

The Nature of an Original Contribution

The extract below is from:

Lovitts, B.E. (2007) *Making the implicit explicit: creating performance expectations for the dissertation*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing. (p29)

Nearly 300 academics from 74 departments from nine research universities participated in the research on which this is based. They almost all said that the purpose of the thesis/dissertation is to make a significant and original contribution.

“The faculty in all disciplines defined "original contribution" with respect to its newness (see Table 3.2). The contribution can be made in almost any component of the dissertation—question, argument, theory, data, data source, method, analysis, results—by thinking, saying, or doing something that has not been thought, said, or done before. The novelty can originate wholly or in part from the student, or the student may borrow an existing contribution from another field or discipline and apply it to his or her field or discipline for the first time” (p31).

TABLE 3.2.
The Nature of an Original Contribution

- Something that has not been done, found, known, proved, said, or seen before that results from:
 - Asking or identifying new questions, topics, or areas of exploration
 - Applying new ideas, methods, approaches, or analyses to an old question, problem, issue, idea, source, thinker, or text
 - Developing or applying new theories, theorems, theoretical descriptions, or theoretical frameworks
 - Inventing, developing, or applying new methods, approaches, computations, techniques, or technologies
 - Creating, finding, or using new data, data sets, archives, information, materials, or sources
 - Applying old ideas, methods, approaches, or analyses to new data, material, or sources
 - Developing or applying new analyses, analytic approaches, frameworks, techniques, models, or statistical procedures
 - Coming up with new ideas, connections, inferences, insights, interpretations, observations, perspectives
 - Producing new conclusions, answers, findings, or proofs
 - Combining or synthesizing things (experiments, facts, knowledge, models of inquiry, problems, sources, technologies, theoretical constructs) from other fields or disciplines
- Is publishable
- Adds to knowledge
- Changes the way people think
- Moves the field forward/advances the state of the art

Which do you think are most important? |