

formation (as is also reflected in the book), it would be interesting to assess the extent to which the occurring changes will follow the patterns based on the code conceptualized by Taylor. Hopefully the author will stick to this subject and provide us with more limited but equally knowledgeable and intellectually stimulating assessment in the future.

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Jonáš Syrovátka

Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University

**Polese, Abel:**

### THE SCOPUS DIARIES AND THE (IL)LOGICS OF ACADEMIC SURVIVAL: A SHORT GUIDE TO DESIGN YOUR OWN STRATEGY AND SURVIVE BIBLIOMETRICS, CONFERENCES, AND UNREAL EXPECTATIONS IN ACADEMIA.

Stuttgart: Ibidem-Verlag. 2018.  
231 pages.

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The topic of 'surviving' in the academic environment has received only limited space within scholarly publications. This comes as a surprise, considering the numerous discussions among academicians on various blogs and websites, in social network groups and at conferences. The increasing pressure on publication outcomes has gradually turned attention to the less glamorous aspects of academic life, including searching for flaws in evaluation systems, reduced time for teaching preparation as well as the increase in mental illnesses and the suicide rate among academics. Academic publishers have released only a few books that discuss this subject. *A Guide to Academia: Getting into and Surviving Grad School, Post-docs, and a Research Job* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2012) by Prosanta Chakrabarty and *Survive and Thrive in Academia: The New Academic's Pocket Mentor* (Routledge, 2018) by Kate Woodthorpe are rare exceptions. Thus, *The SCOPUS Diaries* by Abel Polese has come on the market at the right time.

The author works as a senior research fellow at Dublin City University's Institute for International Conflict Resolution and Reconstruction and at Tallinn University. He is well known as a development worker, writer

and ‘wannabe musician’ (as mentioned in the ‘about the author’ section), but mainly as a productive scholar. *The SCOPUS Diaries* not only covers the actual topic, but its existence provides the first lesson on how to do things right in contemporary academia. Polese has selected a catchy name for his publication and discussed the draft version on *Academia.edu*. There is hardly a better way to attract attention to your research.

The author stresses that his book is not a traditional academic publication but is concerned with how to think strategically about an academic career (p. 18). Consequently, the less formal style, including (academic) life-coaching stories, entertaining anecdotes and personal confessions, should not surprise you. The book discusses the crucial elements of an academic career, pragmatic strategies, ways to achieve the required goals, and where to invest time and effort. The main idea lies in a pragmatic approach to duties and administrative requirements.

You can read the book as a practical guide to an academic career, as a contribution concerning the numerous pros and cons of academia, or just as an intriguing confession of a productive scholar. In all three positions, the book provides useful and refreshing ideas to the discussions currently running in academic fora. The book’s 231 pages are organised into thematic chapters, covering a range of topics from (re)starting an academic career to tasks for an established scholar with a stable position within a university. Among the subjects covered are writing, publishing, growing, shining, niching, networking and funding.

The idea of writing this kind of a book was raised during workshops focusing on publishing strategies and the development of scholarly careers in post-communist states. Numerous countries in the area have recently switched to the quantitative measurement of academic quality. It has happened through – using the

author’s words – a fetishisation of the Scopus and Web of Science (WoS) databases. Journals in these databases are considered the good ones and publishing in these journals is measured as success. We can agree with Polese that it is not necessarily good or bad, but this new criterion for achievement has brought further challenges.

In post-communist countries, in particular, it has led to searching for ‘shortcomings’ in the system. Some of the scholars and institutions have become experts at publishing in predatory journals registered in these databases. They even receive rewards for it in terms of state financing or academic promotion. Is it wrong to exploit such flaws? ‘If you measure quality through (quantitative) indicators, then academics are just numbers’ (p. 11). Though the author warns against publishing in predatory publications as it can destroy an academic’s credibility, there is nothing wrong with publishing in a bottom-rank journal if it helps to keep a job. Polese presents a similar kind of academic ‘realism’ in the rest of the book.

The most intriguing part of the ‘writing’ chapter is the discussion about editors’ expectations for an abstract and the correct way of submitting it. I will long remember the sentence ‘Yo brother, this is my abstract’ (p. 31). It is one of the examples of when the book amuses. The author further discusses the strategies for selecting the ‘right’ journal. The section on reasons for an article’s rejection also caught my attention. Who does not have such an experience? The next chapter provides tips on how to survive the review process, how to increase the chances of having a book published, and to the reasons for publishing in journals’ special issues. The author highlights the necessity to popularise publications via social media or specialised websites for academicians, in order to reach a wider audience.

The (dis)advantages of co-authorship, the choice between publishing articles or book

chapters, the differences between academic and commercial publishers – these are the central parts of the ‘growing’ chapter. The author provides a definition of an excellent conference – an event from which you get more than invested – and provides tips on how to choose such conferences. As mentioned earlier, Polese suggests a pragmatic attitude regarding career requirements. It is the task for a scholar to identify and target the right outlets. If the system requires one to publish in Scopus journals but does not mention any quartile, it can be pragmatic to be published with the lower-ranking journals in some cases, as it is (presumably) easier. The two ‘shining’ chapters discuss the advantages of media presence, guest lectures and participation at conferences.

The last three chapters, ‘niching’, ‘networking’ and ‘funding’, provide ideas on how to maintain a position within the university. The author stresses that, to survive, it is sufficient not to be the worst, so that, if a few heads fall, yours will not be among them (p. 176). It is critical to ensure that you become (almost) irreplaceable for the department in crucial areas such as research, fundraising, management or media presence. Networking is one of the central parts of a successful career in academia. The investment of time and finance and the selection of the most suitable workshops and conferences can generate manifold future returns.

Possibly the most severe problems with *The SCOPUS Diaries* lie in the book’s repetitive parts, such as Shining II, and the division of some topics – including conferences, presentations and the review process – into several chapters. This could be an issue for readers who do not read the book from the beginning but pick up only some of the chapters. More detailed chapters dealing with ethical issues, beyond predatory/vanity publishers and the

role of (good) teaching in contemporary academia would be appreciated as well.

If the main goal is to guide scholars in how to survive academia, then it has been achieved. On the other hand, the book does not provide a step-by-step tool for improving academic performance, but rather an approach to thinking about the options that stand in front of scholars at various stages of their careers. As the author concludes, the key is to ‘find a compromise between what you are requested to do and what you want to do; take risks and work unpaid because you feel this is bringing you something; fail and fail again, possibly because this is the only way to understand what is really worth working for and investing your time in’ (p. 230).

While most senior scholars (probably) do not need such guidance, junior scholars and academicians outside Western academia might find it useful for the development of their careers. The orientation on WoS and Scopus databases journals has led numerous scholars to choose effortless ways, including publishing in predatory journals, to fulfil system requirements. However, the book is more than just a set of useful guidelines. Polese offers fresh impulses to the ‘publish or perish’ debate, and you should not miss this contribution. It is well written, easy-to-read, pragmatic and sometimes cynical view of the life of scholars.

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