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# The Scholarship of Discovery

JEAN DOBOS

**T**HE scholarship of discovery—defined as the pursuit and creation of new knowledge, reviewed and disseminated—is the first of Boyer's (1990) four types of scholarship. Essentially, Boyer partitioned the scholarship of discovery out of the traditional "research" category used to evaluate faculty. As a result, the scholarship of discovery is not synonymous with the traditional category of "research," and the conventional criteria for evaluating faculty research cannot simply be superimposed on the scholarship of discovery. Some of the usual and customary criteria for evaluating faculty research are relevant to the scholarship of discovery, some obviously pertain to one of the other four types of scholarship, and others are debatable.

Because scholarly productivity varies by discipline (Centra, 1993), it is important to consider which of the traditional criteria for research can be used to evaluate the scholarship of discovery in communication. This essay will examine the traditional criteria for evaluating faculty research, and identify the activities pertinent to the scholarship of discovery, the assessment practices currently in use in communication (Stacks & Hickson, 1997), and general use, with national data from the sequel to the Boyer report (Glassick, Huber, & Maeroff, 1997).

## REVISITING THE CRITERIA

Education researcher R. I. Miller (1974, 1987) was among the first to question the traditional breakdown of research, teaching, and service, and to suggest the need for a broader definition of scholarship. Building on a summary of faculty evaluation studies (Creswell, 1985), Miller (1987) provided a useful list of traditional criteria prominent in the evaluation of faculty research: quantitative measures, qualitative measures, peer judgments, and eminence measures. Indeed, as Miller noted, there is widespread agreement that no one criterion is sufficient to evaluate faculty research, and multiple criteria are commonly used. Perusal of these four traditional criteria for evaluating faculty research raises questions about which do and do not apply directly to the scholarship of discovery, particularly in the field of communication.

### *Quantitative*

Listed among the quantitative measures are the number of publications in refereed professional journals, and the number of books or book chapters. There are several questions to consider if this criterion is to be applied to the scholarship of discovery.

First, do all of our communication journals publish new discoveries? Discovery centers on posing new questions, and presenting new findings. The articles published in *Communication Theory*, a journal devoted to theory-building articles, may be viewed broadly as original contributions to new knowledge, but others may argue that such articles do not fall within the purview of the scholarship of discovery. Is every article in each journal issue concerned with the creation of new knowledge? What do we do about Chautauqua articles, critiques and author responses, or rhetorical criticism? At first glance, all articles in refereed journals would appear to fall within the scholarship of discovery, but this may not necessarily be the case.

Second, do all books and book chapters represent original research, the hallmark of the scholarship of discovery? Scholarly books obviously do, but literature reviews and chapters in our handbooks and yearbooks (e.g., *Communication Yearbook* after volume 10) seldom do. Like other edited books and textbooks, works that entail the synthesis of knowledge are outside the strictly investigative domain of the scholarship of discovery. Following the Boyer model, faculty and tenure review committees will no doubt continue to employ quantitative criteria, but will need to define in more precise ways just what counts under the scholarship of discovery.

Several studies have documented that research productivity is an increasingly important component in the evaluation of faculty in general (Boyer, 1990; Centra, 1979, 1993; Fairweather, 1996; Seldin, 1984), and communication departments endorse this view (Stacks & Hickson, 1997). Over half of all four-year colleges use quantitative counts to evaluate faculty research (Glassick et al., 1997). Productivity norms in doctoral and research institutions with an average of 4.9 refereed journal articles, are almost twice as high as the average of 2.6 in comprehensive and liberal arts colleges (Centra, 1993). Quantitative assessments also provide some useful benchmarks for evaluating faculty productivity in communication, such as the average number of journal publications per scholar (Hickson, Stacks, & Amsbary, 1989, 1993; Hickson, Stacks, & Bodon, 1999); some institutions treat single-authored works different from co-authored ones. According to Hickson and his colleagues, the typical communication scholar publishes rarely in our journals, with a mode and median of one article, whereas six articles in refereed communication journals place the author in the top 10% of the discipline. These studies suggest that the vast majority of communication faculty will have few entries under the scholarship of discovery in their academic careers.

### *Qualitative*

The traditional qualitative measures, when applied to the evaluation of the scholarship of discovery, pose still other questions and problems for the communication discipline. There are three indices of quality: the quality of the journal, citations to published works, and the success rate of proposals for research support (Miller, 1987).

Refereed journals are commonly equated with quality in most institutions and disciplines (Centra, 1979; Seldin, 1984). Reviewers and editors who are well published in the field serve as gatekeepers, and the majority of submissions are rejected. Rejection rates at our refereed journals are well over 80%, and in some cases 90% or higher. Manuscripts are rarely accepted without revision, and at least one or two rounds of revisions are common. The process is the same at the national, regional, and specialized communication journals. In fact, the same reviewers often serve on several editorial boards. The premier journals may publish bigger discoveries, more substantive advances in our knowledge about commu-

nication, but the manuscript guidelines for all refereed journals place prominent emphasis on the quality of the submission as the standard for acceptance. The state journals, however, may or may not be refereed.

According to Stacks and Hickson (1997), peer review is an important index of journal quality in about two-thirds of communication departments, and almost 80% assess journal quality by whether the journal is a national, regional, or state publication. The peer-review standard should be relatively straightforward to apply to the evaluation of the scholarship of discovery. Departments need only consider whether national, regional, and state communication journals should be weighted differentially. Are they all of equal quality? Faculty regularly engage in discussions about which ones are more preeminent.

Citations to published works are another index of quality increasingly used to evaluate faculty research, but there are several drawbacks and limitations (Centra, 1979, 1993; Miller, 1987). First, there is a time lag between submission, acceptance, publication, citation by other authors, and indexing. Second, the value of a particular work may not be immediately recognized by others in the field. For these reasons citations are perhaps most useful for evaluation of senior scholars. Too, the citations could be negative or critical, rather than positive. Nonetheless, citations provide an appraisal of a scholar's contribution to the ongoing dialogue in the field of inquiry.

In the field of communication there is another perhaps more serious problem with citations as an index of the quality of faculty work. As Funkhouser (1996) documented, many communication journals and periodicals are omitted from the *Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI)* and the *Arts and Humanities Citation Index (AHCI)*, notably the *Communication Yearbook*, several specialized journals, and all the regional journals. About one-fourth of the citations to published works listed in *SSCI* and *AHCI* came from the excluded journals. A citation analysis, if based solely on these two indexes, seriously underestimates a scholar's contribution to the body of knowledge in communication. Books are also not included in such bibliographic databases. Scholars who are more inclined to publish scholarly books, rather than journal articles, are not well served by a citation analysis.

Following the Boyer (1990) model, communication departments are faced with several difficulties with citation analysis as a quality indicator of the scholarship of discovery. As mentioned previously, the scholarship of discovery pertains to original research, not review or synthesis. Obviously, the citation indexes do not make such distinctions. Departments will have to decide if they want faculty to prepare breakdowns for the citation analysis, subdivided into Boyer's types of scholarship. The usual sum total of all citations will probably not suffice. Citations are given for each article, however, so groupings by type of scholarship are possible once a determination is made of the type of scholarship evident in each publication. Active productive scholars are likely to view the Boyer adaptation of citation analysis as an overcomplication of an already tedious process.

Grant funding received for research support is a venerable criterion for quantitative and qualitative evaluation, particularly in the natural sciences (Creswell, 1985; Miller, 1987). The emphasis on research grants received is increasing at all levels, but especially at research and doctoral institutions (Boyer, 1990; Centra, 1979, 1993). Our professional association newsletters routinely devote several column inches to grants awarded to communication faculty. Successful grant writers find ways to incorporate their own basic research into the objectives of the funding agencies. Pre-Boyer, a grant was a grant. Following the Boyer model, communication departments will have to decide how to evaluate grant funding, especially when the grant includes more than one type of scholarship. Although proportional allocation has an intuitive appeal, this may or may not be realistic or feasible.

Peer judgments are a mainstay of evaluation of faculty research. About three-fourths of all colleges and universities rely on peers within the institution, and 39% use external reviewers (Glassick et al., 1997), whereas 50% of communication departments secure judg-

ments from external reviewers (Stacks & Hickson, 1997). According to Miller (1987), peers from within the institution are in an ideal position to observe and gauge the scholarship of faculty colleagues along several dimensions such as: "content mastery, including both knowledge and understanding; an inquiring, puzzling-through attitude; dispassionate and rigorous examination of all evidence; passion about accuracy in use and interpretation of data; willingness to discard the old for the new...; and productivity" (p. 57). Colleagues within communication departments may or may not be able to assess the significance of a body of work in a particular subspecialty different from their own. Communication is a diverse field with many subspecialties. External reviewers who conduct research in the candidate's own speciality are essential. Typically, external reviewers are called upon to comment on the candidate's national reputation and overall standing in the field, as well as the quality and significance of a body of work. If Boyer's (1990) framework is in place, peers within the institution will be familiar with the language and focus of the scholarship of discovery. Will external reviewers from non-Boyer institutions have difficulty following the Boyer model? Probably not, but the letter requesting an external review sent along with several reprints and the candidate's vitae will have to give specific guidelines.

None of the traditional eminence measures of faculty research can be easily construed under the scholarship of discovery. Eminence measures include serving as referee or journal editor, honors and awards from the profession for outstanding scholarship, invited papers and guest lectures, and the number of theses and/or dissertations supervised (Creswell, 1985; Miller, 1987). Guest lectures and invited papers are likely to involve reports of original communication research, but not in all cases. The "At the Helm" series of lectures presented at the 1996 annual conference of the National Communication Association focused on interpretation and critical analysis of current perspectives, and prediction of future trends. Most of those familiar with the Boyer (1990) model would agree that supervision of theses and dissertations pertains to the scholarship of teaching, but the allocation of the other eminence measures to one of Boyer's four types of scholarship is debatable. The Woolbert Award is given for a seminal discovery, but other more career-achievement awards probably belong under the scholarship of application. Serving as referee or journal editor can be configured under either the scholarship of integration or the scholarship of application. Together with the anomalies mentioned previously, these are issues that probably need to be resolved within departments, or perhaps by our professional associations. (A full explication of each of the remaining types of scholarship appears in the subsequent papers.)

One final issue pertinent to the scholarship of discovery merits examination. As mentioned, Boyer (1990) argued that a broader definition of what it means to be a scholar should help assuage the teaching versus research debate. Most faculty subscribe to the belief that research benefits teaching. Indeed, the dissemination of research findings is an important component of the scholarship of discovery. The mutually reinforcing relationship between teaching and research has several tenets, particularly that research helps faculty stay current in their discipline and instills enthusiasm for scholarly inquiry in their students (Centra, 1993; Fairweather, 1996). Yet the evidence to support this view is sparse, and Feldman's (1987) meta-analysis of 29 studies suggests that the teacher-scholar is simply a cherished myth. Feldman found an average correlation of only .12 between student ratings of teaching effectiveness and various measures of faculty research productivity. Productivity measures included the number of publications, grants received, citations, and peer or chair ratings.

In conclusion, the original Boyer (1990) report and the sequel (Glassick et al., 1997) are likely to influence the way faculty roles are redefined, as colleges and universities struggle to remain viable and responsive to external pressures. Because the criteria for faculty evaluation vary by type of institution and by discipline, communication faculty

need to consider what these proposals mean for communication. This review of the implications of the scholarship of discovery for communication suggests that translating the traditional criteria for evaluation of faculty research into the Boyer model is not simple, but it is also not formidable.

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**ASSESSMENT CRITERIA FOR DISCOVERY****Quantitative**

- Number of publications in refereed professional journals
- Number of books/monographs
- Number of book chapters

**Qualitative**

- Quality of journals
- Citations to published works
- Success rate of proposals

**Peer Judgments**

- Internal faculty judgment of the significance of the work
- External reviewers' evaluations

**Eminence**

- Journal editor or referee
- Honors/awards for scholarship
- Invited papers/lectures
- Theses/dissertations supervised

**Research Benefits Teaching**