



Aries Industry Advisory Board

Date: December 7, 2018

Time: 9:00am – 5:00pm

Location: De Vere Grand Connaught Rooms, Great Queen Street, London, UK

Attendees:

Aries: Lyndon Holmes, Jennifer Fleet, Tony Alves, Betsy Hopkins, Kate Horgan

SSRN: Gregg Gordon

Industry: American Chemical Society, Brill, Cell Press, De Gruyter Poland, IEEE, John Wiley & Sons, PLOS, Renew Publishing Consultants, Taylor & Francis, Thieme, University of Chicago Press, Wolters Kluwer, World Scientific

The meeting commenced at 9:07am following breakfast and registration. Lyndon Holmes, Founder – Aries Systems welcomed the Board, thanking them for their participation in the first meeting of the AIAB.

Lyndon presented the Ground Rules for the Board and the meeting, including legal guidance and participant guidelines.

Following was an introduction of Aries staff and Board attendees.

Lyndon then presented on Data Security at Aries.

- History – Each publication’s data is “siloes” into its own SQL database. Though the data can be reported on across journals by that journal publisher only, this must be explicitly requested by the Publisher. This will remain in place; Elsevier will only have access to Elsevier publications.
- Security Risks – Data security at Aries is separate from any GDPR requirements. Aries takes data and access breach risks very seriously, running proprietary security processes regularly, such as penetration testing and code scanning to ensure data is secure and protected. The Board is the correct place to raise any security-related concerns.
- Going Forward – a number of additional security protocols are being put in place at Aries headquarters to add further protections to Publisher data. Included in this will be a Data Security and Protection Audit.
- The Audit results will be presented to the Board at our June 2019 meeting (date TBD).

Board attendees requested the following:

- Objectives and Scope of the Audit distributed to Board in advance of the Audit
- Annual execution of the audit, unless a triggering event occurs (such as office relocation, etc.)

Additional conversations included:

- Aries treats, and will continue to treat, all publishers equally. No publisher gets special favors. Development will continue for all clients as it always has been managed. Development items already in the schedule will not be impacted by Elsevier development; a separate team is working on Elsevier-identified development. This development will be made available for all clients as they are available in Editorial Manager.
- Aries continues to be committed to the single code-base approach to development, meaning all development will be available for all clients.

Board attendees requested the following:

- Clearly documented position paper or statement that Aries is committed to continuing the Single Code Stream.
- Clearly documented position paper or statement regarding the separation of publisher data across the entire organization.

Tony Alves presented the Current Solution Roadmap.

- Continuity: Product Management staff has more than 100 years of combined Editorial Manager experience.
- Product development ideas continue to be “crowd sourced” from Aries clients through User Groups, specific client requests, and industry events.
- Feature analysis, development, and deployment will remain unchanged.
- Tony then presented some upcoming features on the development roadmap.

Jennifer Fleet presented the Strategic Roadmap.

- Three key strategic initiatives:
 1. XML tools and workflow
 2. Preprint servers
 3. Third-party integrations
- Jennifer discussed the current LiXuid Manuscript development by Aries.
 1. Phase 1 has been released in the form of Xtract, which parses key data elements from Author manuscripts and pre-populates the Author submission form.
 2. Phase 2 is in progress, integrating production-focused XML tools, from automated conversion from Word documents to XML through online editing to auto-pagination and redaction tools and XSLT transforms to export out of ProduXion Manager.
 3. Phase 3 envisions full conversion at the point of submission, as well as peer review within the editing environment introduced in Phase 2.
- Preprint servers are increasing in use year over year. Editorial Manager already integrates with many of these, allowing automatic ingest of submissions to EM. We continue to integrate with market-leading preprint servers.
- Third-party integrations also continues to be a focus for Aries, from tools like financial disclosure systems and commenting tools, to data repositories, to manuscript evaluation tools.

Board attendees discussed the following:

- Open Peer Review and Transparent Peer Review initiatives; what aspects are already available in Editorial Manager and what aspects are being explored.

The Board broke for lunch with the following “food for thought” from Lyndon:

Does the rise of preprint servers in the industry impact the traditional peer review model, and will it become more dominant over the next five years? Is this an area Editorial Manager should attempt to move into or perhaps be a bridge to that model?

The meeting resumed with a talk on the Industry from industry consultant Simon Inger. Key topics included:

- Open Data – what are the implications, and will this mean that the article loses relevance as the industry moves forward?
- Peer Reviewer Shortage – what are the causes, what are the solutions?

Causes include:

- Specialized reviewers do not have the time to review because they are in high demand
- Western reviewers of Eastern papers: as more submissions come from Eastern authors, there is more time pressure on Western reviewers.

Solutions include:

- Provide training for Eastern reviewers to enable them to become part of the reviewer pool
- Artificial Intelligence to assist in sourcing reviewers
- Artificial Intelligence – allows articles to be pre-flighted in a more sophisticated way
- Preprint services – introduce an interesting social aspect
- Peer Review systems – seen as lacking; every time an author submits she has to relearn a submission system. This perception is across all platforms, not platform-specific.
- Open Access (Plan S) – more global awareness of this over the last few months. Shifting the importance of authors, because they are now the source of funding. This may lead to shifts as more accommodations are made to entice authors.

The meeting then transitioned to the Industry Strategic Initiatives discussion with the board as a whole.

Discussions:

- Peer Review Systems: How do we change the perception that they are difficult? Systems need to be easy for authors, but journal requirements differ journal to journal. Need to find the balance between making it easy for authors while ensuring all requirements of the publication are met. This sometimes comes down to journal configurations, but some staff don't always know the difference between a platform limitation and a journal configuration choice. With some platforms, the cost to change workflows can be prohibitive, though this is not the case with Editorial Manager.
- Who is the Customer: For platforms such as Editorial Manager, the publisher is our customer. For the publisher, especially in deference to the author-pay model, the author is. The system must therefore meet the publisher requirements, which may be ease-of-use for the authors. Impact factor plays a part for authors too; not just ease of use.
- Development Dollars: Which group should be the focus for development? Aries gathers feedback from our clients, the publishers. We do not contact or interact with authors or reviewers directly to gather feedback. No consensus from the Board on the "one" group to focus on for development investment (authors, reviewers, journal staff, editors); they are all part of the whole. Authors may submit elsewhere with a bad experience, but they also will not submit in future with a slow review process. Turn-around times are critical. With author as the primary customer for the publisher, the publisher loses the direct author contact when they use a platform. The technology exists in EM where one client has a front-end author portal that feeds submissions to EM.
- Reviewer Pool: Finding reviewers is challenging. There is a perception that there is some editor bias in selecting reviewers, but no demonstrable evidence of this. Diversity in the reviewer pool, and how to eliminate editor bias was tabled as a topic for another day, but agreed it is an interesting topic. Data aggregation and analytics of publicly available reviewer information (not Aries / EM executing the aggregation) may expose editor bias. Educating reviewers in best practices was discussed. Perhaps a certification program for reviewers that could be recorded in peer review systems or via ORCID. Chinese universities are investing in researcher education.

- GDPR: Discussed briefly, this is clearly a sensitive area. Some board members found Aries' solution too heavy-handed, others found it not strict enough.

Suggestions:

- Balance for submission and publication needs: One suggestion was to enforce the gathering of all requirements only after the initial review and decision the submission will go to peer review, but not requiring a full revision.
- Usability suggestions for ease of use:
 - Voice commands might make it easier – the technology is not yet there, but may be assessed in the future.
 - Less text in interface, more graphic cues
 - Industry standards such as:
 - Central submission repository and then allow authors deliver to journals from there
 - Common formatting across all platforms – buttons in the same place, consistent iconography, etc.
 - Explore mobile use for editors and reviewers. Primarily for paper tracking rather than taking action. Enabling reminders via text messaging would be useful as well.
- Ideas to assist in reviewer identification and retention:
 - Enhance reviewer selection tools by providing relevant data on alternate reviewers to promote use of “other” reviewers rather than same batch. Examples include citing works that would make them a good selection, show recently published work and location of publication by that reviewer.
 - Personalize the invitations to show why they are being selected (reference cited works, etc.).
 - Finally, provide feedback to reviewers after they are done so they are aware of the outcome based on their review.
 - Sometimes reviewers have people who assist them; capture those people in a reviewer pool in some way.
 - Look at authors who cited high-impact articles early in their cycle and use those people.

The meeting concluded with the following action items for Aries staff:

- Distribute the Security Audit scope and objectives ahead of audit and results following completion
- Distribute meeting minutes in advance of posting on Aries website; then post on website for public consumption
- Provide a clear statement on the Single Code Base, including no change in our development process
- Jocelyn Koller will distribute reimbursement process information by the end of day Monday
- The next AIAB meeting will be in June in Boston, MA, USA; date to be selected and announced soon.

Meeting concluded around 4:30pm and moved to cocktails, canapés, and conversation until 6pm.