

# Mind the Gap: Gender Disparities in Leadership Positions in Scholarly Publishing

## MODERATOR:

**Lauren Kane** 

Chief Operating Officer  
BioOne  
Washington, D.C.

## SPEAKERS:

**Angela Cochran** 

Director of Journals  
American Society of Civil  
Engineers  
Reston, Virginia

**Ken Heideman** 

Director of Publications  
American Meteorological Society  
Boston, Massachusetts

**Louise Page** 

Publisher  
PLOS  
San Francisco, California

**Charlie Rapple** 

Sales and Marketing Director  
Kudos  
Oxford, United Kingdom

## REPORTER:

**Jessica LaPointe** 

Managing Copy Editor  
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level: women enroll in graduate studies at a much lower rate than men. As he pointed out, this results in the loss of “a whole cohort of women” in meteorology.

Cofounder of Kudos Charlie Rapple confessed she would not have joined this panel a few years ago because she did not notice the gender gap problem. She said she didn’t identify as a feminist when she was younger, but now she’s noticed gender disparities in her profession. She came to realize she was being paid less than men doing the same or lesser work, and she noticed the keynote speakers of conferences she attended were always male.

## Forging a Career Path

Cochran said her career path resulted from a mixture of happy accidents, including relocating several times for her husband’s career; she luckily found jobs in the various new cities and fell into a managing editor position in cancer research. Cochran encouraged women seeking advancement to consider changing jobs. She said many women never get the salary increase they deserve when they have been in a company for many years. Women are often paid less than men when they are hired, and so a promotion might net only a 5% salary increase. But, she said, “If you leave your job and return, you can command a higher salary.”

Page told the story of how she launched the first online medical journal and through that experience got a whole new skillset, which she leveraged into a new job. Her advice for managing career advancement follows from her experiences: “If someone trusts you to do something new; give it a try. What matters is who are you influencing; who listens to you.”

## Work–Life Balance

To manage work–life/family balance, Rapple said employers must have very clear policies regarding maternity leave, and they should be generous with benefits (like flexible schedules) to retain staff. Men also need support when they need to take the time to be a primary caregiver. Rapple urged successful women to “Be the mentor you would have wanted as a young worker, and encourage female members of your team to think strategically about their careers.” She also counseled women to be realistic about planning family life after a baby,

## Identifying the Problem

This well-attended session began with Lauren Kane showing some pie charts about the gender distribution in scholarly publishing: Only one-third of scholarly publishers have a female CEO and only one-fifth have a female board chair. The industry is about 60% female, yet the top leadership positions tend to be occupied by men.

Angela Cochran noted data from an SSP survey showed most people who work in scholarly publishing are white women, and there are broad disparities in gender, race, and country of origin. Louise Page remarked that the age of an organization makes a difference: newer organizations tend to be more progressive, while the structure of older organizations can help provide opportunities and a clear pathway for advancement. In newer organizations, the lack of structure requires staff to forge their own career trajectories.

Ken Heideman noted with surprise that there were very few men in the room and felt that was emblematic of the topic under discussion. In his own profession of meteorology, Heideman outlined the progress that has been made in recent years, saying it was overwhelmingly male when he was in college but there have been improvements, at least at the undergraduate level, where there is now about a 50-50 split between men and women. The gender disparity in meteorology, Heideman explained, arises at the graduate

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and stressed that having sufficient support is essential. All participants spoke about the difficulty of balancing maternity leave and the demands of a new baby with their desire to return work. Page advised new mothers to be honest with themselves and their employers about what they can handle, both physically and emotionally. Kane brought up the need to care for aging parents, and reiterated that employers need to provide flexibility to keep employees happy.

### Mentoring New Talent

Moving onto discussing the solution to gender disparities in leadership positions, Rapple argued that employers should factor gender disparity into hiring decisions. She and Cochran agreed on the necessity of giving staff practical experience in project management. Cochran emphasized the need to prepare women for more responsibility so they can take on leadership positions when they become available. Organizations benefit from creating a job pool of qualified candidates to promote from within. Managers can identify people with talent and help foster that talent to build a qualified job pool.

A concern was raised that mentorship opportunities are available for early career women, but similar support for mid- to late-career women is lacking. Rapple wondered if, because women are conditioned from such a young age not to aim for higher leadership positions, mid- to late-career women may have already chosen not to pursue leadership roles.

Cochran spoke about the field of civil engineering, echoing Heideman's remarks about meteorology: Women go to school for it but many don't stay in the industry very long. Only about 18% of civil engineers are women. It has been assumed women are choosing instead to start families. In reality, women may leave the field because they are not given opportunities to gain the experience they would need to take leadership positions in their organizations. Cochran said she is often the only woman at the journals' editorial board meetings, and while engineers talk about "diversity," they mean different types of engineers, not always women or people of color.

### More Women = Lower Pay?

An audience member brought up a recent *New York Times* article that addressed the fact that, as women begin to work in formerly male-dominated industries, salaries drop.<sup>1</sup> The

question was whether salaries in publishing are low because it's a female-dominated profession. Kane enthusiastically responded that this is her current field of inquiry. She said the article's findings are not surprising, since early research into scholarly publishing organizations' financials show that women are paid about 80% as much as men. Page said that PLOS takes a proactive stance toward salary equity by utilizing salary bands so they are more equitable. To women in the audience, Page admonished, "Know your worth! You have to go out and find what a comparable salary will be at another organization." Kane agreed that women must advocate for themselves and consider moving on to another job to maximize their salary options.

One audience member mentioned that a lack of respect from their colleagues affects the way women are treated by other staff members. Building on this comment, Rapple reiterated that, in her experience, women do not ask for raises. Men do ask for raises, and, unlike women, they feel comfortable expressing dissatisfaction with their salaries, and it only gets worse outside the scholarly publishing world. Rapple said at some events she attended with her staff they were the only women present (other than the wait staff), and other attendees talked only to their male colleagues.

### Publishing's Lack of Diversity

Finally, an audience member asked, "how do you address the fact that publishing is overwhelmingly white?" Cochran agreed more should be done to attract a more diverse workforce. For example, ASCE has a diversity council that addresses how to work together on teams and how to respect other cultures. She said it's important to embrace the diversity that does already exist, and also to figure out how to attract a diverse pool of applicants. Organizations should put more efforts into diversifying racially and ethnically because everyone benefits from having a more diverse staff. Kane agreed: "The organizations that have a more diverse workforce will be the ones that thrive in the future."

### Reference

1. Miller CC. As women take over a male-dominated field, the pay drops. *New York Times*. 18 March 2016. [http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/20/upshot/as-women-take-over-a-male-dominated-field-the-pay-drops.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/20/upshot/as-women-take-over-a-male-dominated-field-the-pay-drops.html?_r=0). Accessed 26 July 2016.