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Stories of Open: Opening Peer Review through Narrative Inquiry (ACRL Publications in Librarianship No. 76)

Emily Ford
Portland State University, forder@pdx.edu

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Contents

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Finally, this book belongs to all of us, any reader who takes anything away from the stories shared, or who reflects on the questions I offer. This book belongs to you, too.

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PART 1

Orientation

Chapter 1

A Meta-story: The Story of *Stories of Open*

WHY THIS BOOK?

"It's just a process that hasn't been questioned in forever, and it needs to be," said Cheryl as we were sitting in a small study room at a branch of our local public library. The faint smell of cigarettes lingered in the study room from its previous occupant, and muffled giggles and cries of children filtered in as we spoke. I was fooling with my laptop, trying to get pertinent documents in Word to function, despite the corrupted install job that had been completed on my new grant-funded laptop. It didn't work, and I felt flustered. Despite this setback, I was ready to learn from her. What did she have to share of her experience, and what kind of meaning would we create together in this hour and a half?

We were talking about peer review. I had asked Cheryl why she wanted to participate in this project as an interviewee. When she said it, I didn't know that it would be the title of her interpretive narrative, the document culminating from our conversation, nor did I know that it would be how I opened this book.

For years, since my time as a cofounder and editor at *In the Library with the Lead Pipe*, a peer-reviewed blog turned journal, I have been fascinated by open peer review. Our open peer-review process was something we invented as we began the journal and something that I discovered to be invaluable during that time. Yet over the years I have learned that it's not widely accepted or understood. Perhaps people fear it because it's unknown, or we simply have naivete—we don't know anything different. We, academic librarians, don't collectively know it. Few of us have experienced it, and most of us don't understand it.

Recently I was catching up on my podcast listening and was delighted to hear Radiolab's Latif Nasser talking about how he finds stories. "I tell myself that there are 7.5 billion people on planet earth… and if you presume that one percent of those 7.5 billion people have those stories… There's no way all those stories are getting told.… There's… an infinity of stories all around us."[1] I truly believe that when we open ourselves to others' experiences, we in turn reflect on our own. We have much to learn about ourselves by listening to others. That is why I've approached my work in stories, and that is why stories matter. This book is as much about discovering method and process as it is about sharing the stories I gathered. I hope that this book will incite our academic library community to reflect on our own experiences and imagine the possibilities of creating new and improved ones. Readers who wish to discover answers to tightly scoped research questions backed by deep dives into academic literature and evidence will be highly disappointed. This book does not do that. Rather, its intent is to share collective discoveries and explorations on a theme. It is here to share our colleagues' stories so that we may reflect on our own and potentially reimagine future stories.

OPEN PEER REVIEW

While chapter 10, "The Next Layer of Publishing Transparency: Open Peer Review," provides a closer look at open peer review, it remains pertinent to discuss it broadly in this introduction. Just what do we mean by open peer review? Although I and others have attempted to unpack this seemingly simple question, there still is no simple definition or application. Essentially, open peer review is an opening up of the peer-review process. It could mean that referees sign their reviews for authors to see, as may occur at BioMed Central journals. "Open peer review as practised by BMC, specifically refers to open identities and open content, i.e. authors know who the reviewers are and if the manuscript is accepted for publication the named reviewer reports accompany the published article."[2] I particularly love this framing of open peer review because it positions the process as a practice, and each person, each community, may practice something in a different way. And this is how it shakes out. Each implementation of open peer review, as I have observed, is different and nuanced. Some implementations allow for the publication of reviewer reports alongside publications, whereas others keep these reviewer reports opaque.

Just as some view open access as a way to democratize scholarly publishing, many see open peer review as affording similar opportunities. With open peer review we can shorten time lines between manuscript submission and publication, hold reviewers accountable for their work, make more apparent the hidden labor of reviewing and editing, allow for collaborative discourse between authors and reviewers, and more. Some of these arguments are deterministic, just as arguments regarding open access being the great democratizer of journal publishing are. In fact, anything open is highly nuanced and contextual. Ultimately, when we discuss "open," we must discuss the stories around it. To what aim? What are the pitfalls? What are the gains? And are we trying to simply replicate a broken system instead of reinventing it?

Open peer review may also mean that authors have the opportunity to more deeply and meaningfully engage with referees. During the process, identities may be open, and the process itself may allow for discourse to occur on collaborative platforms such as Google Docs or using the WordPress Comments Press plug-in. In fact, several books in the digital humanities have utilized an open peer-review process—such as *Debates in the Digital Humanities 2019* and Kathleen Fitzpatrick's recent volume, *Generous Thinking*—allowing members of the public to register and provide their own annotations and comments on manuscripts.[3]

One of the nuances in open peer review, as it's discussed in regard to scholarly communication, is that of the differences between the STEM disciplines and the social sciences, arts, and humanities. Peer review in STEM disciplines is frequently used as a rigor checker. Is the method sound? Do the data support the conclusions? Is the study reproducible? Arguably, social sciences, arts, and humanities research is more nuanced, and peer review in these disciplines takes on a slightly different role. As such, it is difficult to define what open peer review could and might do in these different arenas. With peer review being more straightforward in STEM, it makes sense that there are more implementations of and experimentation with it in those disciplines.

In LIS, conversations regarding open peer review are nascent. While *In the Library with the Lead Pipe* has used an open peer review process since its formation in 2008, there remain few LIS journals implementing an open process.[4] *Journal of Radical Librarianship* offers authors the opportunity to opt in to open peer review.[5] An initial proposal I wrote with my friend and *Lead Pipe* colleague Kim Leeder, asking the editorial board of *College and Research Libraries* (*C&RL*) to consider open peer review, was rejected at the journal's editorial board meeting during ALA Annual 2013. Only recently did *C&RL* pursue an experiment with open peer review.[6]

With so few opportunities for folks in LIS to experience open peer review, it remains mysterious to us, and we have few stories to share. What we do have in our field, as I discovered during my research process, is a curiosity and a desire to better understand open peer review. LIS folks are thoughtful and passionate. We care deeply about our work, our patrons, and our own community. Many of the stories I share with you include a rumination on openness, a collaborative exploration of what it might mean for peer review. It is in this larger context and frame that I present my work, and in which I hope readers will engage.

READING *STORIES OF OPEN*

Orientation

I can imagine that there are readers who may be more interested in method than they are stories and vice versa. This book is laid out in a way that reflects not only research method, but also a logical narrative. It begins with an orientation. This introduction and the next chapter, "Discovering Method: Narrative Inquiry," frame the work for your conceptual understanding. In addition to providing details about narrative inquiry as a methodology, "Discovering Method" draws attention to my worldview and research approach, which have been largely influenced by the writings of bell hooks and many years of friendship with and mentoring by my colleague Robert Schroeder.

The Stories (The Story Middle)

Next, we move on to the story middle. These chapters reveal stories shared with me and that have been shaped by my own reactions, reflections, and analysis. Chapter 3, "The Elusive Norm: Peer Review in LIS," explores this question: Just what is the standard experience of peer review in our field? Next, we hear stories told from a variety of viewpoints and roles—author, editor, and referee—in chapter 4, "Roles of Peer Review." Building on these roles, I then uncover how these roles interact, the tension between them, and the duality and sometimes multiplicity of roles experienced by any one individual in chapter 5, "Dualities and Multiplicities in Peer Review." From here, I explore two themes as told through stories: "Collaborative Work and Discourse Community" (chapter 6) and "Transparency of Peer-Review Process" (chapter 7).

Coda

Finally, I offer you a four-chapter coda, tying together the stories presented with the idea of open and elucidating in more detail the nitty-gritty of the research method. Chapter 8, "Storying Stories," offers details behind the storying stories method and explains how I applied it; showing how interviews and the analysis of them unfold. In the coda you will also find one example of a complete interpretive narrative—the final interpretive narrative of the many stories told me by one interview participant—"I Just Feel Like This Makes Sense to Me: Stuart's Story" (chapter 9). Then, I revisit open peer review in chapter 10, "The Next Layer of Publishing Transparency: Open Peer Review," through our colleagues' eyes. Finally, in chapter 11, "Crafting Future Stories of Open," I offer how we might move purposefully forward, positing how we might be as we do the work to reflect on our past stories and create future ones.

bell hooks asserts that we must approach education with radical openness—a willingness to learn from others' experiences and thoughts. I hope that readers can put this radical openness into practice and that what I, and by proxy what our reflective colleagues, have shared will inspire you to reflect on your stories. I hope that hearing from others allows you to shape your story of experience in our peer-review systems. You will notice that, as you make your way through this book, I offer you questions for reflection at the end of many chapters in order to assist continued exploration of your own experiences with peer review.

For readers most interested in method, Part 1: Orientation and the first two chapters of Part 3: Coda, "Storying Stories" and "I Just Feel Like This Makes Sense to Me: Stuart's Story," will hold the most value. That being said, some parts of chapters in Part 2: The Stories (The Story Middle) include large excerpts of participants' interpretive stories, offering examples of the method in practice.

Readers interested in learning from our colleagues' experiences might savor the stories prior to thinking about narrative inquiry or storying stories. Each chapter should be readable and understandable without the ones preceding or following, yet each chapter builds upon what has previously been shared.

Formatting

There are multiple and nuanced layers to storying stories, as I discuss in chapter 8, "Storying Stories." For each interviewee, I wrote an interpretive narrative. These documents contain a title, an orientation, stories (the story middle), and a coda. (This book intentionally mirrors this structure.) Interpretive narratives also interweave my personal intellectual and emotional reactions to the interview during beginning phases of analysis, as well as explanatory or analytic text constructed and added later in the analysis process. Additionally, the text produced for this book adds another layer of complexity. As a result, I use formatting to communicate these different layers and voices. While it may seem complicated, as you begin reading it should, I hope, become clearer. I offer you the following explanation.

Portions of this book written around interpretive narratives begin at the left margin of each page and are presented in Minion Pro font.

> `My framing of interpretive narratives and analysis are indented once and printed in Courier New.`

Portions of interpretive narratives, or stories, begin indented twice and are printed in Times New Roman.

When my own words or an interviewee's words are used to clarify the context of a story told, they are further indented and italicized. This text is ancillary in that it provides only the context of the interview and is not part of a storied story.

Intellectual/Emotional Response

My emotional and intellectual responses, as well as relation to the text—which are one of the first steps of transcript analysis in the storying stories method—are right-justified, italicized, and labeled as Emotional Response, Intellectual Response, or Relation.

Additionally, there are a few instances where interviewees, upon reviewing their interview transcripts, responded to my responses. These are also right-justified.

THE STORYTELLERS

In this exercise of researching and writing—exploring ways of knowing through narrative of human experience—I have also come to be acquainted with our colleagues who bravely shared their thoughts. We theorized together, and together we explored their (and our collective) emotional experiences. Each and every conversation required folks to be vulnerable and trusting, and in return I have striven to offer you their experiences with loving kindness. This book is as much theirs as it is mine, and as it is yours. In the interest of protecting individual privacy, I have used pseudonyms for each individual mentioned below, with the exception of Stuart, who agreed to openly share their story. Stories from individuals with pseudonyms have been edited to omit personally identifiable information, and when needed, I worked with those individuals to edit their stories to include and exclude information as they felt comfortable. I would like to introduce you to ten incredibly generous and thoughtful individuals. The headings represent the title of each individual's interpretive narrative.

I Just Feel Like This Makes Sense to Me: Stuart's Story

When we spoke, Stuart was completing their dissertation on open access policy—Skyping with me from Great Britain. They have deep experience in open based on their educational experience, but also based in their work as one of the founders of *Journal of Radical Librarianship*. Stuart's interpretive narrative, in whole, is included in the coda of this book. They are generous and brave to share their entire story here.

How Open Is Open? I Think This Is the Conversation We Continue to Have: Jessica's Story

Jessica is an early-career researcher and academic librarian. She is at the forefront of technology, using Twitter and Slack, both in her daily work and to remain connected to the larger librarian community. She is excited to learn, as is evidenced by her drive to write and publish even before it was a requirement of her job and by her eagerness to learn from the interview and other opportunities afforded her.

Transparency of Process Is the First Layer: Bethany's Story

As an experienced author and now a journal coeditor, Bethany is a mid-career professional who thoughtfully frames her work, no matter what it is. She takes the time to think and reflect and sees connections between what she does as both editor and author.

We Still Have a Lot of Work to Do to Convince People That Open Is Better: Nancy's Story

Nancy is a mid- to late-career academic librarian who is currently serving as library director and department chair at her institution. To librarianship she brought a previous research career and master's level education, using this experience to support her own research and authorial work.

It's Just a Process That Hasn't Been Questioned in Forever, and It Needs to Be: Cheryl's Story

Still an LIS student when we spoke, Cheryl brings her previous doctoral education in the humanities to her perspective. She has begun to identify as a librarian, and as a student has been afforded opportunities to coauthor journal articles and serve as an editor for a regional publication.

There's Already So Many Power Imbalances in Those Structures: Alma's Story

As a subject librarian working toward tenure, Alma shares her perspective on the review, promotion, and tenure processes. During our conversation it is evident that she brings a critical and social justice–informed lens to her work and to the way she thinks about peer review.

I Like That Melding of Voices into One: Julie's Story

Julie is a tenured full professor and currently serves as an associate university librarian. Her experiences with peer review range from that of author, to referee, and to editorial board member at an LIS journal. She unabashedly shares her emotional experience.

I Think It's Important to Have That Same Kind of Thoughtful Relationship: John's Story

During our conversation, John brings his experiences as author, journal editor, and referee to bear. His current role working in scholarly communication has allowed him to think deeply about scholarly publishing, peer review, and open.

My Job Is to Enable Researchers to Do Their Work Better: Stephanie's Story

As a newly tenured librarian, Stephanie has a pragmatic approach to librarianship that shapes the focus of her work and her research and writing. Her research focus and her identity as a librarian are embedded in institutional and community needs, which come through as she considers her practice and always frames her work as what is good for her patrons in her library.

It Benefits Not Only Our Disciplines, but It Benefits the Academy in General: Kurt's Story

As a full professor and associate dean, Kurt has had experiences with publishing ranging from authorial, to editorial, to his role evaluating and supporting junior colleagues in their writing, publishing, and promotion endeavors. He has integrated his academic upbringing and past experiences as a disciplinary librarian into his views on scholarly publishing and peer review.

NOTES

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2. BioMed Central, "Advancing Peer Review at BMC," accessed November 26, 2019, https://www.biomedcentral.com/about/advancing-peer-review.
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Chapter 2

Discovering Method:
Narrative Inquiry

Several years ago I submitted a journal article manuscript based on an exploratory survey. The survey I conducted was an attempt to gain broad insight into how editors of LIS publications were thinking about peer review. Had they questioned the processes? Were conversations about peer review happening between editors and authors? Were editorial boards thinking about peer-review processes? Had they ever considered opening up their peer-review processes? My aim with the manuscript was not to present survey findings per se, but to explore ideas. Taking what I found, I drafted and redrafted an article. I pressed Submit. Two and a half months later I saw the e-mail in my inbox—"editor decision." My heart rate slightly elevated, my breathing shallowed, I clicked in anticipation. Revise and resubmit.

I had a lot of work to do. Both reviewers questioned the lack of rigor of my method and wanted to see tables, charts, and statistics, even though the study was an exploratory one and never intended to share quantitative data. Because I was on the tenure clock I felt the pressure to have the article accepted and published prior to submitting my promotion portfolio, so I decided to take the suggestions and make the article what the reviewers wanted. While I labored to strengthen, clarify, and edit the manuscript to meet the reviewers' desires, I kept thinking to myself, "Why numbers? Why is this the evidence they wanted?" Certainly there *were* issues with my presentation of findings, but I couldn't shake the nagging feeling that my work had been misunderstood and that I was going through the motions to violently shoehorn my work into a package desirable to others but not to me. Finally, after a few months revising, I resubmitted the article. It was accepted and I immediately passed on the acceptance e-mail to my promotion and tenure review committee, which was considering my case. At the same time I vowed to never again use a survey as a basis for research. I needed to explore other research methods to answer my questions.

I still wanted to keep investigating this question of peer review and open peer review, and I knew that I wanted to share experiences. I needed a new method. But how could I find and share stories without colonizing them? How would I situate conversations within the research paradigm and position myself not as the "sage on the stage" researcher, but as a curious colleague who values discovering *with* others, not just *about* others? When I found my answer, I rushed to my work next-door neighbor, friend, and mentor's office. "Bob, I found it!" It was as if I had been liberated.

ACTIVE INTERVIEWING AND STORYING STORIES

Like any research, my discovery began with reading, which led me to the *SAGE Handbook of Narrative Inquiry: Mapping a Methodology*.[1] In it I discovered two methods: active interviewing and storying stories. *The Active Interview*, a little blue book by Holstein and Gubrium, allowed me to see interviewing as a creative and robust practice.[2] For them, interviews do not have to be rigid in terms of the questions asked, nor do they need to be vehicles that lead us to some Universal Truth.

Instead, they reason that interviewing is a "naturally occurring occasion for articulating experience"[3] and that, in active interviewing, interpretation is not dictated, but rather it can "provide an environment conducive to the production of the range and complexity of meanings that address the relevant issues, and not be confined by predetermined agendas."[4] It was in this little blue book that I found I could approach an interview in partnership with interviewees; together we could make some meaning, or learn something new, or maybe we wouldn't. (And that would be okay, too.) Any truth that we would together uncover would be apt to change. Circumstances day to day may change it, as might our physical environs. Would someone say something differently if I were to ask tomorrow rather than yesterday? Probably. Here it was, what I wanted, a way that I could be in research *with* others, a way to tell stories, and a way to try and make sense of them.

Holstein and Gubrium's theory supported my research questions, which were intentionally broad. Instead of articulating finely scoped questions, my theme in undertaking *Stories of Open* was to capture, make sense of, and disseminate human stories related to peer review and open peer review in LIS. I wanted to examine narratives, corroborate or bring forth opposing views, and give voice to people's experiences. Active interviewing also complemented how I have always tried to approach my praxis as a librarian and researcher—with love.

I am greatly indebted to bell hooks's writings for expanding my approach to my work and enabling me to view my work as an act of love. For hooks, love is a theme not just in romantic relationships, but also in teaching and learning. In her eloquently written and easy-to-read primer on feminism, *Feminism Is for Everybody*, hooks asserts, "There can be no love where there is domination,"[5] and I strive to realize this in my work as an academic librarian. Although in this passage hooks speaks of romantic love, in *Teaching Critical Thinking*, hooks asserts that "genuine learning, like love, is always mutual."[6] In my research I wanted to learn, and I wanted to learn with others. While hooks doesn't explicitly relate love to the research paradigm, I see the aim in research as the same as in teaching and learning—to discover and engage with new knowledge. During my research project I was cognizant of my work to translate hooks's approach of love in the classroom to the research environment. Just as hooks discusses the need for trust and safety in the classroom, so too does narrative inquiry require trust, safety, and ethical judgement in order for it to work as it should.

What does it mean to be a feminist researcher or to use feminist methods? To me a feminist approach to research is one that is in partnership with subjects. How, then, does a researcher balance power, domination, or coercion in their work? Certainly there are roles to play, but that is also why active interviewing and partnership and collaboration spoke to me. I did not want to find meaning alone. I wanted to find meaning in partnership with the real experts—those who shared stories with me so that I could learn with them.

While hooks outlined a worldview and praxis, active interviewing afforded me a concrete feminist approach. Next, I found an analysis approach—storying stories. Coralie McCormack envisioned and realized storying stories while conducting her dissertation research in the early 2000s. As a process, this method incorporated many facets of research approaches from critical theorists, linguistic scholars, and narrative inquirers. This methodology spoke to the very aim of my project: to incite a reflection of the LIS publishing community on its own individual and collective experiences of peer review by reading and thinking about the experiences of others. "The simultaneous mirror/window quality of these narratives provides the reader with a reflective space within which to re-imagine their own life."[7] McCormack asserts, "The process of storying stories draws its principles from the broad areas of feminism, postmodernism and qualitative research to place its practice within a narrative inquiry framework."[8] The methodology was collaborative, the process included the participants, and storying stories was a way for me to elevate individual experience without diminishing these stories into a series of codes that lose the power and nuance of social and cultural context. The work had the potential to be incredibly rewarding for me and the interviewees. This proved true. After we completed the storying stories process, Julie responded to me, "Each time, I learn new things about myself and gain more from our shared conversation! I'm so glad that you selected me as one of your interviewees."

NARRATIVE INQUIRY

So just what is narrative inquiry? Narrative inquiry is a type of qualitative research focused on human stories. What can we learn from the human experience? What can we know, and what can we only attempt to know? An exemplary book on the subject, especially for librarians lacking in-depth training in qualitative research methods, is Jeong-Hee Kim's *Understanding Narrative Inquiry*.[9] In it she offers a well-written and fascinating dive into the qualitative, sociolinguistic, and literary theory behind this form of qualitative research. In fact, librarians interested in conducting narrative inquiry might use Kim's book as a guide from the inception of a project to formulating research questions, designing research, analyzing data, and presenting findings. According to Kim, the purpose of narrative research is to "invite readers to a sphere of possible contact with a developing, incomplete and evolving situation, allowing them to re-think and re-evaluate their own views, prejudices, and experiences."[10] In her book Kim also draws on Josselson and Lieblich's work,[11] stressing that researchers should formulate narrative inquiry research with clearly stated exploratory research questions, rather than framing narrative inquiry questions that will have concrete answers. Narrative research affords researchers the opportunity to use creativity, to ask broader questions—to tell a richer contextualized story.

Narrative inquiry can take many forms. It can be expressed through projects such as Photovoice,[*] creative visual representations such as paintings and other visual arts, analyses in the creative arts, and more. Narrative inquiry research can also draw from oral histories, gathering life stories, biography, and autobiography. Autoethnography, an emerging research method, is also a form of narrative inquiry. Each of these narrative inquiry approaches has the same aim: to make sense of the human experience through personal stories. Like a praxis of librarianship, it is focused on humans. Our work of writing and publishing are human endeavors, and it makes sense to investigate them and understand them as such.

Narrative inquiry projects may use any number of analytical approaches to examine data and come to conclusions. While some approaches look for themes

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* Photovoice "is specifically a blending of ethnographic method and journalism aimed at supporting the active pursuit of social justice though the support of individuals and institutional projects incorporating participant-generated photographs." Michael J. Emme, "Photonovella and Photovoice," in *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*, ed. Lisa M. Given (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2008), 623–24, https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412963909.n319 (requires subscription).

in data, others look for story plots that may surface interdependencies and links in data elements. According to psychologist (and arguably a founder of narrative inquiry research) Donald E. Polkinghorne, these differing types of analysis in narrative inquiry are either paradigmatic or narrative analytic types. Paradigmatic analysis "seeks to locate common themes or conceptual manifestations among the stories collected as data."[12] In contrast, narrative analysis "requires the researcher to develop or discover a plot that displays the linkage among the data elements as parts of an unfolding temporal development culminating in the denouement."[13] Most narrative inquiry research performed in LIS adheres to the paradigmatic type and uses grounded theory as an approach to create codes and categories for data. For comparison's sake, a search in the Library, Information Science, and Technology Abstracts database for "grounded theory" AND interview AND librar* retrieved 122 results. A search for "narrative inquiry" AND interview AND librar* retrieved four. Grounded theory approaches an understanding and interpretation of data, categorizing data from the ground up—creating categories as a researcher examines the data, rather than before examining the data, and coding narrative text for analysis. This approach can rely too heavily on machine thinking to categorize individual experiences. Another paradigmatic type of analysis is comparative analysis of research participants' interview transcripts. While paradigmatic types of analysis can be powerful, they do not speak to my broad aims to share highly contextual individualized stories so that we may learn about ourselves and our community. In my view, paradigmatic type approaches lose the nuance of the individual human experience story. For instance, they may result in the loss of contextual meanings, including but not limited to the social context in which an interview takes place, which allows for an examination of domination and power structures. These approaches may also seek to more readily come to universal conclusions rather than recognizing the temporal and ephemeral nature of stories and their meanings. This is not to say that these approaches are inherently wrong; they simply do not afford me the opportunity to answer my research question: What are the experiences of LIS authors, readers, and editors of peer review? And what can we as practicing professionals learn from them?

Limitations of Narrative Inquiry

Despite its potential, narrative inquiry does pose challenges, none of which are insurmountable. The first of these is that some may understand interviewing as an inherently biased research method. I can imagine that those who approach research and understand the creation of knowledge within positivist or post-positivist frameworks will not hold the co-construction of meaning in high regard. Positivist approaches to research are founded in the need to find empirical evidence through an objective lens. In this view, the researcher is neutral, or objective, and simply observes and gathers fact. Post-positivist approaches also view research as needing to find empirical evidence through objectivity, but they do concede that researcher bias should be taken into account when drawing conclusions. These schools of thought rely on ignoring the researcher's humanity in the research process. In my view, research is for, about, and conducted by humans, so why pretend we aren't sentient beings?

My views on this matter have been greatly influenced by my colleague and mentor Robert Schroeder, who offered us an understanding of major issues in positivist, post-positivist, interpretivist, critical theorist, and indigenous research paradigms.[14] Before I continue this line of thought, I must take a moment to reflect. Even as I write this paragraph, I struggle to distinguish between Bob—my friend, mentor, and long-time colleague who accompanied me on my path to discover the perfect method—and Robert, the researcher and author offering his contributions to LIS literature that allow us to explore indigenous research methods and autoethnography. Bob is a person with whom I've shared many casual and inspiring conversations about our personal researcher identities, and together we have reflected on how we discovered and grew to value particular approaches. Robert is the person I cite in literature. Because it is human nature, I cannot separate our years of Bob-and-Emily office chats from Robert's formal contributions to the literature. Like Bob, and like Robert, I have an approach to research and an understanding of the world that veer heavily toward the interpretivist, socially constructed, and critical realm of the research paradigms spectrum.

Let's continue to explore other influences on my human-centered approach: active interviewing. Holstein and Gubrium argue that in active interviewing, the act of an interview is an "interpretive practice."[15] Interviews are social events. They depend on time, place, social relationships, and common understandings. In other words, social constructions come into play during interview-based research. Because we, the researchers, are aware of this social constructivism, we are able to acknowledge potential bias introduced by it (and sometimes even address it during the interview). Social constructivism can also introduce bias in quantitative studies, but quantitative studies don't have the opportunity to address potential bias during a conversation between two people, largely because the data collection in quantitative studies is removed from direct personal interaction. When direct personal interaction exists in these studies, researchers stick to predetermined scripts so that each interaction is deemed controlled. I'm thinking in particular here of psychological studies where researchers may be exploring behaviors.

In active interviewing, the interviewer and the interviewee co-construct meaning during the interview. As a result, active interviewing afforded me the opportunity to acknowledge social relationships and give credence and weight to this social co-construction of meaning with interviewees, as well as acknowledge potential bias introduced by our own experiences of social constructivism. It also allowed me to consider and reflect on any potential expressed researcher domination and afforded me the opportunity to attempt to ameliorate that domination in the interview process.

For academic librarians, active interviewing should not be much of a stretch; it is very much like a good reference interview. In partnership with patrons, we think about their questions, rephrase them, and go more in depth for meaning or clues that allow us to uncover what they need and mean. We often ask patrons to critically question what they ask. For example, when a student writing an argumentative essay asks us for evidence that vaccinations cause autism or other developmental delays (for which none exists), we challenge them to rephrase their question from "I need evidence that vaccines cause autism" to "What are some adverse effects of vaccinations?"

One of the potential pitfalls in narrative inquiry is when studies occur in our own communities. This is called backyard research.[16] My own work is a backyard study. In other words, I am drawing my research from a community of which I am already a part. However, since I am concerned with understanding experiences in publishing paradigms in our LIS community, it was necessary to do such a study. I view the active interviewing and analysis process as a component of what I am trying to achieve in LIS. The peers with whom I spoke are just as much experts in peer review as I am. That does not mean, however, that there aren't problems with backyard studies. They can problematize a study's reliability as well as introduce ethical issues for the researcher. For instance, some individuals may not feel comfortable sharing information with the researcher because of their role in a community, or individuals may feel comfortable sharing with the researcher but ask the researcher not to share information with a wider audience, even information that has been de-identified.

In our small academic librarian community, personally identifiable data may have ramifications for one's reputation and potentially one's career. This can create some ethical dilemmas if the work is not done with what Kim calls a "caring reflexivity" in which the researcher "would exercise her phronesis (ethical judgement) by constantly interrogating the ethical dimensions of research practice, including the interpersonal/intrapersonal aspects of research and the interactions/relationships between researcher and participant."[17] To me, caring reflexivity is related to hooks's love, where we question and attempt to end domination.

Before I move into the next chapter, which better unpacks the storying stories methodology, I would like to offer a brief view of how narrative inquiry has been used in LIS research.

Qualitative Research and Narrative Inquiry in LIS

Now that we have a baseline of common understanding of narrative inquiry and its challenges, let's uncover how it has been used in LIS. Narrative inquiry wasn't fully accepted as a legitimate form of research analysis in the academy until fairly recently—the past twenty years or so. As a result, narrative inquiry research in LIS is not well established. This is possibly because narrative research is time-consuming, a luxury not afforded to many academic librarians whose job duties to serve their patrons and libraries take most of the workweek. Academic librarians who must achieve promotion and tenure must think expeditiously in order to fulfill institutional promotion requirements to be successful. Remember at the beginning of this chapter I discussed the survey I conducted to get the pulse of editorial opinions on peer review? My decision to revise that article to include tables and quantitative data was propelled by my need to publish and support my bid for promotion and tenure. In fact, it has only been after achieving tenure that I feel safe enough to explore and use narrative inquiry as a basis for my research.

Given the professional focus of an MLS degree, there is little time for academic librarians to be trained and develop a deep understanding of research methods generally, much less a deep knowledge of qualitative methods and theory. Additionally, academic librarians suffer a collective insecurity about our positions within our academic communities. Without doctoral degrees, and in many academic cultures we must continually prove our worth. (There is a dearth of in LIS literature arguing for the validity and purpose for librarians to have faculty status.) We could even see ACRL's work on the value of academic libraries and the resulting conversations in our literature on the culture of assessment as evidence of our need to continually justify our rank.[18] Sometimes I feel that we are assessing ourselves to death in order to prove that libraries and librarians are just as much part of research and researching as disciplinary faculty in higher education. It is possible that more traditional approaches to research in LIS are the norm—quantitative research presenting tangible outcomes—so that our disciplinary faculty colleagues perceive us as researchers in our home institutions and in our broader academic communities.

This debate about quantitative versus qualitative methods in LIS research has plagued our profession for quite some time. Emily Drabinski and Scott Walter's plea for librarians to base library research in library values,[19] and the slowly rising number of LIS books and articles using qualitative research (like this one), warrant mention of this debate. Qualitative research is time-consuming, and it is even more so if one wants to unpack and share human stories, both subjective and objective, rather than plug them into analysis software and make overarching out-of-context generalizations. There have been recent developments in LIS literature, including the use of autoethnography, one form of narrative inquiry, in Dietering, Schroeder, and Stoddart's *The Self as Subject*.[20] In fact, most of the studies conducted using narrative inquiry were completed not by practicing librarians, but by faculty in academic research departments or government entities, and most authors acknowledged research funding.

This is not to say that there isn't a movement afoot to embrace qualitative methods in LIS, or even in scholarly communication. Donna Lanclos, in her 2016 *Insights* article, writes

> We cannot get to these sorts of things [the experience of being a person] with analytics and systems. We have to get to this kind of information by engaging in practices that bring us in contact with people. We have to talk to them, we have to observe them, we have to ask questions, we have to not just take their word for it when they say they do something, but we have to dig deeper and find out what they actually mean.[21]

There are few studies in the LIS literature that have used narrative inquiry as part of their methods. Those that do exist fall under three themes: evaluating information systems design and implementation, exploring career choices and experiences of school librarians, and student development and use of information literacies. This shows that, despite what Lanclos argues, narrative inquiry may still be approaching LIS research problems as systems-based, rather than understanding the experience of being a person.

Studies conducted in the evaluation phases as part of systems design projects bring valuable qualitative perspectives to complement more quantitative systems evaluations.[22] These studies, however, do not dive deeply into narrative inquiry. For instance, Bonnie Cheuk uses a "sense-making paradigm" to analyze narratives and details how collected narratives are then entered into a database to assist managers with FAQs. In this sense, the narratives do not reflect participants' contextualized experiences inasmuch as they become data points intended to support the further mechanization of systems within bureaucratic power structures. I view this practice as techno-deterministic. Managers may not understand the context in which the narratives were gathered, or even think to use the narrative database at all. The end goal here is to have a functional and responsive system, rather than to elevate human experience. Similarly, Rich Gazan's work discusses the evaluation phase of a large, collaborative grant-funded digitization project with stakeholders across many institutions. This multifaceted project included an in-depth mixed-methods approach to its evaluation, with narrative inquiry being just one piece. These collective narratives were placed into a rigid analytical framework: critical incident method.[*]

Narrative inquiry is the basis for a few studies investigating the careers and experiences of school librarians.[23] While Stephanie Jones uses part of McCormack's storying stories approach, Marcia Mardis uses critical event theory as a lens to perform a narrative analysis of interview transcripts. Mardis's work unpacks three thematic findings of a longitudinal study of school librarian careers. Both Jones and Mardis pose research questions that are narrower than my own, so using a much smaller theory subset is appropriate.

Finally, researchers may extrapolate on student experiences and involve students in narrative inquiry research. Such is the case in Alcalá and colleagues' use of digital storytelling in an LIS classroom as well as Kim L. Morrison's use of narrative inquiry to explore asset-based pedagogy.[24] Although Alcalá and colleagues discuss that both the researcher and participant must work together to make meaning, they do not discuss this theory or approach in depth in their article. Rather the article offers readers the transcripts of this meaning-making exercise. Similarly, Morrison layers autoenthnography with counter-storytelling in partnership with students. Morrison used lived experiences to create an asset-based pedagogy in the information literacy classroom.

The few narrative inquiry studies in LIS offer us a way to view others' lived experiences and reflect on our own. As I discussed in chapter 1, my work to explore stories of peer review is intended to offer readers an opportunity to read, listen, and reflect. Some readers may have more interest in method than content, and others in content over method. In the following chapters I offer you insights into both.

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PART 2

The Stories

(The Story Middle)

As a reminder, stories relayed in this book are formatted to indicate voice and portions of analysis. Although printed in chapter 1, a repetition of this format is offered below for you reference.

There are multiple and nuanced layers to storying stories, as I discuss in chapter 8, "Storying Stories." For each interviewee, I wrote an interpretive narrative. These documents contain a title, an orientation, stories (the story middle), and a coda. (This book intentionally mirrors this structure.) Interpretive narratives also interweave my personal intellectual and emotional reactions to the interview during beginning phases of analysis, as well as explanatory or analytic text constructed and added later in the analysis process. Additionally, the text produced for this book adds another layer of complexity. As a result, I use formatting to communicate these different layers and voices. While it may seem complicated, as you begin reading it should, I hope, become clearer. I offer you the following explanation.

Portions of this book written around interpretive narratives begin at the left margin of each page and are presented in Minion Pro font. This includes all of the text thus far. Each subsequent chapter includes text written for this book as well as portions of the interpretive narratives.

> My framing of interpretive narratives and analysis are indented once and printed in Courier New.

>> Portions of interpretive narratives, or stories, begin indented twice and are printed in Times New Roman.

>>> *When my own words or an interviewee's words are used to clarify the context of a story told, they are further indented and italicized. This text is ancillary in that it provides only the context of the interview and is not part of a storied story.*

Intellectual/Emotional Response

My emotional and intellectual responses, as well as relation to the text—which are one of the first steps of transcript analysis in the storying stories method—are right-justified, italicized, and labeled as Emotional Response, Intellectual Response, or Relation.

Additionally, there are a few instances where interviewees, upon reviewing their interview transcripts, responded to my responses. These are right-justified.

Chapter 3

The Elusive Norm:
Peer Review in LIS

I have a confession: it wasn't until after I had been teaching peer review as an instruction librarian that I felt that I actually understood it. I had two masters' degrees, had been working for a few years, and had even been acting as a cofounder and editorial board member at *In the Library with the Lead Pipe* before I felt that I really knew what it was and how it worked. While I can't presume this is the experience for all or even many academic librarians, I do think that there are others like me.

How does anyone learn what peer review is? If you're an instruction or reference librarian, chances are you engage with your students about it in the classroom or at the reference desk. You may show students how to limit databases with a "refereed" filter and encourage them to think critically and evaluate their sources without solely relying on database filters or designations in *Ulrich's Periodicals Directory*.[1] You might work with professors and instructors to design peer-review activities for their courses. Yet, the frustrating truth is that no classroom experience can authentically teach peer review as it is practiced in scholarly publication venues; the only way to learn it is to do it.

Before this book can begin to explore opening peer review, we need to explore peer review more generally. In the peer-review process, there are many points of tension at which it may break down. Some are long time lines from submission to publication and whether editors can find suitable reviewers for manuscripts. Moreover, how closely did the referees read the manuscript, and how closely is the editor paying attention to referee reports? Are there power dynamics at play between the referees, editorial board, and editor that the author doesn't know about? Does the publication offer referee guidelines, or is there other support for referees to help them provide quality reviews? Do editors assist authors in focusing revisions based on referee reports, or do they simply offer the reports wholesale? These and many other nuances can introduce problems into the peer-review process. In the literature, open peer review is lauded as one way to ameliorate some of these problems. While this chapter does not explore open peer review or other solutions to tension points in the peer-review process, it does, through stories, offer a general landscape of peer review in LIS. These stories can frame our approach to peer review in subsequent chapters. But before we move into narratives, let's set the backdrop and examine peer review generally.

PEER REVIEW IN LIS

In their 2017 report, *Untangling Academic Publishing*, Aileen Fyfe and their colleagues unpack the history of peer review in scholarly publishing.[2] They expound on how, in the 1960s and 1970s, the peer-review process moved from being a community process of scholarly societies to being managed by publishers due to the exponential growth of commercial publishing in the late part of the twentieth century. As scholarly publishing became increasingly commercialized, peer-review processes moved from a collective responsibility—one owned by scholarly societies and associations—to an individual one with authors and referees working in isolation. The commercial publishing industry framed the existence of peer review as a way to make publications desirable for purchase by libraries. Peer review carried the weight of this newly individualized scholars' recommendation for a work's quality and worthiness. In LIS we were no exception to this development. Blind peer review in LIS journals is the current norm, whether our journals are independently owned and run by librarians and professional organizations or whether they are commercial ventures owned and run by big box publishers such as Elsevier, Wiley, or Emerald.

This traditionalism extends to LIS publications in a number of other ways. For example, *Journal Citation Reports* (*JCR*) lists eighty-eight LIS titles in its 2017 data set, only six of which are listed as open access publications.[3] A search for library science in the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) filtered to a subject classification of "Bibliography. Library science. Information resources" retrieved 187 results. Incidentally, DOAJ now offers a filter for peer-review type, and it boasts two open peer-reviewed journals in library science (though I know of a few not listed). In the entire database of 12,438 open access journals across all disciplines, only 135 (1%) have been indexed as having an open peer-review process.[4] I assume that when journals apply for listing in DOAJ, they self-select into this category.

Of course I offer these metrics with the understanding that they aren't all that meaningful, and perhaps not all that reliable. What this snapshot of publishing and peer review in LIS does offer, however, is a sense of the dominance and power that traditional publishing has over independently run publications and publications that may be experimenting with peer review and other scholarly publishing innovations. We must also imagine that there are publications not indexed by *JCR* or DOAJ. These are most likely start-up journals or publications, which, if defined by the dominant publishing paradigm, may not be considered by some as official scholarly publications. Power and perception play an enormous role in what kind of publication is considered valid and by whom—whether it is by established institutions and directories such as *JCR* or DOAJ, or whether it is by a promotion and tenure committee, or even by authors themselves.

The numbers I presented are a little abstract. Perhaps my own experience will elucidate how perception and power can manifest in these situations. When I was still serving on the editorial board of *In the Library with the Lead Pipe,*[*] we were working to get DOIs assigned to the articles we published. One way to do this was to become a member of the Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association (OASPA). We felt that this would help the publication in terms of archiving our work, tracking metrics, and supporting our authors. Because it was a start-up publication with no institutional affiliation, we felt membership would make us look more official, command more respect, and add to the validity of our publication. (At my institution I faced challenges to the validity of my publications in the journal.) However, the OASPA board rejected our membership application. The feedback we received from the board was helpful, and as a result we were able to make substantive positive changes to clarify our Creative Commons license as well as improve our author guidelines and other procedural documents. However, there remained one point of contention: we did not offer a standard citation format (such as volume, issue, and page number, or DOI). We were in a catch-22. We could not acquire DOIs (our preferred standard citation format) without OASPA affiliation unless we were willing to pay significant costs out of our personal pockets, and we disagreed that our born-digital publication needed volume, issue, and page numbers. (These are, after all, vestiges of print publication.) Had our membership been accepted, individual editorial board members would have happily donated the funds to cover OASPA membership costs.

I offer this example not to lambaste OASPA—it does great work—but to show that the power and dominance of traditional notions of publishing and institutional structures can impede the growth and evolution of publishing practices. Institutions that serve as markers of authority and quality can deem what is a good or official or impactful publication, but in this process they also introduce financial and social capital barriers to small, forwarding-thinking publications. To this day, *Lead Pipe* still does not assign DOIs to published articles.

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* We formed in 2008, and I served until 2015.

Before I heard the stories of my participants, I could share and examine my own experiences with peer review—my own notion of what it is and does, and how I would characterize it for LIS. During my research, I did not seek to discover a normal peer-review experience in LIS, but I was struck by a surfacing theme: each participant alluded to what they believed *might* be normal, but no one spoke with certainty.* This points to one detail: we don't really know what should be considered normal. We don't really know for a variety of reasons, but my educated guess incorporates three facets: (1) peer review is not a transparent practice. (How can we judge whether something meets a standard if it is not available to be reviewed?); (2) peer-review processes run the gamut of implementations and approaches by editors, editorial boards, and referees; and (3) the academic reward structure of promotion and tenure and how institutions enact it shapes the process.

We each have our own notions of what peer review should be and do, but a universal experience of what it is in LIS—or what it should be—does not exist. Is there one such definition or experience that is normal? Different journals may hold different goals for peer review. Where at some journals peer review is viewed as supportive and developmental for authors and their ideas, other journals may view it as a quality check and not much more. In these instances peer review becomes a checkbox—or gatekeeping over the record of our knowledge and discourse in LIS. This raises these questions: Just what is scholarly gatekeeping? And who or what has the authority to determine it?

In the rest of this chapter, we'll explore what might be normal for peer review in LIS. The stories shared come from a variety of people with varying experiences as authors, reviewers, and editors. In subsequent chapters, but not in this one, I investigate the nuances and intricacies of these roles, including how experiences in one role may inform another. For now, let's uncover this elusive norm.

Pretty Standard, I Think

To peer review in LIS, we bring our own personal expectations, especially as authors. And even when we think we know what is normal, it remains murky. My conversation with Bethany, a mid-career professional, author, and editor at an LIS journal, uncovered this. I asked her to speak generally about her experiences with peer review.

> *Emily: And as an author, what have your experiences with peer review been like?*

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* In his comments on a draft of this book, Bob Schroeder pointed out that this seemed like a "case of hegemony" and asked, "Where do we base our understanding of normal, or who/what has the authority to create it? Institutions? Journals? Promotion & tenure committees?"

Pretty standard, I think. I mean I've had papers accepted with good reviews; I've had papers rejected. I had something that was accepted once, with really kind of half-assed review, and I was like, "This seems strange," and now I totally understand what was going on with that review. Um, but I've never had, a case where, I was like, "There's something going on here," or something was completely wrong, or nothing, nothing sort of interesting.

Emily: Do you recall any kind of emotional experience that you may have had when you were undergoing a peer-review process as an author?

I mean the whole thing is emotional. Any time you're having somebody else read your work and comment on it, it's always going to be a very vulnerable experience. Yeah, so nothing's really jumping out that's, like, "Oh yes, I've had a really mean peer review," or anything…

Intellectual Response

I'm beginning to wonder if this is endemic to our profession. Although I have no evidence of it, I would say that librarians are generally conflict-averse folk. Is it that our profession isn't necessarily as cutthroat as perhaps some of the more competitive academic fields out there? Is it that we are really a profession rather than an academic discipline? This liminal space that librarianship occupies—are we a discipline or not; from where do we borrow theories?—how does this socially constructed piece of our profession (discipline?) manifest when it comes to the culture of refereeing?

Bethany responded to my reflection:

This suggests to me that people are holding back on criticism, but I don't think that's the case. I've had negative reviews of things I've written—they have just never been horribly uncivil, etc. Which, you would hope that people writing professional evaluations of other professionals' work would always be civil, but that's definitely not always the case in other fields. And I've come across less civil reviews in our field in my editor role, so maybe I've just been lucky in my experiences as an author.

Bethany's reflection shows that she's unsure of what her standard experience is. She says, "Maybe I've just been lucky." Even though she is an experienced author and serves as an editor at a journal, she did not convey a convincing understanding of standard peer review in LIS.

All the Jokes about Reviewer Two

Bethany's response was not unique in that others also alluded to their perceived norm and qualified their experiences as, on the whole, positive or good. But the more I heard about positive experiences, they were almost always contrasted with mention of negative experiences—namely of an experience with the dreaded Reviewer Two. It seems, based on the conversations I had, that part of an accepted normal or standard experience of peer review included an experience with a Reviewer Two.

Arguably Reviewer Two is one of the most commonly accepted inevitabilities in academe. Given enough experience, any writer will have an experience with a reviewer whom they might lump into this category. The internet is rife with jokes, comics, memes, and other humorous takes on peer-reviewing. (For example, the blog *Shit My Reviewers Say* could be extrapolated to mean "shit Reviewer Two says."[5]) Academic blogger Jonathan Weisberg offers a good description of Reviewer Two:

> Reviewer 2 is accused of a lot. It's not just that their overall take is more severe; they also tend to miss the point. They're irresponsible and superficial in their reading. And to the extent they do appreciate the author's point, their objections are poorly thought out. What's more, if they bother to demand revisions, their demands are unreasonable.[6]

The notion of Reviewer Two isn't limited to fun internet memes and quips. In fact, there is a body of literature that discusses reviewer abuse and problems of reviewer accountability.[7] Barring a standard or norm provided from elsewhere, we, whether acting as authors or as reviewers, are left to our own devices to norm peer review for ourselves. Journal policies and guidelines can (and should) play a role, but that is only if the journal has guidelines and if an editor enforces them. (A longer discussion of process appears in chapter 7, "Transparency of Peer-Review Process.") In fact, it was only in 2013 that the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), an organization tasked with "promoting integrity in research and its publication,"[8] published its first version of the "COPE Ethical Guidelines for Peer Reviewers."[9] Given the relatively short amount of time these guidelines have been public and the need for editors and editorial boards to adopt and implement them, we continue to navigate peer review mired in our own fictions of it.

As I reflected back on the conversations I had, I realized that I never thought twice when someone mentioned Reviewer Two; I knew—or thought I knew—exactly what they meant. It's almost as if we use "Reviewer Two" as code for "flaws in peer review."

Nancy, an experienced author, defines her experience of peer review based on her notion of Reviewer Two. Although she starts by saying she has never experienced the phenomenon of Reviewer Two, she immediately negates that assertion, stating she has experienced feedback from a "mean" reviewer.

> Yeah, I was just thinking I haven't had, like, all the jokes about Reviewer Two. I feel like I haven't had super bad experiences with really horrible peer reviews of my own work. I feel like my biggest complaints, other than just it being a nameless and faceless thing, is that it often takes so long and that seems ridiculous. But I have had some where I was like, "Wow, you said a lot of things in this very mean way and why did you do that?" kind of thing. But not super awful…

Similarly, Stephanie reflected that her experience with peer review had been good, despite a Reviewer Two experience.

> You know my experiences with peer review and publishing have been largely positive. There's always one reviewer who either is more harsh or critical or just doesn't seem to get it as much as the other reviewers. But really, generally I've had constructive criticism, and I feel like my work has improved and been better because of peer review.

As we discussed one of her publication experiences, Julie mentioned the notion of Reviewer Two in passing, even though she didn't elaborate on it.

> *Emily: Okay. But the peer-review process for you with that particular article, it didn't uncover any of that, so that was all…*

> Not really. There's always one reviewer that is always a little more… but, not to a place where… I think I revised that article again in a week or two. It was nothing where they were like, "Go back to the drawing board." No. So it was positive.…

Over the course of all the conversations I had, what became clear is that having had a Reviewer Two is a normal experience. For anyone with enough experience, Reviewer Two was omnipresent.

Kurt quipped that he'd had a "reviewer who needs a reviewer."

> *Emily: Did you ever have any experiences of an author where, you know we hear about reviewer abuse, did, do you ever have anything like that happen?*

> No, I haven't. I've had, I've generally been very fortunate in getting good reviewers. I've had a couple where there were, it seemed like really somebody had just kind of mailed it in with… you know, they made a couple of oblique very brief comments that really weren't helpful. And, you know, that I usually just ignore, [laughs] but I haven't, no. I heard of that, but I've never experienced it.

> *Emily: Have you heard of it in LIS?*

> No, I haven't. I've heard of it in the social sciences. Actually I've heard of it in humanities and history and literature. In fact, one example now comes to mind, where a colleague in the literature field, and this is probably ten, twelve years ago, got some really inappropriate comments that, I think we didn't have the term then, nowadays we would call "mansplaining." Yeah. And so yeah, I haven't heard about it in our field, I've heard a couple of people in other disciplines talk about it. Literature and history.

> *Emily: Yeah. Mmhmm. Yeah, and you know what, that also corroborates things that I've heard. I haven't heard of much reviewer abuse, but I've heard of, maybe, negligence, just like reviews that are just not helpful, you know.*

> Yeah, and like I said, I've had a couple of those. You know, either it was unhelpful or it's like, well, "This reviewer needs a reviewer." [laughing] Really, like I just said, not putting the time and effort and just mailing it in.

If we base our perception of Reviewer Two on the dearth of internet memes, we certainly would equate that role with pop culture references to evil males such as Darth Vader and Voldemort. This is not to say that evil representations of Reviewer Two aren't based in some reality. Rather, that reality seems to be an exception to the rule, at least in LIS. In LIS, Reviewer Two may be less Darth Vader and more overworked librarian who just doesn't have the time and energy to give manuscripts the attention they deserve. Why? They may have spent their day filled with shifts at the reference desk, sitting through collections budget meetings, preparing and teaching classes, answering e-mail, attending committee meetings, and then coming home to make dinner and care for diabetic cats, children, or an aging loved one, and then realizing they, yet again, didn't get to that paper they were supposed to referee. In short, Reviewer Two can be seen (albeit in my generous characterization) as well-meaning but neglectful. So why do we normalize Reviewer Two, when it is apparent that reviews by Reviewer Two do not help authors and cause undue frustration? (I will discuss this in more detail in the next chapter, "Roles of Peer Review.")

This Is Something No One Teaches You as an Early-Career Researcher

For those whose careers aren't as established, different themes surface as they speak about peer review. Perhaps they haven't yet experienced the Reviewer Two phenomenon, but they have certainly heard about it. What seemed to define peer review for early-career researchers was not their personal expectations, but the expectations of their institutions. Unsurprisingly, early-career researchers are driven to submit peer-reviewed work in order to achieve promotion and rank.

Cheryl, a recent LIS graduate who also holds a PhD in the humanities, offered her observations on the pressures of promotion and tenure, stemming from her work as a graduate assistant during library school. This experience allowed her a window into the reality of "publish or perish" for LIS faculty.

> *Emily: So you also indicated that you identified a little bit as an author. Can you talk a little bit more about those experiences that you had, particularly with the articles you published with your professor?*

> …so the first article we published was fascinating. And so I was just sort of stumbling along and trying to figure it out. As far as the publishing aspects, she was the one submitting things and going through that. I was surprised by the rapidity with which we got an acceptance because there were things in the article that I was like, I can poke some holes in that fairly easily, or it could use more substance there. The turnaround time was much quicker than my experience in the humanities, which was nice because one of the really obnoxious things that humanities journals can do is just sit on your paper for literally a year—the speed was positive.

> *Emily: Okay. Was there anything in there that—what was that like to see it for the first time in LIS?*

> Yes, that was interesting. It was I guess pretty akin to my experience beforehand, where some of the comments are really helpful, but it also then seemed like one of the reviewers had either not really spent much time or not really understood certain things. So I guess I would say one of the sets of comments was helpful and the other was just kind of, this is sort of a waste of everyone's time, but we have to give them responses to show how we've addressed their comments. And my professor actually mentioned that she was pretty sure she knew who at least one of the reviewers was.

> *Emily: So then you all had to respond to comments and all that. So your professor kind of looped you in on the whole thing.*

Yes, she definitely was totally open about it. She wanted a second set of eyes to look at the comments, really understandably. But I was totally unfamiliar with this quantitative research and data gathering and all that, and it felt like something that library school had not really prepared me for at all, which again, it's the function of a master's versus a research degree. So it ended up being less rigorous than I expected. The lack of rigor was a little bit—I don't know that it was entirely surprising, but it's, again, I think a sign of all these pressures that publishers are feeling, that professors are feeling, that everyone is feeling. I don't know if there's some sort of field-wide simpatico, like the editors know that this professor has to publish to get tenure, promotion, or whatever. So I think it's the field is sort of small enough that the notion of blind peer review is a bit of a joke anyway.

> *Emily: What led her to think that she knew who the reviewer was?*

> *Cheryl: I think, I'm not entirely positive. I mean, you can definitely see, I think you can see who's on the editorial board from the journal website, and I don't know if she had a sense of who they would give that particular topic to or if she was familiar with their writing style or what.*

And I think because of that she was probably—well, that's speculation, but she may have been more open with me about the whole process than another professor might have who just thought, "Oh, it's not necessary for me to share this part with my GA."

> *Emily: What was it like emotionally, that experience going through it the thoughts, feelings, the affect of it?*

> *Cheryl: Yes, I mean it was definitely exciting. It was also a little painful every time we used the passive voice just because I spent, I don't know, five years telling my students not to do that.*

> I think more than anything I was sort of feeling sympathetic for this professor, who had put together one of the really good classes I had taken and was under a ton of pressure as far as publishing. As far as her teaching load was big. So a lot of pressure. I mean Trump had just been elected and she's living literally in Koch Brothers country as an immigrant of color. So I guess part of it was sort of a motivating factor to get this done was to help her out, and hopefully it's done that. It was definitely—the pressure she felt was definitely tangible, and it seems like the stress of publishing for LIS faculty is such that it probably keeps them from having the time to even question these structures and think about "Hey, there's some really horrible things that are happening here. How can I do things differently?" because you're still living your day-to-day life. You have to keep a job. You have to get tenure, et cetera. So the whole experience just sort of brought home, I guess, the realities of the field as faculty for me.

Practicing librarians who must seek promotion and tenure also experience the pressures Cheryl noticed for the professor with whom she worked. For those on the tenure track, it seems a universal experience that having works published in peer-reviewed publications is of great importance to their career longevity.

As an example, Alma's station as a librarian seeking promotion and tenure greatly influences her thoughts about peer review and publishing. She thinks deeply about what she will have to do in order to please her review committee.

> And I think it's been a good compromise to be in a bigger academic library [in the Midwest] because of the support around publishing, which is part of what I just felt was lacking in my previous job. So, I mean, I think that I have a lot of ideas of projects that I want to look into and research.… I'm really excited and inspired by the new research and conversations that were happening, looking at more critical issues of power in librarianship.

> [I was] wanting to be more involved in those conversations, along with just knowing that I had these publication requirements, which, frankly, at our campus are really steep. There's been this push that library faculty need to be more and more productive and need to be publishing. Not so much, I don't think the metrics really matter that much, but having original

> research and traditionally peer-reviewed publication is seen as more valuable now, kind of by a department which I don't love, but I can't really push against too much right now as someone who is not yet tenured. So that's kind of spurred me to carve out more of my time for different research stuff and writing.

Seeing that Alma is challenged by the promotion and tenure culture at her institution, I ask more about what she perceives her institution wants from "traditionally peer-reviewed publications."

> So I haven't pushed on that topic, but I know that in the past people have had issues in promotion review because they had written book chapters and the committee members said—and they listed them as peer-reviewed, which they were—but the committee said that they weren't peer-reviewed because the books wouldn't have been published [without the chapter]… so there was this hierarchy that was put into place which was, chapters are worth diddly-squat and articles are the only currency that you can really have here… and it was kind of coming from that paternalistic view that they wanted to protect the junior colleagues for when they went up for tenure because we're already seen as not real faculty members and how having these inferior publications are going to hurt their chances of getting tenure. So it was pretty troubling and I think since has sort of shaped when I'm thinking about where I want to publish, I really want to prioritize, not necessarily something that uses double-blinded peer review or something like that, but just journals that have a bigger impact factor and that have, that are peer-reviewed, versus, you know, opting to do a book chapter, which I believe is peer-reviewed but that I'm worried that won't be viewed in that way.

Although Alma doesn't specifically say it, I get the sense that the paternalism she sees in the promotion process at her institution bothers her, yet she feels as if she has to con-

> form to it in order to play the promotion game where she works. I also notice that when discussing these larger institutional and cultural norms around publishing, Alma uses the passive voice. She is further removed from these processes, either by not fully understanding them or by acknowledging that there isn't one person responsible, but rather an entire culture to which to attribute this discomfort.

> Having recently been promoted and tenured myself, I identify very much with this experience. Although I wanted to define my scholarship for myself, I had to mollify others. I consequently made publishing decisions not for myself, but for my committee. Hearing Alma use the word *paternalism* also makes me wonder how much gender politics, if at all, play into the researching/writing/publishing decisions individuals make during this process.

Promotion committees and institutions can not only unduly influence where researchers attempt to publish, but can also influence their research agendas. Anne-Marie Dietering theorizes in her introduction to *The Self as Subject* that librarians generally lack a focus or theory, which may precipitate institutional needs coming to dictate librarians' research agendas and approaches. "If my untested theory is true, this also shapes how we think about research. If institutional requirements are the primary factor we use to make research choices, then that starts to shape what we think research is for."[10]

A lack of experience in the peer-review process and not knowing what to expect from it or having false or misguided expectations can be another influence on early-career researchers. For some, this leads to dissonance between their expectations and the reality of the process. My own inaugural experience of peer review at a traditional journal is an example. With a colleague I wrote an invited article detailing a grant-funded project we had completed. The referee comments we received mismatched my expectations: instead of receiving helpful comments on the article's content and organization, offering thoughts about how to improve and clarify our writing, which were what I expected, the reviewer provided a handful of copyedits, merely suggesting where or where not to use commas. Needless to say, I was disheartened by the experience.

Jessica related a peer-review experience she had with one of the first articles she ever submitted, which resulted in feelings of frustration and disappointment.

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The second article Jessica published (with a
coauthor) went through a long and frustrating
process. It was rejected by one publication,
and she and her coauthor then submitted it
elsewhere. She relays her frustration in that
experience.
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> So we had a, first of all we had a really hard time identifying a venue that would produce engagement and readership, and we wanted people to read this and see this piece and be interested in it. So we submitted it somewhere, and I guess it took maybe a little over a month, maybe six weeks, and we just heard back with a note saying that, you know, it wasn't of sort of the traditional rigor that this journal would have, it's not evidence-based, there wasn't a sort of analysis or data collection. They think it would be a really interesting piece and are happy to have further discussions about how it could be kind of a more informal spotlight or showcase piece (whatever those are called). And we really wanted it to be peer-reviewed, for career reasons, but also because we felt like it needed to be refined more and could be enhanced by someone else's perspective on it. And we felt like it was this pretty solid contribution to the professional literature. There weren't people talking about this topic even though it was really important. So we just kinda walked away and said, "Well, we're gonna try and submit it elsewhere, thanks so much for your time." We went back into that journal's archive of publications, and they're publishing things with really, really small sample size. Not to say that those aren't legitimate either, but we're like, "Should we have done something differently?" So we were kind of dumbfounded on how to move forward, and we'd already spent a couple months just, you know, poking around, seeing what are the better journals. I sent it to one of my mentors and asked, "What do you think?" and then eventually we submitted it elsewhere.

So I think that there was just a lack of mentorship with the rejection. I think rejection is part of this process; it's to be expected. Particularly with something where you're trying to identify what's the right venue for this. But as early-career researchers, we just had no idea what process it went through and where to go from there.

> *Emily: So just to clarify, so you received a rejection, but there was an invitation to kind of engage a little bit more, but then you and your colleague decided to just take it in a different direction?*

Yeah. So there was an invitation to shorten it. I think [muffled] and make it like a non-peer-reviewed spotlight piece. There's, you know… there will be these shorter pieces before the actual research articles.… Yeah. Reflection. A kind of informal piece, and we really wanted to see it, first of all we spent a lot of time writing it the length that it was and didn't feel like cutting it in half was useful.

So, we just—this is something no one teaches you as an early-career researcher, you're just like, "All right, I'm just gonna throw something at the wall and see if it sticks." And I think the thing that was frustrating to me is my coauthor and I had no idea what the process was. Did they send that out to reviewers and the reviewers gave them feedback, and if so could we see that feedback? Or was that just an editorial decision made (similar to desk review)? What would have made it stronger? Yeah. And I think, [sigh] for better or worse, we really, really tried to refine it before submitting it, so we also just had a lot of hours [laughing] invested in this thing. And wanted to see it peer-reviewed and… Yeah, it was tough when it got rejected because, again, we just felt like it was a pretty unique contribution. And then we wanted to see it go to the peer-review process, and my understanding is it wouldn't have if it had gone through that kind of abbreviated publishing process, so we decided to look elsewhere.

> It's interesting to me that Jessica is seeking mentorship with her publishing opportunities. While this has been part of her experience, it certainly isn't the norm of publishing in academia. The narrative constructed here, of Jessica's expectation that peer review includes a sense of mentorship, I think reflects Jessica's worldview as a librarian, as someone who tries to be open, to mentor others, and who expresses gratitude to her past teachers and mentors.

Jessica's story hits on several points. She and her colleague were inexperienced researchers attempting to make sense of the complex writing and publishing system, which to them had been wholly unexplained.

The Filter Will Do Its Job Anyway, but I Don't Need to Perform for It

Achieving promotion and tenure offers a great many privileges when we approach peer review. Those who already hold rank and tenure may take more chances or may have different perspectives on the process because the stakes are lower—their continued employment isn't riding on it. In our conversation about his breadth of experience publishing and editing, Kurt discussed how his approach to writing and submitting manuscripts evolved over time.

> Well I'll start as an author. When I began writing for publication, we were told, and you know this is before people started talking about open access. You know, this is the 80s. Our journals were all in print. And people said, "You know, you usually do book reviews, they are a good way to get started, and you know book chapters, but you really need to start thinking about doing peer-review journal articles." The way that I started kind of getting out of that, first of all doing different types of publications. Doing book chapters that maybe went through an editorial process but wasn't the double-blind peer review, doing conference presentations that then had proceedings that you'd write for, things like that. And it was probably in the early 2000s.… We were going to do an article, and we sent off an inquiry to a journal, and, they said, "Oh yeah, we would be interested, you need to do this, this, this, and this, and, yeah, you know, and it takes three years to get published." First of all, "Well, no, we're up for tenure in two, so we need

it before that," and we found an early open access journal that said, "Oh, this sounds like an interesting idea. Why don't you write it up? We've got a peer-review process," it wasn't open [peer review], but it was open access, and we turned these around in a matter of two or three weeks. And we sent this article in, and we got actually pretty good feedback on it and revised it, and it was done in less than two months, and that was when I realized… and then we did it and then at the same time we had some other related research that we did at couple of different conferences. And I've talked to other people since then, friends and colleagues of mine, including people in other disciplines, people in the humanities, people in the social sciences, they said yes, they did a similar thing when they started writing. Especially people who, I had a colleague who was in psychology who had to write peer-reviewed articles for these specific journals. They said, "Yeah, you're writing for their editorial policy and not for your audience."

And I think this is something that for a long time I had kind of subconsciously in the back of my head, and I've since talked with colleagues of my—let's say, age cohort—about this, and, you know, I think we spent a long time in our early careers writing for reviewers rather than writing for audiences because we were so hung up on it. And then, you know, I got rid of that a long time ago. But I think it's something… that I realized a while ago, really kind of influenced me as an early author… it had been drilled into me—and I think this happens maybe even more in academic departments than it does in the library—that you've got to do this type of publication, and you're writing for the reviewers rather than for what your audience is.

> *Emily: Is there, do you have a specific example of when that light bulb clicked on for you? Was there one experience where that really solidified that thought for you?*

…and I think it was getting out of the traditional, it was then that I really got out of that traditional double-blind peer-reviewed mentality and realized, "Yeah, I shouldn't worry so

> much about that." I should really worry about what it is that I want to say, find my own voice, and use it for the audience that I'm actually trying to reach and not for the filter between me and them. The filter will do its job anyway, but I don't need to perform for it.

Kurt shows that even though the filter of peer review can be frustrating, he does have trust in it. As a tenured professor with an established career, he now has the privilege to not perform for peer review. It took him a long time to get here and to realize that he could research what he wanted and write the articles he wanted. He still trusts the process. But why does it take years and an established career to be able to write the articles we want?

That's What Peer Review Should Be

On the whole, participants did relay positive experiences with peer review in LIS. The system does have its flaws, including neglectful Reviewer Twos, but it can be a powerful process. Julie revealed one peer-review experience that was remarkable to her.

> *Emily: As an author do you have any experiences with peer review that stand out from your career publishing?*

> They've all been really informative, to tell you the truth. For example, when we published our first article [on this topic], which was I think it published in 2014, I'll always remember [the journal] coming back to us with the reviewer feedback, and they were like, "Here's some critical literature that you didn't include in there. Do this. Think about how this resonates with your project." And I was like—it was like a gift. "Wow." That's what peer review should be.

> And I would say that across the board that's pretty much been my experience. You asked does anyone, like, "No, you suck," I've never really had that. It's mostly very formative and always helping move toward a better product. Since I've become a reviewer I've sort of started to see that there are different flavors of reviewers out there. Some are hyper-focused and they can give you all this minutiae, that's probably what the person who gave us all that literature was, do you know what I mean?

> And they'll pick apart your methodology, and then there are people like me. As a reviewer I'm more big picture, "This resonated, this needs a little more development, build that lit review out." It's never much more than that with me. But then other people will just go so far down and give you three pages of comments, and I think you kind of need that diversity.

Framing Julie's take on giving and receiving peer reviews is her entire approach to librarianship, research, and writing. Her interpretive story, "I Like That Melding of Voices into One," relays the essential nature of collaboration and community to her work. In our conversation and subsequent analysis, together we discovered that when she researches and writes alone—when she lacks community—her deep-seated fears of publishing become stronger. This community is so important to Julie that when she lacks it she feels downright "paralyzed." For Julie, it was a community of reviewers, offering a diversity of feedback, that enabled her to realize the ideal of peer review . We'll delve further into Julie's story and themes of community and collaboration in chapter 6, "Collaborative Work and Discourse Community."

REFLECTING ON THE ELUSIVE NORM

As these stories illustrate, each individual experiences peer review differently. Our narratives are shaped by personality, worldview, and other social contexts. One's career stage and focus can influence how we internalize and experience peer review and how we approach future experiences. Despite these differences, we do come to see the notion of Reviewer Two as ubiquitous, but not utterly insidious. Although peer review in LIS is generally positive, one does question how opening peer review would have influenced these stories. For example, how might Jessica's rejection have differed if she had submitted the article to an openly peer-reviewed journal? Would Kurt and Bethany, respectively, have experienced neglectful or "half-assed" reviews had these processes been open?

As I reread these stories and share them with you, I have more questions than answers. This is the nature of narrative inquiry; we share stories in order to reflect on our own. Below I offer some questions for personal reflection in the hope that you may continue these conversations. Pose these questions to your colleagues and reflect together. What has been your story of peer review?

- What is your perception of peer review in LIS? Where does your perception come from?

- Does there exist a normal peer-review experience?
- Have you ever had a Reviewer Two experience? How would you characterize it?
- Why do we normalize Reviewer Two, when it is apparent that reviews by Reviewer Two do not help authors and cause undue frustration?
- What should peer review do, and who should have the authority to norm peer review? Why?
- Why does it take us years and an established career to be able to write the articles we want? What can we change in the system to allow us to do this earlier and feel safe doing so?

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Chapter 4

Roles of Peer Review

Now that we have unpacked the elusive norm, let's dive into better understanding who the players are and what roles exist in the peer-review system. Our current peer-review process has three discrete roles: authors, editors, and referees. What do individuals experience in these roles, and what makes the roles distinct? What are the responsibilities inherent in them, and how are the roles borne out? What are individual experiences, and what may be collective ones? While this chapter shares and examines individual experiences of each of these distinct roles, the subsequent chapter, "Dualities and Multiplicities in Peer Review", examines just that—the dualities or multiplicities individuals experience in them.

In peer-review processes, authors are primary content creators, contributing new ideas and knowledge to the scholarly conversation. In essence authorship inherently contributes to discourse. Although scholarly self-publishing and blogging—which do not necessarily undergo peer-review processes—exist in academe, we LIS authors continue to place the vast majority of our written contributions to the literature in the hands of editors and referees at traditional journal and book publishers. We do this for a variety of reasons. We may want to reach certain audiences or ensure that we publish our work someplace reputable. We want our works to be discoverable in library research databases and in Google. In some extreme incidences we may choose the journals in which we publish because those are the journals our promotion or review committees will accept. Publishing in traditional peer-reviewed journals affords authors all of these advantages.

Journal editors manage daily operations, including organizing submissions, editing, and peer-review processes. Editors also work on a macro level, considering a journal's well-being and growth, and monitor changes in the scholarly communication landscape. They may collaborate with editorial boards to set journal policy. Editors at association-affiliated journals are also beholden to and responsible for reporting and upholding the values and mission of the association with which the journal is affiliated. Book editors typically work on a limited-duration project-focused scope, communicating with authors, referees, coeditors, and publishers, lending their creativity to forming the cohesiveness of a single book project with multiple authors. Referees for both journals and books read and examine submitted manuscripts, offering suggestions for improvement and advising editors on publishing decisions. In most current peer-review processes, this labor—that of editing and reviewing—remains hidden. While each published piece is attributed to an author, an editor's advocacy and referees' suggestions have contributed to a final published product without formal public acknowledgement. Moreover, for most referees, their identities remain concealed. Many people see opening up peer review as one way to surface and pay tribute to the hidden labor of traditional scholarly publishing.

In this chapter I will present stories that highlight individual experiences serving in the roles fundamental to peer review: authors, reviewers, and editors. By hearing stories of these roles, we may see similarities to or differences from our own. Whatever connections or disconnections we observe, the following stories will help us better understand the distinct differences between these roles and their functions within the peer-review system. While in this chapter I treat the roles discretely, the following chapter, "Dualities and Multiplicities in Peer Review," examines the nuanced and often interdependent nature of individuals' experiences serving in more than one role.

AUTHORS

It's Not Something That Comes Naturally, It's Something That I Had to Work Really Hard At

We can't examine the role of author without asking this question: Why do we write? This query has as many answers as there are individuals who may answer it, though there are common themes. Of writing, my friend Brett Bonfield said, "I write because I don't know what it feels like not to write, and I don't ever want to find out."[1] My own reasons are similar. But in academic librarianship, many folks write partly (and sometimes largely) because they are required to produce scholarship. They must research and publish research results in order to achieve rank and tenure in their institutions. While this is a very worthy and compelling reason, it is not the only one. Truthfully, most of us write for a pastiche of reasons, including but not limited to the demands of our positions and institutional expectations. And for some, it is not innate. No matter one's position, it seems that writing poses challenges to authors.

In their stories most people discussed writing and authorship under the frame of working toward or having achieved promotion and tenure. The pressures of this cultural reality loom large because our colleges and universities and our academic librarian culture expect that we will engage in scholarship that we then disseminate via written contributions to the literature. This is not to say that this is the only reason individuals write, but it is such a large part of writing and publishing in academia that any discussion of authorship must occur within its (sometimes oppressive) frame.

This chapter highlights stories about authorship that illustrate why we write and how people view the role of author and identify with it. Lastly, the stories highlight challenges unique to the authorial role.

Let's begin with Jessica, an early-career researcher and tenure-track librarian, who began contributing to the literature before she was in a tenure-track job. However, her current need to achieve tenure has added a reason for her to pursue her contributions and make them a higher priority, yet her aim with authorship remains the same—to refine her practice.

> So I would very much identify as an early-career librarian, and I'm new to the tenure track. I feel like writing, presenting, all that sort of refines my professional practice, my professional voice. I was interested in publishing in LIS school, I knew I wanted to be an academic librarian and so started to pursue that in my first position [which wasn't tenure-track and where research and writing weren't required]. It [writing and publishing] adds to this discourse in our profession, and I think it improves our profession. In some ways it's that it's a practice-based profession, and I think that being able to write and add to the conversation helps inform our actions.

Jessica acknowledges that she cannot see herself solely as an author but that her authorship is combined with librarian praxis. She frames the context of her writing as it relates to her professional duties. Jessica was not the only person who discussed this practical view, which sees writing as interdependent with our professional practice as librarian.

Stephanie also reflected on her writing process in this way. Her authorial contributions began as a way to ensure employment, and she continued writing as she moved into a position with promotion and tenure requirements. Despite having recently achieved tenure, Stephanie still finds writing a challenging process, noting that she's more comfortable with the literature search process than she is conveying her written thoughts and ideas.

> As we begin our conversation, Stephanie quickly reveals her pragmatic side. Her relation-

ship to publishing and writing was born of pragmatism and is something that Stephanie sees as serving her work as a librarian.

> So as a tenure-track librarian, I have to publish and disseminate work in order to meet those expectations. Although I had published when I was a graduate student in hopes of helping to get a job.
>
> > *Emily: So in that graduate school experience, just to react a little bit, I've never heard anyone say that they did it because they wanted it for a job per se. I mean, I think career advancement might be a common theme, but could you talk a little bit about that graduate school experience of publishing?*
>
> Sure. So it's probably atypical. So I worked in research for, I think, three years before I started my MLS, and then I began to work on a dual MLS and a master's while I was working. So I was working in research and trying to apply what I was learning in my day-to-day work. So it's not that any of my professors said that I should publish. It was more that I was working with researchers, we were producing research and publishing anyway.
>
> So [pause] it's not something that comes naturally. It's something that I had to work really hard at. [laughing] So I have this sort of requirement and that I think probably drives the volume and shapes the way that I think about contributing to the LIS literature. But I have, over the past six years or so, I've come to try to integrate it as a process of clarifying my own thinking about things and trying to write about the things that I needed to read. And I was trying to, I guess, apply and figure out how do I integrate LIS skills and perspectives into that work [job held during graduate school] assuming that I was going to continue on and work in the same kind of environment.

Stephanie uncovers that her research and writing agenda began in her career and focused on

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the institutional requirements around her—the
need to achieve promotion and tenure. She ap-
proaches it pragmatically within her universi-
ty. Part of her pragmatism, too, was to follow
the path that she stumbled upon as a graduate
student, working in an environment that led
into her librarianship career.
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> *Emily: So then you moved on and you got this tenure-related job, right?*

> Yes. So my first job, I mean the job conversation in and of itself is complicated, but dual career, spouse. So we needed to stay in the same city, because my husband's job is much more stable and pays a lot more, so [laughs] I was limited to applying for jobs in the area. And so I applied for the job here and got it and so that's…

> *Emily: And there's been publishing requirements.*

> We are expected to produce three products, so it doesn't even have to be a journal article. They can be presentations or other things that go through a formal evaluation process, typically peer review. And that's the expectation for my campus.

> *Emily: Is that per year or is that just…*

> That's for tenure. Our primary area is performance. Secondary is either professional development or service. I mean, that completely changed my career focus in a great way, but unexpected. Yes, so it's not, I don't think, unrealistic. It's hard to talk about this stuff without getting into the weeds.

While institutional requirements demand that we write, we do retain some agency (not all—continuing institutional pressures) in what we research and the topics about which we write. In this way our writing can still continue to express our worldview, and we can use writing to further and to communicate our own values. And for those who aren't required to write, sometimes it is our worldview and ethos that push us to do it in the absence of institutional pressures. Let's take

Stuart, for example. When we spoke, Stuart was completing their doctoral degree and finishing their dissertation on open access history and policies. Stuart shared their reasons for writing.

> `We move on to talk about more of Stuart's experiences as an author. I ask about Stuart's authorial identity, what the role feels like for them. Again, Stuart mentions their lack of ambition for a professorial career, but rather that they are merely interested in open and seem to be good at writing and publishing. They see their role as a researcher and writer as that of contributor, putting out things that haven't yet been written. On some level, it seems to be that Stuart sees themselves as fulfilling a necessary role in a conversation and toward the production and dissemination of knowledge.`

> I don't know because I have no interest in a normal academic career, like, I'm not going to try and become a professor or whatever, and I've never had that intention, so I've always been doing it for my own interest primarily.

Even though Stuart has divorced themself from the professorate, they still frame their discussions of writing within it, thus showing the far-reaching power it has over individuals who write and publish. I will not share more from Stuart now, since Stuart's entire interpretive narrative, "I Just Feel Like This Makes Sense to Me," comprises chapter 9.

It may be easy to imagine that writing gets easier with more experience, yet even experienced writers discuss the challenges they face in the authorship role. Nancy relays her frustration with finding publications that fit her work.

> I feel like the part that I'm stuck with now on a couple of things that I'm writing now. And I feel like when I was trying to look for journals to submit it to, to submit some of these, I'm looking at two articles. I kept looking in the education journals, and a lot of those are closed, actually. There are not good OA options in education. That's the other thing too. But I think now I'm more concerned with is it a place where it seems to fit, where the work will get out there. And I feel like

> recently where I've gotten stuck is feeling like my research doesn't necessarily fit with LIS journals always and not quite knowing where to go with it and not being as familiar with some of the other communities where it might fit.

> Even before I was tenured, but definitely now that I'm tenured, I'm just not at all publishing anything that's not open access. The exception will be books, but generally speaking for books, I would, prefer them to have pretty, to allow deposit of chapters, like Library Juice and ACRL and ALA all do that. But yes, I'm just not interested in publishing anything that's closed access. So that limits as well. So I feel like that's been later on. I think at the beginning I was concerned, as everyone is, with making sure that I got things published and enough published to get tenure and that kind of thing.… I think another reason that I responded [to the request for an interview] is that I think about peer review a lot because I think sometimes I feel like, "Ugh, I don't need this for tenure, I'm already tenured, I'm already promoted. I don't need this anymore. I can just write a report and put it on my website and people will see it." What I really want is for people to be able to read it because otherwise why have I done this work? But I really value a good peer review because it really, you know, when you get a good peer review, it makes the work better. That's what sort of keeps me writing things for journals rather than throwing something up on my personal website, my professional website, which I could totally do and it wouldn't make any difference.

In Nancy's experience looking for a publication venue that fit her work, she encountered a challenge; education journals—while they may have fit her research content and audience aims—did not fit her worldview or ethos of open, where she can share her publications immediately and without license restrictions. She resists publishing in closed journals now that she has tenure, where at the beginning of her career she accommodated to the cultural norm. In this simple act she is able to redefine her relationship to publishing and her sense of self as an author. Her tenured position and position as a library director afford her the power to quit accommodating that demand and instead to resist it. Despite this resistance, Nancy remains challenged by her value of peer review at academic journals and her attempts to find the right home for her work.

In addition to the challenge of writing and submitting, authors also experience challenges with the review process. In this process authors make themselves vulnerable, which is an emotional experience. To borrow Bethany's words, "The whole thing is emotional. Any time you're having somebody else read your work and comment on it, it's always going to be a very vulnerable experience." Erinn Gilson defines vulnerability in their book, *The Ethics of Vulnerability*: "Across the diverse instances of vulnerability, a common sense of vulnerability is underscored: vulnerability is defined by openness and, more specifically, to be vulnerable is to be open to being affected and affecting in ways that one cannot control."[2] In this definition vulnerability is not predicated on years of experience; rather, it depends on one's disposition toward experiences. Because vulnerability is a disposition, it is not something that experience could ameliorate.

Julie is a good example of an experienced author who still remains quite vulnerable. Even as a full professor, when it comes to the writing and publishing process, Julie is "paralyzed" by fear. In our discussion she used the word *paralyzed* eight times to talk about her feelings or emotional relationship to her authorship work as well as her work on committees in professional organizations. The paralysis she feels is an example of her vulnerability.

I begin to better understand the fear and paralysis Julie experiences when approaching writing and publishing alone.

> Yes. Absolutely. So my colleague and I have always been interested in affective learning and emotions in the research process, and I think one of the reasons for my interest in that is because I have always felt those emotions very acutely myself. We probably all do. But sometimes I have felt absolutely paralyzed in the research process. And I'm very, very committed to, and I do a lot of this locally.… I have a lot of people who I can bounce ideas off of and do things like presented our promotion and tenure workshop on the

> imposter syndrome, that kind of thing. And so I'm always kind of trying to share that ethos that even though I am a full [professor] and I have been here for eighteen years, I am still paralyzed with fright every time that I write a new article.

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As I'm trying to unpack Julie's fear, her col-
leagues' influences remain present in her expe-
rience.
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> *Emily: So was your angst about—I mean, I think you've explained it a little bit, but were you focused on the peer-review process? Was that part of the angst for you? That's your fear?*

> Yes. Because I felt like they were going to write me back and they were going to say, "Your methodology sucked, we can tell that you did get into the mind of your participants, and we also think that your claims are just weird and also probably about ten years old and no." I just thought that that was going to kind of be the feedback, like, door slammed. But my colleague said, "So what if they say that?" He goes, "Then you just build on it from there." I'm like "Oh yeah, you're so right. I probably have given this advice to eighty other people. You're so right." [laughs]

Despite the vulnerability and the fear and the anxiety of publishing, Julie does it anyway. Most of us do. We continue to submit and publish works.

John, a journal editor, author, and academic librarian, discussed with me how he engages with peer reviewers despite the vulnerability and emotion that underlie his writing and research process.

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As John describes and theorizes about his work
at the journal, it becomes apparent to me that
he is thoughtful in his approach to speaking—
he wants me to clearly understand what he is
communicating, and he takes the time to form
his thoughts.
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> *Emily: Okay. Do you have any—as an author, so you just mentioned you had a really positive experience*

> *with peer review it sounds like, do you have any other stories related to peer review as an author that spring to mind, the good, the bad, the ugly?*

Sure. When we first started talking about this, I mentioned something about—I guess it's a bit of a pet peeve—when manuscript reviews come back, it feels to me like the reviewer maybe felt it was her responsibility to find flaws with the paper. That's a frustration that I feel with the peer-review process.

> *John: And I'm already forgetting the question that you asked. I think that I got myself off track.*

> *Emily: Just any story that you have as an author engaging with peer review. Because you mentioned that you had a really positive experience recently, but at the beginning you said there were some frustrations as an author.*

Yeah. Thanks for getting me back on track there. I think the rest of that is when responding to peer reviews of a manuscript, I think it's important to have that same kind of thoughtful relationship with the reviewer's comments. Most editors will not send back my response to manuscript reviews. I'm not sure if I said that right, but you get the point. An editor sends me reviewer comments, I respond to the reviewer comments and send along a revised copy of the paper. At that point the editor very rarely shares my response with the reviewers, but my response to the reviews themselves should be equally thoughtful. As an example—I'm trying to remember the particulars from this latest paper that I wrote—but I remember one of the reviewers said something about how it might be helpful to the reader if there were more tables representing the data and so forth.

And my response was that I sincerely appreciate the reviewer's suggestion about potentially adding more tables; however, I'm sensitive to sort of duplicating information that's already expressly stated in the text. I think that it's best for readers if there's a nice mix of figures and text and if the figures are really making a point that's not made elsewhere.

I think the important way of engaging with the peer-review process is to acknowledge it and to be thoughtful in one's responses. So someone giving a more petulant response to that reviewer content might say, "No, that's a stupid idea," or "No, I'm not doing that."

Emily: Do you feel like that's the approach that you had when you were just starting out too, or do you think that's been informed a little bit by your experience as an editor?

Well, my mother brought me up to be polite, and I'd like to think that in most of my life circumstances that that is my way of negotiating any kind of interaction. But I would say now that I've been in the business for all of these years, there's a combination of being polite and also having the experience to back up the importance of being thoughtful in those circumstances.

In this story I notice that John reflects on the effect that purposeful use of language has for niceties and politeness, but also in the great power it can wield. His feminist use of the pronoun *her* subtly shows his understanding that language and communication bring with them power, influence, and privilege that should be thoughtfully and gracefully wielded.

John's thoughtfulness influences his entire interpretive narrative, titled "I Think It's Important to Have That Same Kind of Thoughtful Relationship." Thoughtfulness is how he approaches the world and how he accommodates the vulnerability that he experiences as an author and as an editor.

As we can see from these stories of authorship, the authorial role is nuanced. It is tied to the institutional and cultural structures of higher education where authorship is mandatory, even for those who aren't inherently driven to write. For those who do consider themselves writers, institutional demands nevertheless frame their approaches, whether it is choice of publication venue, or the topics about which they choose to write. Vulnerability is an unmistakable circumstance for authors as they submit their works to judgment from peer reviewers and editors, and ultimately from readers.

EDITORS

This Is What Scholarly Journals Are Meant to Do

To some, the role of editor remains mysterious. Because I did not understand the editorial role, I used to view editors with deference and intimidation. Now that I am more familiar with it, I have come to admire editorial work, and I am now able to view editors as colleagues (instead of idols). An editor's advocacy can support and bolster early-career researchers' works, but editors also have the potential to squash them. Still, editorial work is not done for the sheer glory of power and control; it is done out of passion and commitment to scholarly discourse. I can't think of any institution that requires someone to be an editor to achieve promotion (though it certainly wouldn't hurt!). Unlike authors, many editors are a self-selecting group of individuals who seek to do the work. Kurt's reasons are simple, and he boils them down into one simple statement: "I've always liked editing."

For others, their passion for research and writing leads them to editing by happenstance, usually when they form new journals, and their passion and commitment keep them there. This is the case with both Stuart and John, who told stories of founding new journals. For each of them, starting a new journal was a way to fill a gap in the available literature. Stuart attests, "There were so few outlets for writing, particularly kind of research about library-related topics from radical perspectives. So we just set up a journal." John similarly began a journal with colleagues to fill a gap in the literature, but also to address some of their collective frustrations with their experiences of editorial and peer-review processes.

> I begin my conversation with John as I do all others, asking him to talk about how his relationship to LIS publishing developed. In his response, John highlights his decision to create a journal with his colleague. It is clear that all roads in his career have led to it. Despite this great accomplishment and the respect it has afforded John, he does see his career and relationship to publishing as having developed like many others in our field, being

fed into this path based on promotion requirements at his institution.

> So like many in our field, I think I sort of came to the literature by virtue of requirements for professional advancement here at my institution. So I started off as an editor and an inexperienced researcher. In the first several years that I was contributing to the professional literature, I was part of a writing group here on campus of fellow faculty librarians. And one of the premier journals in the field was publishing fewer and fewer issues. Ultimately, Elsevier Science decided to cease publication of that journal. There was, at that time, a number of journals that were publishing papers in our area, but none of them were held to that particular purview. And so one of my colleagues here and I decided to throw all the chips in and start our own journal. And that was the beginning of the journal, and here we are.

> And we all brought to our circle of discourse a number of overlapping frustrations about our experience in publishing: the ways that editors would communicate with us or not communicate with us; the frustrations with experiencing peer review of manuscripts that felt to us like the reviewers were looking for things wrong with the manuscript as opposed to evaluating the manuscript on its own merits. There were frustrations with things like publication cycles that are pushed two years into the future and so forth.… So a number of things started converging at this time for us. This was also a time where we began to recognize the real burgeoning possibilities of publishing in an open environment. So I can sort of speak to things from a number of different angles, you know, as an author, as an editor, as a reviewer, as a publisher because we are an independently published journal.

It is notable that John speaks with and is prone to great humility in all of his interactions. It takes a lot of courage and vulnerability to venture out, even within a small community, to form something new, to be open to public discussion. John describes his path

> as one that was shared by his community—writing group members and colleagues with whom he started the journal.

So just what is a journal editor's role in publishing? This work varies from journal to journal, but generally editors sift through incoming submissions, select referees for submissions and manage the referee process, liaise with the editorial board, oversee policy changes and implementations, and act as a front line for most other journal matters. In short, it's a big job. On top of that, most editors do it for little to no compensation in addition to the work of their day jobs.

While reading the first draft of this book, John Budd, an experienced author and editor who agreed to offer comments on my work, pointed out that the editorial experience and scope of an editor's responsibilities may differ between independent journals and those affiliated with professional associations. Editors of independent journals may have more leeway with their work and decisions, while editors of association journals may need to abide by association policy and potential association politics. Now that I reflect on this, it is interesting to me that the majority of editors with whom I spoke are affiliated with independent publications. As we continue to explore editors' stories, we should keep this in mind.

As my discussion with John continued, he offered a deliberate explanation of his editorial work.

> I'm thinking about when we receive a manuscript submission if it comes to us as a research paper—we have different sections and different editors to those sections. If the editors-in-chief (I don't like that term, but it's just a term that we use.) So, when a manuscript submission comes in, each of the editors of that research paper section will receive an automated message saying, "Something has been submitted by so-and-so, here is the title, and log in and have a look." And what we will typically do is one of us will write back to the others to say, "Hi guys, I've got this one. I'm going to shepherd it through." And that term *shepherd*, or I guess we use it as a verb there, sort of qualifies how I feel on one level as editors. We're trying to assist an author with making the best possible presentation or argument that they're making in their paper. And the shepherding process includes working with manuscript reviewers and bouncing back and forth, providing feedback to the authors, and ultimately our responsibility is not just to the submitting author or authors, but really on a broader level to our readership and community. So in

> one sense—kind of lower level if you will—the role of editor is that of a shepherd. On a different level—I want to say on a higher level, but I don't like the way that sounds, so I'll just say it anyway. On a higher level, we are editors or I am an editor of an enterprise. I regard the journal as something of an enterprise that is part of the field's professional discourse. There's sort of two ways that I view being an editor. One is on a micro scale and one is on a macro scale. I hope that made sense.

Part of what enabled me to begin to see editors as colleagues, not as venerated figures, was understanding this day-to-day work that John described. I also began to see editors as people who endure challenges and vulnerabilities. For example, Bethany's experiences and our collaborative work to craft her interpretive narrative point to some of the intricacies and tensions of editorial work in LIS.

> `I am fascinated by Bethany's retelling of stories of being an editor. She is reflective about what editors are supposed to do and be and forthcoming about the emotional stake she has in it, as well as how she has grown in that role.`

> *Emily: So, as an editor you're also working with authors and referees and you're having to mediate those communications and things like that. Do you have any stories of, something that could surface or provide a good example of your role in terms of working with authors and an example in terms of your role of working with reviewers as an editor?*

> Sure. So looking at authors first. The first time that happened to me was kind of an interesting, it was an interesting article. It might have been a year ago now, at one point I, I don't remember what we were talking about, but suddenly my coeditor goes, "I've learned that being editor doesn't mean always getting your way." And I'm like, "Yeah. That is very true." Because I've had the same experience over and over and over again, that I have come to understand is one of those fundamental experiences in editing—which is you have something come in, and you get your hands on it, and you see some

> potential there, it's like, "Yes, there's something good here," but it's also seriously flawed and needs a ton of work. And so, you know, you do what you're supposed to do, and you kind of gather your reviews, you get back to the people and say, "This could be really good if you just do a, b, and c." And the author does a, ignores b and c, and then you do that twice more, and eventually you realize, this is as far as, this is as good as it's going to get. And you have to make a decision at that point. Do I release this into the world and let it stand on its flawed two feet, or do we just kind of cut our losses? And I was like, "Yeah, this is something we need, and we need someone who's taking a measured look at this thing." This article was kind of in an area where people are passionate. Is that thing actually really a problem? So I was really excited about it, but it was kind of a mess, and then we kind of went back and forth and back and forth and back and forth and, yeah, the author just kept digging in and I finally had to just, like, "Okay. This is as good as it's gonna get." So we just put a lid on it and put it in the journal, and then people can do what they want with it. And I think because it was the first time that this had happened, and that it was something I was excited about but especially frustrating to not be able to get it to that point of this shiny perfect thing. But yeah, the more it happens the more I'm like, "Meh."

When I thought about this later, I felt a bit frustrated with the publishing and editing process in general. In this part of our conversation and later, Bethany referred to her pragmatism and practical approach in editing: "At the end of the day it comes down to what is actually realistic, when that happens. It could also just be that the editor's like, 'Yeah, whatever.'" Certainly editors have to weigh all sorts of things in their publish decisions, but they can't necessarily pull the plug on publications that have been asked to revise but the author won't do necessary revisions. I ruminated:

Intellectual Response

This reality is a bit frustrating to my idealist naive self. What are the pressures on journals to publish things that are realistic rather than what would be the best work? Bethany has given some examples here, but I'm wondering where pressure for volume and issue production comes in, or if there are economic pressures if one is at a traditional journal? Or even political pressures from an editorial board, or if there are power relations between the editor/journal and the author?

Bethany's engagement with my intellectual response during her review of the draft interpretive narrative was enlightening. First, she disagreed with my statement that editors cannot pull the plug. She commented:

I disagree—we can and do pull the plug when authors don't do the revisions we ask for. The edge cases (which are most of them) are where the authors did the revisions, but half-assed them, or they did most of them, but left out one or two. They put in some work and made some progress, but didn't get as far as you wanted them to. That's when it comes down to a judgment call, and we typically err on the side of giving them another chance to revise and eventually publishing an imperfect paper. We know that we could take a different approach, but this one is in line with our philosophy of editing.

Next, she addressed my in-text reflection.

In our case, it's a matter of (a) getting a manuscript to the point where it won't be a complete embarrassment to the journal to publish it, and (b) weighing the flaws against its potential to contribute to the scholarly conversation. We've had so many things where the authors fixed the most glaring problems and brought it up to barely acceptable, and after a few rounds of review, we realized that we were never going to get anything better out of them. At that point, the choice is basically to publish or to decline, and we usually choose to publish. It's then up to the community to read it and decide on its merit. And who knows—reading a flawed paper on a topic might inspire someone to write a better one!

My intellectual response continued:

And if any of these were the case, would transparency in the peer-review process ameliorate any of these problems at all, or would it potentially introduce new ones (in terms of the pressure to publish work that is realistically achievable with the author and other pressures)? On the other hand, all of the discourse about the work is potentially so valuable....

Making the reviews available would change so many things about this process I barely even know where to start. For one thing, it would make it really clear when we are publishing something that we have reservations about. It might also improve the quality of the initial submissions we get, if people knew that the reviews would be made public. Authors often treat peer review as a "first read," when really it should always be at least the second read. You should always have a colleague read something before you submit it to a journal, because otherwise you're wasting a whole bunch of people's time on silly, fixable things.

In fact, Bethany's thoughts have been corroborated by the literature on open peer review. Toni Prug argues that over time the quality of submissions would improve.[3] Additionally, recent studies have shown that open peer-review processes do improve reviewers' comments to a small degree.[4] Rachel Bruce and coauthors found in their study of peer review for randomized controlled trials in the biomedical sciences that open peer-review processes slightly improved the quality of the reviews and decreased rejection rates.[5] Corroborating this, a study published in *PLOS One* concluded that "transparency predicts quality of peer review to a practically useful degree."[6] LIS publications have been slow to create and adopt open peer-review processes, so we cannot yet study whether our own discipline's literature has been improved by it.

For many editors, it seems that challenges have shaped their subsequent approaches to editorial work. Cheryl's worldview deeply influences her editorial work, and she shared one story of connection between her worldview and her editing practice.

Her educational background and her worldview are apparent from the outset of our conversation; she thinks critically and, like me, questions accepted social and institutional structures and would like to figure out how to improve them. She questions every process, every structure, and she sees the world through her theoretical understanding of feminism and social justice.

Cheryl seems to easily identify as an editor. She easily uses plural pronouns, *we*, grouping her experience and relating the work of her co-editors as a group of which she is a part. That is not to say that her experience at the journal has been without some tension or challenge.

Emily: Does anything come to mind of a piece that you worked on with authors where it's, like, oh, *"Here's a funny story," or it stuck with your mind? Perhaps an anecdote of being an editor at the journal?*

Let's see. I guess the piece I felt I had to intervene in most heavily, and was sort of surprised that none of the other editors had, was,… a couple of authors, who I think were both white, had submitted a draft that was essentially comparing librarians to Colin Kaepernick in a way that gave librarians, I think, a lot more credit than they necessarily—it was just a really bizarre analogy and so that was sort of—… And so I was also slightly nervous because I was still new to the journal and the other editors had sort of let it pass. So I kind of agonized over wording a response for a while, but they ended up being totally receptive to it. But then one of the other editors followed up with me and was like, "Oh yes, I had those same thoughts. I'm glad you said something." And I was like, "Well, why didn't you say something?"

That was my first time editing where I really had a problem with the actual premise of the article, and it wasn't just this needs to be reorganized or add more detail about this. So I guess that left me sort of wondering how often people are letting objectionable content just pass by because they want to avoid confrontation or why you're an editor. You're supposed to have opinions about the things that are being submitted. So that was kind of, I guess, a wake-up call for me on a couple of levels. First, the sort of white librarian just overreaching comparison to a social activist. Not that librarians can't be activists, but just trying to make a connection that really isn't there and that really misses the mark in a lot of ways.

Emily: Or like speaking in hyperbole or something like that.

Right. It just didn't make—librarians aren't getting blacklisted for not doing anything on national TV. But again, just sort of wondering and reflecting, I guess, on my experience

> with the academic publishing as well. How often editors who could say something don't, and I would imagine it's maybe even easier to do that when no one knows who the editor is.

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In this experience it seems as if Cheryl chal-
lenged the culture or balance of the editori-
al team at the journal where she was serving
as editor. She was rewarded for it in that she
was able to make positive change and support
the authors to improve their article and argu-
ment. At the same time, Cheryl challenged what
she perceived to be a problem in general edi-
torial processes. She was aware of nuance and
issues of hierarchy and power in these pro-
cesses and questioned what I would call edito-
rial benign neglect.
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But not all challenges to and in editorial work culminate in open-ended questions of the editorial process as Cheryl's did. Bethany shared an editorial challenge she faced reflecting a classic story arc: establishing a setting, introducing tension and a challenge to overcome, and in the denouement, all is resolved.

Bethany was overseeing the review of an article stemming from a contentious debate in the LIS community. The article took the debate, offered valid and authoritative evidence, and concluded by supporting and validating one side of the debate. Finding fair-minded referees was a challenge, but she did eventually recruit two, almost as if she was empaneling a jury. As she shepherded the article though the publication process, she found herself in the middle of the same debate among the editors and referees that had been so controversial in the larger community and for which the article presented evidence. Despite these challenges, Bethany's story ends on a positive note.

> Anyway. It went through some revisions, and we published it, and I think we're super happy about it, that it… Even just the process of getting that published was such an interesting exercise in *the thing* that it was about; it was one of the things where I was really sorry that I couldn't talk publicly about the process.

> *Emily: Okay, great. So you were obviously having some emotions in that experience. Frustration, I*

> *think I heard. Anything else that you feel like you can explicate on in terms of your emotional relationship to that situation?*

> Well, I think mostly just really excited about it. I felt like… I remember thinking, "This is what scholarly journals are meant to do." They're supposed to intervene in situations where you have heat but not light. You know, you have this argument and people are just saying back and forth, "You're wrong," "No, you're wrong"; that's when you need some data and you analyze it and you publish it. And that we were able to do that. And granted, it was this very small thing… but it felt like a very, kind of, mission-appropriate thing to me—for the journal—to be doing. I was excited about that, and I was so proud when it was finally published. Let's see. Yeah, I would say it was a mix of frustration and excitement with that one.

Due to the closed nature of the peer-review process for the article Bethany discussed, she is prohibited to speak publicly about this experience. Had the process been transparent and observable by the public, Bethany's experience with "the thing that it was about" could have shed even more light on the topic of the debate.

It is clear that Bethany is passionate about and invested in her editorial work. Editors should be; they do not receive the recognition they deserve—as their labor to communicate with all stakeholders, serve as a spokesperson for their publication, and remain responsible to their community of readership goes largely unnoticed, except, perhaps, as one bullet point on a CV. Despite this lack of recognition, editors generally approach their work with the dedication to support authors. Some editors, like Bethany, call their editorial style "author-centric" or "supportive."

Kurt relayed a story about an instance in which he and the editorial board took on a much larger amount of work in order to develop and publish a book that was almost initially rejected. This supportive approach sometimes means accepting a manuscript that needs development from an author who needs some mentoring, and sometimes this means that an editor's touch is added to all communications in the peer-review process.

John's editorial approach very much reflects this. Based on a mix of early experiences at the journal, both positive and negative, John discussed how it came to be that they edit manuscript reviews before returning them to authors.

Indeed supporting authors is one of John's major concerns. He shares with me a story about a challenging incident that elicited a transformation of the journal's communication process.

Emily: Yeah. It does make sense to me. Do you have any stories that kind of come to mind are that are either unique, funny, stand out, typical about either of the macro or the micro editor role for you?

I have one that comes to mind that I think will really resonate with you because it's about our mutual friend, George, and because there's a lot of overlap with the peer-review process that informs the story. So, I'm going back about seven years now when George was coauthor of a paper that was submitted to the journal. I shepherded this particular paper and sent it out for review, and the reviews came back a little bit more negative than I expected them to be. So I'm going to stop there and tell you another story about something else that was happening at that time, and then these two things are going to come together.

Also at that time we had received a manuscript from another author, let's call him Fred, that was very poorly written. We wrote back to the author rejecting the paper, but we also included the reviewer's evaluations of the paper, which were pretty harsh. Anyway we didn't [edit the referee's comments] with this one, and Fred responded in a very angry fashion.

So when we received the reviews back for this manuscript that George had coauthored, I just didn't feel up to sharing with him and his coauthor how it was originally received by the reviewers. I reached out to George alone without communicating with his coauthor and I said, "George, our manuscript reviews are back, and I wonder if it would be possible for you and I to just have a quick five-minute talk on the phone about this before I go ahead and send you the reviews" and so forth. And George was like, "Of course, when can we talk?" So he said, "I want you to send me those manuscript reviews, this is a professional circumstance. I'm going to work with my coauthor, we're going to do whatever we need to do to fix this thing, and I don't want you to worry yourself another minute about it." That's exactly what he did. We ended up publishing that paper. It's a very highly cited paper now, but a nice conclusion to this story is that it was also at about this time that my coeditor and I had come to the realization that the journal had grown so big that we really needed additional help on our editorial team.

Looking back on it now, this is a very informative experience for all of us because it's very common for us now to actually edit manuscript reviews before we'd send them back to authors to avoid hurt feelings and so forth.… But I was feeling very vulnerable in terms of dealing with authors at that time because I was just feeling… very "vulnerable" is the only way to say it.… And this was the first time I ever talked to him [George] in person; so we had a conversation on the phone, and I fell head over heels in love with George. No other way to say it. Love at first hear. Guess who the first person was that I thought of [to join the editorial team]?

Emily: Of course it was George.

It was George. I asked. He said yes. And it's history.

Relation

Here it becomes clear that John and I have a relation or position that is linked through my colleague, mentor, and friend. Because both John and I have a close relationship with this common person, it's easy for us to relate to professional experiences in this way. For me, George has been a reflective listener to rely on. It seems that George has served in a similar role for John.

Emily: True love. So what happened with the author where there were all those issues? Was it just kind of happening in tandem and so you had these, kind *of, negative feelings on the one side but on the other hand the other experience reflected the positive?*

John: That's a very good way of describing it.

Emily: Yeah, I think sometimes when you're an author, at least in my experience, sometimes you get so myopic that you don't remember that there are other humans on the other end of the process.

John: Yeah. Especially if the exchanges are mostly electronic.

Emily: Was there anything else that came into play for you? Other emotions or other thoughts about it, your thinking process, et cetera?

Well, I went through the range of emotions at the time. I'm the most anti-confrontational person you'll meet, at least today. I just do not like confrontation. I don't think that that is the way to get things done in a productive way. So when people are in my—and I very rarely encounter this kind of thing—but when people are in my face that way, I just don't like it. It's a very upsetting thing. And so, as I said, I felt very vulnerable, like there could be hidden land mines anywhere that I stepped with this journal. To be honest with you, a week or so after that episode, I found myself feeling pretty angry about it as well, that someone would be so unprofessional. We got past it. Those are things that editors encounter on this journey.

Emily: Yeah. And you mentioned it was transformative. What transformed based on that experience?

Okay. There's a mechanical transformation, which is what I just described for you. That experience was very helpful for us in terms of feeling that it was okay from there on in to modify reviewers' evaluations of manuscripts before we send them back to authors in an attempt to keep things calm and professional and to make sure that people's feelings are not hurt. But also it was very useful [muffled] means something that a guy at another university who ended up being one of my great partners in life after that. So very transformative in almost a mechanical kind of way.

> *Emily: Yeah. Thank you for sharing that. It's kind of interesting to see how emotional sometimes this professional experience can be, but I think that points to passion and dedication.*

Yeah. I agree. Thank you for saying that. We all joke about the professional literature. I will commonly say something along the lines of "I'm catching up on my journal literature because I'm having difficulty falling asleep at night." I'll make fun of it. But I do truly believe—because I see it all around—that the scholarly professional literature can indeed be a very elegant kind of thing. It can include humor. It can include opinion. And like you said, it's a very human kind of undertaking. So yeah, I'm a believer.

Emotional Response

I can see why John and George are such good friends. John is very reflective and thoughtful. He cares what other people think and say about him and how they move through the world just the way George does. He is very passionate about his work and very dedicated to it. In John's responses and in his passion and dedication, I see my own passion, dedication, and emotion as related to my work life. And bringing this back to our common character means that I feel a sense of emotional connection to John. On some level, too, I feel like in this exchange I'm also taking on some emotional labor. I respond to John's sharing of a hard and negative experience with a positive observation about his work and being. I don't want this thoughtful and engaged human being to have had such a tough emotional experience.

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The story that John relates exhibits how he
has accommodated to the challenge of being an
editor by being responsive to experiences and
changing processes for the better. Too, this
experience challenged John in a deeper way. It
illustrates that editors can become champi-
ons or activists to support manuscripts and
authors in order to get valuable submissions
into publishable form.
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John's story might have been much different had the process at the journal been open. Although the literature frequently cites reviewer accountability as a motivating factor for opening peer review, it is rare to see arguments about authors' behaviors. In this instance, however, the author, Fred, who responded in an angry fashion, might have been more thoughtful in their reply. Because of the opacity in this process, John was in a difficult position and felt acutely vulnerable because of his interaction with Fred.

We may not often think of it, but editorial work can put people into vulnerable positions. Editors can and do remain open to being affected by their role and the work that comes with it. This vulnerability, as John's story illustrates, can inform policy and process decisions at publications—improving journal policies and being more receptive to authors in the long run. We can also imagine that navigating between an editorial board, referees, authors (and sometimes professional associations) may feel overwhelming. On the whole, the experiences folks shared were from those who want to positively impact the literature in our field by supporting authors and getting those voices out there.

REFEREES

This Is What I Would Do to Make This Article Strong Enough to Be Published

For those serving as referees, their motivations for doing so may be the same as editors', though they may certainly have others. We want a bullet point on our CV. We want to mentor other colleagues. We want to contribute to the literature. We have been asked and want to serve our profession.

In the following stories about refereeing, there were a few overlapping or coalescing themes. First, refereeing includes some uncertainties. How do referees know what they are even supposed to do? How do they learn to engage in refereeing work? Second, several people discussed their approach to refereeing as framed by mentoring and development. It is notable that I did not hear from individuals that they felt they were gatekeepers of the discourse that would be pushed out in LIS literature, because gatekeeping seems to be an important facet of refereeing in many other disciplines. Finally, those with experience refereeing discussed challenges they had experienced, systemic or otherwise.

Many stories that I heard about refereeing highlighted individuals' interests, as well as their experiences feeling frustrated, but also feeling rewarded by reviewing tasks. Nancy offers a story illustrating both the uncertainty in refereeing and her developmental approach in conducting reviews.

> I do have one story [laughs] which still just strikes me as so odd. I feel like, so when I started refereeing I had never done it before, I didn't know what to do. I went to the internet and googled a couple of things and read a couple of things, talked to my colleagues. I was like, how long does it usually take you? Should it take me ten hours? Should it take me two hours? How long? So I sort of worked through all that, and I feel like it got easier. After three to five, I felt like I sort of fell into a rhythm. So I did, this is not too long ago—I want to say three years ago maybe? I got an article, and it was really problematic. It didn't really fit with the journal. It wasn't very well written or very well argued, and it was also kind of all over the place. So there were grammatical problems and construction problems, but also the argument didn't really flow. So I wrote it all up and recommended reject, and the journal ended up rejecting it. And then six months later I got a peer-review request from a different journal, and it was the same article.
>
> *Emily: Had anything changed in it?*
>
> No. Nothing had changed. [laughs] And I immediately wrote back to the journal. I was like, I just have to tell you I've already reviewed this article for a different journal and they didn't change anything and what should I do? I have this response that I wrote. And they were like, okay, well, I guess just say the same thing again? Yes, it was very strange to me.
>
> *Emily: Interesting. Do you know what the outcome was of that after the fact?*

I think it was rejected by the second journal, and I never ended up following up to see if I could see if it was ever published.

> *Emily: I wonder if it got submitted to a third and a fourth.*
>
> *Nancy: I don't know.*

I think the shortest reviews I write, it's probably normal. The shortest reviews I write—I don't know that I've ever written a review that was less than a page, which I think that's part of me being a nerd. And the shortest reviews that I write are usually the ones that where it's just really terrific and all I can think of is maybe you could look at this one thing to add to the lit review or maybe you could change the order of this sentence or something but with just very minimal revisions. But the ones that need a lot of revisions, even if I ultimately recommend that the journal doesn't accept it, I still tend to write a lot of comments because I feel like if the person wants to submit it somewhere else it would be good for them to have some. And, of course, they can take it or leave it. I'm writing the comments through the lens of this particular journal. If they get that as I've had responses [to my manuscripts] like, "No, this is not the article that I want to write. This is the article that you want me to write." They might have that response too, and that's totally fine. But I still feel like this is what I would do to make this article strong enough to be published.

And again I think what was most interesting with that one article was not, you know, in terms of the argument that you're making or the way it's organized. You know that's one thing again. It's like you have the article that you wanted to write, and I have the article I wanted to read, and if those are different, those are different. But even the grammatical changes hadn't been made. And I try not to be too, I have a very, my attention-to-detail meter is turned way up so I can spot typos really easily kind of thing, which is good and bad. So I try

> really hard not to copyedit while I'm peer-reviewing because I know that's not my job, but sometimes I can't help myself. And even the copyediting kinds of things weren't fixed, and I was like, "Person, seriously?"

As you read Nancy's story, you could probably infer her sense of irritation and frustration when she said, "Person, seriously?" But aside from her highlight of the instance of what I call journal shopping (of which I heard more than one story in the course of my conversations), this anecdote from Nancy highlights her development as a reviewer and her developmental approach to refereeing. Even if she is going to reject, she wants to offer comments, to help. Each of the experiences Nancy highlights, learning to review, irritation with journal shopping, and helping or developing the work under question, was corroborated by others discussing their experiences serving as referees.

Kurt takes this same approach to refereeing; he states, "It should be developmental." In fact, a developmental approach to peer review in LIS is widely accepted. Keren Dali and Paul Jaeger reflect on the historical purpose of peer review, asserting

> A peer-reviewed paper—especially a double-blind peer-reviewed paper—could be seen as a product of thorough evaluation by subject experts, the findings and conclusions of which were deemed viable by peer researchers and carried the editorial stamp of approval. Making no guarantee that the work in question presented inarguably correct conclusions or constituted a groundbreaking contribution to human knowledge, peer review nonetheless offered a way of relaying critical feedback to authors, improving the original work, and sharing the best possible version of the study or conceptualization of ideas.[7]

They argue that peer review includes "mentorship and collaboration that affords a gracious 'opportunity to teach' (Schneiderhan 2013) and to allow for greater creativity, and thus a way forward for both young and experienced researchers and professionals."[8]

In LIS, supporting author development is part of peer review, particularly since librarians typically have only one applied master's degree and not a doctoral one. This mirrors the findings of Finnish researchers in educational sciences, who found that for educational researchers, authors prefer peer review that stresses developmental aspects over gatekeeping ones.[9] For both Julie and Kurt, their sense of self in terms of their service in publications, both as referee and editor, is framed by their desire to mentor. They have both achieved full professor status and strive to wield their status and power to support and amplify early-career professionals. Julie shares:

> I'm also at a place in my career where I've made full [professor], and I've published stuff that I always dreamed about publishing, and I love being on an editorial board, and every time that I do write something I always think, "I hope I'm not taking up a slot that somebody who is in the tenure process could use," do you know what I mean? So I don't see myself in maintaining that same productivity that perhaps I once had, partly because I want to mentor and I want to help people and because I just don't want to sort of take up room where others could then really use that to their advantage to advance in their careers. And that's where I am today.

Instead of continuing to publish with the same output as before, Julie serves as mentor in her service work, including as a referee and editorial board member at an LIS journal.

Early-career researchers, too, are asked to provide peer review. Like Kurt, Julie, and Nancy, all folks with established careers, Jessica approached her first experience as a referee thinking about how she can best support the authors and the work.

> I think I was still just kind of learning, how much can we help someone refine while still accepting or when should it be rejected. I wanted to be really constructive, but at the same time I felt like the article, while it was within the scope of the journal, wasn't… I don't know, I couldn't identify the pieces. It wasn't really making firm claims or supporting them; research methodology didn't match what the sort of study was supposed to do.… So, and I just didn't… as an example, when I had to accept, reject, reject with substantial changes, whatever… and I think that I was the only one of the three reviewers that put accept but with substantial changes. Everyone else rejected it. [laughs] I had some angst, and I was nervous because that was my first time and I wasn't sure… you know, I've heard of people giving feedback that isn't constructive, and I didn't want to do that. So I was trying to be really constructive, while also making sure that our professional literature has quality stuff in it. And thinking about how this could be refined so that it could be published. I was also trying to consider if it could be re-

> worked for another journal with a more appropriate scope. I think that, anyway, there's a lot of sort of angst and anxiety about what reviews should look like and how to be fair and constructive.

But being a referee is not without its challenges, and not all referees provide well-thought-out, meaningful referee reports. One of the reasons for this may be the lack of training provided reviewers and the lack of expressed standards or policies offered by journals. I discuss this issue more in depth in chapter 7, "Transparency of Peer-Review Process."

Alma, although an early-career researcher, began reviewing for the experience and also to contribute some of her knowledge of feminist methodologies to the LIS literature.

> So I signed up to be a reviewer.… I mean, I think part of, [pause] it's hard to sort of tease out how much my motivation for being a reviewer comes from wanting to be a reviewer versus wanting to have it on my dossier, [laughs] which is just sort of like this dirty secret of academia that I didn't know until I was in a tenure-track position. Was just how, there's things I genuinely want to do and then in the back of my mind, I'll be like, "I need to document this for my dossier" [laughs]. And I think when I registered, I registered more for, I wanted to be a reviewer on articles that used qualitative methods and specifically feminist methodologies. And I said that I could review things that have to do with my subject areas. So, I don't think I mentioned anything about quantitative, because at the time when I registered I didn't feel like I had very much expertise in it, but then I received that article [to review], and it was a resubmit, when I was communicating with the editor to try and get an extension, I wasn't hearing back, so I just kind of opted to do it. I mean I was definitely frustrated when he didn't get back to me about giving me a deadline. But then in that particular experience I was really frustrated when I saw the comments back from the other reviewers, which were sort of summarized for the author, [muffled] with that copy and I realized that I was pretty much the only person who gave substantive comments on that article, it looked like. I remember a lot of the other ones were just, I remember them being more general, and if I had written that article I would find them not particularly helpful

> I guess, and I guess part of it felt exciting in a way to be this person who could provide meaningful feedback to someone else to help improve the literature. It also felt like a burden because it came at a time when, at the beginning of the quarter, where I had this very heavy teaching load and a lot of other responsibilities that—my work is usually skewed so that the beginning of every quarter is really exhausting—and I had to get it turned around in that time, and so—although there were some that, I just felt none of them interrogated their methodology at all, which was disappointing to me.

It being her first experience as a referee at this journal, Alma encountered several challenges. Not only was she challenged by the editor's lack of communication, but she was also challenged and "burdened," as she put it, in that she felt as if she carried the weight of the work when it was supposed to have been distributed among all referees. Alma's desire to referee, and her continual thinking about documenting her work for promotion, points to the weight of the burden that the academy places on early-career researchers. Should early-career researchers wait to start refereeing? And would publicly refereeing works in an open peer-review paradigm help or hinder those with nascent careers? On the one hand, early-career researchers engaging as referees in open peer review would be able to point to the quality and impact of their scholarly labor. On the other hand, early-career researchers might have more hesitation to be critical of established scholars' works and may fear for their reputation or experiences of retaliation if they were critical.

Reviewers can also be vulnerable in the review process, just as authors and editors. Bethany related a story about having to write a critical review for a journal. She was vulnerable and was affected by the experience; she felt guilty for writing a critical review, even though she has an established career and does serve as an editor.

> I recently did a review for a journal outside of librarianship, and I was really excited to get to do the review because the author is an academic librarian and you just don't get many of those publishing in this particular field. And he [the editor] had reached out to me because it was about academic librarianship, and I read the manuscript and it was absolute gibberish, and those reviews are always challenging to write. So I was trying to balance being kind and constructive and writing a scathing review. I kind of felt bad that that was the sort of thing I had to write for the journal, but at the same time I was

having to remind myself that as an editor, he probably knows that it's gibberish too, and he probably needs me to document the ways that it's gibberish so he can use that to communicate with the author.

Emily: When you say scathing, though, I mean, I'm sure it wasn't rude.

No no no. It was politely worded, but it was just that this [pause] and yeah, I tried to do this thing that I kinda do as an editor as well, is to find, where is the value in this? Where is the piece in this that, that if developed, could be useful?

I was able to reflect on this point as well, which garnered a response from Bethany.

Intellectual Response

One of the things that I am curious about here, why does an editor need to lean on referees for that? What is the line for judgment call here? Of course this is probably a very personal thing and it varies journal to journal, editor to editor, but where is the line? Or does the editor not have time to do that much vetting? Or is there a policy that they must send everything out?

This is a GREAT question, and this is a GREAT example to ask it about, because I had a conversation with the editor of this journal a few years ago about this very issue. He has a really strict policy of doing what the reviewers recommend because he feels that anything else would be abusing his power as an editor. (I'm not sure what he does when they disagree. Get another review, maybe?) I absolutely do not agree with that, and in my own editorial work, there is a lot of my own judgment. If all of the reviewers say that something is crap, I'm going to decline it, and if they all say it's worthwhile, I'm going to at least give the author a chance to revise and resubmit, but otherwise I feel really free to mediate between reviews for the author, to raise issues that the reviewers didn't, and, occasionally, to explicitly disagree with a reviewer in a decision letter. I think that is the heart of editorial work. We know our journal, we have seen all of the reviews, and we see a LOT of papers. If we can't exercise our expertise and judgment, then the role is mechanical, and who would want to do it?

John also told me about a frustrating experience as a referee.

> The last two [review requests] that I remember receiving, it was nothing like that. And in fact the last one that I received I think it was from… I can't remember. But the editor sent the request and it was very mechanical. We request that you do this, that, and the other thing.… But included in that request was if I am not able to serve as a reviewer for that particular paper to please provide the names of two other people who I think might be.
>
> I don't necessarily think that's a good way of conducting the business. I certainly wouldn't subscribe to doing business that way. There weren't a lot of pleasantries. You don't have to send me flowers, but maybe personalize it a little bit. And I did not provide—I wasn't able to review that paper because it was a very intense time for me, and I did not provide additional names because I didn't think it was my place to do so.

John is not alone in this experience of receiving a mechanical review request. Nancy also told a story about this frustration, illustrating how she challenged those requests and those mechanizations of peer-review processes.

> I was approached by an Elsevier journal at some point last year. But it wasn't even, it's like the machine contacted me. I don't know what it is, but getting these automated—somebody must have put me in as a reviewer that would

> be potentially interested, but I never got an e-mail from the editor or anything. It was always this automated—and I've been getting them periodically, two or three times a year for some journal of computers and learning or something along those lines, ed tech kind of thing.… The first one too I got—I got a reminder. It was like, "By the way, you haven't accepted this review yet." I was like, "No, and I will not, Elsevier robot, accept this review. I'm not even going to respond to the e-mail." And it's just super, I mean, it's Elsevier so that's already like, "No, I would never."… I'm like, "You know, you can't just feed me into an algorithm and expect that I'm going to do a review for you"—it was weird. That's the first time that has ever happened to me. It was even more impersonal.

What I see here in Nancy's telling of the story is that she approaches refereeing work in a human way and would likewise appreciate being treated as a human referee, rather than a cog in a mechanical peer-review system. To me, this mechanical approach to reviewing is in conflict with what I heard folks say about *why* they review. They review to mentor, not to act as gatekeepers, elite knowers who can judge what works should and shouldn't be in the discourse. The main aim was support. This ethos is not reflected in machine-generated e-mails with no human touch. If we subscribe to what Dali and Jaeger assert, that peer review has human dimensions, does relying on machine-generated communications and mechanical requests subvert the humanness? Where is the line between using journal management software for everything and providing a human touch?

REFLECTING ON PEER REVIEW ROLES

In this chapter I've examined why we perform in the roles of academic publishing as author, editor, and reviewer. We have seen that in each of these roles, there remains a mission to contribute in some meaningful way to our professional discourse. These are roles for which we aren't financially compensated and are only small portions of our job expectations, if they are expected at all. But we do them anyway, even as the labor of reviewing and editing remains mostly hidden from public view.

I related closely to many of the stories shared here. Alma, who is always thinking about how she can document her work in order to show her promotion review committee that her work has impact on the community, mirrored my own experiences. (I have begun to document my refereeing activity on my CV.) Similarly, John and Nancy expressed frustrations regarding the mechanical processes of journal publishing software coupled with a lack of human-centered communication. This, too, parallels some of my own experiences that contributed to my desire to investigate human experiences in peer review.

I hope that this chapter elucidated for you some insight into roles you haven't experienced, or that some of the stories resonated with you. In each of these roles, as author, editor, and referee, we remain vulnerable, albeit in different ways. But isn't that part of the great journey, to remain vulnerable and from vulnerability to grow and become stronger at the same time that our discipline can grow and strengthen? In the next chapter we'll look at how the experience of these roles can be multifaceted, intertwined, and dependent on one another.

As I end this chapter, I offer you some questions for reflection.

- With which roles do you identify when it comes to LIS publishing?
- Why do you do what you do in those roles?
- What have been your challenges in the roles you've experienced? Were these challenges resolved, or do they remain open-ended?
- When have you felt most vulnerable in the publishing process?
- How did you learn to referee or perform peer review?
- How could the publishing process in LIS be changed to be more humane and supportive of all constituents?
- Should early-career researchers engage as referees? Why or why not? What are the benefits and drawbacks?

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Chapter 5

Dualities and Multiplicities in Peer Review

One of the first challenges I encountered in my research was how to conceptualize the roles we play in the peer-review process. I found that my initial thinking had been too constricted; I approached each role, metaphorically speaking, as their own discrete subject heading. Yet in practice, the boundaries of these roles are flexible and permeable—they cannot be clearly defined by a controlled vocabulary. Stories in this chapter demonstrate that as we inhabit any one of the roles, we have a hard time fulfilling it without the influence of the many others we also perform.

In my initial approach to developing interview questions and as I articulated what I wanted to learn from participants, I introduced a troubling hierarchy. I asked interviewees to identify with which role (author, editor, referee, or reader) they primarily identified, and those with which they secondarily identified. My thinking was that I wanted my study to be well-rounded and to hear from individuals who had varying experiences in the roles. While I was able to achieve a participant base with a mix of experiences, introducing roles hierarchically, it turns out, was not reflective of individuals' experiences.

To present one role as primary over another introduces a false dichotomy in how we experience our lives and work. Although the roles are distinct—author, editor, and referee—our experiences of them are not; the experience of one frequently becomes muddied by the experience of another. On any given day we may act in one or more of these roles, and on any given day we may identify more with one role or the other. Today am I a referee? Am I a writer? For many, approaching these roles discretely introduces a nonexistent separation of their work in academic writing and publishing. We aren't just an author or just an editor. Our identities adapt to our many lived experiences. Each of the roles we play can morph into a duality or even a multiplicity of them, a layering or blending of author, editor, referee. These are what I call dualities or multiplicities of peer-review roles.

The duality or multiplicity of identities became abundantly clear to me as I moved through the interview process with participants. I would remind someone of how they identified on an intake form, and I would receive an answer such as, "Oh, that's what I said?" or "Today I feel like…" Indeed, our relationships to writing and publishing morph, as do our relationships to and with peer review. Our identities or roles evolve as we act in certain formal and informal ways and depending on past experiences. Once you have taken on an additional function, is it possible to discretely act in another? Can an editor who is writing an article take off her editorial hat? Can a referee take off her authorial hat?

The integration of multiple roles or professional selves is not a new concept. Formation of professional identities or selves has been widely studied, but most relative to our work as academic librarians, this has been studied in the field of education. In *Shaping a Professional Identity*,[1] Connelly and Clandinin liken researchers to those who may participate in a parade.

> We have come to see that the changing landscape and teachers' and researchers' professional identities, their stories to live by, are interconnected. Just as the parade changes everything—the things, the people, the relationships, the parade itself—as it passes, so, too, do teachers' and researchers' identities need to change. It is not so much that teachers and researchers, professionals on the landscape, need new identities, new stories to live by: they need shifting, changing identities; shifting, changing stories to live by as the parade offers up new possibilities and cancels out others.[2]

Similarly, Elliot G. Mishler views identities as comprised of "a plurality of sub-identities. Metaphorically, we speak—or sing—our selves as a chorus of voices, not just as the tenor or soprano soloist."[3]

Realistically, in librarianship, as with other practice-based professions, everything we do informs our daily practice. Just as with human experience and memory, it is difficult to compartmentalize one from the other—experience becomes memory and memory becomes experience.* The roles of author,

* John Budd, in reading a draft of this chapter, commented that this sounded like Henri Bergson, an early-twentieth-century French-Jewish philosopher who argued that experience and intuition are more pertinent to understanding reality than rationalism. Indeed, my thinking is probably influenced by my undergraduate senior thesis research on the work of Hungarian-born Jewish playwright George Tabori, whose works explored Jewish experiences, memory, and identity related to the Shoah.

reviewer, editor, and reader can act in the same way. They are closely linked to human experiences, the boundaries of which we may struggle to impose onto human experience and action. Experiences in various roles and memories of them offer a rich well from which we may draw—extracting one discrete material from another may be possible, but it may also diminish the beauty of the work we do and our experience of it.

In this chapter I share with you stories related to the integration of roles, or the idea of the weaving of experiences in peer review from one into another, where sometimes threads are separate and sometimes threads are intertwined. But before I dive in, I'd like to acknowledge a glaring omission from the last chapter: the role of reader.

READING IS HARD

Why did I avoid this important role present in the scholarly communication system? It was not for lack of understanding its importance or place. Rather it was the one functional role that none of the interviewees viewed as discrete from the others. When we spoke of reading, it was always connected to the work of other roles in peer review. Whenever I asked participants about being a reader, they never offered a straightforward answer. Reading happens in all of the roles, and our relationship to reading changes based on the role we are playing. Authors read when they do research, editors read submissions, and referees read works.

The closest thing to purity in reading, however, may be the experience of a student reader—before we become immersed in the daily work of librarianship and our experience further muddies our views. That said, no role or understanding can be unsullied, for we are the wealth of our previous life experiences, our socializations, and our worldviews. Cheryl and I discussed her relationship to the literature in this way. In large part it is her reading and experience as a student that allowed Cheryl to begin identifying as a librarian and not as someone who holds a PhD in the humanities. Cheryl's worldview is a deep part of her identity, whether she experiences that identity as a reader, librarian, or other self.

> As we begin chatting, Cheryl quickly reveals her worldview and lens of experience. Although she remains an LIS student for a few more weeks, it is clear that she does identify with librarianship and considers herself a part of it, although she is still developing her librarian identity.

Her response to my first question uncovers that she questions not only social structures and power (class, gender, race, etc.), but also the makeup of LIS curriculum and approaches to LIS education. It is clear that she is trying to reconcile the tension between her expectations of and desire for library school to delve deeper into theory, the need for the MLS to be a practice-focused professional degree, and her past experience as a PhD student. Moreover, I quickly see that she is beginning to identify as a librarian, even though she challenges and resists what she sees as status quo in the profession.

Emily: So the first thing I'd like to ask about is just what is your relationship with LIS literature and publishing and how you came to that relationship.

Let's see. So I guess my relationship to LIS literature was preceded by a relationship to humanities literature. I did a PhD in English prior to library school and then started library school, and in my first semester I took a required research methods course. And it was like, "Oh, this is something that would have been really useful a long time ago." And so my first impression was sort of, wow, it's really crazy to think that this level of knowledge about research is just sort of presumed in the humanities often. I was kind of taking a humanities approach to my research just as far as being interested in sort of humanities-related topics. And I did my research paper on—it was basically a lit review of librarian stereotypes in film, which was also interesting.

And I don't know if it's just the institution that I was at or if it's just that humanities people find that kind of thing, oppressively dogmatic or something. And I guess I find aspects of it a little bit dogmatic, but still, as far as getting everyone on the same page and sort of leveling the playing field, it seemed really important to me to have that foundation there, so I was really glad for it.

Emily: In terms of dogmatic, do you mean just the class being dogmatic or the methods you were learning about?

The methods and just sort of the structure of: you have your introduction and then you have your lit review and then you have your methods section. In the humanities you essentially do that; it's just not necessarily, you know, you don't have all the headings, and people like it to feel a bit more organic, even though a well-researched paper *is* highly structured. So it's sort of an aesthetic issue that I think on a lot of levels is tied to class in the humanities. So I was glad to have that. Another thing that struck me in my first semester was that I know librarianship is a female-dominated profession in terms of numbers at least, but I was like, "Hey, how come 75 percent of our textbooks are written by white men?" So there seemed to be a lot of discrepancies, or I guess again it's just sort of the same hierarchies that are in 90 percent of fields, academic and otherwise. So those were the sorts of things that struck me in my first semester. But then the stuff I was coming across in LIS literature was, someone did a Myers-Briggs analysis of librarian film characters, and I was like, okay, maybe this *is* really too dogmatic. I don't necessarily know what the approach, what a more productive approach would be. So that was sort of my two worlds coming together, I guess. And so I could see pros and cons to each.

Emily: So in your subsequent classes, have any of those first impressions changed about the literature as you've been required to read articles as opposed to research methods?

Yes, and I would say, so my first semester was Research Methods and then Foundations of Library and Information Science, and that was a similar demographic as far as authors. And that's been, I would say that's been strictly with textbooks. As far as articles, I think the gender balance is much more equitable. I don't know about the racial makeup. I would assume it's skewed just because librarianship is also extremely skewed as a whole. But I was also kind of, some

> of the research I did on my own to see, okay, what's happening with queer theory and librarianship? Because again, coming from a humanities background it was like, "Okay, organizing systems. Surely we're going to read Foucault or something and talk about these issues," and we never did. Period. So again, having the methods in place was helpful, but it still felt like we were never really questioning the makeup of our classes in the curriculum itself.
>
> *Emily: I wonder how much of that is just library school needs reform.*
>
> I think that's probably a lot of it. And to be fair, it's a two-year program. There's only so much you can do, especially when getting people experience is such a major part of it.

Later on in our discussion, I explicitly asked Cheryl about the experience of being a reader.

> *Emily: So what's it like to be a reader of LIS literature? I mean, what's the experience like for you?*
>
> It's hard. It varies widely. I really enjoyed the summer reading [for a social justice in digital humanities practicum], all these conversations about social justice and digital humanities and sort of the issues that have been ignored and that need to be talked about. Again, there are all these presumptions that, oh, "The digital world is color-blind and gender-blind," which we certainly know is not true. So that's been really good, but reading, I guess [pause] I'm glad I had to read things outside the scope of my interests, but also, [pause] again, issues with LIS curriculum. If I'm not in technical services, do we need to be reading about electronic serials management best practices? [laughs] So I guess my impression is that some of it gets so specific and so specialized that I'm not going to—unless it's something that's directly in line with my interests and career goals—I don't think I'm getting much out of it necessarily. So I guess I wish maybe there had been, it had been more theory-oriented, and there was some of that. But again LIS is such a practical field.

It seems like an apprenticeship model would be a lot more effective in certain ways.

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I notice that Cheryl uses passive voice when
she feels as though she lacks agency or pow-
er, something I continue to notice throughout
our conversation. She continues to explain her
experience as a reader.
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Before we continue to hear Cheryl's story, we should briefly examine the use of passive voice. The use of passive voice is examined in critical discourse analysis (CDA).* While I don't think we can divorce one's use of passive voice from the context of the rest of one's speech or storytelling, CDA has viewed passive voice as a distinct process as opposed to a random one. The choice to use passive voice can be an ideological one. Passivization is a transformative process one can use to delete agency.[4] Sociolinguists also discuss the use of passive voice. Michael Bamberg points out that the passive "is almost exclusively used at positions in the narrative's overall structure that are best characterized as goal blockings."[5] In light of this awareness, we can understand Cheryl feeling a lack of agency in her education, as well as feeling as if her goal in education—to view it through a lens of social justice—is blocked by the existing LIS curriculum.

Emily: So anything else about the experience of a reader? Anything like "Oh, this paper is crap" or "This is the best, most researched paper." I mean, anything? Or like you were saying, looking at queer theory and the literature. Was that when you found stuff because there's stuff? Were you like, [gasp]?

Yes, definitely when I started looking I was like, oh Emily Drabinski, awesome.† But also it's sort of, okay, this is happening thirty years after Judith Butler was writing.‡ Why has it taken so long? Thank goodness that someone is doing it

* CDA "provides theories and methods for the empirical study of the relations between discourse and social and cultural developments in different social domains." Marianne Jørgensen and Louise J. Phillips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2002), 60, https://doi.org/10.4135/9781849208871.

† Emily Drabinski is our colleague who bases her research and writings in queer, feminist, and critical theories.

‡ Judith Butler is a queer and feminist theorist who wrote seminal works in queer and critical theory.

> now and it's great. But also, shouldn't these questions always be at the foundation of a field that's about organizing systems? I think that's been the biggest sort of frustration is that we should have been questioning the discipline all along, and that doesn't seem to have happened, or I've come across—oh my gosh, there are so many articles about men in the profession essentially complaining about how hard it is to be a "minority" in the field and how people assume that you're gay or whatever. And so the notion that those have passed through peer review is a little bit troubling as well.

When Cheryl found that the library literature engages in critical theory, and when she discovered critical librarianship, she was excited. Yet she continued to question. Her discussion of her experience as a reader and a student encapsulates that excitement of discovering a new field and a new profession, when we come to something new with a different lens, before we've become entirely enculturated by our professional identities. And in this, being a reader is hard because it makes you think, and it makes you question what you know and how you perceive the world.

I don't think being a reader becomes any less challenging the more experience we have, but it may become normalized when it evolves to intertwine with other daily tasks. For some the readership role is a more comfortable space than for others. Stephanie, who finds writing and authorship to be challenging, articulates this. While she currently performs in the author role, yet while she discusses it she circles back to readership. Stephanie feels more comfortable as a reader than she does as an author, but the roles are not completely separate.

In his feedback on this book draft, John Budd offered that I might reflect here on the work of Wolfgang Iser, who explored the phenomenology of reading in his 1972 article, "The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach."[6] Although this work focuses on the act of reading fiction, his idea that reading creates a virtual dimension, comprised of "the coming together of text and imagination,"[7] is of import to identity formation—how we see ourselves as readers and how reading forces us to have different experiences.

> The manner in which the reader experiences the text will reflect his own disposition, and in this respect the literary text acts as a kind of mirror; but at the same time, the reality which this process helps to create is one that will be *different* from his own (since, normally, we tend to be bored by texts that present us with things we already know perfectly well ourselves). Thus we have the apparently paradoxical situation in which the reader is forced to reveal aspects of

> himself in order to experience a reality which is different than his own.[8]

Iser concludes his article, asserting,

> The production of the meaning of literary texts… entails the possibility that we may formulate ourselves and so discover what had previously seemed to elude our consciousness. These are the ways in which reading literature gives us the change to formulate the unformulated.[9]

Let's continue with Stephanie's story to see how this applies to her identity as a reader.

> I would say—so the ironic thing is that I feel differently now [than when I filled out the form]. So I've been writing for the past six months. I've had deadlines.… I agreed to write two book chapters, both due this month, and wrap up another revision for a journal article. So probably last fall I was in the, I'm committed to it but I haven't, I'm not deep in the weeds of actually writing.

Intellectual Response

It's so interesting that even though the action taken here is about being an author, yet the identity is different. This may point to the multiplicity of the author/reader identity, and perhaps other identities or roles as well.

> *Stephanie: So, I mean, I think in part it's because I try to write to fill gaps, and I have to read a lot to do that and to connect ideas or topics that haven't been connected before. But I think the other thing is just that so much of our work is interdisciplinary [pause] and it should be informed by ideas and theories and concepts that are broader than the LIS literature. So I maybe tend to take an overly broad view of what I should be looking at to inform my work. Maybe that's because most of my work is—I mean, you know my job is to enable researchers to do their work*

better, and so I don't—[pause] I need to understand that context and figure out where our expertise fits into that. So I think that makes writing challenging when I'm trying to bring those other perspectives to bear. And in terms of the volume of work that I do, I certainly read more than I write.

Emily: That's really interesting. Something that while you're talking about that I guess I have a question of whether it's a false separation between the two.

Stephanie: Yes, I mean, I think to some extent, I mean, any sort of personality trait it's a fluid kind of, the way that we identify and the way that our, sort of, we express who we are—it varies. It changes from day to day and minute to minute. But I think you know when I write [pause, sigh] I feel like much of that is informed by [pause] my own use of the literature, and maybe that's because we don't have the same sort of base of evidence and data that other fields do. I don't know.

…the more I write, the more I feel like I am a reader

Emily: Well so it sounds to me like you've had some sort of transformation or at least fluid experience in the past five months. Was there anything that precipitated that change in particular, or was it a slow realization? And what I mean by change is when you first said, "I'm an author," and now you're saying, "Well, actually I feel like a reader." Was there an event, or was it a slow burn, or is it time to reflect? What's going on?

So I think I probably oscillate back and forth between—I think I probably tend to stay within the realm of reader more often than not, but probably I think the thing that drove the response or the change is that.… And for me, writing, it's almost inseparable from the process. It's a process for me. It's a process of clarifying my thoughts as opposed to producing something, I guess.

Emily: Okay. So is there for you any emotional experience in being a reader and the act of reading?

Yes, I mean, I love reading [laughs] so I don't know if this is just a library school thing, but I tend to gather, I tend to stay in the research-gathering phase of the process of writing far longer than I probably should [laughs] because I enjoy it. It's very rewarding just sort of exploring the ideas and kind of mapping them out in different ways and looking at the information through different lenses, it starts to get anxiety-invoking when I have to put my own thoughts into coherent word structures like sentences and paragraphs. [laughs] Or when I start to think about I have to produce a product that makes sense to other people I guess.

Intellectual Response

It is very interesting to hear this perspective, because writing and putting thoughts to paper has been a task that I have always particularly enjoyed and is an innate skill of mine. When a writer is positioned in this way, when writing isn't as natural for them, what other human experiences are part of the peer-review process? Does it make it feel more tedious? Scary? Anxiety-provoking? Avoidance? Or do such writers collaborate more? Although Stephanie is expressing some uncertainty with the writing, she certainly has taken on a lot, showing that she is dedicated, hard-working, and so on.

Here we see more of Stephanie's identity as a librarian, and perhaps how that identity is defined in a cultural fiction of it: librarians must love reading. She conforms to that notion, mentioning her love of reading and how that contributes to her process and her insecurity of herself as a writer. Yet it is clear that she is still not fully comfortable as a writer, as she mentioned at the outset of our interview. Perhaps it is this discomfort that keeps her from defining herself as a writer, even though it is a task of which she is currently in the midst. This redefinition for herself may be how she accommodates that challenge; instead of seeing herself as a writer, she sees herself as a reader in order to be more comfortable with that onerous writing task. What we don't know and cannot know is just how unique Stephanie is in her perspective.

But reading isn't just intertwined with writing; as Iser asserted, it's part of how we can reflect on ourselves and have new experiences. It is also an inherent part of the work of other functional roles of the peer-review process. As an example, for Nancy, serving as a referee and acting as a reader are deeply enmeshed.

Nancy's work as a peer reviewer melds with her role as a reader. When I ask about her role as a reader, she immediately responds in relation to her work as a peer reviewer. She talks about the "fuzzy line" between editing and reviewing. Clearly there is not a proper delineation between these two roles for Nancy.

Emily: Does anything about peer review come up for you when you're reading something?

That's a good question. [pause] I really like when I can read the things that I peer-reviewed that are out there. That's really awesome. I've had times when I've peer-reviewed something and there was a really great idea in there and I'm like, I can't tell anyone about this because we want to bring in—I have peer-reviewed for *Communications and Information Literacy,* so I feel like I've often had a situation where I'll read something for that and it will be this really great thing that I totally want to try in our instruction program, and I have to wait three months before I can say anything because it's not published yet.

Emily: Well that's a bummer.

> Yes. But then it's exciting when it is published because I'm like, "Hey, remember this thing," and at this point now what I tend to do is talk to our instruction coordinator and I'm like, "In three months please remind me because there's this thing and I can't give you the article but when it's out in three months I'll give you the article and then we can use it." I guess as peer review, when I'm reading [long pause] I was going to say occasionally, but it's very rare, although it did just happen recently. I feel like I'll read something that I'm sort of like, "Hmm, this could have been reviewed a little better or edited for clarity a little bit more." The line between peer review and editing sometimes is a fuzzy line there. But I feel like that doesn't happen very often.

Despite her excitement in these moments, Nancy accommodates and respects the cultural norm of blind review and academic publishing cycles by waiting to share information with her colleagues. For Nancy reviewing is not a chore; she likes it. It is also one of the ways that she is afforded the opportunity to continue to read despite the demands of her job duties.

> So I guess one of the things—now that I'm reflecting on this—one of the things I like about peer-reviewing is that it keeps me reading things that maybe I wouldn't have otherwise read.… So whether it's something job-related or if it's for something that I'm writing, it's sort of like, "Well I have to read this stuff because I need to work on this literature review for this thing that I'm working on," as opposed to, oh, in a perfect world, where every new issue would come in of all of the journals and I'd be like, "Look at this," through the table of contents and sort of browsing, right? Like you have time for that. That's just not a thing. So peer-reviewing helps me keep up with the literature because I'm reading the literature.

Nancy sees reading and refereeing as part of her praxis. What she learns from reading informs how she'd like to approach and improve library services for patrons. It also gives her a meaningful connection to ideas and communities to which she cannot fully commit herself because of her job duties as a library director.

In both of these examples, neither Stephanie nor Nancy is able to separate reading from other roles in the writing and publishing process, or from the work they perform in their role as a librarian within their institutions. This intricate and inseparable weaving mirrors human experience and the iterative nature of self-reflection. It is also possible that the act of reading as a reviewer also supports their writing.

THE MORE I REVIEW THE BETTER MY WRITING PROCESS IS

Just as the experiences of reading and reviewing are intertwined, so too are the experiences of writing and reviewing. I assume that there are, by the numbers, more individuals serving as referees in the world of LIS scholarship than as editors. This deep and pervasive relationship between refereeing and writing, then, makes sense.

Let's return to Stephanie's experience. For her, writing is difficult, and she would rather identify as a reader than as a writer. Yet, when she discusses her experiences as a referee, she attributes them with helping her develop as a writer.

> So I guess the funny thing is that the more that I do peer review, I feel like the better my writing process is. So the more that I read other people's work and sort of reflect on how to be constructive and how to enable them to produce the best possible product, I recognize ways to sort of separate the creation of work from the editorial work. And then I guess it's almost like I feel like I can trust peer review a little bit more.

Perhaps part of Stephanie's discomfort with writing has been her lack of trust in the peer-review process. Engaging as a referee and being able to see what it entails has enabled her to bring an additional perspective to her work. It could also be that over time she has developed a deeper relationship with academic writing in LIS; she has grown to better understand the norms of these social science writing structures. She is now, to invoke the ACRL *Framework for Information Literacy*, able to see herself as part of scholarly conversations.[10]

Jessica shared a similar perspective.

> I just don't have as much experience with being the actual reviewer. So I am a reviewer for a journal. I actually think that being a reviewer was super helpful for understanding, being on the other end of it. Understanding reviews that have been done on my work, and really thinking about how to be constructive, and how the editor's role is to take all those different reviewer comments and look at them holistically, consolidate them, and think about acceptance or rejection or how much improvement needs to made. Because it's a blind review process, and I've reviewed one thing for them so that's not something I have experience with. But no one has ever, you know, approached me to do an open peer review. But right now, I'm really kind of working on the author piece. And like I said, I've published articles and working on an application for IRDL [Institute for Research Design in Librarianship]. Again as an early-career researcher, really kind of trying to get comfortable as an author. And have more things published and be able to refine my own writing and understand the different processes that different journals go through, and then I think I'll hopefully sort of step into more of the reviewer role eventually, or even an editor role. And like I said, I've published articles and am working on an application for IRDL, just to try and get kind of more supporting mentorship on how to find a publication venue and again all the sort of logistics of the publishing process. So, I think that was really helpful and actually helped me improve as an author and as a reader—thinking about what kind of process articles have been through.

Despite her nascent experiences as a reviewer, Jessica is able to recognize that having experience on all sides of the publishing process will improve her work. Her aspirations to someday serve as an editor will be bolstered by having a breadth of experience in different roles. As she continues to develop her experience and skills, her knowledge as an author and referee may become further intertwined into experience, making them harder to distinguish from one another.

I REALLY THINK ABOUT THE WAY THINGS ARE EDITED NOW

Editing also enriches the human experience of engagement in the LIS literature. It goes without saying that most individuals serving as editors have a breadth of experience as authors and referees before they begin editorial work. I will interject, however, that my own experience as an editor differed. When I became a cofounder and editorial board member at *In the Library with the Lead Pipe,* it was very much a DIY project. I had no experience refereeing or editing. I simply liked to write, was decent at it, and got pulled into the experiment. I learned from the ground up, and to this day I still feel junior in many respects when it comes to refereeing tasks. My work at *Lead Pipe* has informed all of my subsequent experiences with LIS literature. I credit my work there with piquing my interest in peer-review processes, and why I am having these conversations, doing this research, and sharing stories with the LIS community. Just as I cannot divorce myself from my experiences, those serving as editors cannot separate their editorial tasks and roles from their previous writing and refereeing experiences.

Let's hear from Bethany.

> Again, Bethany's experience as an editor, at least on the day we chatted, colors her reflection of self in the other roles. For example, she indicates that, as a reader, she still looks through an editor's lens. She then brings her focus back to relating her experience as an editor.

> You know, it's funny, I [pause], I really think about the way things are edited now. I don't know that I evaluate the process, or wonder about the peer-review process, I think I see, for me it's a blind spot.

> *Emily: Is it blind in terms of, for lack of a better term, blind faith?*

> No. It's just, I just don't think about it. You know, I don't recall ever reading something and being like, "I wonder who peer-reviewed?" I mean, it's possible I have, but, you know, I don't know that I always know or care enough to look up exactly what the peer-review process is for a journal that, you know, is usually a pretty safe bet, that it's a traditional scholarly journal, [muffled] anonymous or nonanonymous… but I don't recall ever wondering enough to actually look in detail at the publication, unless I was gathering data for my own journal.

> *Emily: Yeah, you know on some level, I think that that probably points to evidence of it working, or maybe it points to evidence of it being totally broken. I don't know. I mean, I feel like it goes either way.*

> Whatever the case, the editing, too, it has the authors on it, and even knowing how much goes into editing things, I still don't necessarily read something and think, like, "I wonder how much the editor's fingerprints are on this?" I mean, they probably are, but, I mean, an editor is certainly associated with it, in the publication, not necessarily the edits, but at the end of the day the only name on that is the author's, and you kind of have to assume that everything in there came from the author, even though there are these other people that were involved. You don't know how much they were involved in it or, and how, you know, was the editor really [muffled] involved shaping this, or was it like, "Yep, it's good," you know.

Bethany can't unknow her experience as an editor when she reads. Her role as reader will also be a duality of experience. When she reads, her sub-identity as an editor is present.

Some individuals have one dominant lens of experience, yet the dominant role is still influenced by the others. For Kurt the dominant lens or role is that of editor. He regards his research as embedded in editing. He has a long history as an editor, which started during a GA-ship in graduate school. His subsequent work editing a very large reference volume in his subject specialty discipline and his continuing work as the editor of a monographic series continue to shape his identity.

> `He theorizes his work as work of mentorship, and the larger role that editors play in this behind-the-scenes work.`

> I think that this is maybe an extreme example of what most of the editorial work that I've done… is. And it's [sighs], it's really, I guess that you could say I look at editorial work almost as a type of mentoring. And mentoring is another thing that I've always done in my professional life; it is something that I get a lot of personal satisfaction from. You're helping individual colleagues, but you're also contributing to the over-

all success of a profession that—I believe that very strongly—that I want to see continue strongly in the future. And editorial work, I think, is very similar. I really do see it in some ways as a type of mentoring. Now some, you know, you'll get a manuscript that really… an author who's very good or who's been doing it for a long time and it doesn't need a lot of work and that's fine. But you know, there's always something that you can do. But some of these challenges where you can take somebody, especially if it's a junior author, somebody who hasn't published much of anything before, or who's new to a specific type of research, and to help them draw… kind of help them draw out from them what it is that they're really trying to do. It's just, I just find it very satisfying. You feel like you're accomplishing something yourself, you feel like you're helping not just a colleague, but you're really contributing to the future of the profession.

I ask Kurt about a separation of the two roles, of editing and refereeing, and how those relate to mentoring. His response is interesting and a thread that may inform how I continue to look at the discrete roles in academic publishing. He is very quick to respond to this question, even more so than to other questions I have posed throughout our conversation.

Emily: So is there a distinction for you between the role of being an editor and this mentoring aspect and contribution to the profession and what a referee does in that respect?

I don't think it's so much a difference as they're different parts on a continuum. I think that, you know, when you're referee, if you're a referee for a specific manuscript, you have very specific things that you're looking for, and you're giving feedback about methodology, about results. You know, maybe about style, things like that. I see that as part of a continuum. I think when you're doing the higher level of editorial work, you're doing that, but you're also speaking in sort of a bigger picture. You know, when we get a manuscript,

> you aren't thinking about not just that manuscript, but I'm thinking about the series which really is the flagship series, and what is the general tone and what do we want to be the future of this series. How does the manuscript fit into that? But I really, I don't really see them as… —the working as a referee, working as an editor, or working as the chair of the editorial board—different things so much as they see them in different places on a continuum. Does that make sense?

Intellectual Response

So how come we aren't good at defining this continuum in our publication policies and communicating them out to authors, referees, and readers? Would it be possible to outline and clearly and transparently communicate this approach to a publication? How can we create this as a norm?

As I reflect on the intellectual response I had while working with Kurt's transcript, I see that I do have some thoughts on why we haven't been able to communicate or enact this continuum, which, for Kurt, clearly defines his practices. I speculate that we, in our work lives, have come to rely on boundaries. The need for boundaries is enforced by the realities of our working lives and workloads, but also potentially by the politics surrounding the enmeshment of certain roles. A collaborative approach to peer review is more radical in that it does embrace the continuum and boundaries around who does what and when those roles may remain fuzzy.

A continuum relationship, or serving in multiple roles, can also pose challenges to those individuals serving in them. John's story highlights this tension. One of John's major griefs in his professional life is the tension he feels between his editorial work and his own research and writing. The demands of editing a journal are intense, so much so that his own research and writing happen off the clock on evenings and weekends. As we talk, John relays examples of his work in each role, but it is clear that there remain tensions between them.

> I most often think of myself as a publisher when I am talking with other academics who are interested in starting their own journal. I'm commonly contacted by folks across the disciplines who are interested in starting a journal in their particular slice of their particular field, and they need basic information about platforms and assembling an editorial board

> and all of the things that go into it. "How many weeks do you give your reviewers to give their feedback? How would you suggest I communicate with authors about this, that, and the other thing?" These are common conversations. And so I think of myself as a publisher in those kinds of conversations. I think of myself as a reader on a daily basis. I'm in love with, for instance, the *Scholarly Kitchen*. So I consume that with my morning shade-grown coffee every morning. And I have alerts set up for myself for things that are of particular interest. And in terms of authorship I will admit to you that I wish I could spend more time thinking of myself as an author. It's gotten to the point now where the only time that I can devote to writing a paper is typically nights and weekends. Sometimes I just don't have the energy to just keep doing it. I like to have my voice part of the professional discourse. I've gotten to the point now where I think I can actually find ways of inserting my opinion in the way that I back my arguments. And I really enjoyed that. But there's limited time and sometimes just not enough energy.

`As John relates his current authorial challenge, to carve out time to research and write, it's clear that he grieves his authorial role. While working during his personal time is one way he's accommodated the challenge, it is not enough to sate his desire to contribute to the profession in this way.`

There simply aren't enough hours in the day or week for John to perform in every professional role, so he cuts into his personal life, evenings and weekends, to continue doing something he loves. His identities and sub-identities are in conflict for time and dedication.

HIGH-LEVEL EDITING IS SOMETHING THAT I'VE ALWAYS DONE AS PART OF MY RESEARCH

Our work in LIS publishing, no matter the role, comes back to praxis. This work is not insular; it is messy and intertwined and not easily extractable from our work answering reference questions, cataloging rare materials, or providing instruction. The work of researching and writing informs praxis. While I have shared with you in this chapter some examples of this from Jessica, Stephanie, and Nancy, I will share with you one more. The story is from Kurt, who sees his editing work as entwined with his research. It is part of his scholarly agenda to serve as an editor.

Emily: Could you talk about that role as an editor?

> I've actually done, a lot of my research actually has been editorial through the years. And I began again, at kind of a lower level in ALA, in the late 80s early 90s.… And I had the opportunity to do a number of other editing projects. I edited a couple of books.… I was working as a subject librarian, and I had the opportunity to be involved in a very large-scale editing project.… It's one of these old-fashioned German publications that began publishing in the late eighteenth century and finished in the early twentieth century.… And it's huge, dozens and dozens of volumes… and they were doing the first ever English edition, the first ever online edition, and I was one of the two senior consulting editors for the English edition, and it was a five-year project. So I did that work, and that was a, it was very labor-intensive. I mean, I think I was, like I said, one of the two senior consulting editors on something like sixteen volumes that, I don't know, a couple thousand entries, and I authored several entries as well. So I did a lot of, you know, editing with that.
>
> And I just, you know, I've always liked editing. And on it was one of the things that, it actually was one of the projects I got full professor with.

Kurt makes a connection between his editorial work and his scholarly agenda, signifying that this is something in his academic portfolio that his promotion committee considered when he was undergoing review. His discussion of editing is eloquent, acknowledging the contributions of editors in general, despite the fact that they are often behind the scenes or what I call "hidden labor."

> And then when they were talking about what's going to be the future of the series that I edit now, I said, you know, "I would be very happy to take a term as editor," because it's again… high-level editing is something that I've always done as part of my research.
>
> It's something that I think I'm good at, that I enjoy doing. I don't think people always appreciate… you know, I think a lot of people think the thing is copyediting, you know, basically running the spell checker. And, you know, if you… when you've done editing at a high level, you know that it's not that at all. And that's kind of how I got involved in that whole aspect.… I think the creativity of the editorial process is often very understated.

`Hearing Kurt talk about this, acknowledging the hidden labor, makes me wonder if he has encountered challenges in review processes based on his choice to be an editor and not a straight-up author in some instances. It's possible that he identifies strongly as an editor not just because of his passion for it and because it's something he's good at, but because he has faced adversity in that role, further cementing that identity for him.`

Just like human experience, the experience of authoring, refereeing, and editing cannot be separated from our professional roles. Our professional roles and identities are why many of us do this work. Our commitment to doing our work and doing it well means engaging on all levels of discourse to think about and improve it.

WELL, I THINK IT'S SOMETHING THAT STARTED INFORMING ALL OF MY SUBSEQUENT WRITING

Sometimes an experience in one role can completely transform the way we engage in our other roles. Kurt shared one such instance, where his work as a referee transformed his approach to engaging in scholarly conversations. Having been acculturated into scholarly publishing as a white man in the 80s, Kurt discussed his change of approach to writing and refereeing as a result of one experience. This experience, relayed below, taught Kurt that scholarly discourse is a narrative of experience, not just a positioning of oneself as an expert or authority on a subject. In a way, the act of refereeing pulled Kurt from the throngs of positivist thought into a realm where the amorphous human experience is examined and discussed, rather than completely understood and known. Before we dive in, I should share that I sent Kurt a draft of this portion of the chapter, requesting his review for inclusion in the book. He okayed the storying, reporting that it accurately captured his experience.

> There is one experience that he shares that was transformative for him, one that made him view his work differently—potentially a threshold concept in that it is something he can't unknow. It is a story that shows Kurt's growth and how he has witnessed that growth.

>> And that was, that was a while ago. That was probably ten or twelve years ago, but it really…

>> And I can think of a couple of times that I've read, that there is something that I've been working on as a referee that—not only what I was reading, but my response to it—and that the critique that I was making of it got me to thinking of a new line of research—and I'm not saying, you know, plagiarism or something based on what the person was doing—but I've had a couple of times, one in particular, where I was a referee for something that really kind of opened my eyes. Not really informed, but it really didn't influence much the subject of my research, so much, like I said, not even really the method so much as how I presented it.

>> Well, I think it's something that started informing all of my subsequent writing. I think in some ways being a—I've refereed a couple of articles where they—those can be the things that are the most intellectually engaging because usually there's something that's a very specific area that you're personally involved in at a high level, I mean, otherwise they wouldn't pick you as a referee. It wasn't so much that

the subject matter, is sort of, not even really the methodology, that sort of the whole overall viewpoint. It just kind of opened my eyes to a new way of looking at how you present an argument. Just the process, I think, of being a reviewer—if you're doing it right—really, I think, engages you at a very high level. You can't be a good critic without criticizing yourself.

Emily: So it's, there, did you, based on that experience, did you take it anywhere?

Like I said, I guess it wasn't really the content or even the method so much as it was almost the worldview. You know the, how you look at, and how you present what it is that you're saying. And taking kind of a more, I guess a more inclusive view, or not even, not a view, but maybe speaking with a more inclusive and accepting voice.

At this point in his retelling, Kurt takes a lot more time and space around his words than he has up to this point in our conversation. Generally, he is quick to respond and lets words and stories come quickly and freely. Yet, on this particular issue, it's as if he is still processing the experience and what it has meant for his work. It sounds to me like Kurt was challenged with ideas about power and inclusivity and that he is thoughtful and trying to be accurate and represent himself in a way that is honest. I continue questioning him about the experience, and he continues to keep space around his language and thought.

Emily: And how did you do that?

I think by, you know, by writings, and doing presentations and things where I would try… I think I became more interested in making sure that I was presenting a variety of perspectives. Or. I'm trying to think how to say it. Because…

but demonstrating that, that there's not just one way of stating something. That there are different ways of presenting the same conclusions that they may all be fully valid and some of the work better for some audiences than others. Does that make sense?

> *Emily: Yeah. Yeah. I mean it's, so it sounds like you did have an experience as a referee that was very transformative.… And it, what I'm hearing you say, so please tell me if I'm hearing you correctly, is it informed your future writing but also maybe the direction of your research? Or was it more how you wrote?*

It didn't really influence the subject or the method so much. Maybe it's more an issue of tone more than anything. And maybe being less, you know, authoritative, and more, you know, "This is my experience with this problem, and there are other experiences, too. And, you know, I'd be interested in hearing yours." You know, that sort of thing. You know, less than, and it's easy when you start writing, it's easy to, you know, "I'm the expert on this and this is what is true."

Intellectual Response

This is related to what Kurt was talking about earlier, in terms of there not being one right way to execute open peer review. There is not one right way to interpret research results either. Though certainly different approaches introduce different biases, and data can be misinterpreted. Folks with different worldviews and perspectives would draw different meanings from findings. So how do we walk that fine line and actually contribute anything to knowledge or research?

As I heard this, I felt that perhaps this was Kurt realizing that he had been trained in a discipline at a time when white males dominated conversations, and where culture was such that one had to posture and position oneself as an expert, inflating one's own ego and puffing one's chest in order to make it in the academy. I ask about this, in much less overt terms, and Kurt responds with cognizance and a sense of humor. He exposes his identity and sense of self as still related to the discipline in which he learned to be an academic.

> *Emily: How much of, how much of that is… is that something that's pretty pervasive in your discipline? I mean, I'm making a stereotype but…*

> You are, but you're making a stereotype that has a considerable amount of truth to it. Some, especially some of the fields in the humanities that have a body of scholarly communication that goes back, you know, to the fifteenth century and earlier. That, you know, really does have a tradition of speaking in a certain way. And if you read [things in this discipline] until I think the 60s and 70s, was often written this way. I think in a lot of the humanities, you know, you have history, I think some of the social sciences, it was very… and, yeah, I don't even know that we were so much encouraged to do it as it's just something you picked up by assimilation, by osmosis almost, because that's what you were reading. But it's… you know, you speak as an authority, and that means that you talk or you write in a certain way. And you can be an authority with, and you can express… I guess what is, I realize there's a difference between being an expert and being an authority. Being an authority, I think, is "This is how it is because I've done this and this is what I've found." Being an expert is, "This is what I found that and how I found it. What do you think?" You know, so I think it's the difference between making a statement and starting a conversation.

It interests me that Kurt has hit something on the head for me: the performative and privileged nature of the academy. Even those with the most privilege in this institution, mid-

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dle-aged white men, have been acculturated and
learned that they had to act in this way, even
if it is counterintuitive to them.
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> *Emily: You know it's interesting you use the word conversation because I was about to say, "You know that's in the in the new Framework for Information Literacy." We have the whole frame of scholarship as the conversation and part of that frame is for students to be able to start walking and talking like their discipline. So I guess it's really interesting for me to hear that you were walking and talking in a certain way of being in a discipline and then your experience as a referee helped you transform the way you walked and talked.*

While not every referee will have a transformative experience for their own work and worldview, Kurt's experience shows the power of opening oneself to different roles, allowing those roles to play off one another, to become integrated into our human experience, and allowing that integration to change how we maneuver ourselves through the world.

REFLECTING ON DUALITIES AND MULTIPLICITIES

Our work in these roles, author, reader, editor, and referee, are not unattached from the others. We may identify more with one role than another, but because we are human, and these are all human experiences, our experiences in these dualities or multiplicities will influence how we act and what we say when we are performing in different capacities. This is human and it is the nature of librarianship. In our profession we focus on praxis. We write and we research because we want to improve how we approach our day-to-day, we want to improve what we offer to the scholarly community, and we want to improve what we offer to our library patrons.

- Have you ever experienced a tension between two separate roles? What roles were they, and how did that play out?
- How do you position the roles that you have served in and how do you bring those back to your day-to-day work?
- Who do you identify as today? Who did you identify as yesterday? Were they the same or different?

- What have been your emotional experiences in these roles?
- In what role are you most comfortable, and why?
- Have you ever had an experience in one role that transformed how you approached another?

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Chapter 6

Collaborative Work and Discourse Community

INTRODUCTION

Collaboration and community engagement are tenets of the librarianship ethos. Librarians love to work in collaboration and engage in community; it is part of who we are. In both public and academic spheres, libraries serve as community hubs. They are gathering places where students and faculty learn and write, teach, and think, where students socialize between classes, or they serve as a place to meet before heading off to grab a cup of coffee. It takes a collaborative community to run a library: the community of departments and expert knowledge in cataloging and technical services, in providing access to library buildings and services, and in delivering reference and instruction. There are countless layers and webs of community happening in and around libraries.

The research, writing, and publishing aspects of scholarly work are no different; they are built on collaboration and communities of discourse. In fact, it is in the spirit of collaboration and community that I approach this research. I am not the expert on experiences of publishing and writing—only on my own—and each individual is an expert on their own experiences. Via our collaboration in sharing and discussing our own experiences, as well as the collaboration in crafting and analyzing the stories shared, we create a discourse community. Granted, these are small discourse communities, a community of two, but by reading this book you, too, are becoming a part of this community.

Just what do we mean when we say community and collaboration? To begin to answer this question, I turn again to bell hooks. In *Teaching Community: A*

Pedagogy of Hope, hooks considers community as a feeling of connectedness, and a connectedness that stems from love. Yet that connectedness, she argues, should not be rooted in a culture of domination.

> All too often we think of community in terms of being with folks like ourselves: the same class, same race, same ethnicity, same social standing and the like.… I think we need to be wary: we need to work against the danger of evoking something that we don't challenge ourselves to actually practice.[1]

And in order to be in community and do community work, according to hooks, we need to invite others in to feel that same sense of connectedness.

However, in the context of the university system, we can interpret the notion of community in opposition to a common good. Common goods are institutions or materials provided to all "in order to fulfill a relational obligation they all have to care for certain interests that they have in common."[2] Kathleen Fitzpatrick argues that community has begun to replace the notion of a common good in the neoliberal era. In the introduction to her book, *Generous Thinking: A Radical Approach to Saving the University*, she explains:

> Moreover, as Joseph points out, the notion of community is often deployed as if the relationships that it describes could provide an antidote to or an escape from the problems created by contemporary political and economic life. This suggestion, she argues, serves to distract us from the supplementary role that community actually serves with respect to the mainstream economy, filling its gaps and smoothing over its flaws in ways that permit it to function without real opposition. The alternative presented by community—people working together! helping each other!—allows the specter of socialism, or genuine state support for the needs of the public, to be dismissed. Thus, we turn to social network–based fundraising campaigns to support people facing major health crises, rather than demanding universal health care. Thus elementary school bake sales rather than full funding for education. And thus a wide range of activity among nonprofit organizations—entities that often describe themselves explicitly as working on behalf of the community—that serve to fill needs left behind by a retreating state and thereby allowing that retreat to go unchallenged.[3]

Realizing that a tension exists when we speak about *community* in relation to higher education and its affiliate systems, I still use it to mean a sense of open connectedness, including, in its ideal form, a resistance to cultural domination that invites others in. Collaboration, on the other hand, may occur in and across various communities. "Collaboration enables the bringing together of different expertise, skills, and knowledge and involves shared decision-making."[4]

In this chapter I divide collaboration and community themes in two: research and writing in collaboration, and community of discourse. While collaboration and community are present in each person's narrative, it is Julie who most eloquently discussed it. As a result, much of the chapter will be spent sharing Julie's story. But before I dive into this theme, I want to briefly examine community and collaboration as identity.

PART OF MY IDENTITY AS AUTHOR IS AS COAUTHOR

Collaborative projects in libraries often serve patrons, such as library space and instructional collaborations with tutoring and writing centers or athletics programs, or even collaborations between institutions to bridge collections access. For scholarly publishing, collaborations might manifest as joint research between librarians and disciplinary faculty members, or any members of a community who collectively engage in research and writing work, each sharing their expertise and engaging in joint decision-making. For some librarians this is inherent; it is part of their identity. Case in point, Alma identifies herself not just as an author, but as a coauthor.

> While Alma accommodates her writing and publishing decisions to more align with the academic culture at her institution, she exhibits agency in some of the ways she identifies as an author.

> However, I guess in terms of my identity as an LIS author, I feel like I'm still really piecing that together. Most of the projects that I'm doing are collaborative projects with other colleagues, so I think part of my identity as an author is that of, I don't know, I guess a coauthor, and working together on different pieces.
>
> I think that's been really beneficial because the people that I've been working with, we definitely bring different strengths to the table. That has been really helpful. I am

> not the best at lit reviews and get kind of impatient in that process, and I really prefer to focus on writing up methods and stuff like that. And the people that I've collaborated with so far are kind of the opposite, where they love the lit review and don't love the analysis. So I think that that's been really beneficial for me as an author and, I don't know, I feel like a fair amount of it is [pause] What's the right word that I'm looking for? Sort of like trying to [pause] I don't know. I mean I think that I struggle with how, even though I think LIS literature has become more robust, there's still just not as much rigor as I would like to see in it. So part of what I see my role of doing is also just adding more rigorous analysis to different research—qualitative and quantitative method. I really want to try to contribute more at the research level than at the case study level.
>
> So part of it is, in a sense, because I prefer to do coauthored studies, I feel like there is some element of openness, just in the actual writing process itself. And in sharing it with colleagues or friends before sending it off to journals. I think that kind of informal open peer review, to a certain extent, would fall into that. And then in terms of publications that definitely prioritize ones that are open access at publication, but not both at the, to have a pre-brand copy made open. Yeah, I think those are the main ways.

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Alma is piecing together for herself her authorial identity, perhaps in resistance to the lack of agency she may feel because she has to accommodate her promotion and tenure committee. First, Alma sees herself as a coauthor, a collaborator with unique contributions. Second, she provides to her collaborators and the profession the knowledge and methodological rigor she learned while earning her other master's degree.
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Alma's unique contributions complement those of her collaborators and allow her to identify as coauthor. The fact that she is unwilling to see herself only as an individual author is evidence of her collaborative approach to her work as a librarian and scholar. This part of Alma's narrative also highlights the fact that she sees this informal open peer review, receiving feedback from and giving feedback to her collaborators, as part of that coauthor identity

Nancy's authorial identity is similarly tied to collaboration. When we spoke, she shared an episode from her recent sabbatical.

> Nancy's most recent challenge as an author has been her sabbatical. This experience challenged her sense of self, how she had formulated the way that her thoughts and research interacted with the rest of the world. Why? Because she was doing it alone.

> *Emily: So can you tell me about your experience as an author? Maybe you can use one of the things that you're writing right now or something in the past. What's it like to be a human that's writing for the LIS literature, and what that role is like for you.*

> Right. That's a really good question. Most but not all of my work is collaboratively researched and written. I do and have done projects on my own, although I had a sabbatical last year, it was just six months, and I had a project for that sabbatical, and I felt like it had to be my own project or else the sabbatical wouldn't be approved. [laughs] It was the first time in a long time I had worked by myself. I have one colleague at another institution that is my long-standing research partner, and I kept sort of sending her things during the sabbatical like, "This is so weird. Can you read this over?" It was a little bit weird. So I feel like I already have, [pause] I feel like there's already a lot of humans that I'm talking to, I'm already sort of working with other people as I'm doing the work. Because there's always that nice check when you're working collaboratively with someone else.

> Nancy accommodated her work to what she perceived to be her institution's required norm; sabbaticals were done solo. In her accommodation of this challenge, Nancy continued to seek out human contact in the form of her long-standing research partner.

In combination, these instances from Alma and Nancy show how they see their work as inherently collaborative. Yet, when their work is not framed by collaboration, they may struggle; feeling part of community contributed to their successful collaboration.

Identity is not the only reason librarians collaborate on scholarship. According to Deborah Blecic and colleagues, article coauthorship by librarians is on the rise. They posit,

> Many factors could be interacting to influence these trends. Coauthorship may allow for tackling bigger or more complex projects that require more authors to be involved, or librarians may be increasingly turning to coauthorship in response to greater expectations for publication.[5]

On the whole, Blecic and colleagues suggest that an increase in coauthorship coupled with an overall decrease in the number of publications may be a result of staffing and workload changes for librarians. Although they do not suggest this in their article, I see that an increase in coauthorship could reflect a move in LIS to authorship norms in other disciplines, such as the sciences, where it is standard practice to include numerous authors on publications. In fact, the number of authors on science papers is on the rise. Robert Aboukhalil predicts that it will rise to an average of eight authors per paper in PubMed by the year 2034.[6] Given this trend, would it make sense for peer review to mirror the collaborative efforts of coauthorship? Could open peer review be a sensible response?

CONSTELLATION OF THOUGHT

The remainder of this chapter examines a large portion of Julie's interpretive narrative. By sharing her story with you, I hope that her approach to collaboration and discourse community will show how one person has manifested these ideas. Again, to remind you, Julie is an experienced librarian, writer, and editorial board member of a journal. She has reached the rank of professor at her institution and spends her time in service as a mentor, in addition to her own research and writing. She wants to support the development of newer researchers and "get out of the way" so that they may succeed. Community has been a large part of her experience, and one that she relies on to move past her fear and paralysis.

In order for Julie to feel fulfillment and satisfaction with her work, she requires human contact and community, whether it is working in a research community, or whether it is in her refereeing work. She asserts, "So I'm always hoping for that sort of sense of any kind of community of thought around something, and when I don't get it the process is never as fulfilling for me." Julie's story bridges her assertion of identity in collaboration with how she values being in a discourse community.

In the following excerpt, Julie surfaces many ideas, including open peer review. Since this chapter focuses on community and collaboration, these other ideas are discussed in more detail in subsequent chapters.

> At the time I interview Julie, she is working with colleagues to edit a forthcoming monograph. I know that she is working on this, yet in her answer to my first interview question, asking her to recap her relationship with publishing and the literature, she doesn't mention it. So I ask:

> *Emily: And the book project that you're doing right now on an edited volume?*

> Yes. It's an edited volume and that, I have to be honest, kind of lies outside of my research interests. My collaborator and I were really interested in writing an article about this topic we had been talking about, and actually I think somebody just proposed a book or something on that and it was like, "Oh that's tempting." But again, I don't want to take up a space if somebody else could use it more. So we were originally going to do that, and then the other editor came to us and was like, "I want to edit a book on this." And my collaborator said to me, "What do you think, we could help her out," and he's like, "Maybe we can put our chapter in there," and then we, again, decided no, we should give that space to somebody else. So the focus of the book is fascinating, but it's probably not a research trajectory that I see myself continuing with for the future.

> Later in our conversation she provides more detail about this project.

> *Emily: I'd love to hear from you something about that particular thing that you're doing with the book you're editing right now.*

Definitely. So what we did is we have all of our chapter authors, and some of the chapters are group-authored, so we probably have twenty authors maybe total. And around the time when they all turned in their chapter drafts, we also said to them, "Hey, would you guys like to also each sign up to look over a chapter and offer some editorial comments on that, a chapter that's not your own?" And so they were all very generous, most people signed up, and we have a primary reviewer and a secondary reviewer for each chapter. And then we also have an editor assigned to each chapter. So in an ideal world we have three reviewers for each chapter, and then some—it's only two because maybe we only had a primary reviewer and not a secondary reviewer. So now we, as the editors, we're starting to collate this feedback and then kind of meld it into one voice, although we're also sending along the original documents from all reviewers to give some really focused feedback. For me it has ended up being one of the best parts of being affiliated with this project.

And it makes me realize that there should be a more collaborative peer-review experience with any group project.

And all of it [the feedback from reviewers and editors] provided this constellation of thought around this one chapter that made everything so clear to me. Having multiple heads focused on one writing piece just made the job so much easier. And I think for the authors it's going to be very comforting, too, to see that diversity of voices all kind of headed toward the same conclusion. So I love it. I think the more voices the better. And I also think it helps build that investment in the project, too, that the chapter authors are going to feel not just like they wrote their chapters but like they really contributed to the overall health of the book, which is a beautiful thing.

Intellectual Response

I love the words that Julie uses, as a "constellation of thought." To me that is the power of open review! To be able to incorporate others' *thoughts, not just the original text, in your feedback. To create a more robust dialogue and to have a stronger piece of writing in the end.*

And that's what, we actually talked about this [the editor's role in communicating feedback], because he [one of my coeditors], he said, we talked about this, this week we're getting ready to send the feedback back. He goes, "Should I write a cover letter that just kind of introduces, here's your feedback, but then also send a letter with my feedback and then the other two sets of the feedback as well?" I said, "No, I think that cover letter needs to be the voice of all the assimilated feedback and your editorial voice coming through saying and here's what I really want you to focus on." I said, "You have to give them that clear path," otherwise they're going to be like, "Oh my God, I have so much paper, I don't know which way to focus first." I believe that's the editor's job and so that's the path we took.

Emily: So how does that compare for you to your experience as a referee in a different context where it's not in this community or collaborative context, where you can read the reviews of other reviewers at the time that you're forming your own comments?

I wish it could always be that way. So it's always kind of a game when you're reviewing for a journal because they'll send you an article and then, of course, like a week before the review is due I open it and I'll read it and I'll be like, "Hmmm," and I'll take my notes and then I always let it sit for another day or two and just kind of let it stew and think some more about it. Then I start writing up my feedback. I send it to our editor, and pretty much every time she'll write back to me and she'll tell me if my thoughts were close to the other reviewer's thoughts. And so I'll be like, "Yes!" if she's like, "You guys were both on the same page," then I'm like "I did it!" Because they've talked to us before about how when you had two reviewers going at one article in polar opposite directions, this is not good and how can we sort of

> resolve this. Well, through some openness probably would be one way. So I'm always very happy when I can see that I was headed in the same direction as the other reviewer.
>
> I just reviewed an article a week ago for them and kind of gave some feedback. Actually it was one where it was an article that someone wrote a dissertation and now they're taking their dissertation and they're kind of piecing it out and they're like, "So one part of the dissertation is at [a journal] right now under review, and then the dissertation itself is going to be turned into a book. And then I also have this article with you guys." And I said, "I don't know, this is all starting to seem a little duplicative, is the content this valuable that we need to?"—so I sent that off to the editor, and then she was like, "Thanks, Julie." And I was like, "Wait a minute, where is the affirmation that, yes, I was totally in agreement with the other reviewer?" So I'm always hoping for that sort of sense of any kind of community of thought around something, and when I don't get it, the process is never as fulfilling for me.
>
> Even if she said, "Totally opposite direction, here's what the other reviewer thought," that would have been really valuable to me, too, but she didn't even do that. You're in a vacuum, who knows. I hate that.

It's not just during this editing process and in her refereeing work that Julie seeks out a constellation of thought and fulfillment via the community of discourse. One way that Julie sees this could happen would be with opening up the review process.

Julie shared another story in which she concluded that she would love to have community around her work. In this particular circumstance, Julie is trying to get a coauthored paper published. In order to move forward with the article, she and her coauthor threatened to withdraw it because the peer-review process was taking too long.

> `This theme of valuing community and the fear of loneliness seems to permeate Julie's perspective as well as her emotions in regard to her work both in research and writing, and in her service. As I asked more about withdrawing articles from publications, this becomes even clearer.`

Emily: But you've withdrawn articles…

I was wrong. One article. We actually threatened to withdraw our other article. This is an article that is currently under review. And that article has been under review, I want to say since January. And threatened—we threatened to withdraw it, and they were like, "No, no, just a couple more weeks, a couple more weeks." I'm not the lead author on this article. And we finally got reviewer feedback back. That feedback arrived in June, so it was over six months. And so now we have our revisions that are getting ready to go back now. And then, I don't know, I have a feeling there's probably also a pretty large publication delay too; they have a backlog in that respect also.

Emily: I guess my question for you in both of these instances, one, you did withdraw an article, and two, the second one you threatened to and then that made the hamster run on the wheel faster or something.

I mean, kind of. They would just kind of buy time. Again, I wasn't really the main person having the negotiations, but my coauthor, who is the lead author on this, she'd be like, "We are done with you guys." And they'd be like, "We promise we'll get it to you by the 15th, we'll get our feedback to you." 15th would come and go, and she would be like, "Where is the feedback?" And they'd be like, "It's coming, one more week." So they kept trying to buy time. "We're really understaffed. PS, nobody understands your topic area… so we don't really have reviewers." They just kept offering excuse after excuse after excuse. Finally it got there.

(At this point in our conversation Julie is using a higher pitched voice to indicate the voice of the editors, more so than she has used pitch to relay other stories throughout our conversation.)

At the time Julie reviewed her story draft (four and a half months after our initial conversation), she updated me on this article. It was still unpublished, but in copyediting.

In our analysis process I reflected on Julie and her coauthor's experience:

Intellectual Response

Would open peer review solve this problem of not having reviewers who understand the topic area? Allow the community to decide? Or recruit reviewers who know parts of it but not others?

She responded: "That would REALLY solve the problem! It would also bring greater transparency to the range of topics under consideration for publication in journals like this one."

Emily: And so you feel like you mentioned, when you first mentioned the withdrawal, no transparency in process at that journal.

Yeah. And not at this journal either, in this journal it's the same thing. My coauthor would keep e-mailing me and she'd be like, "What does this status mean?" It would be, again, some super-opaque status. And that is all just really frustrating. It really is. But then I would love, on the other side, too, once an article is published, I would love to have more of a community around that as well—of openness and commenting because some journals even allow that, right next to the article is a field that people can post comments and questions, and there just isn't engagement around that either. So I would love to see it around both sides of the process.

Since Julie was working with a coauthor, she has community in her feelings of frustration, just as she wants community in the entirety of the peer-review process, which she didn't feel that she was getting from the journal. It is also clear that because Julie is not publishing this on her own, she must accommodate how she reacts, working in tandem with her coauthor.

With her most recent article publication, Julie, however, did discover that social media could be a place for open discussion. Open commenting systems came up, but she then related a story of how she discovered open conversation regarding scholarship on Twitter.

> *Emily: Yeah. Some journals that offer it, it doesn't, even though it's offered, it's not utilized. It's one of those no-win things. Like PubMed had PubMed Commons, which was like a discussion board, and they pulled it this year.**

> Well, it's interesting with publishing this recent article, I had an experience that I had never had before, and it made me realize a few things about social media. So before I published the article I had a Twitter account but I had not been on Twitter in months—if not years—and so then I didn't even know that the article had been published, but it got picked up by something, which is kind of like a blog. So I think it was there. So then all of a sudden, I see in my spam you have fourteen notifications on Twitter and I was like, "What?" And there's all these people tweeting about my article and retweeting it and saying—oh, actually I know how—somebody direct messaged me, one of my former colleagues, and was like, "I read your article and I'm going to share it with everybody here." I was like, "What? It's out?" And then I looked on Twitter, and there it was, all these people tweeting and retweeting, I was like, "Wow," not that many but still more discussion than I had ever had around an article.

* PubMed Commons was a commenting and discussion platform linked to PubMed Central. It did not succeed, and the National Library of Medicine discontinued it in 2018.

And so since then I've noticed that researchers who I follow, what they will do is they'll be like, "Hey, article published," and they'll put it out there in Twitter. And then they'll start taking quotes from their article, and then every day or every two days they'll put out another quote and they'll link to the article. And I was like, "Wow," they're kind of trying to start their own discussion around this article themselves. And I don't know how effective it is, but seeing even that little piece happen with my own article made me realize that perhaps that is more the place for that open discussion because you can share it so easily and your follower sees it, more than on a journal platform.

Emily: Right. A platform that no one really goes to because they are using discovery systems or databases instead of...

Julie: Exactly. And then no one knows. They comment there and it's like, "Bling!" it's a tree and it fell in the forest.

Emily: Yeah. Where is the commons?—I guess is the question for that. Anything else that comes to mind in particular with your experience withdrawing an article, or even a completely different experience from a different time as an author, what the role is like?

Julie: I think I'm good on all that. It's just disappointing [to think back to my experience withdrawing an article]. And it made me wonder: how many other articles do they lose? And I don't know, I kind of felt validated when my article got picked up by that blog, probably because it's open, and when it then started getting tweeted by, honestly, the people who I wanted to read it in the first place, the people I cited heavily in it, I was like, "Hey, I kind of achieved all my goals without having to wait for [the journal]," so maybe it was fine that way. Maybe they will see their brand devalued in the future because they just aren't reaching as many people. I mean, they're open, but they

> *have that backlog, and they're not communicative. I don't know… that bureaucracy, it's just, do you know what I mean? It's so slow to change. It's so gross.*
>
> *Emily: It's demoralizing, I think.*
>
> *Julie: It is, right? It is. These are our peers. Why does it have to be this way?*

> Despite being a member of the larger bureaucracy that she mentioned, Julie would like to challenge it, resist it, which is evident in the fact that she did withdraw a publication from the journal. Although she has pushed for change in bureaucracy in her service commitments… she was not willing to accommodate when it came to her submitted article.

Why *does* it have to be this way? Julie's experience and thinking illustrate that opening up peer-review processes would have some positive outcomes, at least for her. Collaboration and community discourse require openness.

REFLECTING ON COLLABORATION AND COMMUNITY

In this chapter I shared stories about working in collaboration and its influence on identity and roles in academic publishing. Second, I shared parts of Julie's story, "I Like the Melding of Voices into One," illustrating the power of communities of discourse as author, editor, and referee.

If we want peer review to be collaborative, and if collaboration means that we have shared decision-making responsibilities, wherein lie the boundaries? What are the boundaries of power in a collaborative environment? What boundaries may serve to support a sense of connectedness or community in that work? What boundaries serve to disenfranchise and dominate? I will circle back to bell hooks. In her discussion of democratic education, hooks contrasts democratic educators with authoritarian ones.

> Authoritarian practices, promoted and encouraged by many institutions, undermines [sic] democratic education in the classroom.… Democratic educators are often stereotyped by their

> more conservative counterparts as not as rigorous or as without standards.… When they [students] are taught this [that teaching happens in the classroom and outside the classroom], they can experience learning as a whole process rather than a restrictive practice that disconnects and alienates them from the world.[7]

Peer review is a learning experience for all involved. Editors, authors, and referees alike learn from their engagement with it. If we approach peer review as a learning process it parallels hooks's notion of democratic education. Expanding that analogy to traditional opaque peer review as well as promotion and tenure processes, we could understand these traditional practices to be authoritarian, as opposed to open practices as democratic. Further, in this comparison, we can understand proprietary, non–open access publishing as an authoritarian practice. These authoritarian educational practices lead to the disenfranchisement of students. And students are each and every one of us.

- Reflect on a time when you have collaborated in your work. What was your emotional experience? What was your intellectual experience?
- Do you participate in any communities of discourse, formal or informal? Which ones? What have been your experiences?
- Reflect on your experiences in collaboration and with community via the lens of democratic education. Who were the actors? Did they exhibit authoritarian or democratic educational practices? Who are the players? Would there ever be a time that you would argue for one practice over the other?

NOTES

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Chapter 7

Transparency of Peer-Review Process

Many years ago I submitted a journal article, and it was accepted without revisions. I was very happy to hear that I would be able to publish this work because I had been working on the project for a very long time, but the ease of the acceptance nagged at me. The thing was, I never saw any referee reports. None. I even asked the editor to send them along, and I received no response. To this day I have no idea if the article was actually reviewed, even though it is published as peer-reviewed research. Did the editor not share the reports with me because they disagreed with them? Was the editor so busy they forgot to send them? Were the reviews useless and they decided to publish the article anyway? What could have been strengthened had I received feedback (aside from the informal feedback my colleagues had already given me before I submitted the article)? I credit this experience with shaping my thinking about peer review and transparent processes. As *Stories of Open* unfolded, I connected with many folks who share my same concerns and questions about opacity in peer review.

The title "Transparency of Peer-Review Process" comes from Bethany; it eloquently captures sentiments universally shared by those with whom I spoke. Publishing practices and review processes differ from publication to publication, and as a result, there aren't universal authoring, refereeing, or editing guidelines for scholarly publications. This introduces difficulties and complexities for anyone navigating peer-review processes, where demands and guidance vary from publication to publication. I am not arguing that we need universal guidelines—this would introduce a deluge of issues. (For one, it would create more powerful domination structures and further disenfranchise authors, referees, and editors whose works don't fall into the dominant discourse paradigm.) Rather, I see transparency problems as stemming from a lack of clear documentation, training, and communication for individuals involved scholarly publishing processes. Without transparent processes we needlessly further amplify the numerous obstacles already inherent in the scholarly publishing system.

These issues affect those in every capacity, especially authors, referees, and editors. Authors seek transparency asking questions such as, “How long will it take for an article to be reviewed?” and “Where is it in the process now?” Some publications share referee recommendations and the text of review reports with all referees. However, at others, referees do not know whether the articles they have reviewed are accepted or rejected. Similarly, each publication uses its own standards (or lack thereof) for what referees should consider and address in their reports and ultimate publish recommendations. Some publications provide clear guidance, such the comprehensive Reviewer Center provided by PLOS, and others do not.[1] Without guidance or training, how do referees know what would be most helpful to both authors and editors? What kinds of articles would best serve the publication? Finally, editors are also often stepping into a new role. How are they prepared to fill the demands of the position, and how has publication policy supported editorial success? In essence, how do they learn the ropes?

THERE WAS ZERO GUIDANCE

When publications do not offer transparency of peer-review processes to referees, the looming task can be daunting and confusing and can result in reviews that are be unhelpful to authors. Earlier I shared with you Nancy’s experience of receiving a review request from the “Elsevier robot.” She had no idea where the request came from, and certainly the request had no guidance regarding expectations. Just what are journals’ expectations of reviewers? What should they do in their reviews? Do they offer copyedits? Do they provide citations, or do they offer general comments? Should reviewers attempt to reproduce and validate data? Although the review’s aims differ from journal to journal, when a publication does not share a review rubric or guidelines, it makes the referee’s job difficult. In the end, without some norming of review expectations, editors and authors alike may be disappointed with the end result.

Stephanie shared with me two contrasting refereeing experiences: one that offered “zero guidance,” and one for a journal with “public guidelines.”

> We go on to discuss Stephanie’s experiences acting as a peer reviewer, and it becomes clear that she has had varied encounters with the role, both inside and outside of the LIS field. When I ask if she has any interesting

stories about peer review, she does not hesitate to respond. In fact, it is as if she has been eagerly awaiting this question and jumps at the opportunity to share.

> The first peer review I ever got was, I think, within the first year of my job here, and it was for a journal. So I used to work in a specialized research center and I had published a couple of things related to that research. And so I got a peer review from *the* big journal for that field, and there was zero guidance. And I just had massive imposter syndrome. I mean, it was on literacy and information related to the topic, but it wasn't a very eye-opening experience in terms of "This is what peer review actually looks like for some people." What I got was three very general questions in text boxes to enter in.
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> And there really wasn't particular guidance. And recognizing that, so graduate students at least in this field often will get trained on peer review because they're a postdoc, or the PI will get peer-review requests and they will do it with the graduate student essentially to train them on the process. And I had zero training.
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> > *Emily: And you said that there were no parameters. Can you talk about what you would have hoped to see or what your expectation was that was failed?*
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> Yes, so I expected more, I guess, of, like, a rubric, and this has been a while, so my expectations were probably pretty fuzzy. So I think probably what I would have expected were more pointed questions about the research, you know, Did the methods align with the research questions? Were the results reported clearly? Were the conclusions and the discussion within the realm of reasonable based on the data that was presented? That kind of stuff…
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> > *Emily: And in your subsequent experiences, has that been corroborated?*

So that, I think, is probably somewhat field-specific. So that journal is typically a, it's a disciplinary journal, and I have not accepted reviews for them after that. [laughs]

Intellectual Response

That's interesting to hear that the process is so opaque for peer reviewers in general. How are reviewers chosen for that particular journal or article? This lack of transparency is one of the issues in peer review, which I see as being solved, or at least mollified, by opening up peer review.

As Stephanie discussed her first experience refereeing, we see that it challenged her. She accommodated that challenge for herself by recognizing that perhaps it was her lack of training in the discipline that made her feel unprepared or like an "imposter" in providing that work, and subsequently she accommodated that challenge by no longer accepting reviewing tasks at that particular journal. Stephanie did not resist this challenge, but rather accommodated it by focusing her energies elsewhere, which became evident as she continued to reflect on her other reviewing experiences.

So most of the reviews I have done have been for either library and information science or sort of information science–adjacent journals. And they have been generally more thorough in their guidance.

Emily: So with that [first] experience with the disciplinary journal [outside of LIS], how did it turn out? I mean, you ended up writing a review.

Yes. And I ended up, I think, recommending—I can't remember if it was rejection or acceptance with major revisions. I'm pretty sure that it came back and the other two reviewers must have disagreed with me because I think they—I think I

> recommended rejection because I didn't think it was—the research question wasn't clear enough. It was kind of a mess of a paper, which was also more difficult when you don't have structure. And I think they ended up, the editor ended up recommending acceptance with revisions. And the recommendation or the response to the author didn't seem to reflect any of the concerns that I had expressed. [There wasn't] a place to communicate just with the editor, and so I tried to put some of that information in there and I didn't—the response didn't seem to acknowledge it.

We can't know exactly what happened in this incident, why the editor seemed to ignore Stephanie's comments. Were politics at play? Did the editor simply disagree?

> *Emily: Okay, so you saw what the editor wrote to the author?*
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> *Stephanie: Yes. I mean, some of the journals—I'm trying to think—at least that one and I think one, maybe two other LIS journals have the reviewers are sort of blind copied or are forwarded what is sent to the author.*

> I'm trying to think. I think honestly the experience that helped me with this process the most was writing evidence summaries. But before that I really didn't have a mental model or sort of a process for peer review in my head. And so I looked to the journal to provide that, and generally they do an okay job. I think all the LIS journals have been better than the disciplinary journal. They vary widely. I think it's because it's a really niche thing, and so they don't typically deal with information and literacy topics. But for a while that was kind of a hot thing. And so I guess I just got on their list as a librarian who had published with actual researchers. It was kind of a weird confluence of "I can't believe you don't have anyone better to ask but me" situation.

Intellectual Response

It's really interesting that the editor didn't seem to agree with her comments, yet still continued *to ask her to be a peer reviewer. If the editor had been wholly dissatisfied with her contributions as a referee, I assume that they would not have asked again. I wonder if Stephanie would have a different take on the situation, or a better understanding, if she had been able to see the other reviewers' comments, not just the accept or reject decisions.*

Journal transparency processes interest me a great deal. Is LIS more transparent than other disciplines on the whole? Generally speaking, I wonder if there is some cultural fiction for Stephanie—the guidance she assumed a journal would provide in terms of forming referee reports—though I have no evidence to substantiate whether or not this is a cultural fiction. Regardless, Stephanie continues to relate some of her more positive experiences with peer review, including an upcoming task of performing her very first open peer review.

Emily: So can you tell me a little bit about the invitation you just received?

I think so. I mean it's open peer review, right? So I've never reviewed for them. The editor is someone I know through a colleague, and it's related to my research agenda. So I got the request and read through the abstract, which is all I got—the only information that I got to make the decision [whether or not to accept the review task]. And they had some interesting questions that I hadn't seen before about "Does this fall within your expertise?" which I think is an excellent question to ask explicitly. And a link to the guidelines, which are fairly different. So I had to process through what that might look like and their process for publishing because once you make your recommendation, as long as you don't decide to withdraw, basically what you say about it is out there. So you can, I think, recommend the article and sort of stand behind it as a champion a little bit, or you can—there's another sort of

> middle path, and I can't remember quite what the language is there. But I think it's more of a revise and resubmit option. But it's interesting. I haven't really delved into the details yet.
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> > *Emily: But when you were invited, you were given a rubric of sorts, or guidelines?*
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> I was given a link to their guidelines, which are public, so it was really helpful.

The contrasting refereeing experiences Stephanie shares highlight challenges placed before referees and hint that transparency in rubrics and guidelines are helpful for referees. But it's not just reviewers who need guidance. Cheryl tells her story of stepping in as an editor at a regional journal. Although she had her coeditors for help, there weren't any onboarding documents to help her learn about her newly acquired role.

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Cheryl returned to an editorial role (she had
served in an editorial role in a previous job)
when she joined the editorial board of the
journal, where she continued to discover and
form her librarian identity. She described the
journal and its processes to me.
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> But yes, as far as editing literature, I really enjoyed that process, and I think the journals, it's very different from an LIS journal in, [pause] I think in good ways. I mean obviously it's a different purpose, it's a different audience. But just as far as a public librarian who's reading it might be reading it to get programming ideas and that's, again, like in library school where they're making everyone read about electronic serials management. It's something that would be useful to people in that area. And so the journal seems to sort of meet a need, and it just sort of exposed me to a lot of things that I wouldn't have thought about or paid attention to, and it's been a really good way to sort of familiarize myself with the landscape of the region. So the editorial board—it's more of a committee than a board. I don't know. But I think everyone's at a public library, actually, so it's essentially run by public librarians. There's a big—a lot of people are in rural

areas. So it seems more, it's certainly more democratic, I guess, than LIS, and it's more open, and every issue is sort of curated by a guest editor who's come up with a topic. So, I mean, again, as far as academic rigor, that's not really its purpose. So I've definitely, I feel like I have personally enjoyed that and learned a lot from it.

> *Emily: So in your role there, is it that you took it on as the editor-in-chief for a year, or, what's the gig?*

I kind of stumbled onto it. So I had submitted an article for a previous issue, and the guest editor for that issue dropped out at the last minute. I still don't know what happened, but basically someone, I guess, called me and was like, "Ahh, can you help write the introduction?" and I was like, uh, "What would my mentor say?" Yes. Sure. So I did that, and then I think they had recently lost a permanent editor, so then they e-mailed me and asked if I would like to join them on a regular basis. And I said yes, that sounds great. So it's [them] and then there's been a bit of a turnover lately. There are two other editors…

> *Emily: And do you feel like you know what you're doing? I mean that's a loaded question, right?*

No, that's really interesting. I've been uncomfortable about this because they mean really well, but they have a tendency to say things like, "Well, Cheryl has a PhD in English; therefore, she's always right about things." I'm like, no. I had spent zero time thinking about grammar while I was doing my PhD. So that's been sort of uncomfortable. And I don't want the author just to feel like they can't question me. I hope they *do* question me. So do I feel like I know what I'm doing? [laughs] Yeah, I think it took me a minute to sort of figure out that we're just trying to get these articles into the best possible shape such that they'll be understandable to a wide audience but also that they're concrete enough that specialists in that area will benefit from them. But there wasn't really any sort of "Welcome to the journal, here's our process,

> here's what we do." Unfortunately. I think it's the kind of journal where people aren't really getting rejected from it, so that sort of disorganized aspect isn't hurting anyone's career.

Although Stephanie and Cheryl relayed experiences in different roles, refereeing and editing respectively, both of them point to a lack of training and direction for those new to their roles. So whose responsibility is it to train referees to referee and editors to edit? Expectations for each of these roles may be different from journal to journal, though there are certain to be many similarities.

As it stands, training in peer review is often assumed, and when it is not, academia is leaving it up to proprietary systems providers to fill the gaps. For example, Scholastica, a company that sells an academic journal management platform, offers a new editor training course.[2] Furthermore, researchers are swiftly adopting Publons, the Web of Science–owned peer-review platform, which boasts a "free" service: "Your publications, citation metrics, peer reviews and journal editing work, in one place."[3] Publons also offers Publons Academy, claiming that participants can become a "master of peer review." In both of these instances, we are putting the scholarly publishing community at risk of being molded into what companies think it should be, rather than giving power to the communities that create, validate, and engage with scholarly works. It is not that the proprietary sector isn't valuable or doesn't provide valuable services; it is that the end game of all for-profit companies is to earn money. Just why are for-profit companies like *F1000*, Scholastica, and Publons leading the way in terms of process transparency? Why aren't we doing it for ourselves? Why is it in the hands of those whose end goal is to make money?

This is not to say that there is a complete lack of guidance from community-based organizations embedded in academe. The membership-driven organization Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) offers some trainings and e-learning, but their content focuses on addressing problems in scholarly publishing, rather than providing proverbial preventive care, such as general trainings to onboard referees and editors; it is simply not within their scope.[4] Similarly, the nonprofit trade association Open Access Scholarly Publishing Association (OASPA) offers open access (OA) resources such as setting best practices and offering support to OA publishing generally, but does not concentrate its efforts on capacity-building for editors and referees.[5] Because this training gap does exist and scholarly communities and professional organizations have not been able to fill it, for-profit companies are taking advantage of it. We—individual scholars and our scholarly communities—are complacent. The entrance of companies into the peer-review marketplace should not be surprising, however. Given the history of scholarly publishing's commercialization, which began in the 1960s and 70s, there is a precedent for the processes of scholarly publishing to also become commercialized. This is radically different from how peer review was historically managed by the scholarly societies of the nineteenth century. "Thus, since the 1960s and 1970s, control of the measures of academic prestige—starting with the management of peer review, and extending to the development of metrics—has been silently transferred from communities of academic scholars to publishing organisations."[6]

If our organizations are not going to offer training in peer review, these trainings developed in consort with the proprietary sector will be created with the interests of proprietary communities in mind, not our own. Of course the reasons are complex, and those I can offer are only conjecture. Is it an abdication of responsibility? Who is accountable for training referees? "Not my job," said the editor; "Not my job," said the graduate school; "Not my job," said the promotion and tenure committee—and so on. And then there's the budget and its trickle-down effects, coupled with poor administrative decision-making. Academic workers are being asked to do more with less, and the work to review and edit and write—especially for academic librarians—is pushed further down a priority list. We often treat it as a luxury, despite the lip service we give to valuing this work. (And don't forget the potential to grow workplace resentment for individuals who choose to make this work a higher priority than sitting in ineffective meetings.) While we cannot solve all of these problems, we can certainly work to diminish them.

TRANSPARENT BY DESIGN

On an editorial level, there is much to be done with policy that can affect transparency of process and help mitigate issues related to peer review. In my conversation with Bethany, she shared her editorial experiences working to improve policy transparency and some of the tensions she uncovered in doing that work.

> Our conversation begins to unfold, and I know we are going to be able to dive into some interesting questions regarding the opacity/transparency in peer review. And I immediately ask more about policy changes at the journal.

> …the thing that we've done in this area—we've made a change to the author anonymity standards and processes for peer review, for the journal.

Emily: Have those launched?

> Yes, some of them have. We've been, let's see, so, the one that I just mentioned, the author anonymity piece, that was something that we started working through the editorial board and put into place. The author anonymity during peer review was one of the first things we tackled because we noticed very quickly that there was a problem with the way anonymity was being handled during peer review. It was very inconsistent. In theory it was a completely double-anonymous peer-review process

When Bethany talks about her work at the journal, I notice that she makes use of language patterns that signify her relationship to it. Her work there as a coeditor is very much a collaboration. She alone does not have sole power, but works very closely with the other editor. Throughout our conversation she uses the first-person plural pronoun *we* to signify action in relation to her editorial status. There are a few exceptions to this, and only in the instances when she speaks for her own individual thoughts and actions in opposition to her coeditor. Bethany views herself very much as part of a team, as a collaborator, yet I cannot help but wonder how much gender comes into play as well for this communication style, knowing that research and evidence exist on the way women and men use first-person singular or first-person plural to discuss their work.

Later on in our conversation, Bethany continues to share some of the changes, including implementing some policy changes with the anonymity of peer reviewers themselves.

Emily: Yeah, can you talk more about the transparency in process at the journal?

> Sure. So the author's anonymity that we talked about is an early example of something that we talked about. You know, there's something happening while the process is being made and it's not clear at all, [muffled] we've been talking more recently, the board actually just approved another change to our peer-review policy, and it has to do with reviewer anonymity. So we've also been looking at reviewer anonymity and ways to kind of credit reviewers for their work, plus to recognize the labor that's going into scholarly publishing, but also to be even more transparent about where the stuff came from. So the policy involves saying on each peer-reviewed piece that's published how many people reviewed it and naming them if those reviewers have agreed to be. The editors had some concerns about the complexity of implementing it and asked the subgroup to look at some other ways we might be able to accomplish the same goals. And one of the reasons that the board was in favor of it is that idea of transparency around what's happening in the peer-review process. So I've been looking at ways that—and that's great, if you have somebody who can do that for you—but looking at ways that we can also make the black box less black.

I noticed here that Bethany switches from first-person plural to using the passive voice. Bethany does not have ultimate control over the situation or the policy that is under consideration; hence her use of passive voice, indicating the distance between herself or her perceived power and the policy change decision and implementation.

> *Emily: The journal is really good about posting all policies on its website. And in my own kind of digging around on journal websites, I've found that open access journals that have better policy transparency than your Elseviers and your Springers and your traditional publishers. Also transparency in how to get ahold of editors, in general. Yeah, I found that when I was writing an article and I had gathered all this data and I was trying to find editor contact*

information, basically for the entirety of JCR and DOAJ's compiled subject listing of journals in LIS. It was the open access journals where I could actually get ahold of an editor, and the other ones were a web form and there were no e-mail addresses.

In the initial analysis of our conversation's transcript I reflected on this question of traditional journals versus OA journals and transparency in process, even in obtaining editorial contact information. Bethany responded thoughtfully.

There are very few standards in what information journals need to present on their websites—the only places that I know of that are enforcing anything like that are DOAJ and OASPA, and obviously that's only for OA journals. Who is making sure that toll-access journals post important information about the journal? Who even has the power to do so?

As I reflect on my conversation with Bethany over a year later, I notice that neither Bethany nor I thought of COPE's work in this regard, when in fact COPE, along with other organizations, developed and made openly available the "Principles of Transparency and Best Practices in Scholarly Publishing."[7] To guide peer review, this document asserts what information should be readily available on journal websites, but it does not go so far as to say that publications should develop clear peer-review guidelines. The document's third principle, "Peer review process," states:

> Journal content must be clearly marked as whether peer reviewed or not. Peer review is defined as obtaining advice on individual manuscripts from reviewers expert in the field who are not part of the journal's editorial staff. This process, as well as any policies related to the journal's peer review procedures, shall be clearly described on the journal website, including the method of peer review used. Journal websites should not guarantee manuscript acceptance or very short peer review times.[8]

Because neither Bethany nor I thought about this document during our conversation, we did not collaboratively explore the offerings and shortcomings of the guidance provided by the “Principles of Transparency and Best Practices in Scholarly Publishing” document.

> As we continued to discuss the transparency in process at the journal, Bethany relayed yet another story, solidifying her concept of self as editor, again oscillating between passive voice and first-person plural to signify power and agency as it relates to policy setting at the journal.

> Well, okay, there’s some things that were sort of recent.… Because we’ve got a few people rotating off the middle of this term, my coeditor and I were hoping to do a small round of editorial board member recruitment, where we just invite people who have been consistently good reviewers. And we had data, so we’ve got a rating system in our website, we’re not always consistent about it but there’s something we can look at, “Okay, this person has reviewed more than once, and we thought their reviews were really good.” So we pick up those names and said, “Okay, this is what we want to do, we want to invite these people to join the editorial board.” Um, it was the first I’ve ever not been able to talk the editorial board into something that I wanted because they said, they said no.… And I was really upset about it, and I was trying to figure out, “Why did this happen on this issue? Where is this gap coming from?” And I finally realized, because, my coeditor and I, the editorial board is, they are separate from review. They don’t see the reviews that come in unless they’ve reviewed, and my coeditor and I do, and we have this kind of emotional attachment to the people who do, especially the people who do really good reviews. You know there’s something that is really challenging, and somebody writes a really good review, that’s amazing to us, because you can just be like, “Look at reviewer A, and do what they said,” or when I can rely on that reviewer’s take on it to help us make a case to the author for why we’re declining the submission. And it can be so hard to find appropriate reviewers, to get people to agree to review, to get them the stuff that they said they

> would review. So you know we had this opportunity to kind of recognize some of those people and bring them on board, and it got shot down. And it was upsetting. It really made me think about how that, that relationship you have with reviewers can, that there is sort of an emotional component.

What we see in Bethany's stories is that transparency of process isn't just the transparency of peer review, but it extends to communications with the editorial board. Although we did not discuss it, I wonder if the discrepancy in understanding between editors and editorial board members comes from the opacity around editorial work. The board had not been trained or made deeply aware of editorial processes and outcomes, and they did not understand why Bethany and her coeditor felt so passionately about their suggested additions to the board. While an editorial board is involved in setting journal policy and overseeing publications, they do not experience all that editors experience or see what editors see. Would the outcome of this situation be any different had those reviews been open and the editorial board had the same evidence as the journal editors? Would the editorial board's reaction to this proposal have differed if they had more training or a deeper understanding of editorial work?

Like Bethany, Kurt also points to transparency of process as a tenet of openness in publishing.

> Well, I define open basically as… I think that there's two sides of it and each has a continuum. I think the side of process, open means transparency. People understand your process, they understand… so for open peer review, people understand what the steps are, they understand who is going to be doing or at least what types of people will be doing the reviewing. Like I said, you know, there are, there's a whole continuum in there. But I think that on the side of process, open means transparency. The other side of open is access. I would love to see open peer review and open access going together much more than they are now. Still, I mean, on the open access side, I really think it means just disseminating information as much as possible to as wide an audience as possible. And I think that when those two things can go hand in hand, it is of the most benefit to everybody.

After hearing from editors that they strive for a transparency of process, I reflect back on the stories we previously heard from Alma and Julie. Alma felt frustrated that she could not get an editor to respond to her request for an extension. While a transparent process may have helped Alma, poor communication could have undone all the good that transparent processes attempt to introduce. Julie relied on an article status feature in journal management software when communications with the editor failed. The system's design and interface introduced confusion in the process rather than mitigating it. Transparent processes can take us only so far. Without concerted effort to implement policies as well as develop and retain open and clear communication practices, transparency in peer-review processes will fail to accomplish all we hope they can achieve.

REFLECTING ON PROCESS

There are seemingly innumerable policy nuances in academic publishing processes. Amplified by the number of journals, disciplines, communities, and publishing aims, concrete universal transparent process guidelines and standards would not be possible. What is possible, however, is for small gains to be made. Referees and authors can push back, asking editors and publishers for more guidance. Editorial boards and editors can develop more transparent policies and processes. Authors can choose to publish in journals not owned by proprietary publishers, supporting journals and publishers run by their own communities. Finally, scholarly societies and professional organizations could begin to develop their own peer-review trainings.

- How might you relate to any of the experiences you read?
- What problems do you think transparency of process can solve? What problems might it inadvertently introduce?
- Who do you think is responsible for training referees? Why? Who do you think is responsible for training editors? Why?
- If you were starting a journal, what policies would you put into place to support transparency of process?
- In your view, what is most important for authors to know about the peer-review process at a publication before they enter into it? And for referees?
- What is your take on the privatization of scholarly processes? Does proprietary journal management software and do services like Publons help or hinder transparency efforts for publishing and peer review?

NOTES

1. *PLOS ONE*, "Guidelines for Reviewers," accessed December 30, 2020. https://journals.plos.org/plosone/s/reviewer-guidelines.

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PART 3

Coda

Chapter 8

Storying Stories

And now we find ourselves in the coda. In this book's orientation, you read about my worldview and approach to research and learned about narrative inquiry. In the stories or story middle, you dove into narratives, learning from others' experiences and reflecting on your own. Now it is time for us to think more methodically. This chapter offers a deeper look into the storying stories method developed by Coralie McCormack. It highlights how I used it and what challenges I encountered.

But why do we even need a chapter like this? As academic librarians we are poorly trained to undertake research projects, despite efforts to bolster LIS education and laudable training initiatives such as the Institute for Research Design in Librarianship.* Many of us simply do not have the funding or capacity in our jobs to explore beyond our own desks. We also have very few examples of narrative inquiry in LIS and are not well prepared to tackle methods beyond statistical analysis of survey responses (if we are prepared to do even that). In short, I don't want anyone to have the experience that I did, attempting to achieve something with the wrong method. My hope is that showing you my step-by-step approach to storying stories will encourage you to explore narrative inquiry methods on your own, and maybe even adapt McCormack's storying stories for your own project.

MCCORMACK'S METHOD

When I discovered Coralie McCormack's storying stories process, I knew it was the appropriate approach for *Stories of Open*. It incorporated a sensible pastiche of methods allowing stories to retain the agency of the teller; it included practitioner reflexivity with a feminist lens—exploring how domination and social construction influence stories as well as the social context of and power dynamic present in conversation between interviewer and interviewee. It also included a variety of disciplinary lenses via which researchers can view lived human experience.

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* IRDL is an IMLS-funded initiative to provide academic librarians the skills and support to undertake research projects.

By her own admission, McCormack's approach is cross-disciplinary.[1] Performing cross- or multidisciplinary work is no small task. As John Budd and Catherine Dumas remind us, it means that we need to be able to communicate across disciplines by norming language, theory, and culture. In the end, this work will result in broader comprehension and dissemination of our discoveries.[2] From chapter 2, you might recall that McCormack's approach to the analysis of narrative and narrative analysis stem from D. E. Polkinghorne, a psychologist who launched the development of what we now call narrative inquiry and phenomenological ways of knowing. Polkinghorne's seminal paper, "Narrative Configurations in Qualitative Analysis," makes a case for researchers to look at narrative processes in order to understand situations and individual lived experiences.[3] In addition to subscribing to this groundwork, McCormack uses feminist research methods by approaching narrative inquiry with questions of social and cultural contexts, as well as methods stemming from sociolinguistic analysis. Each of these lenses contributes to the creation of a robust interpretive narrative cocreated with interviewees. In this way, McCormack's method embraces and can be understood by researchers across many of the social science disciplines. She notes:

> The following works were particularly influential in developing the process of storying stories. The works of Cortazzi (1993), Riessman (1993) and Tosenthal (1993) who alerted me to the use of different narrative process in a text and to the structural elements of stories described by William Labov. Connelly and Clandinin (1994) and Polkinghorne (1995) alerted me to the fundamental role of stories in constructing human experience. The work of Mauthner and Doucet (1998) (who in turn acknowledge the influence of Brown and Gilligan (1992) on their work) was particularly influential in developing the stage of the storying stories I term "Active Listening". I had begun to develop a process of active listening during my Masters research (McCormack 1995). The inspirational work of these authors suggested ways to develop active listening into the more reflective and questioning process used in my PhD research. Through the work of Mauthner and Doucet (1998) and Morse (1999) I was alerted to the role of the personal pronouns "we", "I" and "you" in constructing identity.[4]

McCormack's approach is feminist in that is seeks to unpack power structures, and it includes dialogue and collaboration with research subjects and interviewees. Working with participants is one way that researchers can speak to hooks's aim to eliminate domination. As she constructed her method, McCormack drew from feminist narrative inquiry practices that questioned use of language and social and cultural contexts.[5] For example, McCormack builds this into her process by asking researchers to reflect on power dynamics as they analyze transcripts in order to elucidate any bias or other dynamic that may impinge on the interpretation of the conversation or have influence on meaning.

McCormack was also influenced by critical resistance theory via the work of sociologist N. K. Denzin. Critical resistance theory stems from critical pedagogy theorists Paolo Freire, Peter McLaren, Henry Giroux, and others. In *Theory and Resistance in Education*, Giroux argues for a distinct resistance theory, asserting that

> power is never uni dimensional; it is exercised not only as a mode of domination, but also as an act of resistance or even as an expression of a creative mode of cultural and social production outside the immediate force of domination. This point is important in that the behavior expressed by subordinate groups cannot be reduced to a study in domination or resistance.[6]

Returning to the *Understanding Narrative Inquiry*, Kim provides a useful framework for narrative inquirers to understand this and other writings of resistance theory. Describing the work of resistance theorists in education, she explains, "Although schools work to reproduce the existing social class to maintain the status quo, they can become sites of resistance and democratic possibility through collaborative efforts among teachers and students to work within a pedagogical framework."[7] In storying stories, researchers critically examine interview transcripts, asking where participants resist and challenge cultural norms, as well as how they accommodate them. Although storying stories does not necessarily ask these questions under the frame of educational pedagogy, the theory remains the same. Where does one resist? Where does one accommodate? Who are the social and cultural dominators and resistors? The method is detailed, time-consuming, and all-encompassing, but totally worth it.

APPLYING THE METHOD

While McCormack outlines most of her process in three articles, and the *SAGE Handbook of Narrative Inquiry* distills it into a table,[8] I still struggled with how to apply it for myself. My dual MLS/MIS education did not instill in me a foundation for quantitative research, much less qualitative research, so it took time for me to understand the theory and process. I needed to incorporate more details from McCormack's article into the method structure so I could wrap my head around it. I needed not just the steps of the process, but also the theoretical explanations of each step in one document. Culling from each of her three articles on the methodology, I created an outline including all of the pertinent information to guide my process.[9] Each time I sat down to work on analysis, this paper document was out on my desk and opened electronically on my computer. Here it is reproduced in full for your reference. In the rest of this chapter I refer back to the steps detailed below, so you may want to mark this page as you read.

Storying Stories Transcript Analysis Process

Stage 1: Construct an Interpretive Story

1. Compose the story middle.
   a. Active listening to transcripts.
      i. Who are the characters?
      ii. What are the main events? When do they occur?
      iii. As a researcher how am I positioned in relation to the participant?
      iv. As a researcher how am I positioned during the conversation?
      v. How am I responding emotionally and intellectually to the participant?
   b. Locate the narrative processes in the transcript.
      i. Identify stories. Stories have discernable boundaries with a beginning and an end. In the story there is an abstract, an evaluation, and a series of events. The evaluation is the title of the story. It's how the person wants to be understood. It's why the story was told—the abstract (summarizes the point); the evaluation (why it was told, highlights the point); the orientation (who, what, where, when); the series of linked events/actions that are responses to the question, and then, what happened? and the coda (brings the story to a close).
      ii. Identify text not part of any discernable story. These textual parts are theorizing (participant reflecting, what does it add to the story?), argumentation, augmentation (did the participant tell more about a previous story? What does it add and how could it be included in the story?), and description.
      iii. Construct any stories that you find in the text that is not already identified as a story.
   c. Return enriched and constructed stories to participant for comment and feedback.

i. Does what I have written make sense to you?
ii. How does this account compare with your experiences?
iii. Have any aspects of your experience been omitted? Please include these wherever you feel it is appropriate.
iv. Do you wish to remove any aspects of your experiences from this text?
v. Please feel free to make any other comments.

d. Form the first draft.
   i. List the titles of constructed and enriched stories
   ii. Cull the list for titles that speak to the plot/research question.
   iii. Order the story titles temporally (they form an outline of the interpretive story middle).
   iv. Add story texts. The first draft is done.

e. Redraft the story middle.
   i. View transcript through language.
      (1) What is said—relation of self and society, common understandings, making space for thought, specialized vocabulary, self-image, and relationships.
      (2) How it is said—active vs. passive voice, speech functions, personal pronouns, internal dialogue, metaphors, or imagery.
      (3) What is unsaid—silence, tone, speed of delivery, inflections, volume, hesitations.
   ii. View through context: situation.
      (1) What can I learn from the participant's response to my opening and ending questions?
      (2) What can I learn about our interactions from the appearance of the text?
      (3) What can I learn about our interaction from what is not said?
   iii. View through context: culture.
      (1) What cultural fictions does each person draw on to construct her view of being a person?
      (2) How have these ways of being positioned the individual? Where does she conform to and challenge them? Where does she rewrite them?
      (3) Look for times and places where individual reconstructs sense of self through accommodation, challenge, or resistance.
   iv. Reflect on these new findings.

    v. Redraft the story middle to show new understandings. This may be different for each individual.
2. Completing the interpretive story.
    a. Compose an orientation for the reader (what would they need to know?).
    b. Choose a title.
    c. Construct the ending.
        i. What were we feeling at the end of the interview, and what foreshadows future conversations?
    d. Return completed story to the participant for comment.
        i. Does what I have written make sense to you?
        ii. How does this account compare with your experiences?
        iii. Have any aspects of your experience been omitted? Please include these wherever you feel it is appropriate.
        iv. Do you wish to remove any aspects of your experiences from this text?
        v. Please feel free to make any other comments.
    e. Compose an epilogue. This is usually used for participants who have more than one interview.

Stage 2: Composing a Personal Experience Narrative from Multiple Interviews

1. Construct a personal experience narrative.
    a. Temporally order the stories into one document.
    b. Return to participant for comment.
        i. Does what I have written make sense to you?
        ii. How does this account compare with your experiences?
        iii. Have any aspects of your experience been omitted? Please include these wherever you feel it is appropriate.
        iv. Do you wish to remove any aspects of your experiences from this text?
        v. Please feel free to make any other comments.
    c. Respond to comments.
2. Construct epilogue.
    a. Reflect on personal research experience in light of the research question.
    b. Add epilogue to summarize reflections.

Since storying stories requires a reflective practice that acknowledges social and cultural constructions as well as power, my reflections become part of the research. In order to ensure I reflected somewhat systematically, I designed a reflection template. The template allows for reflection prior to and immediately after conducting interviews, as well as during the analysis process. This template provides space to ask particular questions inherent to the storying stories process. For example, prior to each interview I would reflect on each participant and my relationship to and with them. Since this study is a backyard study, this reflection is doubly important. How do my existing relationships with peers come into play, and what potential friction could exist? What might sway how participants respond during the interview and during the collaborative analysis process? I wanted to make as neutral a space as possible, acknowledging that despite my attempts to ameliorate any domination or power structure, they would still exist. It also afforded me a space for caring reflexivity to ensure my work remained thoughtful and ethical. After the interview I would expound on any setting and relationship reflection as needed, but also add thoughts relating to my emotional and intellectual responses or any other reactions that I had to the participant and the interview. This document was also a place where I would react and think after reviewing audio files and editing transcripts with initial thoughts before I dove in in earnest to transcript analysis.

My reflections became part of each participant's interpretive story. The following is a fictionalized example of the reflection template.

Fictionalized Example of Reflection Template

Interviewee	Interview Date
Alma	7/17/2018

Identifies As

First: editor
Second: author, reader, reviewer, publisher

Setting

Alma was just getting over a cold, still coughing. It was the last day before the winter break and late in the afternoon for her. I was feeling a bit bad for keeping her in the office before the break. Had I been working in my office I would have already skipped out. Instead, I am at home in the comfort of my home office with a cat on my lap. It's chilly, but I can easily ignore it because I'm excited to start this interview and continue with the project.

My Relationship to Participant [before the Interview]

My first "meeting" with Alma was because I needed a peer reviewer for an *In the Library with the Lead Pipe* piece that I was writing and I didn't know whom to ask. Christina recommended I reach out to Alma because she was a good writer and a really nice person. I don't remember how she knew her… perhaps through her connections with *ACRLog*? In any case, Alma agreed to review the article, and she wrote back with comments, one of which stuck with me. It was something about me being able to write, which felt good.

Since then Alma has stuck in my mind. She is the editor of a journal that I read, and I have a colleague who has partnered with her on numerous projects. Generally, I have the utmost respect for Alma and am truthfully a tiny bit intimidated to have this conversation.

Emotional Response to Participant [after the Interview]

One of the things that I find gratifying in talking with Alma is that I know she is on the same page with me when it comes to issues of critical librarianship, etc. She also thinks quite critically about positionality and power and understands social justice and wants to participate in it.

Intellectual Response to Participant

One of the things from the interview that sticks with me is our conversation on neoliberalism and how my own privilege and idealism came through in my surprise at her response and perhaps acquiescence to higher education as being a corporate entity that is seen as a means to a capitalistic end of survival for students.

Other Reactions to Participant

10/24/2018

More than with any other participant, Alma and I spend more time theorizing about higher education and tenure and promotion processes than anything else. I do see that she is jumping around, and creating stories from her experience was quite challenging for me to do.

The instances of her talking about the promotion and tenure process at her institution are going to be difficult to reconstruct.

When re-listening to the audio and attempting to follow the written transcript, it was clear that I already had to chop up the transcript a bit to make stories, so I had to jump around and find where snippets of text were coming from. Perhaps I augmented stories too early in the process, rather than waiting until after I'd had feedback.

Following the interviews and initial reflections, I commenced analysis. Keeping in line with storying stories, I engaged with interview audio and written transcripts many times over. Due to lack of funding, I transcribed the first several interviews. I would transcribe the conversation and then re-listen and edit the transcript. My work to either transcribe or edit transcripts allowed me to reimmerse myself into conversations, sometimes to even rediscover them. I would listen carefully to parts with muffled audio to ensure that the transcript was as accurate as possible, and I would continue reflecting on the reflection document. The process remained iterative throughout. After receiving a small institutional grant, I paid a transcription service, saving myself time in transcription. However, the work to edit the returned transcripts before conducting analysis still allowed me to reimmerse myself in the conversations I'd had.

Active Listening and Narrative Processes

Next, I would begin the active listening process (step 1.a) and move on to located narrative processes in the stories (step 1.b). At first it seemed difficult and odd to rearrange a transcript, but I went with it. After I understood how narrative processes fit together, I could rearrange a participant's words to make a story more cohesive and understandable as written text. Some participants told stories very logically, offering a flow of events, whereas others rambled, reflecting and evaluating their experiences before mentioning the concrete events to which such reflection and evaluation related. Here's an example from Nancy's interpretive narratives, "We Still Have a Lot of Work to Do to Convince People That Open Is Better." I share with you the raw transcript and then the rearranged story titled "It Was the First Time in a Long Time I Had Worked by Myself."

> *Emily: So can you tell me about your experience as an author? Maybe you can use one of the things that you're writing right now or something in the past. What's it like to be a human that's writing for the LIS literature and what that role is like for you.*
>
> Nancy: Right. That's a really good question. Most—but not all—of my work is collaboratively researched and written. So I feel like I already have, [pause] I feel like there's already a lot of humans that I'm talking to, I'm already sort of working with other people as I'm doing the work. I do and have done projects on my own, although I had a sabbatical last year, it was just six months, and I had a project for that sabbatical and I felt like it had to be my own project or else

the sabbatical wouldn't be approved. [laughs] It was a little bit weird. It was the first time in a long time I had worked by myself. I have one colleague at [a local] college that is my long-standing research partner, and I kept sort of sending her things during the sabbatical like, "This is so weird. Can you read this over?" because there's always that nice check when you're working collaboratively with someone else. Oh Cat.

Emily: Sorry. I forgot to mention we might get a visit. That's Harvey. One of my cats.

After I rearranged the portions of the story according to narrative processes (part 1.b.i in the process document), the story looked like this:

It Was the First Time in a Long Time I Had Worked by Myself

Emily: So can you tell me about your experience as an author? Maybe you can use one of the things that you're writing right now or something in the past. What's it like to be a human that's writing for the LIS literature and what that role is like for you.

Orientation

Right. That's a really good question. Most but not all of my work is collaboratively researched and written. I do and have done projects on my own, although I had a sabbatical last year, it was just six months, and I had a project for that sabbatical, and I felt like it had to be my own project or else the sabbatical wouldn't be approved. [laughs]

Abstract

It was the first time in a long time I had worked by myself.

And then what happened?

I have one colleague at [a local] college that is my long-standing research partner, and I kept sort of sending her things during the sabbatical like, "This is so weird. Can you read this over?"

Evaluation

It was a little bit weird. So I feel like I already have, [pause] I feel like there's already a lot of humans that I'm talking to, I'm already sort of working with other people as I'm doing the work.

Coda

…because there's always that nice check when you're working collaboratively with someone else. Oh Cat.

Emily: Sorry. I forgot to mention we might get a visit. That's Harvey. One of my cats.

The major difference between the raw transcript and the rearranged narrative in this example is the combination of expository information—that Nancy was on sabbatical—and positioning the evaluative information "It was a little bit weird…" after the orientation offers a reader context to understand Nancy's evaluation of her experience.

Although McCormack asks researchers to combine stories or construct stories not originally coded as such (step 1.b.iii), I quickly discovered that this sometimes confused me (and interviewees) when reading through transcripts. These stories were often constructed from parts of the conversation that did not occur sequentially, often thirty or forty-five minutes after the first part, when the participant or I would circle back to something that had been previously mentioned. In order to not confuse participants who were reviewing their transcripts and my partial analysis, I used my judgment about what which stories could be combined prior to sending transcripts to participants, and which needed to wait until after I received their feedback. In the e-mail I would explain the document formatting so as to alleviate potential confusion. Several participants mentioned that the formatting was confusing at first, but then offered that after they got into the document they could understand what was going on.

There are portions of interview transcripts that are not stories. Some interviewees will tell mostly stories, or at least most of what they say can be "storied," whereas others may spend more of their time theorizing or providing argumentation. The portions of text not in stories are theorizing, augmentation, and argumentation. In step 1.b.ii, the researcher must identify these parts of the text. My conversation with Alma is a very good example. As I got into analyzing our conversation and looking at narrative processes, I was having a hard time constructing stories from a lot of what was said, but that doesn't mean that what we were discussing wasn't worthwhile! I couldn't force what Alma was saying into a story, so I let those long sections of the transcript be, and simply coded. When I scrolled through the document later, one color kept jumping out, that dark teal greenish, my code for theorizing. In other words, Alma theorized a lot, as you can see on the image of her story document (Figure 8.1).

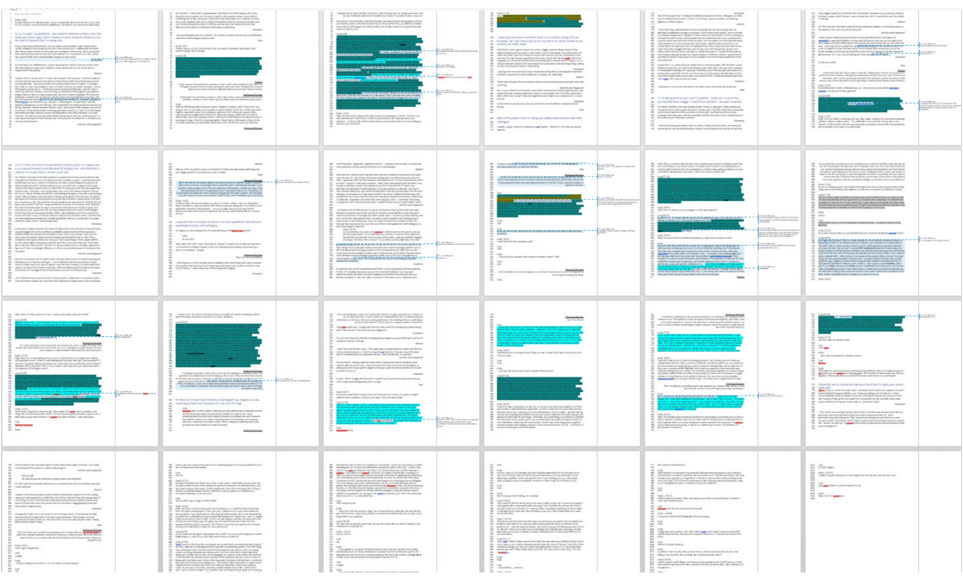

Figure 8.1.
Thumbnail view of Alma's transcripts during the analysis process. Shaded portions of text are textual portions that are coded with theorizing (the darkest shade, a dark teal), argumentation (the brightest shade, an aqua), and augmentation (the most subtle shade, a grey color).

Participant Feedback

The transcript went through various iterations. The document I first shared with participants was not a raw transcript. Rather, it was a transcript that had been actively listened to, that had portions of text reordered into more cohesive stories, and that included coding for story parts, as well as narrative processes. When I wrote to participants, I asked them the same questions that McCormack outlines in her process (step 1.c):

- Does what I have written make sense to you?
- How does this account compare with your experiences?
- Have any aspects of your experience been omitted? Please include these wherever you feel it is appropriate.
- Do you wish to remove any aspects of your experiences from this text?
- Please feel free to make any other comments.

To me these questions made sense, and I did not feel that I needed to rewrite any of them or ask additional ones. However, Bethany did ask about those questions, pointing out:

> I find the question "Have any aspects of your experience been omitted?" really interesting. Of course they have! It's a story (which always involves making choices about what to focus on to construct a narrative) based on a single conversation. I know you know that, but it just struck me as funny and worth calling out. For me, the value of reading this isn't seeing my own experience reflected perfectly, but seeing your experience of our conversation about my experience. Or rather, I experienced it primarily as a reflection of our shared experience. So even if something isn't a perfect reflection of my words and my experiences, it is a perfect reflection of something else. Sorry, digression, and not a terribly coherent one, at that.

I love this quote because it surfaces Bethany's understanding of the storying stories method. She shows how much stories can change depending on who is having the conversation and acknowledges the co-construction of meaning that occurs between interviewer and an interviewee during the conversation and as it continues throughout the feminist analysis process. We are putting meaning forth into the world for us both to reflect on.

This feedback process allows an interviewee to further reflect on our conversation. Most interviewees didn't make substantive changes. Many responded that they didn't like the way they spoke and how it translated to paper (a lot of "likes" and "ums" or false starts. In the literature this seems to be a universal response, and truthfully I edited a lot of the superfluous "likes" out, my own included). And for some, I incorporated their reactions to the first version into their final interpretive narrative. A few participants offered updates regarding events that were currently unfolding. For example, Julie's update with the status of a submitted manuscript that we read in chapter 6.

Another example of a participant's response to the partially analyzed document comes from Bethany. She responded to one of my intellectual responses.

Emily: Okay. And as an author, what have your experiences with peer review been like?

Bethany: Pretty standard, I think. I mean I've had papers accepted with good reviews; I've had papers rejected. I had something that was accepted once, with really kind of half-assed review, and I was like, "This seems strange" and now totally understand what was going on with that review. Um, but I've never had, a case where, like, "There's something going on here," or completely wrong, or nothing, nothing sort of interesting.

Emily: Do you recall any kind of emotional experience that you may have had when you were undergoing a peer-review process as an author?

Bethany: I mean the whole thing is emotional. Any time you're having somebody else read your work and comment on it, it's always going to be a very vulnerable experience. Yeah, so nothing's really jumping out, that's, I mean, "Oh yes I've had a really mean peer review," or anything [muffled]

Intellectual Response

I'm beginning to wonder if this is endemic in our profession. Although I have no evidence of it, I would say that librarians are generally conflict-averse folk. Is it that our profession isn't necessarily as cutthroat as perhaps some of the more competitive academic fields out *there? Is it that we are really a profession rather than an academic discipline? This liminal space that librarianship occupies—Are we a discipline or not? From where do we borrow theories?—how does this socially constructed piece of our profession (discipline?) manifest when it comes to culture of refereeing?*

In her review of the document, Bethany wrote:

> This suggests to me that people are holding back on criticism, but I don't think that's the case. I've had negative reviews of things I've written—they have just never been horribly uncivil, etc. Which, you would hope that people writing professional evaluations of other professionals' work would always be civil, but that's definitely not always the case in other fields. And I've come across less civil reviews in our field in my editor role, so maybe I've just been lucky in my experiences as an author.

Bethany's response to my thoughts served as an analysis check. I had no evidence to back my thoughts, and as Bethany reinforced and clarified her experience, she was able to enhance the conversation, pushing back on a thought I had with which she did not agree. This brings transparency to the analysis process, surfacing potential researcher bias, and allowing collaboration between interviewer and interviewee to co-construct meaning.

There were other instances when my intellectual curiosity was substantiated. Alma and I had reflected together on power structures, race, and gender as they relate in the peer-review process. I pondered:

Intellectual Response

I'm feeling excited that I will be able to delve into the challenges of whiteness, power, and oppression in academia based on her bringing up these issues. I have also never had someone for me make such an explicit connection to qualitative research and gender, though it is not to be unexpected if you think about it. Why,

> *then, in our field that is so female-heavy, do journals like C&RL (and referees) really care so much about quantitative data and presentation thereof? Is it also a performance of maleness that the female profession needs to take in order to be more powerful or impactful?*

Responding my intellectual response, Alma commented, "This in and of itself would be a fascinating study!"

Redraft the Story Middle

After receiving the first round of feedback from participants, I coded some more, redrafting the story middle and listening to the transcript through language. These tasks again required use of interview audio. I marked documents for pauses, equivocations, tone of voice, laughter, and other linguistic particulars. These nuances of audio complement what could have been taken out of context and misconstrued in a solely text-based analysis. Jessica's story, "I Felt Empowered. I Felt Really Proud of My Work," is a prime example. She relayed two experiences publishing peer-reviewed articles. One of the articles was published at an open access and open peer-reviewed journal, and it was her first experience undergoing peer review. After using active listening to locate the narrative processes in her words, Jessica's story appeared as follows:

I Felt Empowered. I Felt Really Proud of My Work.

Orientation

> When I was being reviewed… One was, I should mention, one was a single author experience, and the other was when I was coauthoring with someone. Again, I had just graduated from LIS school. This was the fall of my first year as a professional librarian.

Abstract

> I don't know, there's sort of different circumstances, but I can say for the first one, which was a single author, um [pause]. Yeah, like I said, I felt empowered. I felt really proud of my work.

And then what happened?

…but as a single author, that excitement or anxiety or whatever with my own… With a coauthor, you know, if we were disappointed, because we were able to share that and talk through it, and I wasn't in complete control of how the article was altered, or what changes… my peer reviewer, I think she had explicitly said in the comments, like, "I can't wait to share this with my professional community."

Evaluation

I think both experiences have been really great. Coauthoring with someone, which I think complicates emotion. I think that—as a single author, I mean—there are pros and cons to each, And just reading the comments, and feeling validated, and even though I had to make some serious structural changes in some ways [laughs]… That the core of the paper was useful.

Coda

There's this idea that someone you want to emulate to see your work as valuable.… I don't know, it was just empowering, I guess.

When taken for its pure written value, the title, "I Felt Empowered. I Felt Really Proud of My Work," is a strong statement. However, as I continued the analysis process, listening for language, specifically for "what is said, how it is said, and what is unsaid," I realized that the story title "I Felt Empowered" gives the statement more impact than its context inferred. Jessica used the word *empower*, but it was almost as if it was for lack of a better word, or as an early reader to this book manuscript offered,

> It seems like it's not so much "empowering" as it is a lack of being disempowering/oppressing/disenfranchising… "Hey, this open process is so human(e), I don't feel a loss of control/agency/power and the anxiety that comes with the closed and drawn out mystery processes that a lot of journals' peer-review processes are.

Because I was able to go through the evolution of thinking through Jessica's experiences via multiple lenses, I was able to not inflate her use of this word and to reflect on how she used it. In her final interpretive narrative, entitled "How Open Is Open? I Think This Is the Conversation We Continue to Have," Jessica's story "I Felt Empowered" and my analysis are intertwined. In my analysis I was able to acknowledge the tension between user use of the word "empower" and the meaning she was attempting to communicate. Below is an excerpt from her interpretive narrative.

> I've published two peer-reviewed articles, and both of those went through an open peer review process. So the model at one journal is essentially that you… they sort of assign an editor and they assigned an internal peer reviewer, and then you, in consultation with your editor, kind of come up with a couple names for an external peer reviewer, so someone that's maybe in the library community, maybe in the sort of broader higher education community, that would be your sort of second peer reviewer. I thought this process to be [long pause] empowering. I don't know how else to say. So I wrote an article.… That was my first peer-reviewed article that I've ever, sort of, written. And I was, you know, anxious about showing [the reviewer] the draft. I'm like, "I want her to be my [laughs] external peer reviewer, I know that she'll make this work so much better." And she didn't know me. I Twitter messaged her and she agreed to come on.… And then I sort of established a relationship with her, a professional connection, and now she continues to kind of lift up my work and enhance it. And she did make my article a lot better and I think made it stronger, made it more nuanced, and also gave me a lot of confidence. And she gave me really good feedback and really helped build my confidence and my argument and so… So anyway, I think that it was such a good experience for me that I felt like it was worth talking about and sharing that experience.

When I heard Jessica's first experience with publishing a peer-reviewed article, I was a bit surprised to hear that the word *empowering* was what she, albeit hesitantly, chose to describe it. In fact, she later used the word again.

> …my peer reviewer, I think she had explicitly said in the comments, like, "I can't wait to share this with my professional community."
>
> There's this idea that someone you want to emulate to see your work as valuable.… I don't know, it was just empowering, I guess.

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With her use of the word empowerment, I can't help but question it just a little bit. To me, the word is loaded and uniquely tied to anti-oppression work. But is that something that open peer review can really do? In Jessica's case, she used the word tenuously, not really sure it was the right word, and the tie to anti-oppression work, for her, was not present in any way that I could discern. What did stick, however, was that working with this particular peer reviewer opened Jessica's eyes to the possibilities and richness of the open process. She and the reviewer have been Twitter friends and colleagues ever since.
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The first time Jessica used the word *empower*, she preceded it with an unusually long pause and followed it with an equivocation. The second time she used the word, she concluded with, "I guess." The context of how she used the word is equally as important as the fact that it was the word. Because I noticed this as I coded for language (step 1.e.i), I was able to reflect and include language in her interpretive story that better reflected Jessica's experience. Other forms of qualitative analysis, namely paradigmatic types of analysis, may not take such nuances of language into account, and as a result, researchers might draw erroneous conclusions and, indeed, fall into the trap of changing the meaning and impact of this particular participant's experience.

Another facet of analysis that draws me to McCormack's method is her integration of feminist and critical theory. In redrafting stories McCormack asks us to view transcripts through situational and cultural contexts. With some participants, of course, seeing where they understand cultural fictions and how they resist them is easier than with others (step 1.e.iii). For instance, Cheryl's stories dripped with instances of her engaging with, theorizing, and arguing against cultural fictions. McCormack defines cultural fictions as "the dominant collectively held meanings that relate to individual experience."[10] Cheryl is a critical thinker and very reflective. When we spoke she was just a few weeks away from graduating with her MLS and had already been hired into a tenure-track academic librarian position. As you might recall, Cheryl's experience prior to attending library school was as a PhD student in English and the humanities. Her experience has enabled her to think critically, and this came out as she relayed some of her experiences as an LIS student. Her narrative is as much about becoming acculturated to LIS from her other academic background as it is about her experiences with peer review and publishing. In fact, the title of her story, "It's Just a Process That Hasn't Been Questioned in Forever, and It Needs to Be," sums up her worldview and approach of resistance and seeking to redefine herself as a librarian. You may recall the following story from a previous chapter.

> Her response to my first question uncovers that she questions not only social structures and power (class, gender, race, etc.), but also the makeup of LIS curriculum and approaches to LIS education. It is clear that she is trying to reconcile the tension between her expectations of and desire for library school to delve deeper into theory, the need for the MLS to be a practice-focused professional degree, and her past experience as a PhD student. Moreover, I quickly see that she is beginning to identify as a librarian, even though she challenges and resists what she sees as status quo in the profession.

> *Emily: So the first thing I'd like to ask about is just what is your relationship with LIS literature publishing, and how you came to that relationship.*

> Let's see. So I guess my relationship to LIS literature was preceded by a relationship to humanities literature. I did a PhD in English prior to library school and then started library school, and in my first semester I took a required research methods course. And it was like, "Oh, this is something that would have been really useful a long time ago." And so my first impression was sort of, wow, it's really crazy to think that this level of knowledge about research is just sort of presumed in the humanities often. I was kind of taking

a humanities approach to my research just as far as being interested in sort of humanities-related topics. And I did my research paper on—it was basically a lit review of librarian stereotypes in film, which was also interesting.

And I don't know if it's just the institution that I was at or if it's just that humanities people find that kind of thing oppressively dogmatic or something. And I guess I find aspects of it a little bit dogmatic, but still, as far as getting everyone on the same page and sort of leveling the playing field, it seemed really important to me to have that foundation there, so I was really glad for it.

> *Emily: You mean, in terms of dogmatic you mean just the class being dogmatic or the methods you were learning about?*

The methods and just sort of the structure of: you have your introduction and then you have your lit review and then you have your methods section. In the humanities you essentially do that; it's just not necessarily, you know, you don't have all the headings, and people like it to feel a bit more organic even though a well-researched paper *is* highly structured. So it's sort of an aesthetic issue that I think on a lot of levels is tied to class in the humanities. So I was glad to have that. Another thing that struck me in my first semester was that I know librarianship is a female-dominated profession in terms of numbers at least, but I was like, "Hey, how come 75 percent of our textbooks are written by white men?" So there seemed to be a lot of discrepancies, or I guess again it's just sort of the same hierarchies that are in 90 percent of fields, academic and otherwise. So those were the sorts of things that struck me in my first semester. But then the stuff I was coming across in LIS literature was, someone did a Myers-Briggs analysis of librarian film characters, and I was like, okay, maybe this *is* really too dogmatic. I don't necessarily know what the approach, what a more productive approach would be. So that was sort of my two worlds coming together, I guess. And so I could see pros and cons to each.

Emily: So in your subsequent classes have any of those first impressions changed about the literature as you've been required to read articles as opposed to research methods?

Yes, and I would say, so my first semester was Research Methods and then Foundations of Library and Information Science, and that was a similar demographic as far as authors. And that's been, I would say that's been strictly with textbooks. As far as articles, I think the gender balance is much more equitable. I don't know about the racial makeup. I would assume it's skewed just because librarianship is also extremely skewed as a whole. But I was also kind of, some of the research I did on my own to see okay, what's happening with queer theory and librarianship? Because again, coming from a humanities background it was like, "Okay, organizing systems. Surely we're going to read Foucault or something and talk about these issues," and we never did. Period. So again having the methods in place was helpful, but it still felt like we were never really questioning the makeup of our classes in the curriculum itself.

Emily: I wonder how much of that is just library school needs reform.

I think that's probably a lot of it. And to be fair it's a two-year program. There's only so much you can do, especially when getting people experience is such a major part of it.

To me it seems that Cheryl is putting words to the tension between the education afforded academic librarians in library school and their research and publishing requirements in academic positions. We aren't as educated in methods as people who have PhDs, and yet we are thrown into these positions where we have to publish and research. Library school has not kept up with varying needs of the broad practice-based profession, but also one that

> prepares academicians for success. I commiserate with Cheryl's experience, having experienced incongruity between my expectations for library school (stemming from my elite liberal arts undergraduate education) and the reality of a professional program.

After constructing a final draft of the narrative, going through all the steps to look at narrative processes, language, and context, I completed a narrative draft. I then sent these drafts back to participants for another round of input. Usually changes and comments on these documents were minimal. Some participants had more updates to share, such as an article they had reviewed that still hadn't been published or an acceptance or publication that had occurred since the last time they reviewed their interpretive narrative. Any comments they made in this regard were incorporated into the final interpretive story. Lastly, of the method I will say that in my process I did not conduct multiple interviews, so I did not move into Stage 2 of storying stories.

CHALLENGES

I was new to storying stories, so the challenges I encountered in the process were partially those that any researcher would have (imposter syndrome, feeling overwhelmed, keeping the research question and inquiry appropriately scoped, etc.), but some challenges were born of my nascent experience with the method. Over time I was able to ameliorate most challenges as I developed a deeper understanding of the process, and yet some remained. The first challenge that I noticed in analyzing conversations was how to tell if something was a story or not. This got easier with time, and I would agonize less as I analyzed transcripts to make those decisions. As I continued with the project, my experience constructing stories helped me feel more secure in my decisions. But in the end I realize that I did stick to the functional story definition: a story has a plot with a beginning, a middle, and an end.*

An additional challenge was considering how to include theorizing and argumentation into the interpretive story. When I made deliberate decisions to not delve deeply into theorizing or argumentation, it was guided by my research question. Did doing so serve my research purpose? The answer was different

* McCormack does point out that some stories in some cultures are not thusly constructed. "While each of the interpretive stories is written within the structure of the traditional Western narrative (beginning, middle and end held together by a plot) I recognize that not all stories and not all people construct their lives (and stories) in this way." (McCormack, "Storying Stories," 234.)

in each situation, as with each participant we were together uncovering new knowledge and developing an interpretive story. Bringing myself back to the research questions also aided me in the demand to keep myself in the role of researcher throughout the process. How was I to separate myself enough to allow a participant's experience shine through without being clouded by my own experiences and reflections? How would I keep my experience and my thoughts constructive in the analysis process so that the story still belongs to the individual who experienced it? In addition to remaining true to the research questions set out, my continual reflexivity assisted in this.

Other challenges I confronted were not in my control. Some participants could not fully engage in the analysis process, something I anticipated happening at the outset of the project. Two of the ten participants were able to complete the interviews but could not assist in deeper development or commenting on analysis and interpretive story drafts. In this case I can use partial knowledge, based on our conversations, but I cannot hope to gain knowledge from a back-and-forth review of how my interpretation of their experiences aligns with their recollections and meanings. In instances where I have used their stories in this book, I did my best to represent them and my analysis. And, where warranted, I have communicated with them to review and edit excerpts from their stories that may be more personal in nature.

And finally, what I see as the biggest task is how can I share these individual interpretive narratives with a wider audience so that we may all learn from them? One of the pitfalls of using this method is that it is hard for me to share the wholesale interpretive narrative with people aside from myself and the interviewee (Stuart aside). There is a lot to glean from the separate interpretive narratives. However, the tension of this backyard study means that many participants aren't comfortable being personally identifiable, because doing so may be a risk for them. In their roles as editors, authors, tenure-track faculty members, and so on, there may be a lot at stake in their professional lives if some of the nuanced or more sensitive stories were made public. While I can understand and know each person's experience, my representation of those experiences in this book is not complete. While I attempt to provide nuance and detail, I must, in order to act as an ethical researcher, change names, omit references to other people, fictionalize certain events, and delete references to explicitly identifiable journal publications, professional associations, and so on. In some instances the most fascinating stories simply cannot be shared.

CONCLUSION

As I have iterated and reiterated, my aim with this project has been to gather and share stories. We are all the experts only on our own stories, but by sharing our own we enable others to reflect on theirs. Maybe, in turn, they will be moved to share theirs, too. In parts I have shared my own story as author, editor, and researcher. The way we approach our research, the communities in which we exist, and the communities with which we want to learn are as important as what it is that we *do* learn. Storying stories offers us a process via which we are able to examine human experience in collaboration with its experts: those who are sharing theirs. It enables us to intertwine our library values of collaboration and humanism with learning, and learning with our values.

NOTES

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Chapter 9

I Just Feel Like This Makes Sense to Me:

Stuart's Story*

This chapter presents Stuart's interpretive narrative in whole. It is the culminating document from our conversation that underwent the storying stories process. I am hugely grateful to Stuart for sharing their entire interpretive narrative in this book, and for sharing authorship of this chapter. The fonts and formatting for this interpretive narrative match the fonts and formatting used in previous chapters.

ORIENTATION

> The day that I speak with Stuart, I'm in my new home office. I haven't yet become accustomed to my new desk or setup; we've only lived in this house for a month, and my sabbatical has just started a week prior. Stuart is the first person I'm interviewing since my sabbatical started, and my thoughts are generally preoccupied with my expectations of the coming year, unpacking the house, and my new life with my partner and their kids. The cats aren't yet comfortable in the house, so my usual feline work interruptions—inquisitive meows, a cat

* This interpretive narrative was written with Stuart Lawson.

preferring the spot on the desk in front of the computer monitor, or having my legs fall asleep from sleeping lap cat—are absent.

Stuart and I have never met. They are a doctoral student in the UK working on a dissertation regarding open access policies. Stuart is also an editor at the *Journal of Radical Librarianship*, one of the few journals in LIS that offers an open peer-review process for authors.

For Stuart it is evening. In Portland I am just beginning my day, and I'm sipping on my coffee throughout our conversation. Perhaps because of distance and a resulting lagging internet connection, there is a bit of an echo and lapse in terms of audio during our conversation. I find myself speaking more slowly than I otherwise would. To me that seems a good thing because I quickly notice that Stuart takes time to think about my questions before responding. Whatever the case, I'm still refining the art of interviewing, and because I have never before interacted with Stuart, I'm nervous. My excitement to hear their story, learn from them, and collaborate with them in order to create some meaning and gain new knowledge, leads me to, at times, interrupt Stuart. I catch myself the first time, and throughout our conversation I'm working hard to delay my responses until they've finished their thoughts. Perhaps it is because I see such parallels in our experiences—we have both been immersed in founding journals and we both have a socialist and anti-capitalist bent to our worldviews. I'm eager to hear more about Stuart's approach to open.

OUR CONVERSATION

The general first question of my interview offers Stuart an opportunity to summarize their experience. It's an opportunity for me to get a sense of them, their path to where they are now and what has formed their worldviews in terms of writing and publishing in LIS. One of the first things I notice about Stuart is that they are a bit shy and reserved. They've agreed to chat with me, a complete stranger to them. When asked why they decided to participate, they respond:

> It's interesting, I just want to encourage anyone who's actually doing kind of tons of rigorous research about openness because there's not enough of it. As you probably know, I'm doing my PhD about open access policy at the moment, and there's still so little research about so many of the really important areas, so anything to encourage more of that is… Yeah, it's interesting because I think my experience with peer review, the way I've come into it, is probably very different than most people's, and the way we do things at the journal is probably a bit different to other people as well.

As we dive in and Stuart begins to formulate and articulate their relationship with LIS publishing, it becomes clear to me that they are immersed not only in scholarship about open, but also in the open movement. Their use of jargon, distinction between kinds of OA (open access) publishing, and discussion of new publication formats such as data articles, points to how involved they are and have been in open.

> Well, I'm a reader and an editor, and pretty much all of those things you listed. I initially started, so in 2011, I started working in the library and doing a master's in information

studies. So it's the equivalent to MLIS, is that what you call it? And so that's when I first got started in libraries and thinking about open access. I guess it was a couple of years after graduating when I first actually published something myself in a journal. So that was 2014, was the first thing I published, which was actually a data article in a gold open access journal with post-publication peer review. That was my first experience of [laughs] publishing. And then about a year or so after that, we started getting started with the *Journal of Radical Librarianship* on our side. In terms of my first actual experiences of writing and reviewing, the first one came—well, actually I did attempt to write a journal article based on my master's thesis, and that got rejected from a couple of places because they said it just seemed too much like a cut-down version of the master's thesis turned into an article. But then after that it was this data article in *F1000*. That was my first experience of authoring and being reviewed.

> *Emily: That's kind of a radical first experience, I think, if you're publishing in F1000.*

[laughs] Yeah. So that was, again, it just seemed like a very logical thing for what we were doing with that article as well. Because this was an article on a collected data set on some freedom of information requests [FOI] to universities to find out how much they were spending on journal subscriptions. We sent these FOIs to every university in the UK and had this massive data set to find out how much everyone was spending on the subscription journals. And then this was a data article about that data set.

> *Emily: Okay. But from then your relationship with publishing and writing has just continued, correct?*

Yeah. So between—I guess because there was a few published within about a year or so of that being published. I published a few other articles as well and then started up with the *Journal of Radical Librarianship*. So what's next? I think *JLSC* was the next journal that I published with. So

> I guess that was my first experience of a more thorough [laughs] peer review where I actually had a lot of comments and we had to make a lot of the changes. I guess that's kind of the general narrative of when I got into different things.

I notice that Stuart likes to get the facts straight. They don't want to omit anything from their time line of experience, but as we all do with memory, they work to sort out the order. This manner of speaking and listening to Stuart reconstruct their memories continues throughout our conversation.

As we continue to discuss Stuart's experiences as an author, it becomes clear to me that they approach their work uniquely. Stuart is not caught up in the publish-or-perish game of academia. They are working toward their PhD because they want to, because they interested, because they are good at thinking and writing. They are, in essence, challenging the traditional narrative of the academy. (After having worked to achieve tenure at my institution, which included making some sacrifices of my publishing and writing ideals in order to placate administrative concerns regarding my scholarly agenda and publishing venues, I think Stuart's approach sounds incredibly freeing.) During review of the narrative, Stuart added, "It's also extremely low-stress, because I have no external pressure, only my own motivation (and I try to be kind to myself)."

As they describe their first experience publishing a data article in *F1000Research*, they admit, "It was a bit like an academic exercise in school."

> I don't know, I guess I just treated it a bit like—because it was—because data articles, I don't know what, it was like a thousand words or something, so I just literally wrote down what we did. It was a bit like an academic exercise in school. Because I didn't have to engage with any real—there wasn't any analysis in there, it was very much just a description of the data and how we got the data. So the writing of that was, I don't know, just very straightforward.…
>
> > *Emily: And do you think that's because it was a data article where it just kind of presented the data as it was versus doing any analysis?*
>
> I imagine so, though I have a few times—because there's quite a few articles on *F1000* on similar open topics, and so I read a few on there and had a look at the reviewer reports, and a lot of those were actually very similar like just saying, "Oh, here's a couple of points, but it's generally fine." I don't know.
>
> …I don't remember, I think the reason we submitted there was because I just tweeted something saying I'm going to write this up, and then the person who works *F1000* says, "Oh, you should submit here because there's no APCs [article processing charges]," well, there wasn't at the time when I submitted it there. So that's what I get. Yeah, and the fact that it was just really quick, like it comes online within a couple of days and then the reviews were—I can't remember. It was a very quick process because the review was not very rigorous at all; they were very short. They're basically just saying, "Yeah, this is fine." Tick. [laughs]… I wouldn't consider submitting there again.…

Hearing that Stuart would not again submit to *F1000Research* interests me. It has the most transparent review and publishing processes that I know of, so for someone whom I would call an open activist to not want to again participate in such a transparent process strikes me as notable. In their experience the reviews there weren't necessarily useful.…

> Also, they're a for-profit, and now I'd only choose to publish with a not-for-profit publisher. It concerns me that all the funders who are launching journal platforms are paying *F1000* to do it, rather than contributing to a publicly funded infrastructure.

What needs to change at that journal to improve authors' and referees' experiences? Hearing this I relate to Stuart my own frustrating experiences publishing with and refereeing at *F1000Research*:

> *Emily: Yeah. I've also published with F1000… and I had an interesting review experience there as well. One of the reviewers took a really long time to get back and submit their review, and by the time I had a review from them I was two hours away from submitting my changes, so I just ignored that last reviewer's comments and just submitted my changes anyway. The article that I published there, you know, it's definitely not my best work, but it's published and it's there. And being someone who was, at the time, on the tenure track and writing about open peer review and these other systems of peer-review processes, it would make sense for me to publish in a place that had an open peer-review process. But, yeah, I've had some interesting experiences there. And then I've been a reviewer for an article on F1000Research, which I found interesting as well because I feel like some of the other reviewers, like it was a little, I feel like there was so much utopian determinism to get this article that I reviewed out of there. It's a great piece of work, but I also felt like in that process I was the lone social scientist voice and it got a little obfuscated, I guess, in that. But I don't know if any of those experiences are really just F1000 or if it's just peer review in general, you know.*

> I do wonder what it's like to be able to, because it's when—so *F1000*, other times when I've seen very, very short reports come in written by others, and it's been from—it's not been from humanities scholars, they don't give you a one-sentence review. [laughs]

Stuart doesn't explicitly call out STEM disciplines for having some bad reviewers, but to me it is implied that short reviews in STEM aren't all that useful. On the other hand, Stuart doesn't necessarily equate the length of humanities scholars' long reviews with being good either.

We move on to talk about more of Stuart's experiences as an author. I ask about Stuart's authorial identity, what the role feels like for them. Again, Stuart mentions their lack of ambition for a professorial career, but rather that they are merely interested in open and seem to be good at writing and publishing. They see their role as a researcher and writer as that of contributor, putting out things that haven't yet been written. On some level, it seems to be that Stuart sees themselves as fulfilling a necessary role in a conversation and toward the production and dissemination of knowledge.

> I don't know because I have no interest in a normal academic career, I'm not going to try and become a professor or whatever, and I've never had that intention, so I've always been doing it for my own interest primarily. And I guess I found from originally doing the master's and then trying to write some other journal articles, realizing that, "Oh, this is kind of something I can do and it's quite interesting," and, yeah, I guess it's this thing of, well, the stuff I want to read about, there's not enough interesting stuff being written, so if I do some of it then there will be. [laughs] But, yeah, I guess doing the thesis is such an all-encompassing thing. I haven't

tried to, like, I haven't written journal articles based on it yet, and I don't know if I will, just because I don't want to write the same thing twice.

In addition to their first publication at *F1000Research*, Stuart has also published articles in more traditional open access journals. They relay an interesting story about how they and their coauthors came to publish in *Journal of Librarianship and Scholarly Communication (JLSC)*.

Emily: You mentioned that your second article publication was with JLSC and that felt like a much more traditional review experience. Can you talk about that?

It was. I've published seven peer-reviewed articles, and only two of them have been more traditional, kind of 10,000-word multiauthored pieces that went through quite a rigorous intense review thing, and this was one of them. So the first one, again, it was coauthored with two other people who also happen to be, who later became editors of the journal, the *Journal of Radical Librarianship,* as well. So people I knew through that. And again, I'm pretty sure we literally started a Twitter conversation where there was one person saying, "I should write this," and the others saying, "Yeah, we'll pitch in a bit, we'll write some of that." And I don't know who initially suggested submitting it to that journal, but it just kind of made sense. The process—oh, we did first submit it to a different journal, but they rejected it without reading it because the license that we were asking for they wouldn't do. They wouldn't accept a CC-BY [Creative Commons Attribution] license.

Emily: They wouldn't even negotiate with you?

No. So it's a journal which is run by a Marxist who has very particular views about licensing, and so they were insisting on a CC BY-NC-ND [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives] license because that's the only way to stop your labor being reappropriated by capital and later exploited.

Yeah. They were very much, "No, this is our policy. We will not change it." So after that we submitted to *JLSC*. The review process, I seem to remember we had two long reviews, they both had a lot of suggestions. One of them was very critical. Neither of them were rejecting it, but this one was saying this needs these massive changes, some of which were justified, [laughs] but again this article, I wasn't, I basically wrote one section of it, which is like twenty percent of it. I wrote this one bit, and most of the theoretical stuff in there, which was being criticized, was written by someone else, so I didn't actually do much revision at all. But the others did a lot of work on revising it.

> *Emily: So your coauthors, in the revising of it, when you said that you didn't feel like some of the revisions they asked for were justified, did they end up making all of the revisions, or did they push back on some of the suggestions?*

They pushed back. I have never accepted all those peer revisions in everything that I've published, I think, because they are so often, there's things that they have just misunderstood and their suggestion doesn't make sense for whatever reason and the editors have always just agreed with it. As long as you can kind of justify it, I find, I don't know, it's kind of roughly like 50-50 with revisions where they think, "Oh yeah, that's actually a really useful point that I can use to make it better," or I think, "No, I think you've misunderstood." Sometimes if they've misunderstood, it does mean that you just need to tweak the wording to make it clearer and that can still be valuable. I always found all editors to be pretty flexible with that as long as you can justify it.

In this story I see challenge and resistance, even to those with a similar worldview and approach toward publishing. A self-professed anti-capitalist and socialist (to say nothing of Stuart's coauthors) comes into conflict with an individual who publishes toward the same aim. I myself had this conversation about CC licenses with colleagues at *Lead Pipe*, and it was Hugh's thinking[1] that assured me that licenses with fewer restrictions would be better in the long run. In this story Stuart and their coauthors resist and stay true to the version of open that they believe in.

Our conversation continues to discuss other authoring experiences.

Emily: Yeah. Yeah. So you said that of all your articles, only two or so had been at traditional journals. Were they both at JLSC, or was there another journal that you were publishing with?

No. So it's an article I wrote for *Open Library of Humanities,* and that was the other one. That was also a coauthored one, but I was the lead author for that one. And again, I think the journal had just launched and my PhD supervisor is the person that runs *Open Library of Humanities*.… So I published with them, with *Open Library of Humanities,* and the review process was, it was interesting; it was quick. So two reviewers, one of whom signed their review, and again it was a friend [laughs]—someone that I know, of course. And the second one, I don't actually know who it was; I couldn't tell. They wouldn't say. They must have known who I was, I think. I guess I got that sense from the comments, but again because we've been very publicly pushing the preprint of the article before submitting it.… And again, that process [at *Open Library of Humanities*] was actually, I guess, fairly similar to the *JLSC* in that within a fairly short space of time we got two substantive reviews. They were a lot more, I don't know, what's the word? "Kind" is not the word, but

> they were very respectful of the work, which was good. And they suggested a bunch of changes, quite a lot of which we made. It was very quick publishing with them.

In this experience with peer review at *Open Library of Humanities*, Stuart relays the experience of opaque review as a flawed construct. Their referees could tell whose work they were reviewing. The community of open scholars, at least in Stuart's experience, is small.

Although Stuart was forthcoming with the time line of their experience and their experience relates some of the issues with blind review, I struggled to get a glimpse into their emotional experience. But as we continued to chat, it became clear that for them the emotional portion of their experience publishing isn't all-encompassing. It takes a while for Stuart to formulate their thoughts. They take the time to think, and still their response theorizes that they don't currently see this work as an emotional experience, but simply as their role as contributor to knowledge and research about open and being a player in the open movement.

> [pause] I don't know, I guess there's… [pause] I think it's different now to how it was the first couple of times when I was submitting, in the process of actually finishing and submitting something to a journal felt like a big deal. But now because everything that I write I just put online before it gets submitted anywhere else, so I feel like when I do that it's like it's out in the world at that point anyway. So just finishing a piece of writing is, again, I get a lot of satisfaction out of it. So finishing the thesis hopefully will be even more of that. But in terms of the actual formal publication bit of it is more, I don't know, I don't feel very emotionally engaged with that, it's always like, it's nice to have stuff on a nice journal's website, but I don't know, I feel like it's not the most import-

> ant thing. It's just kind of getting stuff, getting your thoughts down in a way that I'm happy with myself and putting it out in the world is more important.

Stuart views their work and their engagement as the way things should be; it's what they are meant to do. Instead of being as emotionally invested in the process as they were at the beginning, they explain, doing the work and putting it online to get it out there is more of what makes sense to them in the long run.

In my initial analysis and reflection on Stuart's response, I attributed this emotional position to their understanding of their position in the academy. They, in their approach, have liberated themselves from the emotional chains of the academic reward system. I reflected:

Intellectual Response

I'm wondering if the separation here from the emotional experience of publishing and writing is that, for Stuart, it is not part of the same reward system. They don't want to be an academic, as they said earlier. They are researching and writing this dissertation because it is interesting and fulfilling. The fact that Stuart is not participating in the traditional reward structure may afford them the ability to not have as much emotional attachment to the traditional scholarly publishing system when it comes to their own experiences.

Upon reading my thoughts, Stuart noncommittally responded, "That may very well be true!"

In fact, there are times when Stuart comes across to me as a bit nihilistic about formal peer review in general. For them, it just isn't as important as getting the work out there. When I ask if they had any hesitation about being reviewed openly at *F1000Research*, they respond as if it were a nonissue.

> I kind of don't remember about that. I assume—the stuff that I write now, there's such a small pool of reviewers and whoever's reviewing my stuff now I'm probably friends with on Twitter and they've seen me post about it [muffled] and they've seen it already.
>
> > *Emily: Right. Like the blind review is moot, it just isn't—yeah, there's no point in blinding it if they know who you are anyway.*
>
> Yeah. Exactly. They're going to know anyway.
>
> More recently I've been seeing people being wary of open review because of the power dynamics between people. I guess that's always been kind of the criticism of every form of review, whether open or closed or single-blind or double-blind or whatever, there's always—none of them get a perfect balance between the power dynamics between older and early-career researchers or with them having much more difficult times reviewing. I hear so many stories, but from every different version of review. If they're all bad, you might as well just make it open. [laughs]

Stuart's take, simply, is that closed review just doesn't make sense.

Although Stuart mentions the issue of power dynamics between early-career researchers and more established researchers in the peer-review process, I'm not fully convinced that's the only power dynamic at hand in peer review. I challenge their notion a bit, without going deeply into a discussion regarding patriarchy or identity politics involving gender, racism, and classism. Not that this is how Stuart views it, simply as this dynamic, but it is simply not something either of us bring up in the moment. Instead, I offer the idea that perhaps open peer review can elucidate when power dynamics come into play, and that perhaps having power dynamics out in the open isn't as insidious as it is in opaque review processes.

> *Emily: Don't you think that—I mean, I guess I feel that in open peer review, at least the power dynamic is overt, and with an overt power dynamic at least there's some more accountability for that? I guess that's always been my take, and I realize that there's always going to be a power dynamic, we live with a society almost around the entire world, I think, that has power structures, and especially in academia or in professional publishing there's always going to be power, it might as well surface the problems with that power instead of hide it. I don't know, that's just kind of my take.*

Yeah, that makes sense.

> *Emily: Do you feel like people disagree with that on the power?*

Yeah. I guess it does come down to the fact that most articles are in such a niche area that it is very likely that you will know other people. If you know there are people that you're not comfortable seeing your name and reviewing your own work, then that's… the thing is, I generally do agree with you that making this stuff visible so it's clear exactly like what is going on in terms of different power dynamics. I don't know, it just feels like a more honest thing.

Stuart's response, again, solidifies their take. Open review is "more honest." It just makes sense to them.

This idea of sensemaking is evident in their approach to sharing their work. Stuart always shares their work with others, even if they are going to submit to a journal. In fact, they've posted all drafts of their dissertation to the web, making their work open and available, just to get the ideas and the contributions out there. The high value Stuart places on this becomes evident as they discuss the publication of their data articles.

Emily: So, how did those experiences compare to your experiences publishing what you're considering to be nontraditional journals?

Okay. So I've published two data articles, the *F1000,* one with *Journal of Open Humanities* later, and that that one, again, that was even kind of similar because they have a very structured template that you just write your description of the data set into. So that took no time at all. And there was a review process, which was just someone checking what we had written was what was true about the data set. It was like this kind of soundness checking the article. And so that was, again, very quick. They basically said, oh yeah, we're sending out the review and they said it's fine so we'll publish it.

So I published a couple of articles that were in more traditional journals, but they were shorter and I think they were published as opinion pieces rather than research articles. So they were peer-reviewed by two people currently. I never actually saw the reports. With the more in-depth reviews where people do properly engage with it and do analysis of it and try to suggest ways of making it better, I do find it's a valuable thing, but the amount that changes out of it is, you change maybe three percent of the text and that's as much as it ever is. And I don't know, I still feel like peer review is an important thing, but I feel like this is why I like just putting stuff out as a preprint beforehand, because this is the work really, and the review process is a kind of useful accreditation process, and if it's a conversation, that can be a useful thing, but to me it's always been a secondary thing compared to just finishing work and putting it online.

Stuart's response got me thinking.

Intellectual Response

Here in the example of the F1000 data article, when Stuart says that there wasn't much of a conversation, is this a failing of open peer review? If viewed from my lens, where open peer review allows more robust scholarly conversations and a deepening of curiosity and knowledge, are the times when there isn't robust conversation, is that considered a failure?

So what I'm seeing here as a description of peer review with data articles is that the purpose of the peer review for these kinds of articles is simply different. It is serving a different, or perhaps just a truncated role. They are soundness checking method and the data, but not dealing with literature reviews or discussions and conclusions. Should it be called peer review? It is peers, but how can we discriminate between different purposes of peer review for different articles? Or do we even need to distinguish them? Perhaps for referees and authors we do, but if we did that would it bleed into promotion and tenure processes? Would it then be regarded as less worthy from these committees? So much about perceptions of peer review for many people is determined by their academic culture particularly related to the promotion and tenure processes.

Stuart mentions that peer review can just serve as an accreditation process, and for these data articles I agree. But I'm wondering if, as Stuart says, it's the conversation that's useful, if we need to be using formal open peer-review processes for this, or would informal processes *and open discussion/conversation on preprint servers suffice? (Certainly not for those who need to meet promotion standards at most places.) If we are looking idealistically, should we just rip up everything we know about peer review, get rid of the term, and just embrace the conversation and the contributions of individuals and collectives to our growing body of knowledge? I want to say yes. But I also fear that this is a fantasy.*

Stuart has also engaged in peer review as a referee. Their experiences in refereeing have mirrored their experiences as an author. In several instances when they have formally refereed works, they personally knew the authors.

> I've not been asked many times at all. I think I've been asked five times, and I've done three of them because the other two were for commercial publishers so I said no. Actually, two of them were for the same journal, *Publications*, an MDPI journal. So both of the articles that I reviewed there I have personally known who the authors are because, again, I'm asked to review such specific things that are related to exactly what I've published. It was after I published an article with them and so I went through it as an author and I reviewed two different articles since then for them. The first one of which I came through as a blinded, a closed review, just from reading the abstract I know exactly who has written this because I got to talk to them and commented on an early draft of this article.…
>
> So this first one that I reviewed, again, it was just nice, it's obviously something that should be published. It's good, there's a few little tweaks that should be made so I would just suggest publishing with a few corrections. And again, I think—I can't remember what the other—I did see the other reviewer reports because there were three people. And the second article I reviewed for them had four different reviewers. I don't know why, but they went for four.

Emily: Did you disagree or agree with the other reports that you read?

So of that first one, I can't really remember, but the second one was very recently, it was last month, this is the one that had four different, so three other reports as well, and all of them were fairly short, fairly concise. But there was one of them that suggested, that said it needs major changes, which I disagreed with entirely. [laughs] I think I suggested none at all; it was just fine. And this one came through as a single-blind one, so I knew the names of the authors, but they didn't know the names of the reviewers. But it shows that they have picked well who they were going to pick as reviewers because I did really know that area, that very specific area [for the first one]. They just said—I find it such an interesting publication in that I think my experience as an author and a reviewer and other stuff that I read in that journal, it all seems good, it's fine, there's no problems with it, but the editorial approach is very hands-off. They just kind of—it does just seem like they get some reviewers and then pass those reports on to the author and get them to make the changes. It's not a very—I don't know, I guess just compared to how I work as an editor, which is a much more collaborative thing, it's much more of a conversation.… So it's interesting to read other people's reports of the same article because they're obviously all different.… I'm not sure why it was different this time around. Maybe they changed their policy. I don't know who the other reviewers were, but—I don't know—everyone picked up on slightly different things.

To me, Stuart's report of their experience at *Publications* is what should happen with peer review. Reviewers pick up different things, and the collective of responses enable authors to build and publish a stronger piece of work.

In this story we also see that Stuart's referee experiences allow them to reflect on their identity as a founder of and editor at *Journal of Radical Librarianship*. The story of that journal greatly interests me, and I come to discover that it mirrors my own experience starting an open access LIS journal. When Stuart told me about it, I was so eager to hear their experience and see how it was much similar, yet still distinct from my own.

> *Emily: So can you tell me, so you started Journal of Radical Librarianship, why, what drove you to do that and what's the story behind it?*

> So initially it came out of conversations within the Radical Librarians Collective and particularly one—this is a yearly national meeting, one in London in 2014, I think. Yeah, 2014. And it was just kind of an idea of—I'm pretty sure someone else had—of "Should we do some publishing?" because no one at the time, there were so few outlets for writing, particularly kind of research about library-related topics from radical perspectives. So we just set up a journal. Initially, and then a little while later there was just a big Twitter conversation with a few people saying we could just do this right? But within a day we had a website and [laughs] a lot of people that were involved just kind of, yeah, we did it. Because of OJS software, it was, like, well, we know someone who can install that and just buy some server space and then we have a journal.… We initially tried to make the initial decisions with consensus decision-making. And we kind of did, in terms of what the policies were going to be so what the peer-review policy would be or what licenses we got, but it's just everyone who was involved in that conversation so, kind of a big Twitter chat. [muffled]… and then there were some Google Docs were set up, so maybe twenty or thirty people kind of contributing in some way. And then we set up this, what was the name of that? One of these online kind of consensus decision-making things. Loomio, that's the one.

As Stuart relates this story, it is not just their seeing a need to start a journal, but trying to use consensus decision-making and using radical collective processes that rings true from my own experience. First, at *In the Library with the Lead Pipe*, we used consensus decision-making from the beginning as we worked to establish the journal. Once we even attempted to utilize Loomio. I also wrote an article investigating consensus decision-making and its possibilities for libraries.[2] Because of this relation to Stuart's story, I'm hanging on to every word. They continued.

> Which, that kind of petered out, but in the initial week of just starting everything was just done like that, but a lot of it consisted of me starting an element of saying, "Okay, should this be the policy?" and starting to write something, and then other people would just like pitch in and changing things a bit. And then, yeah, then we had the journal. Like the structure of the journal, yeah, it's literally there are about seven people at the beginning who said, "I'll be an editor," and then we were the editors. And then about a year later I just put out a call on a mailing list, does anybody else want to be? And everyone who said, "Yes, I would like to be an editor" is being an editor. There's currently about fifteen people. But for a journal with very low output of articles, it just means that I don't have to actually do the editorial thing of managing the peer-review process for everything that gets submitted, there's just someone else who will take on responsibilities for that article. And a lot of the policies and decisions about the journal is—initially we tried to make it, because this is a very haphazard thing, Radical Librarians Collective is a loosely vaguely anarchist collective of people, there's no official ways to doing things.
>
> > *Emily: It sounds like, to me, you organized a lot of it at the time, but it was definitely a collaborative effort. Do you still feel like you're kind of a managing editor in that kind of role, or is it more anarchist than that?*
>
> Basically it's, I really wanted it to happen, so whenever someone else wasn't doing something, I was like, "I'll do it."

With that initial thing because I'd been thinking a lot about journal policies and how different journals have their policies about what and how they publish. So that's why in that initial thing we were able to do things quite quickly. So it's like, "Okay, I know there's another journal that has a good peer-review policy on their open journal system thing" and I'll just ask them if I can just copy that, and they'll say yes. And that's kind of how we started at the beginning. So most of the text that's on our website, all that stuff is probably copied from other places. And as well, since then actually the only reason I'm an editor, so I don't have a different title to the other editors, but I'm the person who, when things get submitted, it comes in to me first and then out to other people. So again, it's just because there has to be someone doing that, and if anyone else ever says they would like to do it then that would be fine. [laughs] So it's literally just like to try and keep it going.

What strikes me in this story, aside from the parallels to my own experience, is the way Stuart has formed relationships and participates in anarchist or radical communities. They use Twitter. And not just in the instance of creating the journal, but also in other examples of their writing and publishing experiences. They put ideas out there or respond to others' ideas by way of Twitter. It is seemingly immediate. Ideas are hatched and acted upon.

Emily: What was it like getting that first article that you published out in Journal of Radical Librarianship? Is there a story behind it? I mean, obviously was it something that was submitted by somebody or how did that go? And did that go through an open peer-review process as well?

No. Yeah, it's interesting, our journal policy is, it depends what everyone wants to do at the time. So I think there's only been one that's had, I think, like full open review as in both the author and the reviewers have all known who each other were, because one of our articles was submitted and the authors said, yeah, this is such a personal one, we're in the article so much, we can't be anonymous, so we got reviewers that were fine with that. I don't think [pause]—I'm trying to think because I've only actually been the editor for one of the journals managing the review process, sorry, for one of the articles that's been published and that is an open one.

Yeah, I remember now. So that's one that's still, it's been like a year and a half because they have been revising it and then they've moved house. No, sorry, that was another one that's not been published, but it was someone that I just asked them, "Are you happy with doing it as an open review?" and they said, "Yeah, sure," and both the reviewers were as well. In a way it was kind of just a relief because it had been going for quite a while. [laughs] So it's nice just to actually get past that barrier [of publishing the first article]. And again, it was something which was a very political article that would not have been published I think in any other British library journal, they just wouldn't want it. It would have to be something different. So yeah.… I don't know, I just feel like this [open peer review] makes sense to me a lot of it. I do understand why some people are hesitant about it.

In their role as an editor and publisher, Stuart's aim is the same as with their own authorship. They just want to get ideas out into the world that aren't already there.

Emily: Okay. So you also serve in many other roles related to publishing, I mean, if you could even distinguish between them, you're also an editor, a founding editor, you've also been a referee, you're also a publisher, so could you talk about any of those roles and what that's like and how you came to them and then what those experiences have been like for you?

> I guess as an editor/publisher it's been, I guess the thing is a similar kind of thing, I guess, in that just getting stuff out in the world that I think is valuable and that people should read is a nice feeling. And with the journal, although we don't publish very much at all, it's been like two or three articles a year of peer-reviewed articles, but each one is, I know exactly how much work has gone into it and I know what the process has been like for the author, and a few of them at least I feel like this is actually quite important, they're saying something important that is not otherwise being said. I guess, I mean that's the entire point of the journal being there is that hopefully there are things that are not being said that can be said through this journal, and I think that's why I said, we've got a forthcoming special issue about race and power,[3] which, again, I'm not involved at all in the content side of that. There's some other people sort of taking care of the editorial stuff of that and the review process. But again, it's just trying to generate more conversation and more writing in these areas that I think are important and get more stuff out there is, I guess I mean that's what the journal is there for.

To me that is the heart of why we create, engage in, and perpetuate scholarly conversations. One of the ways that we do this is to start journals. Scholarly societies did this, and now more DIY approaches have the ability to do so with the ease of online publishing. This purpose is, in my view (and Stuart affirmed during narrative review, in theirs, too), in direct opposition to why proprietary publishers start journals. Certainly there is some nuance for proprietarily published journals, but the bottom line at for-profit publishers is the building of capital. Generating discourse may be something they say they want, but if that generation of discourse doesn't also generate money, they aren't interested.

Stuart's entire approach reflects this anti-capital paradigm. Stuart resists that cultural narrative, the cultural and market narrative of capitalism; this resistance frames their work. Stuart always makes their work open. They publish only with OA publications. They will not review for non-OA publications. When I ask what more they do, they relate a story that captures, for me, the essence of their worldview and their engagement with open.

> I don't have a lot of stuff—I guess, talking at conferences about this stuff and trying to—it depends on what the audience values, whether [laughs] what you say is actually going to introduce anyone to new ideas. So I actually gave a talk to a bunch of early-career scientists which is just called "Against Capital."[4] [laughs] And just talking about that element of it, talking about publishing as an industry and how messed up it is. It was just really interesting to get feedback from people saying, "I've not heard people talk about it in this way. I'm just told that you have to go publish in this Elsevier journal for your career." I do find the one thing that I found interesting was, my initial interest in this was coming from a radical left-wing perspective, so I'm not interested in openness in terms of doing better science or better research and it speeds everything up, all that stuff just doesn't really interest me. Not that it's not important, but it's just not really what the thing that matters most. My interest has always been in socialism and the end of capitalism, and that has always been kind of coming at it from that angle. And again, getting people to think more critically about that process is always valuable I think.

And I press Stuart for more information about neoliberalism and anti-capitalism in higher education in the UK.

> *Emily: Do you think that, I'm not as familiar with the UK on the research paradigm for early-career researchers in the UK as I am in the United States, obviously, because my education has all been in the United States, but I do understand there are policies*

> *in the UK that are much more supportive of open access than in the United States, so would there be a separation there or do you feel like early-career researchers in the UK are more positioned to accept socialism or anti-capital or anti-oppression work versus—I don't know, I guess I'm just curious if you have any sense about that.*

I'm really not sure. I don't know anyone who has been through the higher education process in the UK within the last, kind of, ten years or so at whatever stage is obviously… [pause] what was I trying to say? [pause] I just think it varies so much. Everyone is coming at it with their own perspective, and it goes back to the fact that I've had so many conversations with people where they also just don't understand the kind of anti-corporate or anti-Elsevier, like, "It's just a business making money, and it's just how the world works." And I don't know. I guess it's just people, most of academia, again, in the UK most of academia is this kind of vaguely left-centrist kind of, you know, they are sympathetic toward anti-corporate or socialist kind of ideas to some degree, but they probably don't actually want it to happen because they're [muffled].

By putting all of their work online, by publishing only OA, by serving as an editor at *Journal of Radical Librarianship*, by not caring about having an academic career and just doing what is interesting and what they are good at, Stuart challenges and resists cultural fictions of publishing and what it is to be an engaged scholar. I respect them immensely.

But I have discovered through our conversation that Stuart is not an idealist. Perhaps their experience, coupled with being a political radical in the political climate of their country and of the world, has not enabled them to be one. I ask what they think is in store for peer review in LIS, and their response highlights politics and their distinct pragmatism.

> It's like when I first started getting involved in all this, I felt like things were changing very quickly and were about to change even more quickly and it felt kind of exciting, all these new ways of doing things, and now, like, oh, actually that was seven years ago and things are actually more or less the same now; in another ten years, fifteen years, things will probably be pretty similar. And I definitely think there used to be a lot of this kind of—what's the word? The kind of enthusiasm that you would get from a kind of tech perspective where it's just inevitable that things are getting better, inevitably we're progressing really quickly and it's just going to happen, and that's not true. Things slow down, stop, and roll back, and we're obviously politically regressing in so many ways, both of our countries. [laughs] Like all of that what's going on in the world on that kind of level I think it does affect how I see changes in other things, particularly when so much is dependent on policy whims of administrations that just change like open data. Open government data, four years ago, was way more advanced than it is now, and things go back just so quickly. So in terms of open access I can definitely see things haven't been progressing that quickly, things can just flip back-and-forth. I guess peer review, maybe it's a little different in terms of it's much more an internal cultural thing to academia, which is why it's maybe not subject to kind of the whims of policy quite so much, but it just means that because academic culture is so conservative in so many ways, that it just is going to change very slowly. Like even people signing their reviews so you know who the other person is, how much more common is that now than, say, five years ago? It's still not common at all, right? And open peer review for journals like the *F1000* model journal, I'm not seeing very many other places doing that at all, it's still not really… I don't imagine things changing quickly.
>
> > *Emily: Okay. So if there's any change just it would be small, incremental, very slow-paced. Okay. Do you think that those—but you do think that any changes*

would be toward more open, or do you think they might kind of reverse course?

Peer review, I think leaning toward more openness, yes, is still going to, probably going to happen. And like I say, in, kind of, five or ten years I don't imagine things being very different, but, in a couple of generations' time I can imagine it's definitely possible that the whole, something could trigger it that people could stop being scared of it. But I don't know.

As I wrap up our conversation, I ask Stuart how they define open, and it all gets more interesting and more complicated to me. I myself can't define open, and Stuart's inability to define it as well further complicates how I think about it, yet elucidates it at the same time.

How do I define open?

Emily: Yeah. In terms of scholarship and writing, how do you define it?

Can I send you my thesis? [laughs] I've got a 10,000-word count to do that,[5] and then it doesn't really. No, I can't define it. I understand openness as coming from open source software. And kind of the two central things that define open source, sorry, free and open source software, are being online and the openness of the collaborative method of producing stuff. So that kind of distributed development model and that kind of openness to participation, which is obviously slightly bullshit because of how, which people can actually become open source developers is obviously coming from a very small group of people. In theory that was the original intention. Open licensing is the only kind of consistent, I think, bit of openness from that through open access, open data, open education, the only thing that remains consistent is open licensing. And again, if something has a CC-BY license,

> then it's open; obviously it's way more complicated than that. [pause] I don't know, I can't define it.

That Stuart was able to make a distinction about open's only common thread being licensing switched on a light bulb for me. This is a fact I tacitly knew, but they articulated it. Is there a hub-and-spoke kind of open? Is it a Venn diagram? And despite our previous short discussion of power, in Stuart's response I see the deep intricacies and inequities inherent in open. To open, there are cultural barriers. There are privilege and class barriers, and it comes back to who can code, and who can read the code that is openly available. Who can use and understand the systems of open publishing? What are the parallel inequities in peer review?

CODA

As we end our conversation and as Stuart and I have corresponded during the transcript analysis process, it has become clear to me that it is a general pragmatism that defines Stuart's approach to their work. It is the way they move through the world as an engaged open advocate and activist. They resist the cultural academic norm of publish or perish, they resist capital and see their work as what makes sense in that resistance. They want to see their world and their work framed by socialism and what represents the collective good. For them, that is the way the world makes sense.

What strikes me most about talking with Stuart is that despite their belief in anti-capitalism and socialism, they do not seem at all dogmatic. They are measured, considering what makes sense for them. My worldview is parallel, yet I fear my own ego and dogmatism frequently come into my thinking, communication, and decision-making. From Stuart I've already learned so much, and I hope to be able to continue our conversations, especially as they move from the realm of PhD student into working in a university library. Will their attempts to resist capital in publishing continue? Will their challenge to the professorial academic norm evolve, and will they express their resistance in a new ways?

NOTES

1. Hugh Rundle, "Creative Commons, Open Access, and Hypocrisy," accessed January 13, 2021, https://www.hughrundle.net/2014/03/24/creative-commons-open-access-and-hypocrisy/.
2. Emily Ford, "Consensus Decision-Making and Its Possibilities in Libraries," *In the Library with the Lead Pipe*, January 25, 2012, http://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2012/consensus.
3. *Journal of Radical Librarianship*, vol. 5, 2019, https://journal.radicallibrarianship.org/index.php/journal/issue/view/5.
4. Stuart Lawson, "Against Capital," July 1, 2017, http://stuartlawson.org/2017/07/against-capital.
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Chapter 10

The Next Layer of Publishing Transparency: Open Peer Review

How could I write a book entitled *Stories of Open* without discussing open access (OA) generally? I operate, dear reader, under the assumption that you are reading with a general understanding of OA and the OA landscape. However, before diving into open peer review (OPR)—a much murkier concept for most of us—I should make some salient points. The stories shared in this book have certainly discussed OA and OPR, but it is important for us to dive a little deeper. After a brief investigation of OA and OPR, this chapter offers a few more stories.

OPEN ACCESS

Academic libraries and our professional associations are dedicated to OA; it is a generally accepted ethos of academic librarians and library institutions. In fact ACRL embraces openness, calling it out in two of the five goal areas in ACRL's "Plan for Excellence."

- Goal: The academic and research library workforce accelerates the transition to more open and equitable systems of scholarship.

…

- Goal: The academic and research library workforce effectively fosters change in academic libraries and higher education environments.[1]

Despite this overarching acceptance of and engagement with openness, there do remain OA skeptics. OA publishing is imperfect and continually evolving, so some skepticism is warranted. For instance, reliance on article processing charges, which John and I bemoaned in our conversation, is not a sustainable OA publishing mechanism. (That part of our conversation is included in this chapter.) What's more, the phenomenon of predatory publishers is very real, and its effects can sully OA's power to improve the scholarly ecosystem. Despite these imperfections, academic libraries have increasingly become OA publishers and have immersed themselves in the work to create and promote open educational resources (OER). Our work with open furthers conversations about the equity and accessibility of scholarly publishing and the dissemination of knowledge, as well as the affordability of textbooks and course materials. Academic library engagement with openness is deep worldwide, and our collective efforts providing repositories, publishing scholarship, and working with OER has global impact.

So why is it that we have been so slow to examine and understand opening peer review? There is a gruesome saying from Max Planck, "Science advances one funeral at a time," which captures some of the social challenges of implementing and accepting new ideas.[2] In other words, it's often hard to experiment and bring in new ideas when the traditional and the powerfully outspoken dominant, respected, and long-serving individuals in a field are not open to experimentation.[*] In fact, one recent study showed that younger, less established researchers more willingly accepted invitations to review in an OPR experiment than their more established colleagues and provided more positivity and objectivity in their comments.[3] There are many experienced librarians and library leaders who champion new ideas in their institutions and in our community.

I do think, however, academic librarians' insecurity problem plays a role in tamping down our progress with OPR. My phrase "insecurity problem" oversimplifies the concept (much like Planck's saying). Anne-Marie Dietering does a much better job of unpacking this issue in the introduction to *Self as Subject*. She unpacks her "untested theory" that research performed by libraries is shaped by "constraints placed upon us by our institutions" because librarians don't have formal research training and because we don't have shared research values. She goes on to conclude, "Without shared training or values to turn to, the constraints laid out by the institutions demanding that practice become paramount."[4] I would like to extend this idea to our experience of scholarly publishing. If we view

* In his reading of this chapter draft, John Budd pointed out that this sounded "like a summary of Thomas Kuhn's (*Structure of Scientific Revolutions*) idea of the subsuming of 'normal' science by 'revolutionary' science. If one believes Kuhn, it will require a literal generational transformation."

traditional academic publishing as the institution, it would fall in line that this institution (publishing) is dictating why we haven't engaged in OPR. This also reflects LIS's slower adoption of qualitative research, as I discussed in chapter 2, "Discovering Method: Narrative Inquiry." We are performing for the expectations of the institution or system, rather than critically questioning and challenging it.

It should be noted, however, that I contend OPR may occur without the existence of OA.[5] There is certainly a relationship between the adoption and acceptance of OA and the adoption and acceptance of OPR. However, one does not necessitate the other. OPR refers to the process, and OA to the mechanisms of publishing, copyright, and access. Later in this chapter you will read thoughts from both Bethany and Kurt that reiterate this point.

WHAT IS OPEN PEER REVIEW?

Debates on Definition

Although there have been a few attempts to define OPR,[6] including my own attempt to synthesize the literature and offer common themes, there has not yet been a definition offered for LIS that is widely adopted or accepted. While there are LIS journals experimenting with OPR—the first of which was *In the Library with the Lead Pipe*—each journal using OPR has instituted it in different ways. *Journal of Radical Librarianship* offers OPR as an option for authors, though it is not mandatory for the peer review to be open. Additionally, *College and Research Libraries* has completed one experiment using it, in which I played a role.[7] None of the processes at these journals is perfect, as I'm sure authors, editors, and editorial members of the journals can attest.

Loosely defined and for purposes of your reading, a functional definition of OPR is that OPR offers authors and referees the opportunity to openly communicate, with their identities divulged at some point in the peer-review process. It should be noted, however, that some instances of OPR simply publish referee reports with the name divulged only at the end of the publishing process, rather than during it. There are many other flavors of OPR, such as those implementations where the entire process is transparent and enables and encourages direct communication between authors and referees.[8]

Peer review is also situated in a complex ecosystem of scholarly communication. A 2019 report to the European Commission pointed toward peer review as a key component of scholarly communication that needs change. Namely, the report asserts that peer review is a process that needs to be made more transparent by the publication of referee reports alongside the publication of manuscripts.[9]

Yet *open* means something different to each person, as I discovered through interviews. Although our profession adheres to an open ethos, our publications have yet to embrace openness in peer review. According to InCites Journal Citation Reports data, only six of the eighty-nine (6.7%) journals listed in the 2018 Information Science and Library Science category are OA.* I find this appalling, because it is libraries and librarians who encourage OA on academic campuses and even host OA journals via their publishing services. This may point to the perception problem we still have in our profession of OA journals, to say nothing of a perception problem of OPR practices.

In their 2012 white paper investigating OPR for the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Kathleen Fitzpatrick and Avi Santo stress, "The form and function of open review practices, like any peer review process, should be dictated by community goals and needs, which should in turn determine the technologies employed."[10] Which community? *Community* in this sense means the community of reviewers, readers, authors, and editors. Depending on how widely adopted and implemented OA is, we could consider an expansion of community for OPR. Would the community be tied to professional organizations, such as ACRL? At the journal level? Whatever the scope of community, Fitzpatrick and Santo argue that intellectual collaboration is a shared goal of peer review.[11]Discussions in LIS regarding OPR are just beginning, while STEM disciplines have a more established culture of it. In STEM there are numerous journals using OPR: *F1000Research*, many of the journals published by Frontiers, *eLife*, and *BioMedCentral*, to name a few. The STEM disciplines have also adopted OA more widely. This is due, in part, to funder mandates in the United States and the United Kingdom demanding that funded research be made publicly available. Moreover, compliance with these policies is enforced. The article processing charge (APC) model of OA publishing in high-impact STEM journals (*Nature*, anyone?) is the norm. Drawing on funds from large grants enables researchers to budget for such costs. As we in LIS are woefully aware, the idea of big funding for library-oriented projects is laughable. Libraries and library projects often rely on IMLS funding, and IMLS's coffers are dwindling. Moreover, IMLS funds are well used to support user- and service-focused projects—such as digitizing collections and building other service capacities—rather than supporting academic research and publication of those research findings.

* The data in question were pulled from the JCR data set updated October 11, 2019. Journals designated as open access are *Journal of the Medical Library Association, College and Research Libraries, Revista Espanola de Documentacion Cientifica, Information Technology and Libraries, Information Research: An International Electronic Journal*, and *Investigacion Bibliotecologica*.

Similarly, humanities and social sciences suffer from the lack of large funding mechanisms and frequently incorporate qualitative research, which can be seen as having less bang for the buck. For researchers in non-STEM disciplines, we simply cannot afford gold OA publishing options. This financial model for OA publishing, which ultimately benefits for-profit proprietary publishers, has created a further disparity of publishing culture between the STEM disciplines and those in the humanities and social sciences.

STEM disciplines have been pioneers in OPR, beginning with preprint servers such as those offered by arXiv and *Atmospheric Chemistry and Physics* (*ACP*). These two platforms allowed researchers to upload unpublished manuscripts to share with their peers for informal feedback outside of the official mechanisms of peer review offered when submitting manuscripts to journals. In fact, *ACP* was the first contemporary publication offering OPR, beginning in 2001.[12] Ulrich Pöschl describes the extension of the preprint culture from *ACP* and how it was extended to become a formal system of OPR at the society's journals.[13]

Potential of OPR

OPR has the potential to do incredible good in scholarly communities, if thoughtfully implemented. First and foremost, it is an outgrowth of an open ethos and can support a transparency of the peer-review process for all involved. OPR also offers an opportunity for scholarly communities to take back peer-review processes from commercial interests and put them into the hands of the academic communities. However, this can be challenging. Commercial publishers and other proprietary interests have entered into the peer-review market, managing peer-review processes and capitalizing on the OPR movement. As I discussed in chapter 7, "Transparency of Peer-Review Process," Publons, while not necessarily nefarious, is an example and a warning. It is owned by Clarivate Analytics, a for-profit company that also owns Web of Science, Journal Citation Reports, and other costly products. They are entering into the commercial market of what has previously been and, in my view, should be a community-owned and -managed process.

Do you remember how you learned to conduct peer review? Or have you learned? Most likely you learned on the fly as you first engaged in the process of writing a referee report. If you were lucky, you had some concept of the work from having undergone the process yourself, or even better, you learned about the process in school. I presume that many people, especially in LIS, haven't been afforded this privilege. OPR can help train and make space for new researchers. It offers students and early-career researchers an opportunity to watch peer review unfold, and as I have argued, it opens the opportunity for students to participate in scholarly conversations.[14]

OPR adds one more layer of transparency to publishing systems. It offers a space to have robust discussion and discourse regarding the research at hand and ideas of the day. Implementations of OPR that allow for public commenting allow students and early-career researchers to observe the peer-review process occur, and even participate in it, enables them to better understand the peer-review process and the work of conducting reviews. To watch OPR unfold allows for scholarship to be an open conversation, aligning with the values of the ACRL *Framework for Information Literacy*.[15] Instead of waiting for the publication of articles, more people will be invited in to read and learn, creating robust discussion, rather than waiting for another year (or more) for a reaction article to be published in the scholarly record.

Additionally, OPR may help us redefine why we even conduct peer review. Instead of acting as a gatekeeper or quality checker for research, OPR can add the support and development of research and ideas as a goal of the process.[16] Finally, two issues of power come into play. First, OPR may make more space for peer review and encourage academic publishing to break down its silos, opening space for individuals and communities not traditionally represented in publishing to participate. And finally, OPR allows for the hidden labor of refereeing to be surfaced, quoted, and even cited and documented for promotion and tenure processes.

HOW DO YOU DEFINE OPEN?

Each person with whom I spoke for this project subscribes to the open ethos; they are all advocates in their own way. Several folks mentioned they will publish only in OA publications, or they will offer their services as a referee only for OA publications. Our conversations morphed from OA to their thoughts on OPR and back again.

In each conversation, I asked participants to define *open* for me. How do they see it? What does it mean to them? The definitions run the gamut, from basic definitions of OA as "accessible to everyone," to more nuanced discussions. Some folks tied their definitions to their jobs and work—as librarians serving patrons—as well as their on-the-ground experiences as authors and editors.

Stephanie's experience shows us one example of how her definition is tied to her job.

> As we wrap up our conversation, I ask Stephanie to engage in the idea of open. She is able to quickly respond to my question with a broad definition, yet as she continues her response, her identity as a librarian becomes even more evident.

Emily: How do you define open in terms of scholarly work?

It's definitely something that's changed. So I guess generally I think about open broadly speaking as transparent. As portable, as equitable. [long pause] Yeah.

Emily: Can you unpack what you mean by portable and equitable?

Yes. For portable, you know, especially with respect to data, I think about how sometimes data are shared in ways that constrain what people can do with it. And so when we share data, if we're going to be able to share it openly we need to enable it to be used as widely as possible, not assuming certain things like you have a fast internet connection or that you are in the West. That you're an English speaker, that you're using a particular operating system. And that we put data out there in packages that provide equitable access. So it's kind of tied up in that, let's look at access beyond North America. I mean there's other pieces to it depending on the particular conversation and types of data. The other piece of that that comes back to publishing and metrics and evaluation is that people participate in this ecosystem and their data should be portable. They should be able to get their citations out. It shouldn't be locked and owned by a company. It shouldn't be locked up in a Scopus subscription or Web of Science subscription. They should be selling the service, not selling the data.

Emily: Right. And so you're seeing portability and equity are very linked?

Yes. I mean, I think it's all linked. The transparency piece as well. Documentation is always a problem, but when you try to get to documenting it so that someone in a different culture or country or who speaks a different language can reuse the data, then it becomes another level of challenge. And so I think yes.

Emily: Okay. How about transparency? Can you just unpack that for posterity's sake?

Part of it is articulating the assumptions that went into the research for the project that generated the data because we know data are not objective. They are results of people and the ways that they interact with systems. But also being very clear about what was done to the data during the collection and management and transformation phases. Being transparent about what you will allow people to do with the data. So whether that's a license or not, we should, I think, support that because there are lots of data that are protected and can't be openly shared. But that doesn't mean that we can't transparently share them.

And as we often do, some people defined *open* in opposition to *closed*. John delved a bit further into the economic model of open, discussing APCs and his view of that model.

In my view, however, open is no barriers to access.

"There are no barriers to access." The nebulous agent in that sentence strikes me as interesting, especially given John's precise and measured use of language. "No barriers" is in opposition to existing barriers. By whom? At play here, I think, is that the barriers we see to openness are systemic. Barriers are embedded in the economic system of publishing, as well as within its cultural context. Of course my analysis of language as a researcher is what leads me to this question. As we converse, I think nothing of how John phrases his definition, and we go on to discuss some of the problems we see with our current publishing system for OA.

Emily: I just want to reiterate what I think you said, article processing charges are a barrier.

John: Yes. That's in my prudent opinion.

Emily: They are. I agree with you. I think it's a stopgap, and I don't know that it's one that actually is working. But I also spent last year managing a fund that we had at Portland State for researchers at Portland State to apply to get funds, APC funds, so I don't know. You can be idealistic like I am, and it seems like you're also pretty idealistic and passionate about what open should be, or you can also be pragmatic and work with sour grapes.

Yeah. Right. I have a couple of thoughts about that. But I think [pause] two things. Thing one is this APC model of open access publishing. It was supposed to be—you just used the word *stopgap*—it was supposed to be a bridge for us to get across this enormous chasm that we're on the precipice of right now.

Emily: How long are we going to be on the precipice? I'm sick of it.

APCs have become normalized, and that really bothers me. The other thought that comes to mind is that of all of the fields out there, the library field should be presenting a tenable model of what open access really should be so that when we're making the argument and we're talking to people in other schools and departments across campus, we have something to point to: "This is the model of how it works." It's going to take forever for some of these disciplines to make that change. But you have to be able to point to something.

Intellectual Response

I agree! And the way that APCs have become normalized, too, could point to STEM publishing where there are more financial resources, arguably more publications, and therefore more power in general in scholarly publishing. In STEM funding for APCs can be written into *grants, etc. In this regard APCs might create further and bigger and greater disparities among the disciplines and those that have and those that do not.*

John is challenged by and resists the current norm for OA publishing, that of the APC. Just what the model is that he thinks may work, we don't go into. In my own view, instituting open peer review more broadly would be part of an ideal open publishing model.

Emily: Yeah. I agree. So can you talk more specifically about what you do personally to engage in open?

Well, never say never, I would like to never publish a paper in a paywalled journal again. I'm not going to say "never" because chances are at some point along the way I will publish papers in journals that are paywalled in one way or another. But for now I'm kind of sticking to where I want to be and I'm only submitting to open access journals, real open access journals, open open.

In some conversations our definitions of *open* spanned further than I thought they would. Alma, for example, shared that she felt that *open* indicated collaboration, particularly for the writing and reviewing process.

When I think of open, I think more of, more boxes of, like, contextually, I guess. But I would say broadly that open scholarship is available to anyone to access without restrictions on how they access through paying. Probably it's done electronically, so there is that restriction that you have to be able to access, you get to it electronically. But, I think, when I'm thinking about it in terms of the writing process, or, like, through the reviewing process, I would think of it as more collaborative in more of a dialogue, when I think about it. And I guess, too, with sharing it, I think it depends on where you're putting it and how it's put out there. But that part of it is that it's, like, not just a relic that gets put up there but that it should be to some

> extent, like, part of a conversation before and after it's published.

Nancy's response also surprised me, because she included research subjects in her definition of *open* and *transparency*.

Emily: So how do you define open?

> That's really hard. [pause] I think for publishing and for—so for published finished products: available and free to read and access for anyone. For scholarship I feel like it's a little—and for research it's maybe a little trickier because I think there are some things that shouldn't be open. So I guess I would say within the realm of good research ethics, which of course everyone defines differently—within the realm of good research ethics that have the interests of the subjects, the research, the participants in mind, being able to share as much as possible. And I feel like in my research with my research partner especially, we've tried to be as open as we can be while also trying to maintain—being sure that we're maintaining confidentiality for the students that we talk with and thinking really hard about what we need and what we don't need. So we absolutely do not need—we've stopped asking about race and ethnicity because we don't need that. That has not actually ever factored into, you know, we have it from stuff that we've done ten years ago, but we've never ever used it once because when you have ten students [and your research is qualitative and about how they do their academic work], it doesn't matter. Race and ethnicity doesn't matter when you're only talking to ten people. So I feel like we've been more mindful about that [especially in our current historical moment and given our student population, comprised of many immigrants—some undocumented—and those with other marginalized identities]. Let me see, what else. And then I guess for peer review, open peer review is that everybody knows who everybody is. And I guess you could take it even more open and have things be up for more public comment. I don't know that for journal publishing. I feel like whenever I've seen that happen it's been like Kathleen Fitzpatrick's *Planned Obsolescence*. It's been in a book. I don't know of a journal article—I feel like

it would take too long to have that for a journal article, but maybe it would work. [pause] I think in peer review, knowing who the peer reviewers are and the authors are is really important for open.

Intellectual Response

I'm really glad to hear Nancy includes research participants in her definition of open. It shows that she thinks broadly and includes research participants as such an integral part of the open community. It makes me consider community-based participatory research in public health, or even the work I saw at the International Congress on Peer Review that discussed how patients have been participating in review of research. It also mirrors my approach with this particular research project, pulling from a feminist method as well as active interviewing, which views participants as partners in the discovery and research process as new knowledge is gained.

TOWARD OPEN PEER REVIEW

Just as we heard John describe "open open," others theorized about open, pointing to the ironic opacity of its definition. Bethany, for example, discussed layers of open.

As we close our conversation, I am struck by the reiteration of the theme surrounding our entire conversation: transparency in process. I ask Bethany what she knows about open peer review.

What do I know about open peer review? You know, it's funny, because most of what I know about open peer review actually comes from you.

Emily: You know what, Bethany? Honestly I don't even know if I know it means anymore [laughs].

> Well, I think, at least to me, you know, it's… it's of one of those, kind of, two-layer things, where the first layer is around transparency of process, and so openness around how many reviewers you have, who were the reviewers, and what role did they play. And then there's openness of the reviews themselves, which is an unusual layer, and so they both, they're just different kind of types of open, which like [muffled] and they both come with their own set of open.

"They both come with their own set of open." So how do we define it? How do we utilize two different sets? Are two different sets in opposition to or in conflict with one another?

Jessica, too, asked the question how open is open?

Emily: What do you know about open review?

> Yeah. Um. I guess I [laughing] mostly know of my experience. Um, and which I think looks probably a little bit different at every journal. How that happens and how reviewers are. I talked a little bit about the review process I experienced and one being an internal reviewer and one being external reviewer and how that's decided and, and all of that, or if the open peer reviewers are also just assigned to you. So yeah, I know that piece of it.…
>
> So I think there's also levels of transparency maybe. And the open process.
>
> And I know that there's a piece that I shared with my students that talks about bias in the peer-review process generally, and that, in one of the studies the researcher cited, more time spent, more comments given when there was an open peer-review process. So I know that there is that. I also know that there's different models. So like, again, as sort of post-publication mixed with open peer review, or even like hypothes.is, the Chrome plug-in, coming to the forefront and more people annotating publicly instead of it being, closed open peer review [laughs].

Uh, so yeah, I would say I have a working knowledge of it, I'm not an expert per se, but yeah.

Intellectual Response

There is an intersection here, where she points to a particular tool, hypothes.is, that should somehow be unpacked. The close relationship here is more in line with digital humanities work, and I'm wondering how the intersection of this kind of social plug-in plays with all sorts of things: publication ethics, sustainability of the technology/platform, how the process would be institutionalized, etc.

Emily: You just said "closed open peer review." What do you mean by that?

[laughs] Yeah. Yes, so I mean that it's an open peer review process, so the author and the reviewers know who each other are, and they even see who gave what comments, et cetera, but it happens in a closed space. So it could happen in a Google Doc that is private, or, I don't know, any number of places where the public cannot see it. Whereas with (completely?) open open peer review, I guess I'm terming it [laughs], would be someone using hypothes.is (although they have to have to have plug-in to see it), or like Kathleen Fitzpatrick's MLA Commons book, where you can see (I don't even know what software it's in), but you can see all of the annotations on it no matter who you are if you have an account or whatever.

Emily: Yes, it does. So I think you were hinting at something that I kind of wanted to flesh out a little bit more, too. With hypothes.is, you have to have the plug-in. So can you talk about kind of some of the tension between open open and whatever tension that might surface?

Yeah. Yes I think there is even a difference between, like, the MLA Commons piece and hypothes.is. I think you can go

> to hypothes.is and throw in a link and it will generate it, but you have to know about it. You have to know it's a thing, and you have to have the plug-in to actually easily go throughout the web and see what people are saying. And I don't, yeah I guess, I mean, I think that when you're working in a Google Doc it's explicit that you want that process to be closed down and you don't want other people to see it. With hypothes.is it's a little bit trickier. It might just be that you don't… I don't know, people don't know about it.

Jessica's tone points to what I perceive as her own discomfort or confusion that there isn't language to discuss how open OPR is. I share this discomfort, and it's a struggle in our community's nascent conversations, and it can vastly differ from one scholarly community to another. In fact, Jessica tells me about an example from a scholarly press.

> I saw a project recently that was an online book. It's organized like a blog essentially. It's the blurring of the lines between open peer review and closed peer review. They're using hypothes.is. The public is using hypothes.is to open peer-review the book. And then it will be taken by the closed peer reviewers, and they will use (or not use) all of those hypothes.is comments to do a closed peer review, and then the final book will be printed. And what will be really fascinating is—will the closed peer reviewers actually use or not use all those hypothes.is comments from the public? So. Yeah. I don't know that I'm coming up with a very good answer, but I think that hypothes.is is somewhere in the middle ground. Like, in some ways it feels like you kind of have to be part of a certain community to know about it. In other ways it feels, like, really exciting that you just get on any web page and you just annotate it and give your feedback.

When we had this conversation, and when I probed Jessica a little more, I could tell she was still trying to form her thoughts about this. What does this tool mean for openness?

Who is included and who is not?* Even at the beginning of our discussion, Jessica's responses pointed to "misunderstandings about open peer review" or our general cultural ill ease with it.

> *Emily: Can you tell me a little bit about why you wanted to participate in this interview?*

> I think there's a lot of misunderstandings about open peer review. I think we, we kind of have to start with our own community and continue to share why that model is useful, particularly for early-career researchers.

I agree that early-career researchers get more out of open peer review. It's nice to hear that an early-career researcher feels the same way as someone, like myself, who is on the earlier side of being mid-career. Here I'm also hearing that she sometimes struggles to be able to articulate the value of the evolving model, which I, too, have struggled with. How has her position as an early-career researcher disadvantaged her for traditional review processes?

And Jessica's right when she says:

> Yeah, but I mean as far as open within scholarly communication, I mean, I think this is the conversation we continue to have. How open is open? We talk about openness, particularly peer review, that I know the reviewer and the reviewer knows the author, we know each other, it's transparent, that sort of thing. Something I talk about with my students is post-publication peer review—like Kathleen Fitzpatrick's book—not only is it open peer review, but anybody can go and see what people gave positive and critical feedback on, for better or worse.

* And in the review of this draft, John Budd offered his thoughts, "*Should* some be excluded? If yes, how?"

> Beyond OPR, I think that there's all sorts of layers of open, for example post-publication peer review. There's all kinds of open. I think the most simple is, you know, transparent, and reviewers know who each other are, kind of what our stakes are in that conversation, and I would say probably even open in between reviewers, so that they can build off each other's critiques and criticisms of the paper and kind of have a conversation between themselves as well. Yeah. But I mean as far as open within scholarly communication, I mean I think this is the conversation we continue to have. I'm thinking of David Lewis's 2.5 percent commitment paper, right, like, thinking about what does open mean? Does it mean nonprofit? Does it mean cooperative? Does it mean… How open is open?
>
> And I think there's all kinds of flavors and all them have pros and cons, I guess.

REFLECTING ON TRANSPARENCY

Clearly, thinking about openness and transparency in review processes poses more questions than it provides answers. The issues facing full implementation of OA and transparent reviewing practices are nuanced and numerous. A big one is our need for cultural change. Our review processes and understandings of impact will need to shift in order for us to adopt OPR on a large scale. The commodification of OA and peer review by proprietary journals and vendors in an increasingly neoliberal and capitalistic academy pose seemingly elephantine hurdles, for it is these economic systems that have normalized APC OA publishing models. When I think of these hurdles, it is hard for me to remain motivated; I want to hang my head into my hands with despair. Yet the conversations I've had with our colleagues have fed me, rejuvenated me. We can work together, and we can start changing culture and start opening systems one piece at a time.

- How do you define *open*?
- What barriers do you see that impede progress in terms of OA publishing?
- How do you think we could move from OA publishing to OA publishing that includes transparent review processes?
- What fictions do you see in our discipline, or do you hold yourself, in regard to OPR?

- What would you need, as an author, editor, or referee, to move forward engaging in an OPR process?
- Think back to an experience you've had with peer review. If it wasn't transparent, how would transparency have changed it?
- When we adopt new tools to support transparency, such as hypothes.is or repository software, who is included and who is left out? And why?

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Chapter 11

Crafting Future Stories of Open

Now that we have heard from our colleagues and peers, and now that we have reflected on our own stories, how will we craft future stories of open? What understandings should we take away to inform our approaches? With what challenges will we be beset? What are the possibilities that lie before us? I am optimistic because I have listened to stories and will continue to listen; because I continually reflect on my own story and my own understandings; because I am willing to make myself vulnerable. I believe in the power of stories, and I also believe in the power of transparency as a tool for transformative change.

During this project I learned with and from the ten people with whom I was privileged to converse, as well as with and from those who read and commented on the many drafts of this book. I discovered that we need to discuss open processes before and in conjunction with open access (OA) and open peer review (OPR). The stories were powerful for me to hear, powerful for me to analyze, and remain powerful and engrained as I continue to work to improve our own peer-reviewing community. I am also taking away from this project that I would like to focus my efforts on training and education about peer review in LIS.

COMMUNITY AND CULTURE CHANGE

We know that having community is powerful. We know that in community, conversations may be more robust. How can we create and foster community? Stephanie articulated the issue of community as we mused about OPR's possibilities.

> Yes, I mean, I think part of the challenge in open peer review is that, I mean, to me it's sort of wrapped up in how does a community talk about and engage in discussion and if there isn't, like, a conference for that work, for those people to

> come together, then open peer review seems like a pretty good mechanism.… But I'm not so engaged right now in communities that have done or do open peer review much. So it's hard for me to, I think, identify immediately relevant opportunities. I feel like it is community-based. Otherwise you could put it out there and people aren't really going to take advantage of it if they don't feel like there is, if it doesn't feel reciprocal.

How do we invite people in? How do we create space for people from a diversity of life experiences and range of professional ones? One of my major hopes for opening of peer review is the potential it holds for us to create intentional community that reflects and expands possibilities for individuals in LIS. There remain stark inequities in scholarly publishing, with a stark majority of white people controlling editing, reviewing, and publishing.

> It is clear that when scholarly publishing fails to reflect the diversity of authors, readers, and research questions, it presents real problems for 1) the authors who are not being published and therefore do not achieve tenure and promotion, and 2) the researchers who do not have access to the full range of possible scholarship. Homogeneity at the top means editors and publishers too often produce homogenous literature. While blind peer review is a valuable tool, "even if a publication is making every effort to metaphorically audition orchestra members behind an opaque screen, it is not helpful if the editors and publishers who are handling the paperwork, assigning reviewers, determining schedules, recruiting editorial boards, and ultimately making policy and article level decisions are not in fact representative or even cognizant of injustices they perpetuate as biased people in a biased system."[1]

While there are few data for LIS publications generally, we do know that a 2017 survey of ACRL publications' editorial boards included an overrepresentation of white males when compared to the demographics of librarianship generally.[2] By opening review, we can explore represented demographics in authorship and refereeing and work to expand inclusion and equity. We can monitor for potential bias in refereeing; we can work to create inclusive journal policies; and we can deliberately make space for individuals from a range of lived and professional experiences to participate in community. Expanding the work of diversity in scholarly communication is a current focus of ACRL's, and OPR is just one facet.

Does community need to be given an economy? My idealist self says no, but I also know that in community, where there is no incentive or currency, there is little discourse. I think about the number of times I have read comments on journal websites from readers, and there exist few to none. I think about the National Library of Medicine's failed community discussion platform for PubMed Central, PubMed Commons.[3] I think about the workload in my institution, where retiring or vacant positions are rarely filled, where budgets remain flat or decreasing, and I wonder from where the capacity to approach a new community or to engage in a new project will come. This will be our biggest challenge, to create community and foster and strengthen existing communities in a neoliberal capitalistic environment that is slowly degrading higher education and everything affiliated it. This does not sound optimistic. It is not optimistic in that I do not see any change to the landscape of higher education that fights back against its commercialization. As higher education and scholarly communities move forward, I fear they will continue to be commodified and that we will have to try to move forward when it seems as if it is all eroding into peak capitalism.

That is not the only challenge. Relatedly, academic evaluation and scholarly discourse cultures will need to change. We need a cultural shift to occur in our profession around promotion and tenure. Around power and privilege. And I will say that the fact that these concepts did arise, for many, is reason to feel a bit of optimism. We know the problem exists, and we aren't hiding it anymore. Alma articulated some of these problems in our conversation.

> …in general in academia, it's a very white male space, overwhelmingly, and so I think a lot about—especially at the campus that I work at—it's, primarily students of color, first-generation students, and I fall into those categories as well, so, thinking about how alienating going to college was, and having to learn, write in these certain ways, speak in these certain ways, how these different terms and, like, yeah, how to act out whiteness, basically. So I think the fact that peer review, already, typically requires some sort of vetting through, by having certain degrees or by having a position at a certain place, already, embeds a lot of whiteness and power into it to begin with. And then in terms of thinking about what sort of methodologies are seen as valuable, typically quantitative, which is valued in most fields, and the ones that are seen as more like women's work, like qualitative methodologies, are undervalued. And things like community-based participatory research and those sort of things where you're involving the community are seen then, not as valuable or

> not as rigorous as a quantitative study would be. So I think there's already so many power imbalances just in those structures themselves that, yeah, I think that peer review can really exacerbate those, just by nature of who the reviewers are, and what kind of preconceptions they already have about work, based on what their methodologies are, or what the journal tends to focus on and stuff like that.

On the other hand, we are in a profession that values collaboration, and we are positioned on the front lines of experimentation in scholarly communication. If we continue our hard work and couple it with patience we may see transformative change. Kurt ruminated on this, concluding that change in the promotion and tenure culture and our general approach will be best benefitted by time.

> And I think that's one of the things that needs to change. One of the problems that faculty outside the library see with open peer review—if they're not familiar with it—is that, is there are people who—in a lot of disciplines—who are really hung up on the double-blind model. And they just don't think anything else is going to work. You know, people who will say open peer review is like open access and vanity press. And I, you know I do, I spend a lot of time here trying to disabuse people of that notion. I think that it's one of the things that I think is part of it, and I get it, it's gonna take time. A lot of the people who were either younger or who are newer to the profession are much more accepting of alternate types of dissemination of their content. And I think beyond library and information science, I mean, I think across the curriculum folks are trying to figure out: how do you document the impact of things like your social media presence? Because that, you know, it's not just librarians who can be in any discipline and contribute to your field through social media, and I don't think most institutions will really let you, give you a way to document that very well, and as you're certainly going through the… I mean, I don't think these people, most people won't even try when you're untenured, because it's, you know. You have to be, in the humanities you have to produce your manuscript, you know, a monograph. If you're in the sciences you have to have *x* number of coauthored double-blind peer-reviewed journals and this set of journals a year for six years until you get tenure. You know it's one

> of those things. Luckily I think that in librarianship… we generally are much more accepting of a wide variety of types of publications and other ways of disseminating information than both the academic colleges would in the first place. That's kind of fortunate. We're actually kind of leaders in the area. We will look at things beyond the monograph and being on the peer-reviewed journal article. But I think it's something that is part of it is just going to take time.

HOW SHOULD WE BE?

To the end of reflecting and in the interest of crafting future stories, just how might we position ourselves during the peer-review process? How can we attempt to *be* in those stations? After all of my thinking and reflecting and interacting and writing, here is what I have to offer.

Use Your Power for Ethical Good

Be a mentor. Be a shepherd. Use your power for ethical good, whatever role you're in. When I asked Kurt about how he saw the position of editor in terms of power, he took the time to think. My question challenged him and how he had considered and approached his authority as an editor.

> That's interesting because I've actually never thought of it in terms of power. You're right, though. And it's… and again, I think I'll relate it to my job, you know, as an administrator. You know you have power, I guess authority, whatever you want to call it, but you know you get to make decisions that affect other people that other people have to live with. And I think the main thing whenever you, in any situation, when somebody has power or when you're talking about power structures, is the first thing you have to do is think about the ethics of it. Because, whether your power is political or military or on an editorial board, you want to use that power well. And to me, I think in this case what this means is that where we're being fair to the author; that we're being fair to the goals and objectives and direction of the publication; and that we're looking at what benefits the profession, broadly defined. So I guess [pause] Yeah [pause] when you talk about editorial power, what we're talking about is using that power in an ethical way to advance all of those things. To advance

> the ideas of the author, to contribute to the future of the profession, and to make sure that it's done in a way that's of benefit to everybody involved.

So many authors wield their powers for good by seeking publication only in OA journals. Seek out OPR opportunities as an author and referee. Push for transparency of process at the journals you read or edit or for which you referee. Privilege the voices of early-career researchers and others whose voices have been historically muted in our discourse.

Be Vulnerable

Having conversations and being open demand presence and vulnerability. In conversation we may discover we are wrong, that the way we have been approaching our work is flawed. This can be deeply troubling, and it is hard work. And this emotional and vulnerable experience will never go away. In Julie's words, "I don't think I've ever been as paralyzed as I was with that article, which shows you that, like, this process never gets easier no matter how many times you have done it."

Be Optimistic

Despite the way it may sometimes feel, all of this work, the being vulnerable, the listening, the sharing, the human-centeredness of librarianship, this work is valuable and makes a future possible. Our colleagues everywhere, and you, too, are working toward positive change in our communities. We work to see each other and support each other.

We may not always be able to use our power for good, or be vulnerable, or be optimistic, but we can strive to be. These qualities will help us begin to craft future stories of human experience.

I will leave you with a quote from Nancy:

> I have really come to prefer open peer review lately. I sort of want that—the change that seems to be happening, I'd like it to move faster because I feel like the traditional peer review is, I mean, even when it works well, I think it's not the best way to do it because I just think—I've had enough open peer-review experiences now that I just think that the conversations that happen are more robust. The feedback is more valuable. It just feels better. I think it's, like, super squishy, I know. I feel like I come out of it feeling like there's not this—I mean thinking about what you just said about humans, right. So the humans are *there* in open peer review,

> and they're, like, named actual people as opposed to the OJS interface the users send to and get things back out of.

The humans are *there* in open peer review.

NOTES

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