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Who's Talking about Scholarly Communication? Poster Presented at MiALA 2017

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An Examination of Gender on the SCHOLCOMM Listserv

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The Impetus

People with privilege often say things like 'There is no real problem' or 'This is only a specific case and not true in general' when confronted about taking up an inordinate amount of space anywhere.
- A female SCHOLCOMM participant

We as a group need to really look at the numbers before we jump to conclusions as to whether or not this is more than just a statistical anomaly. If we are truly concerned about gender representation in these conversations, then we need to do a more complete analysis before casting stones and developing solutions. This hasn't been done in a statistically significant way.
- A male participant's response

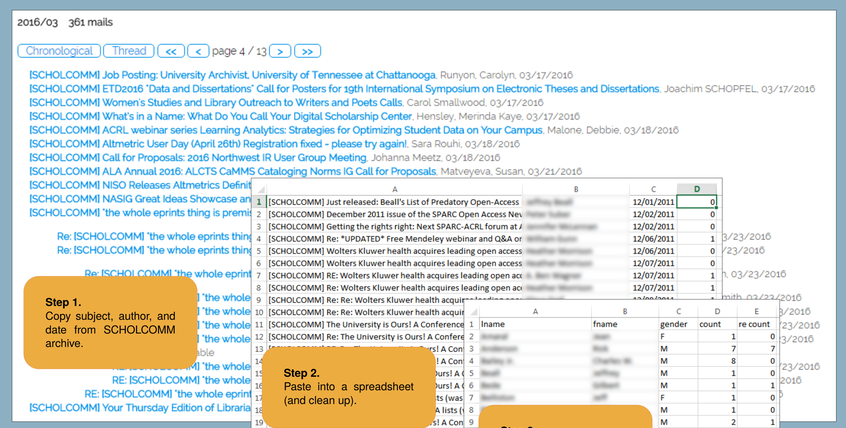
Background & Methods

SCHOLCOMM is the ALA's Scholarly Communication listserv and is maintained by its higher education division, the ACRL. Its user base is international, and is frequented by librarians, publishers, and other stakeholders.

The layout of the ALA listserv archives lends itself well to copy-and-pasting into CSV format. We did this for each year of SCHOLCOMM's operation and identified unique participants and their gender identity (if possible).

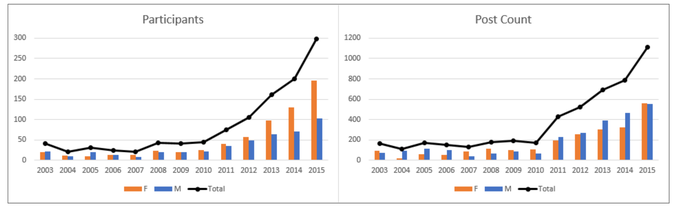
Using Excel, we were able to visually compare how frequently male and female participants posted or replied to the list. Using the R statistical software, we delved deeper into the correlation between gender and the posting of replies.

Gathering and Processing Data

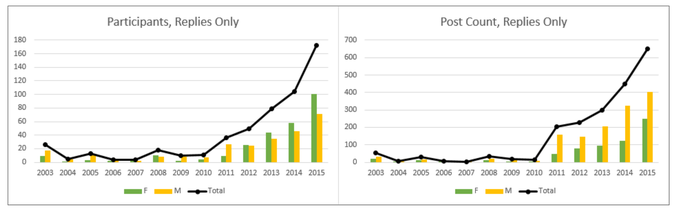


Yearly Trend Graphs

As can be seen, despite women outnumbering men on the listserv consistently since 2011, in almost all cases men accounted for as many or more postings to the list over that period:



This difference in posting frequency is even more pronounced when restricted only to replies:



Chi-Squared Tests in R

Using R, a free and lightweight statistical analysis tool, we examined the following questions via χ^2 tests:

Is gender correlated with having ever sent a reply?

```
mydata=read.csv("SCHOLCOMM.csv")
tbl <- table(mydata$gender,mydata$replied)
chisq.test(tbl)
```

	NoReply	Replied	
F	196	179	$\chi^2 = 11.476$
M	86	142	p-value $= 0.0007051$

Is gender correlated with number of replies vs. nonreplies?

```
mydata <- mydata[c(1,3,5)]
mydata <- melt(mydata,id=gender)
tbl <- xtabs(value~.,mydata)
chisq.test(tbl)
```

	NonReplies	Replies	
F	1599	656	$\chi^2 = 272.17$
M	1193	1329	p-value $< 2.2 \times 10^{-16}$

A Note on Gender Identity

We organized all (human) SCHOLCOMM participants into one of three categories based on identifying information (e.g. pronouns): **F** for female-identifying, **M** for male-identifying, and **U** for individuals who were gender nonconforming or for whom no information could be found.

We understand that this is reductive and that our analysis is focused on the **F** and **M** categories. As only 21 individuals accounting for 31 posts fell in the **U** category, and because of the original comments made on the list, we felt it reasonable to compare the only the **F** and **M** categories.

Avenues of Further Research

- Analyzing position, rank, or years of experience
- Deeper look at underrepresented groups
- Discourse analysis of SCHOLCOMM listserv content
- Analysis of "bad actors" on SCHOLCOMM

An article based on this research appears in the *Journal of Librarianship and Scholarly Communication*, 5.1[2]

[1] http://digitalcommons.wayne.edu/libsp/128/ [2] https://dx.doi.org/10.7710/2162-3309.2017