Hello Amy, welcome to “Research and Beyond”, a podcast that explores the cutting edge developments and pressing issues in the world of scholarly communications. Welcome to you today. Thank you so much for having me.

It's a pleasure and I'm delighted to have you to discuss a crucial topic, equity in the workplace, particularly within the scholarly community. A volunteer with the Coalition for Diversity and Inclusion and scholarly communications, or C4DISC as we call it, you also bring with yourself 20 years of experience in publishing. So as we converse today, I am particularly interested in knowing more about C4DISC missions, their recent workplace equity survey, and the challenges and opportunities for creating more inclusive environments in scholarly publishing.

So, without further ado, let's begin this conversation and I am sure we will be concluding the session with some key insights and practical approaches for organizations to improve equity and also understand the crucial and critical role of leadership in driving meaningful change. So let's get started. Sounds great.

To begin with, let's go back and get a quick background to all our listeners today and viewers on what C4DISC does, especially to educate young researchers who should know about organizations that are working to make the scholarly community more inclusive. Basically, we will discuss what the role of C4DISC is, its mission, and its vision. So over to you, Amy.

Well, thank you. The Coalition for Diversity and Inclusion in scholarly communications, or C4DISC for short, was established in 2017 to address the need for diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility in the scholarly publishing industry. And I'll refer to diversity, Equity, Inclusion and accessibility as DEIA for short today.

So at C4DISC we work with individuals and organizations to create a socially just community that not only welcomes, but celebrates the contributions of everyone involved in publishing. To work towards that goal, we've developed various resources and toolkits that are available on the C4DISC website, and we facilitate working groups and communities of practice on specific topics such related to DEIA in publishing so your listeners can learn more about what we're discussing today on the website C4DISC.org that's amazing and it sounds very inspirational as well to be a part of something that is doing such a remarkable progress in terms of its DIA initiatives that you mentioned.

What was your main reason behind joining CP for DISC and your current role at the organization? And what do you think? You know, what do you pursue to be as your future role in what do you expect to do in the coming year? Sure. So I joined C4DISC as a volunteer because I'm passionate about achieving DEIA in publishing and moving from aspirational statements to concrete outcomes. So I've been working in publishing, as you mentioned, for about 20 years.

I'm currently a leadership coach and I've seen both anecdotally and in the data barriers that people are facing at work. So I'm excited to collaborate with others in the publishing community to help individuals and organizations break down the barriers that are holding people back from being fully supported, represented and engaged at work. Absolutely.

That's something commendable. And I also the thing that you earlier mentioned about the survey that C4DISC had recently conducted, which can be considered as one of the major initiatives taken by C4DISC into 2023. Can we discuss a little more on what drove the need to conduct this survey and how did C4DISC go about it when deciding the core issues that need to be addressed, developing on the questions and you know how it all how everybody was involved in making this survey a success.

Sure. So C4DISC launched the workplace Equity Survey to better understand workplace culture and the experiences of people working in scholarly communications from a DEIA perspective. We've done this survey twice now, first in 2018 and again in 2023 as a five year follow up.

We found that even though many more organizations now say that they're committed to DEIA, there's often a gap between these verbal commitments and what employees actually experience. So our Workplace Equity Survey aims to provide data driven insights that can inform meaningful change in publishing. After consulting extensively with publishing stakeholders, we decided to look into dimensions including gender, race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, caregiving status, ability, and neurodiversity.

We made sure the survey was comprehensive as possible by including key contributors and collaborators from across the scholarly publishing community. In the end, the survey had 1,755 respondents from six continents, primarily in North America and Europe. This wide reach and the large sample size gave us a rich data set to identify trends and emerging themes over the five year period between our two surveys.

Comparing the 2023 results with the 2018 results helped us track changes and measure progress in workplace equity over time. The survey development, data analysis, reporting and communication is all a massive collaborative effort by C4DISC volunteers from across scholarly communications. That's really amazing.

And I believe that after the conduction of the survey, you all must have already reported the findings of the survey. Where can we find those findings? You can find Those on the C4DISC website that I mentioned, C4DISC.org so thank you so much for sharing that with us.

Now, as you speak about the survey that was recently conducted, and as you also mentioned that you've already, you know, collated all the findings and information. Can you highlight some of the important findings that you find most eye opening or concerning with regards to DEIA at workplace? Sure. So let's start with some good news.

Employee satisfaction and recognition of employer commitments to diversity have increased in the last five years since our 2018 survey, but unfortunately not everyone is seeing tangible improvements in workplace culture and equity efforts. There is a significant disparity in how different groups perceive Progress. So while 81% of respondents said that their workplace culture is supportive, this number was much lower among historically marginalized groups.

For example, respondents who identified as black, disabled, neurodivergent, multiracial, non binary or gender diverse felt much less supported compared to their peers. So these findings show that we need more inclusive practices to make sure everyone feels valued and supported. Another key finding of our survey is that inequities persist throughout a person's career and we need to help people of all backgrounds Progress.

For example, 27% of respondents took a career break at some point for parental or health reasons typically, and women were more likely to experience negative impacts from those career breaks. We learned that mentoring and networking are crucial for career growth, but access to these opportunities is uneven, especially early on in one's career. We found in both 2018 and 2023 that line managers have the most impact on an individual's experience of equity and inclusion at work.

So both organizational leaders and individual change makers have a role to play. Ultimately, the survey found that there is much more to be done in the publishing industry to create equitable and inclusive workplaces and to diversify our workforces. Absolutely.

And I agree with you that there needs to be a very transient and a very approachable method that everybody, all of us take in terms of making each other's lives better at work as well. And as you mentioned, line managers play a very significant role in doing so, given that the kind of impact that they have on regular basis and the kind of interaction that they have with their people working with them is significant. Now, while we are talking about these different kinds of people, when you mention women, people of color also face significant level of distinction as we would call it.

Any experiences or observations that you would like to share while working in scholarly communication that shaped your perspective perspective on workplace equity issues and how do you think has your understanding of these topics evolved over the years throughout your involvement with C4DISC? Sure. So as you mentioned, there are many different dimensions of diversity and gender is one example. So in my career I've gone from being all on all women teams to in my early to mid career to sometimes actually being the only woman in the room in more senior meetings where important decisions are being made.

And my anecdotal experience aligns with our survey data. We learned that 62% of men believe everyone has equal opportunities for promotion compared to only 50% of women and 26% of non binary and gender diverse respondents. So we still have a long way to go on gender equity and in all other dimensions of equity as well.

Let's discuss how often we hear about organizations making public commitments to diversity, equity and inclusion accessibility, the EIA that we call it, but then not really following through with meaningful action. Anything based on your action or you know, experience that you may have faced. Can we speak about some real and you know, practically negative impacts that you may have seen that an organization could suffer when they just talk about DIA instead of actually and truly positioning and operationalizing them? Absolutely.

This is such a challenge. So the C4DISC survey revealed that while many organizations have public commitments to DEIA, they often don't translate into meaningful change. 89% of respondents in 2023 said their organizations had stated values about diversity, up from 60% in 2018.

But unfortunately that wasn't always reflected in their day to day experience. So many respondents noted that while there are outward facing commitments and some employee resource groups, there's a lack of meaningful change in practice. So this indicates that organizations really need to move beyond rhetor and take concrete actions for real improvements.

When organizations don't follow through on their DEIA commitments, that can really erode trust and morale among employees, particularly those from marginalized groups. That can lead to decreased job satisfaction and productivity. It can make it harder for the organization to retain top talent.

It can increase turnover. Of course we know high turnover rates are costly financially in terms of lost knowledge and decreased morale. And failing to follow through on DEIA commitments can damage an organization's reputation, leading to a loss of credibility and trust among all stakeholders.

So while making public DEIA statements is necessary, it is definitely not sufficient. Definitely, I absolutely agree with you. But sometimes it could be possible that organizations are probably facing some kind of challenges into making it possible, like you've mentioned as well.

Also, bringing up people from different regions and ethnicities together could probably be challenging for certain organizations. And in that sense, any strategies of how C4DISC is working to bring organizations of different scales, let's say small scales to big scales and you know, industry level changes together with this common goal in mind. Definitely.

So collaboration is crucial in DEIA work. As you mentioned, that collaboration takes place within different parts of an organization and ideally across multiple organizations to scale up resources and impact. So C4DISC in particular fosters collaboration among different scholarly communications organizations to address DEIA issues through various initiatives.

A key strategy is our membership and partnership program that brings together a diverse array of organizations, large and small, commercial and nonprofit, that are committed to advancing DEIA across the scholarly communications community. Together, we've developed and published comprehensive toolkits on topics like ensuring DEIA in peer review, practicing anti racism, using inclusive language, and creating inclusive images. C4DISC also facilitates collaboration through events, webinars, working groups, and communities of practice where representatives from different organizations can share their experiences, challenges and successes in implementing DEIA initiatives.

The fact that C4IRC is a coalition means that we develop resources collaboratively and amplify our impact, helping us reach a broader audience and drive systemic change across scholarly publishing. So by bringing organizations together, co-developing resources and sharing support, C4DISC is making significant strides towards a socially just and inclusive publishing community. That's absolutely commendable.

And this is coming from an organization that is developed like even the toolkits have been developed by people from diverse areas. They're coming from different countries, they're coming from different regions, different, I think, education backgrounds as well, and coming together and making this a possibility is absolutely commendable. Everybody being on the same page in creating toolkits is definitely something that organizations should consider so that they create a more equitable space for everybody that works with them and make it a more productive and a scalable opportunity for the business as well, while keeping the sanity and mental health of everybody intact.

Right. So these were some of the things that you mentioned that C4DISC is typically doing from your perspective. Any practical approaches or simple rules that organizations must adopt to dismantle such harmful hierarchies that act as a barrier in letting thoughts that flow freely make and make their workplace more inclusive and equitable.

So to make progress in DEIA, organizations need to make systemic changes that go beyond surface level programs and policies. As you were saying? So here are some of our recommendations for organizations to improve their approach and outcomes when it comes to DEIA. So first, assess or reassess where your organization and team are on your workplace equity journey.

Create a workplace equity strategy to map your progress long term, possibly through self assessments, employee surveys, focus groups, and external DEIA indices. Second, set goals and align your workplace equity initiatives to meet those goals. It's really important to designate resources to ensure their success.

Some goals might need periodic monitoring, while others may require in depth assessment at specific points. Third, recognize and reward employees for their contributions to advancing equity. It's important that employees aren't overloaded with the charge to improve workplace equity without adequate resources and support.

And fourth, communicate your actions transparently, including progress updates and course corrections, so colleagues know what work is being done, what everyone's learning, and what changes are being made. As we talked about before, it's critically important that employees see that your organization's commitment to DEIA is not just words, but also actions. Yes, absolutely, Amy.

And like you mentioned earlier as well, that leadership and your managers play a very vital role in making sure that you are inclusive into the organization. And typically, when we speak about the leadership role and in terms of making everybody comfortable in their own skin, can you discuss a few qualities or actions that some accountable measures that leaders should take themselves in academic setting as well to create an environment to be truly inclusive and not just call it out for, let's say, the Internet or just to build a social image around themselves. Yes, leadership is crucial in driving meaningful change around workplace equity.

And that's true in any setting, whether in publishing, academic institutions or any other organization. Leaders set the tone for organizational culture and they have the authority to implement policies and practices that promote DEIA. So leaders must have a genuine personal commitment to DEIA and be willing to champion it within the organization.

That commitment should be evident in their actions and their decisions, not only in their words. Leaders need to actively support DEIA initiatives, allocate necessary resources, and integrate equity considerations into all aspects of the organization's operations. Effective leaders also need to be good listeners, so they should actively seek out and listen to the experiences and perspectives of employees, particularly those from marginalized groups.

This involves creating safe spaces for open dialogue where employees can feel comfortable sharing their experiences and providing feedback. By listening and responding to this feedback, leaders can identify the areas that need improvement and take steps to address them. And as you said, accountability is another critical aspect of leadership in DEIA.

Leaders must hold themselves and others accountable for progress towards equity goals, setting clear expectations, monitoring progress, making adjustments as needed, and communicating both progress and setbacks transparently. Very well said, Amy. And I completely agree by every statement that you've made, and being in the leadership circle myself, I understand how important it is for you to maintain a very good balance between different personalities and different people that you come across with, which also may impact the way you react to certain situations.

The way you deal with everybody in your team also kind of affects the overall health of the team and also affects the mental health of that particular individual along with others. There could be a collateral damage that you are probably not foreseeing. So what do you think is the role of an organization to play in proactively supporting mental health as part of their workplace equity efforts? That's such an important point.

Workplace inequity can have a profound impact on mental health, leading to increased stress, anxiety, and feelings of isolation among employees. In the C4DISC survey, respondents from marginalized groups reported experiencing a less positive workplace culture than the average when asked how support supportive their workplace is or if they feel respected and valued at work. When employees experience discrimination, micro aggressions, or a lack of support and respect in the workplace, it can negatively affect their mental well-being and overall job satisfaction.

Organizations play a crucial role in supporting mental health as part of their workplace equity efforts. Employers and line managers need to create a supportive and inclusive workplace culture where all employees feel respected and valued. This includes implementing policies and practices that promote equity, such as fair hiring and promotion processes, mentorship and networking opportunities, accessible resources, and inclusive language and behaviors.

Providing mental health resources and support is also important so organizations can offer employee assistance programs that provide confidential counseling and support services for employees facing mental health challenges. In addition, offering mental health training for managers can help create a more understanding and supportive environment. I think this could definitely help a lot of organizations into understanding the kind of proactive steps they need to take so that while they are looking into the personal development of personal development and the professional development of their people working with them, it is also important that they need to be more supportive in nature when it comes to, you know, being sure of the actions that are being taken by particular employees that are working with them.

Right. So these are certain things that we discussed in terms of what is happening currently and what has been happening for years now. But when I speak about the future, what kind of expectations do you have in terms of workplace equity? With now so many toolkits in place, C4DISC has launched several toolkits.

There are survey reports, there are white papers, especially when I speak about scholarly world and the scholarly community. What do you foresee to be the work the scenario of workplace equity in that area? Looking ahead, I hope and expect that the scholarly communications community will become truly inclusive and representative of the diverse global research community. This means creating environments where individuals from all backgrounds feel valued, respected and engaged.

I also hope to see more organizations making meaningful and sustained commitments to DEIA. So this involves setting measurable goals, regularly assessing progress, and being transparent about their efforts and learnings. Collaboration across the industry to share best practices and drive systemic change is crucial.

Organizations should work together to develop and disseminate resources and participate in industry wide initiatives to promote equity. By working collectively, we can create a more equitable scholarly communications landscape. And thank you so much for the invitation.

I would love to invite your listeners to learn more about C4DISC's workplace equity survey, toolkits for equity and other ways to get involved on the C4DISC website. Again, that's the letter C, the number 4 and the letters disc.org thank you so much Amy for this incredibly insightful conversation.

The work of organizations like C4DISC is crucial in driving systemic change and it's clear that we all have a role to play in this ongoing journey towards true equity and inclusion. Remember everyone, creating an equitable workplace is not just about making statements, but about taking concrete actions and holding ourselves accountable. Like Amy has also mentioned, very evidently, let's all commit to being part of this positive change in our scholarly community.

This has been “Research and Beyond”. Until next time, keep questioning, keep learning and keep striving for a more inclusive scholarly world. Thank you so much.