"JOURNAL OF CULTURAL EVOLUTION" NOTES

Reasons why a specific journal is needed

Cultural evolution is a vibrant, rapidly developing, new scientific framework and there are not academic journals specifically dedicated to it. This is already a sufficient reason to start this project, but there are (at least) three other motivations:

(1) Cultural evolution research is intrinsically inter-disciplinary. This makes it difficult to find suitable venues for publishing cultural evolution research, as traditional academic journals tend to mirror the traditional academic divisions. Only few journals are genuinely interdisciplinary but they have for-profit and impact seeking policies that are not necessarily embraceable (e.g. Nature, Science, PNAS) or their scope is entirely generalist (e.g. Plos One).

(2) Cultural evolution research is naturalistic and quantitative, and this makes it difficult to publish in what would probably be the more "natural" venue, i.e. anthropological journals, which mostly prefer qualitative research.

(3) Academic publishing is in turmoil. As researchers in cultural evolution, given our specific expertise, we may be able to play a leading role in "culturally evolving" the publishing system by applying insights from our research.

Aims and scope

The journal will publish cultural evolution research (in a broad sense), including all naturalistic and quantitative research on social and cultural behaviour (I feel it is difficult to define what exactly counts as "evolutionary").

A tentative list of topics might include:

- Modelling of cultural evolutionary dynamics
- Experimental studies of social learning/cultural evolution
- Phylogenetic analysis of culture and language

- Comparative study of social learning/cultural transmission in human and other animals
- Cognitive anthropology / evolutionary psychology with explicit experimental and/or quantitative approach
- Analysis of quantitative data to study cultural and historical dynamics
- Social network analysis
- Evolution of cooperation

Policies

We have the occasion to do something radically new. The goal is to imagine (shape!) how academic publishing will be in 5 or 10 years. My preferred option would be a system of post-publication peer-review.

The journal would be hosted by a server on which manuscripts can be freely uploaded (http://arxiv.org model, but, in our case, they would not be "preprints", as the articles would not be submitted afterwards to other journals, as it happens for arxiv). The only thing needed at the stage of upload is an automatic check of basic formatting, and to avoid the presence of gibberish, etc.

Review is post-publication and openly accessible together with the manuscripts. A strong argument in favour of this option is here:

http://www.michaeleisen.org/blog/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Eisen_Vosshall_PrePrints_PPPR.pdf

Reviews can be anonymous or not, authors can themselves contact possible reviewers; editors (see below) can also contact possible reviewers, like in the traditional system. It is up to the authors to decide whether to modify or not the manuscript after reviews.

The editorial committee still have an important role, including (1) contacting possible reviewers for papers that are deemed important; (2) stimulating the uploading of specific material (beside "classic" papers – book reviews, short discussion pieces, general-public oriented articles, etc.); (3) proposing call-for-papers for thematic

"collections" (e.g. "Text-mining in cultural evolution", "Social learning in animals", etc.); (4) signalling important papers in the homepage or similar.

The journal may also have an important role in stimulating and encouraging good scientific practices, such as, for example, including models and statistical analysis codes, pre-registration of experiments, making all data freely available, etc. Perhaps we could have a system of very clear "badges" for the articles, assigned by readers/editors, signalling "PRE-REGISTERED", "ALL CODES INCLUDED", etc. (We can discuss this).

Further notes

This is a drastic departure from the traditional model of academic publishing (as said above, current pre-print servers are thought as a pre-publication phase, before the articles are submitted to a "real" journal), and clearly a high-risk/high-reward initiative. Again, my invitation is to imagine the academic publishing system in 5/10 years from now. From the point of view of CES – even taking into consideration the possibility of a failure – it would surely brings great publicity to the society.

Ideally we would need senior scholars commit to upload (some) papers to the journal. Most people will still need to submit to established journals (for academic evaluations, etc.), so I can imagine that the journal can start as a mixed system of pre-prints archive (so authors can *also* submit their papers to traditional journals) and standalone publications, with the explicit goal to move gradually to the latter.