

Why did I come up with the idea of “Rubbish”

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Abstract

This experimental essay reflects on the conceptual origins of the “Rubbish” journal idea, an alternative scholarly space that challenges conventional success–failure narratives in academic publishing. Rather than prioritizing polished outcomes, the article explores the value of drafts, failed attempts, and unfinished intellectual processes. By situating personal writing experience within broader discussions of scholarly communication and academic culture, the author proposes a reflective platform that reconsiders how knowledge production is evaluated and shared. The piece contributes to emerging conversations on experimental publishing, post-publication reflection, and alternative academic expression.

Keywords: Experimental Scholarship; Academic Failure; Alternative Publishing; Scholarly Communication; Creative Process; Post-Publication Reflection

1. Why did I come up with the idea of “Rubbish”

Thanks to Silence for the invitation to contribute. In fact, Rubbish journal and the ideas behind it originated from an experience I had while participating in an essay competition. At the time, I dug out the sixth draft of my competition paper and started polishing the finer details of the writing and the formatting. But this tedious work easily evoked a sense of emptiness: What exactly makes a “good” paper? What is the relationship between personal perspectives and standardized academic norms? Does the pursuit of neat formatting, or even successful publication, conflict with something truly important? Why is it that only “successful” papers get to be seen? Could it be that our attempts and failures hold no value at all? Looking back now, these might seem like naive thoughts—perhaps the kind everyone has when first venturing into academic writing. But at the time, I didn’t know how to deal with them. So, in a moment of self-deprecation, I thought: If the judges think my paper is rubbish, so be it. Why should only good papers have the chance to be seen by more people? Writing this paper was full of amusing moments for me—could it be that these moments are completely meaningless? I believe that if the judges knew the story behind this paper, they might laugh too. What if they saw my first draft instead? Would they be so speechless that they’d fall “silent”? What if I didn’t revise it? Would they be angry? With these thoughts in mind, I posted a note about my idea of “founding Rubbish journal for the greater good.” And thus, the initial concept of Rubbish journal was born. I hope everyone can break free from the academic world’s single standard of judging success by publication outcomes, face life with humor, and dissolve this narrow “success-failure narrative” through joy. Perhaps, by stepping away from all of this, we might rediscover our original selves—the ones who, just stepping into academia, were full of anticipation for the unknown and genuinely happy with every small gain.

2. Rubbish as an Experimental Publishing Concept

The concept of initially arose from a personal moment of doubt and self-reflection but gradually evolved into a broader inquiry into scholarly communication itself. Contemporary academic publishing often prioritizes finalized outcomes—polished arguments, standardized formats, and measurable success—while the processes leading up to them remain largely invisible. Drafts, abandoned ideas, and imperfect attempts rarely enter the public scholarly record, despite being essential components of intellectual development. In this context, Rubbish is not intended as a rejection of academic rigor but rather as an experimental publishing concept that reconsiders which types of scholarly expressions deserve visibility. Instead of focusing exclusively on completed achievements, it seeks to acknowledge the epistemic value of unfinished thinking, reflective writing, and exploratory narratives. Although such materials may appear marginal within conventional evaluation systems, they reveal how knowledge is negotiated, revised, and sometimes reshaped through failure. The notion of “rubbish” thus functions less as a literal label

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and more as a critical metaphor. It challenges the assumption that scholarly value is determined solely by successful publication outcomes. By providing a space where drafts, reflections, and unconventional texts can coexist, the concept invites a re-examination of narratives surrounding academic success and encourages a more pluralistic understanding of intellectual contribution. Importantly, this experimental approach does not seek to undermine established scholarly standards. Instead, it proposes an alternative layer of academic expression that complements traditional publishing structures. If conventional journals represent the polished surface of academic production, Rubbish can be understood as an archive of the intellectual process—a place where hesitation, humor, and uncertainty are preserved as integral aspects of scholarly culture. Viewed through this lens, the experimental journal becomes less a parody of academia and more a reflective mirror, encouraging both authors and readers to reconsider how knowledge is formed, evaluated, and shared.

3. Implications for Scholarly Culture and Academic Practice

If Rubbish is understood as an experimental publishing concept, its significance extends beyond a single journal idea and addresses broader questions within contemporary scholarly culture. Academic environments often emphasize visibility through finalized outputs—such as articles, metrics, and formal recognition—yet the intellectual processes that lead to these outcomes remain largely concealed. By foregrounding unfinished thinking and reflective narratives, Rubbish proposes a shift in focus from results alone to the lived experience of knowledge production. One implication involves the emotional dimension of academic work. Many early-career researchers face moments of uncertainty, revision fatigue, or perceived failure—experiences that are seldom acknowledged in formal publication venues. Creating a space where these reflections can be expressed may foster a more sustainable scholarly environment, one that recognizes intellectual growth as iterative rather than linear. In this regard, experimental publishing does not reduce rigor; rather, it reframes scholarly development as a continuous process shaped by trial, reconsideration, and dialogue. A second implication concerns how academic communities perceive authorship and contribution. Traditional evaluation systems often prioritize clarity and closure, leaving little room for ambiguity or experimentation. By legitimizing reflective and exploratory texts, Rubbish invites readers to engage with knowledge at an earlier stage, when ideas are still developing. This engagement may foster collaborative interpretation and open new avenues for interdisciplinary exchange, as readers encounter not only conclusions but also the uncertainties that precede them. Finally, the emergence of experimental journals raises important questions about the future landscape of academic publishing. Rather than replacing conventional venues, projects like Rubbish may serve as complementary spaces—archives of intellectual processes that coexist alongside outcome-oriented journals. This layered publishing environment allows different modes of scholarly expression to flourish simultaneously, recognizing that academic life encompasses both moments of precision and moments of hesitation. By embracing this plurality, experimental publishing can help foster a more reflective, humane, and diverse scholarly culture.

4. Conclusion: Rediscovering the Meaning of Writing

The concept behind Rubbish began as a personal response to doubt but gradually evolved into a broader reflection on how academic meaning is constructed. Throughout this essay, the notion of experimental publishing is explored not as a rejection of scholarly norms but as an effort to expand the space in which intellectual expression can thrive. By acknowledging drafts, failures, and unfinished thoughts, Rubbish invites a reconsideration of what it means to engage in academic life. In many ways, the act of writing precedes the pursuit of recognition. Before a manuscript becomes an article, it exists as a collection of hesitations, revisions, and moments of uncertainty. These experiences are often concealed once a work is finalized, creating the impression that knowledge emerges fully formed. Revisiting the origins of Rubbish reminds us that the process of thinking—messy, playful, and occasionally self-deprecating—is not separate from scholarship but central to it. The experimental journal, therefore, should not be regarded merely as an alternative platform but as a reflective practice. It encourages authors and readers to view academic production as an evolving dialogue rather than a series of perfected outcomes. This perspective does not diminish the value of rigor or achievement; instead, it seeks to balance them with openness to imperfection and curiosity about the unknown. Ultimately, the concept of Rubbish returns to a simple aspiration: to rediscover the original joy of writing and the sense of anticipation that accompanies intellectual exploration. By stepping momentarily outside the narrow success–failure narrative, scholars can reconnect with the motivations that initially drew them into academia. In doing so, experimental publishing becomes less about challenging the system itself and more about reminding us that knowledge is measured not only by its polish but also by the sincerity of its creation.