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# ECONOMISTS' PUBLICATION PATTERNS

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## Abstract

The results presented in this paper give a comprehensive picture of the extent of publishing by economists. While it is obvious that the traditional emphasis on refereed journal articles captures only a part of economists' research output, to date it has been difficult to determine how large a part of that output was not being measured. This note provides the necessary perspective and presents information on the relative productivity of faculty at different institutional types and with different years of experience.

As a group, economists appear fascinated by how much they are publishing. An example is the long-standing tradition of ranking economics departments and individual faculty members by the number of publications: Dusansky and Vernon (1998), Conroy, Dusansky, Drukker and Kildegaard (1995), Davis and Papanek (1984), Baumann, Werden, and Williams (1987) and Tschirhart (1989) all rank Ph.D. granting universities; Blair, Cottle and Wallace (1986) ranks schools granting a terminal master's degree; Bodenhorn (1997) and Hartley and Robinson (1997) rank liberal arts colleges; and Graves, Marchand and Thompson (1982) ranks all schools publishing in top journals.

Other studies have also examined the publications of economists for purposes other than ranking. Hutchison and Zivney (1995) look at the lifetime output of refereed journal articles in a set of 126 journals. Grimes and Register (1997) examine career publications, also measured by number of journal articles, and their impact on job status.

However, both the ranking literature and the broader looks at publications have traditionally confined themselves to using refereed journal articles as their measure of productivity. There are many good reasons for doing so: non-refereed journal articles or book chapters may not be of the same quality as refereed journal articles; the relative size differences between journal articles and books or monographs on the one side or short book reviews on the other side make comparisons difficult. Hutchison and Zivney (1995), for example, use only refereed journal articles to describe economists' "publication profile." Nevertheless, it is clear that economists do in fact publish more than just refereed journal articles, and many of those publications are quite important. Even those who rank based only on refereed journal articles often make note of the "limitations" of such a ranking, since "they fail to account for the prolific work of those faculty who choose to publish monographs, reports or edited volumes" (Conroy et. al, 1995, p. 1970n).

To date, there have been no studies that explore the breadth of publishing activity among economists. While we have a good idea about how many refereed journal articles economists (particularly those at top research universities) publish, less is known about alternative avenues of research publishing by economists. Kasper, et. al. (1991, p. 1101) is an exception; in their study of the vitae of liberal arts faculty, they found that such faculty had "approximately three times as many essays in contributed volumes, government publications, and lesser known journals than in refereed economics journals." However, there is no way to know how this result generalizes to either other forms of publishing or faculty at other kinds of schools. Similarly, Hamermesh (1992, p. 174) reports that those with more experience have "increasing access to non-refereed outlets," but his conclusion seems based on anecdotal evidence, which, while perhaps accurate, does not give us any measure of how important such outlets are to established faculty.

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This note provides an overall view of the publishing activity of economists. We report the average number of publications of assorted forms: refereed journal articles, non-refereed journal articles, book reviews, chapters in books, textbooks, books, monographs, and technical reports. Additionally, we report how the pattern of these publications varies over different institutional types and over years of experience. We additionally report these averages over an economist's career and over the last two years.

The data used herein are from the 1993 National Survey of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF). This is a survey of 25,780 faculty and administrators from 817 higher education institutions. We restrict the sample to faculty identified as having a primary teaching or research field of economics, which gives us a sample size of 368.

Table 1 reports the mean and median number of publications of the various types. Across all individuals, only one-third of all publications are in the form of refereed articles. Table 1 also reports averages for institutions of different types. Institutions were classified using the Carnegie classification codes. Not surprisingly, economists at research institutions publish the most. Moreover, 40% of the publication at research institutions is in refereed journals, while all other institutional types publish only 25% of their output in such journals.

Finally, Table 1 reports the averages broken down by years of experience. There is a noticeable rise in the percentage of refereed journal articles between the 0–7 years and 8–14 years categories. In levels, the number of refereed journal articles rises while the number of non-refereed journal articles actually declines. There are two possible explanations for this rise: 1) relatively inexperienced faculty publish more heavily in non-refereed outlets or 2) the selection criterion for staying in academia past seven years is heavily weighted towards publications in refereed journal articles.

The values in Table 1 are all career averages. As such, they are only of limited use in evaluating current research productivity. The obvious example of this limitation is the years of experience averages; the fact that older faculty have more publications may be the result of the fact that they have had more years to publish or that they are in fact more productive than younger faculty.

Table 2 reports the average number of publications of the various types over the last two years only. First, we can examine Hamermesh's statement mentioned earlier that older faculty have more recourse to non-refereed outlets. The results in Table 2 suggest that Hamermesh is correct. In the two-year time period, those with over 21 years of experience have 25% more non-refereed journal articles, three times as many chapters in books, three times as many books and over twice as many technical reports as the youngest group of economists.

Second, we note that if we measure research productivity by number of refereed journal articles in the last two years, there is no noticeable decline in productivity as experience increases. This result is similar to that found by Hutchison and Zivney (1995). In their regression results, they find that the pre-tenure publication rate is a very good predictor of average number of publications over an economist's career. There is a small, but statistically insignificant, drop in productivity post-tenure. [This result is consistent with Hutchinson and Zivney's demonstration that the percentage of economist's maintaining at least one article per year drops with years of experience. This latter standard is very exacting and moreover is only suggestive for the relatively small number of economists who maintain the rate of an article per year in their earliest years (20% for those with four years of experience). Their regression results are more broadly based.]

Hutchinson and Zivney's results only cover publication in refereed journals. When we look at total publications, there is actually a *rise* is the number of publications per year with experience. Part of the reason for the lower productivity for those in the 0–7 years of experience cohort could be that that group contains at least some economists who will not publish enough to meet tenure standards. But, even if we compare the oldest group of economists to those with 8–14 years of experience, we see a rise in total publications and no drop in the number of refereed journal articles.

Table 3 presents the distribution of publications across publication types. Refereed journal articles is by far the most common type of publication, with three-fourths of all economists publishing in that way. Thirteen percent of all economists have never published anything, and another thirteen percent have only published in some manner other than refereed journal articles. Less than half of all economists have ever published in any single one of the

Table 1
Number of Publications of Various Types Over Career

| | Refereed Journal Articles | Non-refereed Journal Articles | Book Reviews | Chapters in Books | Text-books | Books | Mono-graphs | Tech-nical Reports | Total Publica-tions |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| All Economists | | | | | | | | | |
| *Mean* | 10.7 | 5.2 | 2.5 | 2.0 | 0.2 | 0.7 | 1.1 | 10.3 | 32.7 |
| *Median* | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 13 |
| Research Universities | | | | | | | | | |
| *Mean* | 18.4 | 6.2 | 3.5 | 4.0 | 0.3 | 1.3 | 1.3 | 11.0 | 45.8 |
| *Median* | 12 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 29 |
| Compre-hensive Institutions | | | | | | | | | |
| *Mean* | 8.1 | 6.2 | 2.4 | 1.0 | 0.2 | 0.5 | 1.2 | 12.3 | 31.8 |
| *Median* | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 10 |
| Liberal Arts Colleges | | | | | | | | | |
| *Mean* | 4.9 | 2.7 | 1.6 | 0.9 | 0.2 | 0.5 | 1.2 | 7.3 | 19.3 |
| *Median* | 1.5 | 0.5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 10 |
| Other Institutions | | | | | | | | | |
| *Mean* | 3.1 | 2.0 | 0.6 | 0.5 | 0.2 | 0.2 | 0.0 | 4.4 | 10.9 |
| *Median* | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| 0–7 Years of Experience | | | | | | | | | |
| *Mean* | 2.4 | 2.7 | 0.8 | 0.5 | 0.0 | 0.2 | 0.3 | 2.8 | 9.7 |
| *Median* | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4.5 |
| 8–14 Years of Experience | | | | | | | | | |
| *Mean* | 7.5 | 2.5 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 0.2 | 0.3 | 1.0 | 5.2 | 19.8 |
| *Median* | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 12.5 |
| 15–21 Years of Experience | | | | | | | | | |
| *Mean* | 9.9 | 5.9 | 2.1 | 2.2 | 0.3 | 0.6 | 1.6 | 6.4 | 29.1 |
| *Median* | 6 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 21 |
| 22+ Years of Experience | | | | | | | | | |
| *Mean* | 21.3 | 9.3 | 5.1 | 3.5 | 0.4 | 1.6 | 1.4 | 24.3 | 66.9 |
| *Median* | 6 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 34 |

other publication types. Books of all sorts (books, textbooks, monographs) have the fewest number of publishers.

It is not the case, however, that these other publication types are simply unused by economists. Given that an economist has published one of the other types of publications, there is a very high probability that that economist will go on to publish more of that type of publication. For example, while only 20% of all economists have published a book, of those that have, half have published more than one book. Similarly, while only 40% of economists have ever published a book review, of those that have, three-fourths have published more than one.

Since refereed journal articles are the most commonly used measure of research productivity, Table 4 shows distributions of career refereed articles. Three-fourths of all economists have published at least one such article, and over 40% of all econo-

Table 2
Number of Publications of Various Types in Last Two Years

| | Refereed Journal Articles | Non-refereed Journal Articles | Book Reviews | Chapters in Books | Text-books | Books | Mono-graphs | Tech-nical Reports | Total Publica-tions |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| All Economists | | | | | | | | | |
| *Mean* | 1.8 | 0.9 | 0.4 | 0.4 | 0.1 | 0.2 | 0.2 | 0.6 | 5.5 |
| *Median* | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| Research Universities | | | | | | | | | |
| *Mean* | 2.8 | 1.0 | 0.5 | 0.8 | 0.1 | 0.3 | 0.2 | 1.7 | 7.3 |
| *Median* | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| Compre hensive Institutions | | | | | | | | | |
| *Mean* | 1.5 | 1.0 | 0.4 | 0.3 | 0.1 | 0.1 | 0.2 | 1.7 | 5.2 |
| *Median* | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Liberal Arts Colleges | | | | | | | | | |
| *Mean* | 0.9 | 0.8 | 0.5 | 0.3 | 0.0 | 0.2 | 0.2 | 1.7 | 4.7 |
| *Median* | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Other Institutions | | | | | | | | | |
| *Mean* | 0.4 | 0.4 | 0.2 | 0.1 | 0.1 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.6 | 1.8 |
| *Median* | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 0–7 Years of Experience | | | | | | | | | |
| *Mean* | 1.2 | 0.8 | 0.4 | 0.2 | 0.0 | 0.1 | 0.1 | 1.2 | 4.0 |
| *Median* | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| 8–14 Years of Experience | | | | | | | | | |
| *Mean* | 2.0 | 0.7 | 0.4 | 0.4 | 0.1 | 0.1 | 0 1 | 0.8 | 4.7 |
| *Median* | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| 15–21 Years of Experience | | | | | | | | | |
| *Mean* | 1.7 | 1.0 | 0.5 | 0.5 | 0.1 | 0.2 | 0.3 | 1.3 | 5.5 |
| *Median* | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| 22+ Years of Experience | | | | | | | | | |
| *Mean* | 2.0 | 1.0 | 0.4 | 0.7 | 0.1 | 0.3 | 0.1 | 2.9 | 7.4 |
| *Median* | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 |

mists have published at least six articles in their career.

The publication rate of journal articles is not similar across institutional types. While less than 10% of all economists at research universities have never published a refereed journal article, nearly three-fourths of those at "other institutions" have never done so. While the percentage of economists at comprehensive institutions and liberal arts colleges who have published at least one article is about the same, the percentage of those who have published at least 20 articles is over four times higher at comprehensive institutions than at liberal arts colleges.

The breakdown of journal articles by years of experience again highlights the relative productivity of older economists. The percentage of economists with zero publications stabilizes after the ini-

Table 3
Percentage of Economists With Indicated Number of Publications of a Particular Type

| | Number of Publications | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 or more |
| Total Publications | 13.6 | 5.2 | 5.2 | 76.0 |
| Refereed Journal Articles | 26.9 | 8.7 | 7.6 | 56.8 |
| Non-refereed Journal Articles | 53.5 | 6.8 | 6.3 | 33.4 |
| Book Reviews | 58.4 | 11.7 | 7.6 | 22.4 |
| Chapters in Books | 63.0 | 12.5 | 6.3 | 18.2 |
| Textbooks | 88.0 | 6.5 | 3.0 | 2.3 |
| Books | 79.1 | 10.1 | 3.0 | 7.8 |
| Monographs | 78.3 | 9.0 | 3.5 | 9.2 |
| Technical Reports | 54.6 | 6.5 | 4.3 | 34.6 |

Table 4
Percentage of Economists with Indicated Number of Refereed Journal Articles over Career

| | Number of Refereed Journal Articles | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 0 | 1–5 | 6–10 | 11–15 | 16–20 | 21+ |
| All Economists | 26.9 | 31.2 | 14.4 | 10.0 | 5.0 | 12.5 |
| Research Universities | 9.2 | 16.9 | 20.0 | 20.8 | 10.0 | 23.1 |
| Comprehensive Institutions | 26.2 | 41.6 | 15.4 | 4.7 | 2.0 | 10.1 |
| Liberal Arts Colleges | 30.9 | 50.0 | 9.5 | 7.1 | 0.0 | 2.4 |
| Other Institutions | 74.5 | 21.2 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 2.1 | 2.1 |
| 0–7 Years of Experience | 37.2 | 50.0 | 8.2 | 4.8 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| 8–14 Years of Experience | 21.4 | 30.6 | 22.5 | 14.2 | 5.1 | 6.3 |
| 15–21 Years of Experience | 25.9 | 23.4 | 11.1 | 12.3 | 11.0 | 16.3 |
| 22+ Years of Experience | 24.3 | 22.2 | 14.5 | 8.7 | 2.9 | 27.4 |

tial, pre-tenure years, suggesting that economists who have not published a refereed journal article in the first 7 years of experience are unlikely to do so afterwards. On the other hand, the distribution of number of articles shifts upward with years of experience, indicating that those economists who do publish refereed journal articles early in their careers continue to publish such articles throughout their careers.

The results presented in this paper give a picture of the extent of publishing by economists. While it is obvious that the traditional emphasis on refereed journal articles captures only a part of economists' research output, to date it has been difficult to determine how large a part of that output was not being measured. This note has provided some of the necessary perspective.

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