

Industry Update: What You Need to Know about the Initiatives of Professional Societies

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The professional societies represented in this session have a shared goal of supporting the scholarly publishing community as a whole—authors, editors, and publishers—in the management of a transforming publishing landscape. To provide this multilevel support, the societies are actively promoting initiatives to strengthen communication, collaboration, and overall standardization in the publishing community.

The Professional/Scholarly Publishing Division of the Association of American Publishers (AAP/PSP) and the Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers (ALPSP) recognize that direct

feedback from publishing-industry stakeholders is imperative for determining how to provide support where it is most needed. Each society recently distributed detailed surveys to its members. With more than 1000 publishers surveyed, the societies gained insight into the core priorities and common issues participants face in the publishing process.

John Tagler, of AAP/PSP, observed that “it’s amazing how often people, both inside and outside scholarly publishing, do not see the bigger picture” because of the lack of complete and consistent industry information. AAP/PSP is increasing access to a more complete view in the scholarly publishing industry by expanding educational seminars; through the “Publishing Facts” section on the PSP Web site, providing regular alerts regarding industry trends; and by investing in new research projects independently and with other organizations.

Isabel Czech of ALPSP asserted that standardization of information is essential for communicating author rights and increasing understanding between publishers and authors. ALPSP’s work with the National Information Standards Organization (NISO)—a nonprofit association that identifies, develops, maintains, and publishes technical standards to manage information—has resulted in the widely available *Best Practices for Journal Article Versions* document.

In the relationship between publishers and authors, an issue that needs to be explicitly addressed is which rights publishers grant to authors and which rights authors have. In communication with its membership, ALPSP has observed a continued disconnect between authors and publishers. The onus appears to be on publishers to clarify author–publisher relations by better communicating information to the editorial community as a whole.

Ross MacIntyre, of the United Kingdom Serials Group (UKSG), noted that “there

have been 2000-plus journal publisher changes” affecting a vast portion of the scholarly community. To assist with the resulting transitions, the UKSG created the *2001 Draft Code of Guidelines*. The guidelines are an essential tool for introducing the needed standardization that Czech discussed. Since 2001, the guidelines have undergone major editing and updating based on recently published best-practices documents and are officially endorsed by more than 25 publishers and societies, including Elsevier, Springer, and ALPSP.

The Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) has become a widely recognized contributor to the standardization initiative in recent years. COPE directly responds to the editorial need for adherence to standardized ethical principles and guidelines. Harvey Marcovitch jokingly referred to COPE’s origin as a “psychological group home for unhappy British editors”, but it has become much more than that. In 2008, COPE’s membership, consisting mostly of editors, jumped from 400 to 5000 when BioMed Central, Elsevier, Taylor & Francis, and Wiley-Blackwell signed up all their publications’ editors for membership. COPE’s increased membership reflects publishers’ growing concern about ethical issues that continue to arise in the publishing process with no point of reference for acceptable methods of resolving them effectively. COPE does not investigate ethical “cases” or decide whether a person is guilty of misconduct. COPE advises editors on how to handle cases and provides standardized guidelines for ethical conduct to address common publishing problems.

Each society faces different challenges in supporting the publishing community. The societies have complementary efforts to improve and increase publisher communication, collaboration, and standardization, all of which will streamline the publishing process. ☺