



“Change Because We Have To” – Scholarly Publishing in 2023

**Interview excerpts with
Charisse Kiino, Ariel Cetrone, Avi Staiman,
Martin Delahunty, Diandra Roberts, and Amy Beisel**

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KENNEALLY: Welcome to Copyright Clearance Center’s podcast series. I’m Christopher Kenneally.

In the final weeks of 2023, Velocity of Content is looking back at the past twelve months of programs.

The knock against scholarly publishing is that the field often shows its age. As a communications medium, scholarly publishing has roots more than three centuries deep. A scientific article appearing in the digital age of 2023 is largely unchanged in form and format from generations of ancestors.

Yet many publishers and service providers are pulling and pushing at traditions, opening doors and introducing innovations.

The gender gap on Wikipedia narrowed some this year -- thanks to volunteers from SAGE Publishing who marked International Women’s Day with an edit-a-thon, creating and editing dozens of biographies for prominent women in the social and behavioral sciences.

SAGE is a distinguished publisher of books and journals in the social and behavioral science and was founded by a woman, Sara Miller McCune, who has had her own Wikipedia bio since 2012.

Wikipedia is the largest and most read reference work in history, an encyclopedia of human knowledge that anyone can edit – and tens of millions have.

Charisse Kiino is vice president for product and market development with the US college division of SAGE Publishing. She joined others in Washington, London, and online for the edit-a-thon.



KENNEALLY: So we know the statistic – just 19% of Wikipedia biographies are for women. For an encyclopedia as massive as it is, Wikipedia is remarkably incomplete.

What drew your attention to the Wikipedia gender gap in these fields? Tell us a bit more about the role that women have played in the advancement of social and behavioral sciences.

KIINO: Women are critical to social and behavioral science research and instruction, from their pioneering work of new methodologies to the application of their work outside of academia on policy and practice. In fact, today, women fill more than 61% of social science-related occupations.

One of my colleagues actually was inspired to organize the event after hearing the startling statistics about women on Wikipedia from someone like Dr. Jessica Wade, who was interviewed on this very podcast and has dedicated so much time to adding entries about women on Wikipedia.

For us, it made sense to make a start by working on biographies of women in the social and behavioral sciences for a couple of reasons. First off, at Sage, 65% of our employees are women and do great work every day. So we want a resource like Wikipedia to reflect the amazing work that women are doing. And for my division, US college, one of our goals to make sure that all students from all backgrounds and abilities can see themselves in the pages of our textbook content. Shouldn't a resource like Wikipedia also reflect women's crucial role in social and behavioral science research? I want women in college to see that work and influence reflected in a site like Wikipedia.

KENNEALLY: Do these Wikipedia biographies of women scientists and researchers play a role beyond simply answering questions about their work?

KIINO: I think it goes without saying that because of Wikipedia's reach, biographies help with discovery of both social science research and the social scientists themselves. In my opinion, Wikipedia plays a real legitimizing role and can be a confidence booster for many. Our authors will ask us often after we've published a book with them about how they can get their biography created, or if there's an existing one, how it can be edited to add more of their work to their profile. I think it brings them a really big sense of accomplishment to see their work on such a widely used public-domain site.

And then that confidence works in a number of directions. Imagine you're a young girl wanting information on something that's important to you, and after multiple queries on Wikipedia, you rarely if ever see a woman researcher doing that work. What kind of message does that send to that young girl about the kinds of career choices she might make in the future about what she



might want to do in academia? So we really want to close that gender gap, and we want that little girl to see the work that women social and behavioral scientists are doing.

KENNEALLY: Ariel Cetrone is the institutional partnerships manager for Wikimedia DC, a regional outreach affiliate for Wikipedia and other projects of the Wikimedia Foundation. She helps organizations, institutions, and agencies engage with Wikimedia to help improve the world's largest online encyclopedia. Welcome to Velocity of Content, Ariel.

CETRONE: Hi, Chris. Thanks for having me.

KENNEALLY: The Wikipedia gender gap arises from a variety of areas, from the predominance of male contributors and from the challenge presented by Wikipedia's principle of notability. A Wikipedia biography must refer to previously published materials, yet if women are underrepresented as Wikipedians and elsewhere, that sounds like a catch-22 bind.

CETRONE: It really is. And as you said, it's what perpetuates the gender gap. So at these events that we do, of course, we encourage individuals to write new articles, especially when working on biographies, and cite existing sources. Now, if we can't find those sources, we can't write those articles. Of course, as we know, an encyclopedia like Wikipedia is a tertiary source, and the role of that source is to find and identify published resources that already have this information, and then we take that information, put in the encyclopedia – into Wikipedia, in this case – and cite our sources.

KENNEALLY: Ariel Cetrone with Wikimedia DC, if I don't consider myself an expert, can I still contribute to Wikipedia?

CETRONE: Yes. One of the great things about Wikipedia is that anyone can create a username and anyone can edit.

Anybody can participate. One of the things that we find is that individuals find it fun. Once they realize that they can really contribute to the world's largest online encyclopedia, they want to participate.

KENNEALLY: In scholarly publishing, researcher and author are often taken as synonymous terms. Writing, however, comes only at the end of a lengthy process of investigation and discovery in a lab or in the field. Many scientists and scholars consider writing drudgery – a



necessary evil in the pursuit of tenure and research grants. What if a machine could lighten the burden – or, if smart enough, could even do the work entirely?

Such sophisticated writing machines now exist, of course. ChatGPT from OpenAI is the most famous of a growing number of generative AI tools that create narrative responses based on textual input from large language models.

Avi Staiman is the founder and CEO of Academic Language Experts, a company assisting academic scholars to elevate their research for publication and bring that to the world. While he recognizes the potential fraud and confusion that chatbots can introduce into publishing, Staiman asserts that publishers should encourage researchers to use all tools at their disposal to make their work as accessible and impactful as possible.

KENNEALLY: On March 31st, in a post for The Scholarly Kitchen blog, you wrote that the proliferation of powerful AI tools pushes us to ask fundamental questions about how we perceive the role of scientists in general and the specific role writing plays in their work. In other words, you asked to what degree should we even care that authors write every word of their research in the first place? It's a provocative question, Avi. So why or why not should anyone care that authors write every word of their research in the first place?

STAIMAN: I think the reason this is a really fascinating question is because it was always a theoretical one, right? Because who else is going to write for you if not yourself? Obviously, over time, people have used the help of scientific writers. That's nothing new. But the concept that something nonhuman could actually write a text for you is something that I don't think before November 2022, most folks would think was even a possibility. Now that it is, we are really asking ourselves questions about the basic role of a researcher.

I want to ask ourselves, to what degree do we think that that individual writing every single word is really critical in light of other activities or important – whether managerial or scientific activities that they could be doing at that same moment?

We need to make a very clear distinction between folks who are just going to kind of generate whatever comes out and then try to use that to publish. That's not what I'm talking about. Obviously, I'm very against that. But what I'm for is having a rethink about what the role of a researcher is, keeping in mind all of the myriad of responsibilities they have as well. We're talking about teaching, advising, researching, reviewing, writing, publishing, speaking engagements. There's a lot on researchers' shoulders. And I think we need to ask the question of, well, as a society, what do we want them doing, and where does writing rank up there if we can have tools that can help at least shorten that process?



KENNEALLY: At the Council of Science Editors annual meeting in Toronto in early May, Avi Staiman, you outlined some of the responsible and productive uses of AI tools in research. Tell us about those.

STAIMAN: You mentioned at the outset that I have been kind of pegged as a proponent of trying to see the good, and I think the reason that I've taken that approach is simply because researchers are already doing this. They are already using these tools. I remember back to my childhood days when I was a camp counselor, we had a rule, never make a rule that you can't enforce. That's my fear, and that was one of the reasons that drove me to write this piece in *The Scholarly Kitchen*, is if we try – and there have been publishers that have tried to simply outright ban GPT. I think the issue with that is that it would be almost the equivalent – and will quickly become almost the equivalent – of banning Google. I don't think any of us are a proponent of trying to ban Google as part of our research process.

The first and foremost thing that I always emphasize is let's go back to what GPT is. It's a large language model, LLM for short. And I like focusing on the second word, language. This is something that I learned from another CCC interview which has really kind of driven my thinking, which is that if we want to use it productively, we should think about its linguistic capabilities and not its informational capabilities or lack of capabilities, because that's exactly what it is. I like to call it Wordle on steroids. It knows how to predict the next word in a sentence or the next string of words on a very high level. And in that way, it's using the totality of human language in order to enrich and in order to convey ideas.

By the way, that also explains why it's a good summarizer – because it knows how to take a long text, and it's giving us an output of I'm feeding you back what you gave me in a form that can be easily digested. I think that's the power of it. The power is not in creating from scratch. The power is taking our data, taking our information, taking what we have, what we know to be true, or what we know to be reviewed and verified, and then improving on it, tweaking it, changing its form in constructive ways.

You can take an article, and in one GPT prompt, you can turn it into a social media post. You can turn it into a policy paper that you might want to present to a local legislator who's not going to speak the academic jargon. And at the same time, you can also write a press release that might get picked up by one of the big media news outlets. In my eyes, so long as the prompter – or the researcher, in this case – is taking responsibility over reviewing that material, it has tremendous potential for good.

KENNEALLY: In your work at Academic Language Experts, Avi Staiman, you come in contact with academic scholars around the world. Have they told you that they're excited about the possibility of ChatGPT?



STAIMAN: It has been definitely mixed, and I think there's hesitation. And I think there should be hesitation. I think that's a positive thing. I don't think that everyone should start uploading all their private information – at least to the public GPT servers. On the other hand, I've also seen researchers who have been talking about how it's helped them when they've hit writer's block. Or when they're trying to come up with counterarguments to their argument, it's been really effective. I've seen use cases where people will use it when they're trying to come up with a new and novel idea for their research grant, and they're kind of stuck, and they just say, give me 10 ideas for how I can take my research and what hasn't been done yet and what I can do. It just gets their juices flowing and head thinking. And in that way, it's been a real positive.

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KENNEALLY: Long before ChatGPT arrived on the hype cycle, Martin Delahunty was considering what AI technology could mean for scholarly publishing, how it might change processes developed over centuries, and how publishers should react.

Based on his work today with universities, science research organizations, and open science publishing, Delahunty, the founder of Inspiring STEM Consulting, has identified important issues with AI, and he has called for swift responses by human curators.

KENNEALLY: In 2019 in an article for the European Medical Writers Association journal, you asked, will medical writers be replaced by robots? That was a long time back in robot years, at least. What was your answer then, and have you changed your mind over the last four years?

DELAHUNTY: Yes, that was a prescient article at the time. And after some deliberation, Chris, the answer was no. Four years on, I think my opinion still hasn't changed. However, the challenges with regard to AI-powered technologies are now much more apparent. I think what we're seeing is a growing consensus amongst those creating and using AI – is that it just remains a tool. It still requires human expertise and skilled use. But the warning I would give is that AI may not replace you, but a person who uses and is skilled in using AI could.

KENNEALLY: That really is the challenge, isn't it – to try to keep up with the change. There's a lot of change going on. And everyone's talking about ChatGPT. It's the most famous or infamous of all AI technologies. How do you think these sophisticated chatbots, like ChatGPT, change the AI calculus for publishers?

DELAHUNTY: Interesting question. Yes, I think we are at the beginning of a rapidly escalating roller coaster with lots of excitement and lots of trepidation. But I think right now, rather than the benefits of AI, there's significantly more discussion and evaluation of the risks, both real and perceived. I think that's natural when confronted with a new, unknown technology that you



consider the threats to the status quo whilst we get to grips with understanding just how they work. That's very much true for academic publishing.

And I think in academic publishing, a major concern is the amplification of existing fraudulent practices, such as paper mills and fake papers. But I'm also seeing publishers developing more clarity on what we define as AI and what sits under the umbrella of AI. You can break it down probably into four focal areas for publishers. That's big data processing – so we know that big data, particularly with open access publishing, is a major challenge – reasoning around data, problem-solving, and learning.

I think it's also maybe surprising to many people that ChatGPT still requires human curation and sense-checking. I imagine a bit like the Wizard of Oz on the yellow brick road – we find the wizard, and then we pull back the curtain, and then we find that it's a wizened old man, powerless, pretending to be something that he isn't. I think there's a manual process behind it. There's also a bias being introduced into the process which is interesting.

KENNEALLY: Every technology has potential for abuse and for driving progress. So can you weigh up for us the pros and cons of generative AI for academic research?

DELAHUNTY: Yes. I think on the positive side, just the advent of these AI tools and the prominence and infamy of these tools is that it's just heightened awareness of publishing practices and ethics, and I think that's a really healthy thing. For example, the Committee on Publication Ethics, a longstanding advocate for ethical publishing practices, has quickly moved to develop a position statement reiterating that large language models like ChatGPT do not meet authorship requirements. And the reaction from publications such as Nature and Science has been equally swift. The editors for these journals have stated that ChatGPT and the like cannot meet the standard for authorship.

But I think publishers will benefit broadly in three ways from these AI tools. For example, for journal editorial offices, it has the potential to automate repetitive and tedious tasks – managing large submission volumes, increasing process efficiency, developing more efficient peer review processes. We know that peer review is critical to the scholarly and academic publishing endeavor, yet it is a human intervention, and it requires a large resource that is just difficult to acquire – consistently difficult to acquire. So I think it will help there.

It can also help in directing authors in submitting to journals that are most relevant in scope for their work, determining if the subject falls within the correct aims and scope of the journal. It can also help in suggesting reviewers, assessing language quality, detecting plagiarism and duplicate submissions.



And thirdly, it may move towards – again, looking at the peer review process – being able to reason and assess the novelty of a scientific research study whilst also checking for ethical compliance, copyright issues, and image duplication, which has been a consistent challenge throughout for academic publishers.

KENNEALLY: Martin, you're a fan, as am I, of *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. Writing in the late 1970s, author Douglas Adams imagined the electronic book, and he pretty much got it right. Along the way, Adams also had a lot to say about our interactions with technology. So let's play dueling quotations. Here's a favorite of mine. "We are stuck with technology, when what we really want is just stuff that works." How does that sound to you, and what quote from Adams do you want to share?

DELAHUNTY: That's a great quote, Chris. My dueling quote to you would be when Arthur Dent asks Ford Prefect what is *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, and he explains to him that it's a sort of electronic book. It tells you everything you need to know about anything. That's its job. And I see ChatGPT and generative tools just like that. At the same time, it sounds scary. But as it states on the cover of *The Hitchhiker's Guide*, I would simply say to all, "Don't panic."

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KENNEALLY: Three summers ago, the world seemed frozen and convulsed all at once. The coronavirus pandemic that began in March 2020 and the lockdown orders that followed restricted entire nations only to the most necessary activities. The murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police officers in May sparked worldwide demonstrations against racism and brought the Black Lives Matter movement to homepages and front pages everywhere.

As 2023 closes, pandemic restrictions have lifted, and urban centers are mostly free of protests. But have we changed and how? In publishing especially, what is different about our jobs, our professional relationships, and our attitudes? Did you answer everything or nothing?

That question – "How have we really changed?" – is the challenge presented by Diandra Roberts, the senior publishing coordinator for the Royal College of Psychiatrists and a chef for *The Scholarly Kitchen* blog published by SSP, the Society of Scholarly Publishing.

This summer, Diandra Roberts spoke with me from London. She shared her reflections on the progress made since the summer of 2020 toward ending the cycle of racism and discrimination in publishing and everywhere.

KENNEALLY: Diandra Roberts, welcome to Velocity of Content.

ROBERTS: Hello. Thank you for having me, Chris.



KENNEALLY: I'm excited about this conversation. It's an important one, and I really want to hear what you have to say about all of these points. 2020 brought calls for many in publishing to make room at the table for people of color as well as those in the LGBTQ community. Did those invitations lead to lasting difference, Diandra? And if those from previously marginalized communities have a seat today, do you think they're being heard?

ROBERTS: Are people being given more seats since 2020? Yes. I am a product of being given a seat and an opportunity to be in the room. But again, I think what you asked is really important – are people being heard? I have been offered spaces in rooms and not been heard, or I'm put in those rooms to say, hey, we did do that thing that we should all be doing now. Because let's be real – some people feel guilty. And there are other rooms that I've been put into where I have a voice. I have an opinion. It matters. And it's taken seriously, and I feel welcomed into the space.

This isn't even getting on to the idea of are we inviting people into spaces that aren't safe? Because that in itself is a whole different bag of we want people to join us, we want people to say we're inclusive, we want to say, oh, we're champions of diversity, equity, or inclusion.

But yes, I think we are being invited into spaces. I don't necessarily know if everybody being invited into spaces – it's genuine. That, I don't have an answer to. I would like to say a lot of them are, although I think a lot of them aren't based on action. I don't know. Does that make me sound jaded? (laughter)

KENNEALLY: In fact, Diandra Roberts, jaded or just honest, we really appreciate hearing what you think about this. And I want to ask what it means to be safe. Tell us how places where people are invited can be safer.

ROBERTS: So I think safety – it's a big one, because it means different things for different people, and I will entirely exclude the safety of anyone who is racist. Your safety is not my concern. My concern is the marginalized communities who want to feel safer in spaces that have never belonged to us. So making sure that people feel heard, that they are actually comfortable in a way of – they can walk into a physical space, and it is comfortable.

For example, I can be told a safer space, but the minute somebody tries to touch my hair, which happens a lot – still happening. Solange made a whole song about it, and here we are. It's like I don't feel safe, because I don't feel like a person. I feel now like some sort of commodity, because another random person has come up to me and immediately started petting me. That's not a safe space. And the response can be, oh my gosh, I'm just a really touchy-feely person. I don't care, because I don't know you. And you don't do it to other people. You can like my hair. It's great. You can also like it from a distance and just say, hey, I like your hair. Cool, thanks.



So it's ensuring that those boundaries are really set when somebody's going into that space, ensuring that language that's being used – it's always the term banter, especially in the UK. We love a bit of bants. But not everything that is called banter is actually banter. You're just making jokes at people. You're making people feel uncomfortable. You're also being – insert homophobic, racist, ableist as such. Sometimes, it's intentional. Even if it's not intentional, it's what you do to turn that around.

And I guess it's being mindful, being human-first. I like to use that term. I think I picked that up from somebody I worked with at one point. And it is ensuring that you're treating people as actual people and not tokens, not commodities, not, well, they're only here because we're filling a quota. We need to make sure we look good. You're actually treating them as people, and you're ensuring that when we're all together in that room that everybody has the capacity to be themselves. And it's very hard. I can't say I can walk into every room and be myself, even rooms I've walked into many times. I definitely have to be a version of myself for my own safety. But we need to ensure that people can be the closest to themselves as possible.

So if somebody turns around and says, look, this is not safe for me, I don't feel comfortable, this is a recurring thing, then we need to believe them, and we need to see what we can do with what's happening to them and how we can change that. Because sometimes, it's an environmental thing. There are many companies who are like, oh, we support all people joining us. Proceed to change no policy, no environmental culture – like, yeah, we support anyone who wants to come and work here, but we don't have certain maternity leave, certain parental leave in general, sick leave, health benefits, things like that. And it's like, well, then you don't want everybody to come and work here, because you're already not doing things before they get in the door.

KENNEALLY: Diandra Roberts, representation is clearly essential. Yet how well do you think publishing has moved toward participation in all levels of its businesses?

ROBERTS: That is a very interesting question, Chris. I think right now, publishing needs to walk the walk. There's a lot of talk about what needs to be done, how we can do more, who is doing what or who's thinking about what – a lot of thinkpieces. And I've just been seeing it for the past three years – a lot of this is what we can think we can do. This is how we think we can. OK. Well, what are you actually doing?

Now, I think I'm more trying to hold people accountable for their actions, and I think that was a large part of what brought me to write my last Scholarly Kitchen post was, well, what are you actually doing at this point? Because it's been three years of saying we need to make change. We need to do this. It's a lot of blah-blah-blah, I'm going to be honest. Because I read a lot of things and statements. I'm always reading statements – mission statements, plans. And I'm like, OK, so how much of that have you done? Where's the action plan that goes behind the mission



statement? And where's the work that's happening? It's not all about statistics, but where is the change? If you're saying you want a more diverse workforce, and you're really encouraging people – again, it goes back to having a safer environment for people.

Realistically, people like myself – we're not stupid. We can walk into an interview and know when a place is not going to be for us. As much as you're interviewing for somebody to join you, they are interviewing to see whether that is somewhere that they want to be. I've walked into interviews and have been like, well, that's not for me.

I would love to work in a place where I'm not the only Black person in publishing. I'm currently in a place where I'm not the only Black person in the building. This is the first time that's happened to me, which is great. It's nice to walk around and see other people who look like me. But I'm still going to a lot of places, a lot of conferences, and there's very few people who look like me or represent things that I represent. So yeah, we need to do a bit more of the work and really do – like less talk, more work. I think that needs to be the push for the change. Then we can say, yes, we're being more representative, I think.

But we need to talk about the sort of hierarchy of restorative justice. Where do you sit within that, and how are you bringing somebody up behind you? It's easy to say, oh, you know, I don't have any privilege. Everybody has some somewhere. Even I do. And I know when I get into rooms, it's for me to bring the next person in, to open that door as long as possible so more and more people can get in. If I'm given a platform, I will be sharing that platform. And the more people that do that, the more we're going to break down the system that's trying to keep people out of it.

And if you're somebody who sits at the top of the hierarchy, you need to be doing way more than the people who are towards the bottom. At the moment, it's the people towards the bottom who are doing most of the work. If that's all it took, we would have just done this already. But we're still here fighting the fight.

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KENNEALLY: As head coach of the UCLA Bruins, John Wooden won 10 national basketball championships, including seven years in a row. A succession of UCLA teams won 88 consecutive games under his leadership. Wooden shared his insights on coaching in many bestselling books. “A good coach can change a game,” he said, “a great coach can change a life.”

In business, coaches emphasize personal development, helping employees to make positive changes in their work habits and job skills, such as communications, leadership, and team-building. Over two decades working in publishing, Amy Beisel held management roles in



editorial, product strategy, and business development. She applies that experience as a coach to rising leaders in research and publishing.

KENNEALLY: Scholarly publishing is not as diverse as it wants to be and needs to be, Amy Beisel. Can employee coaching help publishers achieve their goals in diversity, equity, and inclusion?

BEISEL: Yes. We can look at the Workplace Equity Survey from the Coalition for Diversity and Inclusion in Scholarly Communications, C4DISC for short, to see how much work there is to do across many measures of diversity, whether it's gender, sexuality, race and ethnicity, age, ability, caregiving responsibilities, and more. C4DISC's last report was in 2018, and their new report will be coming out in January, so I'm really looking forward to seeing that new data and hope to see progress.

Of course, there are women at the helm of a number of organizations in our industry – Elsevier, Emerald, IOPP, PLOS, Wolters Kluwer, CCC, for example. But at the same time, we can look at recent gender pay gap data for publishers in the UK and see that on this one measure of equity, pay by gender, there's still a long way to go in our industry.

Sticking with gender for a moment, McKinsey and LeanIn published a report a few weeks ago on women in the workplace in the United States that mentions that one of the reasons that there is so little diversity at the top of the corporate ladder is that there is a broken rung near the bottom, and that's the first rung into management. The report found that last year, for every 100 men who were promoted to be first-time managers, only 87 women were. And the numbers are even worse for women of color – just 73.

I see that on a personal level. Early in my career, I was at a couple different organizations where my team was entirely women, 100%. And as my career progressed, I was surrounded by more men and fewer women. Then at some point, I was the only woman in the room. So I think a lot about that broken rung. And as a coach, I place special emphasis on early- to mid-career phases – how I can help women in particular step over the broken rung and how I can help managers and organizations fix that broken rung so that everyone has equal opportunities to lead and succeed.

Nancy McKinstry, the CEO of Wolters Kluwer, mentioned on a recent Harvard Business Review podcast that Wolters Kluwer has really focused their diversity efforts on middle management as a stepping stone into senior leadership, and they've seen really positive outcomes for that approach. So I think that everyone in our industry has a role to play in making workplaces safe, equitable, and welcoming for everyone, and coaching is just the role that I've chosen.



KENNEALLY: Amy Beisel, what motivates someone or some organization to reach out to a coach?

BEISEL: People come to coaches with a range of challenges. At the organizational level, it could be that they're struggling with employee engagement and turnover since the pandemic. The leadership team is struggling to align. They're working on a new strategic plan, and they're worried about their blind spots as an organization. Or they can't follow through on their priorities. It feels like they're just putting out fires. So it can cover quite a range.

Sometimes, people come with personal career goals. For example, they're working towards a promotion. They're a new manager. They have so many questions, and they've received zero training. Or maybe they've gotten feedback on a few different performance reviews. They really want to make the change, but they're just not sure how.

KENNEALLY: Changes in business models and workflows have transformed scholarly publishing since the beginning of this century, Amy. With so much more change yet to come as AI takes hold, how should publishing adapt its culture?

BEISEL: My former colleague, Alberto Pepe, likes to say that scholars produce 21st century research written with 20th century tools packaged in a 17th century format. So our industry is both on the cutting edge and completely stuck in the past. There are some ways that publishing must change to be more inclusive, accessible, international, and there are some ways that publishing must not change, like upholding integrity and ethics. But from an organizational culture perspective, there's a real opportunity.

I can't tell you the number of meetings I've sat in where someone comes in with a big idea to revolutionize our business, serve our customers, make a big impact, and everyone else in the room spends the entire meeting saying our systems can't support that. Our sales team don't know how to sell that. Our financial systems can't process those transactions. It can't be done. You know what happens? Absolutely nothing. And over time, people bring ideas that are smaller and smaller, basically limited by what our organization already knows how to do. That's the path to smaller thinking, smaller revenues, smaller impact.

Now, to be fair, everyone in that meeting is doing their job. From their perspective, within their function, they're simply describing their functional capabilities and limitations with a focus on cost and complexity. The problem is that the team isn't aligned on what matters most, which is serving our stakeholders in new and better ways and leaning into growth. That alignment and orientation towards the future, towards growth, towards opportunities is really important across the whole organization – not just in business development, product development, or marketing, every function. That's the real opportunity.



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KENNEALLY: “Change before you have to,” advised businessman Jack Welch, who dismantled then rebuilt General Electric.

Scholarly publishing in 2023 faces social and technological forces that will see it, too, dismantled and rebuilt. What emerges is what we design by our intentions and our determination.

That’s all for now.

Our producer is Jeremy Brieske of Burst Marketing. You can listen to Velocity of Content on demand on YouTube as part of the Copyright Clearance Center channel and subscribe to the program wherever you go for podcasts.

I’m Christopher Kenneally. Thanks for joining me throughout the year on Velocity of Content from CCC. Best wishes for 2024!