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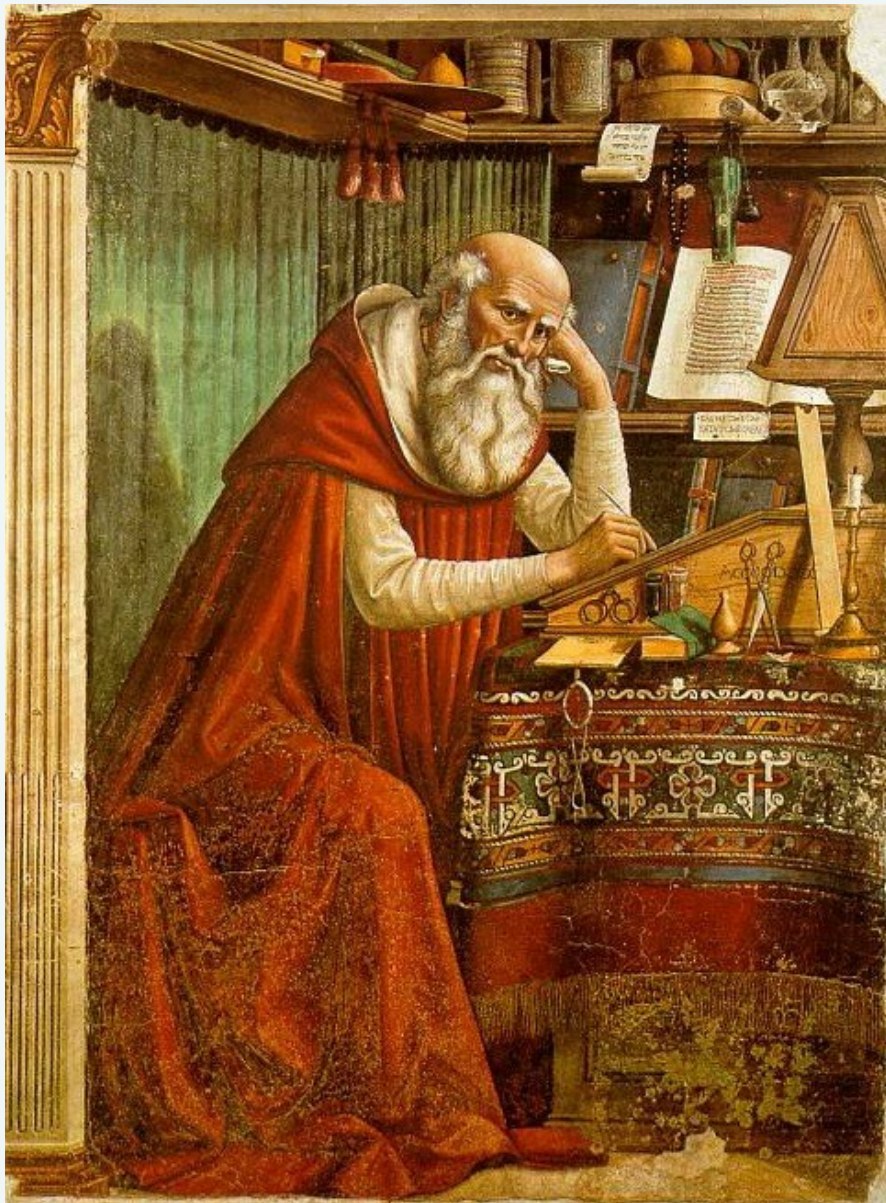
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A Sustainable Knowledge Exchange System for S.D.A. Theological Education [Poster]

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A SUSTAINABLE KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE SYSTEM FOR S.D.A. THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

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Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University
By Terry Robertson, Associate Professor, Seminary Librarian



HISTORICAL MODELS OF FINANCING KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE SYSTEMS

DEFINITION

A “Knowledge Exchange System” is a method of communicating knowledge from an author/speaker to a reader/hearer.

Academic Knowledge Exchange Systems include the publishing of books and journals, mediated by the library.

RESEARCH QUESTION

How can the Seventh-day Adventist Church facilitate knowledge exchange in theological education on a global scale?

THE CURRENT SITUATION

- The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a Global Organization, with over 90% of membership outside the historical Christian West.
- There is a growing need for professional and theologically sound Seventh-day Adventist Church Leaders and Pastors on every continent and in every region of the world.
- The church supports over 60 tertiary educational institutions that provide some theological education, with about a third of those that have a graduate level program. New Seminaries are now launching.
- Outside North America, analog library resources to support these educational programs are limited, both because of associated costs and physical infrastructures.
- Growing access to the Internet provides unprecedented digital access to both historical and current scholarship in all areas of religious inquiry, with Adventist perspectives significantly underrepresented. This risks exposure to and adoption of competing world views without competent critique.
- Needed: A Knowledge Exchange System for Seventh-day Adventist Theological Education that will serve a *global* organization.

VALUES BASED HURDLES IN CURRENT KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE SYSTEMS

1. Reader pay production models
2. Knowledge as private economic/political good
3. Time/institutional support
4. Lack of capacity results in only the best with a “new” contribution to be published, and gives preference to “established” scholars

SUGGESTIONS FOR VALUES BASED DISCUSSION

1. Infrastructure investment model: costs justified by higher productivity and effectiveness of leaders. Creation costs absorbed by institution, distribution costs use current digital infrastructures and so are sustainable.
2. Knowledge as organizational/public good
3. Time valued as commodity of exchange: time has the same purchasing value in Canada, Germany, Korea, India, Peru, Brazil, and Ghana, and is not subject to the laws of international currency exchange.
4. Adapt the Whitworth/Friedman model to the needs of SDA Theological Education. This would provide for publishing and providing access competent, valid, and pedagogically useful material that supports the mission of SDA theological education without the limiting criteria of “new” contribution or market forces, while maximizing the time value of contributors, without restricting global participation.

“Knowledge is power only when united with true piety. A soul emptied of self will be noble. Christ abiding in the heart by faith will make us wise in God's sight.” Ellen G. White, SpTA03 23.1 (1895).

Premise 1: It's all about *money* – Knowledge Exchange Systems have always been extremely costly, both to develop and to maintain

Premise 2: It's all about *power* – Knowledge is power, and those who have it enjoy significant advantages

Church History Model 1: Patronage

In the age of the manuscripts:

Origen (c. 185–254) was supported by Ambrose, a wealthy layman

Jerome (c. 347 – 420) accumulated a huge library for his time, thanks to the patronage of wealthy Roman elites

Monasteries throughout the medieval period built libraries by having monks borrow and copy works

These libraries were deemed a treasure, and access was strictly controlled.

Universities emerged as centers of learning, supporting and preserving scholarship, i.e. Thomas Aquinas (1225 – 1274) in Paris and Italy, and Wycliffe (c.1328–1384) in Oxford – both were engaged in theological education.

But by the end of the 16th century, patronage for scholarship had largely dissipated.

Church History Model 2: Publisher support

In the age of the printing press, publishers superseded the patronage model.

Tyndale (c. 1494 – 1536) had support from both rich merchants and from the sales of his Bibles

Luther's (1483 – 1546) work was disseminated by printer/merchants

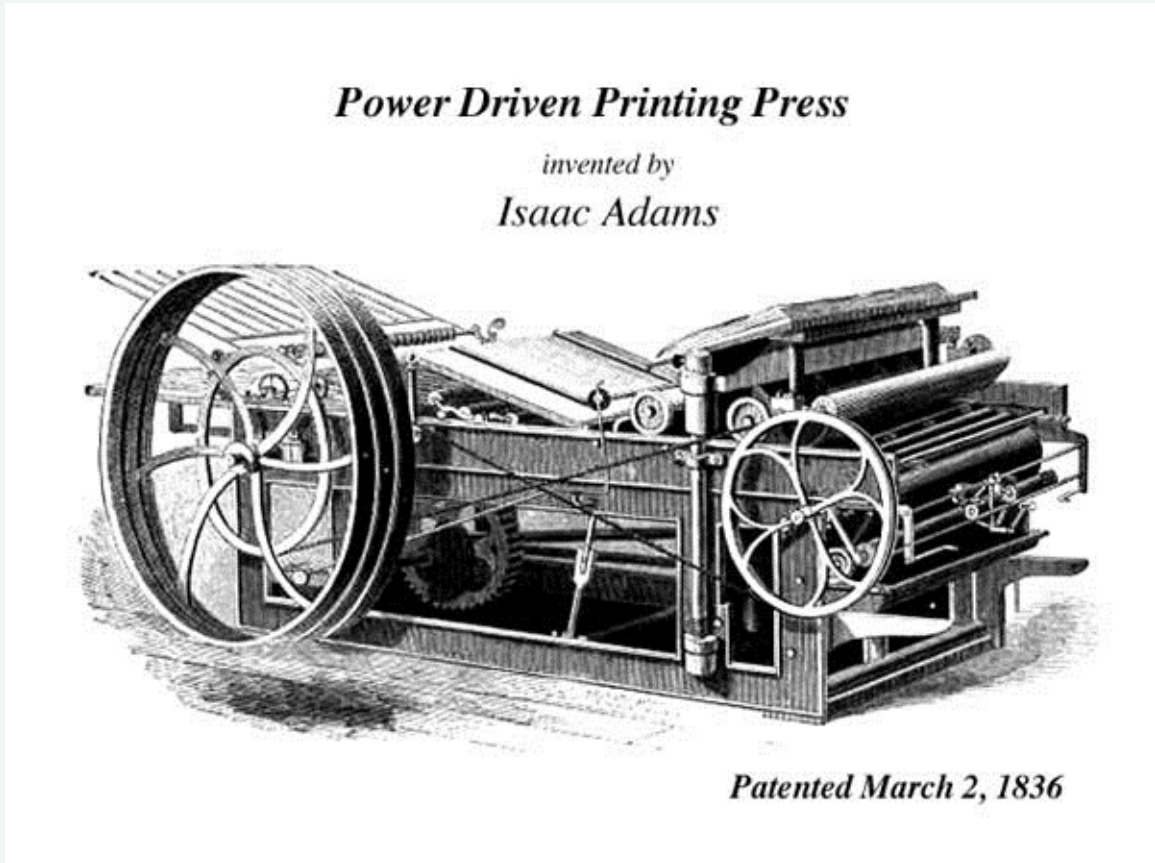
Current Model 3: Reader pays, market driven

With the convergence of the technologies of inexpensive paper, lithography, and steam presses in the mid 19th century, publishing exploded exponentially and literacy rates approached universal. Copyright became an issue.

In today's media saturated culture, publishers compete for reader's dollars by focusing on what those with money will pay to read.

Implications: Adventist publishers by necessity focus on what readers will pay for, and because they are challenged by media saturation, are finding it increasingly difficult to compete. Academic materials for students supporting graduate level theological education are not financially viable in this model.

Students are not a financially wealthy demographic, and there are too few in number to recoup the expenses associated with serving their needs.



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PUBLISH ALL AND RATE ALL By Brian Whitman and Rob Friedman

Electronic repositories like arXiv increase knowledge dissemination but not discrimination, as there are no reader quality guidelines. More people publishing more inevitably means more bad papers as well as more good ones. Yet such a system could also discriminate good from bad, by allowing:

a. Higher rating discrimination (a many–point scale, not just accept/reject);

b. More submissions to be rated (rate all);

c. More people to rate (more community involvement); and,

Different ways of rating (formal review vs. informal use ratings).

Figure 1 is a KES design that *publishes all and assesses all*. Print journals are limited to an accept/reject dichotomy, which implies that quality is an all or nothing thing. In contrast, an open KES can rank papers on a many–point scale, which conveys more information to the reader. The Figure 1 pyramid represents a 1–5 rating system (*Limited to Excellent*), plus a 0 *Not Yet Rated* category, and a -1 *Not Recommended* category. The actual scale would be a ten–point semantic differential, plus a reject option (-1). Ratings could be broken down by criteria like relevance, rigor, writing, comprehensiveness, logical flow and originality.

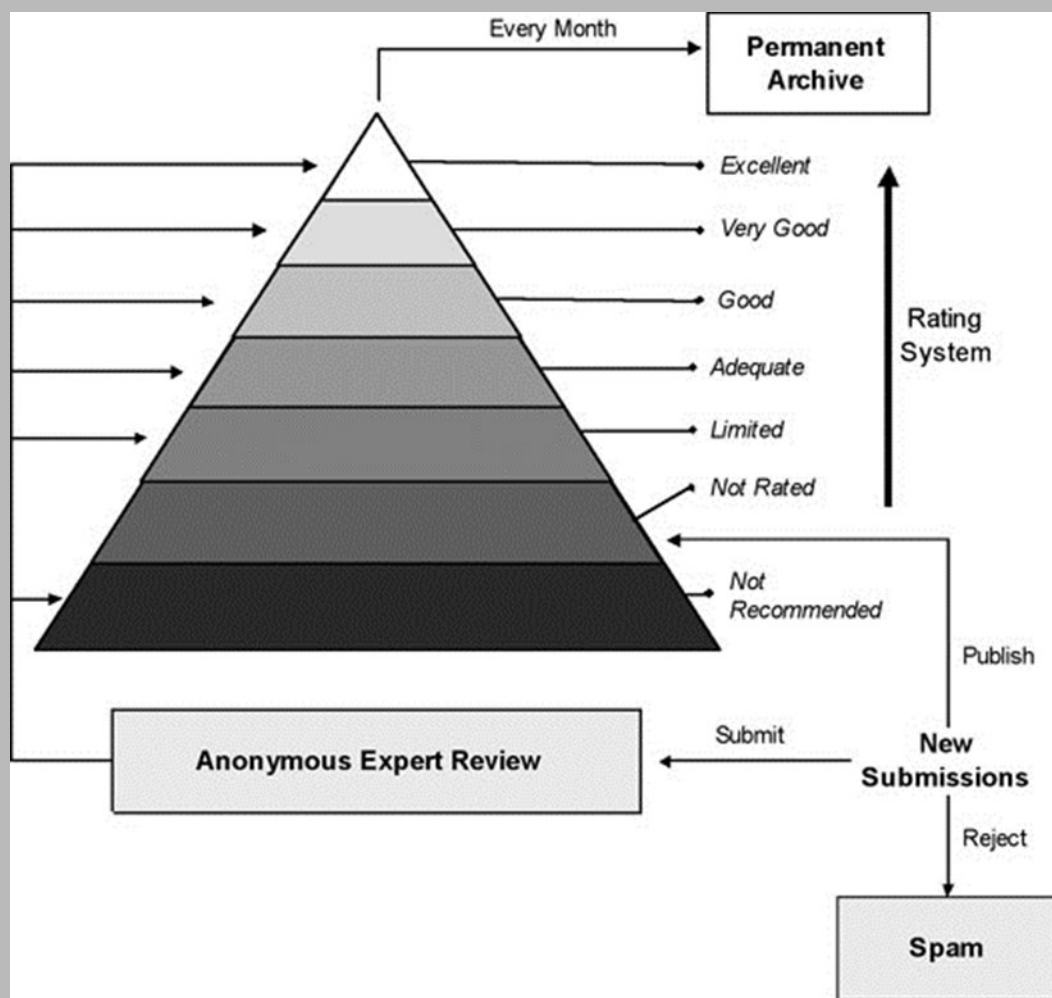


Figure 1: A democratic KES design.

The top white triangle of the pyramid represents the current say 10 percent of submissions that a top journal might print, while the remaining 90 percent of “rejected” knowledge is not available to readers. In this system however all the knowledge a reader chooses to make visible is available for use.

A natural initial response is that this involves too much work. Yet already *to reject even the worst paper someone must read it to some degree, i.e.,* traditional systems already assess every submission as otherwise how is the decision to reject made? The only difference is that while print journals reject in secret, an open KES displays papers it “rejects”, *i.e.,* is transparent rather than opaque. The difference is not how many papers are assessed, but whether the assessment is visible or not. If all submissions must be assessed anyway, why not do it openly?

Another response is that we already have too much to read without letting in more, but blame the Internet for that. As academic journals try to deny the rising flood of new knowledge, the 10 percent of stale knowledge that filters through their walls years later is becoming undrinkable. If there really is that much to know out there, isn't it better to see it than not see it, and to choose the 10 percent you can read? Isn't it better to be an academic citizen than an academic serf?

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