

Book Reviews



Digital Genres in Academic Knowledge Production and Communication

María José Luzón and Carmen Pérez-Llantada

Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 2022. 232 pages. ISBN: 9781788924726

A myriad of digital genres has opened up new channels for academics and impacted their writing practices and research communication in major ways (Kuteeva & Mauranen, 2018; Hyland, 2022). Scholars have become ever more enamoured of digital environments and involved with networking tools to disseminate their research. More importantly, the use of digital genres has broadened the context of academic interaction, supporting direct exchanges between scholars and other professionals, and between scholars and any member of an inquiring society. This novel context dealing with new digital media and non-specialist readerships, however, also brings new challenges to academics. In particular, it influences the ways they construct themselves and their arguments and how they disseminate their work. Thus exploring the role of digital genres in scientific knowledge communication is now crucial in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) research. This very timely book provides an insightful view of what academics can do with a range of digital genres, how they perform their new identities and what semiotic and linguistic resources they deploy to interact with both peers and the broad public. The book will, I am sure, inspire researchers in different fields to reflect on their own use of digital genres and encourage further research in the area.

Luzón and Pérez-Llantada state their aim is to examine “how scholars employ digital genres to disseminate academic knowledge to diverse audiences” (p. 1). The investigation is oriented towards the studies of multifarious digital genres employed by scholars, both monomodal and multimodal, and from both microscopic and macroscopic perspectives. The analysis is informed by four research areas: (1) the digital genres produced by academics, (2) the purposes of these genres and their affordances and constraints on researchers’ activity, (3) the different audiences of digital

genres and the rhetorical strategies used to reach them, and (4) the rationale behind researchers' choices of the linguistic and semiotic resources in them.

The book comprises 11 chapters which follow a logical progression. The introductory chapter provides a rationale for writing the book. It begins with an introduction that discusses the growing importance of digital genres in the scholarly arena. Luzón and Pérez-Llantada explain that academic knowledge communication with the aid of digital genres has become more prominent as they bring to the fore crucial changes in academics' practices, leading to their responses to the new demands and the changing research context. The authors then elaborate on two crucial 'why' issues: why this book and why digital genres, to emphasize again the crucial urgency of understanding the rhetorical actions performed by digital genres and the semiotic modes that can be combined to compose them. The chapter thus paves the way for the following chapters.

Chapter 2 lays the theoretical foundation for the discussion of scientific knowledge communication in digital genres. In this chapter, Luzón and Pérez-Llantada review a wide range of theories and literature on genre. By providing a detailed conceptualization of key terms such as genre assemblages, genre ecology, and genre repertoire, they reveal the way genres work, emerge, evolve and operate in the digital context. At the same time, the authors offer a fine-grained analysis of the affordances and full potential of digital genres for multimodal and multilingual scientific knowledge communication.

Further unpacking the key points made in previous chapters, Chapter 3 contextualizes the analysis of digital genres for knowledge communication. The authors mainly elucidate the affordances and constraints on academic activities, and the way digital media influence scholarly communication in the 21st century. They consider specifically six crucial impacts of digital media on knowledge communication. Their aim is to show how digitalization meets not only academics' desires for visibility, but also the demands of open science in influencing knowledge production and communication. This chapter, then, triggers the discussions in Chapters 4-10 of what academics do with such digital affordances.

The empirical chapters 4-10 bring together case studies of specific digital genres. In these chapters, the authors offer a closer perspective on the use of these genres to accomplish seven actions: performing multiple identities, sharing the whole research process, interacting in academic social networking

sites, disseminating knowledge to and engaging a diverse audience, ‘showing’ research, and assessing research as well as participating in online scholarly discussions. The major issue informing these seven chapters is that the inexorable growth of digital genres facilitates broad changes in knowledge production and communication.

Specifically, chapter 4 embarks on academic identity construction in online environments. The authors offer a lucid review of the construction of academic identity online as a valuable tool for reputation management, and particularly touch upon the underexplored translanguaging practices of multilingual researchers in constructing their multiple online identities. A case study of 347 blog posts from research groups is used to show how Spanish scholars construct their identities and enhance their visibility in research blogs, with the aid of the semiotic resources the genre provides.

Chapter 5 extends the discussion to an underused genre, the open laboratory notebook (OLN), showing its potential for accomplishing research process sharing. By drawing on the rhetorical move analysis and discourse analysis of posts in OLN, the authors underscore the hypertextual and interactive affordances of this digital genre to facilitate the accountability, reliability and reproducibility of experienced-based knowledge and research to advance science through collaborative knowledge sharing.

Continuing to focus on research sharing, Chapter 6 then addresses academic social networking sites (ASNSs), focusing on their crucial role in scholarly interaction between researchers with different linguacultural and disciplinary backgrounds. Similarly, employing a case study of 426 posts taken from 12 Q&A threads in ResearchGate (RG), Luzón and Pérez-Llantada highlight the key role of RG Q&A forums as an open, translocal online affinity space, as it allows information to be both collective and exchangeable with online peer support. The genre thus reveals a socially bonded multilingual academic community.

Chapter 7 further empirically explores how blogs and microblogs (Twitter) are used to engage with a heterogeneous audience, revealing the interplay among digital genres, audiences and language resources. Following a comprehensive review of how academic blogging and microblogging enable two-way interactions between academics and a diverse audience, the chapter touches upon the discursive strategies deployed in blogging practices, and more importantly, the issue of language practices that non-Anglophone scholars engage in. To close the discussion, Luzón and Pérez-Llantada

present the results of a case study of the ways research groups harness their Twitter accounts to keep different audiences informed of their research findings. They also emphasize the coexistence of language practices deployed when using Twitter by multilingual scholars to target different audiences.

Moving on to another key issue, in Chapter 8 Luzón and Pérez-Llantada articulate public engagement and democratization of science through digital genres. Through detailed analyses of citizen science projects and crowdfunding proposals, they demonstrate effectively how emerging digital genres respond to social exigences, contributing to the democratization of science and the accountability of scientific research. The authors then use a successfully funded crowdfunding science project, namely, *10,000 Years of Climate and Environmental Changes in Jamaica*, to further showcase how a digital medium supports public engagement in research processes by interweaving semiotic modes.

Following the discussion of how semiotic resources are orchestrated in digital genres, Chapter 9 attends to ‘showing’ research through several (audio)visual genres. It leads off by offering a neat encapsulation of earlier studies on (audio)visual abstracts, the video methods article and stand-alone online videos. The authors argue convincingly that the increasing use of visual genres helps ‘show’ research and thus increases public engagement by integrating different modes. Similarly, underpinned by a case study of popular science web videos, the relationship among genre, mode and medium is revealed. This is shown particularly through the analyses of rhetorical structure of the videos, strategies of making the content understandable and credible, devices of engaging the reader, and strategies of expressing stance. The chapter offers a demonstration of how the combination of modes affords new ways to make meaning and to engage the lay public.

Chapter 10 turns to digital genres used for assessing research. Beginning with analyses of emerging digital genres for open peer review and post-publication evaluation, Luzón and Pérez-Llantada present studies on features of online review genres and indicate the research gaps. Further supported by discussions of blogs and other social media, they highlight the role of blogs and tweets, for example, in legitimating knowledge and evaluating published research. A case study of academic blog posts and comments follows to show the way participants evaluate other’s claims and

signal their allegiance to a particular group, with different indicators of social and antisocial behavior.

The last chapter provides final considerations on new digital genres for facilitating the dissemination of disciplinary knowledge, both locally and globally. What Luzón and Pérez-Llantada highlight again here, based on all the previous discussions, is the multifarious possibilities facilitated by digital genres for academic knowledge communication with broader changes such as new audiences and new writing practices. This last chapter also encompasses contributions which cover genre analysis and genre evolution and innovation. Important here is how the hybrid and hyperlinked nature of digital genres makes it possible to present knowledge which is open to revision and which supports new research practices as an open and ongoing process. In closing, the authors suggest valuable suggestions for future research on digital genres for academic knowledge production and dissemination.

The timely book exhibits the changing trends in academic knowledge communication, capturing a broad range of digital genres. With the scrutiny of a spectrum of specific genres, the book is a valid contribution to both genre studies and academic discourse analysis. With the ultra-detailed analyses of 7 cases studies, Luzón and Pérez-Llantada map the multiple audiences with whom academics communicate and collaborate in today's academic world and, more importantly, present academics' evolving strategies for adapting their discourses to encourage the participation of a broader public in research. The book is therefore highly recommended to novice and experienced researchers in the fields of EAP, genre analysis and those who are interested in communicating knowledge online in other languages. It will also prove valuable to academics who perform new roles and engage in new academic practices.

However, to my mind, the book could have benefitted from exploring digital genres and multilingualism in greater depth, particularly in how multilingual scholars participate in digital genres using both English and their mother tongues. It would also have been valuable if the authors could have incorporated qualitative data in their findings, drawing on interviews to critically investigate both practitioners' practices and the public's responses to these in the research processes. Finally, I would have welcomed a closing "afterword" to offer final thoughts and outline further lines of investigation. These, though, are small points. Overall, the book is extensively researched,

clearly written and thought-provoking. It covers a great deal of ground and provides an excellent foundation for EAP researchers to undertake further studies of genres and changes in academic communication.

Received 1 May 2023
Accepted 12 June 2023

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