

Do senior faculty publish as much as their younger colleagues?

April 27 2021, by William E. Savage & Anthony J. Olejniczak



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An Academic Analytics Research Center (AARC) study published in the journal *Scientometrics* found that senior faculty (scholars who earned their terminal degree 30 or more years ago) research publication activity

exceeded expectations based on age cohort population for book chapters and book publications, and senior scholars largely kept pace in terms of journal article publications. "Across all disciplines, senior faculty may be uniquely positioned to invest their time in a longer-term publication effort, shifting their research focus to the review and synthesis of ideas through the publication of books and chapters," said AARC Senior Researcher and co-author of the study, Bill Savage, Ph.D.

The study explored the publishing activity of 167,299 unique faculty members at American Ph.D. granting universities in six broad fields over a five-year period (2014-2018). Comparing the publication activity of early career, mid-career, and senior faculty, the study describes a generalized career research trajectory as a gradual change of focus away from [journal](#) article publications and toward book and book chapter publication.

Peter Lange, former Provost and current Thomas A. Langford University Professor of Political Science and Public Policy at Duke University and Senior Advisor to AARC, commented "This article shows convincingly that a widespread belief—that as scholars age, especially in fields driven by grants and journal publication, their scholarly productivity declines—is incorrect. It changes but does not necessarily decline, and it changes in ways that enrich the scholarly literature."

AARC Director and co-author of the study Anthony Olejniczak, Ph.D., commented, "Synthesizing years of knowledge production to explore new topics or re-examine old ones is an important service to one's field, one that senior scholars are especially able to perform." The study uncovered important implications for voluntary separation programs, departmental and program review processes, and retirement planning strategies.

More information: William E. Savage et al, Do senior faculty members produce fewer research publications than their younger colleagues? Evidence from Ph.D. granting institutions in the United States, *Scientometrics* (2021). [DOI: 10.1007/s11192-021-03957-4](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11192-021-03957-4)

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