

Publisher's Note

Reasons to Launch a Journal

By John W. Warren

Abstract

As we launch the new *GW Journal of Ethics in Publishing*, this commentary outlines reasons for launching the journal and a brief history of its evolution to date. The journal was envisioned as a forum to publish articles, case studies, applied ethics projects, and other works on diversity and inclusion, accessibility, copyright, and other topics of ethics in publishing. Goals for the journal include providing a forum for students in Master of Professional Studies (MPS) in Publishing program at the George Washington University to publish their Ethics in Publishing capstone projects; offering graduate students an opportunity for hands-on experience managing a professional-level journal; and involving the wider community of publishing, library, media, and scholarly communication professionals and scholars in the effort, as board members, peer reviewers, authors, and readers. The *GW Journal of Ethics in Publishing* welcomes scholarly articles and case studies presenting research about ethical issues in publishing, applied ethics articles and projects that explore ways of contributing to communities, invited editorials and commentaries, reviews of books and digital projects with a focus on ethics in publishing, and GW Ethics in Publishing Conference presentations.

Goals of the GW Journal of Ethics in Publishing

There are several reasons why an organization may decide to launch a new journal and more than a few reasons why not to do so. In our case, why launch a new *GW Journal of Ethics in Publishing*? Two simple answers to that

question include: because we can, and because we hope to contribute to the publishing field.

The three overarching goals, as I began to contemplate the idea of launching a new journal focused on ethics and publishing, were to provide a forum for students in GW's Master of Professional Studies (MPS) in Publishing program to publish their Ethics in Publishing capstone projects; offer our program's students an opportunity for hands-on experience managing a professional-level journal; and involve the wider community of publishing and library professionals and scholars in the effort, as board members, peer reviewers, authors, and readers.

Ethics in Publishing has been a capstone course in the MPS in Publishing program since the establishment of the program in 2006. The course has evolved over the years, and for the past several years, students in the course are charged with developing an applied ethics project, or a case study on ethics in publishing. For an applied ethics project, students conceive and implement a project with the aim of "making the world better," getting involved with their community or their workplace. For a case study, students research and write a paper on a topic such as diversity and inclusion in publishing, accessibility, etc. While the latter are closer to a traditional scholarly paper in approach, students in the former category likewise submit outstanding and significant work worthy of publication and perseverance. Notable examples in the applied ethics category include a student who wrote the first ethics statement for her organization's journal, while surveying and creating learning tools for authors and peer reviewers on publication ethics; one who launched a mentorship program for underrepresented voices in her organization; another who collected more than 200 books in a book-drive for homeless children and yet another who created several Little Free Libraries and placed them in low-income neighborhoods with diverse books for children, teens, and adults; and a student who launched an effort to teach data and design ethics to high school journalism students; among many others. In the case study category, notable examples include an outstanding study of the lack of university presses and library publishing programs among Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs); an ethical, marketing, and legal argument for publishers to make comics born-accessible for visually-impaired readers; regulations pertaining to and ethical implications of unpaid internships in publishing; case studies on underexploited copyright and orphan works; and case studies on the lack of diversity in children's book publishing, among others. All these works, and many others, deserve a venue for publication.

Students entering the MPS in Publishing program come from diverse

backgrounds and levels of experience; one of the key strengths of the program is the diversity of our students, and our faculty. Some students enter the program with publishing experience, sometimes twenty or more years of professional experience, though more typically five or so; some students have experience in a field such as education, marketing, law, finance, etc.; and other students enter the program with relatively little professional experience, as recent college graduates. All our coursework emphasizes the professional application of publishing skills, with the overarching goal of preparing students for managerial and leadership positions across all publishing industry segments and specialties. Coursework emphasizes “real-world” learning, participation, group work; creative and analytical approaches, in skills and topics such as acquisitions, editing, copyright and permissions, business and management, marketing, design, production, and digital technology. For the latter two broad categories of students, those pivoting from a related field and those emerging as recent college graduates, the *GW Journal of Ethics in Publishing* offers the opportunity to contribute professionally, gain experience and confidence, and discover new talents and passions. Students lead or contribute to committees, including the Editorial, Marketing, Strategy and Sustainability, and E-Publishing committees; one serves as Managing Editor, and one serves as a student representative on the Editorial Board.

Involving the great publishing and library community is an important goal of the journal. The Society for Scholarly Publishing (SSP) agreed at the commencement to become an official sponsor of the journal, providing guidance and mentorship. We have been involving professionals on our editorial board and as peer reviewers, and we hope to find publishing and library professionals both receptive to reading the articles the journal publishes, as well as contributing as authors to this effort.

In our graduate-level publishing courses, such as Business and Publishing, Marketing Strategies, and now Publishing Entrepreneurship, we discuss the importance of the niche, or the micro-niche. “Dominate the micro-niche” is a goal I frequently mention. In this case, there are several excellent publishing journals that we read, recommend, and respect, such as the *Journal of Electronic Publishing*, *Learned Publishing*, *Publishing Research Quarterly*, and *Information, Medium, and Society: Journal of Publishing Studies* (formerly *International Journal of the Book*), among others. All of these publish articles about ethical issues in publishing. Naturally, there are also numerous journals of ethics, including *Ethics*, *The Journal of Ethics*, *Journal of Business Ethics*, *Journal of Academic Ethics*, *Ethics and Information Society*, etc. Most of these would likewise consider publishing articles on ethical issues in publishing, of which there

are many. There are also outstanding organizations working and contributing to the field, in particular COPE, which for twenty-five years has worked to build a community and bolster support, education, and debate in publication ethics, and publishes invaluable case studies, and other resources, on the topic. Professional organizations such as SSP, the Association of University Presses (AUPresses), the Library Publishing Coalition, the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), the Council of Science Editors (CSE), Association Media & Publishing Network, and many others, have committees or task forces, and conduct advocacy, for diversity and inclusion and other ethical issues in publishing. Most recently, the Coalition for Diversity and Inclusion in Scholarly Publishing (C4DISC; <https://c4disc.org/>) is conducting important work in this area, including the creation of Toolkits for Equity on antiracism and disabilities. Alongside this significant work, our new journal is the only one specifically focused on ethics in publishing.

Beginnings of the GW Journal of Ethics in Publishing

Looking back at my now more than 1,100 emails that mention the topic, I started gestating the idea of launching this new journal back in late 2019, as I was preparing to relaunch the GW Ethics in Publishing Conference. The conference was part of the capstone Ethics in Publishing course, a requirement of the Master of Professional Studies (MPS) in Publishing program, and was organized by the previous director, Arnie Grossblatt, for nine years, until 2016. The conference was attended primarily by students; publishing experts spoke about different aspects of publishing ethics, and the students were required to write a capstone, a sort of mini thesis, on a topic that was meaningful to them. As the MPS in Publishing program went online in 2012, and as the online program grew, few people attended the annual conference and for this and other reasons it was discontinued. I became the program's director after Arnie retired in 2018, and among my goals was to re-launch the conference, and transform it into an event for the publishing and library communities, writ large. One issue I discovered around the previous conference was a lack of documentation surrounding most of the conference's session topics and presenters. With some previous experience publishing conference proceedings, the idea of using a new journal to preserve and document the conference proceedings was an important consideration. With the help of co-organizer Puja Telikicherla, professor in the MPS in Publishing program and licensing and subsidiary

rights manager at the American Psychiatric Association, we relaunched the Ethics in Publishing Conference as an online event in [2020](#) and [2021](#), and are looking forward to hosting it again in 2022.

For the *GW Journal of Ethics in Publishing*, an initial [Call for Papers](#) was open to submissions, in a “soft launch,” beginning in early 2020, welcoming “articles, case studies, and conference presentations from scholars, students, and publishing professionals on topics including, but not limited to, diversity and inclusion, accessibility, peer review, open access, sustainability, publishing metrics, equity, and other aspects and issues of ethics in publishing.” In addition to the goals discussed in the section above, another impetus for the Call for Papers was a new course, Editing Special Projects, which I had conceived to offer students practice and practical experience in editing and peer review for both book and journal projects, with assignments and activities encompassing actual, on-the-job work in editing and peer review, and, as much as possible, leading to publication. As publishing professionals, many of us spend significant time managing the peer review process, yet at the same time, many publishing professionals have little or no experience conducting peer review of an article. This course was designed in part for that purpose, providing students with opportunities to conduct positive, helpful peer review feedback based on values of equity, openness, collegiality, respect, quality, and community. During the course, students also contribute to the development and refinement of the journal's peer review guidelines.

In April 2020, I put out a call for nominations for an inaugural Editor-in-Chief and formed a search committee with students and alumni of the publishing program and a College of Professional Studies colleague. Serving with me on this committee were Aliza Becker, Managing Editor, MediaSphere Medical, MPS Publishing graduate 2020; Tiffany Clark, Editorial and Social Media Specialist, American Society of Hematology, MPS Publishing graduate 2020; Emily Everhart, Associate Product Manager at National Geographic, MPS Publishing graduate 2019; and Johanna Galt, Faculty Affairs Specialist, College of Professional Studies, Master's in Higher Education graduate, 2020. The emerging COVID-19 pandemic delayed our progress somewhat, but we nevertheless received several excellent nominations, interviewed four finalists, and selected Randy Townsend—graduate of the MPS in Publishing program (2011) and then-Manager of Publishing Operations at the American Geophysical Union, now Director of Publishing Operations at PLOS—as our new EIC, in October 2020. Randy, a publishing leader with significant contributions to the field with SSP, CSE, and other organizations, also joined our faculty to teach the Ethics in Publishing course.

Randy moved quickly to appoint an editorial board and to refine the mission and vision of the journal. Joining the editorial board, in January 2021, were Lois Jones, a 2014 graduate of the MPS in Publishing program and then-Peer Review Manager (now Director) for the Journals Department at the American Psychological Association (APA); Josephine E. Sciortino, a 2019 graduate of the MPS in Publishing Program, professor of the program's The Professional Editor course, and Managing Editor at Canadian Science Publishing; and Julie T. Vo, Editorial Manager for JAMA Pediatrics. Soon thereafter, in February 2021, Gabrielle Bethancourt was appointed the student representative to the journal's editorial board.

Randy and I worked together to recruit student volunteers to form and serve on four committees, and in May 2021, four committees were formed: an Editorial Committee, led by Giuliana Macaluso; a Marketing Committee, led by Emily Hatcher; an E-Publishing Committee, led by Jeremy Ottley, and a Strategy and Sustainability Committee, led by Ashley Warren. Over the next several months, the committee leads and members, the editorial board, EIC, and others worked to define and establish the new journal.

The journal committees, editorial board, EIC, and I undertook an evaluation of publishing platforms for the journal, in June-July 2021. We evaluated the Manifold platform (<https://manifoldapp.org/>), developed by the University of Minnesota Press, the CUNY Graduate Center's Digital Scholarship Lab, and Cast Iron Coding, with a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation; as well as PubPub (<https://www.pubpub.org/>), developed by MIT Press the MIT Media Lab, and Knowledge Futures Group. After deliberation, with meetings and presentations from representatives of both platforms, we chose Manifold. GW Publishing program was initially selected as a participant in Manifold's pilot program, in June 2019, and we have continued to use the platform for e-publishing courses, to publish the new journal, and the Ethics in Publishing Conference proceedings.

In November 2021, committee leads and membership were refreshed as students graduated or took other responsibilities. Ashley Warren was selected as our new managing editor, Aimar Galarza assumed responsibilities for the editorial committee as well as student representative on the editorial board, Donna Prideaux became lead of the marketing committee, Julie McClenahan became lead of the e-publishing committee, and Madison Neuner became the strategy and sustainability committee lead.

Scope of the GW Journal of Ethics in Publishing

The *GW Journal of Ethics in Publishing* solicits and accepts papers from publishing and library professionals, scholars, faculty, and publishing students in five main categories of articles:

- ✦ Scholarly articles and case studies presenting research about ethical issues in publishing
- ✦ Applied ethics, “Making the World Better” articles and projects that explore ways of contributing to communities, including local, regional, or global publishing communities or other communities on aspects of publishing, literacy, and so on
- ✦ Invited editorials and commentaries
- ✦ Reviews of books, websites, digital projects, and other web resources with a focus or considerable aspect of ethics in publishing.
- ✦ GW Ethics in Publishing Conference presentations

Scholarly articles, case studies, and “Making the World Better” projects are generally subject to peer review, except for invited editorials. Peer review will generally comprise “Anonymous Reviewer/Anonymous Author” peer review (i.e., double-masked, wherein neither the author nor the reviewer knows each other’s identity), but we also plan to experiment, with authors’ permission, in open peer review and alternative forms of peer review. We invite alumni of and current students in the GW Master of Professional Studies in Publishing program to submit their Ethics in Publishing Capstone projects, including both “Making the World Better” projects and Case Studies. Papers from underrepresented voices are especially encouraged. We also welcome and encourage innovative forms of scholarship, such as video or audio recordings, podcasts, or narratives, which can exploit the flexible, multimedia capabilities of the Manifold publishing platform.

We intend the journal to be broad in scope, and invite papers from publishing, library, and media professionals, scholars, and students on topic areas such as:

- ✦ Ways to ensure publishing is inclusive: in all its dimensions.
- ✦ Making sure diverse voices are part of the conversation about inclusion, equity, and accessibility.
- ✦ Work to ensure peer review, authorship, editing, publications metrics, etc., are equitable and free of bias.

- ✦ Can equitable, inclusive, and accessible publishing become a reality instead of a goal?
- ✦ Institutional efforts to increase diversity, for example, within the Association of University Press (AUPresses), Society for Scholarly Publishing (SSP), and other publishing institutions.

Financial equity and sustainability, including institutional support, and access to research and publications, as ethical issues.

Accessibility as an ethical issue.

How publishers can ensure publications are more accessible.

The *GW Journal of Ethics in Publishing* also requires that all published articles meet basic digital accessibility standards for visual resources. Papers accepted for publication that include images, charts, videos, or other visual assets must include alt-text (or long descriptions) for each visual asset, as well as appropriate captions. For more information on the basic principles of describing visual resources for accessibility in arts and humanities publications, please visit [Describing Visual Resources](#).

Looking forward

As we work to establish and publish the *GW Journal of Ethics in Publishing*, we expect it to evolve over time. We invite your contributions of articles and projects as described above, as well as your suggestions for additional types of articles and projects on topics of ethics in publishing. MPS in Publishing students and committees, faculty, and the editorial board will continue to refine our journal's mission and strategy, our peer review guidelines, and our outreach. Work remains on editorial processes, e-publishing workflows, identifiers, and indexing, providing additional avenues for students to gain experience. An aspect of this student-managed journal is identifying and recognizing how much guidance and direction students need or appreciate, as they build confidence and experience in the field of scholarly publishing.

As we publish our initial articles, we still have much work to do, and we welcome your contributions, collaboration, and active participation.

Author bio

John W. Warren (he/his), Director and Associate Professor, [Master of Professional Studies in Publishing](#), George Washington University, formerly held the positions of director of the George Mason University Press; marketing and sales director at Georgetown University Press; and director of marketing,

publications at the RAND Corporation. He has a master's in international management from the School of Public Policy and Strategy at the University of California, San Diego. He is also a classical guitarist and composer and writes about guitar technique, composition, and improvisation. Fluent in Spanish and Portuguese, John is a frequent speaker at international conferences and has authored several articles on digital publishing and other topics.

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