



Early Career Professionals in Scholarly Publishing Tell All

with

**Erin Foley, CCC
&
Rachel Moriarty, Oxford University Press**

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KENNEALLY: In surveys conducted in 2014 and 2020, hundreds of early-career staff working in scholarly publishing disclosed surprising details about their career ambitions and the barriers they face to realize them. A third survey just concluded may reveal whether efforts to provide career support, especially mentoring programs, are making a difference.

Welcome to CCC's podcast series. I'm Christopher Kenneally for Velocity of Content.

European Science Editing, a peer-reviewed open-access academic journal of the European Association of Science Editors, published a report on those surveys in May 2022. In early 2024, that article received Best Original Research and Review honors from the journal's editorial board.

Two of the co-authors join me to share insights from their work. Rachel Moriarty is publisher with Oxford University Press. She joins me now. Welcome to Velocity of Content, Rachel.

MORIARTY: Thanks, Chris. Thanks for having me.

KENNEALLY: We're looking forward to this discussion about early career in scholarly publishing. Rachel Moriarty, you were a member of the early-career publishers committee for the STM Association. Tell us about the committee's mission.

MORIARTY: They're amazing. That's the first thing. I was on the committee for a good seven years, and probably the most fulfilling seven years of my publishing career. I joined them in, I think, 2016, and the main mission really has been to work with the early-career publishers. That'd be anyone working in the publishing industry for about 10 years or less.



It's not based on age or anything like that. It's very much about how long have you been working in the industry?

What we wanted to do back in – I think it was 2014 when we had the first survey was to provide resources, guidance, support for these early-career publishing professionals. Really, to do that, we had to survey them to ask what they were interested in. We couldn't just say we represent these people without actually asking them what it was. And we were early career ourselves, but that was really our guiding force for how we wanted to structure the committee and how we wanted to look forward for our goals and our wider mission.

KENNEALLY: You told us about who you sent these out to. Who responded, and what did they share with you?

MORIARTY: We had a fantastic response to the first survey in 2014, with I think almost 800 responses. It dropped a little bit for the second survey in 2020, we think mainly because of the pandemic. I think it was around 450, 430.

In terms of who responded, it was quite surprising. They were usually within their first five years of working in the industry, but a lot of them had only really been in their current organization for, say, three years or less.

KENNEALLY: Rachel Moriarty, what about the professional ambitions of early-career people working in publishing?

MORIARTY: When we got the surveys back, in both surveys, we were looking at people who were based in the kind of science, technical, medical fields, and HSS as well. They were still mostly within editorial departments, working on books and journals. So a lot of the responses had that slant to it. They were working in editorial, production, marketing. And they were mostly wanting to figure out how do they progress within their current job? Or if they wanted to move laterally, how do they do that? What skills do they need?

We also noticed that a lot of people in both surveys were working within their field of study, the field that they'd done their bachelor or their master's in, rather than, say, having come from publishing degrees. I think a lot of people were looking for that support. I know lots about mathematics. I know lots about social sciences. But I don't know about open access. I don't know about different publishing models. That was a lot of the information we got back in terms of what skills were they looking for that we could support?

KENNEALLY: Mentoring schemes – what do you think of those, and who might benefit from them?



MORIARTY: I'm a mentoring advocate, and I think seven years working on the STM's mentoring program, that's probably going to speak to that. But in my humble opinion, mentoring is one of the most important things that we can do, and everybody benefits. Regardless of your position in the industry, your role, your seniority level, everybody benefits.

So that sharing of knowledge, where you're placing mentees and mentors together who don't work within the same company, maybe don't even work in the same location – they could be in the US, UK, Asia, Middle East, anywhere – and that sharing of knowledge across those potential barriers creates these kind of life- or career-long, at least, relationships that you might not really have or be able to experience if you just look internally in your company.

KENNEALLY: Rachel Moriarty with Oxford University Press, thanks for speaking with me.

MORIARTY: Thank you, Chris. Been a pleasure.

KENNEALLY: And with me now is my colleague at CCC, Erin Foley, who's director of rightsholder relations. Erin, welcome to the program.

FOLEY: Thanks for having me, Chris.

KENNEALLY: What skills do survey respondents say are most important for career advancement, Erin Foley?

FOLEY: Great question. I wish I had something really succinct, but there were over 350 unique responses to that very question. I think as a general matter, it's safe to say that there are many skills that would help early-career professionals to advance in their career. Really the focus that I came away with was all around communication, data analysis, negotiation skills, industry knowledge, business management. Leadership was a really big one, so again, I think that speaks to some of those emerging mid-careers, too. Networking, technology, and lots and lots of tactical skills related to specific job functions. Folks really want to upskill to either succeed in their current role, or they're wanting to upskill to move into a new role. Some of those were around data science, SEO, marketing, production, editorial, and lots and lots of other specific job function-related skills.

I think the interesting thing for me was that there were lots of soft skills that were put forth in the survey as well, and I think the three biggest ones that I noticed were around confidence building, self-belief, and agency and ownership of their work and of what is going on in their role and how they can expand that role.



Associations like STM, SSP, ALPSP, and others do provide resources – webinars, things on their website – to help with this type of education, because we believe that this type of education should not just be on the organization, but really is for the whole industry to be educating newcomers into our field. But the challenge that we really see with ECPs is that they don't even know that these associations exist. They don't know that they have resources specifically geared towards ECPs and their challenges and needs. Or sometimes, they're not members, so they don't have access to those educational sections of the membership sites.

KENNEALLY: What are some of the barriers to advancement that you think the industry should try to work to dismantle?

FOLEY: We didn't ask that question specifically. We asked a lot of questions around how are they advancing in their careers, and we got lots of responses around volunteering for new responsibilities, learning on the job, listening, demonstrating reliability, networking – those types of things. So we didn't necessarily ask that, but I think coming from the industry and speaking for myself, I think there's a lot of challenges around actually getting out and being able to spend some time skill-building, whether that's just getting out of your inbox and trying to do that within your own organizational university or if it's something more robust, like going to a conference or attending a webinar or something like that.

ECPs have really critical roles doing hands-to-keyboard work. They are advancing the paper within the editorial system. They are helping with peer review. They are helping to coordinate teams to do something with the research. So they don't necessarily always have time, make time, or are encouraged to make time to take that time out of their day to do these types of things. I think it's very challenging for managers also to remember that they do need to encourage their staff to take that time to do these types of educational exercises – to go get a mentor, to facilitate getting a mentor, pointing them in the right direction, those types of things.

All of our travel budgets have been squeezed after the pandemic because we discovered that we could work from home. This is really valuable, especially in places where it may be less easy to get to these types of conferences that we're running in the STM and others that provide some of these educational opportunities. However, we know that having in-person attendance and in-person networking opportunities is so important especially as an ECP.

So if I could do anything as an advocate for ECPs, it would really be to advocate for organizations to open up the budget and set aside a small amount just for their ECPs to be



able to attend shows and some conferences in person, to be able to do paid webinars and things like that.

KENNEALLY: Erin Foley, the surveys of early-career professionals are a snapshot of this moment, but I want to ask you to look into the future and tell us about the new roles that you see emerging. What new skills will employers be seeking?

FOLEY: I think in the future, there will be some real level of familiarity and proficiency needed for emerging AI tools. They need to be a little bit more aware of what's happening in the AI space. Whether it seems like it touches publishing or not, it will eventually touch publishing, right? So I think there's going to need to be a lot more familiarity with AI and with AI tooling, depending on your job function especially.

Aside from that, though, I don't think the skills themselves are going to be new, and they're not necessarily anything that's different than what we have today, but I think there's going to be a new emphasis on ECPs bringing to the table or really quickly upskilling on things like analytical skills, critical thinking, creative problem-solving, relationship building and maintenance, because we're really trying to navigate these increasingly wide gaps between stakeholder groups within our own industry.

The mountains are tall, but we can scale them together. ECPs are the future of publishing and every other industry out there.

KENNEALLY: The STM team has just sent out a third survey. Any highlights you can share from this latest round, Erin?

FOLEY: It sounds so soon after the 2020 survey to do a new one in 2023, but we really wanted to get a good understanding of what has changed since the COVID pandemic started, and how has that changed working patterns? How has it changed needs around resourcing, upskilling? What is the perceived value of meetings and conferences in different formats? Has that changed since the pandemic?

But a couple things that jumped out to me when I was looking at the new survey were how many of our colleagues are joining publishing from another industry or from an entry-level role and how that really probably will translate into a major need for training and resources earlier on than maybe it has in the past. It's not that people aren't coming from master's in publishing or master's in library degrees. Of course they are. But there's a lot more of them coming from outside.

Going back to Rachel's comments about mentorship, over half of the respondents ranked mentorship as important or moderately important, but 20% said they had never received



any mentorship, and 44% were not even aware that STM had a mentorship scheme. So we need to do a lot better with our marketing.

I thought this was really shocking, which was 20% of respondents have never been to even online industry events, such as webinars, networking, other types of things. I think this is a major red flag for senior staff that they really need to be sharing information and the resources, invitations to these things, with their colleagues who might be newer and might not be receiving them on their own. From my perspective, this is absolutely part of what it is to be in publishing and giving back. You have to be sharing that information with your colleagues.

KENNEALLY: Erin Foley, director, rightsholder relations at CCC, my colleague at CCC, thank you very much for speaking with me today.

FOLEY: Thanks, Chris.

KENNEALLY: That's all for now. Our producer is Jeremy Brieske of Burst Marketing. You can subscribe to the program wherever you go for podcasts. You can also find Velocity of Content on YouTube as part of the CCC channel. I'm Christopher Kenneally. Thanks for joining me.

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