



## Aries Industry Advisory Board

**Date:** January 21, 2022

**Time:** 8:30am – 9:30am ET

**Location:** Zoom

**Attendees:**

**Aries Systems:** Jennifer Fleet, Brianna Bowen, Betsy Hopkins, Kate Horgan, Bill Reuschlein, Nathan Westgarth

**Industry:** American Chemical Society, American Society of Civil Engineers, Brill, Cell Press, PLOS, Sage Publishing, Springer Nature, Taylor & Francis, Thieme, University of Chicago, Wiley, Wolters Kluwer, World Scientific

The meeting commenced at 8:33am US – Eastern. Brianna Bowen, Director of Marketing called the meeting to order and Jennifer Fleet, Managing Director—Aries Systems welcomed the board and thanked them for their time and participation. We then went around the “room” and shared introductions. Brianna kicked off the content portion of the meeting notifying board members that all questions and discussion will be left until the end of the meeting and we will monitor Zoom’s chat feature.

Nathan Westgarth, Vice President of Product Management at Aries, presented Aries 2022 Product Roadmap Overview. General themes are the same as what was shared during our June 2021 meeting – as expected they would continue through to 2022 and they have.

- 2022 Product Roadmap Overview
  - User Experience and User Interface: Aries is starting with areas that will have biggest impact and showcase our branding. We are looking to offer customization capabilities in new navigation bar. The Author reviewer main menus launched week of January 17, 2022. Reviewer invitation workflow is next to be released. Our aim is to meet accessibility improvements. We will also be doing Author updates focused on user experience without user interface updates.
  - Aries’ is hoping to work on the below list of areas through our UI/UX initiative over 2022:
    - Editor Decision Workflows
    - Editor Main Menus & Folders
    - Publisher Main Menus & Folders
    - Classifications Functionality
    - Registration and Login
  - Performance Improvements and Cloud Migration: 2022 performance improvement is aimed at improving the overall performance of the application and infrastructure. Will be looking to do make updates in 2022 as well as the move to the cloud which Bill will talk about later during his presentation. Moving to the cloud will make Aries more scalable.
  - Aries Partner Ecosystem: Third party integrations are going well. Current work planned for 2022 includes new partners and services across our existing API ecosystem, pre-submission manuscript services (grammar/ language support services), and an API for gender, race, and ethnicity data collection
  - LiXuid Manuscript: Aries immediate focus is on XML conversion that will work in the production side.

- Workflow Enhancements and Features
  - Transparent peer review: Aries is looking to improve our support for generation of transparent peer review reports. This is where peer review content is published openly, and reviewers remain anonymous. Benefits include greater visibility and recognition for reviewers, improved review quality with increased opportunity for scrutiny, research integrity and reproducibility improved with transparency, reduce review manipulation and fraudulent activities. We are seeing use and demand increasing within the industry. Aries is planning to have a standardized export mechanism for all customers rather than varied ones we have today.
  - Diversity data collection: We have looked at Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC) and are working with our Elsevier colleagues on diversity data collection. Our work includes an API integration offering for a standardized solution – RSC has given as example. Opening that API will allow customers to open their own systems. Looking for a publisher agnostic system that the Elsevier team has been working on. The intent is to remove the need for customers to build their own system. The work supports collection of data and would hope to open that up and then expand export.
  - Mentorship in Peer Review: Enabling a junior researcher. This work is slotted for later in the year and requires more investigation. Mentorship is very manual right now, but we hope to make this a more standardized workflow to support.
  - Internal capabilities: Aries is looking to capture product usage to support product improvement prioritization decisions, support future workflow simplification decisions, informing our user experience and user interface refresh initiative. These are some of what we're doing and there will be additional work as well. We also want to capture user feedback for work such as, measuring impact of UI/UX updates, qualitatively and quantitatively, capturing feedback for future product improvements

Bill Reuschlein, Director of Operations introduced himself to the board and presented an update on Aries strategy for moving to the cloud:

- Bill shared his background with the board. Bill's time at Via Oncology office was focused on Co-Lo and migration. Elsevier acquired Via Oncology in 2018. Bill started moving Via Oncology to AWS and cloud based. Growing within Elsevier Bill took on responsibility of Europe and China for getting Via Oncology migrated and among other offerings. He then took the opportunity at Aries Systems to lead them in the move to cloud-based architecture for the next year or two. Once that migration is complete Aries will leverage the cloud agnostic capabilities, to stand up a more robust and scalable infrastructure going forward.
- Why move to the cloud: We want to be in the business of producing world class software, not data center services. In a traditional data center, you need to plan for capacity. Moving to the cloud allows capacity planning and scaling up and down on demand, it allows teams to focus on stability, features, development. Will provide value to Engineering and customers.
- The focus point of moving to the cloud is bringing stability through automation. Cattle versus pets analogy – a server is like a pet you have to care for, and we want more cattle. With infrastructure as code, that will enable work to get through the pipelines faster— we can patch, scan, etc. By adopting DevOps in Aries, it will allow us to take advantage of Elsevier efficiencies while maintaining the data and customer separation. This will allow for savings and reduced costs that can be reinvested back in Editorial Manager® features and improving the product to get the best quality software on the most reliable infrastructure.

The meeting then transitioned to facilitated discussion with the board as a whole on the following topic areas:

- Transparency in Peer Review
  - Are there others looking for more transparency in peer review? What is bubbling up that are priorities this year?
  - What do we do with the peer review Metadata we gather?
- Moving to the Cloud
  - In moving towards the cloud, I'd like to know more about how you plan on security the data. What are Aries' plans for ensuring data is protected against cyber-threats?
  - Elsevier has a long standard of applications we need to meet. There are many layers of protection and security, and we operate in zero trust. With Bill's background in the healthcare industry, he is used to highly compliant applications and Aries is applying all of those standards into EM. The system is username and password protected. Aries has multiple security tools in place. Will also be able to automate the penetration tests we perform today.
  - Does the move to cloud mean Elsevier becomes the data processor? Aries still owns and controls anything that comes into EM. While Elsevier owns it, Aries has a separate team that manages accounts and infrastructure and component security. Compliance principles are brought into Aries but nobody across Elsevier (even within Aries) has access to data they don't need to do their day-to-day job.
- Diversity Reporting
  - How often is API going to be updated? The API is one that calls out to collection system, that's the example Elsevier has built. Joint commitment would recommend all Publishers use same standards where feasible. The API will be stable and call out to collection systems. The way questions are asked will keep pace with what the joint committee suggests, but we expect customizations will be supported by a simple update process (TBD).
  - Will data be stored in EM or outside of EM? Based on the Elsevier example it will be stored outside of EM. We still must figure out how to support reporting. Different customers want to do reporting in different ways.
- Mentorship in Peer Review
  - Could you say a little more about mentored peer review functionality being available? Later in the year, very loosely planned for Q4 right now.
  - Many board members were interested in volunteering to help with this work.
  - Is there any interest in exploring discussion group peer review where a senior reviewer works with a group of more junior resources instructing them along the way?
  - A little-known EM feature is the ability for reviewers and editors who are part of a submission to do a discussion forum. They could then chat amongst themselves, and the chat data is stored in EM. They could have a collaborative discussion, but each person has their own captured feedback. It would kind of be like "ghost mentorship" which is similar to "ghost authorship". Kate Horgan, Director of Client Strategy and Operations share more information on this feature with the board.
- Travel Plans for 2022
  - Travel for early 2022 was discussed with board. We now have a better understanding of how to proceed with meetings and board events.

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

- We'll be sending our January newsletter with a question on how you enjoyed this format. For those of you who have experienced the in-person and multi-hour virtual, let us know your thoughts on these shorter more frequent meeting format verse the longer quarterly meetings. Thank you all for participating and engaging in our January 2022 Aries Industry Advisory Board meeting.
- The meeting concluded around 9:28am US-Eastern