



**Workplace Equity Project
Interview with Susan Spilka**

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KENNEALLY: Introduce us to the Workplace Equity Project (WE) and its goal to raise awareness and promote solutions for workplace equity in organizations across the industry

SPIILKA: WE is a nonprofit, independent organization that uses research, communications, and advocacy to promote equity, diversity and inclusion in organizations across the scholarly and professional publishing industry.

The idea for WE was conceived when Jeri Wachter, Simone Taylor and I were working on a panel discussion about Women in PSP publishing last fall. The event went really well, with great presentations and a lively Q&A. We wanted to keep the momentum going. So we came up with the idea of a survey to ask colleagues about their experiences and perceptions regarding opportunity and satisfaction at work. Our intention is to find out what's already being done to address the issues, whether they're working, and how we can effect and accelerate change.

We chose our acronym -- WE -- to reinforce the notion that this change can only happen if people of all genders, ages, ethnicities, sexual orientations, disabilities, and geographies participate in the effort.

KENNEALLY: How well do such organizations already address equity and diversity issues? What have been identified as challenges?

SPIILKA: Our industry is known to have a majority female workforce, male-dominated leadership, and a striking lack of ethnic diversity. Studies show that around 60% of the workforce is female, over 85% is white, and 60% of the leadership is male. I think the WE survey is going to find that the imbalances persist. We hope to gain some insight into why and identify some of what's reinforcing the status quo.

That said, we truly believe that our industry leaders want to change that equation. Change has to come from the top **and** from within -- that's how WE fits in.



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KENNEALLY: Describe the WE survey and the data you hope to collect. How it will serve your mission to understand workplace experience across professional and scholarly publishing around the world? Is this the first effort of its kind? Until now, have we relied only on anecdotal evidence?

SPIILKA: The survey is organized in sections on work/life balance, career breaks, satisfaction, professional development, mentoring, networking, and attitudes and behaviors. There are also two demographic sections that will allow us to segment by metrics of diversity and employment information. By making comparisons we'll be able to gain valuable insights. So it's very important for participants to respond fully. The survey is long, but it's easy to complete -- it only takes about 12 minutes. PLEASE take the survey, you can find a link on WE's homepage.

We have over 730 responses from around the world. Already, I see trends to support what we know anecdotally, as well as data that offers new insights.

A particularly satisfying result are the many comments that colleagues have added that add qualitative insights. By the way, we'll be presenting our initial findings at the Society for Scholarly Publishers 40th Annual Meeting in Chicago on June 1st.

KENNEALLY: Who supports WE and how are you funded?

SPIILKA: That's a great question! WE is a grassroots effort. The survey was crowd-sourced. We sought input from dozens of colleagues with various expertise to ensure that the questions are oriented to a global audience, cover relevant areas, and don't contain inherent bias.

Dedicated volunteers worked hard to create the logo, branding, survey instrument, and establish key relationships. The survey has been endorsed and promoted by leading industry associations and companies from around the world. Their boost really makes a difference.

Simone, Jeri, and I have donated our time and self-funded the expenses so far. As we go forward, it's likely that we'll seek funding. Anyone interested in getting involved should email us at survey@workplaceequityproject.org.

KENNEALLY: Briefly expand on the WE mission to –

- Promote a workforce that better reflects the diversity of the general population
- Advocate for greater access to resources and opportunities for all demographics at every level within an organization



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- Advance industry efforts to embrace diversity and effective inclusion by collecting data, defining key metrics, tracking progress, and reporting transparently
- Foster equitable business practices and behaviors through communication and consultation

SPIILKA: Gathering the data is step one, activating it is next.

We've incorporated as a nonprofit and recruited a number of industry leaders to serve on our Advisory Board, to guide and govern our future.

We'll be adding more experts to this group as we look to identify needs and solutions, communicate best practices, and influence leaders.

Change IS possible. It's been proven again and again that diversity has a positive effect on quality of worklife and the bottom line.