

Librarians' messages to publishers: turning research into practice

In early 2017 a piece of research was carried out via questionnaire asking librarians to share the messages they wanted to convey to publishers. There was the option of anonymous submission to encourage candour. This research aimed to supplement messages offered to publishers and other organizations via library advisory board meetings, conference talks and other channels. The hope is to facilitate understanding and to progress the library/publisher partnership that is essential for a healthy future for research communication. A lightning talk at the 2017 UKSG Annual Conference summarized the key findings. This article now shares the findings in more depth and delves into the detail of the most recurrent themes. It also features some organizational case studies which illustrate how the findings are being used practically and/or how these organizations ensure they understand the needs of the libraries they work with. These case studies may help other publishers with the implementation of listening programmes.

Introduction

The idea for carrying out some work on librarians' messages to publishers arose from a conversation between Claire Grace (Head of Content and Licensing, The Open University) and me at the UKSG Conference in 2016. We talked about opportunities for interaction and feedback between librarians and publishers such as library advisory boards, ad hoc workshops, official consultations about deals, and others, and their effectiveness. We felt that there is often the danger of inconsistency in interactions, which has the potential for unclear messages sent from libraries to publishers. We wanted to enable publishers to hear librarians' thoughts in a way that would have more impact.



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Methodology and response

A simple questionnaire was created and we were mindful to try not to lead respondents in any way. Apart from asking for some basic demographic information, respondents could add free text for up to three messages. The question asked was framed solely to provide guidance for participants: 'Thinking about your experience in your role for the last 6–12 months, what are the three key messages that you would like publishers to hear? You might like to think about areas that have warranted a lot of discussion, feedback that you would like to give, changes that have occurred within your organization or in the external environment challenges you've faced, or something entirely different.'

The questionnaire was distributed to our personal library networks, via listservs and social networks. Responses were received from 235 people, providing 667 messages to publishers. Over 80% of respondents were from the UK and Ireland and the majority from higher education (HE) institutions, with some responses from further education (FE), health-related and other organizations. Respondents were employed at both operational and strategic levels. We analysed the text and coded the messages with as few labels as possible. Name and organization name was optional, and approximately a third provided their contact details.

'We wanted to enable publishers to hear librarians' thoughts in a way that would have more impact'

It is of course impossible to convey every message in this article. However, the entirety of raw message data, anonymized and organized into themed worksheets, and the slides summarizing this project, are openly available.¹

Emerging themes

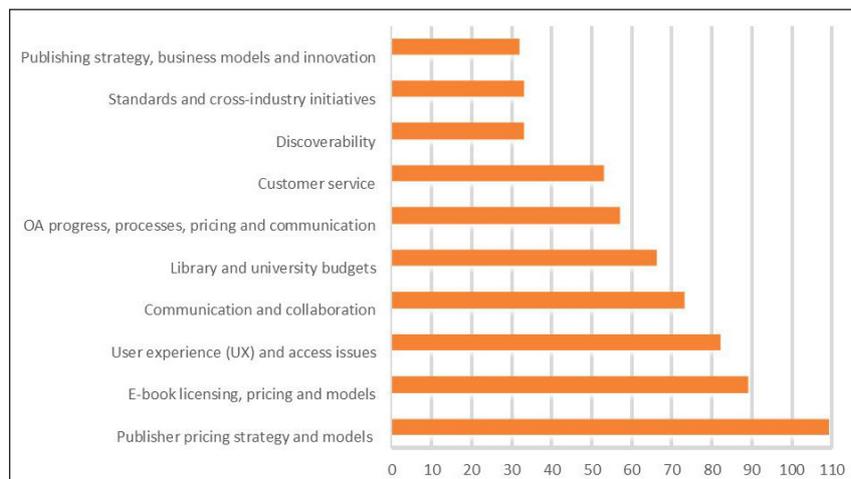


Figure 1. Top ten emerging themes in librarians' messages to publishers

Messages that don't fall into these top ten themes (Figure 1) fall into the following three categories:

- practical matters
- general licensing issues
- accessibility.

In this article I will share the most prominent sub-themes within each of the top ten categories and will share organizational case studies throughout.

Publisher pricing strategy and models

Librarians want consistent, transparent, simple and realistic pricing. For example, being locked into recurrent spend models is described as unsustainable. There are also complaints about price increases without good explanations or with rationale that does not appear to take the customer into account – for instance, publishers deciding to add content or bundling titles.

Usage-based increases year on year appear to penalize effective use and become unsustainable. Another example of unpopular pricing decisions is charges being made for previously available archives in a rolling archive model or otherwise – this can lead to a lack of trust between the library and the supplier – and, more importantly, students and academics.

High article processing charges (APCs) are described as 'greedy' and page and colour charges are described as unfair.

On the books side, librarians complain that textbooks are often published in new editions with minimal changes. There are also requests for affordable paperback book pricing rather than expensive hardback research monographs which will not get heavy use.

Some libraries talk about budgets being volatile and their preference to purchase things like video resources and e-book packages outright. Evidence-based pricing models prove popular.

'Librarians want consistent, transparent, simple and realistic pricing'

E-book licensing, pricing and models

Whilst librarians want more e-books faster (before or with print), there is confusion and mistrust about different licensing and access models, dissatisfaction with technologies, printing, downloading and digital rights management (DRM) – and, above all, pricing.

Most librarians ask for simultaneous multi-user licence models that enable broad access, while there is a need for greater standardization and consistency in platform functionality and compatibility across devices and in formats.

Libraries ask vendors to respond quickly, both with purchasing and support issues that arise. The e-books landscape is described as a nightmare for library users and librarians, with too many platforms, different purchasing models and DRM restrictions. They want books that do not require individual log-ins or lots of library administration. A lack of standardization across the sector makes e-books unusable.

'A lack of standardization across the sector makes e-books unusable'

Pricing based on the cost of print copies does not make sense to many, especially for e-textbooks, with one librarian explaining, 'The cost of e-textbooks is prohibitive to the flexible development and evolution of e-textbooks as a learning resource'.

There needs to be new, collaborative thinking about 'born digital' e-book opportunities that take full advantage of technologies and ways that today's students are starting to work, and no more building an e-book around print as an add-on.

Title-by-title purchasing is wanted, as is the availability of key e-textbooks with concurrent access. Publishers are asked to see the e-textbook as the equal or better of the print.

Case study 1: The MIT Press

'The insights gleaned from Bernie Folan's report on librarian messages to publishers couldn't have come at a better time for MIT Press. While we have a long history of working with academic libraries, particularly via our journals program, we have mostly relied on vendors, including aggregators, to reach the library market with our e-books. Due to our close partnership with MIT Libraries, and involvement in other library and publisher forums, such as the Charlotte Initiative, we realized that offering our own e-book platform to license titles directly to libraries would offer libraries another option that in many cases could meet both MIT Press and library needs better than they were currently being met.

'A cross-functional team working on the new platform eagerly pored over the librarian comments, especially as they related to e-books and pricing strategy.

'Some comments reinforced what we are already planning, which was encouraging: "Make e-books DRM free" and "Unlimited simultaneous user licenses are preferable".

'Other comments reminded us of the importance of considering declining library budgets in our pricing strategy – "Please be prepared to give librarians a detailed explanation for why your prices may have to rise above the general rate of inflation" – as well as the calls for transparency and consistency in pricing.

'The abundance of comments asking for perpetual access options, not just subscriptions, tilted us toward offering that option.

'We also heard loud and clear about items that we didn't realize were such a concern: one in particular was the availability of e-resource access to alumni. Another was the desire for e-books to be made available on the publisher's own platform before availability on aggregators' platforms.

'While designing the platform, we're taking to heart the advice to simply focus on the content: "My students have to deal with 17 different e-book platforms all with different interfaces and usability options". "Most e-book platforms give a terrible reader experience: slow to load page changes, viewing portion of page only, small concurrent user limits. Allow PDF downloads so people can read off-line on device of choice." "Make it easy for users; get them to the full-text quickly."

129 'In phase 2 of our platform launch we'll be considering offering e-textbooks to libraries, and the statements offered here will help us plan that offering: "E-textbook models premised on a price per student/per time period are not acceptable or workable models for Libraries. We cannot afford them, do not have the time and resources to negotiate and provide access on a title by title basis, and the model simply doesn't work or scale."

'We feel fortunate to get this valuable feedback before we launch a product that will ultimately be a significant investment in time and money, instead of waiting until after we launched something that wasn't designed for a key audience. In fact, one of the key takeaways was to simply *ask* librarians for their help, one thing that not enough publishers and vendors take to heart. As one librarian put it, "I have never yet known a publisher to ask what I actually want/if I want anything before making changes".'

'We feel fortunate to get this valuable feedback before we launch a product'

Jessica Lawrence-Hurt, Institutional Sales Manager, The MIT Press

Case study 2: Dawson Books

'Over the course of the last year Dawson Books embarked on a quest to understand the core e-book issues of our customer base and bridge the gap between publishers and librarians. Through a series of informal sessions with small groups in York, Cambridge, Harrogate and London we discussed issues such as DRM, Authentication and e-book purchase/licensing models, and we were surprised to find some fundamental misconceptions and misunderstandings. And it's not just Dawson Books who have been delving into the industry issues; much of the recent research from Bernie Folan Consulting has highlighted the same problems.

'Amongst other things, we found a great deal of confusion with regard to e-book purchase/licensing models, primarily being driven by a lack of consistency or standardization in naming conventions by publishers and aggregators, creating misunderstanding from the outset. Furthermore, multiple concurrent access models don't all have fixed criteria associated with them – some are unlimited, some are 350 access credits, some are more or some less. So, unless you are comparing the exact same model – it's difficult to work out which is the best value for the library!

'DRM was a hot topic for debate and uncovered more misunderstandings. It became clear that some librarians who were complaining about DRM were actually referring to restrictive purchase/licence models, and not DRM in the traditional sense of protecting content from piracy. A question many of us wanted answering was: Why are books DRM free when sold directly through the publisher to the library, but not when sold through an aggregator? Answer: It's just historical. Dawson Books Head of Digital and Marketing, Helen Stratford, adds, "Once purchased, the e-book is in the library domain – students and lecturers are going to use a publisher direct e-book in the same way as they are an e-book supplied by an aggregator. DRM ultimately helps to preserve copying and illegal sharing – which is important to authors and publishers. However, it's the same students and staff using the books who all sign up to use content responsibly in the library." So why is it different? Because it just is? And what happens if publishers start to impose DRM through their own platforms? Where do we go then?

'DRM was a hot topic for debate and uncovered more misunderstandings'

'These issues and questions raised are just the tip of the iceberg from the work undertaken by Dawson Books and are problems reiterated in the recent research undertaken by Bernie Folan Consulting where one librarian summed it up perfectly: "The e-books landscape is a nightmare for library users and librarians – too many platforms, different purchasing models and DRM restrictions". The next step has to be driving action for change.'

Jane Johnson, Executive Director – Library Services, Dawson Books

User experience (UX) and access issues

Libraries do not want to pay for publishers' platforms – just the content. Library users have little or no interest in publisher brand or technology; they just want easily authenticated access to the content – preferably via single log-in. Remote access should always be allowed as part of a subscription to support current academic research habits and technologies.

Librarians want publishers to understand that their students and academics require fast responses to access issues. Customers expect content to be stable and available, and need publishers to resolve their queries quickly, with effective systems for communication.

When publishers do make changes to their platforms, libraries need them to communicate effectively and with a far greater lead-time than many publishers realize and to allow customers to test thoroughly before rolling out.

Article and book publication data should be visible and consistently provided across publisher platforms and preferably on every page. In addition, make it easy for users and the library staff to see what they have access to – not resources that they don't subscribe to.

Finally, alumni access is called for repeatedly.

'Library users ... just want easily authenticated access to the content'

Case study 3: Emerald Publishing

'A number of Emerald colleagues attended UKSG earlier this year and found the presentation really interesting and useful. The presentation and accompanying data were circulated on our internal communications forum and flagged for publishing, sales, product development and marketing to review.

'Emerald has a dedicated user-led product development team who found this feedback valuable, for many reasons including validation of design simplicity, focus on access and the requirements needed for improved metadata supply. We were interested and pleased to see UX and access rising to the most popular themes and in particular, cross-platform agnostic search and access which confirmed our own user research.

'Having looked at the research and the recurrent themes, Emerald have concluded that "ease of access" is a key priority for us. We should choose an authentication model which is easy to use rather than one which is cheaper or looks better. There is a lot in this feedback which relates to the variety and usability of the platform landscape; our motto looks like being a version of the comment "*if you need to train to use it you need to do more development*". We will be developing our platform with this mindset in place. And perhaps most importantly "*get the basics right before innovating more*" – we will innovate in delivery solutions which make sure the basics work. These findings are helping us to think about our users much more – the surprise for us might be that the innovation we deliver will largely be "behind the scenes" rather than user-facing.

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'Our message for librarians for the future is this: Emerald is listening to them and trying to adapt solutions to make them ready for the future.'

Sara Price, Marketing Manager, Emerald Publishing

Communication and collaboration

Time is a valuable resource and librarians ask that publishers use theirs wisely. Librarians want publishers to have an established explicit agenda for visits and to ask for agenda topics from the library. Additionally, it is best for publishers to get in touch with one person in the library rather than e-mail lots of possible contacts.

Librarians want publishers to liaise with them rather than with academic staff in departments. There are well-established communication channels and publishers approaching academic staff undermines this and causes confusion.

Make sure information is easy to find and timely – whether about what can be deposited in institutional repositories, embargo periods, publication data, article metrics or notifications of transfers of titles.

There are many calls for greater collaboration and understanding and to recognize that libraries have a legitimate role in scholarly communication – ‘better science should be our communal goal’. Librarians ask publishers to understand how researchers and all customers work – contacts will not just be in the library in the future and every institution will be different.

Librarians would like to work with publishers on a range of challenges from creating realistic, sustainable business models to help the HE sector meet proposed open access (OA) monograph obligations to better system integration of publication processes into systems such as the Jisc Publications Router and CRISs.

Case study 4: Wiley

‘The findings of the research were interesting to us as they reinforced and validated the approach we have been taking to working with librarians. We really have heard the message about recognizing that all libraries are different, and listening rather than just talking is crucial. We have developed a listening programme where we are monitoring how we are doing with regards to our customer service in its broadest sense on an ongoing basis, so we can learn from our mistakes and understand where we can make a difference. Most of the departments in our company are set up with customers in mind, customer needs are at the centre of our activities from product development, communication and marketing to sales and customer service. There is a keen focus on the partners we work with.

‘An example of where we are engaging with our library customers in a consistent and ongoing way is our Library Advisory Board. We take the role of our Library Advisory Board very seriously; they give us an honest, no-holds-barred opinion on everything we ask. We never talk about products in a ‘sales’ context, but we do ask for advice and input on models, products, policies and developments and the confidential dialogue we have greatly influences how we develop our products and models and how we work with librarians.

‘Along with this, we have many touch points with customers to help us improve our understanding of library customer needs and opinions; Library Advisory Board, Voice of Customer feedback programmes, Account Manager feedback, customer services and conference attendance, along with reading listservs and industry newsletters. This gives us a myriad of ways of keeping up to date. The pros of this – we get individual and industry perspectives, the cons – that is a lot of information to keep abreast of and synthesize into something that is useful and can help positively impact the way we interact, communicate and do business.

132 'I would say that our top message is that we are listening and we are adapting, research like this helps us to refocus and align what we are doing to what our library customers are thinking and saying. Every library is different and those needs are also different. We might not get it right all the time, but we endeavour to. As a society publisher, we are used to working in partnership with unique organizations, so we understand that treating every partner whether that is a library or society in exactly the same way doesn't reflect our understanding of our partners' needs.'

Kate Smith, Marketing Director Library Services, Wiley

'Every library is different and those needs are also different'

Library and university budgets

Librarians provide strong messages and use strong language about their budgets. Library budgets are not like they used to be – even where universities are growing, libraries are not. Libraries are expected to do more with less and in many cases cuts are being made year on year. Many feel that libraries have not seen the worst of this yet.

Above-inflation price rises were mentioned numerous times as were publisher profit margins. Creativity in minimizing the impact of exchange rate fluctuations is requested.

There are many requests for more flexibility, particularly concerning non-higher education institutions (HEIs). FE and non-academic institutions want differential pricing.

Reminders are given that although information resources remain important, there are many other things universities need to invest in as well and a prestigious brand does not equal a growing library budget.

Publishers are asked to understand that libraries have not been given the budget to replace publishers' former revenues from book sales direct to students.

OA progress, processes, pricing and communication

There are many rallying cries for publishers to be more embracing of OA and to make policies clearer, easy to find and to fit within the REF requirements (including for monographs in future).

Communication with the correct person about APCs and licence requirements is asked for. HEI administrators (not necessarily librarians) manage block grants and other funds, offset arrangements and reporting. They need to be communicated with directly, not via the author.

However, to help take the pain out of OA, publishers are asked to be clear in acceptance letters, and to let authors know everything they need for compliance: official date of acceptance, the version allowed in their institutional repository, any embargoes, etc. One librarian proposed that the manuscript submission system could return the appropriate version of the article to the author for use in their institutional repository.

More consistency and alignment in policies across publishers is welcomed. Often, APCs and subscriptions are paid from different budgets, managed by different people and in some cases, in different departments. And different publishers have different policies concerning offsetting, price reductions and more.

Double dipping was mentioned many times, with calls for fair pricing and a clear policy between subscribed and OA hybrid journals. Librarians would also welcome more approaches for subscription price reduction rather than offsetting of APCs. There were some suggestions that publishers are being deliberately opaque regarding what is available free, and are in fact receiving revenue for OA content from licensing it to third-party aggregators.

'More consistency and alignment in policies across publishers is welcomed'

133 One librarian summed it up with, 'Be open and interoperable: whether that's data, standards, practices, attitude, culture'.

Case study 5: Hindawi

'As a publisher attending Bernie and Claire's session at UKSG, I found it extremely useful. I immediately circulated the presentation to my colleagues, and sat down with a few specific people to pull out the key findings from our perspective.

'Hindawi is an exclusively gold open access publisher, so while many of the comments targeted at legacy publishers (regarding subscriptions, double dipping, offsetting and hybrid, etc.) don't apply to us, we were still able to draw out many very useful messages.

'A good deal of the sentiments were already in tune with our approach. We pride ourselves on embracing technical innovation, so comments such as "I would like to see more innovation and risk taking from publishers as we transition to a digital world" struck a chord with us. Hindawi was one of the first publishers to mandate ORCID identifiers for corresponding authors, and we're working closely with other services – including Crossref and JATS4R – to make sure we remain at the bleeding edge. We only publish using CC-BY, since this is the licence most commonly requested by funders.

'We recognize that OA can pose new challenges for librarians and information professionals. Our key response has been to further develop our memberships service to help reduce some of these burdens – again through technical development. Any institution can easily retrieve published papers from affiliated authors by visiting the relevant web page² and appending their institutional URL. Institutions that become members³ have any published papers automatically sent to their institutional repository. Paying APCs is also raised as an issue – so our memberships offer different options, depending on whether the institution chooses to centrally fund APCs, and we also combine APC discounts with waivers to provide greater flexibility.

'We've worked with Jisc to further reduce the cost of a membership for UK institutions, but struggle to get the same amount of attention paid to the publishing juggernauts. Our challenge is therefore to speak to more librarians directly, and this is something I'm personally going to be doing a lot more of over the next six months or so. A barrier to this is the complexity of the decision-making process at different institutions. Some have dedicated OA offices, while others refer us to different individual librarians. I'm also keen to learn more about what help librarians need from publishers. Is us offering materials on peer review, guides for ECRs etc. useful, or do you do it all yourselves?

'So, our top message to librarians would probably be: stop waiting for legacy publishers to change their ways. We're doing a lot of the things you say you want from the publishing industry already. We're trying our best to make your lives easy. One piece of feedback stated: "Embrace Open Access – change your business models". Well, we're all in on OA already. Let's work together.'

Paul Tavner, Education and Outreach Manager, Hindawi

Customer service

Libraries call for faster responses – to permissions requests or product or technical queries (from knowledgeable teams). Also for timely renewal quotes and reminders with no loss of access.

'Be open and interoperable: whether that's data, standards, practices, attitude, culture'

'Let's work together'

134 Publishers should push out information about platform changes, title changes, downtime, new additions and anything needed to serve patrons. Librarians don't have time to proactively source this information. They also want to be kept fully informed and supported when their Account Manager changes.

Online guidance and training materials are valued and preferred over in-person demos from training teams.

There were a number of requests (listed below) on elementary issues.

- Send journal registration codes via e-mail, not on the print journal mailing label.
- Make it easy to find an e-mail address for customer support rather than via an online form that often won't allow attachments.
- Invoice details should be large, clear and easily visible.
- Keep up-to-date title lists on websites – including URLs, title changes, accurate dates.
- Always provide usage stats, however small an organization you are, to justify the reason to subscribe to a product.

Publishing strategy, business models and innovation

Librarians urge publishers not to fear changes in scholarly communication as they are an opportunity for innovation and partnership.

Of the many suggestions made in this area, the following list covers the most frequent:

- peer review needs to include data and code review if applicable
- more background reading books for A level and vocational students so they are not just relying on the textbook
- diversity in characters, cover design and authors
- larger commissions for illustrators and authors
- many universities are teaching-led and although research is important, the first commitment is to fee-paying students who need content created specifically for them
- librarians need publishers to understand that the library and its services are being pulled into all areas of the changing university environment. Publishers should provide content for these services (academic skills, student support and researcher services, for instance)
- more innovation and risk-taking from publishers as we transition to a digital world. Many publishers are seen to be failing to take advantage of the opportunities offered by emerging models of content creation, delivery and consumption
- stop using the journal impact factor.

'Librarians urge publishers not to fear changes ... they are an opportunity for innovation and partnership'

Discoverability

Publishers are asked to share metadata as widely as possible and in a timely manner to ensure discoverability, and to work with all discovery providers. It is suggested that publishers work more closely together for standardization, as discovery benefits us all.

Metadata and MARC records are causing problems due to the inconsistent quality and updating of the data in the multitude of knowledge bases – this causes huge problems for users and was brought up repeatedly.

135 Publishers should provide stable links at the article level and retain links to journal content under previous titles and/or previous ISSNs.

Resources should be accessible either via Shibboleth or EZProxy. There are times when IP is not appropriate (particularly for off-campus users).

Publishers are asked to share the data they are capturing on users. This could enable a collective understanding of how, who, how often, when, how long, what, what format and if possible with what outcomes the end user engages with material. This in turn will enable libraries to support end users in their learning.

'There are calls for cross-industry standardization'

Standards and cross-industry initiatives

Many standards and initiatives were suggested to publishers as the web of connections in scholarly publishing between funders, institutions, authors, librarians and publishers gets more complicated than it used to be. There are calls for cross-industry standardization in terminology on identity management, access and authentication.

Some suggestions:

- endorse and register as a KBART Phase II-compliant publisher
- be familiar with NISO's PIE-J and consider PIE-J guidelines in the design and functionality of journal websites
- conform to library standards such as COUNTER, SUSHI, KBART, ONYX-PL
- participate in JUSP to help libraries manage data to support subscription decisions
- provide consistent usage stats and be COUNTER compliant. More openness is needed around the issue of inflated usage figures due to default search across all databases (for aggregators such as ProQuest, EBSCO, Ovid, etc.)
- register with Crossref
- use CCC or CLA second permission sites
- sign up to common practices on things like including ORCID's and acceptance dates in metadata
- adopt consistent learning analytic standards for e-textbook and adaptive learning products to enable meaningful comparisons of student engagement and progression
- standardize authentication/log-in terminology (for Shibboleth/Athens)
- adopt a consistent approach to administration accounts
- continue to work constructively with consortia and agencies such as Jisc Collections who add value to the library sector, making cost-effective use of local staff time and budgets for resources
- systems should be kept up to date with the latest standards (e.g. EPUB 3).

Case study 6: Equinox Publishing Ltd

'Equinox is a small publisher with fairly limited resources to devote to market research so when I learned about this project and saw the range of topics covered, I immediately started taking notes and asked my colleagues to do the same. We want to use it to produce a check-list of needed improvements to our new e-book platform and our electronic journals.'

- 136 'We had already started on improving our communications with various knowledge base providers and, in fact, hired a librarian a year ago to do this and related metadata management and e-book customer service activities. Our next priority is to upgrade to COUNTER 5 and to expand our authentication options. I was not aware of JUSP or SERU and will look into those; likewise, we will try to be KBART compliant. We don't yet participate in Jisc either.
- 'When it comes to ordering options, I am confident we are sufficiently flexible. We do sell e-book versions of our textbooks (at higher prices to allow for unlimited simultaneous use), and our DRM is there but not too restrictive.
- 'One thing I don't want to do is to license our e-book content to aggregators. We don't make enough to survive on that way. We tried it and then decided to develop our own site. Time will tell...
- 'Our journals are all subscription based with only a few articles having secured funding so far for OA. We would obviously adjust our prices downwards if we saw funding heading in the direction of our humanities/social science subject areas but I doubt that will happen. We are holding our 2017 prices for online-only subscriptions for three years but raising print and online prices.
- 'Thank you for providing a very useful survey.'

Janet Joyce, Managing Director, Equinox Publishing Ltd

Case study 7: Chest (Part of Eduserv)

'Eduserv's Chest Team occupy a comparatively unique position between academic institutions and publishers. Working with the vast majority of HE and FE sites, representing their interests to the numerous publishers involved in Chest Agreements, it is very important that we keep up to date with the news from the academic community.

'Whilst many of the findings of this report echo individual comments we have previously heard, it is fantastic to have it formalized, to have something more concrete that we can take to the publishers we work with. Despite negotiations with these suppliers only taking place once every three or so years, we are in ongoing contact and keeping them abreast of the current academic climate is critical. It helps ensure that Chest Agreements continue to represent the best possible offer, both in terms of the overall package offered and having a pricing model that suits as much of the community as possible.

'it is fantastic ... to have something more concrete that we can take to the publishers we work with'

'Of course, we must not forget that publishers are either commercial organizations or society publishers who have the interests of members at the forefront. Whilst they are generally very respectful of academia, offering preferential prices and conditions, they must earn money both for their shareholders and to develop their services. They will improve their products, investing time and capital, but ensuring they know what works and what doesn't, that they don't over-complicate or lose sight of the basics, can only help to ensure that their models will fit the needs of the academic community moving forwards.'

Ben Offiler, Business Development Executive, Chest Agreements

Conclusion

There is a powerful cumulative effect in reading the many verbatim comments originating from individual librarians. Publishers and other organizations are urged to take some time to read through the messages pertinent to them. Just because it has been heard before does not mean the recurring comments provided should be discounted.

137 This is an opportunity for publishers to take time to have a conversation internally about the messages. Are there surprises? What improvements are possible to make? What are the barriers to change that would improve the work lives of librarians and access to research and pedagogy by library users? Smaller and newer publishers should find a way to communicate and listen whilst explaining their practices and differentiating themselves.

'This is an opportunity for publishers to take time to have a conversation internally'

Librarians may ask themselves collectively why their messages are not being heard. Are library staff confident that they can represent the breadth of these messages? With so many different roles in libraries, is the right person being sent to represent, for example at publisher advisory groups? Where are the blocks to understanding? What can be done differently to move forward? Where are the good examples and how can they be shared – where a message has been heard, what were the enablers? Smaller institutions need to find a way to communicate to explain their challenges.

I should be very interested to hear if and how this research has influenced your organization.

'Librarians may ask themselves collectively why their messages are not being heard'

Abbreviations and Acronyms

A list of the abbreviations and acronyms used in this and other *Insights* articles can be accessed here – click on the URL below and then select the 'Abbreviations and Acronyms' link at the top of the page it directs you to: <http://www.uksg.org/publications#aa>

Competing interests

The author has declared no competing interests.

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