



Creating Connections in and through Knowledge Commons—Introducing the ‘Connection’ Research Scan, available open access via the Open Scholarship Press

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Written by Graham Jensen and Brittany Amell

At a Glance / En un coup d'œil

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Summary / Résumé

This post introduces the *Connection research scan*, available open access via [the Open Scholarship Press](#). The Connections research scan covers topics pertinent to the knowledge commons, including how it has been conceived historically, how it has evolved in recent years, and how scholars are thinking about its implementation now.

Creating Connections in and through Knowledge

Commons

This post introduces the *Connection research scan* (Jensen et al. 2023), available open access via [the Open Scholarship Press](#). The *Connection research scan* covers topics related to questions of how the knowledge commons has been conceived historically, how it has evolved in recent years, and how scholars are thinking about its implementation now.

The idea of a commons has various historical roots that shed important light on ongoing debates about scholarly communication, access to information, and the stewardship of digital resources. For instance, in the European tradition, today's knowledge commons have pre-digital origins in the English medieval practice of designating certain lands for shared use. Over time, most of these commons were gradually parcelled out and privatized (Boyle 2008; Winter et al. 2020). Similar trends in the enclosure of shared spaces and privatization of shared resources proceed apace in the twenty-first century; enclosure has resulted in the cordoning off of scholarly research behind paywalls (Bollier 2002; De Angelis and Harvie 2013), as well as the commercialization of mass media (Benkler 2006) and academic social networking sites.

The research scan consists of nearly 240 individual annotations divided into three main sections organized around the following themes: *Knowledge Commons as Sites of Connection*; *Forms of Connection and Collaboration in Digital Knowledge Commons*; and *Maintaining Connections and Fostering Care in Digital Knowledge Commons*. These core themes are further divided into sub-sections. *An analytical introduction*, written by Graham Jensen, opens the scan and introduces each of the sections in more depth and detail.

Taken together, the bibliography's selected writings work toward an increasingly feasible manifestation of the concept of the digital knowledge commons or digital research commons. Its authors gesture to the many affordances—but also the many extant challenges—of adopting commons-based platforms and practices.

A brief overview of each section and its subsections in the Connections research scan follows.

Knowledge Commons as Sites of Connection

Acknowledging the rich intellectual histories that inform discussions of knowledge commons in our own digital, global age, the *Knowledge Commons as Sites of Connection* section begins with scholarship on the centuries-old concept of a “commons,” the first section focuses on the theme of *Knowledge Commons as Sites of Connection*. This section is divided further into three sub-sections:

- *Historical and Theoretical Approaches to Knowledge Commons*
- *(Academic) Social Networking Sites as Knowledge Commons*
- *Noteworthy Examples of Digital Knowledge Commons*

Forms of Connection and Collaboration in Digital Knowledge Commons

The second section, *Forms of Connection and Collaboration in Digital Knowledge Commons*, is grounded in the two interrelated concepts that give the first sub-section its name—open social scholarship, and social knowledge creation. The INKE Partnership defines open social scholarship as “academic practice that enables the creation, dissemination, and engagement of open research by specialists and non-specialists in accessible and significant ways” (“About INKE”). The *Forms of Connection and Collaboration in Digital Knowledge Commons* section is divided into three sub-sections. These are:

- *Open Social Scholarship and Social Knowledge Creation*
- *Community Engagement*
- *Commons-based Approaches to Teaching and Research*

Maintaining Connections and Fostering Care in Digital Knowledge Commons

The growth of digital knowledge commons and widespread adoption of academic social networking sites in a variety of scholarly, geographical, and political contexts raises important questions about data management, the privatization of previously open platforms, community governance, and who is excluded from virtual spaces.

Many of the authors in the third and final section, which focuses on the theme of *Maintaining Connections and Fostering Care in Digital Knowledge Commons*, share the belief that the enclosure of knowledge commons poses a threat to scholarly production on multiple fronts. Additionally, this section brings together

commentary on the tension between open public knowledge systems and closed corporate ones.

This section also brings together examinations of platforms and the kinds of interactions between publics and academics that occur on them, critiques of a bias towards foregrounding Anglophone and Global North perspectives and scholarship, discussions at the intersection of ethics, care, and academic rigour in relation to data management, and, lastly, a few of the policies and guidelines that are frequently cited in larger discussions about digital knowledge commons and data management.

The *Maintaining Connections and Fostering Care in Digital Knowledge Commons* is divided into five sub-sections in total. These are:

- **Commercialization, Commodification, and the Common Good**
- **Governance and Conduct in Digital Knowledge Commons**
- **Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Digital Spaces**
- **Ethical and Responsible Data Management**
- **Relevant Licenses, Policies, and Guidelines**

Last Words

While the **Connection research scan** reflects the breadth of recent work in digital humanities, scholarly communication, library and information studies, digital sociology, and many other academic fields, it also speaks directly to the need for ongoing academic and non-academic inquiry into knowledge commons as sites of social connection, scholarly and university-community collaboration, and ethical engagement with researchers and research data. In the process, it provokes as many questions as it answers—about how these spaces can build community and support academic research, for example, but also about how they can benefit an engaged public and contribute to the common good.

This research scan, with its 240 or so annotations summarizing recent thinking on public engagement, open social scholarship, and scholarly communication, offers an important entry point for scholars, practitioners, teachers, and students alike.

Other Publications Available via the Open Scholarship Press

The Open Scholarship Press has published several research scans and collections that are openly available via **Wikibooks** including:

- **Knowledge Mobilization in the Humanities**
- **Engaging Knowledge Diversity**
- **Engaging Platforms in Open Scholarship**
- **Foundational Observations: Open Scholarship Policy Observatory, 2017-2020**
- **Observations préliminaires : Observatoire des politiques d'Érudition ouverte, 2017-2020**
- **Extensions: Open Scholarship Policy Observatory, 2021-2024**
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- **Open Scholarship Press Collections: Training**
- **Open Scholarship Press Collections: Policy**
- **Open Scholarship Press Collections: Connection**
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