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Introduction

The ethics of librarianship and publishing as separate domains are well established. Publishers may look to the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), among other authorities, for guidance on ethical practice; librarians might rely on the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions’ (IFLA’s) Code of Ethics as one source for ethical direction. Library Publishing surely derives ethical guidance from both. But as a relatively young discipline, Library Publishing also finds itself developing a different culture from either of its parent domains, critiquing some of the basic assumptions about the scope and direction of both publishing and librarianship in its theory and practice. Do the intersections of ethics in publishing and librarianship suffice to guide the ethical thinking of library publishers?

This version of the Framework differs significantly from Version 1.0. When the Library Publishing Coalition community assembled to develop that document, we approached it as a topical exploration, with annotated resources and recommendations for ethical thinking and for practitioners. Version 1.0 is both helpful as a consideration of issues and existing resources, and hard to implement as a framework. One common observation as we analyzed Version 1.0 was that it was more like a resource guide than a framework, which in hindsight makes sense for a document written by dozens of librarians.

In developing an updated version, then, we worked to define our terms. We conceived of a framework as a structure for thinking about a domain. A structural framework is both solid—a lattice that can support weight or further development—and porous, containing open spaces that can be filled in to build a finished architecture. That suggests the document needs to be both more and less specific in its direction: broad enough to spark original thought, focused enough to deal with real-world questions of ethical practice for practitioners working right now.

The task force that volunteered to review and update the framework—mostly white, all academic or academic-adjacent, and working through a global pandemic—began with a few basic principles: we would proceed with an organic, self-determined process; we would collectively set the terms of success; we would be accountable to each other; and we would at every point remind ourselves of the structural harms inherent in a white library and publishing industry, and the implications for our proposed ethics. We quickly developed a few more directives: that we would prioritize a human-centered ethic, and that we would trust in our collective authority to name our ethical practice.
An Ethical Framework

With that in mind, Version 2.0 represents an entirely different approach from Version 1.0. Through an iterative series of generative exercises, the task force developed a tiered document consisting of three layers. At the highest level are FRAMES, which describe the foundations of ethical thinking in library publishing. There are FOUR FRAMES; one is central and the other three rest on it.

The four FRAMES are:

Fundamentally,

Library Publishing is VALUES-BASED,

and also,

Library Publishing is both LIBRARIANSHIP and PUBLISHING.
Library Publishing is COMMUNITY-ORIENTED.
Library Publishing is DYNAMIC.

Developing from each of these FRAMES are a series of STATEMENTS, which we intend to derive from the frames like arguments from first principles. The STATEMENTS help orient library publishers to how they might proceed to ethical thinking in their discipline following from the FRAMES.

Finally, to help prompt library publishers to ethical practice based on the statements, each STATEMENT is extended by one or more examples of GUIDANCE. GUIDANCE is meant to describe meaningful action-based suggestions of how a particular statement might work itself out in practice. The GUIDANCE is not exhaustive, but should help practitioners take first steps toward an informed ethical practice.

Using the Framework

The framework is meant to be considered as a whole, the frames in conversation with one another to guide thinking about ethics in library publishing. Statements and guidance are not ordered in any meaningful way under a frame, and carry equal weight relative to each other. What can appear to be duplications across the statements and guidance might be better thought of as themes. For instance, the concept of transparency—that ethical practice demands sunlight and accountability—features across the frames, and guidance under one frame can be related to guidance under another along that theme.

That said, the framework can also be engaged at the level of specificity that the reader feels most comfortable with. If the statements are too much, start with the frames themselves. If
the reader wants further suggestions after reading the statements, move on to the guidance. The reader may find it useful at different times to focus on specific details or expand to a wider scope. At every level, the framework is intended to help us think about how to approach ethical practice in library publishing, at the granularity most helpful to our current circumstances. As library publishing is dynamic, so is engagement with this framework.

There is an aspirational aspect to the framework that reflects the task force’s conviction that our community has the professional authority to advocate for the ethics we want to see. Version 1.0 resembled a resource guide, which the ethics of librarianship asks to be neutral. Ethical guidance can derive from professional norms and traditions of practice, but it is also dynamic, and it is in awakening to new ethical imperatives that a discipline can grow in its self-understanding and its practice. The task force's approach in Version 2.0 sheds neutrality in order to take positions in support of ethical practice. For instance, in the first statement under the frame “Library publishing is both librarianship and publishing,” we hold that “library publishers inherit the characteristics and structural inequities of both domains,” encouraging practitioners to acknowledge their ethical responsibility to push against these structural inequities, and to shape their practice accordingly.

The framework does not supplant existing ethical guidelines in either librarianship or publishing. It makes direct reference to these established ethics, but asks library publishers to evaluate and ground those guidelines in their own clearly defined values. The space at the intersection of librarianship and publishing gives library publishers latitude to make choices that support activities that either of those disciplines might not undertake alone, suggesting and hopefully creating a future for library publishers where our ethical norms support the world we long to live in.

At the end of the framework the reader will find a visual representation and condensation of the framework, which the authors imagined as a useful visual prompt for library publishers who would like to remain in conversation with the ethical framework in their everyday work.

**State of the Framework**

From the start, the Ethical Framework was conceived as an iterative document: Version 1.0 anticipated this version, and the task force anticipates a future Version 3.0. This version benefits from critical feedback from members of the Library Publishing Coalition's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee and other community members at a call held in November 2022. It is a collaboratively developed document, equally the product of the care and thinking of the entire task force, and we stand behind the work we have done. But we also embrace its fuzzy edges and contradictions; we see it as a work-in-progress, to be
taken up in turn by future library publishers who themselves feel the need to advance the ethics of our discipline. In the best possible scenario, this document will prompt readers to make ethical considerations that eventually give rise to its replacement.

Library Publishing is VALUES-BASED

This is the fundamental frame upon which the other three frames rest. Until a library publisher defines their values, no basis exists for ethical decisions under the other frames. Values also drive aspirational progress and determine the extent to which we can truly advocate for a human-centered ethic of library publishing.

STATEMENT 1.1:
Library publishers act in accordance with their stated and implicit values. Library publisher values determine library publisher actions and ethics.

GUIDANCE
A human-centered ethic that prefers persons’ well-being over systems, institutions, programs or other priorities, requires a carefully considered value system.

Be transparent: develop an explicit statement of values for your publishing program, and make them publicly available. Revisit this statement regularly and consider how it can and should evolve over time.

Use your values statement to prioritize projects, develop processes, and create a balance between material and ideal practices.

Analyze your existing practices to evaluate their relationship to your values and update practices as needed. Are you acting in ways that conflict with your stated values?

STATEMENT 1.2:
Library publishers’ values do not exist in a vacuum, but are informed by relationships to stakeholders and broader societal structures.

GUIDANCE
Develop your understanding of systems of oppression (racism, colonialism, ableism, sexism, transphobia, homophobia) and use this understanding to evolve your value system.
(It is understood that the struggle against oppression is ongoing. Do your best in our inherited hierarchical systems of oppression to enact this guidance).

Define your primary stakeholders, solicit and consider their feedback. Consider carefully how your values align with or diverge from your stakeholders values, and to what end.

Identify, state and pay attention to your current context. Do your values operate in your current context in ways that are newly harmful?

**STATEMENT 1.3:**
Library publishers' values will determine whether they can advance equitable, diverse, and inclusive access to the production and use of knowledge.

**GUIDANCE:**
Identify and articulate the changes you want to see in the system of scholarly communications. Do those goals align with your values?

Make your end goals, relative to this Statement, explicit in your program’s mission statement or other public documentation.

Enact the guidance under Statement 1.1 above ("Library publishers act in accordance with their values") in relation to this Statement.

Learn from and incorporate practice from other disciplines of liberation and resistance in advancing this goal.

Enact human-centered values by paying and treating workers well.

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**STATEMENT 1.4:**
Library publishers inherit a specific set of declared values from their professional domains, librarianship and publishing.

**GUIDANCE:**
Consider carefully the values of both librarianship and publishing when developing an understanding of your own value profile.
Where the values of your professional domains and your own values align to the benefit of a human-centered ethic, adopt practices that affirm your professional domain's guidance. 

(For instance, your concern for your communities and ALA's advocacy for the Right to Privacy may together suggest that policies and practices that protect the identities and activities of your users are an ethical imperative. This guidance also commends established ethical guidance in publishing, such as the COPE guidelines, where those practices align with your own values.)

Pay special attention to the intersection of ethical practice in librarianship and publishing when developing your own policies and practices.
Library Publishing is both LIBRARIANSHIP and PUBLISHING

Our association with both professions gives us two ethical traditions from which to proceed, and allows us to extend those traditions in conversation with each other. We are uniquely positioned all along the continuum of scholarly communications, with implications for our ethical decisions.

STATEMENT 2.1:
Library publishers inherit the characteristics and structural inequities of both domains.¹

GUIDANCE

Adopt anti-racist practices (e.g. peer review, citation review, organizational development) that address inequities and barriers.

Institute systems, processes and policies that give every stakeholder an effective voice in decision-making and operations, while amplifying voices that are historically least heard.

In support of intellectual freedom and fostering community, choose or create platforms that enhance connections between authors and their audiences.

Be aware of how collection development choices impact scholarship, and the preservation of scholarship.

Support myriad outputs (oral traditions, digital scholarship, data, etc.) to serve authors, researchers and audiences.

Support publications in niche and emerging disciplines.

Acknowledge and track the labor, digital and otherwise, that it takes to publish. Be transparent about the labor involved in publishing, and provide a workplace structure that ensures margins of rest and recompense.

¹ Deep investment in whiteness and neutrality; maintenance of the status quo and barriers to entry; validation of a narrow scope of work; regimented, exclusive systems built on economic and cultural imperatives which limit possibilities and reproduce systemic injustices.
Recognize that your work is not neutral: name the biases and preferences that influence your work, as well as your positions on issues that touch your work (e.g. data privacy, freedom of speech, academic labor), so that you may act with intention, and not uphold unethical systems through ignorance or indifference.

Ask whose knowledge, methods, and/or authorship is validated by the acquisition or selection of a work. Publish works by/about/for historically oppressed populations.

Implement collaborative developmental editorial processes, centering care and conversation with authors and audiences.

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**STATEMENT 2.2:**
Library publishers act at all points on the scholarly communication continuum: as creators, curators, distributors and custodians of scholarship.²

**GUIDANCE**
Implement open access at every ethical opportunity, in consideration of authors' goals for the reach of their work; eliminate unnecessary cost, technological, procedural, or other barriers for authors, other contributors, and readers.

Interpret “ethical opportunities“ to implement open access in consideration with community priorities that might require closed access (e.g. the CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Sovereignty).

Preserve and share methodology, data, software and other inputs and outputs to enable research replication and to build public knowledge.

Choose or create publishing platforms that employ community-governance, protect user privacy, create and adhere to standards, and foster collaboration and exchange of data.

Select and use style guides, and depart from them when needed, according to the relevant community or context.

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² Library publishers have power to amplify or silence, to preserve or destroy, to cultivate or to consume.
Index, create metadata, and undertake other efforts to increase the visibility and impact of diverse authors and content.

Regularly review all policies, procedures, and platforms with an eye to improving equity and accessibility.

**STATEMENT 2.3:**
Library publishers are uniquely positioned in the academy to influence communities and individuals at multiple levels and can use that position to influence structural change.

**GUIDANCE**
Library publishers have an ethical responsibility to imagine the world they would like to operate in, and take steps in their publishing practice to build that world.

Support expansive definitions of scholar and scholarship, and cultivate and work with authors as collaborators rather than submitters. (*For example, non-degreed authors can be scholars, vernacular language can convey scholarship, and non-book/non-journal formats are legitimate scholarly publications.*)

Enact policy around citation practice for the materials you publish, to establish a published record that opens the canon.

Provide resources and advocate for modes of publication that support academic success for scholars working in non-traditional modes of scholarship.

Facilitate learning for your teams and contributors by offering educational resources, mentorship initiatives, and advancement/development opportunities. These opportunities are designed to recruit and develop over time people from communities most marginalized by librarianship and publishing.

Ensure agreements and procedures help editors, authors, and other contributors understand their options regarding copyright, privacy, and author rights. Ethical agreements assume no more rights than are necessary to meet a program’s publishing goals.
**STATEMENT 2.4:**
Library publishers benefit from collaborative, standards-based environments.

**GUIDANCE**
Adhere to metadata, usage, accessibility, unique identifier and other standards to contribute to the effective discovery, exchange, use and assessment of information.

Use open source, community-governed platforms to advance collaboration and information exchange.

Employ open licenses to contribute to the free use and development of knowledge.

Maintain a critical eye when assessing standards for use, acknowledging that systems of categorization and standardization have historically been used to naturalize unequal power structures. When a standard is adopted, its limitations should be documented and surfaced for anyone who will encounter them in their organization.

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**STATEMENT 2.5:**
Library publishers hold power as gatekeepers that influence whose voices are validated.

**GUIDANCE**
Seek authors, reviewers, and communities beyond your networks of established scholars. You have a responsibility to serve and support a spectrum (geographic, language, gender, religious beliefs, world views, sexuality) of authors, editors, reviewers and others involved in the creation process.

Provide transparent review and assessment policies, and center mentoring, conversing, collaborating, and caring, rather than gatekeeping; reconsider who can be a peer reviewer, what qualities are important in reviewers, and the purpose of the review; consider whether anonymous or open peer review best serves the disciplines and communities relating to the work.

Offer metrics that help authors demonstrate the quality of their research and their impact to non-publishing practitioners and the general public, and which do not structurally harm the discipline, authors, and communities relating to the work.
A thorough environmental scan can be helpful in determining which communities and community members are underserved by scholarly publishing in your context, and giving those authors a platform can advance an inclusive and equitable publishing program.

Library publishers can validate the voices of marginalized or underserved scholars for future readers by preserving their scholarship.
Library Publishing is COMMUNITY-ORIENTED

Library publishers serve, are members of, and are responsible to communities. Our orientation to and in our communities affects the impact of our ethical decisions. Ethics are determined and enacted in groups of people—communities—whose context influences the effect of our practices on the individual members of those communities.

STATEMENT 3.1:
Library publishers interact with multiple communities and individuals within them, which may have aligned, competing or opposed needs or interests.

GUIDANCE
Define your communities and prioritize your obligations to each. Make sure you have established your own values as a baseline for these priorities.

Be transparent when negotiating the varying interests of your communities.

Do not be afraid to end relationships with communities who do not align with your values/mission, or start relationships with communities who do.

Be wary of tokenism in your teams, author lists, editor pools. Do not call on one member of a community to speak to or for all other members.

Where your communities’ needs align, look for ways to work that are mutually beneficial.

Take steps to understand the communities you serve or are situated in. Regular environmental scans, power analyses, and community engagement efforts can help you do this. Seek multiple voices when building your understanding.
STATEMENT 3.2:
Library publishers provide a platform for the voices of the communities in which they are situated.

GUIDANCE
Engage with your communities and amplify their voices.

Develop policies and processes that provide equal opportunities for community members to access publishing services.

Apply preservation activities to the work you publish with your communities so that their voices persist in the long term.

Ensure space for community-appropriate epistemologies; let your communities’ knowledge frameworks guide your decisions about degrees of openness in your outputs.

Support self-determination for communities, centering and listening to them even if it means not publishing.

STATEMENT 3.3:
Library publishers impact the communities with which they engage.

GUIDANCE
Proactively learn and relearn about your communities.

Actively seek feedback from your communities to gauge any harm, benefit or other consequence resulting from your activities.

Engage with diversity-building and anti-racist efforts in the boundaries of your local context, including both internal- and external-facing relationships and activities.

Seek to publish research that will inform public policy and improve outcomes in your communities.

Ensure all outward facing activities include an impact analysis from the earliest stages of planning. Revisit this process at regular intervals over the life of a project, and implement any recommended actions.
Become and remain a good actor in your communities: keep up to date with and follow good practice guidance; recognize and address power relationships within communities; work to embody community values.

**STATEMENT 3.4:**
Library publishers are accountable to their communities.

**GUIDANCE**
Strive to ensure that the work you produce meets the needs of your communities.

Be willing to materially change your practices in response to community feedback, particularly in order to reduce harm to a given community.

Ensure your fundamentals—governance, processes, budgets—are transparent and inclusive of the community.

Build editorial boards, administrative teams, and staff that reflect the diversity of your authors, audiences, and communities.

Open your published material to your communities. Strong commitment to open publishing principles can ensure that communities can engage with and respond to the work you do.

Prioritize accessible outputs to ensure that all members of your communities can engage with your published material.

**STATEMENT 3.5:**
Library publishers create their own communities.

**GUIDANCE**
Cultivate in-house community management skills and capacity.

Participate in communities of practice and learn from other publishers, as well as other experienced community developers (activists, student societies, local community groups).
Look to existing sources of expertise for guidance and templates to implement, and share any documentation that you use, create and/or adapt publicly so that others may benefit.

Devote dedicated time and resources to community development and management efforts. Success requires investment and cultivation.

If you are managing communities, do so in awareness of larger societal structures that impact your community members, including racism, patriarchy and capitalism. Find or create, and share, guidance for interactions that support participation by those most marginalized in your communities, as well as processes to handle harmful behavior before and after it takes place.

Develop a shared internal understanding of the difference between collaboration and community, identifying which is appropriate in which context, and what is required for each. Be deliberate in which approach you apply to different situations. Know that at times you will not want to deploy either, and be clear about when and why.

Cede power in favor of community self-governance.

Map the communities in which you have a leadership or coordination role and your strategy/approach to managing them. Review this map annually.

Be clear and intentional about the purpose of your communities and the value of membership to all who participate.
Library Publishing is DYNAMIC

Library publishing is uniquely positioned both in- and outside of librarianship and publishing, which gives practitioners a freedom in their ethical decision-making: to change, grow, and act in ways that might be precluded in either of those domains individually.

STATEMENT 4.1:
Library publishers adapt their practices as conditions change in libraries, in publishing, and in the wider world, with flexibility to choose their own pathways.

GUIDANCE
Library publishing is activism. Use flexibility and creativity to drive positive change.

Library publishers have ethical responsibilities related to emerging scholarship, evolving technologies, and social change, particularly in relation to their communities.

Seek to creatively address problems that are not solved by either librarianship or publishing independent of one another.

Regularly assess your values, programs, areas of scholarship, and audiences to determine how you can better align your activities with your evolving values and serve emerging producers and consumers of knowledge.

STATEMENT 4.2:
Library publishers are constant learners.

GUIDANCE
Prioritize impact and do not be constrained by the norms and traditions of established publishing institutions.

Hear and value differing professional opinions as contributions to the common conversation.
Employ civility and other behavioral expectations to advance open conversation, not to quash ideas or differences.

Support staff efforts to remain up-to-date and pursue professional engagement/leadership in their areas of work through time, money, and flexibility.

Pursue collaborations and relationships strategically to broaden your capacity.

Adopt up-to-date, thoughtful policies that center people. For example, as terminology, capitalization, and other naming conventions change, recognize that these matter deeply to the people being labeled and those that care about them.

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**STATEMENT 4.3:**
Because library publishers are uniquely positioned at the intersection of librarianship and publishing, they have a unique perspective on the functions of both fields, and create possibilities beyond them.

**GUIDANCE**
Prioritize the dissemination of knowledge and creative expression over market value or profits.

Experiment with and support new and emerging forms of scholarship and creative expression with varied products and processes.

Create and hold space for publishing efforts insufficiently supported by traditional publishing.

Leverage your outsider position to work against harmful structures, realities and practices in both librarianship and publishing.

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E.g. collecting & disseminating knowledge
STATEMENT 4.4:
Library publishing practitioners have a unique opportunity to influence the upheaval in scholarly communications and create new pathways forward for publishers, authors, editors, reviewers and readers alike.

GUIDANCE
Critically assess existing publishing practices that have developed in very different contexts before adopting them into your programs. Some can be kept or adapted, but others will not align with a library publisher’s desired outcomes.

Support scholar-owned and -governed projects that are imagining and creating new systems for scholarly publishing which are not limited by traditional publishing imperatives.

Remain engaged with evolving conversations in the field, so as to both learn from and contribute to its evolution.

Build your programs in such a way as to be adaptable and risk-tolerant. Change requires experimentation and an ability to fail and learn. While challenging in an institutional environment, it is vital to remaining relevant and seizing opportunities as they arise.

STATEMENT 4.5:
Library publishers are not bound by the same profit/growth imperatives as market-based publishers.

GUIDANCE
Prioritize publishing authors, subjects and formats that are less likely to find a home elsewhere due to lower expected financial returns.

Pursue sustainable growth or maintenance in all areas—funding, staffing, output. Be transparent when sustainability is not a goal.

Determine what value and reward looks like in the absence of profit or growth, and build your program to cultivate that value.

Ensure decision-making is informed by more than budget or revenue considerations, and account for other forms of impact or value.
STATEMENT 4.6: 
Library publishers deserve joy.

GUIDANCE
Where library publishing practice materially degrades aspects of the practitioners' life, it can and should be changed or abandoned.

The work of library publishing does not take priority over the emotional, mental or physical health of its practitioners. Pay attention to the way you feel as one metric in evaluating the direction of your work.

Cultivate professional relationships that celebrate your unique place in scholarly communications and encourage you toward ends that may not align with the larger publishing or library community. Do the same for them.
An Ethical Framework for Library Publishing
Version 2.0

LIBRARY PUBLISHING IS...

Values-Based
1.1 Library publishers act in accordance with their stated and implicit values. Library publisher values determine library publisher actions and ethics.
1.2 Library publishers’ values do not exist in a vacuum, but are informed by relationships to stakeholders and broader societal structures.
1.3 Library publishers’ values will determine whether they can advance equitable, diverse, and inclusive access to the production and use of knowledge.
1.4 Library publishers inherit a specific set of declared values from their professional domains, librarianship and publishing.

Librarianship & Publishing
2.1 Library publishers inherit the characteristics and structural inequities of both domains.
2.2 Library publishers act at all points on the scholarly communication continuum: as creators, curators, distributors and custodians of scholarship.
2.3 Library publishers are uniquely positioned in the academy to influence communities and individuals at multiple levels and can use that position to influence structural change.
2.4 Library publishers benefit from collaborative, standards-based environments.
2.5 Library publishers hold power as gatekeepers that influence whose voices are validated.

Dynamic
4.1 Library publishers adapt their practices as conditions change in libraries, in publishing, and in the wider world, with flexibility to choose their own pathways.
4.2 Library publishers are constant learners.
4.3 Because library publishers are uniquely positioned at the intersection of librarianship and publishing, they have a unique perspective on the functions of both fields, and create possibilities beyond them.
4.4 Library publishing practitioners have a unique opportunity to influence the upheaval in scholarly communications and create new pathways forward for publishers, authors, editors, reviewers and readers alike.
4.5 Library publishers are not bound by the same profit/growth imperatives as market-based publishers.
4.6 Library publishers deserve joy.

Community-Oriented
3.1 Library publishers interact with multiple communities and individuals within them, which may have aligned, competing or opposed needs or interests.
3.2 Library publishers provide a platform for the voices of the communities in which they are situated.
3.3 Library publishers impact the communities with which they engage.
3.4 Library publishers are accountable to their communities.
3.5 Library publishers create their own communities.

The framework is a structure for thinking about ethical practice in library publishing, at the granularity most helpful to our current circumstances.

An Ethical Framework for Library Publishing Version 2.0

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