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Eve, Martin Paul (2021) Martin Paul Eve on Humanities Commons' Fifth Birthday. Platypus: The Blog of the Humanities Commons ,

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What is the world coming to? In general terms, things don't look good. Pandemics, climate change, ongoing global conflicts, the state of higher education as a whole. It can be a worrying time.

The situation for humanities research doesn't look much better, either. The open access movement is succeeding at scale in the sciences, where in the not-too-distant future all scientific research will be available for anyone to read at no charge. Progress in the humanities, meanwhile, has been slower. Indeed, we face a dangerous scenario where all scientific work may be available freely to read, while all work in the humanities remains behind paywalls or in unaffordable books.

Humanities Commons, which celebrates its fifth birthday this year, has long been a forward-looking platform seeking to connect scholars with one another while also advancing open dissemination of research in our disciplines. HC remains one of the brightest hopes for the humanities in our ongoing difficult times.

Humanities Commons is also important because it focuses on social interaction rather than just technical innovation. It is easy to concoct techno-solutionist resolutions to questions of research dissemination, but these rarely gain traction. HC, instead, spreads its efforts between a sound technical infrastructure – the CORE platform – and a commitment to social embeddedness, embodied in the networking elements of the platform. If for-profit sites such as Academia.edu indicated an *interest* from humanities scholars in online sharing of their work and digital networking, then Humanities Commons is, for me, the implementation of that principle in a way that is congruent with the ethics of our disciplinary space. Certainly, it is easy to overuse the rhetoric of 'the Commons' in the digital world, as Samuel A Moore has cautioned, but the goals of Humanities Commons seem to fit the bill.

The other important element of HC that bears scrutiny is the affiliation with learned societies. Many open access (OA) initiatives have run aground on the rocky shore of learned society finances. Indeed, it is one of the dirty secrets of academia that many intra-disciplinary activities are funded by selling journal subscriptions; a cross-subsidy from libraries to societies. Humanities Commons has sidestepped this problem by twofold partnering with societies but also by embracing green OA, which has been shown not to result in subscription cancellations. HC is a symbiotic friend of societies, helping them to showcase the work in their disciplines, rather than its mortal, de-funding OA enemy.

So despite my gloomy opening, things are looking up, at least in our own small corner of the world. Happy birthday, Humanities Commons, and thank you for the ongoing good that you are doing.

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