

3, 2, 1 - A simple, platform agnostic standard for valuation of scholarly content

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Legacy publishers have effectively slowed an ongoing transition away from traditional and more lucrative publishing workflows by protecting two major assets - valuation (i.e. brand association with “prestige”) and evaluation (i.e. coordinating peer review processes) of scholarly content. Both of these assets will need to be democratized before mass transition to alternative publishing workflows can occur.

In this talk I’ll propose a possible strategy for replacing the former (valuation via publisher brand identity) with a simple, platform agnostic valuation scale between 1-3 that models existing cultural norms of valuation. While individual journals have specific brand connotations and journal impact factor allows precise ranking within specific fields, it is also common to discuss valuation of an article by placing it in one of three categories: 1) it’s published in a widely respected journal across many fields (e.g. Science or Nature), 2) it’s published in the respected journal for my field, and 3) it’s published somewhere (don’t ask). What I am proposing here is to simply formalize this cultural norm as a replacement for brand-specific valuations.

The critical feature of this “3, 2, 1” valuation standard is that it is incredibly simple. In addition to reducing cognitive load for users, simplicity is also a critical feature for ensuring interoperability and widespread adoption, allowing it to be easily implemented in a variety of platforms that can extend it with more detailed and nuanced valuation metrics specific to their user base. Establishing a simple, universal valuation standard is a necessary step before we can move beyond the current incentive structure controlled by traditional publishers.