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Beyond the Book

A podcast series on the business of writing and publishing

Interview with Amy Brand
Assistant Provost for Faculty Appointments at Harvard University
&
Member, ORCID Initiative's Board of Directors

Conducted by Beyond the Book special guest host Susan Kesner

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KESNER: What's in a name? In the world of scholarly research, librarianship and publishing, a personal name, and the reputation that follows, can mean everything. But in the digital age always getting the names consistently right or persistent for today and for the future has often proven elusive. Hello and welcome to CCC's podcast series *Beyond the Book*. My name is Sue Kesner. I'm your special guest host coming to you today from Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Like a family carefully managing its genealogy, the ORCID Initiative is a community effort to solve the author, contributor, name ambiguity problem in scholarly communications by creating a central registry of unique identifiers for individual researchers. ORCID's vision is that through the establishment of an industry de facto standard for name attribution, the scholarly community will enhance the scientific discovery process and improve the efficiency of funding and collaboration.

Joining me in her office today overlooking beautiful Harvard Yard is Amy Brand, Assistant Provost for Faculty Appointments at Harvard University, and a member of the ORCID Initiative's Board of Directors. Amy, welcome to CCC's *Beyond the Book*.

BRAND: It's my great pleasure to meet with you today, Sue.

KESNER: Thank you. Very briefly we should tell the audience that before coming to Harvard in 2008, Amy's career was focused squarely on scholarly publishing. When I first met you, Amy, probably 15 years ago, you were leaving MIT Press where you had been an Executive Director on the book side. Fast forward a few years to your role as Director of Business and Product Development at CrossRef, where you were responsible in many ways for the widespread standardization of journal citation linking practices.

Amy holds a PhD in cognitive science from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. And a BA in linguistics from Barnard College. Amy, we're speaking



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today in advance of the next participant meeting for ORCID on Wednesday, May 18th, that Harvard University will host at Tsai Auditorium. Is that pronounced Tsai?

BRAND: Tsai Auditorium.

KESNER: Tsai. You know, I checked on that at home and my family said it was Tsai, so there you go. (laughter) Here in Cambridge, Massachusetts. All participant organizations interested in joining ORCID are welcome to attend either in person, or as appropriate for the times, you can attend virtually as well. And we will post more information on this on Beyond the Book's website. So, Amy, if anyone were thinking of joining that meeting, can you give them your pitch? In your experience you're a researcher, you've been an editor, why is the ORCID Initiative necessary and important?

BRAND: Well, at this moment joining ORCID, the organization, just means becoming a participant in ongoing discussions as we plan the services that ORCID will ultimately provide. But my pitch, and the one that I gave to others at Harvard to convince them that we should accept the offer of a Board seat and also contribute sponsorship funds, is that ORCID represents really the only way to solve the name ambiguity problem and attribution of scholarship. Because this is a problem that can only be solved collaboratively when all stakeholders agree on a common standard, a common identification scheme for authors and contributors.

KESNER: It's really – yeah, it's very, very interesting. You know ORCID brings together leaders of many influential universities and funding organizations, scholarly societies, publishers and even corporations from around the globe. Tell us about some of those parties involved. And tell us why you, Amy, personally, as well as why Harvard, has chosen to become involved with this.

BRAND: Well it's true, ORCID is rare as a real international partnership among academic institutions, including not only Harvard, but MIT, Cornell, the University of Hannover, publishers like nature publishing group ACM, Wiley, and Elsevier. Other information organizations like CrossRef and Thompson, OCLC and in Japan the National Institute of Informatics. And finally funding agencies namely the Wellcome Trust is also on the Board. And I really wanted Harvard to have a front seat in helping to shape this collaboration. And Harvard's involvement, and my personal involvement, is very consistent with the way in which we have been engaging with the publishing community through its various open access initiatives.

KESNER: Just out of curiosity, because we live in such a connected world, how do you get everybody together? That would have been difficult 20 years ago. How do you do this?



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BRAND: How do we get the Board members together?

KESNER: Yeah.

BRAND: We have a combination of in person meetings and teleconference based meetings. And as with CrossRef, where I had worked previously, we tried to distribute those meetings geographically so that we can get maximal attendance.

KESNER: I remember you and I have been on many committees together through the years and how difficult it is to find the right time of the day where you can get everybody, and you're not offensive or making life too difficult for people either on one coast or the other or one continent or the other.

BRAND: Right.

KESNER: So what time do you get together? (laughter)

BRAND: Well, yes we are dealing with people now in California, and also in Europe. And so it's often right at the middle of the day is the best time for calls. But as I said, we've – we have – we try to plan ahead, that's the other key thing. So if you give people a couple of months to get on board for a meeting it usually works.

KESNER: Speaking about global, we were just speaking about issues of global community. The ORCID principals express a really firm commitment to open access, to global communication, and also to researcher privacy. Why are these three elements so critical?

BRAND: Well, if ORCID succeeds, we're going to end up amassing large amounts of publication metadata and researcher profile data. And we believe that this data has several uses and we want it to be as openly accessible as possible for research purposes around the globe. At the same time, we want researchers themselves to have a high level of control over that information and what information about them is made available through ORCID services. Because without such privacy controls many researchers simply wouldn't participate.

KESNER: I know this is early days, but are you able to share some of the ideas you have for how this information can be used going forward?

BRAND: Sure. We've done a lot of work accessing what potential academic use cases might be. And they go well beyond really the publishing sphere.

KESNER: Or the card catalog. (laughter)



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BRAND: Or the card catalog. So for instance, Harvard has an open access repository, and one of the things that we did, and we are continuing to do in adding content to that repository, is identify automatically publications by Harvard researchers. And it's a tough problem to go into existing databases and identify our own authors just based on give a name. So that's one use. But there are several other systems and IT infrastructure at a university that track the identity of the members of the community, including researchers and faculty, human resource systems, faculty information tracking systems, faculty profile systems, who will all benefit from having a solution to the name ambiguity issues.

KESNER: I have to insert this here. As a former librarian, though it was a long time ago, there's also an issue around hyphenated last names, and –

BRAND: Foreign names.

KESNER: Foreign names, non-US names, I'm thinking of Latin American names. I remember in the olden days of filing library cards, how difficult – different libraries had different standards around all of that. And the names were lost, essentially.

BRAND: Or even in a regular name like John Smith, it is often provided alternately as J. Smith and you just don't know if it's the same person.

KESNER: That's right. Very interesting, very good. Scholarly communications has long provided businesses and non-profits, governments, and of course universities like Harvard, with the data and the insights so necessary for innovation. I've been reading a lot in preparation for another meeting about the emergence of e-research and e-science. So as we experience those transitions from science to e-science, what changes for those actors, besides moving from print to pixels, is there – what is really the hidden potential in finding these digital scholarly publications? Is it going to take ideas to a new level?

BRAND: Well how scholarly and scientific communication will evolve in the digital era is very much still evolving. And it's not just about going from print to pixels in my view. And what we think of even now as journals and journal articles are already radically transformed when you think about how you navigate through them, how you access the impact of them, how you compute over the information, how you consume the information. So I would have to say that new media already are accelerating knowledge creation and will continue to do so.

KESNER: But this – ORCID will certainly accelerate that process, it sounds to me.

BRAND: I think it has that potential to. I mean one use case that we've talked about on the Board that I'm particularly interested in, in my current position working on faculty appointments, is the identification of contributor roles at a more fine



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grained level. You know when you look at a citation that has multiple authors you often can't tell what the particular contribution of an individual is. And we think that the ORCID system will be a basis for developing contributor role standards.

KESNER: You know, my understanding is in the scientific publication – communication and publication the order that an author's names appears is really critical. And it can have implications downstream and upstream for funding and for – I assume even for tenure and other purposes.

BRAND: Right. And the problem is that it varies from field to field what first and last author means. And then if you have ten authors, there are the eight in-between. And often what happens if I'm reading a promotion file and say someone is a bio statistician, and they have 100 publications, but they're not a first or last author, how do I identify that person's particular contribution? And being able to have that included in the metadata associated within ORCID would be very valuable for the academic community.

KESNER: So just out of curiosity, and I'm really ignorant in this area, in scientific and technical, medical I think I understand how the author attribution and the order plays out. But what about in humanities and social sciences? Is that's where it's different?

BRAND: Yes, well it is actually much rarer in a humanities to have multi-authored works. And I do think it is more of an issue in the sciences where you have labs of people and let's say one author has contributed the reagent to the experiment and another contributes statistical skills and things like that. It's very important to be able to identify people's unique contribution.

KESNER: Amy, you know I've always been fascinated by your background and your career path. You've been a researcher, you've been an editor. I think you were briefly an academic, you were a data geek in many ways. And now you're deeply involved in the daily workings of really one of the world's greatest centers of learning and academia. So what's that journey been like for you? Is this something that's just played out naturally one job at a time? Or have you had a long range plan that you took you from a PhD at MIT to where you are today at Harvard?

BRAND: Well, you know it's very easy to construct a narrative –

KESNER: A story. (laughter)

BRAND: Post talk narrative in hindsight, but if my career path appears to have any direction, I don't know, to me it appears to be relatively bumpy. I would say that I've gone from academia to book publishing, then to CrossRef, and now I'm back



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in an academic setting. And the thing that I'm passionate about everything that I've done professionally relates to my interest in how the mind works and how knowledge gets created. But the experience of these transitions on the ground has been more like leaps of faith and following my own nose for what looks important and interesting at the time.

KESNER: I've been talking today with Amy Brand, Assistant Provost for Faculty Appointments at Harvard University. And a member of the ORCID Initiative's Board of Directors. Amy, thank you so much for joining me on CCC's *Beyond the Book*.

BRAND: It was lots of fun to talk to you. Thank you.

KESNER: I'm glad. *Beyond the Book* is produced by Copyright Clearance Center. A global rights broker for the world's most sought after materials including millions of books and e-books, journals, newspapers, magazines, images and blogs. You can follow *Beyond the Book* on Twitter, like it on *Beyond the Book* on Facebook, and subscribe to the free podcast series on iTunes or at our website www.copyright.com/beyondthebook. My name is Sue Kesner. For all of us at Copyright Clearance Center, thanks for listening to *Beyond the Book*.

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