

Reports of meetings

Looking at New Perspectives–2015 annual meeting of the Society for Scholarly Publication

27–29 May 2015, Arlington, Virginia, USA

The annual meeting of the Society of Scholarly Publishing (SSP) was held between 27th and 29th May at Arlington, VA, USA. The theme of this year's meeting was *The New Big Picture: Connecting Diverse Perspectives*. The attendance for this year's meeting was >900, which to date has been the highest attendance and indicates the diverse audience this meeting has been attracting year on year. There were over 150 speakers at the meeting with a mix of keynote speeches, concurrent meetings and exhibits by various SSP members. This year, I had the opportunity to both participate and exhibit at this year's meeting, and it was a truly enriching experience to collaborate and network with editors, authors, companies and other professionals from multiple countries.

Interestingly, this year is the 350th anniversary of *Philosophical Transactions*, the first scientific journal that was published. Thus, this meeting was a very good forum to understand how the industry has evolved in the past 350 years as well as the challenges publishers are facing in ensuring that they are able to sustain themselves in an increasingly diverse market. Moreover, as this was my first time at the SSP conference, it was a great experience to know and understand the career path for an editor in this industry. Considering the overall time constraint and multiple sessions that are being conducted simultaneously at this meeting, attending all of the sessions was not possible; therefore, we had already planned the sessions that we intended to attend before the meeting. If you are considering attending the next meeting at Vancouver, BC, Canada, I suggest you pre-select the sessions you wish to attend, without fail.

The highlights of this year's meeting were the keynote speeches and the inclusion of speed networking sessions by the organizers. The speakers selected for this year's keynote speeches were Charles Watkinson (a librarian), Ken Auletta (a writer), and Jennifer Lawton (ex-CEO of MakerBot); this selection especially highlighted the theme of 'diverse perspectives'. Moreover, at this year's meeting, there were several engaging panel sessions that provided a live platform for the audience to share their views with the panel. The novel inclusion at the meeting was the real-time interaction of the graphic reporter Greg Gersch who engaged with the SSP community in person and online, to bring the ideas and themes of the meeting to life and colour in real time with large graphic murals on public display while he was creating them.

On 27th May, the pre-meeting seminars included *Publishing 101: The Business of Publishing*, *Smart Linking & Supplemental Data: Turning Funder Data Mandates into Opportunity*, *Journal Publishing – Operational Focus*, and *Implementing Next Generation ID Standards for the New Machine Age: "The Ties That Bind."* I attended the session on *Publishing 101 – The Business of Publishing*, which was conducted by Kerry Koffe



(PLOS), Judy Leather (Informed Strategies), Alice Meadows (OrCID), Kari Roane (University of Chicago Press) and Jamie Hutchins (IOP Publishing). During the session, the speakers extensively discussed the newer aspects (technology and business models) of journal publishing, the introduction of newer journals every year, as well as the various features and formats in which content is being provided by journals. Moreover, they stressed the impact of various service providers on the publication industry, eg OrCID, which helps authors ensure that their work is noticed, tracked and followed by a particular audience.

The session on *Journal Publishing – Operational Focus* had Helen Arkins (PLOS), Linda Sussman (Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press) and Judy Hum-Delaney (Canadian Science Publishing) as speakers. The discussions were on the production-related processes that have been automated and/or optimized to ensure reduction in the time taken for publishing papers. Helen Arkins discussed the improvements PLOS has made to their production processes, which has helped them in resolving manual workarounds in their systems, which was done via the "Process Improvement Initiative" of PLOS. Because of this initiative, PLOS achieved improvement in the quality of publishing, started co-ordinating with service providers and reduced the overall time taken for publication after acceptance of any paper.

This year's concurrent sessions included excellent topics such as *The Researcher's New Big Picture*, *The Future of Scholarly Publishing*, *The Future of Publishing: A University's View*, *Where Are All the Users Going?* and *How Today's Startups are Changing Tomorrow's Scholarly Communication*. Each session was well attended and had participants from diverse backgrounds like societies, publishers, vendors and journals.

During this year's meeting, gender diversity in the scholarly publishing industry received due attention with Dr. Amy Brand presenting on the *Demographics and Education of Scholarly Publishing and Communication Professionals*. In fact, one of this year's keynotes was from Jennifer Lawton who

talked about her experiences from a career in technology at the executive level and her path to success.

Among the concurrent sessions, *The Researcher's New Big Picture* had authors themselves as speakers, which provided them with an opportunity to share the inherent challenges they face when they have to publish a paper in any journal. For example, authors mentioned issues such as difficulty in template usage and how it was frustrating to ensure adherence to formats while publishing. Many of the authors also highlighted the fact that they feel disengaged when communicating with editors, and thus, journals need to examine communication at the author–editor level to assure authors that their work is being examined in an effective and time-bound manner. The contributors for this session were from various institutions such as University of Maryland College Park, AAAS/ASM, and American University.

One of the most delightful sessions for me was *Where Are All the Users Going?* This session addressed the issue with the current business model of publishing, which is completely based on the accessibility and visibility of the research published in journals to the end users of any and every journal. To be aware of their current target audience, publishers have to keep evaluating how they are receiving traffic on their websites and what possible changes occur in user behaviour over a period of time. This helps them retain advertisers and prolong the use of the subscription-based model. The users also help assess and validate the efforts of any publisher and ensure that the products they have on the market are used over a period of time. Importantly, the session addressed the issue of steady fragmentation in the manner in which a journal gets user traffic. By evaluation of data, it has been observed that there is a steady increase in traffic through NIH, PubMed and Twitter. However, e-mails are still the most important generators of web traffic for publishers; thus, it is very important that e-mail etiquette and author communication keeps improving with time from the publisher end.

To conclude, this year's meeting truly highlighted the diversity of the scholarly publishing industry. The variety of companies, vendors, publishers, societies and authors that attended the meeting demonstrates how popular this meeting has become and how it encourages professionals to network and grow in the future. The keynotes and the concurrent meetings covered the challenges and opportunities we need to address in the coming years, from the number of new products to basic issues like author–editor communication.

I am definitely looking forward to next year's meeting and hope to see you all there too!

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Editors as promoters of good practices in bioresource research

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Soon after the development and publication of the guideline to standardise the Citation of BioResources in journal Articles (CoBRA)¹, a workshop took place in Toulouse on the 9th October 2015. Bioresources are collections of biological samples with associated medical, epidemiological, biological or social data (biobanks), as well as collections of data of biological origin (databases) or bioinformatics tools. Many important biomedical publications refer to data obtained from collections of biosamples, but the recognition of such resources is often neglected or highly heterogeneous. The CoBRA guideline introduces a standardised citation of bioresources in scientific publications, and was developed within the BRIF (Bioresource Research Impact Factor) initiative, aiming to improve transparent reporting of bioresource-based research, proper sharing and optimal use of bioresources². The guideline recommends the citation of each bioresource according to a specific reference structure, providing specific examples for its adoption. It aims to trace the use of bioresources, encourage their sharing and create tools to recognise the importance of their contribution to research. The CoBRA is included in the list of reporting guidelines of the EQUATOR Network (Enhancing the QUALity and Transparency Of health Research, www.equator-network.org/), that supports editors in promoting and practising responsible research reporting in their journals.

The workshop was organised by the European Association of Science Editors (EASE), the Istituto Superiore di Sanità-Italian National Institute of Health (ISS), the Institut National de la Santé et de la Recherche Médicale (INSERM), the Université Toulouse III-Paul Sabatier, the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) - Department of Scientific and Technological Information (DIST), and the Biobanking and BioMolecular resources Research Infrastructure-European Research Infrastructure Consortium (BBMRI-ERIC). It was also partially supported by the European Commission Seventh Framework Programme.

Based on a positive long-lasting collaboration between the BRIF initiative and EASE, the workshop gathered some of the main experts in the field, who discussed how journal editors, research institutions, researchers, and other stakeholders could promote the use of the CoBRA guideline and in general the best practices in scientific research.

The morning session was dedicated to presentations by researchers involved in the BRIF initiative, in the EASE, in the EQUATOR Network, and in the BBMRI-ERIC. They all remarked upon the importance of a strong collaboration between editors and scientists, that worked successfully and led to the development of the CoBRA guideline. The guideline was analysed from different points of view: that of the editors as gatekeepers of science and the power of a multidisciplinary approach (Paola De Castro, EASE and ISS); its role as a key element for the recognition and the assessment of the use and research impact of bioresources (Elena Bravo, ISS); how CoBRA is integrated in the vision