
BOOK REVIEW

Andrew J. Hoffman. *The Engaged Scholar*, 2021, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 133 pp. Paperback Cost: \$13.99 (Amazon.com)

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In his book *The Engaged Scholar*, Andrew Hoffman, the Holcim (US) Professor in the Ross School of Business and the School for Environment and Sustainability at the University of Michigan, proposes that we scholars selected our profession as university professors because we want to have a positive impact on the world. Most universities have guiding principles outlining objectives for tenure track faculty to make contributions in research, teaching, and service throughout their careers. Faculty service commonly consists of service to the university such as serving on university committees, community outreach through volunteering with local not-for-profit organizations, or publishing research in scholarly journals regarding community issues. Professor Hoffman contends that, to truly make a positive impact on the world, scholars must stretch beyond these three objectives and engage in a wider range of public outreach activities.

The Engaged Scholar is intended to reach and encourage tenured and tenure-track professors who feel a calling to be engaged in their communities. Additionally, the book is targeted toward university leadership and administrators, who can influence change in university performance management and reward systems. Finally, the book is also inspiring for non-tenure track scholar-practitioners who are committed to public engagement and would like to make an educational impact in their communities.

The book begins with the premise that scholarly performance is traditionally measured by the number of publications produced. Hoffman argues that relying on publications is not comprehensively fulfilling the mission of outreach or engagement with our community, as research articles published in scholarly journals are not reaching the public, practitioners, and policymakers.

Thus, Hoffman's central theme is that, for faculty to fully engage, service and outreach must be extended to include teaching non-traditional students off-campus, conducting research about concepts of practical significance in addressing issues in our communities and publishing this research in practitioner journals, posting research findings on social media platforms, and sharing scholarly knowledge with local businesses, not-for profit organizations, and decision makers who construct public policy. Additionally, Hoffman voices concern in Chapter 1 that academia and scientific researchers are facing a "crisis of relevance" in which the general public does not have confidence in the findings of scientific research. For example, he states that during the COVID-19 pandemic many in our population have doubted scientific research conclusions about how the virus is spread and the safety and effectiveness of vaccinations, instead preferring to believe facts found

in social media communications on Twitter, Facebook, and Tik Tok.

We teach our students in business ethics classes that Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is an important concept and that corporations should consider the broader social needs of their stakeholders (Shaw, 2017) in addition to profit-making objectives. Begging the question: Are universities and scholars considering the needs of the stakeholders in our communities when pursuing scholarly objectives and providing outreach? Hoffman's work compels each of us to consider how we have addressed this question in our careers.

Overview of the Book

The purpose of the book explained in Chapter 2, is to encourage individual scholars to reflect on his/her role as academicians and how to make an educational impact in his/her field of research, and to encourage university administrators to determine ways to provide institutional support to help scholars pursue engagement. In Chapter 2, Hoffman describes the academic reward system and its limitations. In the academic context where "continual judgement and pressure for conformity" (Hoffman, 2021, p. 24) is the norm, the number of publications is the primary basis for evaluations and rewards for professors. The rules of tenure show a preference for scholars to publish in A-journals in a single discipline written for colleagues within that discipline. Drawing on organizational behavior theory, Hoffman emphasizes the behavior of people in an organization is influenced by its reward system (Kerr, 1995). Therefore, early career scholars accept this reality and are motivated toward publication as their primary objective, rarely stepping outside of these confines to engage with professionals and the public. Due to these current university norms, scholars must first meet these tenure track requirements before engaging with the public. Chapter 2 concludes by identifying the limitations of the prevalent university reward systems summarized below:

1. Scholars are incentivized (tenure and bonuses) to publish in A-level journals.
2. A-journals have a limited audience, creating a gap between research and practice.
3. The lag time from submission to publication is lengthy, reducing article relevance.
4. The true impact of scholarly journal articles is questionable.
5. "The Sagan Effect": Engaged scholars are viewed as less rigorous and less serious.

In Chapter 3, Hoffman asks scholars to consider the question: "What do you want to achieve as a professor and what gives you a sense of meaning and purpose?" (p. 44). The author urges scholars to consider broadening their conceptualization of the classroom from university students who pay tuition to include businesses, not-for-profit organizations, politicians and policymakers, social media consumers, and community members. Hoffman defines public engagement as developing and disseminating work that contributes to the public good, summarizing definitions developed by other university professors. Hoffman also discusses specific methods of engaging

with the public and the rewards of engagement in this chapter. He inspires us to regard our academic work as a calling, with a purpose bigger than ourselves, and not just as a career.

Chapter 4 explores how scholars can use social media as an academic tool to engage with the public. Social media has many effective uses, and yet, social media is ironically classified as disruptive technology. For example, social media has dramatically changed the way we conduct literature searches, measure citation counts, and develop publication strategies. Many scholars resist using social media citing negative outcomes such as antisocial behavior, the diminished ability of the public to distinguish between rigorous scientific analysis and opinions, or because it is used for self-promotion. Acknowledging this resistance, Hoffman outlines the many positive uses of social media. For example, through social media teaching can be expanded to reach a larger audience to include minorities and marginalized individuals more easily. Social media enhances the way research is accessed and disseminated. Additionally, social media can be effective in reaching practitioners and policymakers. The overall point is that social media provides broad, powerful communication channels for engagement.

One of the most helpful parts of Chapter 4 is the section in which Hoffman provides textbook-like descriptions, definitions, and academic uses of social media platforms. The result is that for scholars unfamiliar with the mechanics of social media platforms, Hoffman provides a useful primer. He describes unique identifiers, preprint servers, scholarly collaboration networks, social media platforms, research-based platforms, professional web pages, citation search tools, search engine optimization, and alternative metrics such as Altmetric and PlumX Metrics used for assessing the public impact of scholarly articles.

Chapter 5 is Hoffman's closing argument, in which he reviews and summarizes his main points in the book. Hoffman re-emphasizes the central theme of the book, "That if your calling is to make a difference in the world around you through your scholarly pursuits, then you must work public engagement into each stage of your academic life in new and expanding ways" (p. 117). Hoffman also recounts that for scholars to be able to expand their public engagement, the culture of academic institutions must change at the system level. Fortunately, some systemic change in this area is already occurring. Some of the enhancements being implemented at universities to support scholar engagement are training programs for faculty and doctoral students on how to successfully engage with the public, customized training for faculty to prepare them for interviews with the media, creative new positions for communications professionals who can help disseminate knowledge from professors to those in the community who can apply the knowledge, and new evaluation metrics for tenure and promotion. Even the accreditation process for the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) has changed to include societal impact and outreach measures in their evaluations of business schools.

Readers of *The Engaged Scholar* will recognize that Hoffman is certainly not the first to advance the idea of scholarly engagement. Many universities have developed mission statements, set goals, and developed centers to increase their engagement within their communities (Purdue University, 2021; Tulane University, 2021; University of Colorado Boulder, 2021; University of Illinois, 2021; University of Richmond, 2021). Nor is this the first book written about public engagement. Baron (2010) wrote *Escape from the Ivory Tower: Guide to Making your Science Matter* which instructs scientists about how to communicate with journalists and policymakers in order to share their research with the world outside of the ivory towers. *Designing the New American University* (Crow & Dabars, 2015) describes how Arizona State University was impressively transformed into a more innovative, international research university that maximizes its social impact. More recently, Martin and Samels (2019) wrote *The New American College Town: Designing Effective Campus and Community Partnerships*, which describes how several U.S. colleges and universities have formed “town-gown” partnerships with the organizations and people in the communities where they are located. Furthermore, this is not Hoffman’s first book about scholarly engagement. Hoffman and his colleagues (2015) authored *Academic Engagement in Public and Political Discourse: Proceedings of the Michigan Meeting, May 2015* which summarizes the findings of a conference hosted by the University of Michigan in which 225 attendees discussed the role of scholars in political discourse around social issues. With a different purpose in mind when writing *The Engaged Scholar*, Hoffman enthusiastically promotes scholarly engagement and brings this concept to the front and center stage of academia, while providing sound and practical recommendations for increasing the engagement of scholars from all academic disciplines, including but not limited to scholars in the field of science.

Hoffman’s persuasive appeal and specific recommendations on how scholars can become more engaged are welcome. As a proponent of the broader view of corporate social responsibility (Shaw, 2017), I agree that public engagement should be a mission of universities and their scholars. Sharing scientific research and evidence-based knowledge with practitioners, policymakers, and the community is a critical factor in strengthening our society and advancing civilization.

Conclusion

To be clear, Hoffman proposes scholars retain their duties of teaching, research, and service and notes that young scholars must first meet tenure track requirements and develop a strong reputation for rigorous research, before gradually working in opportunities to build public engagement. He also notes how public engagement is not for everyone, yet, should be accessible to all “creative, curious, and skilled” scholars who aspire to contribute toward the “pressing needs of society” (p. 130). Overall, Hoffman provides a very persuasive and inspiring argument about why public engagement is critical and why academic institutions and scholars need to renew a focus on engagement as a necessary component of service for those interested in making a positive impact on

society. Hoffman ends the book by reminding us of U.S. President John F. Kennedy's words, "For of those to whom much has been given, much is required." (Kennedy, 1961).

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