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## **Recommended Guidelines for Evaluating Scholarly Contributions**

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Ellie Dworak for the Boise State University Albertsons Library Faculty Scholarship Evaluation Task Force, March 2021

## Introduction

Albertsons Library faculty use the model presented in Ernest Boyer's 1990 *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*, where scholarship is broadly defined as having four functions: discovery, integration, application and teaching. Library faculty value the creation, sharing, and application of knowledge as products of our own work and as a means of self-improvement, leading to greater understanding of the fields in which we work.

Every tenure-eligible library faculty member is expected to produce high-quality and disciplinarily-relevant scholarship, relative to whatever form scholarship takes for them and whatever portion of their workload is assigned to scholarship. Faculty are responsible for presenting evidence to support the assessment of their scholarship.

## Part I. A System for Measuring Scholarly Significance

### Introduction

This document summarizes a System for Measuring Scholarly Significance (System) that was used to create the *Recommended Guidelines for Evaluating Scholarly Contributions* (Guidelines). It represents the synthesis of what members of the Boise State University Albertsons Library Faculty Scholarship Evaluation Task Force (the Task Force) learned through reading and discussing hundreds of pages of primary and secondary documents informing how scholarship is and has been valued, most especially within academic libraries as well as through spending over fourteen hours in conversation with you, the librarians here at Boise State.

It is our hope that this System and accompanying Guidelines provides candidates with tools to create a compelling case for their scholarship across the full span of possibilities described by the Boyer Model even as it presents a means of evaluating such work.

We have sought to provide clarity and objectivity to the process of scholarship evaluation. However, creating a truly impartial standard would require an assessment of current library faculty scholarship in relation to a complete accounting of the work tasks undertaken by each individual. We hope that we have struck a workable balance that will serve as library faculty continue to develop a shared understanding of what it means to be a practitioner-scholar.

### The Boyer Model

In Chapter 2 of his 1990 book, *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*,<sup>1</sup> Ernest Boyer describes four types of scholarship, now collectively called The Boyer Model. The types of scholarship described by Boyer are:

**The scholarship of discovery** is the traditional definition of scholarship as the search for new knowledge. Most often this work is shared in journal publications or via conference presentations and posters.

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<sup>1</sup> Boyer, E. L. (1990), "Enlarging the perspective." In *Scholarship reconsidered: Priorities of the professoriate* (1st ed., Ser. A special report). Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, pp. 15-25. The title has been reprinted many times, in various editions, with various types of introductory material.

**The scholarship of application** is sometimes called the scholarship of engagement, and involves applying knowledge to solve real world problems. Teaching faculty sometimes call it the scholarship of service, but for practitioner-scholars, such as academic librarians, the scholarship of application is often practiced in the broader context of our daily work. Developing a new library service using a methodological approach would be in this domain.

**The scholarship of integration** involves integrating knowledge from across topics within a discipline, across disciplines, or across time. An example is systematically applying communication theory to reference exchanges.

**The scholarship of teaching and learning** consists of the application of innovative teaching practices and the study of how these innovations impact student learning. A librarian might approach this by developing and testing the efficacy of a tutorial video.

### ***The Boyer Model at Boise State University***

On April 24, 2020, the Boise State University Office of the Provost shared two documents with Boise State Academic leadership, both of which contained information about using the Boyer Model of scholarship at Boise State University, and within which is the following statement indicating a need to diversify what we value as scholarship:

*In addition to highlighting the scholarship of discovery, we want to recognize now, more than ever, the vital role that the other scholarly and creative domains contribute to communities within and outside of the university.<sup>2</sup>*

In the coming year, the Provost's office intends to initiate conversations with faculty and departments about how to achieve this goal. For this reason, the Task Force believes that it is important, now, for library faculty to engage with the Boyer Model and develop a shared understanding of how it can be applied in our setting.

### ***Challenges of the Boyer Model***

The Boyer Model, on the one hand, provides faculty the opportunity to receive credit for a broader array of scholarly activities. On the other hand, the model introduces a level of ambiguity in regard to "what counts."<sup>3</sup> This lack of specificity works against transparency, which is so important for supporting pre-tenured faculty, and introduces greater potential for unintentional bias on the part of evaluators.

The Provost's documentation provides a framework for creating clearer guidance in the form of a series of descriptive standards that an activity must meet:

1. clear goals
2. adequate preparation
3. appropriate methods
4. significant results
5. effective presentation
6. public dissemination
7. peer review

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<sup>2</sup> ibid

<sup>3</sup> The Boyer Model also introduces ambiguity surrounding which domain of scholarship in which to place an activity, but this is less troubling in regard to the evaluation of scholarly work.

These measures are similar to those found throughout policies that incorporate Boyer. They offer us an outline, but there is a lot of work to be done at the disciplinary and library levels, too. We've heard questions, and they are good questions that we should ask each other, and answer over time. For example:

- What do we believe counts as public dissemination?
- What are the elements of effective presentation?
- What metrics are encouraged in demonstrating that these bars have been met?
- What is enough? And how do we know? Do two emails from colleagues, a peer review, and a Tweet count for 2 citations?

Without this groundwork, without knowing what, specifically, we are trying to measure, the goal of creating unequivocal guidelines that are also accurate and just will remain elusive. Therefore, in making our recommendations, it is with a sense of urgency that we develop a space for library faculty to unpack Boyer and translate it for our organization.

### Proposing A System for Measuring Scholarly Significance

In pursuit of effective criterion for the evaluation of scholarship, we sought to differentiate the components of a work that constitute it as scholarship. This led to the identification of three factors that, in combination, we term a work's scholarly significance. These dimensions are:

**Dissemination**, which is a measure of reach. As scholarship is a professional and philosophical conversation, and reaching a larger audience has a greater impact in shaping that conversation. Dissemination can be demonstrated by circulation counts, citation counts, downloads, and other measures of the extent to which a work is made available. The traditional analogs to dissemination are publishing and presenting.

**Recognition** designates whether and how a work is evaluated. Double blind peer review or a competitive award are weighty evidence of recognition. Less formal assets such as an email communication with evaluative content might also contribute to demonstrating recognition.

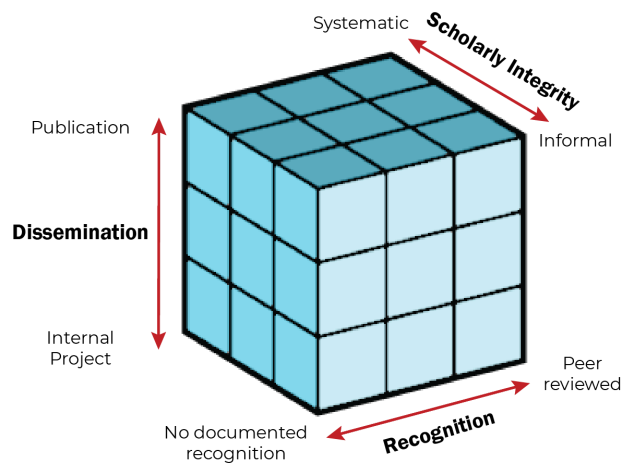
**Scholarly integrity** describes the degree to which a work uses an appropriate methodology rigorously. On the high end of the scale is work that is systematic - methodological and planned. On the other extreme is informal work. Typically, attempts to measure these traits are framed as measures of quality, which is a slippery concept especially in a field with as many diverse areas of specialization as does librarianship.

The standards contained in the Provost's memo relate to these dimensions as outlined below in Table 6.

**Table 6. Relationship Between Elements of Scholarly Integrity to the Standard's Presented in the Provost's Memo<sup>4</sup>**

| Dimensions of scholarly significance: | Dissemination           | Recognition    | Scholarly integrity  |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------|--|
| Elements of the dimensions:           | 6. public dissemination | 7. peer review | 1. clear goals<br>2. adequate preparation<br>3. appropriate methods<br>4. significant results<br>5. effective presentation |

<sup>4</sup> ibid



**Figure 1. Scholarly significance dimensions mapped to a 3D graph**

Figure 1. above, illustrates the interplay between the three dimensions. The continuum of possible ratings for each dimension is labeled along each of the three axes.

### Putting the System to Work

The diagram shown in Figures 1a and 1b is too complicated to use at a pragmatic level. It also obscures an important characteristic, which is that evidence for each dimension is cumulative.

While the Task Force believes that all three dimensions must be present in order to consider a work scholarship, we do not think it necessary to otherwise define a minimum score for each dimension. However, as indicated in Figure 2, evidence across the three dimensions should meet a threshold.



**Figure 2. Scholarly significance viewed as building blocks of evidence.**

## Addressing Ambiguity

As noted earlier in this Appendix, the Boyer Model introduces ambiguity. This document is meant as a starting point for addressing ambiguity of the “what counts” sort. However, the question of how to classify one’s work in regard to workload categories of librarianship, scholarship, and service is not addressed. The reason for this is that the System does not propose to classify activities by type, but rather to substantiate the scholarly nature of a specific output.

Due to the nature of the work of academic librarians, the Boyer Model presents library faculty with an overwhelming number of opportunities to develop our daily work into scholarship. Because 85% of a librarians’ workload is librarianship, it is clear that only a few of these opportunities can be pursued. For this reason, we recommend that the decision for where to place an activity (presuming that it meets the the criteria for scholarly significance) be solely determined by each faculty member as they prepare a self-evaluation, portfolio, or other such presentation of their work.

Finally, the Boyer Model introduces another layer of ambiguity, that of how to classify a work of scholarship within the Boyer typology (discovery, application, integration, and teaching & learning). We believe that further communications from Provost’s Office, along with further conversations amongst the library faculty, will help to remedy this vagueness.

## Next Steps

Over the coming weeks, the Task Force will be providing examples of the System in use. We intend to use these examples as starting points for discussion in addition to soliciting direct input on the Draft Guidelines. We will use this feedback to revise and improve the guidelines until such time as we come to an accord.

## Part II. Proposed Guidelines

### Determining the Scholarly Significance Score of a Work

For each work presented during an evaluation period, evidence in all three of the following areas must be included:

1. Dissemination - more narrowly termed “publication,” demonstrating that the work has been shared in some format;
2. Recognition - peer review in a broad sense, establishing that the work has been evaluated and determined to be of high quality;
3. Scholarly integrity - indications that a work was produced using an appropriate methodology rigorously.

Evaluators should consider the evidence provided for each category and give each a score of 0 to 40, as outlined in Table 1 and in the **Scoring Evidence** section of this document.

**Table 1. General Structure for Scoring Evidence**

|   |                |     |          |      |             |
|---|----------------|-----|----------|------|-------------|
| <b>Evidence of dissemination</b>          | Little to none | Low | Moderate | High | Outstanding |
| Point value:                              | 0              | 10  | 20       | 30   | 40          |
| <b>Evidence of recognition</b>            | Little to none | Low | Moderate | High | Outstanding |
| Point value:                              | 0              | 10  | 20       | 30   | 40          |
| <b>Evidence of scholarly significance</b> | Little to none | Low | Moderate | High | Outstanding |
| Point value:                              | 0              | 10  | 20       | 30   | 40          |

The sum of these three scores is the *Scholarly Significance Score* for the work, which will range from 0 to 120.

### Determining the Scholarly Contribution Score

The scores for each work included in a candidate's portfolio are added together to create the candidate's *Scholarly Contribution Score* for that evaluation period.

### Applying Scholarly Contribution Scores to Evaluation Levels

The guidelines in Table 2, below, are meant to suggest parameters to be considered alongside a faculty member's annual goals and assigned workload, which may vary a great deal from one individual to the next. More detailed information is provided in the Scholarship section of the Appendix to this document.

**Table 2. Applying Scholarly Contribution Scores to Evaluation Levels**

| Unsatisfactory   | Improvement Needed   | Good  | Excellent   | Exceptional                                |
|--|--|---|---|--|
| <i>Scholarly Contribution Score</i> ranging from 0 to 29 | <i>Scholarly Contribution Score</i> ranging from 30 to 59<br>OR<br>Demonstrated progress toward contributions with the potential for a moderate score ( $\geq 60$ points) [years 1-2 only] | <i>Scholarly Contribution Score</i> ranging from 60 to 89<br>OR<br><i>Scholarly Contribution Score</i> ranging from 10 to 30 plus demonstrated progress toward contributions with the potential for a high score ( $\geq 90$ points) [years 1-2 only]<br>OR<br>Demonstrated progress toward contributions with the potential for an excellent score ( $\geq 120$ points) [years 1-3 only] | <i>Scholarly Contribution Score</i> ranging from 90 to 119<br>OR<br><i>Scholarly Contribution Score</i> ranging from 60 to 80 plus demonstrated progress toward contributions with the potential for an outstanding score ( $\geq 120$ points) [years 1-4 only] | <i>Scholarly Contribution Score</i> of 120 |

### Scoring Evidence

The examples below are meant to illustrate the types and amounts of evidence one might expect to see along a range of scores. While discrete categories are used to describe points across the range, the intention is that the full range of whole numerals be available to evaluators, providing the scope to give credit to individual elements of a work of scholarship.

Evidence should be viewed cumulatively, with more weight being given in relation to volume within and across the items. However, by no means should these examples be considered a simple checklist with a strictly additive effect.

For the most part the examples of evidence shown below represent bland averages. Similar evidence might be scored differently if some type of exceptionality is demonstrated.

## Scoring Evidence of Dissemination

Dissemination is a measure of reach: making your work available and of others making use of your work. Table 3 provides some examples of evidence.

**Table 3. Examples of Scoring Evidence for Dissemination**

| Score       | Points | Examples of Evidence   |
|-------------|--------|--|
| Low         | 10     | Having shared with a limited number of individuals, such as with an eCampus Master Course or a library association committee<br>Having published or shared professionally in any format or venue   |
| Moderate    | 20     | Attendance statistics from a presentation or workshop<br>Citation counts   |
| High        | 30     | Having published or shared professionally in an open access venue, in any format<br>Having published or shared professionally in a high circulation or high attendance venue<br>Having published or shared professionally in a national or international venue |
| Outstanding | 40     | Having published or shared professionally in a venue that meets two of the following criteria: open access, high circulation/attendance, national/international  |

## Scoring Evidence of Recognition

Recognition is a gauge of peer evaluation in its broadest context.

**Table 4. Examples of Scoring Evidence for Recognition**

| Score       | Points | Examples of Evidence  |
|-------------|--------|---|
| Low         | 10     | Thank you letter for service on a committee or other working body<br>Editorial reviewed article, presentation, etc.   |
| Moderate    | 20     | Comments on a blog post or other online publication venue<br>Citation counts, with context about how the work was used<br>Participant evaluations of a presentation or workshop |
| High        | 30     | Invited publications or presentations<br>Peer reviewed article, presentation, etc.<br>Publication in a ranked journal or equivalent   |
| Outstanding | 40     | Publication or presentation that meets two of the following criteria: invited, peer reviewed, ranked venue  |



## Scoring Evidence of Scholarly Integrity

Scholarly integrity is a measure of how closely a work meets the aims of scholarship - to be purposeful, methodical, and rigorous in the pursuit of knowledge.

**Table 5. Examples of Scoring Evidence for Integrity**

| Score       | Points | Examples of Evidence  |
|-------------|--------|---|
| Low         | 10     | Professional contributions such as a literature review, book review or, best practices article/workshop, conducted with an implied, but not explicated, methodology<br>Editing or reviewing a scholarly work,   |
| Moderate    | 20     | Professional contributions such as a literature review, book review, or best practices article/workshop, conducted with a clear, explicated methodology<br>Editing or reviewing a scholarly work, when conducted with a clear, explicated methodology |
| High        | 30     | Original research conducted with a clear, explicated methodology  |
| Outstanding | 40     | Major research project or research project requiring the attainment of new or advanced research methods or skills   |

## Toolkit for Writing About Scholarly Impact (Draft)

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>What is this?</b>  | A compilation of resources that the Scholarship Evaluation Task Force hat encountered while working on our charge, and which we thought would be useful to librarians.  |
| <b>Writing about your scholarship</b>   |   |
| <a href="#">CRediT – Contributor Roles Taxonomy</a>                             | Librarians may find that the contributor roles are helpful in describing scholarship that doesn't result in authorship.   |
| <a href="#">How to use Altmetrics for Promotion &amp; Tenure</a>                | We have access to another Altmetric product (PlumX metrics), but most of the information in this guide translates. If you need help with PlumX metrics, Ellie Dworak is happy to assist.  |
| <a href="https://www.metrics-toolkit.org/">https://www.metrics-toolkit.org/</a> | The information about what a variety of metrics do and don't measure might be helpful to librarians writing about the impact of their work.   |
| <b>Identifying metrics &amp; measures</b>                                       |   |
| <a href="#">ACRL Impactful Scholarship and Metrics Framework</a>                | A list of recommended impact measures for a variety of types of scholarship produced by librarians. The authors of the framework did a gargantuan amount of research into current practices prior to writing their recommendations. |
| <a href="#">Eigenfactor metrics</a>   | An alternative to the Thomson-Reuters Journal Citation Reports; useful for writing about impact with a traditional focus.   |
| <a href="#">Scimago Journal Rankings</a>  | Uses the Scopus database metrics to calculate its own rankings, called SJR. Useful for arguing for the impact of a publication. Also provides the H-Index and citation counts in various permutations for each journal.             |
| <b>Other resources</b>  |   |
| <a href="#">Demonstrate your impact</a>   | A Libguide from Portland State. Includes a section on community engaged scholarship.  |