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SPEAKERS

Meredith Adinolfi, Ann Michael

M Meredith Adinolfi 00:05

Welcome to episode eight of SSP's Early Career Publishing Podcast. This is Meredith coming to you again from Boston. For those of you who might be new to the podcast, this is a series that aims to serve all facets of scholarly publishing by bringing together insight, information, and guidance from leaders and experts in our field. Today's episode is the second in a two-part series on open access and scholarly publishing. In part one, Sara and I talked through some of the basics of OA. And today, with that foundation in mind, we'll delve further into several key topics surrounding OA. Luckily, we'll have some help with that. We're very happy to welcome back Ann Michael to help us dig a little deeper into some of the more complex aspects of the OA landscape. Ann is the CEO of Delta Think and has also been the Chief Digital Officer for the Public Library of Science and has served as SSP's President. So, Ann, welcome to the podcast. And thank you so much for coming back to help us out on yet another topic.

A Ann Michael 01:02

Thanks, Meredith. It's very nice to be here again.

M Meredith Adinolfi 01:05

I gave you a quick introduction, but why don't we start with just having you tell everyone a little bit about yourself?

A Ann Michael 01:10

Sure. I have been in consulting in scholarly communications since, I think, 2005. And prior to that, worked at Wolters Kluwer Health. My background is mostly around strategy, new product development, innovation. Interestingly enough, though, and I think maybe perhaps the reason why you asked me to do this podcast with you is that over the last several years, we've had, at

DeltaThink, a very strong interest always in data and analytics, and focused on open access to produce a product in that space. So as a result, we've become very familiar with open access data and the strategic questions and issues and opportunities that publishers face.

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Meredith Adinolfi 01:56

Yeah, that's one of many reasons why we asked you to come here and talk about this topic today. In part one, we talked about what open access is, and generally how the workflows and policies are set up. And we also focused a lot on how and why OA has gained so much traction and attention in our industry. So with that in mind, I want to start by just asking you whether you've seen publishers taking any steps to ensure that all authors have access to open access publishing?

A

Ann Michael 02:23

That's a really great question to start with, Meredith, because I do think there has been substantial action that's being taken in the market to ensure access. There are -- a lot of critics of open access would say, especially open access based on an article processing charge, that the barrier to read was simply replaced with a barrier to publish. And so we've seen a lot of activity over the last months and couple of years, around non-APC based models. And really, the core reason for that is about having global access and access regardless of the ability to pay for the individual author. So PLOS has the Community Action Publishing Program that they started, you could go to their website and look at that. If you look right on their website, it says, you know, "our Community Action Publishing Model aims to eliminate author APCs, in order to make our most selective open access journals truly open to read and open to publish." The subscribe-to-open model, which has been worked through for various scenarios by Chainbridge Consulting -- we first saw it at Annual Reviews, at Bergen Journals, ADP Sciences -- that is another model that seeks to flip, if you will, the subscription model, from subscribing to get access to subscribing to keep a journal open. And we could do an entire session on that model. So I won't get into the particulars here. But, I mean, in short, absolutely, I believe that, you know, especially with a now awakening of a lot of the publishing industry to diversity and inclusion as a really core effort that they want to pursue, there's been this merger of that into the open movement, and people are looking for models that are more equitable.

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Meredith Adinolfi 04:23

Yeah, and I think you're right that a lot of the questions we're going to talk about here, we probably could have a separate episode on each of these questions. So, thank you for just the high level overview on that one. And we'll follow up perhaps in future episodes to dig a little deeper. So you talked a little bit about global access. So I want to ask you next, how do funder mandates vary geographically?

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Ann Michael 04:45

For the most part, I believe a lot of the mandates started to take route earlier and faster in the UK and Western Europe. I went over to Roarmap (R-O-A-R-M-A-P), which is a registry of different mandates. Now, they're not all funder mandates. So Roarman also includes mandates

different mandates. Now, they're not all funder mandates. So, Roadmap also includes mandates from research organizations, like universities, for example. But it was very interesting that, by far, the largest area with mandates was Europe, which has 680 and 121 of them were in the UK alone. So, I think what you see in the UK and Western Europe is a more concerted effort by funders to push for the content, the articles, and the data related to research that they have funded to be open. In the US, it's a little bit different, it's a little bit softer hand, if you will. There are some organizations that are US-based, like The Gates Foundation, that have signed up for Plan S, which I know we'll talk about in a little while. And, you know, there are -- so there are certain organizations that have taken a stronger stance to ensure that the content produced from their funding is open. But from a governmental perspective, the OSTP, and I'm not even sure what that stands for -- Office of Science and Technology, I believe, or something to that effect -- they have been discussing requiring open access for a while, have had open discussions about it, and they haven't really been able to move in that direction. So you'll get, in the United States, public access, which has been in place for quite some time, which basically is -- and the time frames vary -- but when you see publishers that make their content free to read after a certain amount of time, often six or twelve months, some of them are two years, that is kind of an answer to mandates that came from the US government, but they're much softer than what you would see in the UK and Western Europe. And now, China has started to come out with some interesting mandates. There was a good article about that in the Scholarly Kitchen, about China and what the impact might be. But in short, there's a move to get more Chinese research to be published in Chinese journals. And then they even further went on to produce a list of publications where they were not as happy for their researchers to publish their articles. And these were publications that were usually very broad based, open access publications based outside of China. So, there's -- the question is, it really does vary. And it often depends on the mission and objectives of the government or the organization that's putting the mandate in place. So there is a move towards open and there's varying degrees of stringent requirements that are attached to them.

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Meredith Adinolfi 07:45

And I think everything you said really highlights how complex this picture is for everyone who's involved to try to keep track of all of the different things and part of why these could all be their own episodes is because it's such a dynamic, changing picture all the time. So I think this is a good segue into talking about Coalition S and Plan S. So I want to just start with, very basically, what are those things?

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Ann Michael 08:08

Basically, it's a consortium of various funders. If you look at their website, I believe right now they have 26 funders that have signed up to be part of this. And they're really focusing on a specific mandate, and actually, directly from their website, it says, "with effect from 2021, all scholarly publications on the results from research funded by public or private grants provided by national, regional, and international research councils and funding bodies, must be published in open access journals on open access platforms, or made immediately available through open access repositories without embargo." So basically, in September of 2018, this group was formed. And they started to work on the principles that would support this overarching mandate and purpose and those principles are Plan S. So Coalition S is an organization; Plan S is an actual description of some of the principles and objectives and

requirements that would be, to some extent, and they varied, they came out real strong, and it loosened up a bit in time, but to some extent, would be enforced or at least held in, you know, as guidelines by the organizations that were part of Coalition S.

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Meredith Adinolfi 09:31

You kind of referred to the fact that they came out strong and certainly, Plan S caused a lot of buzz and flurry in the industry when it happened, and then it sort of evolved over time in the last couple of years. Can you give a few examples of what some of those guidelines are and sort of how they've softened a little bit?

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Ann Michael 09:48

Originally, when they came out, I believe it was 2018, and they said by 2020, that there was a much more dramatic flip called for. As time went on, they came up with more points and descriptions and guidelines. But what they wanted to at one point, they were saying that if a journal, I believe it was 50% -- so, I know you spoke about hybrid models before, and you could have a journal that is both subscription and accepts an APC to make individual articles open -- that's a hybrid journal. So, they were talking about if a hybrid journal reached 50% of its content being open access, that it would be required to flip. I believe Springer Nature and others wrote responses to this particular principle or requirement. And it was softened up a little bit. So, for example, it was changed to, I believe, it's 50 to 75%. So, I do believe, in general, from a change management perspective, if you want something to change, and you really want to push in a direction, the most logical way to approach that is to go really hard and fast to the endpoint that you want, and allow yourself to be negotiated back. Because if -- wherever you start from, you will be negotiated back. So it's just more logical to start farther down the path you want to pursue. And I believe that was very much, in my opinion, a tactic that Coalition S used. And one could argue it was a very effective tactic. So regardless of how one might feel about some of these mandates and some of these requirements, and how they were or were not consulted in that process, from 2018 to today, there has been a lot more change and activity around open access, even before the COVID effect. You know, there was a lot more -- I had clients coming to me, we have to do something, we have to be open access, even though Plan S, the individuals or the organizations that have signed up for Plan S might have only accounted for three or four percent of the content that they received -- that they were only funding three or four percent of the content, there was still this urgency. So I do believe that it was a very effective change management mechanism to do that.

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Meredith Adinolfi 12:14

That's such a great point about the strategy and pushing change and sort of being negotiated back. I was going to ask you as well, you sort of talked a little bit about this, but Sara and I talked in part one generally about why publishers are willing to embrace open access and start to sort of move more and more to that. And I was going to ask you kind of the same question from your view about why publishers and researchers and funders who, as you said, have mixed views and had mixed views since Plan S came out, why they're sort of feeling that urgency and why they are moving towards models that will give compliance with Plan S?

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Ann Michael 12:51

I believe they're feeling that urgency because of a confluence of several factors. So one, open access content is increasing. So that's a little bit of a chicken and an egg question. It's increasing because they're paying more attention, but they're paying more attention because it's increasing. So that's definitely one aspect. I believe, when you look at most of these publishing organizations that are pretty mature, they find a need, let's just say purely economically at first, there's a need to be global. And it's very difficult to be global with the current models as we have. I think that that's another push for open access is to make content accessible to different parts of the world that may or may not have the ability to access it, as it stands now in current or past models. And that kind of leads right into another very strong trend within scholarly communications is about diversity and inclusion. So that ties to the global concept. Then you get things like COVID that comes along where the world needed access to research, and it needed it now, not in 12 months, and many of the publishers with closed models or mixed models rose to the occasion, and made that content accessible. And I think all of these things together have started to increase the recognition that as long as it is sustainable, and that's another completely different podcast, that it's better to have content open. And quite frankly, I'm trying to figure out a way to say this that's positive, because I think it is a positive thing, but nobody wants to be the bad guy. Publishers want to be the good guys. And very often, you know, when people talk about publishers, I think they think about these large commercial organizations -- you know, like Elsevier and Springer Nature, Wiley, Taylor and Francis -- and these are large organizations and they do have a mission imperative as well as a financial imperative, but the reality is they're commercial and they are accountable to a board. And they think of those organizations as the environment when the reality is, while they do cover -- those organizations do cover a large majority of publishing, just simply by article volume -- when you look at who's publishing, it's a much larger, broader market. And it's -- there's a lot of professional societies and organizations that are very mission driven. And they, from a mission perspective, really want to open their content. So it's a real, you know, cornucopia of different motivations, but they're all moving in the same direction.

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Meredith Adinolfi 15:42

Yeah, a lot of great points in there. And I think really aligns well with what Sara and I were talking about in part one that really everybody just wants to serve science. Everybody wants science to move forward and progress and wants to do the right thing to get science out there and to get it in as many eyes as possible. So yeah, I agree with that. So I think this is a good time to maybe transition to talking about another big topic within this discussion, which is transformative agreements. So can we start again, just very basically, what is a transformative agreement?

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Ann Michael 16:12

There's Efficiency and Standards for Articles Charges (ESAC) Initiative, and I can provide you a link for that, that defines a transformative agreement as contracts negotiated between institutions (so libraries, national and regional consortia) and publishers that transform the business model underlying scholarly journal publishing, moving from one based on total access (which is subscription) to one in which publishers are enumerated a fair price for their open access publishing services. Now, that is very interesting. But basically, what it's saying -- there

are two things in that definition that I find interesting. You know, one is the market those folks on the library and regional consortia, and even the funder side, even though they're not necessarily directly involved in these negotiations of contracts, they start talking about services. So, I think one of the interesting things about this whole movement, and the position that Plan S has taken, is viewing publishing as a service. It's not historically been viewed that way, it's very much been viewed as a partnership or a different level. But a transformative agreement is simply trying to shift what libraries and -- anyone you know -- and consortia are paying for. And it's trying to make that shift such that it's increasing the amount of open access that is in the bundle that organization is paying for. And I know that I'm probably over complicating it, when you look at Read and Publish and Publish and Read, for example, what it's saying is, you're going to pay something for reading, and you're going to pay something for publishing. In a Read and Publish deal, the cornerstone of the deal is more about reading. And in a Publish and Read deal, I think the cornerstone is more about publishing. Although I will say that I believe that nuance was very true when it first started. And pretty much it, just so you know, everybody talks about Read and Publish, and they don't really talk about Publish and Read, but there used to be a distinction. And the idea is that over time, you're renegotiating these deals. And the thing that publishers are very aware of is that in time, if you're renegotiating what you're paying to read based on how much of the content is open, but at the same time, the agreement itself incentivizes the creation of open content, that there's a logical conclusion to these deals, if you're not careful and thinking about it, where your read amount goes lower, lower, and lower, your publish amount goes higher and higher and higher, potentially. But when you don't have readers paying at all, and you only have the publishing piece, the people producing content -- the research articles -- paying, there is a percentage of money in the environment that goes away. So anybody who doesn't publish, but reads, no longer has to pay anything. I mean, that's just logical. The only people that are paying are those that publish and then the burden for supporting these journals is 100% on them. So harkening back to question one, this is another reason, a sustainability reason to look at models that are not APC based. And one of the criticisms of transformative agreements is that they are, in fact, very much founded on the basis of an APC. So that it's almost like they're inadvertently selecting the model and in doing so, they are advantaging the largest publishers and actually potentially encouraging consolidation in the market. So that scale then tries to make up for other losses in revenue. So that's probably way more than you wanted. But a transformative agreement is simply: we want OA to increase over time. Ultimately, we'd like to get to a point where the journal completely, completely flips. And to do that, we're going to package together the amount you pay for reading and publishing. And what the library or consortia is hoping is that as time goes by, that is going to shift to where they're not paying for reading anymore. And I think the publisher has to really think carefully about how they structure those agreements.

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Meredith Adinolfi 20:46

That's definitely not more than we wanted. I think that's great. One just quick follow up I wanted to ask for your thoughts on here. I know that there's transformative agreements, and then there are transformative journals. And those terms are sometimes used kind of interchangeably, and there might be some confusion. Are those the same thing? Or is there a distinction worth noting?

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Ann Michael 21:05

They are not the same thing. So for -- transformative agreements are usually agreements that are made between relatively large or mid-sized publishers and the libraries and consortia that they serve, and transformative agreements apply to a portfolio. So it's a portfolio of journals. And I'm actually glad you brought this up, because it was in my notes, and I didn't mention it. Transformative journals are just that: it's about one journal. So go back to the ecosystem I described, where you have a few very large players, mid-sized players, and then a whole bunch of really tiny players that, you know, a society that might have one journal, or two journals. They can't create a transformative agreement; that option isn't open to them. So transformative journals is tracked on a journal basis. And what it seeks to do is, again, this harkens back to the idea that we want -- that the funder, the person that is defining these terms really wants open access to increase to the point of flipping -- that's the goal. And it's also about being compliant with Plan S. So what a transformative journal has to do is it has to increase the proportion of OA research content, at least five points. And what they say is in absolute terms -- so if this year, my journal had 10% -- oh, on an annual basis -- 10% open access. Next year, it needs to have 15%. And then the year after that, it needs to have 20 to be a transformative journal. And at the same time, 15% year-on-year in relative terms, if you take these things to their logical conclusion, it actually becomes the second criteria, that becomes more difficult because as the percentage increases -- you know, 5%, 10%, 15% -- you have to be increasing the volume too. Anyway, we're actually, at Delta Think, we're doing a free post on this on June 15, to help explain this a little more and to show you some of these sensitivities. But the point is transformative journals are really there to allow smaller publishing organizations to have a path to Plan S compliance. Yes. And I think that's a really important distinction. So thank you for clarifying that. As you say, we could probably go on for a while just talking about transformative and Read and Publish. But let's move on to another area. When we were preparing for this series, we asked some of SSP's early career professionals about what their questions were, broadly, on open access, and they raised some questions about open source software. So, can you just talk a little bit about what that is and whether there's any intersection worth noting here with OA publishing in general? Sure. So I think what happens in general is that "open" becomes, I think, confusing. So you can have -- obviously, open access is talking about publications, journals, articles, and open source around software or whatnot. And open source is either community driven or accessible software that can be used. There is some degree of intersection in the sense that if you look at like the Coko Foundation, for example, and there are several open source publishing service providers. Coko, for example, has been -- their software, their environment, their community has been leveraged both by E Life and by Hindawi to build systems that support open access. But really, I think it's hard or I should say, I think it's maybe not valuable to conflate these two things. So the first thing is, what is open access? How does it work? What are the mechanisms of it? What do I need to do? I need to, you know, in this environment that's APC based, I need to process an APC. I need to understand who's funding what, who's paying for this APC. I need to process all of those things. And then the next question is, well, now I need technological support to be able to do those things. So, at that point, there are non-open source and open source options that you can think about that could help you to fulfill the requirements that you have in order to have transformative agreements, transformative journals, to fund APCs in general, to provide discounts or all of the other things that you, you may want to do. I did a blog post on open source software for the Scholarly Kitchen. Gosh, it was years ago. And I gotta be honest, I've not kept up to date on all the different options that are out there. But I would definitely separate the objective from the implementation of the objective. And the open source software is one potential way to implement some of your objectives.



M Meredith Adinolfi 25:59

Yeah, thank you. And I think when we publish this episode, we're going to share some of your recommendations on reading material and references for some of what we're talking about. And definitely recommend checking those out. The Scholarly Kitchen, in particular, is a great source for just a lot of good discussion about the basics of different models, and how all of these aspects that are really timely in the OA conversation are at play.

A Ann Michael 26:24

No, absolutely. And I do believe that there are also some other sources and we'll go through them, I'll send you a list. But I think the really important thing, personally, is to maintain a balanced perspective and to try to keep looking at open and the ramifications of open from different angles. On a funny note, whenever we're writing the News and Views for Delta Think, which is the open access newsletter I spoke about, I'm always looking at them in the editing process for an accidental tip in one direction or the other. And something could be as simple as referring to APCs as revenue versus referring to them as cost. If you're referring to an APC as revenue, you're coming at it from a publishing perspective. And if you're referring to it as cost, you're coming at it from a library or consortia perspective. So, you know, it's just very interesting to always try to keep that neutrality because it's in the neutrality that you get to consider the full spectrum without necessarily limiting your consideration by assuming one role or the other.

M Meredith Adinolfi 27:31

That's a really great point. I think that sort of underlines that it's important to read multiple different perspectives. And it doesn't matter if you're at a publisher, or if you're at an organization, or if you're a researcher, you should get the full view from all different sides. So I want to end, Ann, with a very broad, but perhaps provocative question: is open access the future of scholarly publishing?

A Ann Michael 27:53

In typical fashion, I think the first thing I want to do is reframe the question. So we have to put open access in context. Open access is only one small part of open research or open science. And, originally, in the pursuit of open research or open science, I think the industry started to get this tunnel vision around open access - with good reason. And it was because it was a, quote unquote, "revenue threat" or a, quote unquote, you know, "opportunity to manage cost in a better way." But I do believe that most publishers are starting to view what they do as broader than what has historically been defined as publishing. I can't tell you how many times, whether we're talking to a small society, or a large commercial publisher that we're talking about the researcher's workflow, and we're talking about artifacts other than the journal article, we're talking about data, we're talking about code, we're talking about, what are the challenges that researchers have in doing their jobs? How do they find funding? And is there a way to help them there? How do they produce impact? Is there a way to help them there? You know, and I mean, impact in changing-the-world impact not impacting a number that, you know, that is calculated by someone that that says what your impact is, you know, not necessarily citation based. You know, I think open access advocates would say that they believe that the

environment will move to be 100% open. I do believe, personally, that diversity is needed. And diversity in business models is needed too and there -- I mean, right now, think about it, Meredith, you would say everything in the world should be electronic. Can you honestly tell me you never print anything, ever? It's very difficult to say something is going to be 100%. It almost seems as though it is a wish more than a potential reality. So I do believe that open and open access are going to continue to grow. My wish and my belief is that we're going to get past open access. And we're going to start to think about open a lot more broadly as some already are. And that the idea of open and shareable and reusable is going to be the future. And the real challenge about that is going to figure out how to support that in a way that we can trust it, and that we know how to process it, you know, that we understand what we're looking at, and where it came from -- all of these things that publishing provides now, and very often does it with a cost structure that's based on a subscription model, we need to be able to do those things with a different cost structure. And I know there are people out there, and I can see some of their faces in my head right now, that would say, well, that's the problem and that's why it's never going to work. Personally, I believe it's a matter of priority and market demand and where we are, you know, as a people, as humanity. If this is the way we want to go, we will figure out how to get there.

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Meredith Adinolfi 30:57

Yeah, I agree. I think the print-to-digital transition point is a really good comparison to make because I know, from the time that I started in this industry, I always heard print is going away, and it's going to disappear in the next five years. And here we are many years later and we're still having that conversation. So it's a good analogy, as well as the point that things are changing so much that we don't know what things are going to look like five years from now, especially with the COVID landscape and things changing so much around that.

A

Ann Michael 31:24

Yeah, years ago, I won't tell you where I was working at the time, but I was working in this organization, they hired this Chief Medical Officer, and he was fabulous. I really enjoyed him. Very much a, you know, everything digital, everything's going to be digital, print's going to go away, kind of guy, which was great enthusiasm. And he went into a group of publishers who, at the time were basically print publishers, I mean, this was early 2000s. And he said, How many of you think that print publishing will be gone in five years? Nobody raised their hand. 10 years? Nobody raised their hand. 20 years? One person raised their hand. What was funny was, later on, I was talking to him, and I said, you know, I really think you need to change your question. And rather than say, "How many of you think print is going to go away?" why don't you ask them, "How many believe that digital products and services are going to represent a growing percentage of their revenue?" And I bet you every hand would have come up, and then you have the foundation to start a conversation.

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Meredith Adinolfi 32:25

Yeah, that's a great point and a great anecdote. And I think this is a great point to end the conversation. We've taken up so much of your time, you've been so generous. So thank you for taking the time to be here and to shed some light. These are some of the most critical but also

complex topics and conversations that are happening in our industry right now. So we really appreciate your very informed perspectives.

 Ann Michael 32:46

Thank you so much for having me, Meredith. It was a pleasure.

 Meredith Adinolfi 32:49

Thank you. We hope you found this open access series to be informative and interesting. We want to say a big thanks again to Ann Michael for taking the time to give us her critical insights. Sara and I will be back soon, and in the meantime, thank you so much for listening.