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Thank you so much for joining today on research and beyond. And first of all, I would want to congratulate you on being the President elect at SSP, which we call the Society for Scholarly Publishing. Congratulations.

Thank you so much. Amazing. So let's begin with your journey and plans as we speak about SSP.

Can you tell us about your journey in scholarly publishing to begin with, and how you became involved in the Society for Scholarly Publishing, which we call the SSP, and any memorable experience or milestone from your career that has significantly impacted your professional journey, let's say? Sure. Thanks for that question. I'm originally a historian and had difficulty in the job market, the academic job market, as a lot of people do, and happily found a home in publishing.

I started out on the book side and worked in book acquisitions for history and military history, you know, for quite some time. The company that I was working for went to an XML workflow for their books in 2004, which was pretty early and it was a really painful process, but I could see the potential as a researcher myself. Oh, if I could search content, that would streamline, you know, my research process.

And so I became more and more interested in learning about that and in order to work on that full time, I needed to move over from books to journals. So I worked at Springer before it was Springer Nature. I was the product manager for the SpringerLink platform.

So I got to learn about all of the technologies and standards and services that make hosting platforms go. So appreciated that learning. I took a little bit of a turn through the startup space.

I worked at a course material startup out of Stanford University, which had me communicating with all different types of publishers as well as universities. And most recently, you know, I do work for Delta Think a little more than three years now, which again, I really appreciate being able to work with all types of publishers, all types of service providers and vendors. And then I work on an open access data and analytics tool that we provide that has a lot of subscribers, not just from the publisher and vendor side, but also from the library and consortia space.

So it's been quite a journey. My first SSP was I think in 2009 when a colleague from Springer asked me to fill in for him in what ended up being a pre conference. So it was not just a presentation, it was a half day session.

I remember showing up at SSP and it was quite a bit smaller then than it is today, maybe about half the size, about 500 attendees and thinking both, wow, everybody knows each other already. How will I become a part of this but also thinking I want to become a part of this, that this is a lot of people that remind me of myself. I came out of that first meeting on two committees.

I think that was the annual meeting program committee and also something called an organizational collaboration committee which looked at work that SSP did with other organizations. So I would say I knew about doing volunteer work because I had done it in the library space. But SSP was my first introduction and awareness that doing volunteer committee work was possible in the publishing space as an industry.

That's very impressive. Like you know, right from starting your first appearance at SSP in a pre conference to now actually leading the entire committee and community. It's very commendable and it's honestly very inspiring to me also as a science communicator.

So. And I'm sure this interview will also inspire a lot of other women out there who are taking their stride in scholarly publishing despite initially probably finding it a little difficult and challenging, which it definitely is. It could be a little daunting at certain times with new advances and changes taking place every day.

But it's truly inspirational to, you know, see someone like you get on board and you know, do something this aesthetic at the moment. So when I speak about, you know, take you taking on as the president of SSP, what are certain key initiatives that you plan to focus on for SSP. Yeah, so this happens to be a year where regular strategic planning has come up for SSP.

I think they're on a multi year cycle. So together with the other members in the board of the directors, we've, we've been looking at that. SSP did a survey of members to hear more about what members wanted to focus on.

So just as a matter of course, you know, SSP will be reviewing the current programs and where some areas are that we might focus in the future. So I've been warned that that's going to take a lot of my time and that's very exciting. So I don't know that I'm going to have a big splash type platform.

I do want to continue the work that the past president, Randy Townsend has started in the area of mental health and wellness. I think a lot of folks in our industry, as a lot of folks in the world, you know, have struggled a little bit with COVID and Post Covid or whatever that as we're in now and I do think that that's important and it does take a lot of time for these initiatives. So you're, you do and the way SSP service works is you are the president elect for a year, you are the president for a year, and then you're a past president.

So that gives a little bit more time to focus. But, you know, a year is not enough for a big initiative like that. One thing I do want to spend time on is working with existing SSP committees around Early Career Development and Early Career Engagement.

My sense is, and I've been a remote worker for quite some time, that if you started your career immediately prior to or during the pandemic, or you made a significant job change during that time, you may not have met your team because you may be completely remote because you're not even near your team, or maybe that offices have. Have closed or shifted their. Their time in person.

I know that companies may be spending resources a little bit differently in terms of sending people to events. So I want to make sure that Early Careers can meet as many people in the industry as possible so that they will fall in love with the scholarly communication space the way that I did. And I think it's really important to talk to early careers to find out what it is that they need.

So not just to assume or try to replicate, you know, what it was like for me, you know, 20 or 25 years ago. So I'm looking forward to having lots of conversations, making sure that the Professional Development committee and the mentorship committee that SSP hosts can really make sure that Early Careers find out why they should stay, what the industry can do for them, and how they can give back, you know, moving forward. So I'm going to be working with existing committees on that.

That's exceptional. And, you know, the initiative that you just spoke about, of gathering all the people who've been working remote, will be of great help in terms of understanding different cultural backgrounds also and understanding scholarly dynamics across the globe also. So I think that's something very.

And as you spoke about Randy Town, who was the past president, he spoke largely and, you know, initiated a lot of conversations around mental health. And somehow we believe that DEI is also kind of partly responsible for making sure that your mental health is, you know, considered and taken care, you know, taken a step a little forward in terms of making an initiative in that direction. So, speaking of your role at Delta Think as the Director of Community Engagement, which rightly reflects in you, wanting to get people together from remote places as well, must give you some valuable perspectives on DEIA initiatives, I believe.

And I'm a little curious to know how that experience might influence your approach at SSP, other than, you know, having to bring people Together. Are there anything else, Is there anything else planned in that direction? Yeah, I'm very happy that you brought up that element. It's one that is increasingly important.

Not just SSP but other industry groups. More companies are focusing on looking at the composition of their staff, of their authors, their peer reviewers, editorial boards, folks that they're working with. I think that there's a much better understanding now.

There's more listening that's happening to not just early careers, but everyone, you know, who is involved in the space, who maybe comes from an underrepresented community. At Delta Think we've done a number of initiatives working with companies who are trying to benchmark what is their current state in terms of diversity amongst different stakeholder perspectives. And so we, there's.

It's a combination of putting together collection surveys and collection forms for those folks, but also using some AI tools along past data to get an idea from that space. I think in terms of SSP, I've been working pretty closely as President elect with the DEIA committee already and I've just rotated off as a co chair of a working group at ALPSP, which is another industry group, the association for Learning, Learned and Professional Scholarly Publishing. So I know that that's a big focus.

I think one thing to touch upon your mental health example is there's been some posts in the scholarly kitchen about, I think that colloquially calling it like the DEI tax, where certain individuals and organizations are really called on to participate in task force and initiatives on top of their regular job and maybe not feeling like they are kind of fully realized member of that group, but they are maybe like a box checking exercise, like, oh, we have our, you know, our DEI, you know, member. One of the things that SSP has done on the committee structure in recent years, I can't take any credit for this, but this is kind of how I find it is that there are DEIA committee members embedded in all of the other committees that SSP has. So there's a constant two way communication.

If it's education, education committee looking at, you know, webinars, if it's the professional development committee, you know, looking at, you know, mentorship, there's an opportunity for the liaison from DEIA to bring up, oh, we're working on something over here that could be relevant or please remember to have, you know, diversity amongst your presenters. Make sure that there's an inclusive, you know, environment, you know, that's created so that, you know, that communication piece, you know, I think is incredibly important and on the accessibility front because I, I know that, you know, we are, it's we are EDI or DEI compared to where we're based in the world. And then other initials like Belonging or our justice, you know, come up with that.

And I do think that a lot of conversations around accessibility, you know, can happen in those contexts. But in many organizations, the Accessibility Group is a technical group, and they're looking more at accessibility in terms of people using our content, using our products, and maybe less at how can we make sure that we hire with, you know, inequity, you know, internally. So I want to make sure that the A in DEIA does, you know, also receive an emphasis, you know, and is not overlooked in that context.

Absolutely, Heather. And when you speak about committees being formed for DEIA initiatives, we've had the opportunity to speak with DEIA advocates such as Chhavi Chauhan and Damita Snow as well, who have been a part of absolute, remarkable progress in terms of work equity policies as well. So that is something that is pretty inspirational and, you know, wanting to understand that there is a need for this transition to take place in society.

Also, the editor chief, the editor in chief of Enago Academy, Dr. Anupama Kapadia, she's also one of the members of the C4DISC panel. So this kind of, we can say that, you know, the transition of the movement towards a more equitable and a more accessible scholarly publishing domain is something that we are at least on the verge of somewhere trying to get there.

In that sense, I believe, when I speak of you, I believe that you've been at the four front row seat to the challenges around open access and accessibility through your work with Delta Think, open access data and analytics tools, shifting that towards the global scholarly community. What opportunities do you see for building a more equitable society in that sense? Yeah, I think about this a lot. I mean, my background, you know, in history, being in military and diplomatic history, and my background in book acquisitions, touching a lot of security studies topics.

I know a lot of people who work in the policy space and a lot of people who are teaching, you know, about the different background and context for the geopolitical tensions that we're experiencing now. And we are really thinking about the uptake around OA from an equity standpoint, but also, again, from a data standpoint for publishers. So some of our, you know, subscribers and some of the projects we work on look at what kinds of changes in global uptake of OA, different regional uptake in OA subject areas and how those are shifting and changing.

You know, for example, we Use high energy physics, almost everything in high energy physics for a long time, you know, due to initiatives like the scope 3 and use of pre print services. A lot of those are OA, but high energy physics is a really small part of physics overall, you know, so you need to ask, you know, questions when you're honing in on different subject areas. You need to look at, you know, which regions, which subject areas are growing over time, you know, which is something that, you know.

We also collect information on and working with libraries to look at their individual participation in OA by subject area, trying to look at researcher impact. A lot of librarians need to provide that information internally up through the provost, different departments. It helps them secure, you know, resource funds for, for OA and also, you know, discovery tools and things like that that they might provide to their researchers.

I think we're at a kind of pivotal turn in open access with some, you know, recent announcements by some funders and some shifts by some funders that there's a feeling that maybe, oh, open access hasn't progressed far enough, fast enough, or that, you know, larger publishers have just kind of pivoted and, you know, are now publishing away together with their subscription content. We do a lot of analysis at Delta Think around journals that do not have APCs. For example, they might be called the, you know, diamond journals or platinum journals.

So we've been looking at trends there. One of the big challenges on that front is a lot of journals that fall into that category are smaller scholar led journals and they may or may not have resources available, you know, to, to create the best metadata, participate in, you know, using identifier services and things like that, that most of the Skullcoms community has come. I try to remain very optimistic because a lot of the terminology that we use when it comes to OA transformative agreements, read and publish, transitional, those kinds of things.

Those are new terminology, new models, you know, subscribe to open, that didn't even exist five or six years ago. And so some of what we'll be using five or six years from now is probably being created by some of the best minds in the business out there. So, you know, I'm very excited, you know, to look forward and see kind of what happens next on that front.

Yes, definitely. And I agree with the, the geopolitical tension that you mentioned that, you know, it could probably be very difficult to get on the same page with everybody in terms of, let's say, scholarly communication or making it a sustainable approach. Every approach would require a lot of diverse Opinions from everywhere and especially when international collaboration is involved.

Right, let's move on to the academic libraries part that you mentioned. You've been deeply involved with academic libraries throughout your career. How do you see the role of academic libraries evolving in the next few years? Do you think technology and especially AI would affect it? Also how do you see the roles of the publishing stakeholders and the evolving technology with the growth of open access resources and digital scholarship? You know, one of the very rewarding aspects, you know, of, of my role in the space, I'm, I currently sit on the board of a library organization called NASIG.

I've been one of the directors for the Charleston Library Conference, you know, for, for quite some time. And I think that, you know, as publishers, many times the closest we can get to talking to researchers, you know, broadly in terms of their, their wants and needs is through the libraries. I think, you know, for a snapshot of where we are right now, libraries are spending a lot of time and energy managing open access.

Whether that is negotiating agreements, whether that is using technology to track approve APCs, communicating out, you know, to researchers about the existence of certain agreements that they might have. If the universities and you know, many. I should talk about like some, some regional differences, you know, some parts of world, some parts of Europe, Australia, New Zealand, for example, have gone the institutional repository route as much as a gold APC funded route.

So in that environment, a lot of the libraries work on institutional repositories, you know, and managing, you know, those services. Certainly in Latin America that has had a very strong, you know, open access focus for, for a long time. The libraries there, you know, work on cataloging those resources, managing those resources.

So I think there, there's always going to be a role for libraries. I think maybe in the beginning of the OA space, libraries might have thought what, what we would be doing. It's clear now they're going to be doing the things that they've always been doing, but a lot more jobs.

On top of that, I think that the relationship between, you know, some traditional types of things that libraries pay for, like databases and aggregation as a higher percentage shifts to, to being open, that there, there's going to be an emphasis on discovery services and recommender services and, and AI services. On top of that, I'm hearing from, you know, librarians that they are really becoming the communicators on campus back to the classroom, giving little overviews in addition to what they would have talked about in the library about, you know, use of AI tools and in writing and Researching and discovery, you know, that is going to. Going to continue, you know, for some time.

Another thing that libraries have been looking at for quite a while is, you know, the idea that open resources are not free. Open educational resources, which might, you know, replace some costly textbooks in some context, need a lot of money to generate them, to maintain them. There's a movement to make sure that there's transparency amongst students and what they will pay for textbooks.

And, you know, that takes some time and some energy on the part of the instructors to look at, you know, options. And libraries are kind of heavily involved there. I'm really excited about some unique forms of digital scholarship that are very, you know, interactive, that maybe with the addition of AI tools, be able to be customized, you know, for me, provide me with personalized quizzes I can take to make sure I'm understanding the material, maybe providing me in my own sort of pathway, you know, through a resource, adjusting to a level, an undergraduate level versus a graduate versus a practitioner level.

All of those things are going to be very important in the future. How we preserve them for the moment and also for the future, you know, is going to be an incredibly important topic. And since that is really the new frontier, there's a.

There's a big need for, for standards in that space. So look for the creation of working groups there and ways to get involved there. You know, you mentioned Chabi Chawan is very involved.

SSP has a community of interest network around AI, which I hear is in the hundreds of members now, and that's open for anyone to join, even if they're not an SSP member. So again, you know, I probably sound like a little bit like a broken record, but I'm kind of really excited to see the directions that we're going in. Definitely.

And it looks like digital preservation is an area of expertise for you. Definitely. And the viewpoints that you shared about academic library in the moment.

We understand that with AI's integration into a lot of processes and academic libraries, it's going to be a paradigm shift because we all know that AI is pretty inevitable. We need to adapt to it, we need to embrace it the way it comes. But it's also important that we do it responsibly and in the ethical way that we can.

Thank you so much. That was very insightful and one of the most inspiring conversations I've ever had. Thank you so much for your time, Heather.

Again, what you mentioned toward the end is you need to be positive, you need to be optimistic with whatever comes your way and yes, we are definitely not getting rich, but we are getting rich in the, in terms of the literature that we produce as part of scholarly communications, which is making scientific inquiry more robust as the times change. So that's what we can aim for and hope that our ethical standards are at par as times grow and the number of retractions are reduced, especially that happen due to misconduct. Well, thank you for, for having me here today.

I've really enjoyed the conversation.