

Against the Grain

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And They Were There

Reports of Meetings — 2019 ALPSP Conference

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ALPSP Conference — Beaumont Estate, Old Windsor, United Kingdom — September 11-13, 2019

Reported by **Anthony Watkinson** (Principal Consultant CIBER Research) <anthony.watkinson@btinternet.com>

The venue was not far from Windsor Castle and within taxi reach of London Heathrow Airport. Next year it moves to Manchester, the Hilton Hotel, which does also have an international airport with transatlantic flights.

The **Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers** is an international membership trade body that supports and represents not-for-profit organizations and institutions that publish scholarly and professional content. With nearly 300 members in 30 countries, membership also includes those that work with these publishers, for example commercial publishers that work as partners but only as associates. It was founded in the UK in 1972 and its representative function is well established there and in Europe, but in the USA it is probably much less well known that the **SSP** which has a different membership structure and no representative claims. Interestingly however **ALPSP** works closely with the university press community over the **Redux** conferences now established as a series (<https://events.bizzabo.com/redux2020/home>). Among those present in 2019 were at least four U.S. university press directors and **Peter Berkery**, Executive Director **AUP**, as was **Melanie Dolochek**, Executive Director of **SSP**, and **Michael Mabe**, the retiring CEO of **STM**. Though the conference remit might be expected to be somewhat narrow there is a wide interest in the concerns of readers of this journal.

The annual conference appears to be thriving under its experienced staff and its new CEO **Wayne Sime**. **Wayne** is a highly experienced health librarian with a recent background as the Director of Library Services of the **Royal Society of Medicine**. There were nearly 400 present including 272 paying delegates compared with 235 in 2018. The app including the programme can be reached from <https://www.alp.org/Industry-Events/ALPSP-Conference-Awards-2019/60434>. There was and is an active Twitter exchange under an **ALPSP** hashtag and there is another report on the **ALPSP** blog. A dedicated site is being built to host all of the slides, audio recordings and video footage. The content will include full transcripts that are searchable and closed captioned, as well as being tagged with relevant metadata to make finding and sharing so much easier.

This report concentrates on the plenary sessions.

The first keynote was billed as concerned with *The Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA): Opening up the Measure of Success* but biologist **Stephen Curry** ranged widely over a collection of open access sites — not just **DORA** (www.sfdora.org) which is adopted fully at his own home base **Imperial College London** but the wider perspective of open science. The big concern is that “Metrics have taken over” and research results are distorted in consequence and so are university rankings (<https://events.bizzabo.com/redux2020/home>).

The need is for a reform of assessment. **DORA** and Plan S (see below) press for evaluation of actual content, not judgement of publications by use of proxies. He recognised that lip service could get in the way of actual adoption but some funders (for example Wellcome) are monitoring compliance from their reviewers. The bottom line is that open science can be better science

Not surprisingly, Plan S was a prime topic. Some additional information will be added to the record of presentations in order to make some of the intricacies clearer.

Learned societies, the representatives of the research communities, were not consulted in advance about Plan S. Soon after the announcement **ALPSP** provided a formal briefing which did not chide but did seek “engagement”: <https://www.alp.org/news/20190921plansbriefing>.

Three of the plenaries were concerned with the topic, reflecting some level of success. The first of these was on *New Horizons in Open Research: Open transitions within Plan S*. The moderator was **Alicia Wise**, now a director of the consultancy **Information Power** and previously director of Universal Access for **Elsevier**. She and her **Information Power** colleague **Lorraine Estelle** introduced the **SPA-OPS** project (Society Publishers Accelerating Open access and Plan S) which they led. It was commissioned by **Wellcome, UK Research and Innovation**, and **ALPSP**. “This project set out to identify routes (27 business models and strategies) through which learned society publishers could successfully transition to open access (OA) and align with Plan S.”

The collection included a toolkit enabling transformation, bringing together publishers and library consortia who were surveyed. “Such transformative agreements emerged as the most promising because they offer a predictable, steady funding stream.” The conference presentation among the items on this site (https://wellcome.figshare.com/collections/Society_Publishers_Accelerating_Open_access_and_Plan_S_SPA-OPS_project/4561397). There is an article published at <https://insights.uksg.org/articles/10.1629/uksg.477/>. **Estelle** emphasised the focus on transformative models: the audience were told it was important to move quickly — pilots had to start by the end of this year in order to meet the implementation deadline. There were other speakers including **Rachel Bruce** of **United Kingdom Research and Information (UKRI)**, but also of more immediate interest two publishers with different perspectives. Firstly **Gaynor Redvers-Mutton** of the **Microbiology Society** representing a relatively small journal publisher previously engaged in mainly green open access without embargoes but now offering as well a publish and read approach stretched for consortia both frictionless for authors and of maximum value for institutions, and secondly **Shelley Allen** of **Emerald Open Research** on Supporting the transition to Open within Social Science via an open platform on collaboration with **F1000**.

The **Microbiology Society** is a member of the **Society Publishers Coalition** (<https://www.socpc.org/>) whose 40 plus (mostly UK) members “share the common ambition to see an orderly and sustainable transition to open scholarship and to improve the efficiency of the scholarly communication ecosystem for the benefit of researchers and society at large in a fair and sustainable way.” It was not clear how much they

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buy into SPA-OPS but some indication can be seen from the record of the fourth plenary (see below) and other additional information from a SocPC member:

The range of opinions about and approaches to Plan S among UK society publishers is wide. Those in the Society Publishers' Coalition (socpc.org) share a goal to see an orderly, sustainable transition to OA, where sustainability is both financial and, crucially, the ability of all authors to publish without worrying about fees. Having said that, even within Soc PC there is a general consensus that Plan S does not take the very real and valid concerns of the AHSS community into account (as one example).

Many of the societies who are independent publishers, like the Biochemical Society and the Microbiology Society, are making efforts to find ways to transition journals from subscription to OA without putting up paywalls in place of existing paywalls. Previously, these deals were restricted to the bigger society players such as IOP Publishing or the RSC.

The fourth plenary was on **Transforming Publishing: Sharing Perspectives on the Latest Models to Expand Open Access** moderated by **Dan Pollock** of **Delta Think**. **Steven Inchcoombe**, Chief Publishing of **Springer Nature** was candid. Open Access has been the slowest revolution in history which has suited publishers. Pressure has come from open science. Bigger publishers can more easily handle transformation. **Malavika Legge** from the point of view of a smaller learned society publisher (and of the society publishers coalition — see above for link) urged her colleagues not to be distracted by the deadline but start from what is possible and listen to researchers. **Niamh O'Connor**, now recently Journals Publishing Director at **PLOS**, does not think we have it all sorted. She is herself convinced by open science and starts from there. **Ralf Schimmer** as Director of Scientific Information Provision at the **Max Planck Digital Library** represented a flipped institution. For his position see <https://oa2020.org/wp-content/uploads/pdfs/B14-14-Ralf-Schimmer.pdf>. He wondered when we shall have our **Thunberg** moment. He thinks it is close. Others were less optimistic. A positive was the proposed rewiring of funding implicit in the Coalition S thinking. As far as open access being the rule/default, publishers present agreed that they were looking to when rather than if.

The closing keynote came directly from within Coalition S: **Plan S – The Road Ahead**. **Johan Rooryck**, a humanities professor from **Leiden**, represents cOAlition S in meetings with external stakeholders including funders, researchers, librarians, and publishers. He has a track record in OA advocacy and practice: see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossa_\(journal\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossa_(journal)). He presents Plan S, listens to concerns, and develops plans to help participants adapt to a changing publishing landscape. He also advises cOAlition S on the ways to implement the transition to full and immediate Open Access as smoothly as possible. He was good at this. Books are in sight because Plan S is concerned with all scholarly outputs which have to be open, but no mandate as yet. Acceleration is the aim. The principles are in place. He confirmed in answer to a question that there can be no recognition of hybrid models unless as a confirmed step to transition to full open access. Previously, the experience of open access advocates has been that hybrid journals (where researchers can pay to make their article in a subscription journal open access) has not lead to a flip to a wholly open access model: see <http://www.researchinfonet.org/finch/> for the evidence. More detailed information is to come but there was a sensation among the audience that someone was listening: **Rooryck** is a researcher and an optimist. He thinks the rest of the world will follow Europe.

The other two plenaries were in the first place: **Breaking the Glass Ceiling** convened by **Rebecca Asher**, Deputy Director of **Sense about Science** (<https://senseaboutscience.org/>). One speaker found it helpful to concentrate on discrimination against women rather than such discrimination being part of a wider diversity panel. There were two publisher speakers: **Amy Brand**, Director of **MIT Press**. **Sarah Greaves**, Chief Publishing Officer of **Hindawi** and **Alison Lang**, Medical Researcher and Publishing Director of **BMJ** with a chemist **Lesley Yellowlees**, who holds a personal chair at the **University of Edinburgh**. **Professor**

Yellowlees agrees that there have been positive changes in the Academy but they have been glacially slow compared with publishing which she rather envied. The publishers tended to agree but insisted that ongoing vigilance is important

Secondly: **The Changing Copyright Landscape across the World and the Impact of Brexit**. Presumably the nature of Brexit could reasonably be expected to have been settled by the time the presentation was given but it had not been. The speaker was **Elizabeth Ribbans** of the **British Copyright Council**. Whatever the relationship between the EU and the UK turns out to be, the Berne convention will have been signed by all players

Other presentations included an unusual take on data management moderated by **Dan Pollock** of **Delta Think** — **Does Data Mean Dollars?** Among the insights were the following:

Data is growing beyond our capacity to manage it. If you could store data at the atomic level, at current rates of data growth, in 180 years we will have used every atom on the planet.

Much data is gathered now in raw form, in case it is useful in future. So those who may in future benefit from data gather today are not paying for it. We need to view data as we would an insurance valuation and consider it a tangible balance sheet asset.

Another session also produced new insights in a familiar context. This one was a panel on **Working with Early Career Researchers** of serious interest to librarians and to publishers. The chair was **Heather Staines**, now Head of Partnerships at the **MIT Knowledge Futures Group**. Whether in the sciences or in the humanities, early career researchers have a lot on their plates. In addition to their day jobs in labs, archives, or lecture halls, we expect them to publish, participate in service activities such as peer review and begin to train even earlier career researchers and students. How can we best help them navigate this challenging time? How can we engage them in service activities, conference participation, publications, and more? What can we learn from them in their support for sharing research early (preprints or journals clubs), transparency around publishing and beyond?

There were two sessions concerned with books and what can be done with them. There was a session on open books with a strong emphasis on open source chaired by **Simon Ross** CEO of the **Manchester University Press** with speakers comprising **Staines**, again talking this time about **Pubpub** (<https://www.pubpub.org/>), **Anke Beck** CEO of **InTech**, **Alison McGonagle-O'Connell**, Editoria Community Manager, **Coko Foundation** describing the tool they built with the **California University Press**, and **Charles Watkinson**, Director of **Michigan University Press**, describing several initiatives aimed at measuring Open Access eBook usage. **Watkinson** also spoke at the second session on the **Future of the Book**, chaired by **Christine Tulley** of **Findlay University**, this time on enhanced eBooks and interactive scholarly works. In this session there were also presentations from **Ros Pyne** of **Springer Nature** on the first book created using machine learning — see <https://www.theverge.com/2019/4/10/18304558/ai-writing-academic-research-book-springer-nature-artificial-intelligence> and **John Sherer** Spangler Family Director of **University of North Carolina Press** under the provocative title: **From Suspicion to Sustainability: How Open Access can Save the Humanities Monograph**.

There were two awards given at the conference dinner which were as follows:

ALPSP Award for Contribution to Scholarly Publishing — ALPSP Council was delighted to present this year's award to Ann Michael. Ann founded Delta Think the strategic consultancy, recently transitioned to Chair of the Delta Think Board, and now serves as Chief Digital Officer for PLOS.

ALPSP Awards for Innovation in Publishing — The winner of the 2019 ALPSP Awards for Innovation in Publishing is scite. scite.ai is a platform to evaluate the reliability of scientific claims. Its deep learning models, combined with a network of experts, automatically extract and classify references to a scientific claim (citations) as supporting, contradicting, or mentioning. This information helps researchers, organizations, and the public to assess the veracity of published research and, consequently, researchers and institutions at unprecedented speed and scale. 🐼