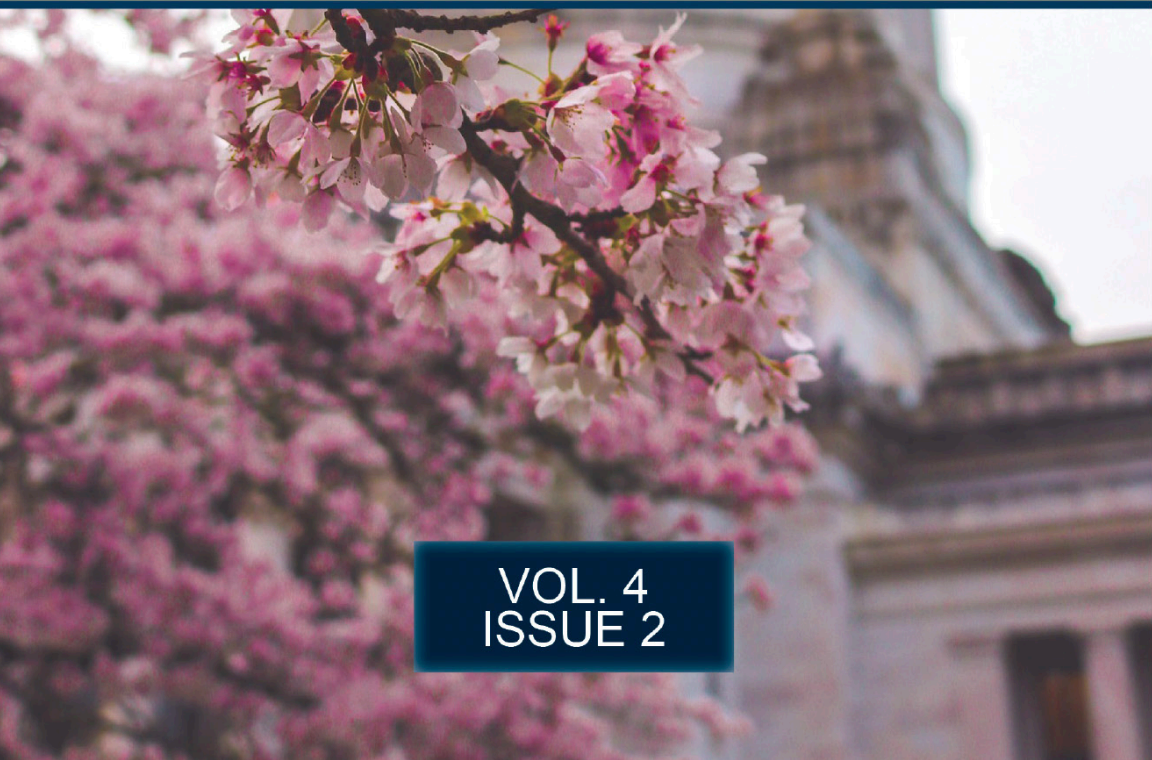
GW JEP

The George Washington University Journal of Ethics in Publishing



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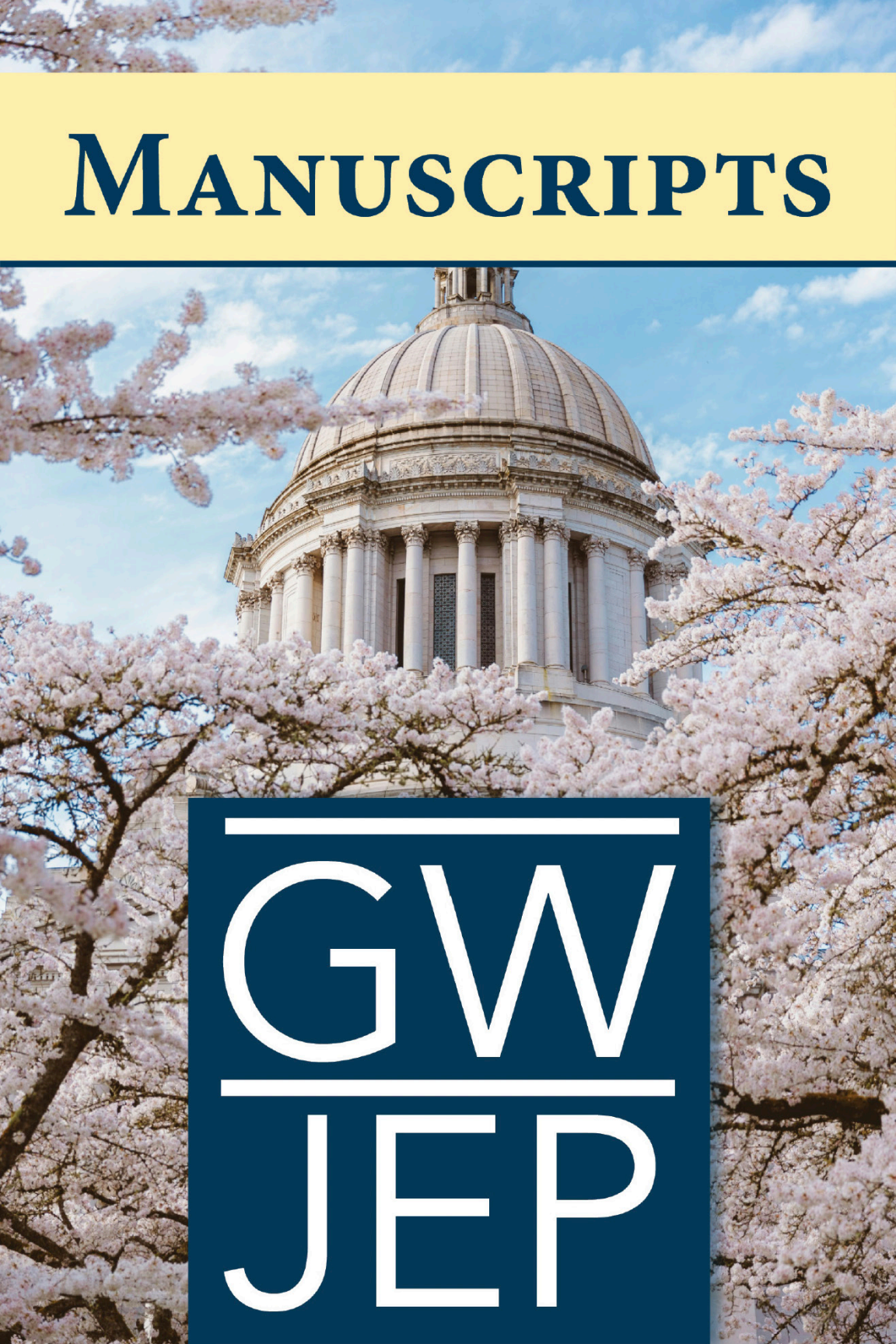

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Stewarding a Literary Legacy: An Ethical Framework for Estates:

Questions and practices for intentional, resilient, and enduring literary stewardship

By Charlotte Jones (Voikls)

Introduction

Literary legacies don't manage themselves. After an author dies, someone (sometimes someone relationally or emotionally close, sometimes someone who has been chosen for business or legal expertise) is left to make decisions about how the work continues in the world. Those decisions are rarely straightforward. They involve contracts and copyrights, yes, but also values, relationships, and questions that don't have easy answers.

This framework grew out of that complexity. It comes from lived experience with literary stewardship: the slow, ongoing work of caring for a body of work that still speaks, still resonates, and still raises new questions. In my case, that work involves the legacy of my grandmother, Madeleine L'Engle. But the dilemmas I've encountered are not unique. Again and again, I've found myself in conversations with other stewards, heirs, and partners who are grappling with the same tensions.

This guide is for those making decisions after an author's death, whether formally as executors or informally as caretakers, collaborators, publishers, or teachers. It isn't meant to prescribe what to do but to offer language and structure for thinking through recurring tensions with more clarity, care, and confidence.

Living authors are also part of this picture, even if they're not the primary audience. The choices they make—about collaborators, contracts, the documentation of wishes or instructions for after they are gone, archives, and values—shape what comes after. A future version of this resource may speak more directly to those questions. For now, they remain in the background, acknowledged but not centered.

This version of the framework is still evolving. The final public-facing form may shift in tone or format—more tool than meditation—but the core aim will remain the same: to offer a thoughtful, usable structure for a task that is both practical and deeply personal.

Why Stewardship Matters

When an author dies, their work does not. Literary estates become stewards of a legacy that touches readers, scholars, teachers, and artists around the world. This work is not simply administrative; it is ethical. Estate stewards hold the power to shape how a writer's voice continues to resonate across generations.

Too often, estate management is framed in terms of ownership, control, or preservation. But truly ethical stewardship calls for something more: a commitment to access, equity, adaptability, and responsibility. This guide is designed for heirs, executors, literary agents, publishers, and also for adjacent communities such as educators, scholars, editors, and cultural producers who want to participate in conversations about access, responsibility, and relevance.

Why Ethics Matter

Ethics is not an abstract layer added on top of estate management—it is central to making good decisions. Clear ethical frameworks lead to:

- **Clarity**: By surfacing values and articulating priorities, estates reduce confusion and second-guessing.
- **Better decisions**: When trade-offs are explicit, choices are less reactive and more durable.
- **Trust**: Transparent, principled decision-making builds confidence among heirs, partners, and the wider public.
- **Sustainability**: Short-term gains are weighed against long-term health, ensuring the legacy remains vital for generations.

Ethical practice also makes the business case: clear processes and principled choices strengthen relationships with publishers, licensees, and audiences, making negotiations smoother and reducing conflict. In other words, ethics is not a constraint on stewardship—it is a tool for resilience and growth.

The Six Core Tensions in Literary Stewardship

Every estate faces recurring dilemmas. This framework highlights six tensions that surface again and again, offering tools to navigate them with clarity and care:

1. **Access vs. Sustainability** – How to share work widely while ensuring resources to preserve and promote it.
2. **Transparency vs. Privacy** – When to open decision-making to build trust, and when discretion protects relationships or integrity.
3. **Immediate Income vs. Future Agency** – Balancing short-term financial needs with long-term flexibility for future stewards.
4. **Fidelity vs. Adaptation** – Encouraging reinterpretations that keep a work alive while safeguarding its spirit.
5. **Continuity vs. Change** – Responding to shifting cultural and generational contexts without erasing the historical record.
6. **Silence vs. Voice** – Deciding whether and how to use an author's voice in current debates without misrepresentation.

Navigating Core Tensions in Literary Stewardship

Tensions are not problems to be solved once and for all; they are recurring dilemmas with no single right answer. Each estate, family, or partner will weigh them differently depending on context, values, and goals. By naming these tensions, we create space for reflection instead of reaction and for choices that feel steadier and more durable.

Each of the following sections introduces one of the six tensions, along with possible practices and questions to help surface values. The point is not to prescribe an answer but to give stewards tools to clarify their priorities and navigate difficult choices with greater confidence.

1. Access vs. Sustainability

The tension: How widely should a work be shared, and at what cost? Open access promotes equity, but estates must also ensure financial resources to sustain preservation and promotion.

Practices to consider: Tiered pricing; accessible digital formats; affordable library licenses; partnerships that expand reach while generating revenue.

Questions to weigh: Who is excluded by current pricing or formats? How can we balance cultural good with fiscal responsibility? What models make the legacy both open and durable?

Questions to surface values:

- Is our priority to maximize readership, maximize revenue, or balance both?
- Should educational or nonprofit access be treated differently from commercial use?
- How much financial risk are we willing to take for wider cultural reach?
- In 10 years, what would we regret more: restricting access or undermining sustainability?

Scenario: A global publisher offers to digitize an estate's backlist for free and make it widely available, but only through a proprietary subscription service. The estate must decide whether broad access is worth locking readers into one commercial platform.

Scenario: A library consortium requests deeply discounted licensing for unlimited e-book lending. The estate wants to support equity but worries this might depress retail sales and reduce revenue needed for preservation.

2. Transparency vs. Privacy

The tension: Openness builds trust, but some matters—personal correspondence, internal disputes, financial terms—require discretion.

Practices to consider: publish a values statement; document who participates in key decisions; communicate criteria and reasoning where appropriate; define boundaries for what remains private.

Questions to weigh: What information should be public, and what must remain confidential? How will we explain decisions to those affected? What feedback channels are meaningful?

Questions to surface values:

- Do we value public trust more than privacy, or vice versa?
- How transparent do we want to be about internal disagreements?
- Whose trust matters most—family, readers, publishers, or partners?
- What risks do we accept by sharing too much or by saying too little?

Scenario: Scholars request access to an author's personal letters to better understand their creative process. Some letters contain sensitive family

conflicts. The estate must weigh academic value and public trust against the privacy of living relatives.

Scenario: A journalist requests details of the estate's publishing contracts to investigate industry-wide royalty practices. Disclosing would contribute to transparency and possibly benefit other authors' estates but could compromise the estate's negotiating leverage.

3. Immediate Income vs. Future Agency

The tension: Short-term financial stability can conflict with long-term flexibility. Assigning rights permanently may yield income now but constrain future stewards.

Practices to consider: time-limited licenses; reversion or review clauses; regular rights audits; scenario planning for short- vs. long-term outcomes.

Questions to weigh: Which rights must remain revocable? What time horizon are we optimizing for? How might today's deal restrict (or empower) future generations?

Questions to surface values:

- Is financial security today worth limiting future options?
- How much should we prioritize our generation's needs over future heirs' opportunities?
- Would a smaller, renewable deal be preferable to a large, permanent one?
- What legacy do we want our financial choices to leave?

Scenario: A studio offers a large one-time payment for perpetual adaptation rights. Accepting would provide immediate financial security for heirs, but it would prevent future generations from renegotiating or reclaiming creative control.

Scenario: A small independent press offers a modest but renewable license with strong creative alignment. At the same time, a major publisher offers a much larger upfront advance but demands a twenty-five-year exclusive. The estate must weigh security against flexibility.

4. Fidelity vs. Adaptation

The tension: Adaptations keep works alive for new audiences but risk distorting the author's vision.

Practices to consider: identify non-negotiables (themes, tone, characters); gather evidence of authorial intent; set approval thresholds for different kinds of adaptations.

Questions to weigh: What changes illuminate the work versus distort it? How can contracts safeguard integrity without stifling creative freedom?

Questions to surface values:

- What aspects of the work are sacred and must never be changed?
- What kinds of reinterpretation might deepen or broaden the work's reach?
- Are we more concerned about artistic risk or reputational risk?
- Who should decide whether a proposed adaptation honors the spirit of the work?

Scenario: A theater company proposes a bold reinterpretation of a beloved novel, setting it in a contemporary political context. The production could bring new relevance and audiences, but risks alienating long-time readers who value fidelity to the original tone.

Scenario: An international publisher proposes translating a work but altering certain cultural references to "localize" it for readers. The estate must decide whether this counts as helpful adaptation or unwanted distortion.

5. Continuity vs. Change

The tension: Literary works are read differently across generations. What was once accepted may later be harmful; what was once overlooked may become newly important.

Practices to consider: contextual forewords; educator guides; annotated or phased releases; consultation with communities most affected by representation.

Questions to weigh: When is added framing enough, and when is withholding or delaying publication more responsible? Which audiences should be consulted to provide context?

Questions to surface values:

- Do we believe in presenting the work as it is or reframing it for modern readers?
- How much context is enough—footnotes, essays, content notes?
- Should the estate actively invite critique or quietly provide context?
- What responsibility do we hold toward communities harmed by outdated portrayals?

Scenario: An older children's book in the estate contains racial stereotypes. A publisher suggests releasing a new edition with contextual notes and an essay

by a contemporary scholar. Others push for a clean "updated" version without the problematic sections. The estate must decide how to acknowledge history while engaging modern readers responsibly.

Scenario: Among the papers, the estate finds a late draft where the author rewrote a published novel to soften its ending. Should the estate release the revision, highlighting the author's evolving views, or preserve the original as the "definitive" version?

6. Silence vs. Voice

The tension: Estates may be asked to speak in an author's name on current issues. Doing so may sustain relevance but risks overstepping or misrepresentation.

Practices to consider: create a quote bank from published works; adopt a policy for public statements; prioritize programming and curation over new statements.

Questions to weigh: Does the existing corpus already speak to the issue? Are we amplifying the author's perspective or projecting our own? What risks of confusion or misattribution exist?

Questions to surface values:

- Should the estate ever speak in the author's name beyond their published works?
- Is it more important to maintain relevance or to preserve restraint?
- How do we weigh silence against the risk of misrepresentation?
- Who should decide when the estate speaks, and how?

Scenario: The estate manages the author's official social media accounts. On a national day of remembrance, posting one of her quotes could resonate deeply with readers. Yet choosing which words to highlight (and in what context) risks being read as a political statement. Remaining silent may feel like a missed opportunity, but speaking risks projecting today's concerns onto the author's legacy.

Scenario: A political campaign begins quoting the author's words out of context. Journalists ask the estate for a statement. Remaining silent may allow misuse to spread; speaking risks the estate appearing partisan.

Moving Forward

Stewarding a literary legacy is never just about contracts or archives. It is also about relationships, emotions, and the long arc of cultural impact. Paying attention to these dimensions helps avoid conflict and fosters healthier

decision-making. Structured conversations, clarity around values, and neutral facilitation can all make a difference.

This guide is meant to spark reflection and dialogue. Each estate, family, or stakeholder group will answer the questions differently, and that is the point: the framework is not a prescription but a tool. The hope is that it raises the bar for stewardship, making choices clearer, more intentional, and more sustainable.

At Tesser Well Consulting, we support estates and literary organizations in navigating these complexities with empathy and focus. We offer guidance, mediation, and practical tools for decision-making that honors both relationships and legacy.

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Conclusion

This framework is the result of sustained reflection on the ethical dimensions of literary stewardship. While rooted in my personal and professional experience, it was shaped and sharpened through the process of engaging with this course content, especially as it intersected with my own experience in mediation. What emerged was a clearer understanding of ethics not just as a set of values but as a way of navigating tension, surfacing trade-offs, and building more durable, thoughtful approaches to decision-making.

The six tensions outlined in the guide are ones I have encountered repeatedly, yet naming them (along with potential practices and questions) has made them more navigable. My goal was to create a resource that could offer clarity without prescribing rigid answers and that could support stewards in making intentional, context-sensitive choices and give others interacting with estates insight into how to understand the things estates balance in order to create better conversations.

Developing this project helped me recognize that ethical frameworks are most powerful when they are practical. I expect the public-facing version of this document to evolve: the tone may shift, and the format may become more solution-oriented. But the core insight will remain—that literary stewardship is ethical work and that having tools to support that work can reduce conflict, increase trust, and better serve both the cultural record and the people entrusted with its care.

Looking ahead, I plan to adapt this framework as part of my consulting work with literary estates and rights holders and potentially as the foundation

for workshops or panel discussions with authors, publishers, and cultural institutions. It may also serve as the basis for a companion tool designed specifically for living authors who want to engage in legacy planning proactively.

This assignment has helped clarify the kind of space I want to offer: one that doesn't promise all the answers but instead supports clarity through well-framed questions and thoughtful processes. Every estate, author, trustee, and partner may settle these tensions differently—and what feels right may shift over time as relationships, priorities, and cultural contexts evolve. That's why a flexible framework matters. It makes room for change while still offering something steady to return to. That, I've come to believe, is what makes the work both sustainable and meaningful.

True Crime Genre

Where Is the Line Drawn When It comes to Consent and Confidentiality?

Jessicah A. Jensen

Author Bio

Jessicah Jensen is in her second year of the MPS in Publishing program and the Marketing Lead for the *GW Journal of Ethics in Publishing (GWJEP)* at George Washington University, where she combines her passions for publishing, communication, and ethical inquiry. Originally from Utah and now based in Boston, she earned her Bachelor's degree before spending five years working as a paralegal—an experience that deepened her appreciation for integrity, precision, and the power of language to shape justice and understanding. Her transition into publishing reflects her conviction that stories and scholarship can serve as catalysts for change. At the *GWJEP*, she is dedicated to amplifying diverse voices and exploring the intersection of technology and ethics in modern publishing.

Abstract

The growing popularity of the true crime genre across books, podcasts, and other media has prompted important ethical questions regarding the representation of real people and events are portrayed. Although true crime narratives frequently rely on publicly available information, their publication can have lasting impacts on victims, families, and communities involved in

the crimes. This paper addresses and examines the ethical tensions between storytelling and protecting consent, privacy, and confidentiality in true crime publishing. Drawing on existing research in media and publishing ethics, along with interviews with true crime authors, the study investigates how writers handle research methods, representation, and the use of sensitive information. The results highlight inconsistencies in ethical standards within the genre and reveal a lack of clear industry standards guiding these practices. This paper advocates for stronger ethical frameworks in true crime publishing that respect individuals while promoting responsible and transparent storytelling.

True Crime Drama: Where Is the Line Drawn Whent It Comes to Consent and Confidentiality?

As many have noted, the true crime genre has become increasingly popular. This rise in popularity raises an important question: Where is the boundary between individuals' consent and confidentiality in these stories? As many have noted, the true crime genre has grown increasingly popular. With this rise in popularity, you might wonder where the boundary is regarding individuals' consent and confidentiality, and how these issues are addressed when creating such works. It is also essential to determine the right to consent and privacy. In an ideal world, consent would be obtained from all parties discussed in true crime publications, but that is not always feasible or desired by those involved.

My goal in this study is to examine current guidelines for true-crime publications on the consent and privacy of all parties involved. By interviewing true-crime authors, we can gain a deeper understanding of the publishing process and the considerations that respect the consent and privacy of those involved. Whether you directly or indirectly consume the true crime genre, you may begin to wonder how these publications can affect the individuals that they are about, no matter their involvement.

Goals

1. What guidelines are currently in place (if any)?
2. Conduct interviews with true crime authors to understand their personal process.
3. Recommend guidelines that can be put into place to provide consent and confidentiality to all parties.

As creators delve into these narratives, it's crucial to consider how these issues are addressed. Determining the right to consent and privacy becomes a key consideration. In an ideal world, we would obtain consent from everyone involved in true crime publications. However, that's not always feasible or desired by those involved. This complexity challenges us to think critically about the ethical implications of true-crime storytelling.

Let's start from the beginning… True crime originated in the 16th century. According to JSTOR Daily, between 1550 and 1700, British authors and printers published an astounding number of works reporting on capital crimes. More specifically, " as literacy rates expanded and new print technologies emerged, topical leaflets began to circulate among newly literate and semiliterate consumers. Hundreds of crime pamphlets—short, unbound books of roughly 6 to 24 pages, usually detailing horrific murders—circulated during this era. However, these pamphlets were not the only form of crime reporting. Ballads—narrative verses recounting the dastardly deeds of England's Most Notorious—were printed on broadsides and posted around cities and towns."

This was only the beginning of the rise in popularity of true-crime publications. The rapid and consistent rise to popularity in these publications is surprising, prompting questions about the longevity of sensationalism and its current state. Society has witnessed so many examples of this sensationalism, which often lacks the privacy of the individuals involved—for example, Jack the Ripper, Ted Bundy, or Jeffrey Dahmer. Not only is the crime itself being sensationalized, but also the victims and suspects involved as well. The details of these individuals' lives become publicly available in various forms, resulting in a lack of confidentiality and, often, consent.

Interviews

I had the opportunity to interview three true-crime authors about their experiences publishing in the genre. Kate Dawson, James Renner, and Joshua Sharpe are three authors whom I had the pleasure of interviewing for this research on the steps they take regarding consent and confidentiality in their true-crime publications. Given the minimal guidelines and rules governing this genre, it was fascinating to observe the personal moral and ethical standards that these authors established for themselves during the writing and publication process. It was interesting to observe each individual's personal standards and the lengths they were willing to go to obtain consent.

I began my interview by gaining a deeper understanding of their experience. I then ask whether they are aware of any guidelines they should

follow when working in the true crime genre, specifically regarding consent and confidentiality. I received the same answer in all three of my interviews. There are zero standards or guidelines that they are required to follow. Kate Dawson stated, "There are none in this industry." As I delved into these interviews, I aimed to identify any guidelines the interviewees follow in the true-crime genre, particularly regarding consent and confidentiality. It was both enlightening and concerning to find that all three interviewees shared a common perspective: there are no standardized guidelines in this field.

Kate Dawson emphasized this point, remarking, "There are none in this industry. Literally none, even with most journalists, unless they're with the New York Times." Additionally, James Renner highlighted an ethical consideration, stating his belief in protecting the privacy of juveniles, particularly those who haven't been charged. He noted that in the digital age, privacy is a scarce commodity, especially given the nature of social media. This point underscores the tension between public interest and personal privacy. These insights reveal a significant gap in ethical practices within the true crime genre. As we move forward, it's crucial to reflect on how these practices can impact the individuals involved in these stories.

Joshua Sharpe mentioned that he thinks about freedom of speech when he writes. These people in the stories have been through a lot, and their trauma is more important than the story; we are not entitled to anything. John Renner had a similar response, stating that "I'm writing for the victim, and any info I share should help to kick up new leads and information. I always attempt to get the families and friends on board with my writing, but sometimes there are people who do not."

John Renner had a similar response, stating that "I'm writing for the victim, and any info I share should help to kick up new leads and information. I always try to get families and friends on board with my writing, but sometimes people do not wish to participate. At times, I have published information about these individuals from police reports and trial transcripts when it is important to the case (not necessarily the narrative). I believe the truth outweighs any hard feelings."

With clearer confirmation that there are no industry standards these authors need to follow, they all had one thing in common in their responses. They all have found their own moral and ethical compasses to follow when they are writing in the true crime genre. Each of them had their own point of view and standards they had set for themselves when covering these stories. This is where I began to see some differences in judgment and boundaries.

Given the industry's lack of specific standards or guidelines, I wondered

whether any of these authors had faced defamation or other legal issues or had defamation insurance. One had an incident that resulted in his defamation insurance saving him. John Renner strongly recommends defamation insurance based on his experience. He stated, "A few years ago, a woman who took issue with some facts I'd posted about her involvement in a bogus lead given to the police sued me for $650,000. I knew there was no case, and it would be dismissed, but she sued me anyway in an attempt to bankrupt me. Fortunately, insurance covered the lawyer's fees for the initial hearings, at which the case was dismissed. Saved me around $10,000."

Book publishing defamation is the publication of a false statement that harms an individual's reputation. To successfully sue for libel, an individual must prove one of the following: the author made a false statement of fact, a statement was communicated to a third party, the author's fault amounted to at least negligence, or a false statement caused harm to the individual. Different defamation claims depend on whether the individual is a public figure or a private individual. It is common for major publishers to carry defamation insurance that covers all their authors.

Lessons Learned

The more I explore consent and confidentiality, the clearer it becomes how little is required beyond an individual's own choice to obtain these permissions or consents. It's surprising how strict the guidelines are for health and science publications, yet when it comes to true crime, everything seems to depend on the author's personal preference, which is reflected in how immensely sensationalized true crime is today.

- There are no industry guidelines or standards for authors to follow when writing true crime.
- The guidelines that each author follows are based on their own moral and ethical compass.
- The true crime genre is becoming increasingly sensationalized, thereby continuing to erode consent and confidentiality.

The more I explore consent and confidentiality, the clearer it becomes how little is required beyond an individual's own choice to obtain these permissions or consents. It's surprising how strict the guidelines are for health and science publications, yet when it comes to true crime, everything seems to depend on the author's personal preference. True crime today is immensely sensationalized.

Recommendations

We could begin by reviewing the health and science genres and their consent and confidentiality guidelines. These genres often emphasize the importance of respecting individuals' privacy and obtaining clear permissions before sharing sensitive information. We can find common ground to develop solid guidelines tailored to the true crime genre, balancing storytelling with ethical considerations. One of these guidelines should be to obtain explicit consent for all details, regardless of whether they are already in the public domain, to ensure respect for the victims and their families. These experiences are inherently traumatic, and sharing such details without consent can cause additional pain. There must be profound respect for the principle of "no"; if individuals or their families do not want their stories told, that decision must be honored. Furthermore, holding authors and creators accountable for publishing true crime stories is crucial to maintaining ethical standards. This accountability can help prevent exploitation and ensure that storytelling does not compromise dignity and respect. Lastly, be mindful of the genre's trend towards sensationalism. Strive for responsible storytelling that respects consent and confidentiality, which are often overlooked but vitally important.

Now that we've explored key challenges and insights from the interviews, let's shift our focus to recommendations to help authors navigate these complexities in the true crime genre. First, learn from the health and science genres and their guidelines to apply them to the true crime genre. Second, respecting "no". Lastly, be mindful of the genre's trend towards sensationalism. Strive for responsible storytelling that respects consent and confidentiality, which are often overlooked but vitally important.

Throughout this project, it has become very clear to me how sensationalized the true crime genre is. It makes me wonder how much true crime content I have consumed without fully considering the issues of consent and confidentiality involved. Everyone has their own moral and ethical compass regarding what is appropriate to publish, and it has made me reflect on whether my own consumption and sharing of such content aligns with my personal values. This awareness has led me to question the impact of my media choices and the responsibilities that accompany engaging with stories about real people and their tragedies.

Everyone has their own moral and ethical compass regarding what is appropriate to publish, and it has made me reflect on whether my own

consumption and sharing of such content aligns with my personal values. This awareness has led me to question the impact of my media choices and the responsibilities that accompany engaging with stories about real people and their tragedies.

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Manifesto Time: Do You Need a Publishing Manifesto?

John W. Warren

Note: An abridged version of this article was published in *The Scholarly Kitchen* blog, on October 6, 2025.

Does your publishing organization need a manifesto? Considering attacks on research funding, challenges to research integrity, concerns with AI, and assaults on the value of truth, this seems like a good time for action and an appropriate moment to consider writing a manifesto for your organization, for yourself, or for your long-dreamed-about indie publisher or lit mag startup.

Writing a manifesto for your organization can be a great exercise for team building and planning, even if the result is not necessarily intended for a public audience. Your *mission* defines your organization's core purpose, *vision* clarifies the future as seen by your organization, and *values* define your organization's ethical framework and culture. A well-constructed *manifesto* is a statement of principles that unites all three and is employed to ignite action. You can center these as well on personal growth, goal setting, creativity, and activism.

Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech, delivered at the Lincoln Memorial on August 28, 1963, established a clear and convincing purpose for American civil rights. It is arguably the most inspiring manifesto of our time. (If you haven't listened to it, or listened to it lately, take a moment to listen in its

entirety—have a Kleenex nearby.) Three years prior, Rosyln Pope, then a senior at Spelman College, along with Julian Bond, future head of the NAACP, wrote, "An Appeal for Human Rights," arguing for justice in Atlanta and Georgia, and inspiring generations of activists.

"Manifesto" derives from the Latin terms manifestus and manifestum, meaning clear, evident, obvious. The concept translates into Spanish as manifiesto; the verb form, manifestar means to declare, for example, one's faith, and to protest or march.

Manifestos are as old as or older than publishing and inexorably intertwined with the history of the book. The biblical narrative surrounding the Ten Commandments describes them as written in stone, first by God, and later by Moses, after he ill-advisedly smashed the originals. Andrew Pettegree and others argue that Martin Luther's "95 Theses" helped ensure the success of the invention of the printing press. Invectives flying from Northern to Southern Europe as pamphlets led to the Reformation and Counter-Reformation and kept the first printers in the black, while huge, expensive, tomes such as the Gutenberg Bible failed to make a return on investment. Originally titled *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' ten-point program for communism, published in February 1848, inspired the Russian revolution and continues to impact the world.

Manifestos have been used to advance and excuse terrorism, murder, genocide, and other destructive action. The very idea of a manifesto has, to a certain degree, been hijacked by extremists and terrorists (and who decides who is an extremist or terrorist is often contentious and political). Adolf Hitler wrote *Mein Kampf* (1925/1926), as a launchpad for his political career. Political leaders and presidential candidates continue to use this strategy to launch their campaigns. Ted Kaczynski's "Unabomber Manifesto" (1995), has inspired legions of self-mythologizing mass murderers, whose ramblings seek attention and to justify their violence, but leave out details like their history of animal abuse. *The Washington Post*, controversially, and at the FBI's urging, published the "Unabomber Manifesto," which led to Kaczynski's arrest after his sister-in-law, Linda Patrik, and her husband, David Kaczynski, recognized his writing and David tipped off the FBI.

Those who read and perhaps follow the precepts of your manifesto become a *public*, as Michael Warner described in "Publics and Counterpublics," a member of an indefinite number of people with a shared identity, even if they may not know each other. David Ronfeldt developed the framework of "Tribes, Institutions, Marketings, Networks" to describe societal evolution. While a manifesto can inspire the public of any of these organizational types,

the emergence of multiorganizational collaborative networks provide greater opportunities for social advocacy.

While not framed as a manifesto per se, the principles to affirm and strengthen research integrity proposed by the Association of Research Libraries (ARL), International Association of Scientific, Technical & Medical Publishers (STM), Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), Society for Scholarly Publishing (SSP), and Association of University Presses (AUPresses), are intended to inspire action. As the authors state: "Future generations depend on our actions today. That's why we must stand together to uphold trust and integrity in the research enterprise."

The collaboration developed principles of belief and support in public investment in basic science and the humanities: the need for broad access to validated, trusted information; the importance of research integrity; and protecting and advancing freedom of speech, academic freedom and nondiscrimination in the marketplace of ideas, as well as ensuring research and scholarship remain free from political interference.

It's Time for Change: Get Writing

Here are a few guidelines for creating a constructive manifesto. They are applicable to all good writing, and like all tenets of communication, the rules can be broken—are even meant to be broken—but it's best to know how and why you are breaking the rules.

Be concise and engaging. Manifestos often have ten points; five to seven action points work well; some manifestos have thirty or more. Use emotions to draw in the reader and paint pictures with words to captivate. Show the problem clearly and offer a solution, bending the arc toward justice. Alliteration and metaphor, as well as a well-chosen, unusual world, can all help, but are easily overdone. Clarity is key. Consider, most of all, your audience: whom are you trying to reach, and what do you want them to do?

You can work to turn your core values, beliefs, strategic priorities, and maxims into a manifesto. A manifesto, however, is more than just a collection of values, beliefs, and aphorisms. A manifesto is a call to action: to persuade your team, your community, the world toward actionable change.

Look to history: what individuals and what organizations do you admire who have written a manifesto? I collect manifestos; excerpts of a few favorites and other examples are below. Look around and find some that inspire. (Once you start looking, you'll find manifestos are ubiquitous.)

Like all collectors and collections (guitars!), there are always enthusiasts who surpass. Geoff McDonald's 1000 Manifestos blog pursued a chiliad

but stalled at 269. Creative director Lonnie Elliott has created a database of 175+ "brand manifestos" from Apple, Nike and the like, and compiled a comprehensive writing guide including in-depth analyses of various emotional arcs, such as the U-shape.

Write and revise, rinse and repeat. Thomas Jefferson wrote his defense of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" in about two weeks, but the Declaration of Independence had at least 86 edits and revisions between the Committee of Five and the Second Continental Congress. Try writing your manifesto first as simple bullet points before revising to make them more eloquent and poetic. (Then, you can turn it into a book, as we'll see below.)

It's time for change. It's time to inspire action. Get writing!

Look to the South

My love of the manifesto has been inspired by Latin America, where manifestos are intertwined with the continent's long history of colonialism and struggle for justice. Living in the upper Amazon of Bolivia as an American Field Service exchange student, in 1978-79, I became familiar with the Chilean songwriter, poet, and activist Victor Jara. I learned to play his song "Manifiesto," written shortly before he was murdered after Agusto Pinochet's coup of September 11, 1973. It resides in a long tradition of manifesto as protest song, led by "Strange Fruit," written and composed by Abel Meeropol (under the pseudonym Lewis Allan), and recorded by Billie Holiday in 1939. Woodie Guthrie, as you'll recall, scrawled "This machine kills fascists" on his guitar in 1943: a four-word manifesto.

Manifiesto: Víctor Jara (1973):
Yo no canto por cantar
ni por tener buena voz,
canto porque la guitarra
tiene sentido y razón.
Tiene corazón de tierra
y a las de palomita,
es como el agua bendita
santigua glorias y penas.
Aquí se encajó mi canto
como dijera Violeta
guitarra trabajadora
con olor a primavera.
Que no es guitarra de ricos

ni cosa que se parezca
mi canto es de los andamios
para alcanzar las estrellas.
Que el canto tiene sentido
cuando palpita en las venas
del que morirá cantando
las verdades verdaderas,
no las lisonjas fugaces
ni las famas extranjeras
sino el canto de una lonja
hasta el fondo de la tierra.
Ahí donde llega todo
y donde todo comienza
canto que ha sido valiente
siempre será canción nueva.

* * * * * * * * *

I don't sing just to sing
or because I have a great voice,
I sing because the guitar
has meaning and reason.
It has a heart of earth
and wings like a dove,
like holy water
it blesses glories and sorrows.
This is where my song fits,
as Violeta [Parra] would say,
a worker guitar
with the smell of Spring.
It's not a guitar for the rich
or anything similar,
my song is a scaffold
to reach the stars.
A song has meaning
when it throbs in the veins
of the one who will die singing
the truest truths
not fleeting flatteries

nor foreign fame
but the song sliced
from the very bottom of the earth.
There where everything ends
and where everything begins
a song that has been brave
will always be a new song
(Translation by John Warren)

Eduardo Galeano's *Memory of Fire* trilogy, written between 1982-86, is a lyrical and historical manifesto of the marginalized voices who struggled for justice in the Americas, and changed the way I perceive the world.

In mid-January 1996, I headed to publishing meetings in NYC and stayed a few days early with a friend who was launching a publication akin to the literary magazine *Guernica*. Jim had an actual fax (Does anyone remember the fax?) sent directly from Subcomandante Marcos of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation in Chiapas; he had posted the entire 35-page or so manifesto on the walls of his Brooklyn loft. This is an example of a manifesto and social netwar that might be considered nefarious or destructive by some people, and positive change for others, or perhaps both, depending on whose side you're on. I can still picture those fax pages plastered all over his walls.

Fourth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle: Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos (1996) (excerpt):

> We were born of the night. We live in the night. We will die in her. But the light will be tomorrow for others, for all those who today weep at the night, for those who have erbeen denied the day, for those for whom death is a gift, for those who are denied life. The light will be for all of them. For everyone everything. For us pain and anguish, for us the joy of rebellion, for us a future denied, for us the dignity of insurrection. For us nothing.
>
> Our fight is caused by hunger, and the gifts of the bad government are lead and paper for the stomachs of our children.
>
> Our fight is for a roof over our heads which has dignity, and the bad government destroys our homes and our history....

Internet Dawn

At the dawn of electronic publishing and the Internet, the "Cluetrain Manifesto" was published by Rick Levine, Christopher Locke, Doc Searls, and David Weinberger. First posted to the web in 1999 as a set of ninety-five theses, like Martin Luther's, it was published as a book in 2000 with the theses extended by seven essays. The work examines the impact of the Internet on marketing, claiming that conventional marketing techniques are rendered obsolete by the online "conversations" that consumers are participating in, and that companies need to join to stay relevant. It pointed to the Internet's potential for community-building and positive change. At the time, perhaps, we didn't foresee that social media monopolies, organizations, and individuals would master the use of the Web to manipulate and spread misinformation.

Cluetrain Manifesto (1999) (excerpt):

> We are not seats or eyeballs or end users or consumers. We are human beings – our reach exceeds your grasp. Deal with it.

1. Markets are conversations.
2. Markets consist of human beings, not demographics sectors.
3. Conversations among human beings sound human. They are conducted in a human voice.
4. Whether delivering information, opinions, perspectives, dissending arguments or humorous asides, the human voice is typically open, natural, uncontrived.
5. People recognize each other as such from the sound of this voice.
6. The Internet is enabling conversations among human beings that were simply not possible in the era of mass media.
7. Hyperlinks subvery hierarchy.
8. In both internetworked markets and among intranetworked employees, people are speaking to each other in a powerful new way.
9. These networked conversations are enabling powerful new forums of social organization and knowledge exchnage to emerge.
10. As a result, markets are getting smarter, more informed, more organized. Participation in a networked market changes people fundamentally....

Rules for Learning

"Some Rules for Students and Teachers," often attributed to composer John Cage, was written by Sister Mary Corita Kent (~1967). It was popularized by Cage, and rule 10 quotes him directly. It was published in Steward Brand's classic *Whole Earth Catalog* in 1966, itself a kind of extended manifesto.

Some Rules for Students and Teachers: Sister Mary Corita Kent (1918-1986):

RULE 1: Find a place you trust, and then try trusting it for a while.

RULE 2: General duties of a student — pull everything out of your teacher; pull everything out of your fellow students.

RULE 3: General duties of a teacher — pull everything out of your students.

RULE 4: Consider everything an experiment.

RULE 5: Be self-disciplined — this means finding someone wise or smart and choosing to follow them. To be disciplined is to follow in a good way. To be self- disciplined is to follow in a better way.

RULE 6: Nothing is a mistake. There's no win and no fail, there's only make.

RULE 7: The only rule is work. If you work, it will lead to something. It's the people who do all of the work all of the time who eventually catch on to things.

RULE 8: Don't try to create and analyze at the same time. They're different processes.

RULE 9: Be happy whenever you can manage it. Enjoy yourself. It's lighter than you think.

RULE 10: "We're breaking all the rules. Even our own rules. And how do we do that? By leaving plenty of room for X quantities." (John Cage)

HINTS: Always be around. Come or go to everything. Always go to classes. Read anything you can get your hands on. Look at movies carefully, often. Save everything — it might come in handy later.

Poet, novelist, essayist, environmental activist and farmer Wendell Berry's poem, "Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front" (1973), critiques modern societ, urging readers to reject consumerism and embrace nature, community, and faith.

Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front (1973) (excerpt):

"...Every day do something
that won't compute...
Be like the fox

who makes more tracks than necessary,
some in the wrong direction.
Practice resurrection."

Crafting as Activism

Creativity and the creative act are interwoven with the manifesto. I came across the "Craftivist Manifesto" over the holidays, as a striking, ten-foot-tall lithograph in Copenhagen's beautiful Designmuseum Danmak (Danish Design Museum). The Craftivist Collective was founded by Sarah P Corbett, an award-winning activist, Ashoka Fellow, and author, who developed a 'Gentle Protest' methodology, merging aspects of crafting, neuroscience, positive psychology, and social campaigning, and focusing on "introverts a lot as well as Highly Sensitive People, those struggling with anxiety and burnt-out activists looking for a quieter, gentle way to protest." The Craftivist methodology has been used for social and political change in a wide variety of contexts, including increasing minimum wages, and was used by the World Wildlife Foundation in a campaign that led to legislation protecting migrating birds in Spain.

Craftivism encompasses many different strategies, styles and belief systems, including The Pussyhat Project, "dedicated to advancing women's rights and human rights through the arts, education and respectful dialogue."

A Craftivist's Manifesto, Craftivist Collective (undated):

> Connecting our hands, hearts and heads we can truly make a difference.

1. **Be the tortoise**: Breathe; take it slow. Craftivism is about taking a thoughtful approach to mindful activism.
2. **Craft is our tool**: It can bring about effective long-term change, but it should always fit seamlessly with what we're saying, never used for the sake of it.
3. **Solidarity not sympathy**: Preserve the dignity of others by showing solidarity with them in your craft. Understand their struggles and you'll understand their solutions. Activism is not about charity.
4. **Find comfort in contemplation**: Use the slow, stitch-by-stitch, nature of craft to help you consider the complexities of injustices. It will lead to a deeper understanding of them and their solutions.
5. **Empathy never points fingers**: Try to see everyone's perspective. Everyone faces different challenges, so aim to make critical friends, not aggressive enemies.

6. **Small & beautiful**: However small, pieces inspired by beauty and love can be powerful reminders of just how gorgeous the world can be. Don't worry about imperfections either: they're endearing.
7. **Humility holds the key**: The world often needs us to change before it can. Consider your role within the bigger picture. Work with people, never against them and always keep an open mind.
8. **Provoke don't preach**: Never shout, always encourage. Inform through your craft and it will provoke thought and action, Intriguing activism inspires never intimidates.
9. **Embrace positivity**: It's the most encouraging tone we can take. Being cynical is easy, but a positive, compassionate world vision has the power to fuel dreams and build movements.
10. **Make the change you wish to see**: If we want our world to be more beautiful, kind & just, then let's make our activism beautiful, kind & just. So, pick up your needle and thread and join us in crafting! Together we'll change our world one stitch at time...

Publishing Empires

Publishing loves manifestos and vice versa: you can take your ten or thirty or 95-point manifesto and turn it into a book. Examples abound of impactful manifestos published as books. Stephen Covey's manifesto, *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, became a bestselling book and launched a publishing empire, with myriad spin-offs: books, speaking engagements, in person and online courses, merchandise, and more. While this involved substantial marketing, no amount of marketing expense and effort alone can make your manifesto resonate and create an impact.

Seven Habits of Highly Effective People: Steven R. Covey (1989) (summary):

Independence/Self-Mastery
Be Proactive
Begin with the End in Mind
Put First Things First
Interdependence/Working with Others
Think Win-Win
Seek First to Understand, Then to be Understood
Synergie
Continual Improvement
Sharpen the Saw

If you're into checklists, you'll want to read Atul Gawande's book, *The Checklist Manifesto*. The author uses checklists for surgical safety procedures; he claims the use of checklists to make the reliable management of complexity routine, has saved lives. It's a simple manifesto that could be a long article, all about building checklists.

The Checklist Manifesto: Atul Gawande (2009) (summary):

A checklist for checklists
Development
Have clear, concise objectives
Be concise, practical, to the point
Use simple structure and language
Design to be read aloud as a verbal check
Drafting
Fewer than 10 items (per pause point)
One page max
San serif font, upper and lower case, large enough to read easily
Validation
Test with those who will be using checklist; modify in response to trials
Ensure checklist can be completed in a reasonable amount of time
A checklist is not a how to guide or instruction manual

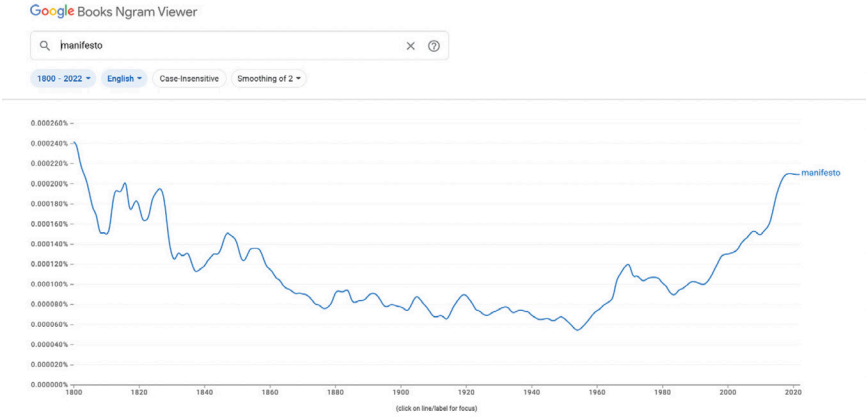


Image: Google Books Ngram Viewer: Appearance of word "manifesto" or "Manifesto" in books published in English included in Google Ngram corpus, from 1800 to 2022.

I recently read Tricia Hersey's *Rest is Resistance: A Manifesto* (2022). I stay busy, involved in numerous self-motivated initiatives and activities, but am also a firm proponent of a good nap, through learning the value of a good siesta while living in the upper Amazon. Hersey, founder of The Nap Ministry, holds that "Rest is a form of resistance because it disrupts and pushes back against capitalism and white supremacy." Hersey's manifesto can be summarized by the book's epigraph:

> Your body is a site of liberation.
> It doesn't belong to capitalism.
> Love your body.
> Rest your body.
> Move your body.
> Hold your body.

Her book has manifestos nesting into manifestos like Matryoshka dolls. Like Covey, she has taken the concept into coaching, immersive workshops and courses, lectures and key notes, social media, and flagship collective napping experiences, and the Resurrect Rest School.

Tenets of the Nap Ministry: Tricia Hersey:

1. Rest is a form of resistance because it pushes back and disrupts white supremacy and capitalism.
2. Our bodies are a site of liberation.
3. Naps provide a portal to imagine, invent and heal.
4. Our dream space has been stolen, and we want it back. We will reclaim it via rest.

Manifestos and Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship also often spawns manifestos, and vice versa. Bernadette Jiwa, a "storytelling advisor, story skills trainer, and author non-fiction and fiction, presents her manifesto for entrepreneurs as a question, an unusual but effective technique for a manifesto:

> **If: A Love Note to Entrepreneurs, Bernadette Jiwa (2011):**
> If you're doing your best work.
> If you touched one person.
> If it makes a difference to a handful.
> If you're building a legacy, not just an empire.

If your values are front and centre.
If you're launching ideas from the heart.
If you understand why you're doing this.
If it doesn't have to matter to everyone.
If you care.
If you can see the world as it isn't.
If passion is your master.
If possibility feeds your soul.
If meaning is your currency.
If you embrace failure alongside success.
If permission doesn't get in your way.
If understanding the problem to solve matters.
If people are your inspiration.
If you could change one thing.
If you know the questions to ask and aren't afraid of the answers.
If you could ask for anything today, would 'this' be it?
If not this, then what?

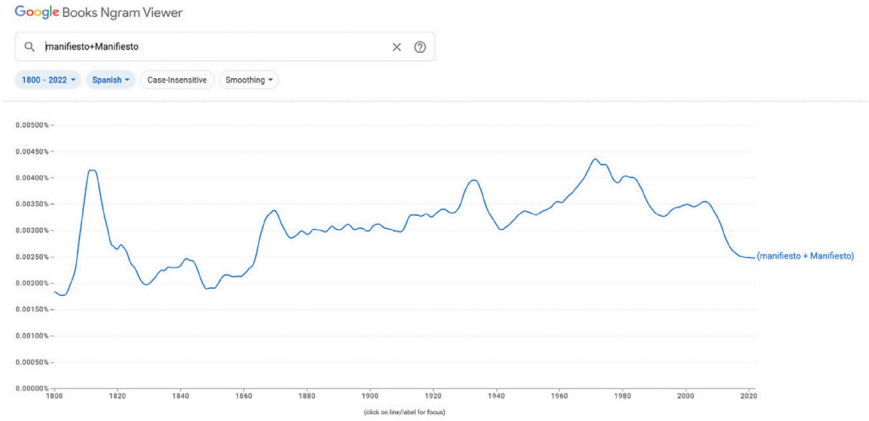


Image: Google Books Ngram Viewer: Appearance of word "manifiesto" or "Manifiesto" in books published in Spanish included in Google Ngram corpus, from 1800 to 2022. The prevalence of the word in Spanish is about one thousand times more than in English, in books of the respective language, in the Ngram corpus.

Get Creative

Not surprisingly, artists and creatives often embrace constructive and avant-garde manifestos. Michalis Pichler, in *Publishing Manifestos: An International Anthology from Artists and Writers*, (MIT Press, 2022), compiled a wide range of manifestos from creators of artist books and zines, including Tauba Auerbach's Diagonal Press, and Erik van der Weijde's 4478ZINE's publishing manifesto, which ends with "All books that are not made, are, at least, just as important."

The creative act itself is ripe for manifestos, such as cartoonist Hugh McLeod's "How to be creative" (2004) ("Ignore everybody... The idea doesn't have to be big. It just has to change the world... Put the hours in... Sing in your own voice...").

I mentioned above creating a personal manifesto. WePresent, WeTransfer's arts platform, has commissioned and compiled an ongoing series of manifestos by creatives who work in music, art, photography, film and literature (and sometimes all of the above). Each offers "10 rules to live by," including musician Willy Nelson ("Stop Looking for Happiness"..."Don't Be An Asshole"...); artist Ai Weiwei ("Take a lot of interest in history and past experience, but also seek out new knowledge. Be imaginative, and desire things that have not happened yet."); Malian musicians Amadou and Mariam ("Be passionate about something"... "Success does not come in a day, so get ready to work hard and be patient"...); psychedelic Timbuktu band Songhoy Blues ("Learn to tune out and tune in every day"... "Seek art outside your comfort zone"), and dozens of others. (Definitely a fun way to spend an hour or two.)

Be As Courageous As You Can

The best manifestos consider what's at stake, and provide a solution, or at least some hope. *On Tyranny* (2017), by former Yale professor Timothy Snyder, has been on the *New York Times Best Seller* list for 129 weeks, drifting in and out of the top spot, and has been published as a graphic edition and expanded audio edition. We had the pleasure of collaborating with Snyder through his biographical essay for Georgetown University Press' *Story of a Secret State*, by Jan Karski. (If you haven't read Synder's *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (2010) you should do so now.)

Timothy Snyder (from *On Tyranny*, 2017): Don't Be A Bystander: Lessons From The Twentieth Century:

1. Do not obey in advance
2. Defend institutions
3. Beware the one-party state
4. Take responsibility for the face of the world
5. Remember professional ethics
6. Be wary of paramilitaries
7. Be reflective if you must be armed
8. Stand out
9. Be kind to our language
10. Believe in truth
11. Investigate
12. Make eye contact and small talk
13. Practice corporeal politics
14. Establish a private life
15. Contribute to good causes
16. Learn from peers in other countries
17. Listen for dangerous words
18. Be calm when the unthinkable arrives
19. Be a patriot
20. Be as courageous as you can

These seem to be perilous times. We're witnessing alterations to the historical record, research funding frozen or eliminated on ideological factors, federal and state legislatures exerting increased control over higher education, and inclusion branded as illegal activity. Political violence, never dormant in the United States, may be on the rise. It's important not to give up hope that, as Martin Luther King Jr., reminded us, "the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." Many of us are mission-based organizations, seeking to improve and change the world, one book (or journal) at a time. Perhaps take the idea of a manifesto as inspiration for a teambuilding exercise or department retreat activity; if the word manifesto itself raises issues, focus on stating or reaffirming foundational principles. These principles can be a continual work in progress, and do not necessarily need to be made public, although you may choose to do so. Reaffirming a commitment to elements of ethical publishing, as an organization, and as an individual, can be a step toward positive, nonviolent action and change. My own principles center on building and engaging community, being relentlessly creative (and analytical), being a leader in a micro-niche (and developing a unique style), practicing ethical thinking and continuous improvement, and connecting in collaboration.

I asked Randy Townsend, M.P.S., professor of GW's Ethics in Publishing capstone course, for his thoughts, and he suggested prompts for an organizational retreat or planning session, such as:

- What are the biggest threats to our (scientific) community?
- What does our community need to hear from us?
- How can our press/organization make an impact? How do we know if we are making an impact?
- What do our voices need to affirm?
- What are your personal values and how can you apply them to your daily work?

You can also refocus these questions to create a personal set of principles, defining your goals for personal growth, creativity, impact, and activism. Spend some time defining your personal mission, vision, and values, and come up with a personal manifesto, "rules to live by." Or create one for your long-dreamed-about independent publishing imprint, lit mag startup, or indie bookstore.

It's time to get writing!

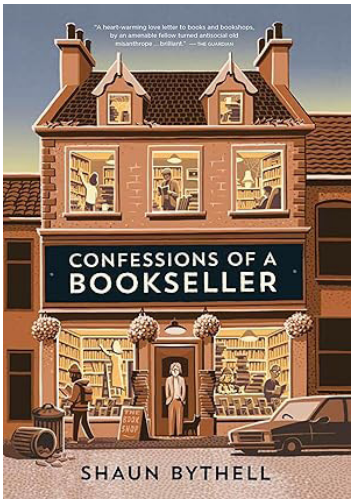
John W. Warren is Professor and Director of the Graduate Program in Publishing, College of Professional Studies, George Washington University; founder and publisher of the *GW Journal of Ethics in Publishing*; organizer of the GW Ethics in Publishing Conference; and founder and co-organizer of the Student Journal Symposium for Literary and Research Publications. He has authored several articles about publishing, including "Innovation and the Future of E-Books" (2009), for which he was the winner of the International Award for Excellence in the development of the book, "Zen and the Art of Metadata Maintenance," and an open textbook on Impact in Publishing for the Library Publishing Curriculum. He is a classical guitarist and composer who performs regularly in concert, and a contributor to *Classical Guitar and Acoustic Guitar* magazines.

Book Reviews

GW JEP

Book Review: *Confessions of a Bookseller* by Shaun Bythell

Reviewed by Savannah Aleksic



Bookstores are a haven for the book-lovers, the historians, the introverts, the wallflowers, the academics, the curious, and most importantly — they are home to other worlds, endless knowledge, and words waiting to be discovered. If you have ever wondered what lies behind the register of one of these institutions, *Confessions of a Bookseller* by Shaun Bythell will answer some of those questions.

Wigtown, a small town nestled in the Dumfries and Galloway region in Scotland, has been known as "Scotland's National Book Town" since 1997. This is due to the The Wigtown Book Festival, which was first held in 1998 and has since grown to be the second largest book festival in Scotland. *The Bookshop*, widely assumed to be the largest secondhand bookstore in Scotland, is owned and operated by Tom Bythell, whose book *Confessions of a Bookseller*, is just one of many volumes he has written documenting his day-to-day experiences as a bookseller of secondhand books in the quaint town.

Bythell often reflects on customers who wander around the bookstore for a few minutes, ask questions about the stock and the pricing, to ultimately state

> "This is undoubtedly the best part of the second-hand book trade, and probably of book-collecting too: finding and handling something rare and important."
>
> —SHAUN BYTHELL, BOOKSELLER AND AUTHOR.

that they will just buy it off of Amazon for cheaper. *Confessions* illuminates the unseen side of the secondhand book trade, which is the protection of used books and finding them a new home. There is the occasional treasure trove of rare mint-condition editions of tomes that go for hundreds, but more often than not, customers haggle booksellers over pennies. Furthermore, most of these stores rely on volunteer labor as they are barely able to keep the lights on.

Confessions showcases the harsh realities of booksellers in the modern era where there are cheaper and more convenient alternatives to the traditional brick and mortar location. For some context, in 2021, there were only 1,701 independently-owned bookstores in the United States, the lowest since 2014. However, as of 2024, that number has skyrocketed to 2,433 independently-owned and operational bookstores in the United States—the highest recorded in recent history. Are bookstores having a comeback? If so, how are these bookstores able to compete with the modernity of online retailers and e-readers? If bookstores were to disappear, how does that impact reading initiatives on society as a whole?

Bythell's snarky remarks about the occasional customer can be impudent, but his interactions with the various recurring characters throughout the book provide humorous anecdotes and authentic warmth as a reminder of the importance of community. Most, if not all, of the author's interactions surround *The Bookshop*. These spaces harbor knowledge and encourage the protection of community-owned spaces.

I recommend this book to book-lovers and publishers alike, as Bythell provides informative insight into the world of the secondhand book trade in an easily digestible format. Additionally, Bythell's appreciation for the book trade —the good and the bad—will make readers more aware of their own book-

buying habits to become a more conscious and ethical consumer by supporting their local bookstore and the communities that they create.

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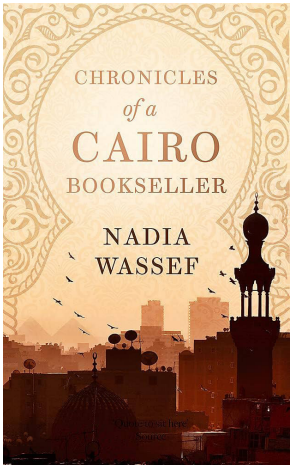
Book Review: *Chronicles of a Cairo Bookseller* by Nadia Wassef

Reviewed by Claire Bianchi



Shelf Life: Chronicles of a Cairo Bookseller is a memoir by Nadia Wassef, one of the three women who co-founded Diwan, Cairo's first independent bookstore. At the time of its founding, the notion of public space for culture or creative output that was free from the influence of Egypt's government was virtually unfathomable. As Wassef states in the book's prologue: "Starting a bookstore at this moment of cultural atrophy seemed impossible—and utterly necessary."

The memoir follows Wassef's decade-long journey opening Diwan and managing its multiple franchises through vignettes organized by store sections: The Café, Egypt Essentials, Cookery, Business and Management, Pregnancy and Parenting, The Classics, Art and Design, and Self-Help. It's a clever framing device that anchors the narrative in place; you can almost imagine yourself wandering Diwan's aisles, dragging your fingers along spines in various languages including Arabic, English, and French.

Throughout the memoir, Wassef is not shy about her own upper-class status in a starkly divided Cairo. Yet even with this privilege, the sexism and prejudice she confronts are deeply illuminating, underscoring how patriarchy cuts across class lines and, in some ways, how those with relative safety and access have a particular responsibility to push against it.

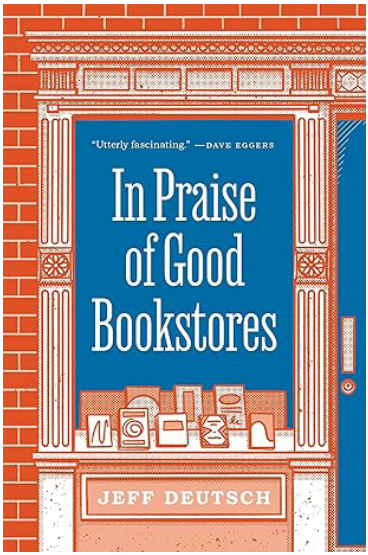
Among the most striking anecdotes is Wassef's visit to the Censorship Bureau, where officials flag *The Naked Chef* by Jamie Oliver purely on the basis of its title, attributing it to the West's "loose morals." She manages to talk them down and ultimately forges an uneasy alliance with the bureau, helping her avoid future shipping holdups. In another vignette, she reflects on curating the "Pregnancy and Parenting" section, an experience that ultimately prompts her to interrogate her own approach to motherhood and culminating in a request to have her tubes tied after her second child, only to be asked whether her husband has approved. To this she replies, "they're mine, not his. Tie them!" Wassef's observations in the "Egypt Essentials" and "The Classics" sections also examine how books shape our understanding of a culture's history, depending on who is doing the writing: the colonized or the colonizer. Together, these scenes reveal how even the most ordinary books can become political objects, and how broad accessibility to diverse perspectives is essential to a truly prosperous society and to advancing the rights of marginalized communities.

Positioned as a "portrait of a country hurtling towards revolution, a feminist rallying cry, and an unapologetic crash course in running a business under the law of entropy," *Shelf Life* delivers on all three counts. For Western readers, and particularly Americans, Wassef's story is a reminder of liberties we rarely question: the right to read freely, to publish without permission, and to browse without fear. Her account shows how government control over books and culture reinforces patriarchal power and narrows whose voices are heard, making *Shelf Life* an important touchstone in conversations about ethics in publishing and the responsibilities of those who shape what reaches readers. Wassef's story emphasizes that books are not a luxury, as many in Egypt had come to conclude; books are vital pillars of culture that sustain fundamental rights like equity, knowledge, and opportunity. Her memoir poses urgent questions about publishing ethics and accessibility: Who gets to tell stories? Who decides which stories are allowed? And how should everyone involved in the publishing ecosystem—from authors and editors to publishers and booksellers—be held accountable for safeguarding these freedoms?

As a pioneer not just for women booksellers but for business owners more broadly, Wassef chronicles the extraordinary resilience required to carve out a "third space" for intellectual life to flourish within a repressive system. Her voice remains fierce, witty, and unsparing. If there's one qualm, it's that the narrative occasionally feels disjointed and might have benefited from more sustained or contrasting perspectives. Still, at just 240 pages, *Shelf Life* is a compact, punchy read for anyone interested in global publishing, feminist activism, or the transformative power of books.

Book Review: *In Praise of Good Bookstores* by Jeff Deutsch

Reviewed by Brianna Lantz



In *In Praise of Good Bookstores*, readers find themselves learning about the intricacies of bookstores, both as a customer and as a bookseller. Jeff Deutsch argues that good bookstores are important places of cultural infrastructure and community building and has long-time readers reevaluating how they see and experience bookstores, bringing up a variety of questions about their own personal book shopping habits.

Are they the type to go in with no plan, prepared to spend hours moving slowly through the aisles, picking up every title that piques their interest? Or do they go in with a mission, searching for a specific book? Do they engage in conversation with anyone, be it other customers or booksellers, or do they keep to themselves, relishing the solitude in browsing? There is no correct answer to any of these questions, of course, but it is fascinating to recognize how many different kinds of shoppers there may be, and how each contributes to the experience overall.

> "We enter a bookstore for many reasons, in many moods. We enter a bookstore settled, but the ideas we encounter unsettle us. The company, however, is comforting and the connection provides a pleasant stirring." – Jeff Deutsch

Deutsch himself is a lifelong bookseller, and it's easy to see where the passion for his career comes from. Using the experience and knowledge gained from working as the director of Seminary Co-op Bookstores in Chicago, he celebrates and acknowledges what makes a good bookstore, even with the differences and variety between retailers. He recognizes that opening a bookstore isn't always a financially based decision, and is often not the smartest thing one could do with their money, but those who do it, do it because they want to curate a space for readers and book lovers. There is often no monetary incentive, and in its place is simply a love for community. And while this might seem evident to almost anyone who has interacted with a bookstore in some capacity, it is increasingly important for people to curate spaces for community during a time when everything seems to be moving online. With in-person bookstores, it's important to have a place for students to study, or grab a title last minute that's required for a class. It's important to provide spaces for people who are searching for connection, those who thrive on face-to-face conversations. To some extent, the internet is a useful tool when connecting long-distance friends, or hosting online book groups, but in the end, it doesn't really fill the hole that in-person shopping does.

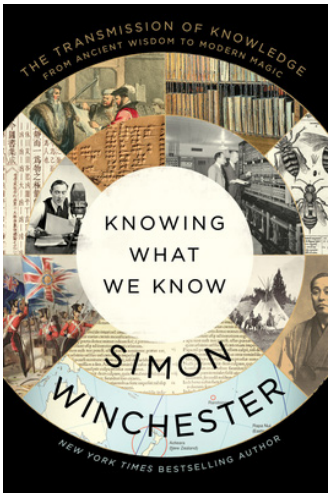
Regarding ethics in publishing, this celebration and conversation of bookstores and their physical inventories is incredibly important during a time when there are more options for book purchasing, specifically online. While companies such as Amazon offer books at a cheaper price with quick shipping, there is no "experience" while book shopping online. There's no conversation with a bookseller, no wandering through the aisles, no flipping through potential buys. Furthermore, if one was to buy all of their novels from a website, there wouldn't be as specific of a curation as there may be in person. Algorithms will recommend what's popular within the genre you're reading, or

what authors are similar, but oftentimes it's a lot of the same, and makes it more difficult to discover smaller authors or less popular titles – it is often more difficult to discover specific niches in an electronic space. Online book buying, especially from retailers that are not small businesses or are not book focused, does not provide the sense of community and connection often associated with independent bookstores.

I would recommend *In Praise of Good Bookstores* to anyone who wants to know more about the passion that goes into their favorite small businesses and independent bookstores, as well as those who are interested in the relationship between themselves, booksellers, and the titles they read and love.

Book Review: *Knowing What We Know* by Simon Winchester

Reviewed by Alyssa Gluf



What is knowledge? How do we gain it, how do we keep and share it, and what do we do with it? Journalist and writer Simon Winchester explores these questions extensively in *Knowing What We Know*, guiding us through the vast history of knowledge-sharing in its many forms through historical (and some personal) anecdotes. Chapter by chapter, he examines different methods of teaching and thinking, inventions that have enhanced our ability to share and gain knowledge, and moments in history that exemplify the ways information can be manipulated to suit various purposes. In the end, the reader is asked to confront how the process of thinking is changing, and what this could mean for our future.

Starting with the question of what knowledge is, *Knowing What We Know* has a lot of ground to cover, from cuneiform on clay tablets to chatGPT-generated "poems". Winchester writes passionately on what knowledge is, how we gain it, how we share it, and how we use it for good or ill, through stories of history's greatest minds and pivotal inventions. There are amusing accounts of people attempting to physically amass all of the knowledge in the world,

juxtaposed with sobering photos of the Vietnam War that changed public opinion on U.S. involvement. Interwoven with these stories are fascinating personal accounts from Winchester's journalist career, including being present for the Bloody Sunday massacre and testifying in court against the false narrative being told by the British army.

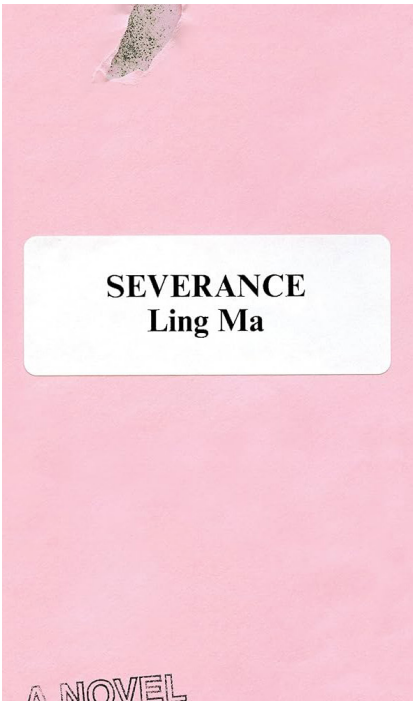
Knowing What We Know is a bit of an undertaking to read. History buffs and scholars in general will enjoy the amount of detail and any reader will have an expanded vocabulary by the end of the book. At times, the first half of the book can feel like Winchester truly is trying to go through every bit of knowledge there is, in a way where it isn't easy to tell where things are going. At one point the reader is shown a long list of different newspaper names and at another point, we are told step-by-step how to find a boat's exact position on the sea without a GPS.

The latter half of the book becomes more engrossing as it explores the moral complications of how we frame the knowledge we share. The stories of Winchester's personal experiences are particularly compelling and bring a more personal feel to the otherwise very academic writing. Elements like tales of watching a woman start a free school in a poverty-stricken town in India, or of speaking to a Chinese student who did not know about the Tiananmen Square massacre, enhance the book's points by showing the small-scale, everyday effects of how knowledge is transmitted. The book's final analysis on whether or not AI removes the need for us to think for ourselves leaves the reader examining their own thoughts in what feels like a fitting, satisfying end to a book about thinking.

Through the stories it tells, *Knowing What We Know* shines a spotlight on the ethical issues that arise when people teach, inform, and interpret. Knowledge is often kept and controlled by those in positions of power–mainly white men or government leaders, as Winchester points out. Governments can wipe incidents like the Tiananmen Square massacre from generational memory, while journalists on the ground can wrest the control of truth from any one particular narrative by publishing a photo. Knowledge is how we learn from the past, but Winchester shows how easily it can be shaped if we are not careful enough to examine for ourselves. Now, in a world where we rely on machines to gather information and deposit it at our feet, it is more important than ever to be aware of the filters through which we are told about the world.

Book Review: *Severance* by Ling Ma

Reviewed by Alexus Wall



Some apocalypses arrive with fire. Ling Ma's *Severance* begins with office routines, production schedules, and a woman who keeps going to work anyway. That is what makes the novel so unsettling. Its deepest horror is not chaos, but routine: the deadening pull of work, the comfort of repetition, and the quiet way people are absorbed into systems that no longer serve them. For readers interested in ethics, labor, and cultural production, *Severance* offers more than a survival story. It offers a warning.

The novel follows Candace Chen, a millennial office worker in New York City whose job involves overseeing the production of Bibles manufactured overseas. As Shen Fever spreads and the city slowly empties, Candace continues going to work, clinging to routine even as everything around her unravels. Its opening line, "The End begins before you are ever aware of it." perfectly captures the novel's movement. In *Severance*, collapse is not sudden. It is gradual, procedural, and embedded in everyday life.

One of the novel's strengths is how effectively Ma tells the story by centering repetition, numbness, and routine.That choice makes the social critique much sharper. Candace's decision to keep reporting to the office sounds absurd, but it is believable, perhaps because many of us know what it feels like to keep performing normalcy in the middle of dysfunction. That is where much of the horror of the book lives. It is also what makes the novel feel like such a powerful allegory for modern life.

From an ethical perspective, Candace's work in Bible production raises questions about commodification, labor, and the uneasy relationship between meaning and profit. A sacred text becomes just another object in a global supply chain. In that sense, the novel seems to suggest that industries built around culture and meaning are not immune from becoming hollowed out by routine and commerce. Readers in the publishing industry may find this especially resonant. *Severance* reflects concerns that feel familiar to the field: invisible labor, outsourcing, burnout, and systems that depend on people continuing to produce even when the purpose behind the work has become thin.

Ma is effective in her critique of modern dependence and consumerism. Early in the novel, Candace remarks, "We didn't know how to survive so we Googled everything". The line is humorous, but it also reveals how removed people have become from direct knowledge, self-trust, and each other.

The detached voice is one of the novel's most intriguing qualities, though it may not work for every reader. At times, I found myself putting the book down, not because it lacked insight, but because Candace's emotional distance can make the narrative feel cold. Still, that distance fits the novel's larger themes of numbness and repetition. Not all readers will agree with this point, particularly those who prefer more emotionally expressive protagonists or stronger interpersonal dynamics. The later sections involving the group of survivors are also less gripping than the portions set in New York. A few of the secondary characters feel more symbolic than fully developed, which slightly weakens the novel's momentum.

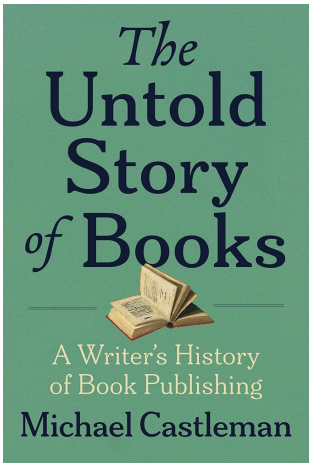
Even so, *Severance* remains a thoughtful and well-crafted novel because its style supports its message. By the end, the novel broadens its critique beyond Candace's personal experience, observing, "To live in a city is to take part in and to propagate its impossible systems." That line captures the novel's larger significance. It is not just about surviving the end of the world; it is about the systems people uphold every day, often without question, and the emptiness that can emerge when productivity replaces purpose.

Although *Severance* is not a traditional text on ethics in publishing, it still fits meaningfully within those conversations. It adds to current discussions

about labor, value, and cultural production by showing how systems built around meaning can become detached from the people within them. I would recommend this novel to readers in publishing, to scholars interested in labor and cultural critique, and to general readers drawn to literary fiction that is both unsettling and observant. Despite some emotional distance and a less engaging supporting cast, *Severance* is well worth reading for anyone interested in the ethics of work, the cost of routine, and the quiet violence of impossible systems.

Book Review: *The Untold Story of Books* by Michael Castleman

Reviewed by Brianna Lantz



The Untold Story of Books takes readers through the history of publishing and bookselling in three major eras of the book business. From the Gutenberg Press to the current age of digital publication, Michael Castleman leaves few corners unexplored of the long-standing industry that is constantly evolving.

Castleman, a long-time author with over 50 years of experience in the publishing industry, spent a major portion of that time researching the history of publishing. Drawing on his own personal notes, articles saved over the years, and a four-volume, 3000-page publication, he created an in-depth account of books, full of surprising facts and insights.

In the early history of publishing, reading and book production were rare and often controversial. Publishing was done by scribes who handwrote texts, making books both labor-intensive and expensive. At the time, monarchs, popes, and bishops alike feared that once literacy became widespread, they would no longer have any control about what information was being released. With the invention of the Gutenberg Press, text was able to be copied and printed accurately, getting rid of the need for scribes. Over the next few hundreds of years, printing presses spread worldwide, allowing for mass production of text.

This shift lends to the second era of the book business, where publishers began to see and understand the profit that stood to be gained from book publishing, and then moved onto now, the third era of book business: the digital age.

Ethically, one of the book's most relevant themes is the long history of piracy and copyright. In the early stages of publishing, it was relatively easy for both the public and the publishers to reproduce authors' work without prior permission. With no copyright laws, creators had little protection, and the industry had few procedures when it came to addressing and potentially stopping piracy. At the time, authors were seemingly less concerned with this, as it was sometimes frowned upon to accept payment for written work. But over time, more protections and laws were put into place to make sure that piracy and theft of text was no longer possible on the large scale that it was happening. Castleman's greatest strength is his ability to make the history of publishing feel both accessible and relevant to current conversations about authorship, ownership, and access.

The Untold Story of Books provides unexpected parallels between the current publishing industry and its original format. It is a work for both readers and creators of books, for those who want to learn more about the industry, and anyone who is searching for an untapped part of history.

Case Studies

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Beyond the Bamboo Ceiling

Ethics of Representation and Equity for Asian Americans in Trade Publishing

Kaitlin Phillips

Introduction

In the years since 2020, the U.S. trade publishing industry has made high-profile commitments to diversify its workforce and catalogs. Diversity statements and recruitment initiatives position publishers as responsive to calls for equity, yet statistics and testimonies suggest these efforts often translate more into optics than transformation. Diversity cannot be reduced to a number on a spreadsheet; what matters is who holds decision-making power over acquisitions, budgets, and publishing strategy.

The "bamboo ceiling" names a related problem: Asian Americans are present within publishing but face barriers against meaningful advancement and authority. Aggregated industry data further obscure subgroup differences, masking inequities within the category itself. This case study examines how the bamboo ceiling operates in trade publishing through industry data, testimony, and cross-industry research.

Despite public commitments to inclusion, U.S. trade publishing continues to ethically fail Asian Americans by sustaining leadership inequities and reducing identity to a marketing tool. Addressing this failure requires both ethical accountability and structural reform that redistributes authority in hiring, promotion, and resource allocation.

Defining the Bamboo Ceiling

The term "bamboo ceiling," coined by Jane Hyun in 2005, parallels the "glass ceiling" metaphor describing invisible barriers preventing women from advancing into leadership roles (Gong et al. 1). In trade publishing, the bamboo ceiling describes structural and cultural barriers that limit Asian Americans' advancement into positions shaping acquisitions, marketing priorities, and long-term editorial strategy, despite their presence throughout the workforce. Research identifies three recurring factors reinforcing this pattern: the "model minority" myth, cultural differences in communication and leadership norms, and misconceptions about leadership ambition.

Recent data from the Lee and Low Diversity Baseline Survey show that 7.8% of the publishing workforce identifies as "Asian/Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander/South Asian/Southeast Indian," compared to 6.3% of executives (Jiménez et al.). Although this difference appears small, it reflects a decline in representation at higher levels of authority. In an industry where more than 70% of executives identify as White, even modest gaps translate into limited influence over acquisitions, budgets, and long-term investment decisions (Jiménez et al.). Given that Asian Americans are among the most highly educated demographic groups in the United States, this decline suggests barriers to advancement rather than lack of qualification (Gee et al. 16).

These statistics also mask disparities within the category itself. The Diversity Baseline Survey aggregates East, South, and Southeast Asians alongside Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander populations, despite differences in professional experiences and advancement patterns (Jiménez et al.). Research in other industries shows that East Asians are often stereotyped as deferential, while South Asians may be perceived as more assertive, producing different leadership outcomes (Nunes). However, because publishing data remains aggregated, this case study uses "Asian Americans" as a collective term while acknowledging its limitations; the absence of disaggregated data is itself part of the ethical problem.

The Bamboo Ceiling Elsewhere

The underrepresentation of Asian Americans in executive roles within publishing reflects a broader national pattern. Because industry-specific data remains aggregated, research from other sectors provides important context. In Silicon Valley companies, Asians make up "27.2% of the professional workforce, but only 13.9% of executives" (Gee et al. 3). Similarly, analyses of S&P 500

companies found just 16 Asian CEOs in 2017 compared to 440 White CEOs, even though Asians represented roughly 6% of the U.S. population at the time (Nunes). These patterns suggest that the decline from workforce representation to executive authority is systemic rather than unique to publishing, reinforcing the interpretation of similar disparities within trade publishing.

Factors Reinforcing the Bamboo Ceiling

As previously mentioned, research suggests that three recurring factors reinforce the bamboo ceiling within publishing: the "model minority" myth, cultural differences in communication and leadership norms, and misconceptions about leadership ambition. Together, these forces shape how Asian American professionals are perceived and evaluated within workplace hierarchies.

The "Model Minority" Myth

In 1966, the "model minority" myth was coined to leverage Asian Americans' proximity to Whiteness and frame Asian immigrants as non-threatening, particularly in the aftermath of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act and the 1942 incarceration of Japanese Americans (Gong et al. 2). The phrase has since evolved into a narrative that obscures "the existence of systemic and structural racism" not only against Asians but other racial minority groups as well (Gong et al. 2).

As Gong et al. explain, by "stereotyping Asian Americans as high achievers, those with strengths outside of academics… are often marginalized and deemed as 'failures' or 'outliers'" (2). The assumption that Asian Americans will succeed without structural support can result in heightened expectations and unequal standards of evaluation. In professional settings, they may be expected to perform at consistently high levels while being granted less grace for error than their White counterparts. When those inflated expectations are not met, normal variation in performance may be interpreted as a deficiency rather than development, contributing to slower promotion rates and restricted leadership opportunities.

Cultural Differences

Advancement in American corporate environments often depends on self-promotion and visible assertion—expectations rooted in individualistic norms that equate confidence with leadership potential. However, many East and Southeast Asian cultural traditions emphasize humility, harmony, and collective

success. As Gee et al. note, "As aptly expressed in the popular Japanese proverb, 'the nail that sticks out will be hammered' and 'the quacking duck gets shot', Asian culture is more concerned with the dangers of speaking out. By contrast, in Western cultures, we are advised that 'the squeaky wheel gets the grease'" (17). In workplaces that reward visibility, modesty may be misinterpreted as disengagement or lack of ambition, shaping evaluations of leadership readiness.

Misconceptions about Leadership Ambition

Another common explanation for the bamboo ceiling is the claim that Asian Americans lack interest in leadership roles (Gong et al. 3). However, research contradicts this assumption, finding "no significant difference being found in leadership motivation amongst different ethnic groups" (Gong et al. 3). In fact, "[i]n a survey conducted by the Center for Work Life Policy, 64% of Asians aspired to high-ranking positions compared to 52% of Whites," indicating strong leadership aspirations among Asian professionals (Gong et al. 3).

The persistence of this misconception reflects how cultural expression of ambition is interpreted in the workplace. When leadership is defined primarily through Western norms of assertiveness, alternative expressions of ambition may go unrecognized. The result is not a lack of desire for advancement but a mismatch between cultural expression and institutional expectation.

Structural Authority and Tokenism

The effects of the bamboo ceiling in publishing extend beyond representation statistics. When Asian Americans remain underrepresented in executive roles, they have limited influence over consequences with true impact. Decision-making authority shapes not only careers but also the narratives that reach readers. Without diverse leadership, publishing risks reproducing existing cultural priorities under the language of inclusion.

Although recent surveys show a gradual decline in overall Whiteness within publishing, more than 76% of staff still identify as White as of 2023 (Jiménez et al.). This demographic concentration allows representation to function symbolically rather than structurally. Token hires may signal progress without altering who controls budgets or strategy, making diversity visible while leadership remains concentrated.

A 2021 Scholarly Kitchen article highlights this dynamic, observing that "it is unlikely that the few non- white… people have any kind of demonstrative power or agency to push against the normative status quo standards" (McLaughlin). Without genuine authority, diverse staff remains constrained.

As another publishing professional writes, "I consistently find a self-serving equation of 'diversity' (an outcome) with 'antiracism' (a practice) in our industry. The appearance of progress and harmony stands in for difficult, never-ending work, and ultimately, the relinquishment of privileges," highlighting how diversity efforts can preserve existing hierarchies while appearing reformist (The Scholarly Kitchen).

Ethical Analysis

A deontological framework emphasizes moral duties and treating individuals as ends in themselves rather than tools for an outcome. This helps clarify the ethical stakes of the bamboo ceiling in publishing. When Asian American professionals are hired or showcased primarily to signal diversity rather than to recognize expertise or leadership potential, their identities are instrumentalized and reduced to symbols of inclusion. This dynamic limits meaningful participation in decision-making processes and conflicts with the industry's stated commitments to representation and equity. Respect, in this context, requires not just visibility but empowerment and autonomy within the structures that shape cultural production.

John Rawls's concept of the "veil of ignorance," which asks whether systems remain fair when individuals do not know their own position within them, offers a second lens. Applied to publishing, this perspective draws attention to how advancement tied to culturally specific leadership norms can reproduce unequal opportunities. When evaluation standards privilege narrow expressions of assertiveness, alternative leadership styles may be overlooked, reinforcing existing disparities. Greater transparency in promotion criteria and decision-making processes then becomes less a matter of preference and more a question of fairness. In publishing, where acquisition and investment decisions shape cultural narratives, these structural inequities extend beyond individual careers.

Practical Import

For publishing to sustain its role as a space where diverse voices are heard, inclusion must extend beyond symbolic commitments. When diversity initiatives remain performative, trust erodes within the workplace and among the audiences the industry serves. As Dan Sinykin and Richard So note in The Atlantic, publishing often embraces diversity when it is fashionable but fails to sustain it once attention fades. Publishers may generate diverse "editorial fanfare, then fail to provide adequate investment in [subsequent divisions]; the titles [are set

up to fail,] underperform, and… provide publishers with an excuse to disinvest" (Sinykin and So). When racial minorities are hired without meaningful support and face discrimination, retention declines (Sinykin and So).

The lack of Asian American and other nonwhite leadership directly affects which books succeed and how "diverse stories" are perceived. Real transformation requires "making serious concessions within the traditional budgets" (Sinykin and So). Without diverse decision-makers in these areas, investment priorities continue to center White readerships and sustain the assumption that White women remain publishing's primary market (Sinykin and So). As one expert explained, the absence of nonwhite professionals in marketing and sales "means that they cannot reach the readers that the book needs to go to unless they're being directed by someone from that community" (Sinykin and So). Limited internal diversity narrows both creative and economic possibilities by shaping how books are positioned and who they are imagined to reach.

The practical import is clear: diversity without structural empowerment is unsustainable, and failure to equitably support diverse professionals weakens the industry's cultural legitimacy. Superficial diversity paired with homogeneous leadership restricts innovation and audience growth. Meaningful progress requires structural investment and accountability; the ability "to keep them from repeating the cycles of the past by seeing beyond the shortsighted demands of short-term financial growth toward a more flourishing literary culture for all" (Sinykin and So).

Recommendations

Addressing the bamboo ceiling in publishing requires structural change. Reform must occur at both organizational and interpersonal levels to ensure Asian American professionals are empowered to thrive. Structurally, publishers must prioritize redistribution of power and investment. Leadership should expand its definition of diversity to include equitable resource allocation, not only in editorial but in areas where inequity remains "most visible and most consequential," such as marketing, publicity, and sales (Sinykin and So). Genuine transformation requires sustained funding and accountability mechanisms that tie leadership performance to measurable DEI outcomes (Sinykin and So). Regular data audits can further promote transparency and help dismantle existing hierarchies (Sinykin and So).

Workplace culture must also support advancement. Yun Saksena, via the Journal of Dental Education, emphasizes that management must actively mentor and sponsor underrepresented professionals while fostering "psychological

safety and an atmosphere that fosters open communication" (683). Managers should include diverse perspectives in decision-making, recruit from varied sources, and provide honest feedback that enables growth (Saksena 683). Asian American employees should likewise be supported through initiatives that develop leadership and communication skills and expand professional networks (Saksena 683). These efforts create conditions for authentic growth rather than symbolic inclusion.

Conclusion

The persistence of the bamboo ceiling in publishing reveals how systemic bias, cultural misunderstanding, and tokenistic inclusion constrain Asian Americans' ability to thrive in an industry that claims to value diversity. Rooted in the "model minority" myth and reinforced by Western leadership norms, these barriers limit advancement and shape which voices are deemed worthy of investment. Inequities in leadership, mentorship, and decision-making perpetuate a cycle where Asian Americans are seen as contributors but rarely as visionaries. As the ethical analysis demonstrates, treating individuals as ends in themselves and building fair systems requires more than surface-level reform. The future of publishing depends on empowering diverse professionals to lead and shape its cultural trajectory. Dismantling the bamboo ceiling through structural change, authentic mentorship, and equitable investment can produce not only a more inclusive workforce but a more representative literary landscape. For Asian Americans, breaking this barrier is not simply upward mobility but reclaiming creative and cultural agency in an industry that shapes how the world reads and imagines.

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Interviews

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Ethics in Ink: A Conversation with Richard Ovenden

Author of Burning the Books: A History of the Deliberate Destruction of Knowledge

Interview conducted by Alyssa Gluf, Content Committee, George Washington Journal of Ethics in Publishing

Introduction

Burning the Books: A History of the Deliberate Destruction of Knowledge offers a warning about the fragility of free societies in an age where institutions of knowledge are frequently destroyed, neglected, censored, and weaponized for political gain. Written by Richard Ovenden, head of the Bodleian Library, the book explores why and how knowledge has been stored, destroyed, and lost throughout history so we may learn how to protect it in the present. As purveyors of information and narratives, publishers have a part in this dilemma through their editorial decisions and responses to societal pressure.

Ovenden and I spoke over Zoom from an ocean away—from New York and Oxford—to discuss new developments since his book was written, the

responsibility of publishers in preserving knowledge, and what the average person can do to help.

What follows is an edited excerpt from our conversation, condensed for clarity and length.

On Recent Challenges to Preserving Knowledge

GWJEP: *Burning the Books* came out in 2020. What would you say has changed most about the ethical landscape since then?

Richard Ovenden: I don't think there's a single answer to that. There's been a continuation of the literal destruction of knowledge in the form of archival and library institutions, and there's been an escalation since 2020 of that physical violence afforded to libraries, particularly the wholesale destruction of libraries in the hundreds in Ukraine has been quite striking.

Richard Ovenden (cont.): The other change has been in the U.S., where the war on public and school libraries over contested titles has reached near-epidemic levels. There have been leakages of that epidemic across the Atlantic, as well as north of the border between America and Canada.

Richard Ovenden (cont.): Something that is entirely new but moved up to a new level of intensity and social impact has been the degree to which major technology companies have exercised their control over the platforms of knowledge. Part of that has been the continued rise and weaponization of social media. Then, the rise of generative AI and the formation of large language models, largely through extraction of knowledge on the open web and increasingly through wholesale piracy, has been a new thing that was not present in 2020 or before I was writing the book.

After reflecting on new challenges, the conversation led to Ovenden's thoughts on recent developments on the matter and how people can support further improvements.

On Hope for the Future

GWJEP: Can you point to a development since 2020 that gives you hope about the fight to preserve knowledge?

Richard Ovenden: I do see signs of hope. I see extraordinary resilience in the librarians in Ukraine. They adapted enormously quickly to support their communities. I've seen in America how individual librarians have been incredibly brave and committed in the way that they have responded to personal attacks in many cases, and then the organization of the library community through the American Library Association for toolkits for support, legal

funding, and crowdfunding for legal defense. We've seen many cases where the various attempts to control through policy were overturned in the courts, so pan–America and its alliance between its library organizations has been really heartening to see.

Richard Ovenden (cont.): What I try to do through *Burning the Books* is raise the profile of libraries in the public discourse and public policy debate. That has continued to move forward, and I think people are beginning to see the value of libraries. I definitely do see signs of hope, but I'm absolutely the opposite of complacent. I think one has to continue to redouble one's efforts and keep fighting on multiple fronts.

On the Average Person's Role

GWJEP: In the book you recommend solutions like funding and policy support for protecting and maintaining information. Is there anything the average person can realistically do to move the needle, or is it largely a systemic issue?

Richard Ovenden: I do think there are things ordinary people can do, absolutely. The public policy around libraries is a political matter. The funds that are available to public libraries and municipal libraries are voted on by elected officials. The lobbying of those officials is only effective when it comes from voters—from ordinary people. They need to express their views and write to their elected officials. It's really as simple as that. That's one thing, and it's a critical thing.

Richard Ovenden (cont.): Secondly, you need to use the library, get a library card, check books out, borrow them online, go and sit in reading rooms, order books from closed stacks. Attend lectures, use the facilities, show through your physical presence or your online clicking that the library is a vital, useful thing.

Richard Ovenden (cont.): Thirdly, where you can, give money. That's even just going into a library café and buying a cappuccino, donating money, or getting involved as a volunteer. Doing anything that you can to support the financial well-being of the library sector, because we cannot be dependent on public funding alone.

Richard Ovenden (cont.): Fourthly, work with young people. Encourage young people to use libraries, because we need that younger demographic to see their value and to utilize their energy.

Richard Ovenden (cont.): Fifthly, what can you do that is the opposite of complacency? We've been too reticent. Society needs to be engaged with the whole issue, and some of that is those specific things like using libraries or helping financially. Partly, it's just that general awareness.

Having discussed the role of the general public, Ovenden offered insight on how publishers contribute to the preservation of knowledge and the fight against censorship.

On the Publisher's Role

GWJEP: Librarians and archivists are obvious guardians of knowledge, as *Burning the Books* highlights. Do you think publishers have similar ethical responsibilities to preserve knowledge? Sometimes that can combine with legal risk, harm to a person's reputation, and pressure over censorship.

Richard Ovenden: I think publishers do have a role beyond the simple commercial. Obviously as the publishing sector has become more aggregated, the commercial imperative can often take precedence. There's nothing wrong with making money with publishing books, but the issue is when those decisions limit unnecessarily the circulation of ideas, the freedom of people to choose what to read, or the way in which publishing maintains veracity, faithfulness, and truth. The mere act of publishing creates a unit of knowledge that can be recycled and reused over time. Those aspects can be often forgotten about in the publishing process.

Richard Ovenden (cont.): I think where you find editorial decisions being influenced by political issues and censorship, a publisher won't want to put their employees at risk of ending up in jail. At the same time, there are principles about the free circulation of ideas as being one of the pillars of an open society.

GWJEP: Right. Resistance has some necessary risk.

Richard Ovenden: Yes, absolutely. And there's never an easy answer to those kinds of things. It can be extremely difficult.

Speaking on the ethical responsibility of publishers, Ovenden elaborated on a related point in his book: archiving information online. We wrapped up with his thoughts on what he wants people to do after reading his book, encouraging readers to act on what they've learned.

On Privacy vs. Public Record Online

GWJEP: Your book talks a little about the tension between privacy and the public record, including peoples' desire to erase their traces online. What do you think about balancing privacy rights with the societal value of preserving things people say and do online?

Richard Ovenden: There are different aspects to this. For people in the public domain who are paid officials or elected representatives, I think there is a societal need to preserve what they say in the public sphere. That is part of

what it is to have an open society where you can hold elected officials or people in positions of power accountable for their statements, and they have to be mindful of that. I think where it becomes trickier is where it's material that was never intended for publication, and in the past this might have taken the form of a telephone call, but nowadays it's quite often using digital communications where people type out an SMS message, or a WhatsApp message. I think society hasn't quite caught up to the fact that this is written communication as we saw in the cases where individuals have been caught out by using encrypted communication technologies and where they should have recognized that these were subject to the prevailing archival legislation. That's where legislation and codes of practice need to be constantly updated, because the technology moves so fast.

Richard Ovenden (cont.): Where it becomes murkier is where it's not anything to do with the formation of public policy, where individuals will quite often transact very personal and private issues using those same technologies. The ability for those to be preserved unwittingly and shared without the knowledge of individuals has become a massive concern. I do hear accounts of politicians going back to relying on telephone calls for private conversation and being very alert to the fact that anything written down will find its way into public circulation. I think there's a risk there that we end up with the future being denied information that will be of long-term value because of that desire for the immediacy of access to be eliminated as a possibility.

Richard Ovenden (cont.): We have plenty of examples—we have the member of the First World War Cabinet who wrote down various things about his own views, remarks about things that had happened in cabinet meetings which give a color beyond the official record of those discussions, which really helps us to understand why the world went to the most catastrophic war. There's a social value in that. But I think if he felt there was a risk of that coming into the public domain in 1914 or 1915 he would have never written it down, and we would have lost that. That's what's happening now, and I feel that's unfortunate.

On Takeaways from the Book

GWJEP: When readers finish *Burning the Books*, rather than just thinking differently, what do you want them to do differently with the information you've given?

Richard Ovenden: I want them to think differently about the institutions that society charges with the preservation of knowledge, and to think about

the social value of the preservation of knowledge. That [thinking] might turn into doing positive actions. It might make them think about the photos they take on their smartphones; letting them sit there on the cloud or on the phone's digital infrastructure is not a safe thing to do if you actually would like them to be kept. So sort of thinking more actively about that and thinking about not relying on one single backup routine but having several different ones where you can exercise the "lots of copies keeps stuff safe" acronym. Also some of those actions we were talking about earlier: lobbying your elected officials, lobbying those in positions of administrative power, voting accordingly, using your library and archive, helping to support them financially.

Richard Ovenden (cont.): I'd like people to actually use thinking and doing in the same moment. I wouldn't want people to either just sit and think great thoughts and do nothing, or to write to their local elected officials and not continue to think about it because the best libraries are ones that endure. They are stable institutions of our society sometimes lasting over centuries or even millennia, and that has an enormous value in a society that changes so rapidly. These places are kind of oases of knowledge. That in itself, that stability, is something that we should value and treasure.

GWJEP: So not just shaking up complacency, but keeping it in mind as times change.

Richard Ovenden: Absolutely.

Closing Thoughts

In discussing what has changed in only six years, Ovenden made it clear that preserving knowledge is an undertaking that requires continual awareness and effort from everyone, from elected officials to young students. It was heartening to hear Ovenden's words of hope, but we must remain vigilant for the myriad of forces—whether apathy, malice, or fear—that threaten our ability to record and learn from the world around us.

Author Bio

Richard Ovenden is Bodley's librarian and the Helen Hamlyn director of the University Libraries (the senior executive officer of the Bodleian Libraries), and is responsible for their strategic oversight. He holds this post together with being the head of Gardens, Libraries, and Museums (GLAM). He has written extensively on the history of the book, on the history of photography, and on current concerns in the library, archive, and information worlds.

Ethics in Ink: A Conversation with Michael Castleman

Author of The Untold Story of Books

Interview conducted by Brianna Lantz, Content Committee, George Washington Journal of Ethics in Publishing

Introduction

In *The Untold Story of Books*, Michael Castleman, a long-time writer with over 50 years of experience in the industry, breaks down the history of publishing and bookselling into three distinctly different book businesses. Today, when book production relies heavily on digital technology, what Castleman calls the third book business, it is important to understand the history of all three business models, and how their ethics and conventions have changed over the years.

We spoke over Zoom to discuss how this book came to be, and what ethical and cultural contexts this book serves today. What follows is an edited excerpt from our conversation, which was condensed for clarity and length.

On Creative Form and Intent

GWJEP: What inspired you to write the history of books?

MC: I never set out to write a history of book publishing. I signed my first book contract way back in 1979 when I was in my late twenties, and at the time I thought that it might be productive for my career to research the book publishing industry. One was that when I talked to other authors and bookstore owners and book people and agents and everyone involved in publishing, I heard all sorts of contradictory messages.

MC (cont.): I wanted to research the industry and see if I could figure it out for myself. But I didn't have a lot of time. I had a job. I was writing magazine articles, I was writing books. I was raising children. So on the side, at night, I would read about book publishing. I read the memoirs of famous editors and publishers, and I read histories and I read punditry and I read pretty much anything I could get my hands on. I also kept files of publishing articles from *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New Yorker* and other publications. I don't think all my research helped my career in terms of my income, but it did answer many of my questions and it debunked some of the myths, so I felt like the effort was worth it.

MC (cont.): Around 2000, everything changed. The industrial publishing of the twentieth century, what I call the second book business, yielded to digital publishing in the twenty-first, and all of a sudden everything looked very different. I was thrown into a confusion, along with most other authors. I thought, "Everything's changing, what is going on?" So I struggled with that for about five years, and then thought, "Things are changing, and authors and the public don't really know about this and so maybe there's a book to be written on the history of book publishing that would talk about all these changes." It was at that point that I really put the history of book publishing under a microscope, and I came up with the structure of *The Untold Story of Books*, which talks about the three different publishing industries—the changes in word reproduction technology in the twenty-first century that upended the whole industry. I tried to make sense of the many changes. Reactions to *The Untold Story of Books* suggest that maybe I succeeded.

GWJEP: What was the research process like?

MC: I researched the book business for forty years. All of the sources I was reading, the famous writers, the famous editors and publishers, their perspectives mostly revolved around their own lives. Now their lives were important, but their perspectives were pretty myopic—chatty and personality-

driven. They made the industry look like it was run by cocktail parties, when in fact, it's a tough, cut-throat business. Then I came upon a book by Jason Epstein, who was a leading editor during the second half of the twentieth century. Around the millennium, he wrote a book called *Publishing: Past, Present, and Future* that talked about the economic history of book publishing in the United States since World War II. I was fascinated by this book because unlike a lot of the memoirs that I was reading, Epstein's discussed how economics and post–WW II cultural changes, for example the rise of suburbs, changed publishing. I was absolutely captivated by it, and I thought "this is what I want to pursue."

MC (cont.): By accident, I stumbled upon a massive, three thousand-page, four volume book called *A History of Book Publishing in the United States* that had been published in the mid–1970s. I tried to buy it but couldn't find it. I found one volume on sale for $1,800 bucks and I thought that's ridiculous. So I went to the San Francisco Public Library and they had one volume of it but not all four, which left me very frustrated. But then all of a sudden it turned out, a small press on Cape Cod reprinted all four volumes and was offering them for $500 bucks. So I thought, "All right, I'll spring for it." That tome was really terribly written; I mean, it was horrible. And I thought, "Oh God, can I actually wade through all this?" But I decided since this was like a hobby. I thought, "All right, I'll open volume one to page one and I'll just start reading and I'll take notes." It took me four years to claw my way through the four volumes and take about seventy-five pages of notes. That exercise informed a great deal of the information in *Untold Story*, from colonial publishing in America through to around 1970, and then my own files picked up, so there was continuity.

It was clear that through his years of research, Castleman had gained a deep understanding of the industry and its impacts on society, both positive and negative.

On Media and Cultural Relevancy

GWJEP: Do you feel like there is a similar sense of control and weariness around literacy today as there was in the early days of reading and publishing?

MC: The printing press, Gutenberg's press, freaked out the monarch of England and the popes and the bishops of the Catholic Church because they thought, "Oh my God, if anybody can get information, then we don't control it anymore and people can think things that we don't want them to think." That has been a recurring motif in publishing and all the mass media ever since. In fact, today you have a lot of people saying, "Oh, people are getting their information from Fox News, from TikTok." There's this panic that information

is out of control and that a lot of it is wrong, which a lot of it is. I hate to say it, but a lot of the information that's out there is pretty crummy and terrible and wrong. But that's the media environment we live in today. Anybody can publish anything, and they do, including lots of lies, and this has been a worry of people in power ever since the printing press was invented. In *The Untold Story* I go into how popes and monarchs tried to control printing presses and what they produced—and couldn't.

Castleman's thoughts on literacy control led easily into a conversation about AI use, and how it has affected the current industry.

On Ethics and Moral Dilemmas

GWJEP: You write about scribes losing their jobs due to the Gutenberg Press. Do you think there's a similar thing happening today with the growing use of AI?

MC: You know, I'm not a prophet. I don't peer into the future, but from what I see and from what I read, it's clear that AI is already putting entry-level coders out of work. I mean, I live in San Francisco, which is a tech hub, and all the big tech companies are laying off hundreds of people. In fact, some of them are laying off thousands because AI can do a lot of their jobs. And authors are terrified that AI is going to start writing books. There have already been scandals about AI generated books being sold on Amazon. It's a worry. I write for some websites, and now I have to check boxes that say, "This is human written not from AI." To me it's all kind of ironic because I love to write. I wouldn't use AI if I could, but you can't tell that to a high school junior when it's the night before the term paper is due and this kid is going to use AI to write his paper. That seems inevitable. I know people who teach in college who say that they no longer assign term papers because of the fear of AI. They make their students write in class.

While *The Untold Story of Books* focuses on the history of book publishing, I was interested in what else Castleman wanted readers to discover within the work.

On Takeaways from the Book

GWJEP: Beyond a deeper understanding of publishing history, what would you hope readers take away from reading your book?

MC: I wrote *The Untold Story* for two constituencies. One was serious readers who are interested in the publishing industry, and the other was authors who are trying to write and publish books. For readers, I hope that *The Untold*

Story of Books provides historical perspective that allows them to see how this industry actually evolved, how it actually developed, and why we have what we have today.

MC (cont.): For authors, I really want the book to provide a grounding in reality, and debunk the myths that their books are going to rocket out of the gate and ascend to the bestseller list. Only about one in five thousand titles becomes a bestseller. So you could fill Carnegie Hall with every seat taken by an author and just one of them would be on the bestseller list. So, it's important to give authors, I felt, a reality check of what their chances really are in this business and to push the message that unless you're on the bestseller list, writing books is not a career. Writing books is an expensive hobby, like world travel or playing golf or owning a boat. You have to put not just time into it, but also money. Most authors today spend more money on their books than they make from them. But my hope for authors is that they understand the reality of publishing, the world they actually inhabit, not just the myths.

Closing Thoughts

Castleman's passion for the publishing industry, as well as the amount of research completed for the work, is evident both in *The Untold Story of Books* and in our conversation. It felt important to have this conversation to understand how book production is always changing, and how factors that had effects at the beginning continue to influence the industry today. From literacy control to the implementation of new technology, professionals in the publishing industry have faced similar challenges throughout the entire history of books.

Author Bio

Award-winning San Francisco-based journalist Michael Castleman is "One of the nation's top health writers" (Library Journal). Over a fifty-year career, he's written fourteen consumer health and sexuality books, and more than 3,500 magazine and web articles. Recently, he's focused on the history of the book publishing industry with *The Untold Story of Books* (Unnamed Press, LA, 2024), now in its third printing.

Inside Publishing: A Conversation with Havilah Sciabbarrasi

Random House Books for Young Readers and Rodale Kids

Interview conducted by Savannah Aleksic, Content Committee, George Washington Journal of Ethics in Publishing

A graduate of the Columbia Publishing Course, Havilah Sciabbarrasi is currently working at Random House Books for Young Readers and Rodale Kids as an editorial assistant for two editors. While we spoke over Zoom, Havilah and I reminisced on our time working together at our undergraduate institution's literary magazine. During our conversation, Havilah spoke about the importance of intentional inclusion in editorial work, navigating bans on books for younger readers, and upholding authenticity across publishing mediums for various audiences. This connects the importance of inclusion and editorial responsibility in publishing, topics that resonate with the *GW Journal of Ethics in Publishing* (GWJEP) and the wider GW publishing community.

What follows is an edited excerpt from our conversation, condensed for clarity and length.

Havilah started by reflecting on the unique challenges she faced as an undergraduate student managing peers at a student-run magazine as it struggled to reach its audience.

On Joining the Industry

GWJEP: We first met when you were editor-in-chief of The Kudzu Review. What's one experience from that role that most directly shaped how you work in publishing now, and why?

Havilah: I think for me, it was retooling the magazine a bit. It's not one specific thing that I aimed to do, but Kudzu was a magazine that felt pretty secluded and not well known about on campus and it felt like we weren't taking advantage of all the ways that we could reach people.

Havilah (cont.): There were visions that I had of how I wanted us to connect within the team. I organized events that would encourage team bonding and find the areas where we weren't doing as well when it came to outreach. This included reaching people outside of the English department, spreading the word, having events that raised money and encouraging people to get to know their fellow peers.

Havilah (cont.): Not exactly the same thing, but that has become something that I've taken into my current job—finding new ways to reach people where they are when it comes to reading. One of Random House's core values is creating readers. That often means you are not necessarily curating books that you then hope people will find. It's finding out what people enjoy and then crafting books to meet them where they're at. It's a value that I think can translate across different disciplines.

Havilah (cont.): I've learned that you have to be extra thorough and examine where your sources are coming from. Don't accept things necessarily at face value. Do your due diligence and look further. It's a fast-paced industry, but one thing I have learned is the importance of slowing down and making sure that things are right the first time so that you don't have to go back and fix your own mistakes.

Our conversation shifted towards Havilah's experience at the 6-week intensive Columbia Publishing Program as a recent graduate from Florida State University.

On Early-Career Publishing Ethics

GWJEP: While you were in the Columbia Publishing Program and entering NYC publishing, was there a moment that challenged your expectations about

how the industry works ethically? What was the situation, and what did you take from it?

Havilah: The publishing course is a very intense, stressful experience especially if you know it's your dream already; you're kind of told that the Columbia course will be the ticket into the industry, but then the reality of it is that you get out what you put in. You're not guaranteed anything.

Havilah (cont.): As far as situations that challenged us ethically when it came to working together, [mainly it] was attribution. A lot of the time, you're wondering when it's right to take credit for work and to let other people take credit for work. When working together in a team, it's especially dicey because everyone's throwing ideas out there—it's hard to say who did what, and does it really matter as long as the work gets done? It's these questions that I had to navigate with other people because you're trying to put yourself into a position where you can be set up for success down the line. I know that's not a big ethics, capital "E", concern, but those interpersonal relationships are the backbone of publishing. Getting along with people and not sacrificing the work for the sake of your ego is really important.

Next, we explored preserving personal authenticity in navigating experiences across freelancing, internships, and creative passion projects.

On Staying Authentic Across Mediums

GWJEP: You've worked across small press, journalism/editing, and podcasting. What principles stay the same across all those formats, and what changes depending on the medium?

Havilah: The underlying thread through all of those things is a passion for seeing someone's vision of their work come to light while also creating an experience that I think doesn't alienate readers or listeners. There is something inclusive about everything that I believe I was trying to do. I'm thinking of, I used to work on fantasy manuscripts as an editorial assistant at a tiny indie press, and I was doing a lot of first reads and our mission was to publish stories that might have gotten marginalized. I remember working on manuscripts in our slush pile and my gut check was that it didn't feel authentic. There's little things like that that you have to be aware of because if you have a mission statement, you want to make sure that the work that you're putting out there reflects that.

Havilah (cont.): Podcasting started off as a school project at Florida State University, but it became so much more. It was this really fun space to talk about how pop culture and intersectionality cross over and often can start conversations. Sometimes it's a bit of a Trojan horse situation such as shows that reach a lot of people like Heated Rivalry. It can do so much work for

normalizing same-sex relationships. It's not trying to do that with a capital PSA but by being a well-written piece of work that people just genuinely enjoy; you are getting those conversations started in the ways that grassroots campaigning or social media posts can't.

Passion for reaching audiences across mediums created a natural transition to Havilah's current work at Random House Books for Young Readers and Rodale Kids, where she assists in promoting inclusivity efforts in uplifting diverse communities.

On Adjusting to Ethics in New Environments

GWJEP: Working as an editorial assistant on a children's imprint, what's been the biggest adjustment in how you think about audience, responsibility, and impact compared to your earlier work?

Havilah: I am now working on things that are going to children and teens, so there's a lot of scrutiny on the media that is being given to children now. My biggest responsibility is thinking about the stories that kids need to hear most. Right now, I'm working on a project that's addressing ongoing questions our society has about AI and agency and how it can be used and whether it even should be, but it's also talking about the process of coming out for children to their parents, especially parents who might not necessarily be warm and welcoming. It had a great underlying message of learning to be true to yourself in adversity. These are the things that are on my mind right now due to books being so easily banned.

Havilah (cont.): I also recently read a review of a book that I worked on last year called *When Tomorrow Burns* by Tae Keller. She won the Newbery Honor for *When You Trap a Tiger*. In this book, she has a character who has two dads and it's not even a huge part of the book, but there was a one star review written by someone who did not finish it because of that. It's frustrating because it's an example of casual representation, but it can lead to a loss of readership. I'm lucky PRH is very focused on keeping that a part of the experience for kids because all kids deserve to feel seen and heard. If they can't find that in their communities they should be able to find that in the books they read.

Our conversation drew to a close as we discussed the pressures of balancing market expectations with author visions, as well as strategies to uphold inclusive editorial practices across a large organization.

On Ethics in Children's Publishing

GWJEP: In children's publishing, how do sensitivity reads and inclusive

editorial practices show up in the workflow, and what do you think your ethical responsibility is as an editor when values, market pressures, and creative intent don't perfectly align?

Havilah: Sensitivity reads aren't always necessary, but they are a lot of the time for the projects that I work on. For one of our current projects, the author is prioritizing a story about a kid who's been in the foster care system and they want to see if this is reading as authentic. I'm in the process of looking for a sensitivity reader for someone who's been in the foster system to provide a thumbs up or thumbs down. There are examples where sensitivity readers aren't necessarily required because the author is speaking from their own experience, as a lot of stories we publish are quite personal and they're often writing the stories they wish they had when they were young.

Havilah (cont.): We had a meeting as a team a while ago where we were reading the book Erasure by Percival Everett and compared it to the movie American Fiction because both discuss the ways in which racial identity can show up in publishing and how it needs to be accurately represented. This goes back to not being the loudest voice in the room and deferring to people who would know better than you.

Havilah (cont.): I don't think there's a simple solution but you want the book to sell and reach people, which is what the author wants too, so in situations like that you're trying to stress the importance of having this book be in people's hands. Sometimes it doesn't always go the way you want, but you try to stress to the author the importance of getting this book in the hands of kids, which is why they wrote it in the first place, and book covers are an area where we might not be as married to a certain direction.

Havilah's reflections remind us that ethical practices in publishing can't be simplified, as empathy and authenticity can be the most important action when it comes to approaching life-long readers at a young age and lifting up voices historically underrepresented in children's and young adult literature.

Authoir Bio

Havilah Sciabbarrasi (she/her) is an editorial assistant at Random House Books for Young Readers and Rodale Kids. She supports two editors on picture books, middle grade, and young adult titles. She is also a bookseller at her local bookstore, Book Culture, and works as a freelance editor on World War II manuscripts. Based in NYC, she loves a good thrifting haul, bookstore crawl, or cold drink of Mountain Dew.

GWJEP Staff Interview: Claire Bianchi

Acquisitions Committee Lead

Biography

Claire Bianchi is a second-year student in the Master of Professional Studies in Publishing program at George Washington University. In her first year, she served on the Strategy & Sustainability Committee and now leads Acquisitions for the George Washington University Press (GWUP) initiative. She earned her bachelor's degrees in Economics and Spanish from the University of Virginia and brings a decade of experience across finance, marketing, and content strategy. She currently works at Amazon Web Services (AWS) as a Content Manager and Field Engagement Lead, combining her analytical background with a passion for literature and publishing innovation.

Can you describe your role in the Press Acquisition Committee and what your key responsibilities are?

Until the press has established an editorial board and takes further steps toward implementation, my focus is on identifying opportunities among the scholarly publishing community, which involves activities like assisting with

society membership applications, speaking with faculty, and collaborating on presentations about publishing best practices.

What drew you to join this particular department of the journal?

As a second-year in the MPS in Publishing program, I've found throughout my coursework that I am especially interested in the editorial side of publishing. I find the concept of building a list of books, creating a brand for oneself as an editor, and establishing that trust with your readers as to what they can expect from your publications, particularly compelling. I was curious to understand how this might work for a newly formed press and saw this department as a great learning opportunity to apply what I've learned in this program by giving back to GW's publishing initiatives.

What are your hopes for the future of ethics in publishing, and how do you see your committee contributing to that vision?

My hopes for the future of ethics in publishing revolve around two key themes: transparency and community. I believe with the threat of AI-generated content – from manuscripts to peer reviews to editing – publishers need to be increasingly transparent with their editorial standards and practices around AI usage. While I think it is unreasonable to imagine a future with zero AI involved in publishing (in fact, I think publishers may be able to benefit in certain business areas if used mindfully), I would like to see a future where the combination of human-AI involvement that went into publications is clearly disclosed. I believe this level of transparency is the only way we can move forward with full confidence in the long-standing integrity of the publishing industry. Secondly, I believe the power of community to uphold ethical standards is often underestimated. Organizations must hold one another accountable for ethical practices around not only AI usage, but in areas of accessibility, peer review, data privacy, and bias. I believe the acquisitions committee of GWUP can help contribute to this community effort uniquely in our capacity as a teaching press by offering forums for peers in the industry to discuss their solutions to and challenges with ethical issues, and to help develop these standards over time.

How do you think the Press Acquisition Committee contributes to the larger conversation around ethics in academic publishing?

Acquisitions play a critical role in the conversation around ethics in academic publishing, as we must face complicated ethical questions throughout the

entire editorial process, from considering manuscripts and other content for submission, to managing peer review, to positioning the content in the market. We must ask tough questions around whether content aligns with our mission and vision for an ethical publication, and determine whether to be the amplifier of this content. It is critical that the acquisitions committee understand the impact of our decisions and actions on the industry - by upholding ethical standards in our acquisitions process, we are ensuring reliable, trustworthy contributions to the greater scholarly community.

Do you think there are areas of publishing ethics where personal opinions should have more influence? If so, where?

This is a complicated question and, as it goes with most discussions around ethics, I don't think there is a simple answer. However, at the heart of ethics is one major imperative: do no harm. Thinking about publishing ethics in the context of this key pillar, I believe certain practices are not at all subjective; publishers must not discriminate, published works should be truthful and properly attributed, scholarly works deserve unbiased peer review, and there should be transparency, accountability, and integrity in all aspects of the publishing process. I believe personal opinions can come into play in areas of editorial judgment like which stories to tell, how to approach messaging and audience targeting, or decisions around a publisher's mission and vision and how to align that to their content. But personal opinions should have no influence when it comes to universally objective ethical standards.

What are you hoping to accomplish in your role in the Press Acquisition Committee?

I would like to leave the press, which is, of course, still in development, in an even better position than when I started. I truly believe the GWUP and *GWJEP* have a bright future ahead, and I hope my contributions as the first Press Acquisitions Committee Lead will enable future leaders to continue to grow the press and the *GWJEP* in a way that is both innovative and ethical, continuously raising the bar for student-run publications.

GWJEP Staff Interview: Kiriana McAffee

Strategy and Sustainability Committee Lead

Biography

Kiriana (Kira) McAffee is a second year graduate student in George Washington University's publishing program. After obtaining her undergraduate degree in English Literature from Brigham Young University–Idaho, she has spent several years as a grant proposal writer for the Consortium of Universities of the Washington Metropolitan Area, a higher education nonprofit in DC. She has also worked as a freelance writer and editor in the creative and education literature spheres. Kira has utilized her professional background in technical writing and funding to lead Strategy for the developing GW University Press and plans to continue pursuing work with university presses after her graduation. In between her work with the Consortium and GW, Kira spends her time reading, writing, and exploring the Oregon coast where she lives with her husband and two daughters.

Why are Strategy & Sustainability important to publishing?

Strategy and sustainability is essential for turning the long-term vision of a press into reality. That has been the cornerstone of my work with the Strategy and Sustainability committee, especially as it applies to the new George Washington University Press (GWUP). The focus of our Strategy and Sustainability committee has been on building foundations for the future GWUP by streamlining processes, seeking funding for financial self-sufficiency, and laying plans for long-term projects. I've had to develop a more far-reaching mind that doesn't think so much about the next issue of the *GWJEP*, or even next academic year, but several years ahead to what the future committee members will be doing long after I've graduated.

What drew you to this committee?

I've been lucky in my educational and professional experience to develop skills that have been applicable to strategy and sustainability, especially my grant writing experience. This has allowed me to seek grant opportunities for *GWJEP* and the GWUP that will hopefully allow them to become even more financially sustainable. Additionally, I've always been interested in university presses due to the impact they have on higher education, especially student-led presses like what GWUP will be soon and publications like *GWJEP*, which provide students with experience in the publishing field. It's unsurprising that I jumped at the opportunity to become involved in strategy for both of these organizations.

What are the ethical issues in S&S that your committee wants to solve for both GWJEP and the wider publishing world?

It's getting more and more difficult to break into the publishing industry in part because of how quickly it is evolving with new technology, trends, and funding landscapes. It also feels like jobs everywhere, including publishing, expect you to have multiple years of experience even for entry-level positions. For many, these factors make building a career in publishing feel like swimming upstream. This makes publications like *GWJEP* incredibly valuable for students because it is almost entirely student-led, allowing students to graduate with some industry experience already on their resumes. The S&S committee wants to increase these types of opportunities; we've been working for the past academic year to build GWUP, which will be student-led, and we are in the beginning stages of a couple projects within GWUP that will also have opportunities for students

to get involved. If we can provide more initiatives like this to students, they can enter the publishing workforce on a more level playing field.

What strategies or initiatives have you proposed or worked on that you're particularly proud of?

My work with getting GWUP off the ground has been particularly rewarding. I started looking for funding opportunities when the press was initially approved, and we recently received our first book proposal. Being a small part of that progress has confirmed my interest in university presses, and I plan to keep pursuing work in that sphere after I graduate.

How do you strategize with each committee in an efficient way?

Strategizing with the other committees of the *GWJEP* requires a long-term vision. Right now, my work with GWUP feels very separate from *GWJEP*, but they are actually intertwined. In the very near future, GWUP will be bigger and fully off the ground, and *GWJEP* will fall under its editorial umbrella as one of its student-led publications. Any strategizing that we do for GWUP is also a strategy for *GWJEP*; they develop and evolve together. Even the work that the S&S committee does specifically with *GWJEP*—like this semester we are beginning the indexing process—operates with a future vision in mind. By maintaining that mindset, our goals strategize for the journal as a whole and affect the other committees cohesively.

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

This is the most essential part of my role as committee lead. It's always been extremely important to us that we keep the journal as accessible as possible by maintaining its open-access status. We want to incorporate those values into our strategies both for the journal and for the university press as well, which raises some important questions like "how do we find enough funding to develop the university press and maintain the journal while also upholding our ethical standards and keeping everything accessible to all readers?" This is where my grant writing experience is the most applicable; by helping the press and the journal find grants, the S&S committee is able to create funding strategies without compromising the commitments we've made to our values, like keeping the *GWJEP* open access.

GWJEP Staff Interview: Kimiko Christensen Hammari

E-Publishing Committee Lead

Biography

Kimiko Christensen Hammari is in her last semester of GWU's MPS in Publishing program and serves as the E-publishing Committee Lead for the GW Journal of Ethics in Publishing. She is a published author and works as a freelance trade book editor. After many years in the industry, she became an adjunct editing professor at Brigham Young University, where she has taught for two years. She is passionate about helping authors bring their ideas to life and seeing her students grow into accomplished editors.

Can you describe your role as E-Publishing committee lead, and what it means to you/what drew you to this committee?

As the E-Publishing Committee lead, I work with my team to upload, format, and publish the journal articles. This year we are working on enhancing the reading experience with a more sophisticated design and accessibility features. Although still a work in progress, the journal will soon be available as PDF

downloads in addition to the online format. We are also working to implement accessibility features taught in the Accessibility in Digital Publishing class.

To be honest, I joined this committee because the editorial committee was full. But I'm grateful for how things worked out. I love being on the production end of a publication. My design experience up to this point was mostly in print, so I've had my fair share of challenges in this new role. But it has also been very rewarding. I've learned a lot, and I have an incredibly supportive team.

What decisions drive the cover design of an ethical journal from issue to issue?

When we select a cover image, we look for a photograph that embodies Washington DC and the virtues upon which our nation and university were founded. It's nice when the photograph aligns with the season—such as cherry blossoms for our spring issue—but our primary goal is to find an image that captures the strength, integrity, and leadership exemplified by George Washington and other great leaders.

With technologies changing so quickly, what do you think are the most important ethical issues for electronic publishing moving into the future?

Although we need to address accessibility, data privacy, and copyright infringement, I think people are most concerned about AI. We don't always know if an article was written by a human or a bot, and as publishers, we have a moral obligation to produce legitimate, factual work. Most of us agree that AI can be a useful tool, but publishers need to ensure that AI doesn't change the author's voice, present false information, violate copyright laws, or compromise the author's or publisher's integrity.

What innovations in e-publishing excite you, and how would you like to implement them in the journal?

One of my top priorities is making the journal more accessible. Unfortunately, I knew little about accessible documents and websites before starting this program. I don't think most people without a disability even think about things like alt text and color contrast. Last fall, I shattered my ankle and had emergency surgery. While I was getting around on a knee scooter for the next six weeks, my eyes were opened to accessibility issues in the physical world—

handicap parking spots, elevators, ramps, etc. I was lucky that my situation was temporary, but I really started to think about how most people don't recognize certain needs. And because I eat, sleep, and breathe publishing, I began to wonder how I might be discriminating against people in the publications I work on. I knew I had to use my position on *GWJEP* to become an advocate for an accessible publication. Although accessible websites and PDFs are not new, they are new for our journal, and I'm excited to be part of these changes.

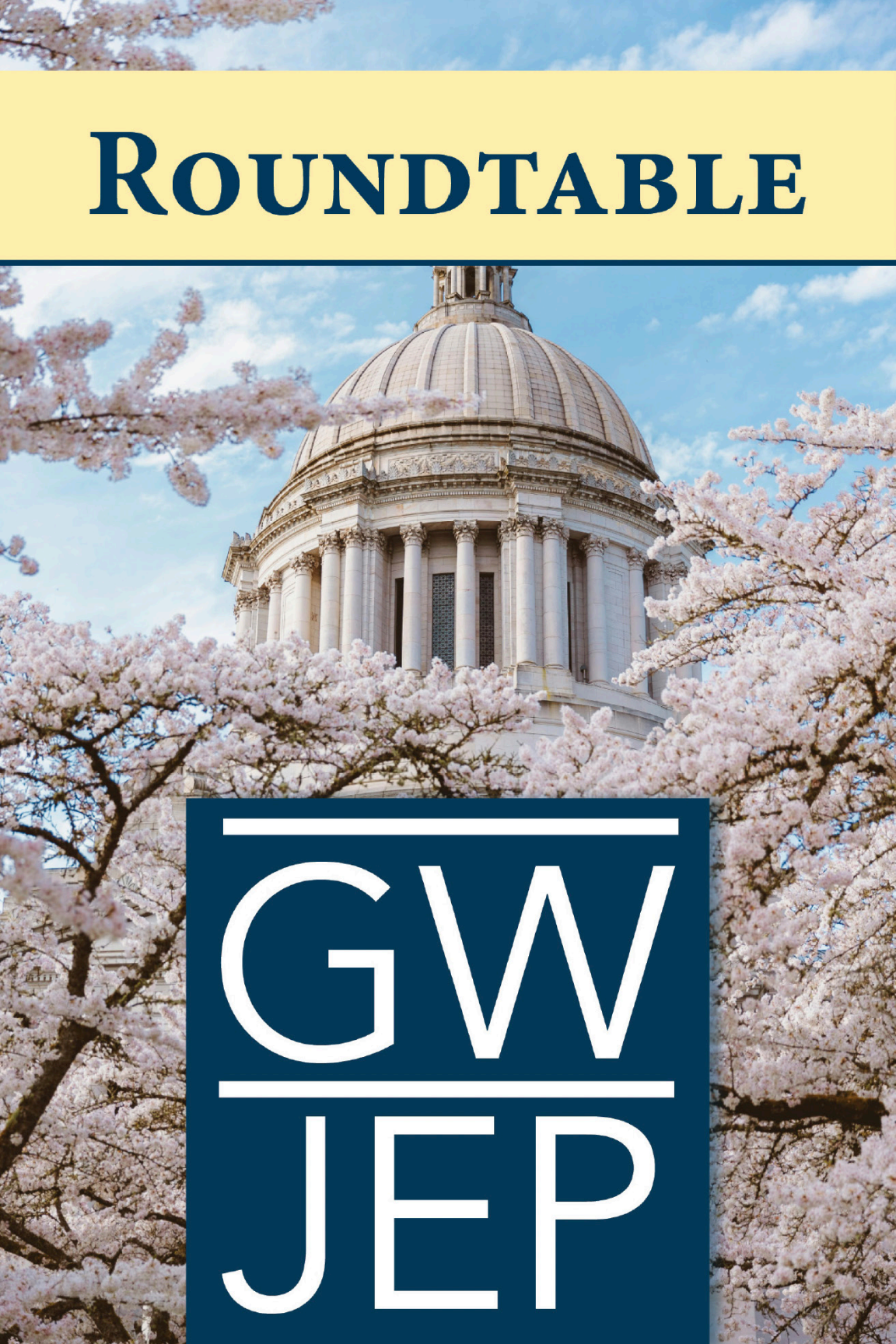
What are the main ethical concerns when it comes to digital publishing and open access?

We need to remember that digital and open access content is free to read, not free to distribute, reproduce, revise, or plagiarize. Many authors and designers are not being paid for their works that can be reproduced and shared with a single click.

Additionally, free content is not free to produce. The rise of predatory publishing is a huge concern. Authors should not have to pay exorbitant fees to get published. Nor should publishers rely on AI to produce content to save money.

I'm grateful that *GWJEP* is following the lead of so many publishers in providing open access content. Obtaining knowledge is a right, not a privilege, and I think as many people as possible should have access to educational materials. I believe the *GWJEP* is doing all it can to promote ethical publishing practices.

Roundtable



GW JEP

What Authors Owe the Audience: Transparency, Trust, and Disclosure

Roundtable Facilitated by: Brianna Lantz

Within this conversation, transparency may mean a number of things: process transparency regarding AI use, ghostwriting, research methods; interest transparency such as sponsorships, brand deals, paid ads or incentives; and identity/personal transparency, meaning "morals," values, conflicts of interest, personal life, etc.

In an age of social media, generative AI, and the ability to hide behind a screen, it is important for audiences and authors to understand that honesty is an integral part of the relationships they have, both with each other, and the content they create and consume. This awareness may raise some potential questions into what information the audience is warranted, and what the author should keep to themselves.

What do authors owe readers in terms of disclosure, and where is the line between ethical transparency and performative oversharing? How important is honesty right now, during an era of social media and generative AI?

Our contributors, Wylie Janousek and Tyler Ogden, explore this question while considering other factors, such as personal relationships between the audience and author, proactive disclosure, and when honesty could become harmful.

Contributors

Wylie Janousek

I am a first year publishing student in GWU's master's of professional studies program. My professional background is in tv/film post production and I currently work as a video editor for a tech start up in Los Angeles. As a GWU student I enjoy learning about "post production" for books and journals, not just my practiced visual medium.

Tyler Ogden

Tyler Ogden-Hunter is a second-year Publishing Masters student in the College of Professional Studies at GWU. She holds a spot on the Strategy & Sustainability Committee for the GW Journal of Ethics in Publishing. Her main areas of interest are copyright and acquisitions for trade publishing.

Wylie Janousek

In regards to transparency and what the author discloses to the reader, there is undeniably an ethical necessity for an author to grant the reader transparency in regards to their process as well as their interest. When it comes to process, tools such as AI use can be valuable for both facilitating clearer written communication and also distilling large amounts of research data. The use of AI in this manner is not amoral as it stands to reason that the author's percipience was not wholly replaced by AI in any writing decisions. One could argue that the author does not have an ethical responsibility to disclose this, the same way there is no need to disclose the use of a thesaurus or a calculator. In fact, performative oversharing of this kind of AI use may diminish the disclosure of more pervasive AI use, where the use of AI could more clearly threaten the scholarly or creative legitimacy of a work. Ethically, a reader shouldn't be asking if AI was used, but rather if AI changed or dictated a creative or analytical decision. This is where an author has an ethical duty to disclose their AI use. Readers deserve to know if they are getting a true author's perspective or an author's perspective altered through the use of AI.

Moving beyond AI, there are several ways an author's perspective can be changed, and here we come to the author's interest. It may be difficult for an author to say how financial relationships, brand deals, or sponsorships may have dictated a final outcome of their written work, but this is why disclosure in this area is so important. Disclosure of this nature imparts upon the reader

the necessary knowledge to make these judgements themselves. It would be unethical to have machinations that may or may not alter an author's viewpoint without a reader being privy to these external factors. It is important to note that an author oversharing about the specifics of a financial deal would cause harm to both the author and the institution working with the author. The author has an ethical need to disclose that these financial relationships exist but should go no further than that.

Furthermore, just because the reader may be owed this information, it would be amoral for the audience to discount a work entirely just because these relationships exist. Now, the reader has an ethical obligation to not make judgement of an author based on their partnerships, but instead, take a more nuanced approach of digesting the work agnostically while still having the information to paint a whole picture of the work. If the author is going to be honest with the reader, the reader must also give the author an honest shot to get their point across. Both the reader and the author keeping an open mind with each other is paramount, especially in today's hyper algorithmic social media culture.

Where a reader isn't owed anything is in the author's identity and personal background. Here, oversharing can muddle the audience's interpretation of a work by perhaps leading the reader to fall into implicit biases. The author has no ethical need to disclose their background, but saying why they chose to work on this project can lead to a more enjoyable reader experience. That can help create a more personal relationship with the audience. But, sharing beyond a simple motivation for why a book should exist and instead disclosing a personal moral belief system in lieu of factual background or lived experiences may cause a reader to become close minded before ever giving the work a fair shot. Honesty in the publishing sphere is more important today than ever before. The combination of vast amounts of instantaneously accessible information coupled with growing ideological divisions means authors have an ethical duty to share with readers parts of their process and interests while still providing enough space for their audience to keep an open mind.

Wylie's response places an emphasis on allowing readers to make informed decisions themselves, while Tyler's focuses on the three main factors surrounding honesty that authors must consider.

Tyler Ogden

As AI and Large Language Models (such as ChatGPT) become more integrated into daily life, author disclosure is extremely important now more

than ever. It is no longer just a personal choice; it is an ethical one.

When it comes to the finite details of authorship and their work, the decision to share each and every component can be a personal choice depending on what the author feels needs to be disclosed. However, three key details are non-negotiable: funding, content, and methods.

This disclosure is especially important for scholarly and non-fiction publishing. As research is conducted and facts are claimed, readers must know who is funding the project in order to determine if any bias or bribery is influencing the data. It is also imperative that readers know where the content was found and how it was created. Any and every factual claim needs to be backed by research and evidence, and any AI use for any reason should be revealed. These are essential for both critical review and personal morals of the reader.

The line between ethical transparency and performative oversharing only exists if the oversharing is meant to manipulate the reader into consuming the content or to manipulate their view and opinion of the content.

When everything can be altered, from a blemish to a full-on controversy, honesty is at the apex of importance today. The media is at a point of consumer psychosis - what's real and what isn't? What can you believe anymore? Disclosure builds trust with the audience, and that is so important in the age of AI.

Process and interest transparency are owed to readers. By reading an author's work, readers are funding the author (even if they are not physically paying for it, they are a part of the reason the author is published). Readers deserve to know who or what actually wrote the content they are consuming, and the author deserves credit for their work (i.e. ghostwriters). Source & AI disclosure also allow readers to determine credibility and authenticity of the author as well as the content.

Personal transparency should be up to the author, especially in cases of anonymity. Personal information is just that: personal. Many personal identifiers can also cause bias from readers, even if the work is authentic and non-biased. It's best to leave it to the author's discretion.

In a perfect world, honesty is not harmful. It's stating facts. However, with social media and the human psyche, it becomes difficult for audiences to not form parasocial relationships or take certain statements personally. It can also be difficult for readers to view things neutrally, especially when personal interests are involved. So while honesty itself isn't harmful, it's important to remember that we're all just human.

Conclusion

This roundtable offers two perspectives on the responsibilities that authors have when it comes to being truthful with their audience, and how they have to recognize the line between honesty and oversharing. While we as an audience may believe that we want to have a close relationship with our favorite authors, it is important to know the appropriateness of that desire.

As readers and publishing professionals, we must stay aware of the need for honesty during a technologically focused era, while also understanding the limitations that authors may have.

Guidelines and Submissions

GW JEP

Call for Papers

Submit your article using the GWJEP Scholastica *submission site.*

The George Washington University Master of Professional Studies in Publishing program solicits papers for the George Washington Journal of Ethics in Publishing (*GWJEP*). This online journal is managed by students in the GW Publishing program and overseen by Editor-in-Chief Lois Jones and an editorial board of publishing professionals.

The *GWJEP* is published in conjunction with the GW Ethics in Publishing Conference. Conference presentations as well as papers based on previously-presented material are also encouraged. The journal publishes on the Manifold Scholarship platform developed by the University of Minnesota Press, the Graduate Center at the City University of New York, and Cast Iron Coding, through a grant from the Mellon Foundation. The peer review platform has been provided by Scholastica.

We welcome scholarly research articles, case studies, book reviews, and conference presentations from scholars, students, and publishing professionals on topics including but not limited to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), accessibility, sustainability, open access, peer review, publishing metrics, and other aspects and issues of ethics in publishing. Innovative forms of scholarship, such as audiovisual media, are also encouraged. The journal invites submissions from publishing professionals in all areas of the publishing industry, including academics, librarians, authors, illustrators, editors, agents, rights managers, production managers, paper producers, ink suppliers, and more. Articles relating to any publishing sector are welcome, including academic and trade publishing. Student submissions are also highly encouraged; papers from

underrepresented voices are especially encouraged.

Peer review will use a double-blind process, which ensures anonymity between author and reviewer. The *GW Journal of Ethics in Publishing* accepts five main categories of articles:

- Scholarly articles and case studies presenting research about ethical issues in publishing
- Applied Ethics/"Making the World Better" articles and projects that explore contributions to local, regional, or global publishing networks, as well as initiatives in literacy and related fields.
- Editorials and commentaries (Invited by editorial board, but contact if you have an idea)
- Reviews of books, websites, digital projects, and other web resources with a focus or considerable aspect of ethics in publishing.
- Conference presentations

See also the journal's Instructions for Authors and Peer Review Guidelines.

Instructions for Authors

The GW Journal of Ethics in Publishing

The Basics

The GW Journal of Ethics in Publishing is an open-access, online journal managed by students in the George Washington University's Master of Professional Studies (MPS) in Publishing program.

We welcome scholarly research articles, case studies, book reviews, and conference presentations from scholars, students, and publishing professionals on topics including but not limited to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), accessibility, sustainability, open access, peer review, publishing metrics, and other aspects and issues of ethics in publishing. Innovative forms of scholarship, such as audiovisual media, are also encouraged.

The journal invites submissions from publishing professionals in all areas of the publishing industry, including academics, librarians, authors, illustrators, editors, agents, rights managers, production managers, paper producers, ink suppliers, and more. Articles relating to any publishing sector are welcome, including academic and trade publishing. Student submissions are also highly encouraged.

Each submission should include the following items:

- The email address of the primary author
- The names and email addresses of all contributing authors
- A short biography of each author (100 words maximum)
- URL links to the author's (or authors') personal, project, or university/company websites
- An article abstract (300 words maximum)
- The article or presentation (as a Word.doc attachment)

We generally accept 6,000- to 7,000-word articles but will consider shorter articles. All articles must have a title, an abstract, an introduction, a body, a conclusion, and a reference list; scholarly research articles and case studies have additional requirements (see below). Chicago Author-Date style is required for all in-text citations and reference entries. Chicago Notes-Bibliography Style will not be accepted.

We know tone and voice differ based on the subject and style of submission, so our only requirement is that tone and voice are internally consistent within an article. The author is free to use the tone and voice they find most appropriate. Authors are encouraged to use the Inclusive Language Guide from the APA and the Conscious Style Guide founded by Karen Yin.

Article Types

The *GW Journal of Ethics in Publishing* accepts five main article types:

- Scholarly research articles and case studies that explore ethical issues in publishing
- Articles about real-world, applied ethics projects in the publishing ecosystem
- Reviews of books and other media with a focus on publishing ethics
- Presentation write-ups from the GW Ethics in Publishing Conference
- Editorials and commentaries on ethical issues in publishing (invitation only)

Scholarly Research Articles and Case Studies

Scholarly research articles and case studies present original findings resulting from qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-methods research. They should generally be between 3,000 and 6,000 words long, but we will consider exceptions. Articles should include the following sections (may vary per article):

- Title Page
- Abstract (300 words maximum)
- Introduction
- Literature Review (when applicable)
- Methods
- Results
- Discussion

- Recommendations
- Conculsion
- References
- Author Bio(s)

The introduction must include a clear thesis statement. The recommendations section should include three to five items (arranged in a bulleted list) describing how publishing professionals can apply the article's findings to real-life publishing practice. The conclusion must summarize the article and emphasize why readers should be concerned or interested in the article's topic. The references section must be in Chicago Author-Date Style format. The author bio(s) should include the name of the author(s), their institutional/professional affiliation(s), and a brief description of their expertise in the relevant field.

All scholarly research articles and case studies undergo double-anonymous peer review.

Applied Ethics Projects

Applied ethics projects explore ways that publishing and publishing professionals (students included) positively contribute to their local, regional, or global communities. In other words, applied ethics projects strive to "make the world better." Applied ethics projects may vary considerably in form and scope, and they mainly involve one or more of the following elements:

- **Advocacy**: Contributing to causes that promote knowledge and understanding (such as DEI awareness and education, accessibility implementation, censorship resistance, literacy promotion, etc.).
- **Engagement**: Enhancing public awareness of and participation in issues concerning the public good (such as online piracy, AI usage, Open Access scholarship, etc.).
- **Volunteerism**: Volunteering at an individual or organizational level to make the publishing ecosystem a better, more ethical space.
- **Organization**: Organizing and engaging communities using publishing to develop community goals, values, and relationships (for example, developing a community newsletter).

Articles reviewing applied ethics projects should generally be between 3,000 and 6,000 words long, but exceptions will be considered. They should generally include the following sections (although some sections may vary per article):

- Title Page
- Abstract (300 words maximum)
- Introduction
- Project Scope and Goals
- Actions and Methods
- Discussion and Implications
- Results and Impact
- Recommendations
- Conclusion
- Author Bio(s)

The introduction must include a clear thesis statement. The project's scope and goals must be clearly defined and measurable. The recommendations section should include three to five items (arranged in a bulleted list) describing how publishing professionals can apply the article's findings to real-life publishing practice. The conclusion must summarize the article and emphasize why readers should be concerned or interested in the article's topic. The references section must be in Chicago Author-Date Style format. The author bio(s) should include the name of the author(s), their institutional/professional affiliation(s), and a brief description of their expertise in the relevant field.

Applied ethics projects may be improved through active peer review; however, due to their variable nature, some projects may not warrant peer review. The editorial board will make a case-by-case determination of what is needed.

Reviews

The *GW Journal of Ethics in Publishing* welcomes book and media (such as websites, digital projects, digital resources, and so on) reviews focusing on publishing ethics or involving a considerable element of publishing ethics.

Reviews should generally be between 500 and 1,500 words, although exceptions will be considered, especially for reviews of multiple titles or resources. They should include the following sections:

- **Citation**: Include a full reference entry for the reviewed item in Chicago Author-Date Style. When reviewing an online resource, include an access date in addition to the date of publication.
- **Authority**: Briefly summarize the relevant background or expertise of the author(s), creator(s), or editor(s) of the reviewed item.
- **Audience**: Specify the target audience of the reviewed item. In

other words, specify the people or groups who would make use of the reviewed item.

- **Content**: Detail the content and goals of the reviewed item, including whether the creator(s) effectively communicated the content and accomplished their goals.
- **Quality**: Assess the quality of the content, including whether the content is grounded in facts and logic and is backed by science and current research.
- **Usefulness**: Comment on whether the reviewed item advances the field to which it belongs, publishing ethics, or publishing in general.
- **Impact**: Assess the importance of the reviewed item for its intended audience and the publishing industry in general.
- **Your Bio**: Include a brief biography at the end of the review, including your name, your institutional/professional affiliation, and a brief description of your expertise in the field.

The Editorial Board may solicit authors and items for review, but we welcome review proposals. Please let us know if you have a book, article, or website that you would like to review. You must let us know if you have any conflicts of interest or connection to the work's authors, editors, or publishers that you intend to review.

GW Ethics in Publishing Conference Presentations

The annual GW Ethics in Publishing Conference complements the *GW Journal of Ethics in Publishing*. Presenters are invited to submit articles based on their conference presentations (following the above guidelines for scholarly research articles, case studies, or applied ethics projects–whichever is more applicable). Conference videos are available for the 2020 and 2021 conferences.

Invited Editorials and Commentaries

The Editorial Board will invite editorials and commentaries from publishing, library, and scholarly communication professionals, researchers, scholars, and others to comment on their work in publishing, their efforts to make publishing more ethical, and their efforts in advancing the field.

If you have an idea or suggestion or would like to be considered for an editorial or commentary, please contact Editor-in-Chief Lois Jones at lijones@email.gwu.edu.

Style Requirements

Title Page

- **Title**
- Centered
- Bolded
- Located ⅓ down the page
- **Subtitle**
- Centered
- Bolded
- Located on the line after the title
- **Author(s) name(s) and affiliation(s)**
- Centered
- Plain Text
- Located ⅔ down the page
- **Conflict(s) of interest disclosure**
- Left-aligned
- Plain text
- Located at the bottom of the page

The title page is double spaced.

Abstract

- **Heading (the word "Abstract")**
- Centered
- Bolded
- Located at the top of the page
- **Content (a one-paragraph summary of the article)**
- Left-aligned
- No indent
- Located on the line after the heading

The abstract is double-spaced and should be no more than a paragraph long.

Section Headers

Use up to three heading levels (as formatted above) to divide the article into sections.

Body

- Double-spaced (except for block quotes)
- Left-aligned
- First line of each paragraph indented
- In-text citations formatted in Chicago Author-Date Style
- Pages numbered
- Masked

Because the article will undergo double-anonymous peer review, the article must be masked, meaning that no information could identify the author(s) or their affiliation(s) may be included. Identifying information should only be included on the title page. Any identifying information crucial to the article's narrative can be restored to the article after it passes peer review and before publication.

References

- **Heading (the word "References")**
- Centered
- Bolded
- Located at the top of the page
- **Reference entries**
- Left-aligned
- Hanging indent
- Single-spaced with an extra line of space between reference entries

The *GW Journal of Ethics in Publishing* uses *The Chicago Manual of Style* for its citations and references: https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org. The journal uses Chicago Author-Date Style, ***not*** Chicago Notes-Bibliography Style. Please ensure your citations and reference entries are accurate and that all hyperlinks are functional.

Figures

The *GW Journal of Ethics in Publishing* requires that all published articles meet basic digital accessibility standards for visual resources. Papers accepted for publication that include images, charts, videos, or other visual assets must include alt-text (or long descriptions) for each visual asset, as well as appropriate captions.

For information on the basic principles of describing visual resources for accessibility in arts and humanities publications, please consult Stephanie Rosen's *Describing Visual Resources Toolkit*: www.describingvisualresources.org/guidelines/basic-principles.

AI Policies

The *GW Journal of Ethics in Publishing* follows GWU's guidelines on the use of generative AI for its submissions as a baseline, with more stringent guidelines on generative AI. While generative AI may be used to help an author find a starting point for their research, brainstorm, or create accurate citations and bibliographic entries, it may not be used, in whole or part, to write the submission. Nothing created with or by AI may be submitted for consideration for publishing.

In accordance with GWU's AI policies, work submitted for evaluation is represented as the author's own intellectual product. Authors may not submit content (e.g., ideas, text, code, images) for evaluation or publication that was generated, in whole or in part, by Generative Artificial Intelligence tools (such as ChatGPT and other large language models).

The use of tools such as spell and grammar check are permitted. A short list of approved AI to aid in spell and grammar check are Microsoft Word's Spell and Grammar Check, Grammarly, QuillBot, GrammarCheck, and Scribbr. Many of these sites have additional features, like a paraphrasing tool. Paraphrasing tools count as generative AI and may not be used.

Questions?

If you have any questions about the *GW Journal of Ethics in Publishing* or the GW Ethics in Publishing Conference, please contact John W. Warren, Director and Associate Professor of the Master of Professional Studies program, at jww@gwu.edu.

Peer Review Guidelines

The *Journal of Ethics in Publishing* welcomes articles, case studies, and conference presentations from students, professionals, and scholars on a range of topics, including: EDI (equity, diversity, inclusion), accessibility, peer review, open access, sustainability, publishing metrics, and any other aspects of ethics in publishing. All submissions are subject to peer review.

Peer review is a fundamental element of scholarly communication that provides valuable guidance to authors in the development and improvement of their submissions and protects journal integrity.

Peer reviews should focus on adhering to the following values: equity, openness, respect, and quality. Final decision for publication will be made by the Editor-in-Chief after considering peer review from multiple reviewers.

GWJEP uses double-masked peer review, so neither the author nor the reviewer know each other's identity unless indicated in advance. Manuscripts are confidential and only shared for the purposes of peer review.

PEER REVIEW GUIDELINES:

Before you review: When you receive a request to review, you should first assess the **time commitment**, your **applicable expertise**, and if you have any **conflicts of interest**.

A conflict of interest can be financial, such as if you benefit from a product, service, or company that is mentioned in the submission. Other conflicts include personal or close professional relationships with the author(s), which could impact your review of the manuscript, either positively or negatively. If you are unsure if something constitutes a conflict, you should contact the editor or include this information in your review.

If you would like to volunteer to review for the journal, please contact us.

Review Questions

Please provide a few sentences in each section below, as applicable. Although the review may be critical, personal attacks are never appropriate in peer review. Instead, focus on opportunities to improve the submission.

In the final section, provide your recommendation to the editor. Note if any subject matter within the article is outside your field of knowledge, or if there is anything else that you want to disclose to the editor.

Overall

- What are the strengths of the manuscript?
- Does the article contribute to the scholarly field? For example, is it original, is it valid, and does it contribute to the understanding of ethical issues in publishing?
- Are the author's arguments clear, logical, and concise?
- Is the article well-written and well-organized? Are there sections that could be improved?
- Is there a consistent use of style (Chicago, APA, MLA, etc.) throughout?

Introduction

- Is the premise or purpose of the submission clear?
- If applicable, is relevant literature reviewed and synthesized across themes, methods, or findings, rather than by author?
- Are the authors' assumptions clarified and addressed?

Methodology

This section will only be relevant for research articles.

- Is the methodology appropriate and comprehensive?
- Do you know who studied, when the study took place, and how research was conducted?
- Has the study taken into account diversity and inclusivity as part of the design?
- Did the author address limitations of the study design, such as the participant sample used?

Conclusion

- Is the conclusion logical and appropriate to what has come before in the body of the article?
- Is there sufficient evidence presented in the text for the conclusion?

Discussion

- If applicable, does the manuscript provide a clear summary of the findings of the study at the end?
- Does the author make convincing connections between findings in this study and the field?
- Are implications for this topic and future research or practice discussed?
- Do recommendations clearly stem from the results?

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PUBLICATION (SELECT ONE):

1. **Accept, no revisions needed**: Paper is well written and a significant contribution to the literature. No improvement needed.
2. **Revise, minor revisions requested**: Well-written, well-organized with some minor edits to arguments, research, or analysis. Additional including formatting, grammar, or style suggestions required.
3. **Revise, major revisions requested**: Paper is promising, but requires multiple major revisions, such as more research, depth, or analysis. Several sections require rewriting in order to improve clarity, flow, or arguments. Revised manuscript may undergo peer review again.
4. **Reject for publication**: Manuscript seems unable to conform to acceptable standards even after revision, or is not within the journal's scope.

OPTIONAL SECTION:

Please use the area below for any comments to the editor that *will not be provided* to the author.