

New Zealand's PBRF regime: What lessons it holds for the ERA and journalism research in Australia

Paper presented to the
"The future of journalism research in Australia:
Addressing the 2010 ERA round" conference
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What I'll discuss

- PBRF
- Performance of Journalism in the PBRF
- Journalism as research in the PBRF
- How to maximise grade
- Conclusion

The PBRF

- The PBRF – Govt funding of research in NZ
- 2003, 2006, all universities involved, some technical institutes
- Next round 2012
- Period 2007-2012 PBRF will allocate about \$NZ1.5 billion

The PBRF

- The TEC allocates PBRF funds to each institution on the basis of its research activities, particularly the quality of its research output.
- Each PBRF-eligible staff member prepares an evidence portfolio (EP), considered by independent assessment panels

The PBRF

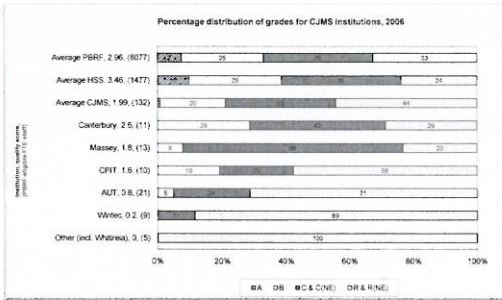
- Each researcher is graded:
 - A (World class)
 - B (High quality, at least national recognition)
 - C (Reasonable)
 - C(NE) (Completed a doctorate/equivalent, 2 publications)
 - R, R(NE) (Below C)
- Each institution and subject area receives an aggregate numerical score based on these grades

Performance of Journalism

Quality scores of selected subject areas, 2006 PBRF round		
Ranking	Subject area (PBRF-eligible fulltime equivalent staff)	Quality score
1	Philosophy (68)	5.15
2	Earth Sciences (137)	4.77
3=	Biomedical (222)	4.65
3=	Physics (106)	4.65
35	Communications, Journalism & Media Studies (132)	1.99
40	Education (978)	1.31
41	Design (83)	1.27
42	Nursing (243)	0.49
n.a.	Average for Humanities and Social Sciences (1477)	3.46
n.a.	Average for PBRF (8077)	2.96

Relative success of traditional research disciplines, cf practical courses taught at technical institutes

Performance of Journalism



Performance of Journalism

- As a result of PBRF, increasing emphasis on research in Journalism programs, at least among the universities
- Research-active staff have been hired, existing staff encouraged to obtain research qualifications, and research-inactive tutors used more for teaching
- At same time, cannot sacrifice teaching of vocational Journalism programs

Journalism as research

- Vexed question
- Journalism (esp. investigative journalism) can be research-intensive, quality assured, lengthy articles, high impact
- But rounds make it clear research typically theory-driven, published in journals, not routine professional practice.

Journalism as research

- In Australia, under ERA, journalism academics arguing journalism is "creative works". But ARC has graded thousands of *academic* journals
- In NZ, creative disciplines have typically done poorly in PBRF - eg, Design (1.27), Theatre and Dance, Film, Television and Multimedia (1.82)
- Only Music, Literary Arts and Other Arts did well (3.34), due to academic research

Journalism as research

- Calls for assessment panels to give greater weight to non-academic research, change composition of panels
- Costly, goes beyond remit
- Govt's *Tertiary Education Strategy 2010-2015*: PBRF must recognise research that has "direct relevance to the needs of firms and its dissemination to them" (p. 16)

Maximising grade

- Use time wisely – focus on international journal publication, collect material as you go
- Produce – turnaround can be >year, coherent platform of research
- High impact – ARC rankings, impact factors, put on your website

Maximising grade

- Well-presented portfolio: panels has short time, do not bury best work (quality-assured only)
- Prizes, JEA could establish research prizes
- Research teams, staging conferences, (guest) editing journals
- Lobby institution for support – research time, training in preparing evidence

Conclusion

- Published journalism may not fare particularly well in ERA initially, but many journalism skills will serve journalism scholars well:
 - Interviewing
 - Researching
 - Networking
 - Time management
 - Writing
 - Publishing

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