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Brief Reviews of Books and Products

The Evaluation Game: How Publication Metrics Shape Scholarly Communication.

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BRIEF REVIEWS OF BOOKS AND PRODUCTS

Book Review: Kulczycki, E. (2023). *The Evaluation Game: How Publication Metrics Shape Scholarly Communication*. Cambridge University Press. 228 pp. ISBN 9781009351218, 39.99 USD.

Situated at the intersection of philosophy, social science, and research policy, Emanuel Kulczycki's experiences in the world of scholarship have inspired a valuable study. Kulczycki, an associate professor at Adam Mickiewicz University (Poznań, Poland) also leads the institution's Scholarly Communication Research Group; he has additionally served as a policy advisor for the Ministry of Science and Higher Education in Poland for the past decade.

In six ambitious chapters tied together by a well-organized introduction and thought-provoking conclusion, Kulczycki addresses the following three big questions: "Who has the power to produce evaluations? Which conditions and historical contexts allowed the rise of research evaluation systems? And finally, how did diverse evaluation systems produce different practices of resistance and adaptation in academia?" (p. 14). Several paragraphs of organizing information helpfully reveal how Kulczycki maps these questions onto the overall structure of the book (pp. 14–16). Given the complicated subject matter, readers are more likely to benefit from the work by way of a cover-to-cover read-through than by skipping around among the various chapters. Kulczycki's exploration of these questions will be of interest not only to librarians with expertise in scholarly communication and research information management but also to professors hoping to more deeply understand the systems that shape their academic and professional trajectories. Additionally, academic policymakers seeking illustrations of how powerful incentives can yield surprising consequences have much to gain from reading this book, as do intellectual historians reflecting on the relationship of science and the state in a variety of national contexts over time. Perhaps the most fascinating aspect of Kulczycki's intervention in the literature is his exploration of research evaluation histories in the Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc countries (pp. 70–97).

Kulczycki's work ends with seven principles operating on a deeper level than calls for the reformed use or wholesale abandonment of research metrics. First and foremost, he believes that evaluations of academic work should reward integrity and the cultivation of trust in science and scholars rather than productivity for its own sake. To ward off the scarcity mindset that can pit researchers against each other instead of encouraging them to cooperate for the common good, Kulczycki also calls for a dramatic increase in research funding, on par



with the investments made by the United States in the early years of the Cold War. On a related note, Kulczycki observes that researchers cannot use prestige alone to keep their lights on and their homes warm; instead, scholars can only do their best work when their employment conditions are stable and appropriately remunerative, with performance expectations effectively communicated by those who hold “evaluation power” (p. 193). Procedures for evaluation ought to develop only in conversation with those whose work receives assessment; any alternatives are unlikely to win the support of the research community at hand. To prevent a short-sighted loss of focus on teaching and mentorship, researcher evaluation should take into consideration not only publications and grant applications but also student success. Kulczycki additionally believes that academic organizations such as universities and learned societies must claim responsibility for the management of scholarly communication platforms and outlets rather than leaving such responsibility in the hands of corporate publishers seeking profit from publicly funded research. Finally, Kulczycki calls for greater openness in the availability of citation data.

A robust bibliography follows these principles, demonstrating the author’s extensive consultation of relevant literature in arriving at such a conclusion by way of writing the book. Consequently, the principles will likely sound very familiar to librarians in scholarly communication roles. Given their profoundly transformative nature when considered together, it is entirely reasonable to question whether these principles are realistic; Kulczycki even states that they are “in essence simple and at the same time a great challenge to implement” because they push against “the existing interests of many stakeholder groups” (p. 192). As a reader, it would have thereby been rewarding if Kulczycki’s abundant experiences with these groups had spurred more substantial reflection, specifically at the end of the book, regarding the plausibility of achieving widespread institutional consistency with these principles over the long term. It is likewise fair, however, to acknowledge that an ambitious study deserves an ambitious conclusion. After all, in the absence of carefully considered proposals for ideals around which to coalesce, it might be difficult, if not impossible, for professional communities to orient additional debates regarding which aspirations are feasible and which are not. Kulczycki’s contribution of global perspective and historical curiosity combines with an admirable interest in aligning researcher incentives with the promotion of societal wellbeing and trust in expertise. *The Evaluation Game* will find a welcome home on the shelves of librarians, researchers, and policymakers alike.

BIOGRAPHY

Scott Richard St. Louis holds an MS in information science from the University of Michigan. He represents only himself in his writings.