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The Scholarly Publishing Scene-Getting Attention

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The Scholarly Publishing Scene — Getting Attention

Column Editor: **Myer Kutz** (President, Myer Kutz Associates, Inc.) <myerkutz@aol.com>

The idea that the contents and conclusions in scholarly journal articles make their way into newspapers and other popular media isn't new. Nor is the notion that such transmissions are important not just to the general public, but to the scientific community, as well. An October 1991 *New England Journal of Medicine* (NEJM) article, "Importance of the Lay Press in the Transmission of Medical Knowledge to the Scientific Community," by **David P. Phillips, Elliot J. Kanter, Bridget Bednarczyk, and Patricia L. Tastad**, posited that "efficient, undistorted communication of the results of medical research is important to physicians, the scientific community, and the public." Because "information that first appears in the scientific literature is frequently retransmitted in the popular press," the article's authors asked the question, "does popular coverage of medical research in turn amplify the effects of that research on the scientific community?" The hypothesis they tested was, "researchers are more likely to cite papers that have been publicized in the popular press." The article's authors compared the number of *Science Citation Index* references to NEJM articles that were covered by *The New York Times* with the number of references to similar articles that were not covered by the *Times*. The authors concluded that NEJM articles covered by the *Times* received a disproportionate number of scientific citations in each of the ten years after the articles appeared. (The *Times* is an appropriate yardstick because of its power; what it chooses to publish makes its way to many other media outlets.) The effect was strongest in the first year after publication, when NEJM articles publicized by the *Times* received 72.8 percent more scientific citations than control articles. This effect was not present for articles published during the newspaper strike in the 1960s, when the *Times* prepared an "edition of record" that was not distributed; articles covered by the

Times during this period were no more likely to be cited than those not covered.

NEJM remains fully aware of the importance of article transmissions to the popular press. With the print edition published weekly on Thursdays, and with each week's content available online at *NEJM.org* at 5 PM EST each Wednesday, NEJM offers advance-access subscriptions to "qualified journalists" with daily or weekly deadlines. When advance-access subscribers agree to abide by NEJM's embargo policy, i.e., not to publish stories before online publication on Wednesday at 5 PM EST, they have complimentary access to embargoed content via the NEJM Media Center on the Friday prior to publication. At this time, advance-access subscribers also receive author contact information, which facilitates author interviews in advance of publication.

Of course, because NEJM publishes articles about medical issues of wide interest, its parent, **The Massachusetts Medical Society**, would place great emphasis on feeding clinical and medical research information to journalists. Other scholarly publishers in not just medical but in other disciplines, as well, maintain similar press operations, with their own sets of rules, not only, I think, to disseminate results in journal papers and information in books for public benefit, but also to attract papers from prominent and up-and-coming authors, as well as to sell more subscriptions and more copies — to do well by doing good.

In addition to medicine, many scientific disciplines receive considerable press coverage. Biology, physics, and astronomy are disciplines that come readily to mind. During the recent **PROSE Awards** judging, two science journals

really stood out for me. The reason was their purposeful linking of scholarly articles with public issues and the attempt to secure press coverage.

The first one I want to discuss is a subscription-based chemical sciences journal, *Chem*, published by **Cell Press**. The journal's primary aims, according to the publisher, are to showcase "chemistry as a force for good" by demonstrating "how fundamental studies in chemistry and its sub-disciplines may help in finding potential solutions to the global challenges of tomorrow." (I'm reminded of the phrase, "Better Living Through Chemistry," the more common variant of a **DuPont** advertising slogan, "Better Things for Better Living...Through Chemistry," used from 1935 until 1982. To circumvent trademark infringement, "Better Living Through Chemistry" was used on non-DuPont products. You've probably heard the phrase used to promote prescription or recreational drugs, to praise chemicals and plastics, or for sarcasm. [Hat tip to Wikipedia])

On submission, *Chem* authors are asked to categorize their contributions, including research articles, reviews, commentaries, discussions, and opinions into at least one of the following ten Sustainable Development Goals identified and developed by the United Nations, which *Chem* selected for their relevance to chemistry: good health and well-being; affordable and clean energy; clean water and sanitation; climate action; zero hunger; sustainable cities and communities; responsible consumption and production; industry, innovation, and infrastructure; life on land; life below water. **Cell Press** says that *Chem* is the first journal to establish these wide-ranging links.

According to the supporting materials that **Cell Press** submitted to **PROSE**, they're taking on a "greater challenge." They assert that chemistry is never seen in "the same positive light" as other sci-

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Black Betty by **Walter Mosley**

If you don't know who **Easy Rawlins** is, I invite you to find out by reading about him in **Walter Mosley's** novels. He is like no private eye or anyone at all you have ever encountered. As he solves mysteries, **Rawlins** also provides a running social commentary that gives us all something to think about.

Death at the President's Lodgings by **Michael Innes**

Here is another professor of English literature using his professional background as a backdrop for murder and mayhem. The president in this novel oversees an imaginary English university situated midway

between Oxford and Cambridge. Oh to have such lodgings, sans the murders.

Earthly Delights, Unearthly Adornments: American Writers as Image Makers and *About Fiction* by **Wright Morris**

Most of **Wright Morris's** books are novels and short stories but he was also a gifted photographer and a literary critic with an insider's feeling for American literature. But **Morris** also read across borders as will be seen in his twenty recommended readings appended to *About Fiction*.

In 1989, I was privileged to meet, converse, and dine with **Mr. Morris**. I regret that I had not read these two books before meeting him because then I might have been able to hold up my end of our conversation and correspondence. The winner of two National Book Awards and two **Guggenheim** fellowships for photography, this native Nebraskan is probably the best unknown American writer ever. 🌻

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entific disciplines. When it comes to chemistry press coverage, the focus is on topics such as waste, environmental hazards, and weaponry. **Cell Press** drive home their point with this additional assertion: even several recent Nobel prizes in chemistry have been awarded to life science researchers.

Is this initiative working? According to **Cell Press**, since *Chem*'s launch in July 2016, around 30% of its research articles have been picked up in both specialized and general news outlets. I'll presume that the coverage has been positive.

The other journal that caught my attention during **PROSE Awards** is an Open Access interdisciplinary journal, *GeoHealth*, published by the **American Geophysical Union (AGU)** in collaboration with **Wiley**. Started in 2017 (so not yet eligible for **PROSE Awards**, but wait 'til next year) *Geohealth*, according to **AGU's** website, "highlights issues at the intersection of the Earth and environmental sciences and health sciences. It focuses on the following topics: environmental and occupational health; outdoor and indoor air quality and pollution; food safety and security; water quality, water waste treatment and water availability; climate change in relation to human, agricultural, and environmental health and diseases; soil health and services; ecosystem health and services; environmentally-related epidemiology; geoethics; national and international laws and policy, as well as remedia-

tion around GeoHealth issues; global Public Health; effects of climate change on exposure to pathogenic viruses, parasites and bacteria; human health risks of exposure to potentially harmful agents in the aquatic environment and through the food chain; remote sensing, satellite based observation of infectious disease and modeling; hydroepidemiology."

GeoHealth's content includes original peer-reviewed research papers, reviews, and commentaries discussing recent research or relevant policy, most of them invited by the editors. The current editor in chief is **Gabriel Filippelli**, Professor of Earth Sciences and Director of the Center for Urban Health at **Indiana University**. He has an ambitious vision for the journal. He wants it to "be an interactive, nimble, and perhaps even controversial vehicle for covering challenging issues." Additionally, he wants the journal to have an international focus and will be soliciting research from regions such as Africa and parts of southeast Asia.

The journal has an enviable pedigree. The founding editor is environmental microbiologist **Rita Colwell**, an internationally recognized expert on cholera and other infectious diseases. During her long and distinguished career, she has served as the 11th director of the **National Science Foundation** (from August 1998 to February 2004). In 2008, she founded **CosmosID**, a company that uses systematic microbial identification that provides proven high-resolution bioinformatics to facilitate personalized treatment in health care and monitoring of environmental bio threat agents. In addition to being chair of **CosmosID**, she holds Distinguished Uni-

versity Professorships at the **University of Maryland** and at **Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health**.

When you go on *GeoHealth's* website on **Wiley's** Online Library, you see a list of research articles. Listed below each article title, written in language approaching academic speak, is a list of three "key points," which are written in pure layman's terms. This presentation, it seems to me, will facilitate public awareness of the studies and distribution of their contents though the popular press. Sure enough, *GeoHealth* studies have been featured in such publications as *Business Insider* and even the *New York Post* ("Anthropogenic carbon dioxide emissions may increase the risk of global iron deficiency"); the *Washington Post* ("Next generation ice core technology reveals true minimum natural levels on lead (Pb) in the atmosphere: insights from the Black Death"); and *Scientific American* ("Impacts of oak pollen on allergic asthma in the United States and potential influence of future climate change").

I wonder whether *Chem* and *GeoHealth* are signals about the future direction of the journals business. Will we see more of these general-news-oriented journals instead of narrowly focused twigs and branches extending from the limbs and trunks of discipline- and sub-discipline-based trees appealing only to specialists? I look forward eagerly to the answer to this question. 🌱

And They Were There

Reports of Meetings — @Risk Forum, 13th APE, and the 37th Annual Charleston Conference

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@Risk North Open Forum — The State of Shared Print Preservation in Canada — November 10, 2017 — Ottawa, Canada

Reported by **Tony Horava** (Associate University Librarian, Collections, University of Ottawa, Canada)
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The **@Risk North Open Forum** (<http://www.carl-abrc.ca/news/save-the-date-at-risk-north-2017/>) was held at **Library and Archives Canada**, in Ottawa. It was conceived as a Canadian-focused successor to the **@Risk Forum** held in Chicago in spring 2016 that was held under the auspices of the **Center for Research Libraries**. The purpose of this forum was to give attendees an opportunity to discuss the state of shared print preservation programs in Canada, in a setting that was intended to push these conversations forward into action. Participants came from across the country, representing academic libraries, public libraries, government libraries, regional consortia, and national level organizations.

The day began with a keynote from **Constance Malpas**, Research Scientist at **OCLC**. In her talk, "Approaching the Long-Term Preservation of Print Documentation," she explained that this issue is still

relatively new — we need to think about it in terms of new tools and we need to think at scale.

Redistributing curatorial responsibility across multiple institutions, building out the long tail, and sharing investment in stewardship are important. She argued that Canada is in a good place to be thinking about shared stewardship. In terms of the distribution of holdings of print books, there are 46M volumes, of which 92% are concentrated in 12 mega regions. We need to think about movement of flows of books at a system level. There are 5.8M books held outside of these mega regions (40%). There are 89% that are held in 5 or fewer libraries, and 15% are held uniquely in Canada. Extra-regional print books are at greater risk, where there is less commitment to preservation. A supra-institutional understanding that transcends organizational and geographic boundaries is necessary. She cited **Rick Lugg** in arguing that institutional scale collection management is not sustainable. There is either too much duplication, or too little! Collaborative scale agreements are needed. Common cause is needed even among Ivy schools. Scarcity is common in research collections; scarcity decreases as the scale of collaboration grows. Consortia scale partnerships leverage trust networks, and direct borrowing consortial networks reduces friction in collection management.

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