

**Commonplace • Series 2.2 Community-led Editorial Management**

# **Exploring the Nuances**

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Every one of us, and every group with which we live and work, must become the model of the era which we desire to create.

– Ivan Illich, “A Call to Celebration”<sup>1</sup>



“Editorial management processes” as a term encompasses both the technical implementation of a publication’s workflow and the social/community practices around which that workflow has accreted. For example, when one interfaces with a software-based editorial management system one is also interfacing with the habits, roles, and values that underpinned the original development of that system, as well as the hacks, kludges and glitches that we encounter (or build!) during workflow.

In academia and scholarship, editorial management processes as we understand and practice them today have existed for hundreds of years. The quintessential example is the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*, established in 1665 by Henry Oldenburg. The *Philosophical Transactions* can be considered the first journal exclusively devoted to science and is therefore also the world’s longest-running scientific journal. It established early forms of editorial workflow still in use today. Oldenburg defined the purpose of the *Philosophical Transactions* as a way to establish provenance over an original idea or invention, to evaluate ideas with the intention of making those ideas better, and to disseminate that information to others.<sup>2</sup> All these tasks were performed by members of the Royal Society. Oldenburg organized this community of scientists to write, to review, and to discuss scientific concepts, which not only provided a platform through which their work could be professionalized, it also provided a forum for social interaction and networking.

The Royal Society was, and still is, a community of scientists and scholars who share ideas and discoveries. Today there are thousands of professional societies, as well as other institutions such as universities, publishing entities, philanthropic funders, and government agencies, that perform a similar function. These organizations often have overlapping interests, which means there are also networks of communities building shared editorial processes, using similar technology, and establishing common standards and protocols. In writing the call for contributions to this series, we were interested in exploring the nuances of such systems: an exploration that would prove particularly *apropos* given our own use of PubPub as a review, production and publication platform for the series.



When we first embarked on this project, thinking about what the [call](#) for papers would ask of our colleagues, there was some uncertainty if there would be enough diversity in editorial processes so as not to have too much

redundancy. After all, looking at the purpose of the *Philosophical Transactions* and recognizing that evaluating scholarship hasn't changed that much in the past few hundred years, it was possible that many of the submissions might end up presenting distinctions without differences. However, what we saw when we started receiving abstracts is that there are actually quite a lot of differences in how various communities approach editorial processes, there are many new and innovative approaches being explored, and technology is being utilized in creative ways. Several key themes are readily apparent in the final contributions:

*New workflows, new cultures.* Two essays foreground how communities shape the technology and the feature set in workflow systems. In “Designing for Emergent Workflow Cultures: eLife, PRC, and Kotahi,” Adam Hyde, Damian Pattinson, and Paul Shannon document “PRC” — publish, review, curate — as a workflow-centered model for preprint publication communities. Bill Kasdorf’s essay “Accessible Systems for Accessible Content” argues that not only must published end-products be accessible to people with perceptual, cognitive, or physical disabilities, but that the systems that produce such artifacts need to follow the same process. He advocates for a “born-accessible” workflow process in which accessibility is centered throughout the entire publication process from start to finish.

*Technological interventions into publishing processes.* In “Experimental Book Publishing: Reinventing Editorial Workflows and Engaging Communities,” Janneke Adema and Rebekka Kiesewetter discuss the ways in which open access and digital publishing are transforming not only the nature of “books,” but also the processes that create them. In a move away from print-centric publication, Adema and Kiesewetter describe a pilot project to reuse, remix and rewrite books from the Open Humanities Press catalog, and speculate on what opportunities such activities might open up for the future of experimental book publishing. In “Meeting community-led needs with advanced digital solutions,” Patrick Hargitt and Hong Zhou explore the implications of what they call the “ABCs” — AI, big data, and cloud computing — for changing the way we think about content discovery and knowledge production in publishing. Meanwhile, John Maxwell’s “Pop! A simplest-possible journal workflow” explores a lightweight technology stack for academic publishing, focussing on what they call “platform minimalism” as a purposeful contribution to humanities publication. He argues that such minimalist platforms decenter technology and foreground, instead, communities of care in scholarly communication.

*New processes for scholarly evaluation.* Two essays bring to the forefront the issues and opportunities inherent in redesigning peer review systems. Marjolaine Hamelin, Denis Bourguet, and Thomas Guillemaud’s essay, “Disconnecting the evaluation of scientific results from their diffusion,” discusses the role of the open science movement in scientific scholarly communication, suggesting that pairing preprint servers with open peer review enables a robust community focussed on transparent, timely, and ethical publishing of scientific results. Roopika Risam and Jennifer Guiliano’s “Disrupting Hierarchies of Evaluation: The Case of *Reviews in Digital Humanities*” presents a case study in journal publishing which pairs original works in non-traditional publishing genres with reviews by practitioners in that field. Risam argues for a “people-first peer review

system” that both addresses the scholarly community’s reliance on peer review as the primary mechanism for career advancement, and potentially disrupts that model of scholarly evaluation, with a particular focus on how such interventions transform traditional understandings of peer review, labor, credit, and access.

*Global platforms and collaborations.* Three essays explore how the increasing reach of publication beyond North American and Eurocentric boundaries might offer opportunities to rethink publication processes and roles. Omo Oaiya, Iryna Kuchma, and Adam Hyde’s “Identifying the needs of African Open Access publishing communities” describes the process of consultation and co-designing to better support open access publishing initiatives across Africa. They propose a set of principles for collaborative publishing infrastructures that foreground sustainability, local governance, and coalition-building. Jean Dawson and Andrew Smith’s essay, “Utilising WeChat to improve communication in China during the peer review and publication workflow,” explores problems unique to the Chinese academic publishing landscape, and describes a novel protocol utilizing WeChat as an alternative to email for primary communication between authors and editors. And Aimee DesRoches’ “Global Collaboration to Drive DEI in Scholarly Publishing via Standardized Reporting” tackles the lack of diversity, equity and inclusion standards in publishing, focussing on patterns of exclusion manifest throughout the traditional scholarly publication process. She explores the possible role of self-reported data gathering as first step intervention toward enabling transparency, accountability and fairness in the publishing landscape.

*Co-creation and writing communities.* Finally, two essays describe the role of time-limited community writing and publication events in fostering new understandings of how we view collaboration, co-creation, and co-credit. In “Essay Jams and Collaborative Writing as a Community Event” Joey Eschrich and Zoyander Street document the Pandemics and Games Essay Jam: a community writing event held in 2021 on the subject of COVID-19 and its impact on games and gaming communities and industries. The Essay Jam (based on the idea of a “Game Jam” in which players come together for a limited and intense session of gaming) is used as an opportunity to explore issues of performance, interaction and social collaboration in the writing process. Meanwhile, In “A Book Sprint as a concurrent editorial process,” Barbara Ruehling and Karina Piersig discuss the book sprint process, in which authors, editors and publishers work closely to produce a book in 5 days. Ruehling and Piersig argue that such a method foregrounds co-authorship, co-creation and collaboration in the publication process, complicating the usual understanding we have of authorship being solely the domain of the writer.

We very much enjoyed putting this series together and hope that you find these contributions from the community interesting and useful. We are encouraged to learn from what the contributors have shared, and to apply some of these techniques and strategies to our own editorial processes. There is a great commenting feature on the PubPub platform, and we would love to get feedback. Please tell us what you found inspiring. Let us know if you disagree with something. Share your own strategies for building community. Tell us about an innovative process, or about a tried-and-true method that shouldn’t be forgotten. PubPub is a platform

designed to bring the community together to read and discuss those concepts and philosophies presented by scholarly-minded authors.

— Helen & Tony



## Footnotes

1. From Ivan Illich, *Celebration of Awareness: A Call for Institutional Revolution*. Penguin Books, 1970.

p.17. ↵

2. <https://royalsociety.org/journals/publishing-activities/publishing350/history-philosophical-transactions/> ↵