Publish don't perish thanks to new iPhone app

August 8 2014

A new app developed at the University of Otago is already helping researchers in over 20 countries connect more effectively with journals that could publish their research.

The HelpMePublish project is the brain-child of Associate Professor James Maclaurin, from the Department of Philosophy, in partnership with Otago Innovation Limited (OIL), the University of Otago's commercialisation arm.

"The academic research publishing industry is huge," says Maclaurin. "It's now worth over $20 billion per year and it publishes around one million academic papers per year.

"With numbers of published papers growing by around 9% per year, getting published is increasingly an uphill battle particularly for young researchers who must choose from hundreds of journals in their subject area and often find it difficult to get good information about how those journals work."

HelpMePublish allows researchers to search for journals in their subject area in a more targeted way, he explains. To date they have created a 'whitelist'database of about 5500 journals in 13 subject areas across Arts, Business and Science. The database sends out requests to journals asking them to fill out a single-page form asking for key pieces of information such as acceptance rates, refereeing style (e.g. double-blind, single-blind etc.), publication fees, etc.

"HelpMePublish is like a marketplace for information between journals and researchers with research showing that 80 per cent of the information that journals give us is information they don't put on their websites. So this really is trying to change the way researchers and journals communicate."

An initial search might give a researcher 100 journals to consider but, says Maclaurin, they can then refine their search based on information about acceptance rates, anonymity in peer review, speed, quality of editorial comment etc.

"Without something like HMP researchers may not realise that two journals they are considering have acceptance rates that differ by an order of magnitude or that one of them uses double-blind peer review while the other has no anonymity at all in its review process."

Dr Graham Strong, OIL's commercialisation manager, says it's more than a mobile application that delivers content.

"It is a support system for academics, in many respects, providing a whole lot of hints and tips via the @HMP_Project twitter feed which they might not have known before. Through the apps crowd-sourcing capability academics early in their career can benefit from more experienced researchers who 'rate'their experience with a Journal."

He says the app can also help journals that are trying to get established.

"For the journals – with over 1250 Journal Editors contributing information about their journals to HMP so far it is also a great opportunity for Journals to make themselves aware to academics who may not have heard of them before."

Otago Innovation are pleased to announce that, as of August 8 they are

making the HMP app free to all University of Otago academics and postgraduates as a thank you to all the people who have worked on the project. To get free access, download HMP from the iPhone app store and register with your Otago email address.

More information: www.helpmepublish.org/