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Things that Keep Us Awake At Night

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If Rumors Were Horses

Hey everyone! It’s summer in Charleston which means high 80s! Not sure how we would be able to survive without air conditioning!

I hope you read Nancy Herther’s two part article about Amazon and Jeff Bezos. What a piece of great research and journalism. I am just sorry that I didn’t buy Amazon stock when it was cheap. At last look it was nearly $1000 for one share. Ouch! Anyway, more power to Amazon and Jeff Bezos.

**SSP (Society for Scholarly Publishing)** is entering its fortieth year and is celebrating the occasion by launching a new logo. “As scholarly publishing has evolved over the years, we felt now was the right time to refresh our logo to better reflect who we are today and to symbolize the dynamic nature of our future. SSP’s strength is within our membership and our new brand pays homage to our past while providing a new and exciting look for the Society going forwards,” said the wonderful Melanie Dolechek, SSP Executive Director.

**ATG** - “Linking Publishers, Vendors and Librarians”

**Karen Hunter** did 20 years ago. Welcome fellow insomniacs!

The context in which that article was written was in the interim between the end of Project Tulip and the eventual launch of the ScienceDirect digital publishing platform which flowed in part from it. **Karen** was at the nexus of a huge transformation in scholarly communications, though no one could be certain of that at the time. What was clear, however, were some of the challenges that needed to be tackled.

Fast forward 20 years, and there are epic shifts underway again. I enjoy an interesting perspective within Elsevier which is well on its way through a transformation from publisher to information analytics company that improves research performance. What that exactly means continues to develop and become more clear, and we’ll see the eventual impact and outcomes. At least two things are different this time around: I am not nearly as awesome as **Karen Hunter**, and the epic shift is not happening in the same environment of collaboration between libraries and publishers. Indeed, a theme I often reflect on with real sadness is the rather parlous state of this fundamental, and potentially hugely powerful, strategic relationship. Now it too often feels the relationship is defined, at least by some, as a competitive one rather than as a symbiotic one. Neither community has made a radical transformation to the benefit of our shared users without the other. Anyway, while this is honestly something that does keep me awake at night, I have discovered that my sleeplessness by itself does not lead to change on this front.

It is a profound commitment to working symbiotically with librarians that shaped the way this issue of **ATG** evolved. My first action was to list my angst on paper, and to share it with the extremely thoughtful members of our North American Library Advisory Board (thank you — you know who you are!), and then **Katina** and **Tom** kindly offered to extend this consultation to members of the Charleston Advisory Board for thoughts and additions. I am so glad of having done this, as these wise professionals surfaced two additional themes that were keeping them awake at night, and have come to keep me awake now too. Problems shared are problems halved they say, and I certainly hope this proves to be true in time.

So what are some drivers of our shared angst:

1. Information authenticity in an age of both misinformation and overload
2. Metrics to demonstrate our impact
3. Making “open” a reality
4. Rights — by which I mean in this context copyright, copyright exceptions, and the rights of different scholarly communication stakeholders
5. Data access and preservation
6. Big data and privacy

So to each topic in turn… Fake news and fake research are both eroding the trust that has traditionally been placed in published material. As is the case with news, fake research in its purest form is fabricated.

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**Katina Strauch** and **Tom Gilson** paid me a huge compliment earlier this year with their invitation to guest edit this issue of **ATG** around the theme of things keeping me awake at night. This theme was specially chosen in honor of a terrific article on the same theme that the supremely talented **Karen Hunter** did 20 years ago. Welcome fellow insomniacs!

Mabel Porter Jacks, the fifth grandchild of Bruce and Katina Strauch. She is adorable!
I f you are interested in leading a discussion, acting as a moderator, coordinating a lively lunch, or would like to make sure we discuss a particular topic, please let us know. The Charleston Conference prides itself on creativity, innovation, flexibility, and informality. If there is something you are interested in doing, please try it out on us. We’ll probably love it...

The Conference Directors for the 2017 Charleston Conference include — Beth Bernhardt, Principal Director (UNC-Greensboro) <beth.bernhardt@uncg.edu>, Glenda Alvin (Tennessee State University) <galvin@tnstate.edu>, Adam Chesler (AIP) <adam.chesler@cox.net>, Ed Colleran (Triumvirate Content Consultants) <ecolleran@triumvirateconsultants.com>, Cris Ferguson (Murray State University) <ferguson.13@murraystate.edu>, Rachel Fleming (University of Tennessee at Chattanooga) <rachelfleming@utc.edu>, Joyce Dixon-Fyle (DePauw University Libraries) <joyfyle@depauw.edu>, Erin Gallagher (Reed College) <gallagher@reed.edu>, Tom Gilson (Against the Grain) <gilson@cofc.edu>, Chuck Hamaker (UNC-Charlotte) <chahamaker@email.uncc.edu>, Bobby Hollandsworth (Clemson University) <hollan4@clemson.edu>, Tony Horava (University of Ottawa) <thorava@uottawa.ca>, Albert Joy (Retired) <albert.joy@uwv.edu>, Ramune Kubilius (Northwestern Health Sciences Library) <r.kubilius@northwestern.edu>, Erin Luckett (Readex) <eluckett@newbank.com>, Jack Montgomery (Western Kentucky University) <jack.montgomery@wkvu.edu>, David Myers (DMedia Associates) <dave@dmmediaassoc.com>, Ann Okerson (Center for Research Libraries) <aokerson@gmail.com>, Audrey Powers (UFS Tampa Library) <apowers@lib.usf.edu>, Heather Staines (Hypothes.is) <heather.staines@gmail.com>, Anthony Watkinson (Consultant) <anthony.watkinson@binternet.com>, Meg White (Rittenhouse) <meg.white@rittenhouse.com>, Katina Strauch (College of Charleston) <kstrauch@comcast.net>, or www.charlestonlibraryconference.com.

Send ideas by July 14, 2017 to any of the Conference Directors listed above. The Call for Papers form will open on April 18, 2017 at http://www.charlestonlibraryconference.com/participate/call-for-papers/.

Or send ideas to: Katina Strauch, P.O. Box 799, Sullivan’s Island, SC 29482 • 843-723-3536 (voice) • 843-509-2848 (cell) <kstrauch@comcast.net> • www.charlestonlibraryconference.com

2017 Charleston Conference — 37th Annual Issues in Book and Serial Acquisition

Call For Papers, Ideas, Conference Themes, Panels, Debates, Diatribes, Speakers, Poster Sessions, Preconferences, etc. ...

2017 Theme — “What’s Past is Prologue”

Preconferences — Monday & Tuesday, November 6-7, 2017
Vendor Showcase — Tuesday, November 7, 2017
Main Conference — Wednesday-Friday, November 8-10, 2017
Charleston Gaillard Center, Francis Marion Hotel, Courtyard Marriott Historic District, Embassy Suites Historic Downtown, Charleston, South Carolina

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for the purposes of profit or propaganda, for example a whole range of predatory journals, including those recently exposed for accepting articles by “Dr. Fraud” (an entirely made up academic).

The public is waking up to the serious ramifications that fake news has for political processes, with the likes of Facebook and Google being asked to be part of the solution. The consequences of fake research are arguably just as dangerous and immediate for the millions of doctors, scientists, policymakers and more who rely on it to make do-or-die decisions every day. If a doctor makes a treatment plan based on fake research, it could risk the patient’s life.

If I’m therefore delighted that in this issue of ATG we have two contributions on this important topic. The first is by Donald Plutchak. I really encourage you to read both — they were developed independently but are highly complementary and reflect whether there are pragmatic things that can be done to tackle these issues, and/or whether an intellectual paradigm shift is required. I’m not convinced there is a single right answer, but having read these pieces I’m newly convinced there are no quick and easy solutions. From where I am sitting, better peer review, research reproducibility, and analytics will be necessary ingredients.

Metrics have become surprisingly compelling to me, trained and firmly committed as a qualitative social scientist. But oh, the power of numbers is something I’ve come to really appreciate since joining Elsevier. Everything is measured here, occasionally in very painful detail. But there is something powerful in numbers and robust metrics for getting at reality and trends, and especially when these are counterintuitive or at odds with our own beliefs and perceptions. Other members of the research community clearly find metrics compelling too, given the range of articles in Elsevier Connect categorized under metrics and analytics and addressing topics from gender to research performance (https://www.elsevier.com/connect/home?fb_tags=terms=metrics&f_tags=data%20%26%20analytics&f_c_tags=Community&community=elsevier%20connect).

Roger Schonfeld and colleagues at ithaka have got a great deal of experience in terrific longitudinal studies to gather metrics on the impact of libraries. Much of this work has focused on the contribution libraries make to teaching, and it would be really compelling to have even more insight into the contribution that libraries make to improving research performance.

I first aspired to help create an open access world in 2001, and sometimes really cannot believe that in 2017 it still hasn’t come to pass. And why is this? It is certainly not because it is impossible. It is not because there are vested interests that throw up road blocks. It is not because of copyright. Or money. Or profits. Or indeed many of the other things I regularly hear cited as “the barrier.” I firmly believe it is because we are not pragmatic enough, and do not just make it work for all stakeholders. If we did, it would be. Instead we use “open” as if it were a battlefield or a grassy field on which all sorts of other games are played. Anyway, this keeps me awake at night. However, as it was my day job, and this exercise is in halving problems by sharing them, I asked my wonderful colleague Gemma Hersh for her perspective on making open a reality. She’s come up with a great piece that spans open access, open data, and open science and to my delight she also focusses on the importance of collaboration to make it all a reality. I hope you will enjoy reading what she has to say as much as I did.

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3. Publishing is critical. Vint Cerf mentioned this in his brilliant opening address, and it was echoed by Keith Yamamoto in his equally brilliant closing. For Vint, increasing the reproducibility of published research was paramount, and this requires increasing access, and this in turn requires a much more serious focus on digital preservation—from hardware and operating systems to software and formats. Without preservation and access, there is no modern scientific record. For Keith, the focus was on the act of publishing. ‘If you don’t publish your experiment, it is exactly like not doing it.’ But the current system of publishing is too expensive for universities (barring any major restructuring of how much money is allocated to libraries, or how much money comes directly from the government to support publishing), so our focus needs to be on what now—figuring out who pays, figuring out what we publish and where, understanding the global impact of our solutions, making sure we’re resolving researcher concerns, and more. (Both speakers had much more involved messages than this; a summary will be provided soon.)

4. OSI can help. Several concrete ideas were proposed regarding where OSI can help push the ball forward on open. These included creating new resources for the open community (such as APC finders or open resources links), designing new open outreach materials tailored to specific audiences (instead of one-size-fits-all materials), funding studies to look at issues like how much libraries are spending on open, developing a better understanding of researcher needs and incentives, convening conversations between funders, helping to identify best practices, promoting the DART framework for open (discovery, accessibility, reproducibility and transparency), and getting behind efforts like OA2020 and DORA (both of which can be read in a more balanced light).

5. We’re on the right track. OSI isn’t going to be able to tackle this issue by itself—we all acknowledge that this effort’s current lack of staff (i.e., funding) makes it a somewhat unlikely candidate to manage a global revolution in scholarly communications, but most delegates thought OSI serves an important and useful purpose nonetheless—that what has been spinning out of OSI is having an impact, and that the approach we’re taking is exactly on the right track. Whether by being a neutral forum for broad discussion, a proponent of inclusive ideas, a convener of parties, or even a developer or funder of new products and projects, the big tent approach is better understood this year than last (although as a group we’re still not settled yet on exactly how this group should be managed, if at all). Keith Yamamoto noted one specific way in which OSI might be on target: Helping to identify a set of common principles that define what we want at the endpoint. If we can identify these principles as a group, we can then make a broad model that can be adapted or adopted.

6. We’re more alike than unlike. Several stakeholder groups (in their reports) pushed back against the idea of having distinct groups. We have differences of opinion in this community, but there is often as much diversity of opinion within a single stakeholder group as there is between groups. Everyone agreed that we need more involvement from the global community, and also from researchers themselves.

7. Convergent needs are everywhere. The HSS & Scientists workgroup in particular identified a raft of areas where these often disparate communities can find common ground—e.g., on the need for visibility, public engagement, preservation, and interdisciplinarity. Convening action on this common ground is the next step. Some stakeholder groups (namely scholarly societies) felt they were already cohesive enough and well-positioned enough that they could advance agendas and promote culture change—that these convergent needs were (or could become) clear and as actionable. Similarly, the scholarly infrastructure groups like ORCID and DOAJ are ready to work together and with OSI to help promote and secure open.

8. Accountability and recognition. We need to get institutions invested in this effort (not necessarily financially). We all have a stake in the outcome. What this means in practice is to be determined. As far as recognition is concerned, several groups expressed an interest in developing a way to recognize good work in open—a type of Nobel Prize for open.

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AVAST, ME HEARTIES by Bruce Strauch (Retired, The Citadel)

Pirate holds millions of scholarly journal articles in violation of copyright. And they hand it out for free.

They began in Russia with the samizdat culture where scholars passed lit and scientific info underground. They then shifted to English-language works. And grew to ginormous. A neuroscientist from Kazakhstan created Sci-Hub that jumped the fence of journal paywals via donated passwords.

Elsevier began litigation against Sci-Hub and Library Genesis in 2015 claiming a loss of millions of dollars in profits. The pirates argue that their users could never afford the price of buying the articles so Elsevier really lost nothing.


NEVER A BAD TIME FOR A NEGRONI by Bruce Strauch (Retired, The Citadel)

The Strauch daughter — Ileana Jacks — returned from Venice a Negroni enthusiast. And starting June 1 is Negroni week. The classic has equal parts sweet vermouth, Campari and gin. Rocks. Garnish with orange twist.

Or for a mod taste, smashed cucumber, Bonal vermouth, gin and beer. Cucumber ribbon wound through inside of glass. Salted rim.

See — Jim Kearns, Wall Street Journal Podcast, 4-24-17.

AND LET’S READ ABOUT BASEBALL by Bruce Strauch (Retired, The Citadel)

Jim Boulton, Ball Four. (First exposé book on infidelity, drinking and drug use by ball pros.) (1970); (2) Robert Peterson, On the Ball Was White. (First book about the Negro Leagues. Inspired special Hall of Fame entries at Cooperstown.) (1970); (3) Bill Veeck, Veeck as in Wreck (3-foot-seven pinch hitter gets walked because he has no strike zone.) (1962); (4) Ted Williams, The Science of Hitting (Ted’s legacy still in print.) (1970); (5) Michael Lewis, Moneyball (Mgr. uses stats to find undervalued talent.) (2003).


GROUNDBREAKING BIOGRAPHIES by Bruce Strauch (Retired, The Citadel)

William Godwin, Memoirs of the Author of ‘A Vindication of the Rights of Woman’ (Husband writes of Mary Wollstonecraft, feminist, travel writer, children’s author.) (1798); (2) Elizabeth Gaskell, The Life of Charlotte Bronté (Liz actually interviewed Charlotte.) (1857); (3) Michael Holroyd, Lytton Strachey (1967-68); (4) Robert Caro, The Years of Lyndon Johnson (Four volumes of a study of power.) (1982-2012); (5) Stacy Schiff, Véra (The Nabokov marriage) (1999).


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9. Trust. This conversation needs trust to move forward. There is a lot of mistrust in the system — not in OSI, which is widely seen as something of a unique refuge and a unique and valuable opportunity to speak across the aisle — but in the larger schol-comm system which has been so polarized for so long. Still, even within OSI, we still haven’t cracked through to where we’re having frank and open exchanges yet (at least in the annual meetings) about fundamental disagreements — issues like APCs, for example. How and where to have these conversations is to be determined — maybe not in full-group meetings in front of live audiences, but we can certainly continue to make progress in this regard. Scott Plutchak noted that we can’t get to this level of trust (and engagement) by meeting only once a year for a few days — more meetings and more engagement will be needed.”

All restful music to my ears. Rock on, OSI!

The next three topics proved particularly frustrating as I was unable to find anyone willing to write about them. Now, I am sure you are out there, and I simply failed to look in the right places or ran out of time before I did so. But, please, identify yourself loudly and proudly and come out of the woodwork. For example, consider submitting a proposal to speak at the Charleston Conference: http://www.against-the-grain.com/2017/04/2017-charleston-conference-call-for-papers-now-open/.

What especially gave me sleepless nights were the reasons provided by some real experts in these areas about why they were unwilling to write on the key stressful topics identified. Now, of course they are all busy people being experts, so perhaps these are polite cover stories, but what do you think of some of these responses:

- Rights — there’s nothing new to report or discuss, nothing much has changed in the last 5-7 years. This left me depressed, and if things are so entrenched surely this must be a sign of problems in itself.
- Data and preservation — this is new and hard and so understandably difficult to write about, but what depressed me was the huge willingness to write about the preservation of publications. The preservation of publications is not something keeping me awake at night when we have wonderful services like CLOCKSS and Portico and national libraries with legal deposit collections. Let’s please not waste our energy on duplicating effort, and instead really embrace and overcome the new challenges facing us all.

- Big data and privacy — there is clearly lots of shared angst that needs to be surfaced, and pragmatic steps for resolving this need to be found. Again, the Charleston Conference is a good place for this to happen. For example, Elsevier’s privacy policy was published partly in response to an excellent session Ann Okerson organized there on this topic two years ago. Thank you, Ann. So… a little more conversation and then some action, please (to mangle Elvis Presley’s tune just ever so slightly).

And then finally a hopeful and thoroughly pragmatic and positive note to end on, by the wonderful Maggie Farrell. She reflects, from her position as a Dean of Libraries, on the importance of establishing a strategic vision and for all the necessary things to drive change through to a successful conclusion. If there is one certainty we all share, it is that change is all around us and more is coming. Inspirational, successful leadership is essential for us all.

<http://www.against-the-grain.com>