



Interview with Anke Beck, CEO, InTechOpen

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KENNEALLY: Scientific publishing aims to accomplish many things, but above all the sharing and advancing of knowledge. Now a 15 year old publishing startup is adding collaboration and community to the list.

Welcome to Copyright Clearance Center's podcast series, I'm Christopher Kenneally for Beyond the Book. IntechOpen, founded in 2004, is a scientific community of authors and editors built by scientists for scientists to provide a collaborative environment for peer reviewed academic research. According to its mission, IntechOpen is leveling the research playing field and promoting an environment that is democratic and inclusive. Dr. Anke Beck joined IntechOpen in August 2018 as CEO. At her previous role of managing director for De Gruyter, she led a traditional publisher to take a leading role in the competitive open access market. Dr. Beck joins me now from her London office, welcome to Beyond the Book, Anke Beck.

BECK: Hi, Chris. Thanks for inviting me to talk to you.

KENNEALLY: We're looking forward to speaking with you about IntechOpen. The open access space is a very dynamic one in the scientific and scholarly publishing environment, although mostly people think about open access as far as journal articles are concerned. But your emphasis there at IntechOpen is on books, and we'd like to learn a little bit more about how you are approaching this particular aspect of the open access publishing revolutions. So tell us, what particular role does IntechOpen play?

BECK: I think I would like to start by just saying something about what role I think IntechOpen plays in today's open access world, as such. To me, coming from a very traditional publishing house, IntechOpen was always a very fast and very forward looking I would call it an enabler was a real game changer, not only in the book world, but as you may know, the founders of IntechOpen, two roboticists, they come from science, but then they opened their robotics journals.

So what the new role of IntechOpen is that they started and revolutionized open access book publishing before everybody else started to do that. So while most of the discussion, as you said, in the open access world takes place in the journal



ecosystem, we focus on books where we believe that there's a greater space for ideas to flourish, and for collections of ideas to come together. You may also know that I have given a talk about that in the conference in Berlin on academic publishing in Europe, and I referred to open access book publishing as the Cinderella of publishing because it opens that space where scientists can shed light to a given scientific problem in more detail, and I think it serves much, much better the scientific discussion than scattered articles in a journal.

KENNEALLY: It's a more thorough examination of a particular topic.

BECK: It is. It is. And I think – to me, just from the format, and that was this talk I gave was all about is I do not really see a difference between journals and books in the digital age. I think we are all confined by the formats, by referring either to the ISSN or to the ISBN, and I do acknowledge that scholars would like to have a destiny, like what do I publish? What do I submit for? Do I submit for something which has an ISSN or an ISBN? But in fact the book has, to me, so many more advantages because you can refer to a book on a chapter by chapter level, so that's the journal format, while also wrapping around something about that topic, and then it has an ISBN.

Also Google, it enables the search functions for open access books, too. So therefore we have an advantage – to me it's a double advantage of publishing of nexus of books.

KENNEALLY: Give our listeners, Dr. Beck, some sense of the range of books that you have published at IntechOpen. I know you publish works by Nobel Prize laureates, also by upcoming scientists working in new, relatively exciting fields.

BECK: Yes. What we focus on is on the STEM fields at large, while not excluding the social sciences, but this is not really our focus. I think we take pride in embracing the scientific world at large, and not focusing only on the Western world. That is something also important to me because I think there were so many articles so far and so many research being done that the current traditional publishing excludes so many good brains, important brains. I think open access has revolutionized the science or the research, as such. I do think that we cannot afford to lose the 90% of academics the traditional publishing excludes so far. I know that this is some sort of statement, but I do think that the open access paradigm is not only about saving money, but it's very much about including another stratum of fine brains into this world.



KENNEALLY: Let's talk about the authors, then. You've given us an idea of some of the range of authors who participate in your publishing programs. What do they tell you about why they choose to publish with IntechOpen?

BECK: I think it is important to note that it is not the beginners who publish with IntechOpen, it is those who have made their career. It is those who have published in their impact factor journals and they got tenure. So we are not a Ph.D. publisher, even though we would not exclude very, very excellent Ph.D.s, so this is not a statement against beginners in their career. But our clientele, and we have done the research on that, is more about those who are established scientists who believe in the open access paradigm and the necessity to share and to give back to the science community. We have for example – I mentioned that IntechOpen is very proud to include many stratum of scientists, do not focus on core countries. I'm not sure whether this is a PC – this is politically correct, talking about core countries in scholarly research, but to include others.

But we also have a program and we focus on women in science, and that has the objective of encouraging more women to pursue careers in STEM fields. This has been an issue on the global agenda for many years, and there is still a lot to be done. But in this program, we aim to publish roughly 100 books in three years, and we look for third party funding, so authors do not have to cover the open access fee, which is a service fee. The books are all edited by women who are leader in the subject, and they come from all over the globe and include, for example, the L'Oréal, (sp?) UNESCO for Women in Science Award winners or women from the National Science Foundation or the European Commission. So these are the kind of people who see the benefits of open access publishing to gain visibility and to gain immediate impact and receive citations and simply to share their views with other scientists and work on the same problems.

KENNEALLY: That sounds like a very interesting program and one very timely, given the environment today in publishing at large. What are some of the other strategic goals you have for IntechOpen in the next 12 to 24 months?

BECK: The IntechOpen's plan is, of course, to put out more good research, as such. I think that is the most important thing. We will invest into areas that make the user journey more agreeable because that's why we are digital publishers. While we interact with our authors in a normal way, we don't put articles in an envelope anymore, and nobody sits down and typesets it anymore. But we live in a digital age, and IntechOpen is about to fully embrace the digital world. So when you ask my colleagues what we stand for, then I would say it's about convenience and then to introduce an artificial German word which made into the vocabulary in Germany, it's called sofortness. So sofort means now-now. You want to publish



something now-now to make immediate impact. And these are all guiding principles.

One thing we are at, we try to be with the author and work around the author's needs. They have various service needs which may vary from one discipline to another. We would like to create networks and a community, that is part of the reason of moving the company also to London, that is to tap right into the thriving community here. That's what I enjoy very much, even coming from the vibrant city of Berlin. London is a hub for technology and innovation, and the UK, more broadly – Oxford and Cambridge just an hour away is exciting to me, and to look into the future in terms of digitization.

I would also like to mention what makes it so exciting, as you may also note, we are based in the Shard, which possibly a little bit unusual for an academic publisher.

KENNEALLY: Dr. Beck, we'll have to tell listeners who might not be familiar with London about the Shard. The Shard is an iconic skyscraper in the center of London, and really at the heart of the city – the old city – but also of the new city.

BECK: Yes. It's quite exciting, honestly. It's a building built by Renzo Piano, and we are located on the 25th floor. It's a shared space. But we didn't move here because of the nice look we have on the River Thames, this was not the reason. But we moved here to learn from other companies who are all located here in the Shard.

The Shard is referred to as the vertical city, if you look that up on Google, and it resembles what the world is today. It's not about national boundaries the UK tries to re-establish, but it's very much about collaboration. That is something which the Shard, as an environment, offers us. There are so many digital companies here, there's so many international companies here. Virtually you just take the elevator and can knock at somebody else's door and say, hey, I have a question on website improvement, or I have a question on the Chinese market, and so on and so forth. And that is so very helpful. It helps us with solving so many questions here.

When you said, what would you like to achieve in the next 12 to 24 months, we would like to distribute our work even wider, not for us, but to give the authors the widest possible distribution, so we have recently signed an agreement with the Chan Zuckerberg platform, Meta, or we have also uploaded our information, our content on My Signs Work (sp?) and so on, so forth. So we believe that because that's what authors pay us for. They pay us to give them the widest possible distribution for their widest impact, and that's what we're trying to do. So we try to live up to our own standards.



KENNEALLY: It's fascinating to hear about the place is evocation of your ambitions. The Shard is a place of innovation and you're aspiring to be a very innovative publisher. You're also one that is focusing on collaboration, which you can do there in the building. But I also know that there's a commitment there to quality in terms of the publishing that you do. Tell us about that.

BECK: Yeah, of course. We work like any other publisher. I think what you referred to is the animal in the room, and that is that IntechOpen, quite wrongly, I think, appeared on the Beall's list for predatory publishers, and that was very much about the lack of – or supposedly lack of proper reviewing for the journals business they have done. So I think I'm particularly cross with everything which has to do with the Beall's list because these problems have been addressed and solved. I think Beall's and what he has done had a place at the time when it was established, but I think it should also acknowledge that publishers move on and solve their problems.

In 2016 Beall's listed on his list, of course they were "cleared" and then they were sold to Sage, and they have carried out an extensive analysis of all of our editorial practices before the purchase, and they have checked all the peer review that had been carried out independently and in line with industry standards. If not we could not work with, at that time, the owners – I wasn't a part of it – couldn't have sold the journals.

And now our quality standards are, firstly we apply the usual quality standards around the international publishing process including, of course, peer reviewing, which we will come back to. I also believe that the post-publication usage of the global community is a marker of quality, and we offer as a combination of statistics drawn from our platform as well as independent metrics from altmetrics and dimensions. This is what every reader can see. This is a quality standard, so for example the number of downloads or citations from the community of readers.

So talking about the publication process, we completely comply to the what I would call an industry norm and industry-established editorial process. So every abstract submission is scientifically checked to evaluate its suitability. Only when it has passed that check, then it goes to a plagiarism check – we use iThenticate. So then you already have the first quality standard that this is something which is not plagiarism. Then we invite the author to fully submit a chapter, then we send it out to peer review. We have a huge database of reviewers. We enlarge that reviewer base in conjunction with a board. Then either chapters or entire books are accepted or rejected. So that's literally like every other publisher does. We have published our peer reviewing process on our website, and therefore, I think IntechOpen or



open access publishers as such, they do not behave differently from any other traditional publishers.

I think it is absolutely dangerous to jump to conclusions that open access is without quality checks just because it is open and just because you pay for the reviews. I think all of us who have worked in the industry so long, we know what quality checks are also in traditional publishing houses. So that's what I think.

KENNEALLY: Well, I appreciate your really going into that deeply to explain the quality controls that you have there at IntechOpen.

We have been speaking today with Dr. Anke Beck, who is the CEO of IntechOpen based in London. Dr. Beck, thank you so much for joining me today on Beyond the Book.

BECK: Thanks very much, and it's a pleasure to talk with you.

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