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SPEAKERS

Laura Ricci, Sara Grimme, Ian Mulvany, Meredith Adinolfi

S   **Sara Grimme**   00:06

I got the job.Hi, and thank you so much for joining us on Episode 2 of SSP's Early Career publishing podcast. For those of you who are new to the podcast, I'm Sarah Grimme and I'm joined by my co host Meredith Adinolfi. This podcast is run on behalf of SSP and is aimed at providing useful and informative career advice for early career publishers. Today we're going to focus on the question of "Where do I go next?". We have a couple of great interviews lined up for today. We've got Ian Mulvany from Sage and Laura Ricci from Clarke & Esposito. So, my own career started outside of scholarly publishing, actually in market research for consumer goods. But now I've got over 10 years of experience in publishing. I started at Nature, and then I moved to Elsevier. And now I find myself at Digital Science, where I do something extremely different than when I first set out to do in publishing. I'm a very good example myself of the many twists and turns one's career can take. And Meredith, would you like to introduce yourself?

M   **Meredith Adinolfi**   01:03

Sure! Hi, Sarah, very happy to be back here with you for Episode 2. So I'm Meredith and I have worked at Cell Press for most of my publishing career. I am in publishing operations, which is a new and made up title of a department, which is also kind of another example of twists and turns from where I started, which was in copy editing and production. So this is a topic very, very close to my heart. And I feel like sorry, you and I have different stories, both that contain twists and turns but interesting and different.

Sara Grimme 01:37

Absolutely, I would totally agree with that. And hopefully some of those twists and turns will be really valuable for our listeners so that they can see how random your career choices can actually be. Going back to that core question that we want to focus on today. Where do I go next? Meredith, do you have any stories of your career that you'd like to share here just to get us started? How have you yourself actually navigated that tricky path of career advancement?

Meredith Adinolfi 02:01

Yeah, I do. I have one thing that I really was thinking about a lot as we were preparing for this episode, it was a moment in my career where I was sort of job sharing, I was doing two different roles. Both were meant to be 50% roles. And I really loved them both. But it became clear that I was at a point where I couldn't give my all to either of them, or really grow into either of them the way that I would want to. And there was a moment where my manager at the time, who was a great mentor to me, sat me down and said: "at some point, you will need to make a decision between these roles, not because you don't enjoy one or the other, but because that's the way that you're really going to be able to grow and develop". And I made that choice, it was difficult. But it really led me to where I am now into getting to do several different roles, where I really got to kind of experiment, and grow, and learn, and really challenged myself. And I wouldn't have been able to do that without kind of putting all of my focus into where I really wanted to develop.

Sara Grimme 02:59

Right. And one thing I think people will be fascinated to know is how much of our careers are actually planned? Did you plan out to have that career path where you would be doing a split roll, and you'd have to make those choices? Just thinking about if you go back to when you were 23 or 24 years old and very new to the industry and not sure what was going to happen next?

Meredith Adinolfi 03:20

Yeah, that's a great question. I've thought about that question a lot. And I would say absolutely not. When I started in publishing, I knew that I was interested in editing and copy editing and the written word, and things surrounding that. But I never envisioned myself managing people thinking about strategy, and budgets, and everything related to sort of running a department and a group. And that's really what I'm doing now. And when I had this split role, the decision I had to make was between kind of the hands on

journal work that involved editing and some of the stuff that I really had envisioned myself doing with my career, and growing in a way where I would learn how to manage people on a broad level in a really more polished way. So that was kind of the decision point in my career. And I'd never imagined if I'd asked myself earlier that it would make the decision I made but I'm very happy I did. And it definitely opened up about a lot of doors for me.

S Sara Grimme 04:17

Yeah, my career has been not at all where I expected. So when I first finished university, I actually went and did about three years of working in market research in consumer goods. But I always loved publishing and I always loved books and envisioned that at some point I would become a fiction editor and my life would be surrounded by books, and I moved to London from Canada. And I saw a job at this company called Nature that I hadn't heard of, and applied for a job there, and found myself absolutely loving academic publishing far more than I ever imagined because I loved working with academics themselves, and I loved the process, and I loved how detailed we could get with the science itself and, you know, thinking about who I was when I went to uni and decided what I wanted to do and got my first jobs... where I am now, I've been in publishing for a long time. And I would never had anticipated I would now be working at Digital Science, doing a job that's a combination of multiple different skill sets that I've picked up. And so actually something that I think that is really important to stress as we go through today's podcast is, we can start our crew somewhere weak, but we can end up somewhere very, very different as we learn more about what it is that we enjoy, and where we think we'd like to go.

M Meredith Adinolfi 05:31

Yeah, that's very true. I think that's something we're really going to focus on with our guests is, what were the decision points in their careers? What were the moves they made? And how did they sort of know when it was the right time to make a move and what that move should be. That I feel like is a real challenge, especially early in your career, understanding when it's the right time to do that, and when you need to sort of wait it out and continue to learn and grow in your current role. So I'm really interested to hear what our guests will have to say about that.

S Sara Grimme 05:57

Absolutely. So is now a great time to welcome our first guest.

Meredith Adinolfi 06:01

That sounds great! Well, hi, Laura, it's nice to see you. Thanks for taking the time to be in here and talk to us.

Laura Ricci 06:12

Oh, it's such a pleasure! I'm glad to be here.

Meredith Adinolfi 06:14

So I'm here with Laura Ricci who is currently working at Clarke & Esposito. And I'm wondering if to start with, you can just introduce yourself and tell us a little bit about your current role in your organization.

Laura Ricci 06:24

Sure, so I'm a consultant at Clarke & Esposito and Clarke & Esposito is a management consulting firm focusing on the scholarly publishing industry, the kinds of clients we serve are nonprofits, professional associations, library consortia, and other folks of that ilk. And we help clients deal with some difficult problems. We do a lot of different projects every day. So what my typical typical day looks like is always changing. It's always a lot of fun.

Meredith Adinolfi 06:53

That's great. So as you may know, the topic of today's discussion, this podcast is where do I go next. So it's really about career mapping, and think about how to grow your career and what the right moves are, kind of where you go next, from your current role. So I'm wondering if you can talk about your first role in scholarly publishing and how you got into that?

Laura Ricci 07:14

Sure. So I started my career in textbook publishing, and even backing up to that I left college and I did a program at the University of Denver, for one month over the summer, that was focused on the publishing industry. It's called their Denver Publishing Institute. And when I was there, I heard lots of different presentations about different kinds of publishing that you could get into. But the gentleman from Pearson, who came and presented, talked about academic publishing and mentioned a lot of the companies were based in Boston, which is where I wanted to live. So I moved out without any role, I didn't

know exactly where I wanted to work. And I interviewed at Houghton Mifflin, and was hired on as an editorial assistant not long after being here. But of course, that first role is very different than what you think it will be like when you hear about the industry. So a lot of that first year, year and a half, at Holden, was about learning what is it like to work in a publishing company. What are the different other roles that you may interact with on a day to day basis? And it was a lot of just learning by doing.

M Meredith Adinolfi   08:19

Yeah, you're bringing up a great point that I was actually going to ask you about. What do you think was the most important thing you learned from that first role, where you've sort of were first entering into the publishing industry?

L Laura Ricci   08:29

Because so much of that first role is about figuring out what you don't know, what I found very helpful was that I was shadowing more experienced colleagues and getting a chance to understand the publishing process from commissioning work all the way through the first time it was published. But I also had some autonomy and was able to take on projects myself where I would lead the whole process. And what that ladder function helped me do was learn how to work with a team, how to coordinate with different departments, because where sometimes it's very easy to focus on doing your own work and doing your own work well, working in a publishing company has so many different pieces to it, where it's very important to understand how your work then feeds into the next stage in the process and how you can keep the trains moving on time.

M Meredith Adinolfi   09:19

Yeah, that's a good foundational point, right, that your first role in the industry really is learning about the industry and what the different pieces are. So can we fast forward a little bit here and then talk about from that first role, when you made that first decision that you needed to maybe take on something different or move to a different role? Can you talk us through that decision?

L Laura Ricci   09:38

Yeah, my first boss was actually very good about telling me when I was hired, if you're still here, after two years, two and a half years, we probably haven't hired the right person. They at Houghton were very good about wanting to find someone who would get exposed to lots of different things, figure out what he or she would like and then go pursue

that. So, about a year and a half into my role at Pearson, I knew basically where I wanted to go, I felt like I was in the right type of role. And I was looking for that next step up the ladder. And I interviewed across the street actually at Pearson Education and was hired into their custom textbook division from there.

M **Meredith Adinolfi** 10:19

I'm curious about that anecdote you talked about with your manager, did it still feel like the right time to you as a young professional sort of getting used to the industry to make a move and do a different job, or was that a lot kind of prompted by your manager telling you this is about the point in time when you should be thinking about your next role?

L **Laura Ricci** 10:37

I think that, in general, working in publishing is not quite like high school or college where after a certain period of time you graduate to the next role. So even though there's sort of a time goal in there, it really did have to do with how I felt in the position, how much I was learning on a day to day basis, and the kind of things I wanted to learn next. So even though, you know, it was helpful to have that guideline around, this is what we see as the role lasting for you, that actual decision very much came down to what I felt would be the next right step for me and where I felt I was at that particular moment.

M **Meredith Adinolfi** 11:23

Yeah, that makes perfect sense. So can you talk us through a little bit from that first move then, what your path was to where you've ended up now?

L **Laura Ricci** 11:31

Well, that starts to get very complicated. When I was at Pearson, I was there for about four years. And it was a very cyclical business. So over the winter time, I was looking for ways to expand myself and I learned about a program they had called the New Directions program, where if you came up with a business plan, you could be sent to another office of Pearson's somewhere around the world. So I applied for this program, with the blessing of my manager, and was sent to India for a number of months to work embedded in their office on the custom textbook division that they were trying to found. That was very different than I initially expected. It was a fantastic experience and completely shaped the rest of my career. I remember sitting down with my new colleagues and talking and listening to them and hearing what their challenges were and comparing it to the business plan I had written and basically needing to tear up all of my ideas, because everything

was so different than I expected. But it made me very curious about how publishing works in the rest of the world. And really, I learned that there was so much more that I wanted to know. So once I got home from India, I then went abroad and got a master's in International Publishing at Oxford Brookes University in the UK. And I worked with a consultant there, a local consultant, and from there thought that that was a very interesting career path, I was being exposed to a lot of the work by a consultancy, called outsell. And when I got home, I applied for a role that was open and outside, which was far beyond what I was qualified for. But they did speak with me, they liked what they heard, and they didn't offer me that position. But they called me back and said, there might be something else that we could have you do here and they brought me on as their first market analyst. That was a fantastic opportunity. It definitely didn't come because I thought that there was a particular way that I needed to go or there was a particular path. And it certainly wasn't planned out. And I spent two years there, went back into the industry for about five years at EBSCO wanting to get more hands on experience, wanting to have more of a technical role. And then about a year, year and a half ago, I left EBSCO and joined Clarke & Esposito as back into the consulting world.

M Meredith Adinolfi   13:53
That's so interesting, all of those details. The way you told that story, it sounded like you were really sure at each kind of "Oh, no", kind of crossroads of where you wanted to go and what you wanted to apply for and how you wanted to put yourself out there and that you also took some chances and maybe applied for things that you weren't sure you were quite ready for, but you knew you were interested in. I'm curious if you can talk a little bit about how confident you felt at those different transition points and how you push through the times where maybe you didn't feel as confident?

L Laura Ricci   14:23
Well, I felt like I was confident enough to ask but I wasn't confident that I would know what the outcome would be. And that's something that in that career, you're really your best advocate. And there are certainly times when you have to bet on yourself, but you never really know where things are going to go. It's also very hard when you're applying for a role. You see the job description, but it's hard to put yourself in that position of knowing what the day to day work will look like so there have been times when I applied for a role. For example, the first role I took at EBSCO was actually not right for me. And it became pretty obvious after a few weeks on the job. And at my 90-day review, I remember telling them, well, you know, I don't know if I'm exactly the person that you wanted to hire for this role. And, to their credit, they had a very open conversation with me about it. And, you know, we felt that there was still a role for me at the company. And I

went on to join another division and had a great five years with EBSCO. But in that moment, I certainly was not feeling very confident. I just knew that, you know, that was something that I needed to pursue at that time. So, it all works out. You just have to be open to those kinds of experiences.

Meredith Adinolfi 15:39

Yeah, one question I was going to ask you, I think you sort of answered, which was, were there any career moves you made that you didn't think was the right decision? I hesitate to say regret, because I think everything is a learning process.

Laura Ricci 15:51

That's true. Yeah, I think that was, that's certainly one that I would point to. And what it taught me was to not only be excited for the kinds of roles that I would be offered, but also be more discerning in the kind of thing that I pursued and to make sure I understand what I can bring into a role. And I think that's good advice for anyone, particularly as they progress in their careers, lots of doors will be open to you. But again, you can be your own best advocate. And, you know, you know what you like and you know what you want to do. So, as you're interviewing, you're interviewing the company and the role just as much as you're being interviewed.

Meredith Adinolfi 16:30

Yeah, that's very true. You've talked about this a little bit throughout your comments, but I'm curious what advice you would give to someone early in their career in scholarly publishing, who might be a little bit more hesitant or have a little bit of a harder time thinking about change or thinking about judgment, but they are ambitious, and they do want to grow their career, what advice would you have?

Laura Ricci 16:50

I think one of the things that has helped me most is to volunteer and be engaged with the industry, even if it isn't in a purely professional capacity. And the reason I suggest this is because this is a very collaborative industry, I've loved the people that I've gotten to work with, I've loved the people that I've gotten to know. And if you are passionate about something, if you're interested and curious about something, people tend to recognize that. And if you find that group of like minded people, it really does become... you get a sense of community. And that helps, I think, in helping you find what that thing is that you want to pursue. If you aren't in the kind of place where you get up out of bed excited to do

what you're doing every day, then, you know, keeping yourself out there and keeping yourself engaged is a great way to find what is that next step that does tick that box for me?

Meredith Adinolfi 17:48

Yeah, that's great. The final question I want to ask you is, if you have any advice for how those early in their career in publishing can find out what else is available in the industry, you talked a little bit about sort of volunteering and networking in the industry as a whole. But how can people at this early point figure out what the options are for them if they want to stay in this industry, but want to try some different things?

Laura Ricci 18:12

I think volunteering certainly, again, helps very much. Having a good strong network of people that you know, and not being afraid to ask questions of people that you know, in the industry is very helpful. I think that there are lots of resources out there. But in my experience, I tend to get the most out of making sure that I'm out there and networking, and getting face to face with people and getting to know new people and understanding what they do. That really has been helpful for me and making sure that, you know, not not just what's written down in the job descriptions, but what people say that their lives are like and what their roles are like, and you know, talking to smart people about what they do all day. You can never go wrong with that.

Meredith Adinolfi 18:59

Yeah, that's great advice. Well, Laura, I want to thank you so much for taking the time to talk to us. I really enjoyed hearing about your career story. And you have some great advice that people who are hopefully listening to this podcast can take with them. So thank you so much.

Laura Ricci 19:11

Of course, thank you.

Sara Grimme 19:16

Okay, so Meredith, thank you so much for that fantastic interview. And I'm now joined in London by Ian Mulvany from Sage. Ian has a fascinating career so far. And I'm really excited to ask him about some of his experiences, starting all the way back from when Ian

was still a PhD student. So Ian, thank you for joining. I'm going to hand over to you just to give a quick introduction and to lead with my first question, which is how did you end up in this industry?

Ian Mulvany   19:44
So thank you very much for inviting me. I'm delighted to be on the podcast. A quick shout out to a scholarly comms product meetup that we run here in London, for the product managers working in digital for scholarly communications. Have a lookout for that. It's a great event.

Sara Grimme   19:58
Okay, so Ian, late into the first of many questions I have for you, I would actually love to know, how did you end up in this industry? What was your path in?

Ian Mulvany   20:06
Okay, so I'll just quickly describe my current role and title. And then I'll talk to you about how I got my start in this industry. So I'm Head of transformation product innovation at Sage Publishing, where I work on looking at how modern product development methodologies or process methodologies or modern software engineering practices can help us make better products for the research community. But I started in this industry way back in 2002. And I did a big switch from an academic track. My background in studies is in Astrophysics, my studies in Dublin, and then I did a Master's program in the University of Edinburgh. And then in the early 90s, in the late 90s, in 99, I managed to get a PhD position at Columbia University in New York.

Sara Grimme   21:02
Wow!

Ian Mulvany   21:03
And I just thought that was it, right? Oh, this is it.

Sara Grimme   21:06
You've made it.

Ian Mulvany 21:06

I've made it. I am in an Ivy League. I didn't even know what Ivy League was, before I went there, I learned pretty quickly. But I made a really big error when I went to the PhD program in the US. I thought that by getting into the PhD program, that was going to be it, that was all I needed to do to continue there. I would just spend the five years thinking deeply, end up with a PhD. We have to go through a series of qualifying exams. And I got derailed. I did really bad the in those exams. And I also had made a mistake of not understanding what the requirements were, in contrast to what I had wanted to do.

Sara Grimme 21:44

So that aspirations that you had, were not what it was.

Ian Mulvany 21:48

That's right. And frankly, I got burnt out. And I got asked to leave the Ph. D. program.

Sara Grimme 21:54

Wow.

Ian Mulvany 21:55

And it was, I remember that moment, it was the worst thing I could imagine happening, happened.

Sara Grimme 22:01

Yeah.

Ian Mulvany 22:01

And I'd been carrying all of this stress on my shoulders for maybe six months, and Lord just dropped away. And I felt like I didn't know what I was going to do next.

Sara Grimme 22:11

When you say it dropped away. Did you just feel an intense feeling of relief? Or was it a different kind of dropping away?

Ian Mulvany 22:17

It was it was both both a relief and a deep sadness as well. So I went back to Dublin, which is where I'm from.

Sara Grimme 22:26

Yeah.

Ian Mulvany 22:27

And I basically spent eight, nine months trying to do nothing with science.

Sara Grimme 22:33

Okay.

Ian Mulvany 22:34

I ended up working as a supply teacher.

Sara Grimme 22:37

Wow.

Ian Mulvany 22:38

I did data entry.

Sara Grimme 22:39

Okay.

Ian Mulvany 22:40

I was a bike courier for a while.

Sara Grimme 22:42

Amazing.

Ian Mulvany 22:43
I even taught evening classes in of all things cosmology to members of the general public.

Sara Grimme 22:48
Wow, ok.

Ian Mulvany 22:49
And then and then I woke up one morning, probably eight, nine months in. And I suddenly thought, hang on, I have two, maybe three degrees in advanced science.

Sara Grimme 23:00
Yeah.

Ian Mulvany 23:00
Depending on how you count them. There's got to be something I can do that contributes to the scientific research ecosystem where I don't have to do research.

Sara Grimme 23:10
Right.

Ian Mulvany 23:11
And that was that was the point where I certainly actually started to get more structured around looking for something new to do.

Sara Grimme 23:17
And another time, did you even know what academic publishing was?

Ian Mulvany 23:21
Not amazingly, I had a very narrow view. I didn't even understand anything about subscription access. In physics, everybody who's working off of the physics archive, I guess I kind of thought that that was how you access content.

Sara Grimme 23:38
Yeah. Finally.

Ian Mulvany 23:39
Yeah. So that was that pivot from kind of an academic track, to then trying to find a new role.

Sara Grimme 23:47
So what happened next?

Ian Mulvany 23:49
So I had that moment of clarity. And I went out to Ethan's, a bookstore in central Dublin, and I bought a copy of New Scientist.

Sara Grimme 23:57
Okay.

Ian Mulvany 23:58
And they've got these job pages. So I referred to the job pages. I was just looking for roles that were in the scientific ecosystem, but not doing research. And I found three jobs that looked interesting.

Sara Grimme 24:10
Okay.

Ian Mulvany 24:10
I applied for them from this one copy of New Scientist. I got two interviews, and I got offered one of the jobs.

Sara Grimme 24:17
And did you literally have to send away the application? I mean, the internet would have

just been early.

I Ian Mulvany 24:24
Oh, yeah. Paper applications. Yeah, yeah, definitely.

S Sara Grimme 24:28
Okay.

I Ian Mulvany 24:29
Yeah. And so I got interviewed for a role in a High Performance Computing Center in Manchester.

S Sara Grimme 24:34
Okay.

I Ian Mulvany 24:35
And I got interviewed in Heidelberg, in Germany, to work on copy editing physics manuscripts.

S Sara Grimme 24:41
Okay.

I Ian Mulvany 24:41
And I remember the reason I applied for the Heidelberg role, it was because they needed a native English speaker who understood law tech with a physics background.

S Sara Grimme 24:50
Right.

I Ian Mulvany 24:50

I was like, I can do that. And then the copywriting one was one that came back and offered me the role.

S Sara Grimme 24:57
Wow. So you picked your suitcases, you moved to Heidelberg. And how did you enjoy the job?

I Ian Mulvany 25:04
It was great! Heidelberg is an amazing, amazing city. Beautiful city. Funnily enough, I was living there, just two weeks, going bouldering in a local bouldering spot and someone who like been in undergraduate with me emerged from the forest and he said, "Well, Ian, what are you doing here?" And I said, "I live here". And this friend of mine, Connor, was like, "No, no, no, I live here". And he'd been in the city already a year. And I didn't know. So I was able to tap in immediately to his network of friends.

S Sara Grimme 25:34
Right. Amazing.

I Ian Mulvany 25:35
Yeah. So that was the first job. I was working on managing the copy editing flow for the physics journals in the Springer program. This was long before Springer Nature merged. It was my first time probably in the world of work. I remember things like you got holidays. That was totally unknown to me.

S Sara Grimme 25:58
All of a sudden, you were a grown up.

I Ian Mulvany 25:59
Yeah. I had my own apartment. It was yep, definitely life transformational. Yeah.

S Sara Grimme 26:05
And you had to make decisions over what your job was. And what happened. And so how

did you decide what to do next? Because that is not where you are today?

Ian Mulvany 26:15

No, no, no, no. So the first year of that job, everything was new about that, everything about the world of work was new. And then the second year of that job, I felt I had pretty much kind of nailed it. It was becoming kind of just fairly routine, right? I, I didn't feel like there was any room for growth in this. And I have this academic background in physics. And Springer posted a job internally for a managing editor for some of their books programs and journal programs in physics. So I applied and I thought, yeah, I have that academic background. That's probably clearly where my career should be going. And I got that job. I got that role. It was an internal move within the company. And I moved from Heidelberg, to go work out of the offices in Dordrecht.

Sara Grimme 27:10

Oh, amazing.

Ian Mulvany 27:11

Yeah. And what had happened at that time is there had been a merger between a Dutch publishing company and the German company, and lots of the Dutch senior staff shuttled off down to take senior roles in Germany. And I was the only person after that merger, who moved in the other direction.

Sara Grimme 27:30

So just to very briefly recap, in the early stages of your career, you've gone Columbia, back to Dublin, Heidelberg, Dordrecht. And so one thing, just a little bit of a sidebar. Never be afraid to travel into to go different places and take those opportunities in different countries.

Ian Mulvany 27:48

Yeah, that's definitely the case. Yeah.

Sara Grimme 27:51

So you get to Dordrecht. You're gonna do this, you're going to excel and you're going to be books commissioning editor, that's your careerh. What happens?

Ian Mulvany   27:59

So I guess I found that the core of that job wasn't really where my heart was. It turned out to be mostly about going out and trying to convince these very busy academics to do work for me, to write me books. And at the time asking people to do things was something I found very difficult. I found it very difficult to put myself out there, put that ask in front of people. It's something I'm much better at now. I remember back at that moment, though, I used one mental model to help me with this.

Sara Grimme   28:40

And what was that?

Ian Mulvany   28:41

So I realized that, whilst I may be annoying to many academics, by trying to pursue them to write books and commission books with Springer, maybe there were some who had manuscripts ready or who had ideas. And I had the magic power of actually being able to take their work and get it published. And so I turned it in my mind from being a question of me annoying these people to a statistics game. There must be a percentage of academics out there who have work, who are looking for a venue and my role then would be something which could play the the bridging gap between those two needs.

Sara Grimme   29:18

See, what you did was you play to your strengths, you found a way to make it work for you based on what you knew that you were good at.

Ian Mulvany   29:24

Kind of, yeah, it made it easier for me to try the role. But I think my boss at the time, who is amazing, and she's still working in the industry, these fantastic person, she must have been tearing her hair out, because at the same time as as I was trying to do this in my core role, there was a lot of interesting initiatives beginning to happen in the technology, academic space. So this was at the time of the emergence of what we quaintly called web 2.0. And a service called Delicious had just launched, Flicker was making waves, people were talking about user generated content, which we're familiar with today. But that was at a time when this was just beginning. And myself and a very good friend of mine, Brian Bishop, had this idea: maybe we could do something in this space for academics, and we had seen services like Sachi like and Connotea. But we recognize that as publishers, we

had the connection that networks between our authors, our editors, the content, so we pitched an idea to the CEO of the company at the time, Derk Haank, for a new service that Springer could create. And the feedback I was getting was, it's great, it's great that you're going talking to the CEO about all these ideas, but you still need to sign all these books.

S Sara Grimme 30:45
Okay, so there's an inherent issue here with where your passion and your heart is, and you're getting those 50 books a year. Okay, so what the hell did you do?

I Ian Mulvany 30:57
So I realized that, you know, the commissioning side, the publishing side, that wasn't where I was really interested. And I saw in my mind that the future of our industry has to be about creating services, about digital services, because publishers sit in this amazing position of being in the middle of all of these networks. And I just thought, surely there must be a way to make that work. And right, at that time, Nature advertised a role for a product manager. And it was to Product Manager service they had created called Connotea. And I was thinking, that's it. That's the future. This is what we need to do. But wait a minute, what's the product manager, I didn't know what that is. And, and I saw the job ad, and there were loads of things on there that I could do technical side, but there were loads of other things that I had no idea about. So I had a strategy. Apply for the job. When I don't get the job, find out where the gaps are between my skills and what's needed, and then go away and skimp on those things.

S Sara Grimme 32:04
And had your plan been to go back to Nature when you didn't get the job and directly ask them what the skill gap was?

I Ian Mulvany 32:10
I hadn't thought that far.

S Sara Grimme 32:11
Okay. But you had a plan.

Ian Mulvany 32:12

Yeah. And but it didn't work.

Sara Grimme 32:14

Okay. Why?

Ian Mulvany 32:15

I got the job.

Sara Grimme 32:16

Right. Yeah. And hence you and I met several years ago at Nature working on Connotea. Yeah. So that was a big transition. How'd that work for you?

Ian Mulvany 32:26

That was great. Okay. Yeah. It was, it was a hard move from a personal point of view. I had just started a relationship with someone in Germany and there was a lot of worry between us and from her in particular, that me moving to the UK at this moment was going to potentially put that at risk. But we devised a strategy to work around that. So one thing that we did is, we met fairly frequently, every two or three weeks. And every time we did meet, we had already booked our next travel. So when we met each other, there wasn't any concern about when will that next meeting happen?

Sara Grimme 33:06

Because you knew.

Ian Mulvany 33:07

Because we knew. But when I look back on it now, I think, my sort of much older self, I probably wouldn't have made that trade off. But back then it seemed like the right thing to do.

Sara Grimme 33:19

Yep. And so you've got your first product job. You've just been doing all this editorial stuff.

Sounds like you're in the right place.

I   Ian Mulvany   33:28

Yeah, definitely.

S   Sara Grimme   33:29

Yeah. Now you've done quite a few other things since then. So eventually, you left Nature, of course. What made you take that step from leaving Nature and then going on to your next job? What was it that made you go, okay, now's the time, I'm ready to do this.

I   Ian Mulvany   33:44

So at that time, that decision was a little bit more serendipitous. I have been working on trying to draw people in the product industry. In London together for some meetups, I began to be speaking at conferences, I met some people. And the shift in Nature at that time was changing a little bit. It was around about the time the Digital Science got started. And so suddenly, all of the exciting things were happening over Digital Science. I was still on the Nature side looking after some products where, to be honest, they were very experimental at the time. And we hadn't really thought through things like business models or product strategy, things which at that time, have sort of explosion of ideas in the late 2000s. I think people hungry to grasp the importance of those is underlying fundamentals before you get started. I can't in any way fault Nature, and we learned so muchbut certainly the products I was maintaining were more in maintenance mode.

S   Sara Grimme   34:49

And, and is it just is it fair to say that during that period, you were also still very much constantly learning because you're learning the product side, you're learning the tech side, but then there's all this other stuff like business models and financials that you were having thrown at you.

I   Ian Mulvany   35:02

Yeah, well that very much so yeah, yeah. And so I got called up by some people at Mendeley and they said "hey, Ian, you wanna go for lunch?" And being very naive, I said to people around me, hey, people from Mendeley want to go for lunch, who wants to come? And our good friend Uan was there and he's like, I'd love to come, and Uan, who has since went on to be the founder of Altmetrics. We were still very green naive product people. So

I called it mentally guys. Okay, I'm gonna bring you in. And they were like, okay, we went for lunch, went to some fine pizza place. Very nice lunch, come back to my desk, I got an email from Mendeley saying, "Yeah, Ian, we just want to go for lunch with you". I'm like, "Ah, okay". Yeah, went for lunch with them again, went to a very nice place. And they basically were pitching for a role, which was head of product for the whole of that company. And I remember thinking, I can't do this, because I don't I don't have enough experience. But I sat down with one of their founders, one of their VC backers. And she basically said, "No, no, it's fine. What this company needs right now is just anybody who has experience of what it's like to work in a proper grown up business. You will be fine". So I said, Okay, I'll give it a go.

Sara Grimme 36:25

And you must have still been relatively young at the time.

Ian Mulvany 36:29

I'm a bit older than I look. But I was in my early 30s.

Sara Grimme 36:33

So young at the time. And it's funny because both when you transition to Nature from Springer, and this move to Mendeley, both times, it's something where you might have thought, Okay, can I actually do this? This seems very serious. And yet, you did it, you made a success of it. And are there any key things that I think that you would want to impart on anyone listening? I think there's a lot there to be said about backing yourself.

Ian Mulvany 37:01

Yeah. I think that it's very important not to get into imposter syndrome, right? It's very easy to feel that way. But the more I've been in organizations, and the more senior people I've met, the more I've realized that we're all just trying to figure it out. And so ask questions like, what's the risk profile? And so often, I've thought to myself, okay, I might take this role. It might not work out. But at this point in my career, I've had this this and this success. Yeah, one bum note, is not going to destroy my career. And if it's successful, the upside is quite large. And so thinking in bets can help you mitigate the fear that you might have about trying to take on something new.

Sara Grimme 37:50

Yeah. Okay. I think I think that's great advice. And actually, so after Mendeley, of course, you went to eLife and then subsequently to Sage. Have you ever spoken to anyone who received any advice when moving organizations or thinking about your next step that you think would be relevant to pass on?

Ian Mulvany 38:08

That was a really interesting question. And as I thought back about it, I've realized that I haven't ever received that advice, from the outside. But I have noticed that my own framework for how I think about opportunities has been evolving. So I've got kind of a nice clear way now that I like to think about that. And I kind of call it a traffic light kind of framework. And so I kind of, up until the Mendeley role, I think it was fair to say that a lot of my transitions were purely based on the opportunity and the product itself. But after that, the decision criteria I had changed quite a lot. And so one of the reasons why I moved from Mendeley to eLife, it means it was an amazing experience, I left before the acquisition by Elsevier, and it was a fairly exciting in all of the words kind of role. But we were also very uncertain around what the future of that company would be. I had a team of about 20 people reporting into me. I remember staying up at night, worried about their future, worried about the future of the organization, having a lot of anxiety. But still learning a lot, having a lot of fun working with some young but amazingly talented and driven people. And then myself and my by then wife, we made the thing work long distance, we were living together in London, we got married, we're about to have our first child. And I just thought, okay, maybe I need to change my criteria for how I think about these things. eLife came along the scene. It's an organization that is backed by funders. And it was very new. And I realized up until this point, I'd had a lot of exposure on the commercial side, on the publishing side to the scientists, but I had no exposure in my career until that point with the funders side, a really key component. And so with eLife, I saw the opportunity to get access to a sector of the industry that I didn't have exposure to before. But also that very significant institutional backing and a moment in my life where I was part of a young family. And so since then, the way I've kind of thought about career moves is I sort of asked myself these three questions. Is it a role, which will support my family and me and the way that I need? And as I was saying, that's not only about the salary, but it's also about just physically where you're located, what the culture of that organization is like. I just give a shout out to Sage, Sage is an incredibly family supporting and understanding company, that is something that's really important to them. And then I think about, is the role itself for the job to be done going to be impactful? And then finally, I think, am I going to have a positive impact on that? And so when when Sage approached me when I was working at eLife, I've been there four years, we'd raised worth of 40 million in funding from our funders. I was heading up all of the technology team, we were

beginning to build our own platforms. Why would I leave that role, right? But Sage came and asked if I could help think about how to do new business model, new product development for an area, which I think is very important today, which is how we understand the effects of the digital on our culture in our society, how can we support social scientists want to work with that. So that was clearly an area that was important. And then in terms of that new product development, they were going to create a small incubator unit, and I felt that I had a lot to give on that side. And it was a company which was going to be very close to where I lived at a moment where we were about to have our second child. Up until then I'd been commuting heavily to get up to Cambridge and to come back down. And so I didn't have any intention of switching. But when those three questions came up all green, I have to ask, what's, you know, what, why, why shouldn't I? Why? What's the downside? And there wasn't any. So that was what led to my most recent job.

Sara Grimme   42:13
Just on a totally different tangent. Are there any career moves that you regret, you don't have to talk about the company, by the way, just more broadly speaking, and there may be none?

Ian Mulvany   42:25
Well, as I was saying before, I really was the world's worst commissioning editor. And I don't by any means regret that job move, because it did eventually lead to where I am today. But I would like to apologize to all of my colleagues from back there about how I must have made them tear their hair out, it was very clear very quickly, that that kind of job was not the right role for me. And I think it's okay to kind of recognize that in a role. And so yeah, that is not a regret, but a recognition that it was the wrong fit.

Sara Grimme   43:01
Yeah. Okay. So just to finish up, in some ways, this is the most important question, what advice do you have for early career people in this industry?

Ian Mulvany   43:11
So my advice would be to try and develop systems level way of thinking about what your role in the industry is. How to think about questions of value, what's the value you're creating for the ecosystem? How do you describe the value you're creating within your organization. This is a framework I really recommend people to look at, which is called

outcomes over outputs, we can often get very stuck on thinking about the outputs of what we do, but we have to be able to describe what the outcomes are that we want to have changed in the company around us or in the world. And if you can describe your contribution in those ways, it's so much easier for your bosses to see the value that you're creating in the organization. On top of that, I would say learn about the wider scope of the infrastructure, learn about how the things you're working on connect things, like ORCID, or Crossref. And then finally, learn some programming and learn how to extract information from those services. And from my perspective, I think those things would be the advice that I would give to people in this industry.

Sara Grimme 44:19

Amazing. Thank you so much, Ian. I've thoroughly enjoyed that. And I hope all of our listeners enjoy listening to you just as much. Thank you very much.

Ian Mulvany 44:28

Thank you. And thank you again for the invitation.

Sara Grimme 44:31

No problem. Wow, that was such a fantastic interview. I think we've just listened to two amazing interviews.

Meredith Adinolfi 44:44

I agree, Sara. Those were both really great conversations. And I feel like both interviews were chock full of really great advice and insights. I actually have nothing that I would add. I think those interviews really speak for themselves. I and Laura both made some really great points. So I think we're just going to close this discussion there. And we really hope everyone enjoys listening particularly to Lauren and talk about their career experiences, and give us some insight and advice, and how to navigate through that in your own career. And that is going to finish us out for Episode Two. Thank you so much, Sarah.

Sara Grimme 45:18

Thank you, Meredith. And we'll chat next time.

Meredith Adinolfi   45:21

Sounds good. See you for Episode Three.