

Michelle Claville:

Greetings, everyone. My name is Michelle Claville, and I serve as the Vice President for Research and Policy Analysis here at the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, otherwise known as CHEA. CHEA is located in Washington DC in the United States of America. I also get to serve as the liaison for CHEA's International Quality Group that we commonly call CIQG. Today I have the distinct pleasure of interviewing another guest for the March, 2023 issue of Quality International Newsletter. Our guest is none other than Tony Roche, the Chief Officer of Publishing and Strategic Relationships at Emerald Publishing. Emerald is based in the United Kingdom and is a company that is engaged in a number of initiatives that align with and support the United Nations' sustainable development goals. With that brief introduction, let me introduce you to and welcome Mr. Tony Roche. Welcome, Tony.

Tony Roche:

Thank you, Michelle. Delighted to be here.

Michelle Claville:

So let's get started with the interview. Could you just tell us a little bit about yourself and your journey into the current role at Emerald Publishing?

Tony Roche:

Absolutely. Thank you. So, thank you very much for the invitation to reach out to CHEA's membership via QI News. I'm absolutely delighted to be here. So my story, I joined Emerald Publishing in 2012 and subsequently have led a range of the business functions including content acquisition and management, product business innovation. Most recently, I led the business as the CEO prior to and following the acquisition by Cambridge Information Group in Massachusetts. As of first February, I'm delighted to have taken up the role of Chief Officer for Publishing and Strategic Relationships, which is a new role within the group. And this really has responsibilities that span all aspects of publishing, brand, open research, public policy, strategic relationships, and as part of the M and A team at C-Suite level. And prior to joining Emerald, I worked across a range of editorial, product, brand and publishing roles with Elsevier, which is part of the RELX Group.

And that was over a 16-year period, culminating in the role of publishing director for their business and management sciences group outside of Emerald. My wife Sarah, and I enjoy everything that comes with having two teenagers at home, as well as two very energetic field spaniels. And we live here in the Yorkshire Dales in the north of England. Just briefly, if I may, I'd just like to provide a little bit more background on Emerald itself. So we were founded by Management Scholars in the UK back in 1967, and we provide a range of publishing services to help researchers to tell their story in a meaningful and timely way. We provide tools and we provide services to help build confidence and capability in impactful research. And our vision is to support real impact through healthy research and publishing practices through mission-driven content and an engaging customer experience. So we we're really committed to academic freedom and quality that's writ large across everything we do. And I think as such, there are really strong parallels with the mission and the work of CHEA.

Michelle Claville:

I wanna go directly into your to Emerald's role. I noticed that Emerald is one of the signatories in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Publisher Compact. Could you explain to our audience the significance of the agreement in general and Emerald's role therein?

Tony Roche:

Absolutely. So we were delighted to be a founding signatory of the UN SDG Publishers Compact back in 2020. And this is all designed to inspire action amongst publishers around the world to really accelerate progress to achieve the SDGs by 2030. Now, given Emerald's commitment to equality in its broadest sense, we were already focused on mission-based research to support the UN SDGs. We were calling for research to be published that really helps solve those real world issues, things like realization of a fairer society, supporting healthier lives, quality education for everyone, and mitigating the climate crisis. Sustaining the Compact for us made a clear commitment to the underlying principles of developing sustainable practices and acting as a champion for the SDGs across this current decade, which they're terming at the UN the decade of action that takes us through to 2030.

So we're really all about publishing content that will help inform, develop, and inspire action in that direction. We've long sought to challenge the status quo in the publishing market. We believe that it's our responsibility to think differently about the content program and to create new impact barometers that more accurately reflect the modern research era that we're living in. So combining some of the legacy metrics with some of the new and dynamic ways to develop the narrative around research and to make sure it reaches the people who drive the change on the ground. So the motivation for us for making changes, it's about shifting cultures. It's about driving impact continuously. If anything, the pandemic that we've all lived through recently is, heightens the urgency to drive meaningful change through research in the real world. And the development of vaccines is a brilliant example of that.

I think it's fair to say that there've been many different mandates and aims expressed by funding bodies, by the UN itself, by international governments. We all recognize though that the SDGs represent existential challenges, and we are really not making enough progress or progress we need at the pace we need to combat these things. So it's a duty, we believe of research institutes, of publishers, funders, and of bodies like CHEA, who wish to drive quality and encourage collaboration to come together to meet these challenges with far greater urgency. Ultimately, we've all got a responsibility to play our part in solving these significant global challenges, and that's really the heart of what we're about. So signing the SDG Publisher Compact supports our continued goal to drive change and create more equitable publishing practices that really empower decision makers and ultimately influence real change. When we launched our original Impact manifesto back in 2018, we wanted to be as bold as possible with it, whilst also making a solid commitment to the numerous communities that we serve across all the disciplines that we publish in.

So this for us, was about demonstrating what we could do and backing it up with actions and investments to support the entire research journey. Now we know that as a moderate-sized, medium-sized independent publisher, we can't do all of that on our own. But as a publisher in social sciences and one that's really willing to make positive moves, such as, for example, signing the Declaration on Research assessment, we have to clearly state our intent to support the provable effects of research in the real world. So by signing the UN Publisher Compact, we took another step forward in delivering that real impact agenda, contributing to the creation of equitable, healthy and sustainable research and publishing for all. As I said before, this is a decade of action as the UN describes it itself. So all signatories of the Compact have made a number of concrete commitments against which we will measure our progress publicly.

And just to summarize these for your members, these are committing to the SDGs stating our sustainability policies and our targets on our website, including adherence to the compact itself and incorporating the SDGs and their targets where appropriate in all of our business goals, actively promoting and acquiring content that advocates for themes that are represented by the SDGs. These themes include things like equality, sustainability, just different safeguarding and strengthening the

environment. We commit to annually reporting on progress towards achieving the SDGs, sharing our data and contributing to benchmarking activities, helping to share best practices and identify gaps that still need to be addressed across the publishing sector. And we've nominated a person who promotes SDG progress, acting as the point of contact and coordinating all of the SDG themes throughout the organization. And in Emerald's case, I'm very fortunate to be the person that leads that at C-Suite level, and I act as a sponsor for all of our SDG activities. Some of the other things that we've committed to doing, raising awareness and promoting the SDGs amongst staff to increase their awareness of SDG policies and goals, and to encourage projects that will help to achieve those SDGs by 2030.

So it's a mix of some top down and some real movement that's bottom up in the organization itself. Also committed to raising awareness and promoting the SDGs amongst our supply chain. So we advocate for the SDGs, collaborating on areas that need innovative actions and solutions, and indeed holding our supplies to account to do the same where we possibly can.

We've become an advocate to our customers and our stakeholders by promoting and actively communicating about the SDG agenda that comes through our marketing channels, through our websites, through our promotions and the projects that we contribute to. And we (collaborate) across cities, countries, and continents with other publisher signatories and other organizations to develop localize and scale projects that will advance progress on the SDGs, both individually and through industry bodies. And I think today's conversation, today's podcast is part of that outreach to other audiences and stakeholder groups. We also dedicate budgets and other people resources towards accelerating progress against the SDGs internally and through our content all aligned to those principles. And finally, we commit to taking action directly as Emerald on one or more of the SDGs. And we actually have four of the SDGs that are completely embedded within our programs. So this is all ongoing work for us within the framework of the SDG Publishers Compact. We're actively involved in things like the SDG Compact Fellows and the Higher Education Sustainability Institute, which has a task force looking on impact and outcomes. And that, again, reflects our commitment to meeting these challenges head on.

Michelle Claville:

So you've said a great deal about what Emerald is doing, and all the different ways that it's demonstrated its commitment to the sustainability development goals and to manifest quality in various ways that we've already discussed. But I wanna talk about you for just a minute because as over the past year or so, I've noticed that you've made a great deal of public commentary, regarding the historical context, or the historical recognition of quality and research in various venues. And I wonder if you would share it with this audience, while stating any, you know, possible implications for quality assurance in higher education more generally.

Tony Roche:

Yeah, absolutely. Michelle, so in, in 2022, we relaunched our impact manifesto, and that has six commitments to advance ongoing debates around academic culture, around incentives, around research evaluation. Ultimately, that's all about, again, driving the highest quality research to advance positive change in society. So the essence of this is a call for sector-wide action to bring together multiple parties to break down barriers to change. So that includes funders, it includes policymakers, the users of research, researchers themselves, academic institutions, publishers, and accrediting bodies who clearly play a vital role in setting and upholding the quality agenda through what is measured and recognized. So straight off the bat, CHEA and its members, for example, bodies in the accrediting space for business and management education, AACSB, EFMD in Europe and AMBER again in Europe, they all

have a role to play in helping us address and recognize what needs to be measured, what the impact of that measurement has, and how ultimately it drives quality and change.

So we were one of the first publishers to champion the need for change. We launched our original Impact manifesto back in 2018, and at that time we also signed up to something called DORA, which is the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment. And since then, we've really tried to actively challenge what we think are quite outdated practices that can take the focus away from real world impact. And we've responded to the sector's desire for change by launching some of these initiatives that really attempt to drive the needle positively towards real world outcomes. I think there's been some progress there, but I think it's fair to say also that the pandemic has led to a slowing of the sector's ability to drive change. In our change report in 2021, we highlighted a number of issues. We surveyed over 2000 researchers around the world, and those revealed really a number of issues where academics were returning to things like citations and impact factors as the main way that they evaluate research quality or that they perceive they need to show value.

We also saw through our report in our survey, a reduced focus on research having measurable change in practice policy or behavior. And we really feel those are somewhat retrograde steps when we are talking about the SDGs and the need for research ultimately to drive that journey to knowledge exchange, and real impact on the ground. So we, we've concluded that incentives and structural changes are really causal at the root of some of these issues. And we've redoubled our efforts. So we're calling for collective action across research and across the publishing sector to break down some of the barriers that do hold back research from having meaningful impact beyond the academy itself. To put that another way, we're at a time where research needs to contribute to societal change more than ever, and we really need to move beyond the echo chambers of academia themselves.

So as a publisher, we've taken steps, just some baby steps, but in the right direction through our Real Impact awards through signing DORA, as I mentioned before, we've set up a real impact advisory board, and we've launched Real Impact literacy tools to help support healthy practice and develop best practice planning and finding new ways to bring researchers and the non-academic beneficiaries of their research together. So alongside our partners in research and knowledge exchange communities, we share the same ambitions ultimately for the research and its impact on society. But at the same time, we recognize that the journey to real world impact requires many changes across the research and publishing ecosystem. We're just one voice, but for real change to happen, it can only be achieved by the whole research, education, publishing sectors coming together to deliver collective actions. And that's why we're calling for the community to unite, to build shared action plans. We are asking all interested parties to get behind our six commitments, and we've developed those commitments in conjunction with our impact advisory board, and we're asking the communities, including potentially the accrediting bodies themselves, to sign up to our impact manifesto.

In recent years, we've heard from researchers that one of the main challenges to advancing the research impact agenda is the complexity of sharing best practice and the different pace of research and the change in research around the world, which makes sector-wide action disparate and sometimes quite siloed. So as a potential solution to this, our "Are You In?" campaign is really seeking to share best practice, to share approaches and learnings and case studies from those who've already tried to drive change. And we'll do that through a dedicated microsite that we're developing, but we're also encouraging the community to get involved to build that collective action, to identify the problems together and to do that in a really inclusive and coordinated way to really ignite action on the ground. So the initiative is called "Are You In?" We're encouraging wider participation, including all the groups I've mentioned today.

All of those groups who include a focus on quality assurance in higher education to share knowledge, to share experiences of progress that will ultimately drive that real world change. We want to bring multiple parties together. We want to support co-creation, galvanizing positive collective action. I've provided the CHEA team with a link to our signup page, and I'd be really grateful to the team if that could be shared with your members, either through the podcast or through the newsletter itself. And just to wrap up on that point, the six current commitments to our Impact manifesto focus on championing alternatives to traditional metrics, finding new formats and channels to disseminate to and engage with a wider audience beyond academia, developing more equitable and accessible ways to publish research, highlighting and rewarding examples of research that drives real world change and co-designing services that help researchers and research offices to develop healthy practices, building stronger partnerships and networks.

Michelle Claville:

Well, you wanna talk about truly calling out this age of convergence. We say that we are in this age of convergence, and what you have just challenged all of us to do is to truly converge--take everything that we know and work together to effect change for the betterment of humankind. And I truly appreciate those comments. I truly appreciate the challenge and it is my hope that we would do more than appreciate the challenge, but that we would accept it. Thank you for that. You've said so many rich things. I wonder if you have anything else that you wish to tell us, as you know, some final remarks as we close out this section. I'm like, Lord, you've given us so much! What else would you like to say as we close this session?

Tony Roche:

Well, Michelle, thank you again for the opportunity to introduce Emerald and our mission, and our work to CHEA, to your members, and to reemphasize really commitments to collaboration. Collaboration is the optimal way for research to drive that positive societal change at a time when we as society are facing so many existential challenges. We are just one small voice in a huge global ecosystem. I hope none of what I've said has come over as Emerald feeling it is the change maker itself. We're just trying to stimulate some of the debate. We're trying to act as a catalyst in our own small way. We don't have the solutions. We can do our small part, but again, coming together with multiple stakeholder groups, some of whom don't always naturally work well together. But I think the higher meaning and the purpose of what we're all pulling together towards is about progress for society.

It's about quality; it's about independence; it's about standards. Some of those things are being challenged geopolitically at this point in time. So I think now is the time for united action. So I talked earlier about that shared commitment to academic and institutional independence, and interest and a commitment to international collaboration. And of course, the quality. And I warmly encourage CHEA members to consider signing up to "Are You In?" and to working with us and other stakeholders to really drive that positive change together. I'd love to speak to your membership again at some point, but for today, I think that summarizes really my final remarks.

Michelle Claville:

Wow. I feel like I'm at a loss for words. I keep using this three letter word. "Wow!" Thank you so much, Tony. I've truly enjoyed this period of time with you. You've given us a lot to think about and even in thinking about all the things that Emerald's doing, you've caused us to pay attention more so to the sustainability development goals that a number of our nations have signed on to, but did not necessarily understand how valuable our signatures were--one, and how important it is to actualize what we said

we would do. You've given us some details for us to consider as we look at the way we conduct research, and the way we publish research, on the way we value research. And, it is something that will, speaking as a former intensive academic, it is something that many of us have questioned, but didn't necessarily have the means to kick against.

You know, you just had to fit in where you got in. So hopefully this is a time when we will look at the value of research as it aligns with the value of the academy as a whole, and then its impact on the rest of the world. Know that we applaud your work and we applaud the work of Emerald, and we count it an honor to have been given a glimpse into your thoughts, and in I would daresay into your expertise.

Tony Roche:

My pleasure. Thank you.

Michelle Claville:

Thank you. So let me also thank the people at CHEA/CIQG who have worked together to make sure that this interview was possible. We thank you, the Quality International Newsletter audience for spending this time with us, and we hope you enjoyed the segment and will join us again as we release another additional issue of Quality International Newsletter. Until next time, this is Michelle Claville on behalf of CHEA/CIQG. Take care.