

Authors

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All the research, 1/40 the size!

A while back, a study estimated the number of people who will ever read any given published academic paper. The number was pretty low; it was somewhere just barely above the total number of editors plus their parents. The finding seemed to confirm that the inescapable Ivory Tower stereotype was not too far off. Appropriately, I didn't ever read the meta paper itself... anyone remember this gem?

Certainly some academics don't care too much about reaching out to those outside of their narrow speciality. Perhaps someone writing pages upon pages about X topic (this space intentionally left blank to avoid offending friends engaged in the scholarly arts) is quite content to toil in obscurity, and cares not to engage mere mortals in the discussion.

I think it's more likely, at least among the researchers I've encountered, that many academics *do* want to reach out. It is the dictates of their discipline, unfortunately, that erect a wall against the uninitiated. It's a well-established fact, for example, that in order to have a fighting chance at publication, at least one quarter of any Economics working paper must be written in Greek letters.

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