

Student Interview: Mary K. Urquhart

Bio

Mary K. Urquhart holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in English/Writing from Eastern Oregon University and is currently pursuing a Master of Professional Studies degree in Publishing at the George Washington University where she also serves on the E-Publishing committee for the *GW Journal of Ethics*. She was the managing editor for the 2022/2023 issue of *Oregon East*, EOU's long-running literary magazine. Previously she spent more than a decade working in the food manufacturing industry where she learned a great deal about food, business, and production. She resides in the Reno area in the great state of Nevada and dedicates her free time to her dogs and cat.

What does ethics in publishing mean to you?

The topic of ethics is an interesting one because ethical arguments can be both subjective and objective and whether an argument leans in one direction or the other is dependent on what one considers moral or amoral. Questions of morality, while often generally agreed upon in many cases, are based on ideology and how each of our different ideologies are informed and influenced by progressing discourse, life experiences, and of course, literature. Thus, my answer today might differ from my answer in twenty years, but today what ethics in publishing means to me is looking beyond the complacency of previous generations to find basic human decency.

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

I am very interested in the DEI movement in publishing. Since I started this program in August of last year, I've been really impressed by GW's efforts to

push conversations about diversity, equity, and inclusion into the forefront of the publishing industry. More specifically, I recently became aware of two emerging issues: Jewish actors feeling excluded from the DEI movement in the film and television industry, and Palestinian employees feeling silenced in the publishing industry. The obvious conflict between the two issues becomes the catalyst for a conversation about equity in the DEI movement and how the publishing industry might navigate conflicts of equity within the movement.

How would you describe your experience with the journal?

I would describe my time with the journal as a positive and fulfilling experience. This is my first experience working on a journal and I've come to appreciate the amount of work and organization involved in producing each issue.

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

I'm relatively new to publishing. My educational experiences up to now have been primarily on the author side of the equation. Being a part of this degree program and the journal has exposed me to the publishing industry more than I could ever have fathomed, and part of that is learning to see the industry through the lens of ethics. I would equate it to being colorblind and suddenly being able to see colors I've never seen before. I find myself suddenly in this world where I'm thinking about the relationship between ethics and copyright law or contracts or the emergence of AI in publishing. It's really fascinating from both professional and educational perspectives.

Do you feel that the classes you have taken so far have discussed ethics enough?

I've only taken a handful of courses at this point, and I have to say that ethics have come up in nearly every class. It is a pretty consistent theme in this program so far and I expect that to continue.

What is something you would like to see the journal do in the future?

I would love to see the journal explore the ethical implications of rhetoric surrounding the Israel/Palestine conflict. With any social movement, society will tend to shift toward one extreme or another, rarely finding middle ground. We saw it during the Depp v. Heard defamation suit with the conflict between celebrity idolization and the Me-Too movement. We've also seen it in the Me-Too movement itself with the juxtaposition between the idea that women should be believed and the idea that all women are automatically telling the truth. Currently, I'm seeing similar rhetorical conflicts on the subject of the Israel/Palestine conflict, and I would love the journal to explore this rhetoric through an ethical lens from multiple points of view.