



Publishers Putting Research & Information To Work Against COVID-19

Interview with Porter Anderson

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KENNEALLY: The novel coronavirus that can lead to COVID-19 has given rise to a new sometimes terrifying vocabulary – social distancing, flattening the curve, super spreader.

Welcome to Copyright Clearance Center’s podcast series. I’m Christopher Kenneally for Beyond the Book. In this time of pandemic, once ordinary medical resources have taken on greater importance, from simple thermometers to sophisticated ventilators.

Most highly prized of all may be peer-reviewed research and carefully curated information. Indeed, immediate access to research findings and reliable news sources can make a critical difference for individuals and entire nations. In an effort to contribute to the common good, leading scientific news, trade, education and business publishers are offering open-to-read access to a deep pool of content on topics related to the novel virus and the COVID-19 disease pandemic it is creating.

Effective immediately, Copyright Clearance Center’s own Website will be updated regularly with an alphabetical list of links to this important content. CCC will support this roll call of responsible publishing through our own social media channels to give it the greatest possible reach for individuals, academic researchers, commercial scientists and students. Earlier this week, Publishing Perspectives Editor-in-Chief Porter Anderson reported on how leading publishers across the scholarly publishing ecosystem have enlisted in this volunteer army of knowledge sharing. He joins me now on CCC’s Beyond the Book. Welcome, Porter Anderson.

ANDERSON: Thank you, Chris. Great to be here.

KENNEALLY: Well, it is good to speak with you, but it’s especially important to share the information that you wrote about in Publishing Perspectives earlier this week, because somewhere in all of that information and data could be the cure, could be the answer, the vaccine to COVID-19. And as you wrote, the Association of American



Publishers President and CEO Maria Pallante issued a statement. She was expressing her own organization's support for the Trump administration's leadership in getting researchers, funders and publishers together to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. Tell us what was in that statement.

ANDERSON: Yeah. Her statement was very clear. And I'm grateful to Maria and her team for bringing this to us because, as you know, we cover primarily the trade industry on the international scale. We don't get to look into scholarly publishing as often as we'd like. And this was an occasion on which we have every reason to do that and to congratulate that sector on what they're doing in such a difficult time.

I should say, in fact, that the leadership at the White House, in this case, is Kevin Droegemeier, who is the Director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. And he is not actually on the team – the coronavirus team that we see every day in its briefings at the White House. He does, however, sit in on all of their meetings, so that he's up to exactly where they are on things, and was following along, and he has been instrumental in putting together this cooperative effort by 12 nations' scientific advisors, who all decided together, we will prevail upon the publishers we know in the scholarly world, those with whom we have contact, and ask them all to begin contributing their information into a repository that, again, those of us in the trade are not as familiar with.

It's called PubMed Central. This is housed by the National Institutes of Health, from which Dr. Anthony Fauci comes, of course, in his original position, and the National Library of Medicine at the NIH is producing PubMed Central, and it is the central repository now for the coronavirus information that the researchers are bringing forward from around the world.

And what Maria was doing was thanking the White House and Kevin Droegemeier for taking the lead on this. She said – and I can just quote her here, because it was very well done – she says the publishers purposefully and continuously contribute to the advancement of science and medicine by investing billions of dollars and producing and disseminating high-quality, peer-reviewed journal articles, which we all know, very rarely do we all get a chance to read them.

In this urgent and serious environment, she says, we are grateful to the many publishers who are doing their part to communicate valuable discoveries, analyses and data as quickly as possible. That's probably the salient point. Including by making their



copyrighted articles pertaining to the virus freely available for public use during this crisis in both text and machine-readable formats. As you know, many of these outfits are actually using machine reading to go quickly through research and find what they need.

As she says, many publishers, both commercial companies and nonprofit, have been doing this for weeks. And so under this program, they have been pulling together and coalescing a great body of work, which is fantastic and very good to find out.

I had begun thinking in this direction, thanks to one of our trade retail outfits, Kobo, Rakuten Kobo, which sits in Toronto, of course. And I had the good fortune to discover that their CEO, Michael Tamblyn, someone we all know and like in the industry, had actually found that his team in Italy, Kobo Italy, run by Stefano Tura and Lorena Landini had begun working with Mondadori, the great publisher of Italy. One of the very largest houses – to get e-books available to the Italian citizens who had been locked down in the original lockdown area that was southeast – am I saying that right – yeah – southeast of Milan, not in the Lombardi. It wasn't up to that lockdown yet. It was the original lockdown with the Codogno (sp?) group of towns, the little 12 towns, 50,000 people or so. And they offered them free e-books so that, during this period they had to be inside – some of them alone and quite frightened by the whole thing, since they were really quite new to it at the time – they could get something to read and something to reassure them.

And I felt this was great, because, as I was writing in our magazine, this is a moment for publishing not only to worry definitely about what's going to happen to it – particularly our booksellers, who, in a lockdown, are being shut down. They're not allowed to sell their books, can't open their doors, like any other business. We have to worry about that, but we also can look at what publishing can do. And now we're starting to see many instances of very good moves being made by publishers, and I'm grateful to all of them, as I'm sure we all are.

This then came in as secondary to that work that I had seen Kobo and Mondadori doing when we discovered it on the scholarly side. All of this research was being channeled into this very fine and available, freely available, central repository, so that everybody can get at it. One of the biggest problems being, of course, in the way you correctly introduced this problem, it is novel. It is new to us, and we just don't know enough about this virus yet.

KENNEALLY: And it's this kind of response, Porter Anderson, that is really of the moment. We are 2020 and able to share information globally and to make it possible for



researchers, whoever they are, wherever they are, to be a part of a global solution to this remarkable public health challenge.

Let's share some of the specifics here. Now, at Elsevier, for example, they have created a free novel coronavirus information center.

ANDERSON: Right. They actually have their own repository up and running – although they are going ahead and contributing everything that that has into PubMed, so that those who specifically want their work know to come to the – it's called the Novel Coronavirus Information Center for COVID-19. But anyone who simply goes into PubMed to find what they need very quickly is going to find that material as well. It's being replicated there. And that they have produced so far in their own system there more than 19,500 articles. Primarily, they're coming out of their journals, called Cell and The Lancet, which is what we would expect, of course, their primary medical organs.

But it's terrific to see. And they're giving us a comment, which we were very glad to have. Kumsal Bayazit, the CEO of Elsevier is saying that, in working with the White House to improve the discoverability and the utility, as she puts it, of this important body of knowledge, we're now making it available to PubMed Central and other publicly funded repositories. They're including WHO, the World Health Organization, of course, with its own COVID database, for full text and data mining and without any limitations for as long as needed. So most of these companies, I believe, most of these publishers, are looking at this as a wide open-ended arrangement that they understand needs to stand as long as necessary.

KENNEALLY: And at Springer Nature, Porter Anderson, they are offering not only the very same types of journal articles that Elsevier has made a part of the PubMed Central database but they are publishers of Scientific American, and so the information they are opening up to the public is one that public readers, nonprofessionals like yourself and me – we can read about the latest developments in this fast-moving medical story.

ANDERSON: Yeah. If anything, I have to say the stories we're doing right now on this are going through the ceiling in terms of readership. It's something that we are, of course, always grateful to see in terms of bringing audience to the site, Publishing Perspectives, and to our work. But even for a situation as grave as this, it's marvelous to see that people are curious, people are looking for the information.



And I hope that means that they're taking it very seriously because, of course, as I think we're all aware, most of the cultures trying to prepare for the brunt – the next brunt, if you will, of the virus arrival are having a hard time making people understand that self-distancing is for real. You must do it. And it's just not something you can play around with. So it's good to see this level of curiosity and, as you say, something going out in Scientific American hits exactly the right kind of people who are wanting to learn more about it.

KENNEALLY: Indeed. And other publishers who are joining this effort include Wiley Research. Judy Verses announced that Wiley and its society partners are doing all they can to aid in this global response. The UK's Emerald Group has also made all relevant coronavirus and pandemic-related resources freely available. And so publishers are really joining together in this. And you mentioned at the start of your remarks that this is really an industry-wide effort, a recognition that not only is this a very difficult moment for publishing as a business, it is really a time for publishers to join with everyone else in helping reach some solution to this.

ANDERSON: It is. It is. And I have to say, if there's sort of a difficult reality to this ahead – and of course, there are many of those coming for all of us – I think one of the things we're noticing in the experience of the Spanish and the Italian publishers today – I have a story – they are both having to make very strong appeals to their governments not to be forgotten in the kind of economic stimulus and other help that's being prepared for the other side because, of course, as we were mentioning, their booksellers, their bookstores are closed. These are cultures that are not as up to speed as ours is, here in the United States, in terms of online ordering. And the publishing industries of at least certainly Spain, Italy, France – I'm afraid – Germany, where there's quite a robust outbreak at this point, they're going to suffer terribly. I'm worried about the UK, although that seems to be a little slower walkup, we expect it to intensify.

And I think that anything that the publishers can do at this point, while they go through the process of – and it's a difficult one – of remotely working, getting their staffs to work from home, which I think is terribly important but difficult to arrange – if they can, at this point, address what do we have to contribute, how can we make it available in a medium that people can get to without having to physically exchange things, I think this is the time to do it, because, I guess, what I'm really saying is that, on the other side of this, it's going to be all about making sure we save everybody. Right through the supply chain are going to need every bit of support we can find for them.



So this is the moment. This is the moment of generosity that we want to see. And I'm very grateful to all of the publishers and to everyone else in the system who are actually stepping up and doing something like this, including, I should say, Copyright Clearance Center. I've noticed you've got a really fine page of resources here, which is great.

KENNEALLY: Well, thank you for the compliment, Porter Anderson. It's only a small part of what we are going to try to do in the coming weeks at Copyright Clearance Center to support the sharing of information about this coronavirus. And we appreciate your reporting on the subject as well. We've been speaking today with Publishing Perspectives Editor-in-Chief Porter Anderson. Porter Anderson, thanks so much, and take care.

ANDERSON: Thank you, Chris. Everyone be safe.

KENNEALLY: Beyond the Book is produced by Copyright Clearance Center. Our coproducer and recording engineer is Jeremy Brieske of Burst Marketing. Subscribe to the program wherever you go for podcasts and follow us on Twitter and Facebook. The complete Beyond the Book podcast archive is available at beyondthebook.com. I'm Christopher Kenneally. Thanks for listening, and join us again soon on CCC's Beyond the Book.