FEATURE

"Unbury" the Book Chapter?

An Investigation of Library and Information Science Book Chapters from Edited Collections in Scholarly Indexes

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Publishing a book chapter in an edited collection carries a perception that doing so is akin to "burying" one's work. This research investigates whether book chapters from edited collections within the field of library and information science suffer from discovery challenges in three indexing databases: Google Scholar, Web of Science Book Citation Index (BKCI), and Dimensions. Findings show a consistent lack of comprehensive indexing across all three indices. This research also sought to answer questions about open access and book chapters; due to the lack of discoverability of half of the book chapters, however, these questions could not be addressed. The results highlight concerns about the discoverability of book chapters within edited collections, particularly in the field of library and information science, while also examining potential avenues to increase discovery.

Introduction

A persistent metaphor of "burying one's work" in relation to authoring a book chapter exists. This metaphor stems from an informal investigation that Dorothy Bishop, a professor of Developmental Neuropsychology at the University of Oxford, performed on her own research. In her exploration, Bishop found that when comparing citation counts of her journal articles versus book chapters, her book chapters received significantly fewer citations than her journal articles.[1] Based on the outcomes of her investigation, Bishop jokingly writes, "If you write a chapter for an edited book, you might as well write the paper and then bury it in a hole in the ground." In many disciplines, particularly in the social sciences and humanities, edited collections remain an important mode of scholarly communication. This article grapples with Bishop's observations about book chapters and looks specifically at book chapters within edited collections from the field of library and information science (LIS).

An edited collection is a distinctive form of scholarly communication that includes chapters written by different authors and compiled and organized by an editor(s) into a cohesive collection.[2] Edited collections can enable different authors to reflect on, further develop, and communicate with each other around a central topic or theme.[3] Chapters are intended to convey ideas, and the collection—read as a whole—conveys connections and intersections among the chapters. Some edited collections serve as important resources for students or practitioners who want to gain an overview of a field, and may be included in instruction or on syllabi due to their usefulness to students.[4] In addition, when comparing edited collections versus monographs,[5] edited collections see a higher citation average than monographs.[6] Edited collections remain an important and distinctive form of scholarship for researchers and within academic library collections. In the field of LIS, from 2020 to 2024, the database Dimensions identified 1,420 edited books, defined as books with multiple authors and editor(s).[7]

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This averaged 284 per year. During that same period, Dimensions identified only 1,158 LIS monographs or, on average, 232 books per year defined as distinctive from edited collections and generally on a single subject and often a single author.[8] The higher average publication of edited collections over traditional monographs suggests the continued importance of edited collections within the field of LIS.

For scholars and authors, there is much debate over the advantages and disadvantages of authoring a book chapter for an edited collection. Advantages of writing a book chapter may include a higher acceptance rate than journal articles, the opportunity to publish alongside experts in one's subfield, and the opportunity to engage with scholars on a shared topic and build relationships or future work together.[9] Furthermore, if an edited collection is adopted into the curriculum, a chapter may find more readership than a journal article.[10] However, as Bishop suggests, there are drawbacks and challenges in disseminating and discovering book chapters. Drawbacks of publishing scholarship in an edited collection relative to journal articles include lower citation counts, lower discoverability and readership at the book chapter level, less perceived prestige, a longer time to publication, and the perception of a less rigorous review process.[11] In addition, the quality of many edited collections can suffer as a result of disparate chapters, lack of cohesion, and lack of cross-chapter communication, resulting in edited collections that fail to advance the field meaningfully.[12]

In a follow-up to Bishop's piece, an article from *The Scholarly Kitchen* stated, "Journals long ago moved into the 'article economy,' shedding the volume/issue shell for searchable articles, in every way except citation construction and print delivery. Books remain in a packaging shell, with chapters trapped therein. There is no 'chapter economy.'"[13] Edited collections are designed to provide a unified collection of chapters that complement each other and are assembled in a single book, setting book chapters apart from journal articles. This structural requirement also poses challenges for book chapters in the digital environment that do not apply to journal articles, impacting discoverability. One significant example is the difference in use of identifiers for articles (digital object identifiers, or DOIs) versus books (ISBNs). The DOI is a persistent identifier that in part is designed to be interoperable among systems,[14] and many of the major DOI registries such as Crossref allow open and freely available metadata for use and reuse. In contrast, the ISBN identification system is not based on free and open metadata.[15] For example, Bowker is the official ISBN agency in the United States and maintains a proprietary database of metadata for publications with ISBNs and repackages and sells this metadata as commercial products such as the Books in Print database.[16] Another drawback of the ISBN, as many librarians are aware, is a single title may be subject to multiple ISBNs depending on format, such as whether it is a hardcopy, paperback, or ebook.[17]

The development of the Book Citation Index (BKCI), launched in 2011 by Web of Science, aspired to make bibliographic data on books and book chapters more available to scholars.[18] Early research on the BKCI found some significant limitations in what was indexed. For example, one study found that 83 percent of the books included were published by commercial publishers, only 14 percent were published by university presses, and three commercial publishers represented half of the publications indexed.[19] A 2018 study found that although Google Scholar is particularly strong at providing journal and

conference proceedings bibliographic data, books and edited collections bibliographic data are prone to incorrect, incomplete, duplicated, and distributed data.[20] Variations on title alone—from shortened titles to miscitations—further exacerbate issues in indexing book and book chapter citations.[21] Book chapters continue to face ongoing challenges related to indexing, metadata, and discoverability—issues that are less common among journal articles.

Open access (OA), however, may increase the readership, discoverability, and attention metrics of book chapters. One study from the field of conservation biology found that there was a statistically significant citation advantage for book chapters available as OA versus non-OA book chapters.[22] Another study by Michael Taylor theorized that one reason for these findings could be the disproportionate assignment of DOIs to book chapters among OA publishers.[23] Taylor also found that OA chapters consistently received more altmetric attention than non-OA chapters.[24]

When considering OA status for book chapters, however, the environment is often more complicated than for journal articles or even monographs. A report from the British Academy on the current state of OA for book chapters highlights that although OA for journal articles has become widespread, OA for book chapters is still relatively rare.[25] In the United Kingdom, three-fourths of book chapters submitted in the 2014 Research Excellence Framework survey were found to be outputs from publicly funded research projects.[26] As funder mandates for OA expand, there is a need to look closer at forms of scholarship beyond journal articles, as book chapters remain a consistent form of research output, some of which are results of publicly funded research.

Authors face numerous challenges to publishing their book chapters as OA. Publisher policies on book chapters are more difficult to track down than journal articles, and although a small number of publishers are responsible for issuing large portions of all book chapters, the long tail of publishers is substantial.[27] In addition, it is common for prominent scholars to be invited to contribute to an edited collection in hopes of bolstering the interest and marketability of a book. Yet, prevalent author-pay models supporting OA publication contradict the common invited-author practice.[28] An OA model that supports edited collections would need to grapple with the question of whether an invited author would be expected to fund the publication costs of the book chapter they were asked to write. Once published, authors may face challenges with tracking usage metrics of an OA book or book chapter across platforms.[29] Promisingly, though, among authors who have previously published an OA monograph, the majority have also published at least one OA chapter in an otherwise non-OA book, suggesting that efforts related to OA monographs could also be beneficial to authors publishing book chapters in edited collections.[30]

Librarians face financial conundrums with OA book chapters. Libraries and institutions have already faced the issue of "double dipping" within hybrid journals, where publishers receive payment for both a journal subscription and an article processing charge to publish articles within a paywalled journal as OA.[31] Libraries may be resistant to pay for the full cost of a monograph in which some of the chapters are made available as OA. Publishers may need to devise complicated pricing models for each titled depending on the amount of OA chapters in each work.[32]

Many of the initiatives libraries engage in to support OA are geared toward the journal article, whether it is libraries providing financial support to faculty and students to pay for article processing charges (APCs) or through transformative agreements that negotiate provisions for OA publication of articles by the institution's authors within license agreements for journal subscriptions. There are some initiatives to address OA monographs through library subvention funds that pay for the publication of an author's monograph as OA, or through collective purchasing initiatives, such as Knowledge Unlatched, in which libraries contribute funds to support the publication of a collection of ebooks as OA. Yet there has been little attention to book chapters, particularly those in edited collections, as a unit to consider for OA initiatives.

Research Questions

This research was inspired by Michael C. Calver and J. Stuart Bradley's study from conservation biology that found a statistically significant citation advantage for book chapters available as OA compared with non-OA book chapters.[33] Their study found that the mean number of citations for OA book chapters was at least twice as high as non-OA book chapters.[34]

The author applied Calver and Bradley's work to the field of LIS to investigate whether LIS book chapters also demonstrated an OA citation advantage.

The author additionally sought to explore questions about book chapters in the field of LIS, namely:

- To what extent are book chapters from edited collections in the field of LIS indexed?
- To what extent are book chapters from edited collections in the field of LIS available as OA?

Methodology

Although the author was inspired by the research questions and findings of Calver and Bradley, the methodology used to reach their conclusions on book chapters in the field of conservation biology were limited in some respects. Calver and Bradley selected for inclusion in their study four titles from the field of conservation biology, published in different years, and verified as available as ebooks. None of the titles were fully OA; titles ranged from 5 to 17 percent available as OA based on chapter count. All titles were edited collections with multiple authors at the chapter level.

In order to explore a similar research question as Calver and Bradley—plus the additional research questions—the author designed this study differently. This research was scoped to examine edited collections published within LIS within a specific copyright year. To identify publications within the LIS, the author used the Library of Congress Classification (LCC) system Class Z, which covers bibliography, library science, and information resources.[35] The author selected the copyright year 2015 to examine, to have at least five years from publication at the time of data collection.

The author used the ProQuest Oasis purchasing database to identify an initial set of edited collections to examine.[36] To create a search query in Oasis, the following parameters were selected: titles falling under the LCC Class Z* and a copyright year of 2015. The author specified book type "edited compilation" and

excluded edited compilations that were reprints of previously published journal articles. The search query was designed to filter out unwanted results and to ensure that only relevant titles meeting the specified criteria were included in the search results. This generated a list of books with a copyright year of 2015, LCC Class Z, and defined as an "edited compilation." Despite the query specifications intended to filter out such results, some titles in the dataset were compilations of previously published journal articles. The author manually identified and excluded these from analysis. The results from Oasis included title-level and not chapter-level data. The author compiled and exported date as an Excel file.

To compile the dataset of book chapters, the author used the book titles found in the Oasis dataset and manually searched each book individually in OCLC FirstSearch to obtain a table of contents of the book. The table of contents data—including book chapter titles and authors—was then compiled into a comprehensive dataset. If table of contents data was not available in FirstSearch, the author conducted an online search to locate the table of contents for each book. The final dataset—the manually compiled dataset of book chapters from books published in 2015 and classed as LCC Class Z—has been deposited and is available in CU Scholar.[37]

The author first searched Google Scholar to identify whether the chapter was indexed, and if so, whether the chapter was available as OA. This required manual, chapter-by-chapter searching. Book chapter titles were searched in Google Scholar using the bibliographic data identified in WorldCat First Search table of contents. In the majority of cases, this bibliographic information included author names. Not all book chapter titles included authors, however, and some titles included extraneous bibliographic information, such as chapter numbers or book subsection headings. For the purpose of this research, the author defined a chapter as OA in Google Scholar if the chapter was accessible via a repository, publisher site, or OA ebook aggregator without a paywall. The author manually verified access to establish whether the content was available under the earlier conditions. The author collected data from October 21, 2021, through April 22, 2022.

After analyzing the Google Scholar results, the author identified additional indexing sources. This comparison would address the author's curiosity as to whether other sources provide superior or different results compared with Google Scholar. The indexing sources—Web of Science BKCI and Dimensions—were selected because of the author's access to these sources through their institutional subscriptions and both sources' inclusion of and ability to identify edited book chapters as a format. The author acknowledges that other scholars may use different sources than the BKCI and Dimensions to identify scholarship in the field of LIS.

In both Dimensions and the BKCI, the author used the advanced search functionality to search by ISBN to retrieve all book- and book chapter-level results for the ISBN. The author searched both indices on February 7, 2025. OA chapters were identified through OA indicators in both indices' datasets. Dimensions categorizes OA articles and book chapters as Gold, Hybrid, Bronze, or Green.[38] Web of Science categorizes OA articles and book chapters as Gold, Green, and Free to Read with additional subcategories for each.[39] Results for book-level bibliographic data were removed, and only results at the chapter level were analyzed. Basic statistical methods were used to analyze the data.

Results

The author's findings and ability to address the initial research questions were ultimately impacted by the discoverability of the book chapters in the indices searched. To investigate the extent to which book chapters from edited collections in the field of LIS are indexed, the author searched 1,500 eligible book chapters from 90 edited collections across Google Scholar, BKCI, and Dimensions. Of 1,500 book chapters, 750—only 50 percent—book chapters were found across the three sources. Conversely, 750 (50 percent) book chapters were not found to be indexed in any of the three sources (figure 1). Both the BKCI and Dimensions had low percentages of book chapters indexed, 7 percent and 9 percent, respectively. Google Scholar had the highest number of book chapters indexed in total (737) and uniquely (521). BKCI had twelve chapters uniquely found in its index, whereas Dimensions had only one unique title. Nearly all of the titles found in both citation indices were also found in Google Scholar. Only one chapter was found to be indexed in all three indices, and there was no overlap in titles in BKCI and Dimensions and not Google Scholar (figure 2).

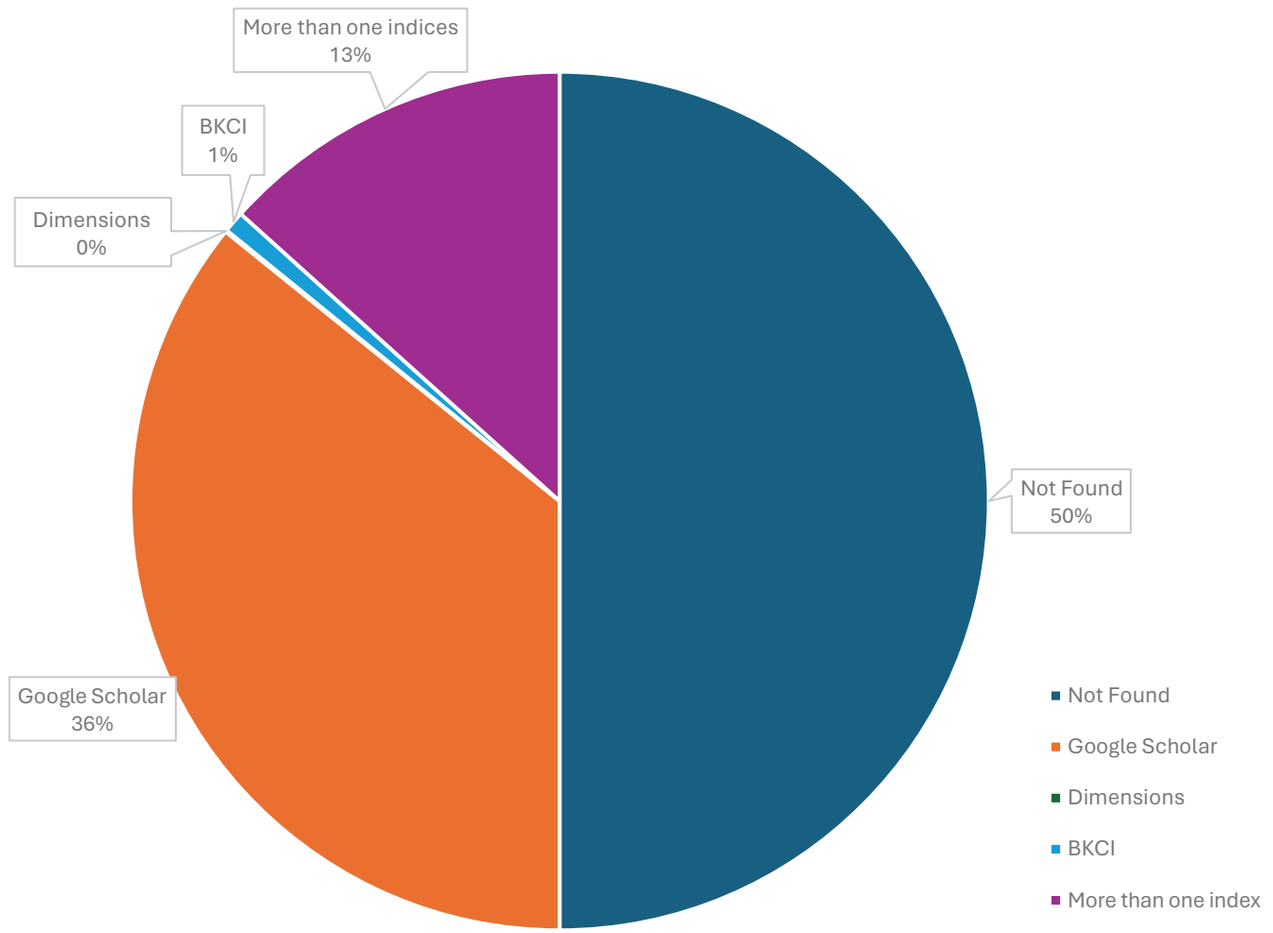

Figure 1. Comparison of book chapters searched and indexed.

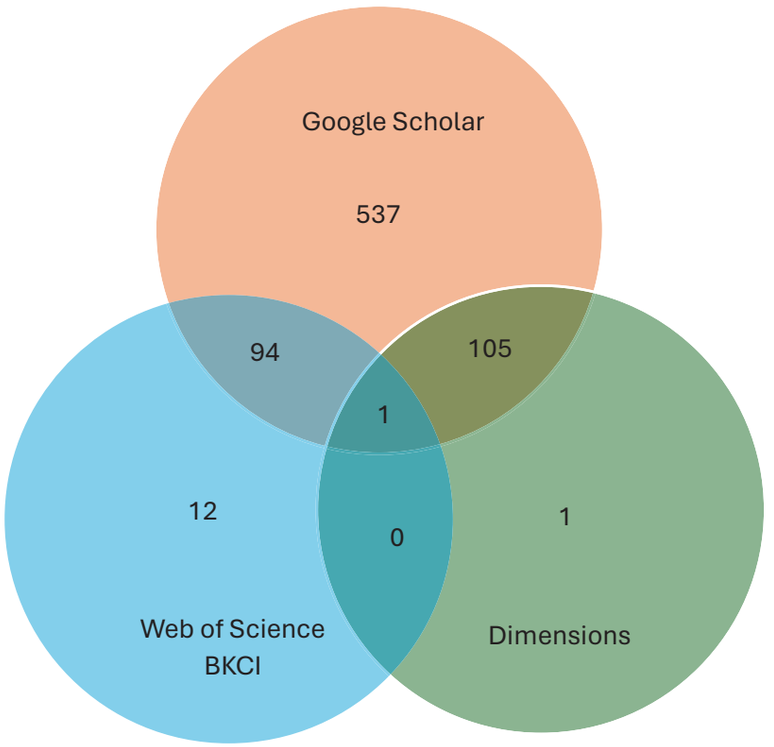

Figure 2. Comparison of book chapters indexed in Google Scholar, Web of Science Book Citation Index (BKCI), and Dimensions.

Because of the significant lack of discoverability of the book chapters in all of the indexing sources, investigation of the additional research questions was hindered. The author had intended to explore the extent to which book chapters from edited collections are available as OA and whether book chapters available as OA had a statistically significant citation advantage in comparison with non-OA chapters, as Calver and Bradley[40] had found. Because half of the dataset could not be identified in the indexing sources, however, the findings for these questions are inconclusive and cannot be adequately analyzed.

Discussion

The author's inability to answer the research questions on OA availability and citation count advantage based on the lack of indexing and discoverability of book chapters within the three major indexing sources is worth discussing. The lack of access to book chapters in the digital environment is what Bishop originally quipped about, "However good your chapter is, if readers don't have access to the book, they won't find it."[41] Scholars rely on online indexing sources to find and discover scholarship, and when half the relevant sources are not indexed, it is problematic. This may be particularly true for authors from fields not well served by indexing databases, or authors who publish with noncommercial or smaller publishers. The challenge of indexing book chapters comprehensively is surprising given that Dimensions has indexed more than 16 million book chapters, and the BKCI has indexed all the chapters from more than 160,000 titles, adding more than 10,000 new titles every year.[42]

Compared with the BKCI and Dimensions, Google Scholar provides more discoverability of both book chapters and book titles. An examination at the book title level found that seventy-eight of ninety titles (85 percent) were represented with one or more book chapters in the Google Scholar results. In comparison, Dimensions and the BKCI each had nine titles (10 percent) represented with one or more book chapters in the results. Only thirteen books were not found in Google Scholar, both at the title and chapter level.

The representation of publishers, particularly smaller and noncommercial publishers, appears to be limited across all indices for the field of LIS. When looking at the publishers for the LIS titles found in Dimensions and BKCI, only eight publishers were represented, all of whom are either based in the United Kingdom or Germany. No titles from the American Library Association or any associated imprints were indexed in either database, and only one title from Rowman & Littlefield, a prolific publisher in LIS, was found in Dimensions, although the publisher listed was Nomos Verlag rather than Rowman & Littlefield, which appears to be incorrect metadata stemming from the inclusion of the Rowman & Littlefield title as an ebook on the Nomos eLibrary, an academic ebook platform in Germany. In Google Scholar, titles published by the American Library Association and its imprints also lacked discoverability. Of the book titles not found in Google Scholar, 30 percent were published by the American Library Association and its imprints. The remaining publishers with titles not found in Google Scholar primarily came from smaller, independent presses but also included titles from larger publishers such as Bloomsbury and De Gruyter. Previous research found that in the BKCI, only 14 percent of books indexed were from university presses, only 3 percent were from noncommercial, nonuniversity academic presses, and the remaining 83 percent of titles indexed came from commercial publishers.[43] Additional findings from this previous research on the BKCI include a bias toward publishers from the United Kingdom and United States, as well as a concentration of titles indexed from three major commercial publishers: Springer, Palgrave, and Routledge represented 50 percent of the titles indexed.[44] When smaller academic presses or even university presses books are not well represented across indices, this can be particularly problematic for fields such as LIS where noncommercial publishers produce important work. It is also an important bias for librarians to recognize as they work with researchers using these indices to understand the limitations and bias of these tools and how this impacts what is and is not discoverable.

Across Google Scholar, BKCI, and Dimensions there appears to be significant inconsistencies in what gets indexed and what does not. Titles from De Gruyter, for example, were indexed in all three sources, yet not one index managed to index all of the De Gruyter titles published in 2015 in the field of LIS and searched from the dataset. It is clear, however, that the discoverability of book chapters is greater via Google Scholar than the BKCI and Dimensions. Meho and Yang found that Google Scholar was able to identify 53 percent more publications authored by LIS faculty than Web of Science and Scopus combined, but Google Scholar still lacks comprehensiveness for the field of LIS.[45] Factors that have prevented the indexing of books and book chapters in these databases could be explored in future research. For example, future research could explore whether book chapters with assigned DOIs are

discoverable in various indices. The author asserts that it would benefit both publishers and authors of edited collections published—for example, by the American Library Association and associated imprints—to include DOIs at the book chapter level for titles that are available as ebooks for these titles to become more discoverable by scholars.

The author's inability to address the research questions related to OA reflects the challenges with OA and book chapters noted in the introduction. To make meaningful advancements in models for OA at the book chapter level, more research on this topic is needed. If fundamental questions about OA and book chapters cannot be answered, such as determining how many book chapters are available as OA, then it will be challenging to develop a nuanced understanding of OA for book chapters.

Limitations

There are limitations in searching these indices due to the lack of a consistent, reliable identifier across all databases. Google Scholar was searched without using any identifier and relied on chapter title and author metadata, which may impact discovery due to inconsistent or differing metadata in Google Scholar. Both BKCI and Dimensions relied on the ISBN as the identifier to locate books and book chapters; however, as noted in the introduction, there are variations on the use of ISBN by format and which ISBN appears in bibliographic records.

Conclusion

This research highlights the continued importance of both edited collections and book chapters in fields such as LIS, while also demonstrating challenges in making book chapters discoverable. Although the author was not able to answer some of the research questions, particularly those related to OA and citation impact, the results nonetheless provide insight into book chapters as a form of scholarship and open the door for further discussions among librarians, publishers, and authors about the indexing, discoverability, and availability of book chapters within edited collections. The highly selective indexing of LIS book chapters within BKCI and Dimensions is notable and worth further conversation with vendors to better understand why most book chapters from the field of LIS are not represented in their databases. Similarly, at the publisher level, it is notable that American Library Association publications and imprints are not indexed in either BKCI or Dimensions, and they also lack comprehensive coverage in Google Scholar. Collections, acquisitions, and e-resources librarians working directly with publishers and vendors are well positioned to engage in conversations about indexing at the book chapter level, use of open metadata, registration of DOIs for book chapters, and other methods that might enhance discoverability. Although book chapters in edited collections face many discoverability and indexing challenges, the results of this research suggest promising actions library and information professionals can take to help "unbury" the book chapter.

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