Author Disambiguation after Identity: ORCID and the Role of the Author

Introduction

The unique author identifier program ORCID we evaluated through critical and practical approaches in understanding the complicated role of the author in scholarly research. The Death of the Author and What is an Author? represent two of the most known critical theory evaluations of the role of the author in understanding a text. Practical issues with authorship include the challenge of large-scale research with an ever-increasing number of authors to identify, gift/honorary authorship, ghost authorship, and the notion of using the term "contributor" rather than "author" for large-scale research.

ORCID
(Open Researcher & Contributor ID)
- Most comprehensive program to identify unique individuals in scholarly research
- Formalized in 2012, ORCID is being quickly adopted by universities to improve research efforts
- Non-commercial, non-profit project and organization (most other related projects are proprietary)
- 16 digit identifier format for interoperability (ISNI format)
- Academic institutions are encouraging researchers to create ORCID accounts in addition to scholarly publications

Central Questions
Why evaluate ORCID with an examination of the practical issues of authorship?

Is the author always easily identifiable in a research project?

How can critical theory play a role in understanding an author identification program like ORCID?

“Death of the Author”
- The comprehension of a text is usually interpreted by knowing the author’s personality & beliefs
- The Death of the Author & Critic is the Birth of the Reader
- The “Scriptor” vs. the “Author-God” as a way to reimagine the role of the writer
- No writer is original as they reuse/repurpose older ideas


“What is an Author?”
- The author was created with the rise of private property and formal copyright laws
- The “Author Function” serves as the means by which a text or discourse is understood
- The critic cannot impart a singular objective meaning onto a text, meaning needs to be varied
- The text itself needs to be evaluated without so much focus on the writer

Foucault, Michel. “What is an Author?” The Foucault Reader, New York: Pantheon Books, 1984

Practical Issues with Authorship
- “Big Science” (large-scale research)
  - Increasing number of authors
- Gift/Honorary Authorship
  - Prestigious individuals given authorship without input
- Ghost Authorship
  - The actual author is intentionally removed and given to more well-known individual (honorary author)
- Is “Contributor” a more appropriate term than “Author”?
  - Suggestion to change our practical understanding of the writer

Conclusion
The purpose of this research is to critically and practically evaluate the idea of author identification within a program like ORCID. Such an evaluation does not negate the idea that the ORCID program will serve an important role in making scholarly research more accessible by being able to locate authors (or contributors).