. Ceased publishing a corresponding Acrobat version.
- October 25-28, 2006. Created Google Custom Search Engines for the *Open Access Bibliography: Liberating Scholarly Literature with E-Prints and Open Access Journals*, the *Scholarly Electronic Publishing Bibliography*, and the *Scholarly Electronic Publishing Weblog*.
- November 1, 2006. Resigned my position as Assistant Dean for Digital Library Planning and Development at the University of Houston Libraries, where I had worked since November 1987 (previously as either Assistant Dean for Systems or Assistant Director for Systems).
- November 3, 2006. Migrated the *Scholarly Electronic Publishing Bibliography* from the University of Houston Libraries' servers to escholarlypub.com.
- December 14, 2006. Established the digital-scholarship.org domain.

- December 18, 2006. Announced the digital-scholarship.org domain, branding it and digital-scholarship.com under the name "Digital Scholarship."

## 2007

- 2007. Published 4 versions of the *Scholarly Electronic Publishing Bibliography*.
- 2007. Published *Scholarly Electronic Publishing Weblog* posts biweekly as needed.
- 2007. Published *DigitalKoans* posts.
- February 12, 2007. Published an HTML version of the "Open Access Weblibliography."
- March 14, 2007. Published the first annual PDF version of the *Scholarly Electronic Publishing Bibliography*.

## 2008

- 2008. Published 4 versions of the *Scholarly Electronic Publishing Bibliography*, including the one described below.
- 2008. Published *Scholarly Electronic Publishing Weblog* posts monthly.
- 2008. Published *DigitalKoans* posts.
- January 6, 2008. Published *Institutional Repositories, Tout de Suite*.
- March 21, 2008. Became a member of the *Open Access Directory* Editorial Board. Helped build the initial Wiki.
- April 29, 2008. Published the second annual PDF version of the *Scholarly Electronic Publishing Bibliography*. In this version, links were added for e-prints of published articles from disciplinary archives and institutional repositories, and many additional links were added for freely available versions of articles from publishers.
- May 12, 2008. Published version 2 of the *Electronic Theses and Dissertations Bibliography*.
- May 27, 2008. Published version 2 of the *Google Book Search Bibliography*.
- June 9, 2008. Published version 72 of the *Scholarly Electronic Publishing Bibliography*. In this version, links were added for e-prints of published articles from disciplinary archives and institutional repositories, and many additional links were added for freely available versions of articles from publishers.
- June 14, 2008. Authorized using the *Open Access Bibliography: Liberating Scholarly Literature with E-Prints and Open Access Journals* as the basis for a new wiki bibliography on the *Open Access Directory*, called the *Bibliography of Open Access*.
- October 27, 2008. Published *Author's Rights, Tout de Suite*.
- December 9, 2008. Published version 3 of the *Google Book Search Bibliography*

## 2009

- 2009. Published 3 versions of the *Scholarly Electronic Publishing Bibliography*.
- 2009. Published *Scholarly Electronic Publishing Weblog* posts monthly.
- 2009. Published *DigitalKoans* posts.



- January 20, 2009. Published version 3 of the *Electronic Theses and Dissertations Bibliography*.
- May 5, 2009. Published the *Scholarly Electronic Publishing Bibliography: 2008 Annual Edition* as a paperback. (The XHTML version that this paperback was based on was freely available.)
- June 29, 2009. Published version 4 of the *Google Book Search Bibliography*.
- July 10, 2009. Published a Kindle edition of the *Scholarly Electronic Publishing Bibliography: 2008 Annual Edition*.
- July 15, 2009. Published version 4 of the *Electronic Theses and Dissertations Bibliography*.
- July 16, 2009. Created a Twitter feed for *DigitalKoans*.
- August 31, 2009. Began to tweet additional relevant news items on the *DigitalKoans* Twitter feed.
- September 8, 2009. Published the last version of *Scholarly Electronic Publishing Resources*.
- September 13, 2009. Published version 5 of the *Google Book Search Bibliography*.
- October 19, 2009. Published the *Institutional Repository Bibliography*.

## 2010

- 2010. Published 2 versions of the *Scholarly Electronic Publishing Bibliography*.
- 2010. Published *Scholarly Electronic Publishing Weblog* posts monthly.
- 2010. Published *DigitalKoans* posts.
- January 11, 2010. Published version two of the *Institutional Repository Bibliography*.
- March 27, 2010. Published *Digital Scholarship 2009* as a paperback. It included four bibliographies: *the Scholarly Electronic Publishing Bibliography: 2009 Annual Edition*, the *Institutional Repository Bibliography*, the *Electronic Theses and Dissertations Bibliography*, and the *Google Book Search Bibliography*. (HTML versions of the bibliographies that this paperback was based on were freely available.)
- April 12, 2010. Published version 6 of the *Google Book Search Bibliography*.
- May 17, 2010. Published version 1 of the *Digital Curation and Preservation Bibliography*.
- June 18, 2010. Published the *Scholarly Electronic Publishing Bibliography: 2008 Annual Edition* as an open access PDF file.
- August 21, 2010. Published *Digital Scholarship 2009* as an open access PDF file.
- August 23, 2010. Published the *Open Access Journals Bibliography*.
- September 7, 2010. Published *Transforming Scholarly Publishing through Open Access: A Bibliography* as a paperback.
- September 9, 2010. Published *Transforming Scholarly Publishing through Open Access: A Bibliography* as an open access PDF file.
- October 12, 2010. Published *Transforming Scholarly Publishing through Open Access: A Bibliography* as an open access HTML file.
- November 11, 2010. Published version three of the *Institutional Repository Bibliography*.

- November 30, 2010. Published version five of the *Electronic Theses and Dissertations Bibliography*.

## 2011

- 2011. Published *Scholarly Electronic Publishing Weblog* posts monthly.
- 2011. Published *DigitalKoans* posts.
- 2011: Established and moderated the LinkedIn Digital Curation Group.
- January 17, 2011. Published version 2 of the *Digital Curation and Preservation Bibliography*.
- March 1, 2011. Published the *Digital Curation and Preservation Bibliography 2010* as a paperback.
- March 2, 2011. Published the *Scholarly Electronic Publishing Bibliography 2010* as a paperback.
- March 4, 2011. Published the *Digital Curation and Preservation Bibliography 2010* as an open access PDF file.
- March 4, 2011. Published the *Scholarly Electronic Publishing Bibliography 2010* as an open access PDF file.
- June 15, 2011. Published version 4 of the *Institutional Repository Bibliography*.
- July 28, 2011. Published the *Institutional Repository and ETD Bibliography 2011* as a paperback.
- August 15, 2011. Published version 7 of the *Google Book Search Bibliography*.
- August 30, 2011. Published the *Institutional Repository and ETD Bibliography 2011* as an open access PDF file.
- October 18, 2011. Published the *E-science and Academic Libraries Bibliography*.
- October 30, 2011. Published version 80 of the *Scholarly Electronic Publishing Bibliography*.

## 2012

- 2012. Published *Scholarly Electronic Publishing Weblog* posts monthly.
- 2012. Published *DigitalKoans* posts.
- 2012: Moderated the LinkedIn Digital Curation Group.
- January 17, 2012. Published version six of the *Electronic Theses and Dissertations Bibliography*.
- April 16, 2012. Published the *Research Data Curation Bibliography*.
- May 10, 2012. Shut down the digital-scholarship.com mirror site.
- June 7, 2012. Published the *Digital Curation Bibliography: Preservation and Stewardship of Scholarly Works* as a paperback.
- June 11, 2012. Published the *Digital Curation Bibliography: Preservation and Stewardship of Scholarly Works* as a PDF file.
- August 12, 2012. Published the *Digital Curation Resource Guide*.

## 2013

- 2013. Published *Scholarly Electronic Publishing Weblog* posts monthly or bimonthly.
- 2013. Published *DigitalKoans* posts.
- 2013: Moderated the LinkedIn Digital Curation Group.
- January 14, 2014. Published an XHTML version of the *Digital Curation Bibliography: Preservation and Stewardship of Scholarly Works*.
- January 14, 2013. Published version 2 of the *Research Data Curation Bibliography*.
- February 14, 2013. Established *Digital Curation News*.
- March 18, 2013. Published the *Digital Curation Bibliography: Preservation and Stewardship of Scholarly Works, 2012 Supplement*.
- June 17, 2013. Published version 3 of the *Research Data Curation Bibliography*.
- October, 14, 2013: Published the *Altmetrics Bibliography*.

## 2014

- 2014: Published *DigitalKoans* posts.
- 2014: Published *Digital Curation News*.
- 2014: Moderated the LinkedIn Digital Curation Group.
- January 13, 2014: Published the *Transforming Peer Review Bibliography*.
- June 23, 2014: Published version 4 of the *Research Data Curation Bibliography*.

## 2015

- 2015: Published *DigitalKoans* posts.
- 2015: Published *Digital Curation News*.
- 2015: Moderated the LinkedIn Digital Curation Group.
- July 1, 2015: Published version 5 of the *Research Data Curation Bibliography*.

## 2016

- 2016: Published *DigitalKoans* posts.
- 2016: Published *Digital Curation News*.
- 2016: Moderated the LinkedIn Digital Curation Group.
- June 6, 2016: Published version 6 of the *Research Data Curation Bibliography*.

## 2017

- 2017: Published *DigitalKoans* posts.
- 2017: Published *Digital Curation News*.
- 2017: Moderated the LinkedIn Digital Curation Group.
- January 24, 2017: Published version 7 of the *Research Data Curation Bibliography*.
- October 4, 2017: Published version 8 of the *Research Data Curation Bibliography*.

2018

- 2018: Published *DigitalKoans* posts.
- 2018: Published *Digital Curation News*.
- 2018: Moderated the LinkedIn Digital Curation Group .
- April 18, 2018: Published version 9 of the *Research Data Curation Bibliography*.

2019

- 2019: Published *DigitalKoans* posts. Over 10,800 posts published since 2005.
- 2019: Published *Digital Curation News*.
- 2019: Moderated the LinkedIn Digital Curation Group serving over 1,700 users.
- June 28, 2019: Published version 10 of the *Research Data Curation Bibliography*.

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