

How Library Stuff Works Video: Scholarship as Conversation

As a university student a large amount of your time is spent on by research. You read academic books and journals, write research papers, attend lectures and participate in classroom discussions.

These activities show that you are not only a consumer of information but have also an active participant in the dissemination of scholarly knowledge.

In order to successfully participate in academia you need to better understand the context behind the information and knowledge that you engage. By reading, writing and attending scholarly sessions you are already inadvertently involved in an academic conversation with peers, professors, and scholars that came before you.

You may be wondering how do I contribute to scholarly discussion and how is it relevant to me? We'll get to that but first, let's consider what is scholarship as conversation?

Well, communities of scholars, researchers and professionals interact with one another by discussing their insights and discoveries on topics in their fields. These are ongoing conversations between an ever-growing number of individuals who each bring their own perspectives and interpretations to the topic.

These conversations take place in different venues but are most evident in the writing and publishing of academic articles and scholarly books.

So how is this relevant to you? You're just a student after all. Well as a university student you critically evaluate, cite and contribute to issue and topics in your discipline, issues and topics that are presented in the books and articles that you read.

Writing research papers you engage with the material that you are discussing. This means you critically evaluate what is being said, by who and how it fits into the larger conversation on this topic.

You further contribute by presenting in class or talking with colleagues. Your contribution isn't just a summary of the topic but rather, a development on the idea.

Finally, by properly citing all the sources you engage with you have now become one of the scholars developing the conversation with your own views and opinions.

But keep in mind, there are barriers to scholarly conversations and the academic system privileges the voices and information of established power and authority structures and by not having a fluency in the language and the processes of a discipline you can be blocked from participating in the conversation.

So work on familiarizing yourself with the evidence, methods and vocabulary of your discipline and remember all experts were once beginners so don't underestimate your contribution. You might just surprise yourself and others!