Student Interview

Carly Fisher

Biography

Carly Fisher (she/her) earned her Bachelor of Arts in English Literature and Editing and Publishing Undergraduate Certificate from the University of Central Florida. During her time at the university, Carly was awarded the UCF Excellence in Publishing Award for her work as editor in chief and sole staff member for Issue 23 of Imprint magazine. She was also awarded the Department of English Outstanding Editorial Work Award for her role as production editor and assistant prose editor on Issue 34 of the literary magazine Cypress Dome. Currently, she is in her second year of GW's MPS in Publishing program. She is a member of the Strategy and Sustainability Committee for the *GW Journal of Ethics in Publishing*. Carly also volunteers as an assistant prose editor for the online creative writing magazine Wishbone Words, which publishes work by chronically ill and disabled creatives.

What does "ethics in publishing" mean to you?

I am a believer in the old cliché, "The pen is mightier than the sword." Whether fiction or nonfiction, research or review, published writing inspires the systems that create our society and inform our ethical decisions. We look to others to understand ourselves

and our place in the world, and publishers decide whose points of view are observed, celebrated, and hidden. As our social consciousness is growing to understand the way publishing has been used to promote white, Christian, Eurocentric systems of wealth and disparage anyone outside of that mold, implementing ethics in publishing ensures the industry is at the forefront of creating a more equitable, empathetic, and informed society–a society that can begin to tear down the systems of inequity that are plaguing and dividing developed western countries.

Ethics in publishing is a promise to right the wrongs of the bygone people in power. It is a promise to influence a better, more diverse, curious, and sustainable industry that can compete with an explosion of misinformation and the influx of ill-conceived and unregulated media in an attention-based economy. In scholarly publishing, ethics can look like diversifying researchers and research subjects, strengthening the peer review process, reducing carbon emissions, and developing strategies to identify and mitigate bias. In trade, it can involve fighting book bans, creating more diverse office environments, and using sensitivity readers as common practice. In any sector of the industry, there are hundreds of ways ethics in publishing can be implemented to ensure that the written word is being used in its most powerful way: toward a better tomorrow.

What recent ethical topics in publishing are you interested in and why?

I am dedicated to and interested in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in the industry and representation in publishing products. As a member of the disabled community, these topics are not only ethical questions but crucial to my and many other communities' existence in the world. Currently, I am researching how remote work can help scholarly publishing realize its goals of diversifying the industry by removing barriers intrinsic to an in-person office.

I am also focused on the problems of performative DEI initiatives. According to the C4DISC Workplace Equity in Scholarly Communications 2023 Executive Summary, 89% of respondents were "aware of their employer's stated values about diversity" compared to 60% in 2018. Yet the identities of those working in scholarly publishing have only increased by single-digit percentages. Black-identifying respondents went from 3% to 4% in four years. Lee & Low noted in their 2023 Diversity Baseline Survey 3.0 that there was "an actual decrease (–1.4%) in the people who self-identify as Hispanic/Latino/Mexican at 4.6%. This [is a] decrease from both 2015 (6%) and 2019

(6%) . . ." These numbers are clear evidence that the publishing industry isn't fulfilling its commitments to underrepresented groups. I am passionate about finding out what barriers are preventing the industry from reaching a more equitable standing.

How has ethics in publishing influenced your job/career/profession? How has it influenced your education/learning?

I spent my childhood wrapped in the pages of books. I read in the car, I read before bed, and I read in class even when I probably shouldn't have. Then, in high school and during my undergrad, I started reading journals and scholarly work; I gained a new understanding of how scholarly theories and research influence our current systems, how we view history, and how I understood myself. When it was time to set a career path, I knew I wanted to be part of the industry that opened my world, fictitiously and educationally, to so many experiences, values, and lives different from my own. Books made me aware of ethics and representation in the first place, and I figured if any industry had values that matched my own, it would be publishing.

This last year in the GW MPS in Publishing program has opened my eyes to all the ways publishing has improved in its ethical responsibilities and all the places it has room to grow. I still see the industry in a positive light, but that light is no longer rose-tinted. The amount of ethical growth needed in the industry drew me to this journal, where I hope to help bring ethical issues in publishing into focus and make the industry that made me ethical and empathetic more ethical itself.

How do you think the Strategy & Sustainability Committee contributes to the larger conversation around ethics in academic publishing?

Ethics in publishing should reach every branch of the publishing process, and strategy and sustainability (S&S) is no different. Strategy and sustainability committees create pathways and goals to keep journals and publishers relevant, reputable, expanding, and thinking toward the future. With these goals in mind, S&S committees should be on the cutting edge of ethical discussions in publishing because ethical practices are, in themselves, sustainable strategies. Currently, S&S committees should be exploring the ethics of open access for accessibility, better ways to detect plagiarism and AI use, strategies to improve the peer review pool to grow academic integrity, and finding more

diverse researchers and topics to encourage growth to wider audiences. All of these topics involve ethical questions that, if left unanswered, will eventually extinguish any scholarly endeavor.

In your strategic planning, how do you consider the journal's growth without compromising its ethical values?

For our journal, I don't see growth and ethics as competing terms. The industry and the audience we're serving are embracing ethical conversations as critical dialogue for the future of publishing because scholarly readers are demanding it. As a new journal, our growth is dependent on expanding our readership; ethically sourcing, reviewing, and distributing quality content is the best strategy for this growth. As a student-run diamond open access journal, our content does not run on profit, the most commonly-used excuse to ignore ethics. Instead, it runs on the resource of time. However, time, just as profit, is a deterrent to ethics because ethical practices require more care. We must grow by increasing our accessibility, our discoverability, and our reputation—all things that take time—and even more so if we promise ourselves, our institution, and our readers ethical practices while achieving those goals. For this reason, patience and support from our institution and sponsors are key elements in our strategic planning, so we can take the time to ensure all of our attempts at growth take place within ethical frameworks.

Do you find that the mission of the university and journal heavily influences what your committee creates?

"The *GW Journal of Ethics in Publishing* (*GWJEP*) seeks to provide a platform for students and other industry professionals to discuss often-ignored realities of the publishing industry."

This mission and our values are in the air of every choice we make at the journal. As students of the MPS in Publishing program, our professors and guests have presented us with possibilities and problems of the scholarly publishing world. The deep care that these industry professionals have demonstrated establishes ethics as a tenet that should be at the forefront of the industry. Their passion has met ours in equal force. As largely outsiders or newcomers to publishing, we have the unique position to see how unethical practices in the industry can affect consumers and tarnish the reputation and potential of the publishing world. We are bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, and we want to make the industry of our dreams meet our expectations as socially conscious individuals. This journal is where we take those first steps.