Editors' Gloss: Just Like Starting Over

MICHAEL ROY, DAVID W. LEWIS

As we begin our terms as the new editors of the *Journal of Electronic Publishing* (*JEP*), we have reflected on the title of our journal. In 1995, when the journal formed, there was much to discuss about what is meant by electronic publishing, how it can both benefit from the centuries of experience and insight gained from print publishing and also break from this tradition to do things faster, better, and cheaper. Now that nearly all publishing is electronic, we toyed with how the *E* in *JEP* might need to be changed: the journal of experimental publishing, the journal of equitable publishing, the journal of expensive publishing. Reading through the more than 20 years of archives, *JEP* reflects back to us the history of technology and the complicated and at times fraught relationship publishing has had with the revolutionary changes that we are living through. We see a sense of progression from early days of novelty and possibility to a present that seems more well understood but also not so rosy. There is also a sense that maybe the future of publishing is just as uncertain as it was when *JEP* began.

With this issue, we return to many of the themes and topics that *JEP* has engaged over the years, recast for our particular moment.

- This particular moment is, of course, a pandemic moment, and Charles Watkinson in his contribution **"What Has the COVID-19 Pandemic Taught Us about Academic Book Publishing So Far? A View from North America"** brings to light the important lessons learned about scholarly communication, infrastructure, and access when the world turned upside down in March of 2020.
- Ours is also a moment of the expansion of digital methods for expressing concepts and relationships beyond the confines of traditional print publishing. Karen Hanson, in her **"Preserving Innovation: Ensuring the Future of Today's Scholarship,"** provides insight into the challenges of preserving born digital scholarship and also documents promising efforts to do just that.
- John Warren's **"Always the eBook of the Future"** updates us on the widespread adoption of what can today be called "traditional eBooks," muses on the long history of wrong predictions about the departure of the eBook in form and function from its cousin the print book, and then describes fascinating experiments from the

world of gaming and AI that perhaps (check back here in 10 years!) will prove to finally be the catalyst for actual change in the eBook's format.

- Peter Suber has some pointed things to say to publishers and authors about their rights in his **"Publishing without Exclusive Rights."**
- We might want to rename our publication the *Journal of Extractive Publishing* after reading Jeff Pooley's **"Surveillance Publishing,"** which exposes how commercial publishers are using the Google and Facebook playbook to create value through mining our readers' data.
- Reggie Raju and Auliya Badrudeen remind us in their **"Social Justice Driving Open Access Publishing: An African Perspective"** that efforts to promote open access need to be grounded in a commitment to social justice and describes efforts to create a pan-African open access platform according to these values.
- In their **" 'Bundle of Sticks' and the Value of Interdependence: Building a Tools and Services Collective,"** Katherine Skinner, Catherine Mitchell, and Kristen Ratan describe a path forward for sustainable community-based, non-commercial publishing based on their decades of experience studying and enacting collective action models.
- David Lewis in his **"Digital Publishing's Four Challenges"** reminds us that the economic, organizational, cultural, and social challenges that digital technologies pose to our institutions are still very much in play and that we would do well to continue to ask ourselves hard questions about how prepared we and our current structures are for that digital revolution that perhaps has just begun.

We have big plans and high hopes for keeping the tradition of *JEP* alive throughout our tenure as editors while also addressing some of the new issues and challenges faced by the publishing community today. In putting together this issue, we asked our contributors to frame their contributions around a set of questions we want to explore in coming issues:

- Can old business models survive in the world of digital content?
- Will established firms consolidate and dominate the market, or will the modest cost of entry allow many new players to compete?
- Is open access inevitable and desirable? If so, what flavor?
- How does the inclusion of media (audio, video, graphics, data, etc.) change what we mean by a publication and how a reader interacts with it?
- How can the needs of creators and readers be balanced?
- Do current publishing structures limit or encourage a diversity of voices?
- How are quality and accuracy assured, and how can these assurances be conveyed to readers?

- What can we learn from the publishing experience outside of Europe and North America?
- What can publishing learn from the adjacent fields of social and streaming media and gaming?
- Does the introduction of data analytics into the publishing process improve publishing? What sorts of issues around privacy does this practice raise? What can be done to address these issues?
- In a world where nearly all publishing is digital publishing, is piracy inevitable? Does it matter?
- Does the current practice of publishing contribute to efforts to dismantle systemic racism; address income inequality; combat climate change; and support social, economic, and climate justice? If so, how? If not, why not and how can this change?

We see *JEP* as a conversation—a place to share what we are learning, what is worrying us, and what excites us and to understand the role of publishing in the creation of a more just and equitable society. We welcome your comments and feedback at https://twitter.com/JEPub.