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I Hear the Train A Comin' — An Interview with Sally Morris

Column Editor: **Greg Tananbaum** <greg.tananbaum@aya.yale.edu>

When the definitive volume on turn of the century scholarly publishing is written (and debates about whether that volume will be an eBook, open access, etc., are an entirely different column), one of the key characters will no doubt be **Sally Morris**. Sally serves as the Chief Executive of the **Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers (ALPSP)**, the international trade association for nonprofit publishers and those who work with them. Since Sally took office in August 1998 the **Association's** membership has nearly tripled — it now has some 340 members in 36 countries — and its activities have grown substantially. In many ways, **ALPSP** has emerged the chief strategy group for scholarly publishers.

Before joining **ALPSP**, Sally spent a quarter century as a “real” publisher, including 11 years running a program of 50 medical journals, and several years in charge of copyright and licensing. Sally's career has had stops at many of the world's leading publishers, including **Oxford University Press** and **Wiley**. With Sally concluding her tenure at **ALPSP** this fall, it seems an appropriate time to look both backward and forward with one of the industry's leading minds.

What is ALPSP's mission? How has it changed in your eight years on the job?

SM: When I joined in 1998, **ALPSP** primarily represented learned society publishers.

Early on — inspired by our then Chair — our governing council held a groundbreaking “strategic planning” session at which we determined that our mission should actually be to represent all nonprofit publishers — not just

societies, but also university presses, research institutes, inter-governmental organizations and so forth. The Council also clarified that associate membership should be open to anyone else active in the scholarly/professional communication chain. We also determined that our key objectives were:

Advocacy — representation of the interests of the nonprofit scholarly and professional publishing sector in particular, and publishing more generally, both formally to governments, legislators, funders, and informally to the other communities with which we interact such as libraries and academics. Wherever possible, we try to back up our advocacy positions with facts, and to that end we carry out a great deal of research.

Education — not just training (though we now provide 24 courses a year in the UK, and are planning to extend this to the USA, China and hopefully other parts of the world in future) but also seminars, workshops and other types of events. Our aim here is to fit both young and more experienced publishers for the challenges ahead.

Information — providing information not just for our own members (though there is a wealth of that on the members-only part of our Website), but also to the industry at large and, indeed, to the wider community. We have a quarterly print and electronic journal, **Learned Publishing**, now published in association with the Society for Scholarly Publishing; a monthly e-newsletter, **ALPSP Alert**; various listservs and a “Future Watch” blog; and a whole lot of information on the Website (www.alp.org).

Outreach — we felt that growth of the organization would likely follow from the successful pursuit of the first three, and indeed it has — when I joined we had about 120 mainly UK member organizations. The 340 members we have now collectively publish nearly 10,000 journals, more than 40% of the world output.

A couple of years later, we added a few more strategic objectives:

Good practice — the promotion of sound practices in a range of areas of publishing. We've issued a number of guideline documents, all under the general Principles of Scholarship-Friendly Publishing outlined on our Website (see <http://www.alp.org/SFPubpress.htm>).

Collaboration — we developed, with **Swets**, the innovative **ALPSP Learned Journals Collection**, bringing together 557 journals from 46 different publishers. The **Collection** is sold as a single package or as subject-specific subsets to libraries and consortia. The idea was to overcome the problem, which troubled librarians as well as publishers, that “big deals” from large publishers were taking up so much of librarians' negotiating time and money that they squeezed out the important journals from small publishers. We're now looking at whether there is a need for something similar for eBooks.

Internationalization — as our membership became increasingly international, we felt it was important to ensure that membership benefits became equally international. We could not expect members to travel to the UK for every event! So we've set up a North American Chapter that is beginning to plan its own activities, and another will follow very shortly for Australia and New Zealand. We're also collaborating with other organizations to provide events in the USA, China and mainland Europe. While our primary aim was to make membership more rewarding for existing members, this does seem to be bringing in new members as well, which is great news — the more publishers we represent, the stronger our voice!

Assuming your successor runs a term of similar length, what are the most critical issues he/she will face within academic publishing?

SM: First and foremost, I think that over the next decade publishers will have to get to grips with the way that their customers are actually working in their different disciplines. We need to understand the role of things like massive collaborative computing (e.g., e-science,

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The Typewriter for Typewriter's Sake

The typewriter may be entering yet another Renaissance. It was recently noted in *Youth Studies Australia*, a publication focused on the issues affecting Australians from early adolescence to young adulthood (<http://www.acys.utas.edu.au/ysa/>), that 20- and 30-somethings of today in some cases prefer typewriters over computers. “Having grown up around the fastest, smallest, quietest gadgets they find the blank screen and blinking cursor of a monitor less intimate than a typewriter with its clunky keys and visible inner workings.”¹⁸ In agreement with this attitude, **Robert Graves**, English author and poet, once wrote, “A vet-

eran typewriter of which you have grown fond seems to reciprocate your own feelings, and even to encourage the flow of thought.”¹⁹

People take comfort in the nostalgia and derive inspiration from the use of a typewriter. While there is definitely more advanced technology out there, when sitting down to a typewriter you are in some sense stepping into another time and world, and your task, whatever it may be, is made more interesting by the equipment you are using.

So, if you are frustrated with your computer, stymied over where to start on your next article, or just interested in a purely un-electronic writing experience, try a typewriter. **Olivetti** still makes a classic manual typewriter, the **Linea 198** (<http://www.olivetti.com/site/public/product.asp?sid=&cid=261&iid=74>). Used models of all shapes, sizes, and capabilities can be bought on **eBay** for very reasonable prices. 🐾

the Grid). Also the whole dimension of community filtering and information production (blogs, Wikis). We need to see what part information products and services, both what we currently offer, and what we could offer, can most helpfully play in these customers' working lives. For example, there are some exciting developments around filtering services (e.g. **BioMed Central's "Faculty of 1000"**), integration of articles and data (e.g., the **Cellular Signaling Gateway**), and community bookmarking (e.g., **Connotea**). We have to understand that reading things like journal articles is not an end in itself, as far as our users are concerned. When they look for information, in articles or wherever, they actually need that information to help them do something else — do a job, solve a problem...!

I think the migration to a world of multiple, and rapidly changing, business models will be another big challenge. Print subscriptions are becoming less and less relevant. We have a whole range of online licensing and selling models, from large collections of journals to individual articles, and there's a huge amount of experimentation with different metrics such as users and usage. There's also a remarkably high level of experimentation with one or other variant of the Open Access publishing model (more than 20% of respondents to our recent survey) and many more are making articles freely available after a relatively short period ("Delayed Open Access"). And I don't think we should assume that there's simply a "licenses versus open access" duality — we certainly need new models, but there may be many more options out there that we haven't thought of yet. You have only to look at what's going on in other industries such as music or telephony. We all need to experiment, and learn from each other's experiments, and we need to wave goodbye to the idea that there will ever be a steady state again!

Clearly some aspects of the wider Open Access movement are another big issue. For example, the self-archiving strand: no one really knows yet whether large-scale self-archiving will actually happen, and — if it does — whether it will be damaging to journals. Obviously, as "Scholarship-Friendly" publishers, **ALPSP** members want to satisfy the needs of their authors, since without authors we have no publications. At the same time, it's going to be important to gather evidence about the actual effects, both positive and negative. It doesn't seem very scientific to gallop towards a conclusion before testing the evidence! And the general underlying trend to contest copyright, not just by widening exceptions but also by trying to create "access rights," is another aspect of this movement that could create problems for creators and publishers.

What is the status of the "scholarly communications crisis?" Is there, in fact, such a thing?

SM: Yes and no! I think there was indeed a library crisis until about 1995; journal prices,

driven primarily by the inexorable rise in the amount of research being funded and therefore published, were rising way ahead of static or falling library budgets. However, with the advent of e-journals publishers have been working hard to resolve this problem and I do think that innovative licensing approaches have ensured greatly improved access and reduced cost-per-use, as recent studies from **JISC** (http://www.jisc.ac.uk/uploaded_documents/nesli2_usstudy.pdf) and **CIBER**, among others, have shown. Nevertheless, assuming that library budgets will never again grow in line with research expenditure (and thus with research outputs in the form of articles), a growing mismatch seems inevitable unless we can find better ways of covering the costs of publication. Open Access, as mentioned above, might provide part of the answer but I very much doubt that it's the whole answer. OA journals may not work in all disciplines (e.g., if research funds are insufficient to support publication costs) and self-archiving in open archives may turn out to destroy the journals on which it feeds — we really don't know yet.

The bigger issue, and I'm not sure I'd necessarily characterize it as a "crisis" as much as a "scholarly communications revolution," is that researchers are working and communicating in new ways and publishers need to understand and adapt to this environment in order to go on adding value which the community considers worth paying for (via one model or another).

What are the most common concerns about the state of publisher-library relations voiced by your membership?

SM: I'm not sure that our members do voice great concerns! **ALPSP** has particularly good relationships with various library organizations; we have regular meetings, and we are hoping to get involved in some joint projects in future.

One issue that does sometimes arise is the perceived confusion inherent in library support for Open Access. It often appears that librarians support both kinds of OA as a way of saving money. However, they don't seem to follow this through logically. They seem to overlook the fact that OA journals require just as much funding as before, though through a different route. If the money has to be redirected, it will be taken away from libraries. They also seem to overlook the fact that if they use OA archives as a way of saving money, this means they will be canceling subscriptions. This will damage journals (and their proprietors, including learned societies), possibly in some cases terminally. There does seem to be a generalized dislike of large commercial publishers and a feeling that large profits are somehow intrinsically wrong — however, the tactics adopted to "punish" them are in fact much more likely to damage small nonprofit publishers that produce high-quality journals at extremely reasonable prices.

We see some libraries moving into the role of publishers, for example setting up their own e-presses. We have no problem with this and welcome all new players of whatever type. As an organization supporting nonprofit publishers in particular, we hope we have

something to contribute in terms of information provision and skills training.

How difficult is it to serve as an advocate for publishers as disparate as the Chemical Society of Ethiopia, Elsevier, and Monash University ePress?

SM: Not as hard as you might think! We do, of course, speak primarily for nonprofit publishers, so on those occasions where their interests conflict with those of commercial publishers (which is not that often, actually) we know where our loyalty lies. More often, though, we are actually speaking for scholarly and professional publishers as a whole. The value they add, the skills they need, and the problems they confront are not in reality all that different — it's more a matter of degree. By sharing information both formally (e.g., through seminar presentations and journal articles) and informally (e.g., through the listservs or networking at meetings) our members all help each other to thrive in this environment.

What is one thing about scholarly publishers that libraries should know but do not?

SM: I'd say it's around the nature and importance of nonprofit publishers: we estimate that they publish at least half of all journals, and charge on average one-third as much per page as commercial publishers, as well as producing more highly cited journals. Two-thirds (in our admittedly small survey) make any money out of publishing — the rest are subsidized — and this is used to support the other activities of societies and the like. If libraries want, as they say they do, to support these publishers then we need them to put their money where their mouth is!

Perhaps I can cheat and give you a second one, which is about journal price increases. It always surprises me that libraries don't seem to understand the extent to which journal costs, and therefore prices, are driven by the number of articles published. Research funding rises steadily (I believe the figure is about 3% per year), and the number of researchers and the number of research articles rises in line with this. All these articles, by and large, get published somewhere. And more papers can mean only one of two things: existing journals getting bigger (and therefore more expensive) or new journals being created and adding to the potential "shopping list" (I've read that on average every 100 additional papers in the overall pot leads to the creation of one new journal — though it's getting harder and harder to launch new journals). The perception that the primary driver in journal price increases is publisher "greed" is, I think, based on this fundamental misunderstanding. That's not to say, though, that we don't appreciate that library budgets are not keeping pace with research budgets, research outputs, and thus, journal prices.

What is one thing about libraries that scholarly publishers should know but do not?

SM: That's a hard one for me to answer as a publisher! Perhaps it's about their funding: the fact that it's a tiny (I think around 3%) and falling percentage of institutional budgets; and that only 36-40% of library budgets are actually spent on acquisitions,

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with most of the rest going on staff, space, and so forth.

That reminds me of a second thing, where I think both libraries and publishers have a misconception about the other. Publishers want to move to e-only publication — it would lower their costs. Libraries want to move to e-only publishing too — it would lower their costs as well. The perceived obstacles — post-cancellation access, “disaster” access, long-term preservation — are all being addressed. But bizarrely, I hear publishers saying that librarians don’t want it, and vice versa. Let’s break the log-jam!

Let’s conclude with a quick word association game. What springs to mind when I say the following:

— **institutional repository**

SM: Who knows what the future will bring? Currently no threat to journals — but they could be if they gained critical mass.

— **society publisher**

SM: Part of the scholarly community they serve. Many currently depend on proceeds of publishing to support low-cost membership, conferences, travel bursaries, research, public education.

— **university press**

SM: Also part of the scholarly community. Don’t be fooled by the success of the big, long-established ones — the majority are small and struggling

— **PubMed Central**

SM: Could be an ally or a threat to publishers. If it starts republishing, replacing publishers’ links with internal ones for example, we should be worried.

— **viola da gamba** [an “early music” instrument of which Sally is an enthusiastic performer]

SM: More time for music-making — one of my hopes for retirement! 🌿

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Wandering the Web — Subcultures on the Internet: Part Two: Dance

Column Editor: **Jack Montgomery** (Western Kentucky University) <jack.montgomery@wku.edu>

Column Editor’s Note: This is the second installment of my study on Internet subcultures. The purpose of these articles in this series is to provide the librarian with useful, reliable resources on many of these groups to recommend to their patrons. In the first of these articles, we highlighted the Hip-Hop subculture and here’s a cornucopia of additional dance-oriented subcultures although this list is far from exhaustive. — **JM**

Dancing Cultures: Movement as Culture. Although dancing would not be defined as a subculture by many, it does meet many of the necessary requirements and so... General: two places to start <http://www.danceuniverse.co.kr/index.php> — A Korean site with an extensive guide to dance styles, clothing, clubs, contests and music. A general site with many links to more specialized sites.

<http://www.dancelovers.com/> and <http://www.iefit.com/dance/ballet.htm> — Two great sources for “learn to dance” videos and DVDs for all ages and styles.

<http://www.artslynx.org/dance/> — **ArtsLynx** is an extensive links-site for Dance-related resources of all types.

Ballet: Pointe your way to Health and Fame. <http://www.ballet.co.uk/> — A British site with many links to the online resources for the many forms of Ballet.

<http://dancescape.com/eve/ubb.x/a/fm/f/731106172> — A Blog site for the fans of Ballet. Hey, you got to have a Blog site these days!

Ballroom Dancing. <http://www.ballroomdancers.com/> — This is a teaching learning site with valuable Quick-time movies of the various movements of each dance.

<http://www.ballroomdancingdirectory.com/> — A well-organized site/guide to finding competitions, dance partners and other resources related to Ballroom dancing in North America, but still under development.

<http://linus.socs.uts.edu.au/~don/pubs/>

<http://www.basch.com> — This site provides an excellent history site of Ballroom dancing.

Belly Dancing. This often controversial but graceful ethnic dance style has its ancient roots in Middle Eastern culture.

<http://www.belly-dance.org/> — An online modern museum of belly dancing history, stars and music with many photos and sound links.

<http://www.joyofbellydancing.com/> — This dancer’s personal Website has loads of information on everything from costuming to routines, to history, to a directory of modern belly dancers — an excellent site.

Butoh. <http://www.butoh.net/> — Butoh is a modern avant-garde dance that originated in Japan in 1959 and incorporates elements of ballet and modern dance into a performance art. This group maintains an excellent site on this often surreal form of dance.

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