

The University in a Bind

IWMW 2013

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The institutional Web at the not-so-calm centre of the hurricane

- The operating environment of universities is changing
- They tell a story to themselves and others about how they are responding
- I ask myself
 - How do we tell a coherent story about the University?
 - What do we do that is different?
 - What could we do?
- The institutional Web is a key vector for the story

My personal effort to make sense of it all

- Talk through some of the conflicting pressures on universities
- Explain what a double bind is
- Apply that idea to universities
- Argue that this is a fruitful way of looking at the problems of understanding and presenting the identity of a university

Some conflicting pressures

Conflict: Publish or Perish / connect through the Web

- Universities and academics need to publish
 - to attract research funding
 - to attract students
 - to be useful in the world
 - and because that's what academics do
- Open access journals tick these boxes

OPEN ACCESS PEER-REVIEWED

15,803

VIEWS

12

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819

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

A New Owl Species of the Genus *Otus* (Aves: Strigidae) from Lombok, Indonesia

George Sangster , Ben F. King, Philippe Verbelen, Colin R. Trainor

Article

About the Authors

Metrics

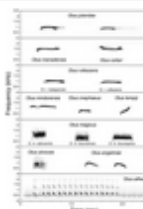
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Species	Number of specimens	Sex	Age	Locality	Date	Collector	Accession number
<i>O. macleodensis</i>	1	♂	Ad	Lombok	2011	Sangster et al.	BMNH 2011.10.12.1
<i>O. macleodensis</i>	1	♀	Ad	Lombok	2011	Sangster et al.	BMNH 2011.10.12.2
<i>O. macleodensis</i>	1	♂	Ad	Lombok	2011	Sangster et al.	BMNH 2011.10.12.3
<i>O. macleodensis</i>	1	♀	Ad	Lombok	2011	Sangster et al.	BMNH 2011.10.12.4
<i>O. macleodensis</i>	1	♂	Ad	Lombok	2011	Sangster et al.	BMNH 2011.10.12.5
<i>O. macleodensis</i>	1	♀	Ad	Lombok	2011	Sangster et al.	BMNH 2011.10.12.6
<i>O. macleodensis</i>	1	♂	Ad	Lombok	2011	Sangster et al.	BMNH 2011.10.12.7
<i>O. macleodensis</i>	1	♀	Ad	Lombok	2011	Sangster et al.	BMNH 2011.10.12.8
<i>O. macleodensis</i>	1	♂	Ad	Lombok	2011	Sangster et al.	BMNH 2011.10.12.9
<i>O. macleodensis</i>	1	♀	Ad	Lombok	2011	Sangster et al.	BMNH 2011.10.12.10
<i>O. macleodensis</i>	1	♂	Ad	Lombok	2011	Sangster et al.	BMNH 2011.10.12.11
<i>O. macleodensis</i>	1	♀	Ad	Lombok	2011	Sangster et al.	BMNH 2011.10.12.12
<i>O. macleodensis</i>	1	♂	Ad	Lombok	2011	Sangster et al.	BMNH 2011.10.12.13
<i>O. macleodensis</i>	1	♀	Ad	Lombok	2011	Sangster et al.	BMNH 2011.10.12.14
<i>O. macleodensis</i>	1	♂	Ad	Lombok	2011	Sangster et al.	BMNH 2011.10.12.15
<i>O. macleodensis</i>	1	♀	Ad	Lombok	2011	Sangster et al.	BMNH 2011.10.12.16
<i>O. macleodensis</i>	1	♂	Ad	Lombok	2011	Sangster et al.	BMNH 2011.10.12.17
<i>O. macleodensis</i>	1	♀	Ad	Lombok	2011	Sangster et al.	BMNH 2011.10.12.18
<i>O. macleodensis</i>	1	♂	Ad	Lombok	2011	Sangster et al.	BMNH 2011.10.12.19
<i>O. macleodensis</i>	1	♀	Ad	Lombok	2011	Sangster et al.	BMNH 2011.10.12.20
<i>O. macleodensis</i>	1	♂	Ad	Lombok	2011	Sangster et al.	BMNH 2011.10.12.21
<i>O. macleodensis</i>	1	♀	Ad	Lombok	2011	Sangster et al.	BMNH 2011.10.12.22
<i>O. macleodensis</i>	1	♂	Ad	Lombok	2011	Sangster et al.	BMNH 2011.10.12.23
<i>O. macleodensis</i>	1	♀	Ad	Lombok	2011	Sangster et al.	BMNH 2011.10.12.24
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<i>O. macleodensis</i>	1	♀	Ad	Lombok	2011	Sangster et al.	BMNH 2011.10.12.28
<i>O. macleodensis</i>	1	♂	Ad	Lombok	2011	Sangster et al.	BMNH 2011.10.12.29
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LncRNA

Abstract

Introduction

Materials and Methods

Results

Abstract

The avifauna of Indonesia is one of the richest in the world but the taxonomic status of many species remains poorly documented. The sole species of scops owl known from Lombok has

There is institutional control over target journals

ICO home

- Introduction
- Organization
- Participants
- Members
- Research
- Education
- Special events
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ICO accepted journals

Journal articles are accepted only if the journal appears on the [ISI-list](#) or the supplementary ICO-journal list. The supplementary ICO-journal list will be presented here:

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Supplementary ICO Journal List (October 17, 2011)

	Name Journal	ISSN
A	Action in Teacher Education	0162-6620
	Adult Learning	1045-1595

There is system wide control over target journals



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Journal Analyzer

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Search

Limit by Subject Area

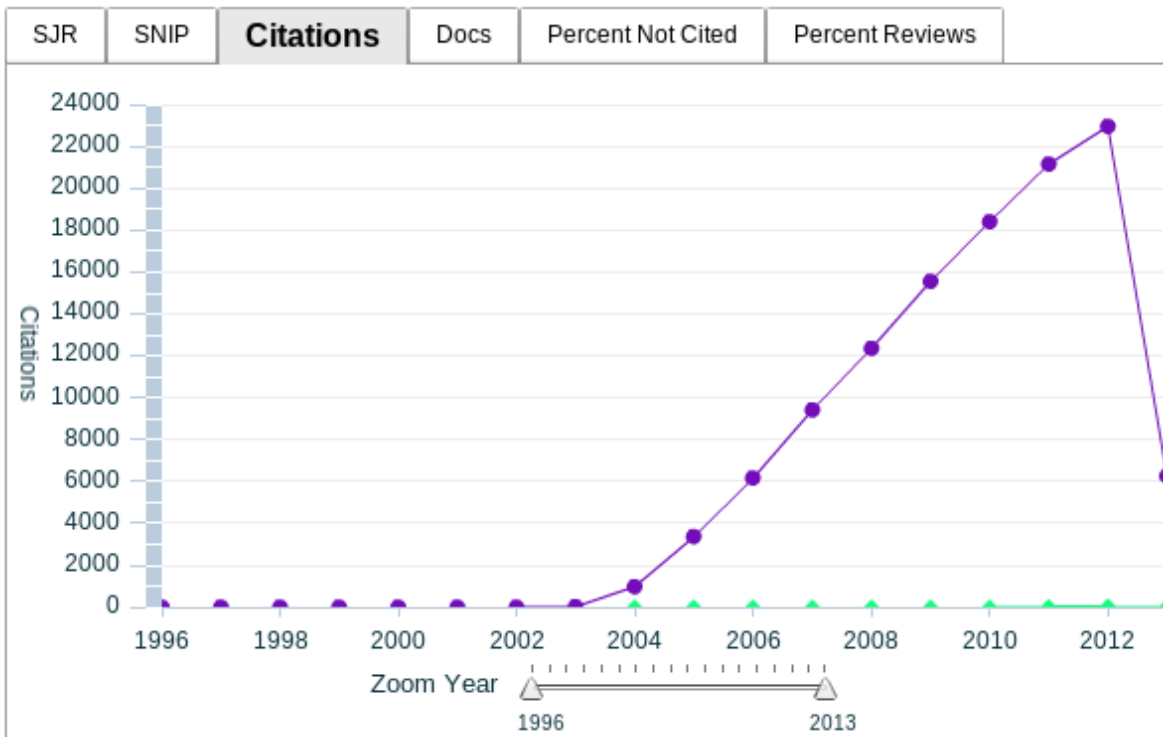
Show SJR SNIP ISSN

Results: 15 Sources Found (Double-click or drag to add)

Journal Title	SJR
Baozha Yu Chongji/Explosion and Shock Waves	0.345
Combustion, Explosion, and Shock Waves	0.378
Explosion	0.100
Huozhayao Xuebao/Chinese Journal of Explosives and	0.321
International Conference on Architectural Support for P	0.905
Journal of Explosives Engineering	
PLoS Biology	5.115
PLoS Computational Biology	2.639
PLoS Currents	
PLoS Genetics	5.185

Show journals in: [Line Chart](#) | [Table](#)

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And who owns the metrics?

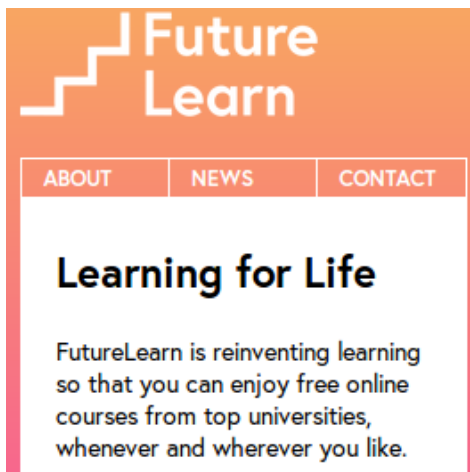
Question: Where does your institution stand

- Two strategies
 - Use the REF as an opportunity to boost the status of your university
 - Use Open Access journals to boost visibility and impact
- What is your institutions position?
- Is that position part of its Web identity?

Conflict: New models, traditional practices

Cable Green, Director of Global Learning Creative Commons told us on Wednesday that

"Higher education is being disaggregated in so many ways"



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Jimmy Wales on MOOCs

"...unless universities respond to the rising tide of online courses new major players will emerge to displace them

...

It's also been **slower than anyone would have anticipated.**"

Jimmy Wales, 1st May 2013

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-22160988>

Michael Barber Pearson Report: An Avalanche is Coming

"Complacent" British universities that fail to respond to the rise of online universities will be swept away by global competition."

Sir Michael Barber, chief education adviser for Pearson, says online courses will be a "threat and opportunity" for the UK's universities.

This "avalanche" could see some middle-ranking universities closing, he says.

Why should anyone oppose that kind of alliance!

What are the agenda here?

What other agendas are there?



Hieronymus Bosch, Cure of Folly. ca. 1488. El Prado, Madrid

Question: Where does your institution stand

- Does your institution run MOOCs or provide OERs?
- Does it have a coherent story about how these developments fit, or don't fit into their identity?
- Is it shared by all parts of the University?

Conflict: Supporting students / balancing the books

Deloitte 2011 (Google / Sword presentation)

'the education sector was disproportionately hit during the financial crisis with funding from government, private sector and individuals drying up. Deloitte's report recommends universities proactively streamline business processes and back-end systems and explore new revenue opportunities'

- What is the boundary of business processes?
- What is the opportunity cost of new revenue opportunities?

http://www.deloitte.com/view/en_gb/uk/08e83fa10e491310VgnVCM1000001a56f00aRCRD.htm

[com/view/en_gb/uk/08e83fa10e491310VgnVCM1000001a56f00aRCRD.htm](http://www.deloitte.com/view/en_gb/uk/08e83fa10e491310VgnVCM1000001a56f00aRCRD.htm)

Widening participation (remember that?)

- Weaker students need more support than stronger students
- More failure demand to cope with (see Seddon)
- How do we keep supporting the whole potential student body when
 - university budgets are under pressure
 - resources are being syphoned off to 'proactively ... explore new revenue opportunities'
 - costs to students are increasing



UNIVERSITY OF BATH



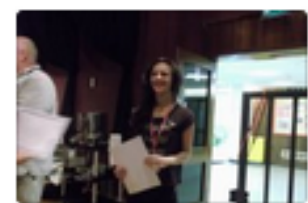
WPO Bath

University of Bath Widening Participation Office

Hoffi

98 o hoffterau

Addysg The Widening Participation Office delivers Foundation degrees and Honours year programmes in partnership with local FE Colleges and partner institutions as well as running HE



98

WPO Bath

Gwybodaeth - Awgrymu Golygiad

Lluniau

yn Hoffi

Digwyddiadau

Fi

Question: Does Deloitte's injunction fit with your institutional mission?

- Do your institutional initiatives to diversify revenue opportunities all point in the same direction?
- Are the teaching staff, academic management and marketing all line up?
- Does the view look different from the Russell Group and the Million+?

Contradictions, or double binds?

- **Contradictions are tough to deal with.**
 - They need a lot of attention
 - They are stressful
 - They are not necessarily pathological
- **Double binds (formally understood) are pathological**

Necessary elements of a double bind

- You are given repeated contradictory instructions
 - Get your funding from foreign students!
 - Police them so that they are prohibited or discouraged
- The instructions are enforced by a threat of punishment (explicit or implicit)
- You are not allowed to discuss the contradiction
- You can't leave the situation

Gregory Bateson. 'Towards a theory of schizophrenia'. Included in 'Steps Towards an Ecology of Mind'

The University in a double bind?

We have seen the conflicting injunctions
Is there enforcement?

KPIs, KIS,



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Changes to the Website



Skills Funding Agency

New
Single
Government
Domain

2013/14: Data Collections

2013/14:
Data Collections
and Funding
Transformation

Statistics



Statistics

FE Data Library goes live

FE Data Library
- data at your fingertips
- now live

What is KIS for?

Performance Indicators are one of the ways of enforcing contradiction

- "The purpose of Performance indicators is to:
 - provide reliable information on the nature and performance of the UK higher education sector
 - allow comparison between individual institutions of a similar nature, where appropriate
 - enable institutions to benchmark their own performance
 - inform policy developments
 - contribute to the public accountability of higher education."

http://www.hesa.ac.uk/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2074&Itemid=141

Can the enforcement be questioned?

- Performance indicators cascade through the system
- Managers create targets for those below them
- Employees questioning the targets is at best useless, and at worst dangerous
- For the institution stepping out of line puts funding at risk

Am I being over pessimistic here?

Indicators and identity

- Indicators and targets create a de facto representation of the system which they intended to measure
- They become a surrogate system, which is managed
- Factors which are not measured are not candidates for consideration
- This may get out of step with the view which marketing and teachers have

A dystopian view...

- The relationship between teachers and students is not documented or planned
- It exists in an uninspected space, because management does not have the ability to inspect everything
- Analytics offers a way of
 - expanding what can be monitored through indicators
 - imposing the logic of the surrogate system on the activities of staff and students
- The only way out is to insist on using data to ask questions rather than to report compliance

The bigger bind

- In the States there is a trillion dollar education bubble
- You can buy education futures
- The US Bankruptcy Reform Act of 2005 exempted private loans from bankruptcy

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The state in a bind

- Can any state afford to let this be questioned or undermined?
- Even if it were meaningless, the education system would have to roll on
- Perhaps try to keep the show on the road by regulation, but reduce costs to the state.

What are the consequences of the double bind

- **Exploitation**
 - If you have prestige and power you can make this work for you
- **Insanity: a perfectly rational adjustment to an insane world (Laing)**
 - Institutions become incoherent
- **Creativity**
 - Institutions find unexpected ways to flourish
- **Escape**
 - People who care about education and learning create a alternative system
- **To escape the pathology we need to understand the double bind**

Adapting from Stafford Beer...

Universities are faced by a changed technological operating environment.

- A good question is "how can we do what we do better"

Adapting from Stafford Beer

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- A good question is "how can we do what we do better"
- A better question is "how can we do what we do differently"

Adapting from Stafford Beer

Universities are faced by a changed technological operating environment.

- A good question is "how can we do what we do better"
- A better question is "how can we do what we do differently"
- The best question is "given these changes, what now is the university"

The best question...

- Is your institution capable of asking that question?

The best question...

- Is your institution capable of asking that question?
- Is the question prohibited by a double bind?

The best question...

- Is your institution capable of asking that question?
- Is the question prohibited by a double bind?
- Is that why our jobs are so hard?