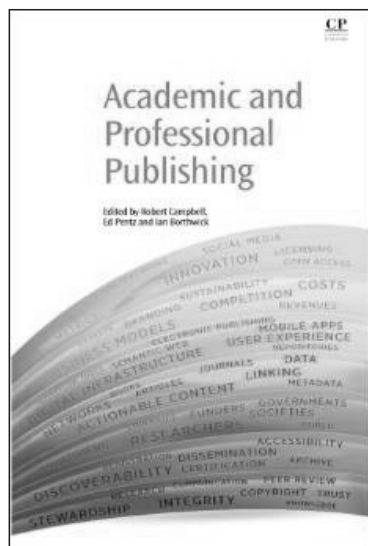


Book review

Academic and Professional Publishing

Edited by Robert Campbell, Ed Pentz and Ian Borthwick. Chandos Publishing, 2012. Paperback £58.52. Kindle edition £55.59. ISBN-13: 978-1843346692



This book builds on previous books edited by Robert Campbell on journal publishing, and as the complexity of publishing has increased, so has the number of pages and contributors to this current volume. This book now includes 20 chapters from 23 contributors.

The contributing authors come from academia, commercial publishers, and ancillary organisations

involved in scholarly communication. They bring a wealth of experience and well-respected viewpoints filling almost 500 pages. The three editors themselves are well-respected within the industry: Robert Campbell worked for Blackwell Science (now Wiley) for over 30 years and was instrumental in the development of world-class publishing services for learned associations and scholars. Ed Pentz is the Executive Director of CrossRef, a non-profit membership organisation that provides cross-publisher services with the objective of ensuring safe, global linking to quality-assured content. And Ian Borthwick comes from the Institution of Engineering and Technology, where he works on the growth of international standards.

The chapters cover the full gamut of publishing issues, starting with an overview of how publishing is changing. The chapters consider peer review, publishing strategies, how digital communication has changed the scholarly ecosystem, and how journal and book publishing models and finances have changed to meet the new requirements of academia, scholars and professionals. Editorial workflows are examined, along with publishing standards, particularly looking at citation and impact. Sales are considered, and the roles of intermediaries – in particular librarians – are discussed, especially in respect to managing digital content. Finally, both legal and ethical aspects of publishing are each given separate chapters. The book finishes with a consideration of the future of the journal, the external forces that are moulding what publishers do, and finally the importance of trust within this environment.

One key feature of the book is the descriptions of the growing number of cross-publisher initiatives that scholars may be completely unaware of. These include linking standards (eg the digital object identifier), ethical

agreements (the Committee on Publication Ethics), standards to ensure accessibility (eg DAISY for visually impaired readers) and identifying authors and institutions (ORCID and ISNI respectively). Many of these have been developed in response to the evolving digital and international environment, and show an industry that – usually – works in a collaborative (as well as competitive) manner. There is also an entire chapter devoted to relating content to the user – increasing discoverability and usefulness. This surely is something that users in the world of Google are totally unaware of – assuming that Google just takes care of this!

This book is certainly not a “how-to” book for the uninitiated, and assumes a level of understanding from the readers that would discourage those new to publishing. However it does provide an authoritative reference to the many issues that publishers – large and small – are encountering and having to manage. As in any multi-author book, the styles vary from chapter to chapter, making some easier to read than others. Some authors provide pragmatic information whilst others are more academic and discursive in their approach to the subject. In one chapter there is a checklist for meetings, whilst another has a text heading “The Tao of academic publishing” and discusses the importance of a “...strong positive feedback loop.”

There is a great deal of valuable information and insight provided in this book, and it would make a useful resource for publishers and librarians interested in the industry. It makes a strong argument for the value of publishers in a time when their role in scholarly communication is being questioned – but unfortunately those not already in agreement are unlikely to read such a book.

The book has been written from the perspective of the major publishing industry in the US and UK, and this is both a strength and a weakness. For those outside this community the complexity of initiatives and standards may make inclusion appear unobtainable, and there is a lack of perspectives from other regions of the world (although at almost 500 content pages perhaps there was no room for them!). However the book makes no apology for this complexity and argues that in a global, linked world, publishers must respond to the needs of scholars and meet their complex needs.

In conclusion, would I recommend this book? Yes, I definitely would, since it provides a wide range of opinions and information in an area where relatively little useful information is published.

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