

The need for accelerated change in diversity, equity and inclusion in publishing and learned societies

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Abstract

Diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I) is a key priority for many organizations and institutions, including learned societies. With diversity at universities, both in the UK and around the world, being reported as low, it was decided to make DE&I one of the main areas of enquiry for the seventh Wiley Society Member Survey, conducted in May 2021. We found that satisfaction with levels of representation for gender, race and ethnicity was falling and that the impact of the coronavirus pandemic had disproportionately affected those already most disadvantaged within the academic hierarchy. In order to fully understand the current status of DE&I in academia, and within societies in particular, this paper also draws on other research undertaken or supported by Wiley, including a survey of journal editors and the *Brave New World* study, as well as further research in which Wiley was not involved. What it shows is that academic research, learned societies and publishing all have their own DE&I issues that need to be addressed, but that through improved DE&I can come better research.

Keywords: diversity, equity, inclusion

INTRODUCTION

There is much to occupy the minds of academics these days. From combatting the pandemic to battling climate change, but there is perhaps no topic that has had a greater personal impact than the issue of diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I). In the United States, the trial of Harvey Weinstein and the murder of George Floyd sparked overdue conversations about gender equality and racial disparities, and the need for change. This has impacted on the research community as much as it has society at large, making it clear that a more diverse and inclusive research environment is needed.

Universities, research institutions, learned societies and academic publishers have all had to look long and hard at themselves. According to research undertaken by the United Kingdom's Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) in 2020 fewer than 1% of the professors employed at UK universities are Black and British universities are unlikely to employ more than one or two Black professors. That amounts to 140 academic staff at professorial level identifying as Black, equating to 0.7% out of a total of more than 21,000 professors (HESA, 2021). So, it was in this atmosphere of self-enquiry and change that Wiley conducted its seventh Society Member Survey. As with previous surveys, the questions were wide-ranging and focussed on many topics, such as the central importance of career

support to society members, the environmental impact of continuing to print journals, the ongoing rise of the importance of open data, and perhaps most significantly concerns around DE&I (Roscoe, 2021b). The survey was particularly concerned about issues of representation and sought to determine satisfaction levels and whether the ongoing pandemic had affected certain groups disproportionately and thereby widening existing divisions.

Although the majority of the content of this paper is drawn from the society member survey with a particular focus on the gender and racial aspects of DE&I, I will also be drawing on other research undertaken or supported by Wiley, including a survey of journal editors and the *Brave New World* (Brave New World, 2021) study. The hope is that this will not just act as a summary of current perspectives on DE&I in academia, but also point to the ways in which societies can address imbalances and inequalities to improve representation and inclusion for all.

METHODOLOGY

The Wiley Society Member Survey consisted of 43 questions and was fielded in May 2021 to a list taken from registrants to Wiley Online Library (WOL). The list was random and other than being registered on WOL there was no restriction of subject, geographical location, age, gender or ethnicity placed on the selection. Respondents self-selected to complete the survey following a campaign that consisted of a series of three email 'invitations' deployed over a 2-week period, which is the same procedure we have used for the previous three surveys. In total there were 1444 responses, which, although lower than last year's total of 3211 and the previous year's 3112, still provided a statistically robust quantity to base our findings on. We received responses from over 45 disciplines and from across 113 countries. The top responding subjects were Social Sciences (10%), Business, Finance, Accounting (8%), Engineering (8%), Humanities (4%), Agricultural Sciences (4%) and Psychology (4%). 58% are currently members of a society, which is a fall of 3% from last year's survey and the lowest portion for 5 years.

For a fuller understanding of the survey findings, this paper also considered concerns around the composition of editorial boards and DE&I within the wider academic community. This involved a review of other studies conducted or supported by Wiley, including a survey of journal editors and the wider *Brave New World* study, as well as other research not involving Wiley. These results were then layered on top of the Society Member Survey findings to hopefully provide a more rounded picture.

SURVEY RESULTS

Demographics of respondents

For a piece of work looking at DE&I it is important that the respondents reflect a suitable cross-section of age, gender, race and ethnicity. However, as this cannot be pre-determined in a random list

Key points

- Satisfaction with gender and racial representation in learned societies is falling.
- There is a lack of representation at all levels of higher education as well as within learned publishing and societies.
- Editors are struggling to recruit appropriately qualified and interested members to editorial boards and to make boards more representative.
- The pandemic has made pre-existing racial and gender inequalities in academia worse.
- Almost two-thirds of respondents report that their society journals offer OA options (up from 56% in 2020), and OA is seen as a key way to improve DE&I.
- Closer working between societies and publishers will result in improved DE&I.

selection it is perhaps fortunate that respondents to our survey continue to be suitably wide-ranging. In previous years, we have seen an increasing number of female respondents, up from 32% in 2018, this year the number stayed the same as last with 36% self-identifying as female and 62% male. We recognize the World Health Organisation (WHO) definition of gender as being 'used to describe the characteristics of women and men that are socially constructed, while sex refers to those that are biologically determined. People are born female or male, but learn to be girls and boys who grow into women and men. This learned behaviour makes up gender identity and determines gender roles' (World Health Organisation, 2002). For the purposes of the Wiley survey, however, the gender of the respondents is solely based on how they self-identified when completing the survey.

In itself, gender would appear to have little relevance in determining the nature of responses to the survey and gender is unlikely to be the main driver for the choices that academics make. However, in the interests of achieving a representative cross-section gender is important when thinking of the equal recognition of men and women, how they are treated, and how they experience society membership and academic life in general. The survey indicated differences in the gender balance in differing subjects. Engineering is overwhelmingly male (85%), for example, whereas Nursing skews female (71%). In broad terms, male respondents tend to be more experienced with 69% of those with over 21 years membership being men compared with 27% of women. When it comes to being members of multiple societies men are also more likely to be members of six or more (76%) compared with women (21%). On a positive note, 49% of early career researchers (that is, those with under 5 years' experience) are female so hopefully we will see a more balanced gender distribution in the future, although we should probably also expect to see more 'Other' or 'I prefer not to answer' responses too.

Even though the number of women responders has stayed steady (36%), there are noticeable differences in gender diversity based on subject, as we have seen, and geography. In the Middle

East and Africa, 76% and 70% of responses respectively are from men, whereas 45% of US-based respondents are women.

When it comes to race and ethnicity, we do not include that as a question, but in terms of age, the average responder has 15.2 years' experience with 54% having 16 years or more (see Fig. 1).

Universities continue to be the main place of work with 40% working in a university or college (up slightly from 38% last year) (see Fig. 2). This is lower for researchers based in the United States (26%) and for early career researchers (30%). Over a third of those in healthcare work in Nursing (37%) whereas almost a quarter of those in the Agricultural Sciences (24%) work in a research institution. The gender split of those based in universities is very similar to the gender split across the survey as a whole being 65% male and 32% female.

Membership trends

As has been said previously society membership has continued to fall. The 58% who report they are currently members of a society has dropped to the lowest level since 2016 (see Fig. 3).

It is not clear from the survey results what the reason for this fall is, but what appears significant is the growing number who have never been a member. While those that leave remains consistent at around 10% each year, the number who have never joined a society has risen from 19% in 2020 to 23% this year. Of those that are not members, 42% say they have not joined because they have not been asked and 23% say they do not know what is available.

Belonging to more than one society continues to be typical with the average member belonging to 2.8 societies (see Fig. 4) and, like last year, around 8% belong to six or more. What is striking though is that it appears that those who consume, produce and utilize the most research are the ones who are most likely to join multiple societies. For example, those who belong to four or more societies consume more journal articles, books and conference proceedings than those who belong to fewer societies or who have never been members.

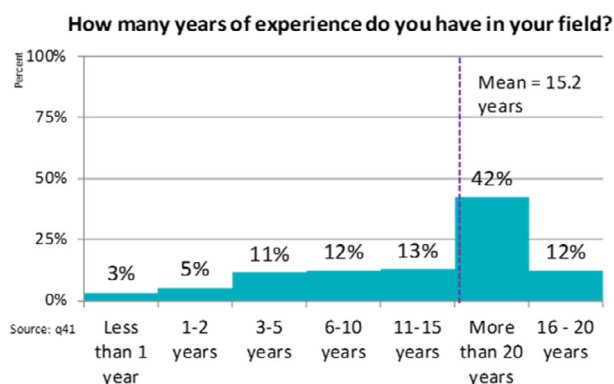


Figure 1 Member experience.

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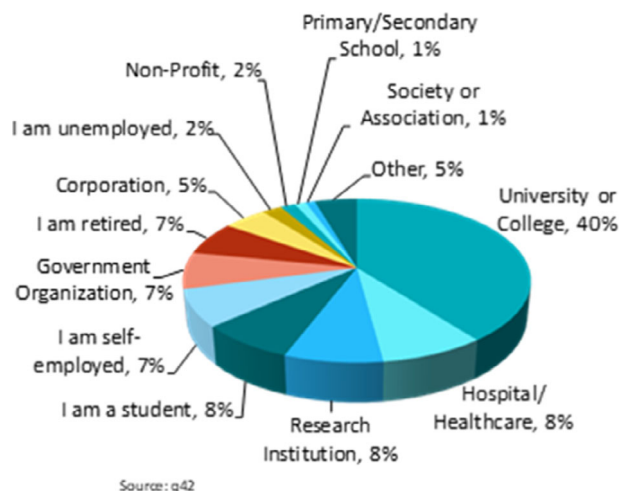


Figure 2 Place of work.

Over the years of conducting the survey we have seen the ongoing importance of careers support to society members, but this year it is top of the agenda. Significantly, 15% of those who left a society in the last 12 months cite lack of support for careers as the main reason. This departing group is also likely to be the most negative about society membership. It is also notable that the level of satisfaction felt by members for career support continues to fall, down this year to 44% from 49% last year.

In contrast, open data and open access continue to increase in importance. This is not only significant in terms of research dissemination, but it is also a marker of DE&I. The greater transparency offered by open data appears to be linked to calls for improved DE&I within societies. 53% said that open data was more important than it was 12 months ago and 42% of respondents told us that their society supported open data, which was up from 35% a year earlier. Amongst those whose society supported open data, the call for improved working relationships

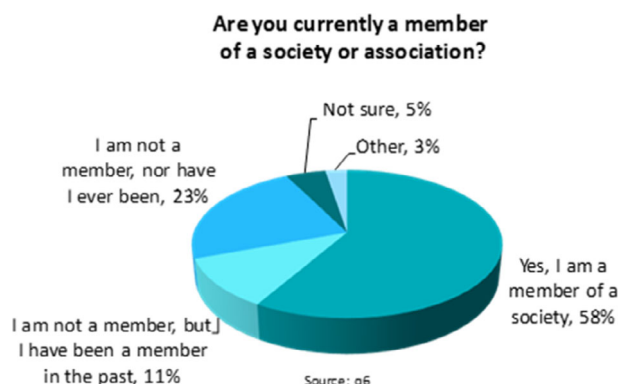


Figure 3 Membership status.

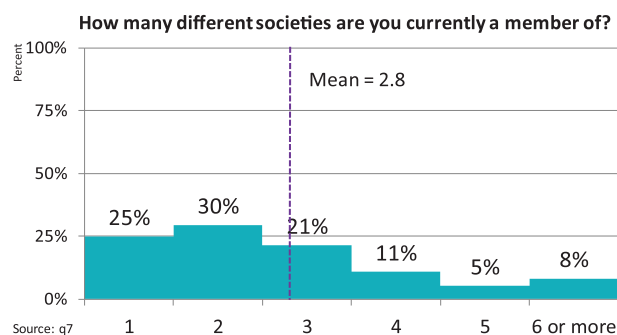


Figure 4 Multiple society membership.

between societies and publishers to tackle DE&I concerns was at its highest.

Similarly, open access is growing amongst the research community. 64% of respondents said that their society offers an open access publishing option on some or all of their journals (up from 56% in 2020) and 43% of respondents said that they had published open access themselves, a 5% increase on last year and something that 62% said they would be likely or very likely to do again in the future. As we shall see some journal editors are concerned about equal access to funding, however, Wiley's research indicates some regions, such as Africa (55%) and Asia Pacific (54%) have higher levels of open access publishing than the survey average and higher than that currently seen in the United States (29%), for example.

Diversity in societies

On first sight, the survey suggests that there is broad satisfaction with representation from society members. However, societies should not be complacent because that satisfaction is falling year on year. Last year 62% of members told us that they were satisfied with the representation of members across genders, but this year that has dropped to 56% (see Fig. 5) and which is down 10% from the number two years ago. This may reflect the portion of women and increasing numbers of ECRs responding to the survey, hence the decreasing satisfaction rate even though representation is increasing. Satisfaction with the representation of members across racial and ethnic groups has also fallen from 57% to 50%.

However, the notion of access to a varied and cross-cultural global community continues to be a major draw to joining a society, with 50% citing that as the main reason for renewing their membership. This attraction is amplified if the society takes a strong lead in promoting DE&I. 61% of non-members said they would be more likely to join a society that provided such a lead, something that those in Africa and Central Asia were particularly keen on along with those working in Nursing and the Humanities. In fact, it is a strong driver of recommendation and approval that appears to be tied in with the opportunity to connect with members they would not usually meet, thereby gaining new perspectives.



Figure 5 Membership satisfaction rates.

Across the survey, 75% of members and non-members believe that it is important for societies to take an active lead on DE&I. Not only that, but 68% of those say that publishers should take a lead on this also, working alongside societies. This opinion is especially strong amongst students (85%) and ECRs (84%), and those undertaking research in Agricultural Science (92%) and Business, Finance and Accounting (84%). Only those in the United States were less keen, with 46% saying they were neutral on whether or not publishers should take a lead on DE&I. This may reflect the older demographic of respondents from the USA, as the survey suggests that older members are also likely to express ambivalence on the topic. For example, 62% of respondents with over 20 years' experience were 'less likely' to support this and 35% were neutral, compared with the positive response of 84% of those with under 5 years' experience. Consequently, the survey suggests that publishers could have a central role in influencing change and helping societies become the representative organizations they want to be.

Different aspects of society activity face different challenges, whether that is recruiting members from diverse backgrounds, attracting authors from across the global research community, or ensuring that education and career support is inclusive enough to meet all needs and from all backgrounds.

FURTHER DISCUSSION

The challenges facing editors and journals

Societies encompass researchers at all stages of their careers and have a variety of roles that reflect those different stages. One of the most common leadership roles is that of journal editorial board member. In the member survey we asked about the

challenges faced by those members who also sat on editorial boards. As ever many talked about issues surrounding recruiting and engaging with members, some of which had been made more difficult by the coronavirus pandemic. Significantly though, issues surrounding diversity also surfaced. Respondents told us that 'recruiting new minority [sic] members into the society' was particularly difficult and that the biggest challenge was to 'reconcile various people's needs. More precisely, to represent people of different backgrounds and try to meet contradictory demands' (Roscoe, 2021a).

If the experience that Cynthia Garcia Coll describes in her article, 'Diversity Is Not Enough - The Society for Research in Child Development is Making Inclusive Change' (Coll, 2021) is typical, then it is likely that for some society representatives increased equality is not their primary concern. Coll, the former editor of US-based journal, *Child Development* for the Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD), recognized that despite there being samples of problematic behaviour in all racial and ethnic groups the journal largely published research using behaviour taken from the BILPOC (Black, Indigenous, Latinx and People of Colour) community, while the psychologists working in the field were largely used to publishing on what has been termed WEIRD (White, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, Democratic) populations which were typically used as a benchmark of normative behaviour. She believed that if the journal was to represent the diversity of the US population and the rest of the world then change was necessary.

Getting the editorial board on side and developing a common publishing language to represent the journal's interdisciplinarity were the first challenges. There was an inevitable backlash as Coll noted that any challenge to the status quo will never be universally welcomed. Nonetheless, changes were made. Importantly, according to Coll the quality of the research remained high while the journal published research that reflected the diverse living conditions of the world's childhood population by an increasing number of scholars from across the research spectrum. 'Editorial change', she says, 'needs a clear vision and the work of many with the same goals. It takes time and persistence' (Coll, 2021).

This is a situation that was recognized by a survey of Wiley editors undertaken in February 2021 (Wiley, 2021a). Editors who responded to the survey were divided about whether there was sufficient diversity in their authors, reviewers and editorial board members with just over half saying that there was. However, there was agreement that an effort to expand diversity was required. The view of respondents was that the focus should first be on diversity amongst authors before moving onto reviewers and board members. The Wiley editor survey also found that many editors feel that assessing the diversity of authors and reviewers without all of the demographic data is a challenge, but 61% said they were actively looking to expand the diversity of their editorial boards.

As can be seen from the HESA research, issues of diversity and representation extend to universities themselves and not just in the United Kingdom. There is a bigger issue with diversity in higher education, as laid out by Nikki Forrester in an article for

Nature. She cites a study published in 2019 which 'examined how gender and race influenced faculty perception of postdoctoral candidates in physics and biology at eight US universities by altering the names on otherwise identical CVs. Across departments, faculty members perceived white and Asian candidates to be more competent and hire-able than their Black and Latin American counterparts, despite being equally well qualified. Physics faculty members also perceived male candidates as more competent than female candidates' (Forrester, 2020). This would appear to be part of a wider social malaise. According to research done by the Pew Research Center in 2017 (Anderson, 2018) ~6-in-10 Black STEM workers (62%) say they have experienced some form of racial or ethnic discrimination at work, such as earning less than a co-worker who performed the same job or experiencing repeated, small slights at work. That compares with 44% of Asians, 42% of Hispanics and just 13% of whites in similar employment.

University presses are also under scrutiny. Charles Watkinson has written about the attempts to improve diversity at the University of Michigan Press, in many ways echoing the work done by Coll and her colleagues at the SRCD. Watkinson tells us, 'acquisitions editors have committed to amplify the voices of people of colour, re-examine the composition of editorial boards, and be intentional in selecting more diverse peer reviewers. Production departments have heightened their focus on eradicating racist language from manuscripts and re-examining the diversity of their suppliers. Sales and marketing teams have expanded the range of review venues they submit books to, directed promotional funding to Black-owned bookshops, and diversified their advertising spends. Across the landscape, presses are scrutinizing their hiring practices and examining their organizational climates to try and ensure that black, indigenous, and people of colour they recruit into a majority-white industry can also be retained' (Watkinson, 2021). Publishers clearly have a role to play and at Wiley we have offered practical advice to journals editors, such as how to create a journal diversity, equity and inclusion statement (Wiley, 2021b) as well as providing information about what Wiley is doing to address the issue within our own organization and taking 'an honest look into our own organization and taking necessary actions with the urgency each deserves.' (Ricci, 2021).

Other non-DE&I specific industry developments are also having an impact. We have seen growth in open access (OA) publishing over recent years with the Wiley Society Member survey saying that 64% of societies offer some sort of OA publishing option on its journals, which is up by 8% from last year. The Wiley editor survey suggests that OA is also good for enabling journals to access a wider readership with 30% of editors feeling that OA had increased the number of their readers and 32% reporting that it had allowed them to reach a more diverse readership. However, in our editor survey we also found that some editors are concerned that limited funding from governments or research institutions could result in fewer submissions from outside of Europe (where OA funding is more common), thereby damaging the journal's author representation. One respondent to the editor survey wrote that 'open access is

the biggest threat to diversity currently facing publishing. As a researcher from the Southern hemisphere, outside the immense wealth and research funding of Europe, China, and North America, open access is a huge barrier to publication' (Wiley, 2021a). The rise in transitional (or transformative) agreements (Hinchcliffe, 2019) and Article Processing Charge (APC) waivers and discounts mean that this does not have to be the case. However, to alleviate these types of concerns publishers need to work together with societies to offer solutions.

The biggest challenge facing everyone over the last two years or more has been the pandemic, of course, and that has impacted on DE&I issues in research as it has on every other area of life.

Diversity, equity and inclusion in the face of a pandemic

Every survey conducted in the last year inevitably reflects the impact of the pandemic, and the Wiley Society Member Survey is no different. The survey highlighted the impact not just on research, but also on mental health, work/life balance, and the knock-on effect on careers and educational development.

Our survey indicates that 53% felt they had missed opportunities by not attending in-person conferences and events, 44% had developed increased anxiety and stress which had affected their productivity at work, and 44% had also had difficulty balancing the needs of family and personal life with performing at work (see Fig. 6).

It is arguable that the groups that already faced significant challenges before the pandemic, have been further challenged, and disproportionately so, by its effects. It is often the case that gender is not particularly useful as a marker, however, when considering DE&I it is central. For example, representation of women

within learned societies has historically lagged behind men, despite small signs of growth each year. According to Anderson writing in *The Guardian*, 'Male professors continue to outnumber females by three to one, or 15,700 to 5,700 in 2018-19. The number of female professors has increased by 1,200 in the five years since 2014-15, and the number of males by half that amount' (Anderson, 2020). Ricci highlights the wide-ranging impact of this outside of academia: 'a report analysing a decade's worth of STEM characters in film, television, and streaming content in the US found that only 37.1% of are women, and only 27.9% are people of colour' (Ricci, 2021). The report supported by the Lyda Hill Foundation and the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media asserts that women 'remain underrepresented in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) professions. Women constitute half (48%) of the college-educated workforce in the U.S. but hold only a quarter (24%) of jobs in STEM' (Seejane, 2017). The findings of the Wiley Society Member Survey also suggest that the pandemic affected genders disproportionately. For example, 51% of female respondents declared difficulty in maintaining a work/life balance compared with 42% of men, and 49% of women said that they had faced increased levels of stress during the pandemic compared with 42% of men. There is little doubt that everyone has been affected by coronavirus, but it would appear that some groups have been more affected than others.

The *Brave New World* (Brave New World, 2021) research study conducted between November 2020 and February 2021 and which Wiley co-sponsored, confirmed similar findings. They found that the pandemic had increased gender disparity and highlighted racial inequalities, especially the disproportionate effect of the virus on Black and ethnic communities. The *Brave New World* study took a more detailed look at some of the areas highlighted in the Wiley Society Member Survey and found, for instance, that during the pandemic 59% of respondents to the study had taken on additional household chores, 51% had taken on responsibility for home-schooling, 33% had dependent care, and 46% had other caring responsibilities.

The study found that professional responsibilities had also increased with 53% spending more time on lecture preparation and planning and 48% spending more time supporting students. When broken down, however, the disparities are once again apparent. Those in the BILPOC community were less likely to report additional home-schooling responsibilities and care of dependents but were more likely to have increased responsibility for household chores (62%). When considering the reduction in time spent on research as a result of the pandemic, 37% of Black respondents said they had less time compared with 30% of white respondents. Similarly, 45% of women said they spent less time on research compared with 37% of men. Indeed, 50% of women compared with 44% of men said they had increased caring responsibilities and 68% of women faced an increase in household chores compared with 55% of men.

It is to be expected that in time, as the impact of the pandemic recedes, many of these additional responsibilities will reduce or disappear. However, the Wiley and *Brave New World*

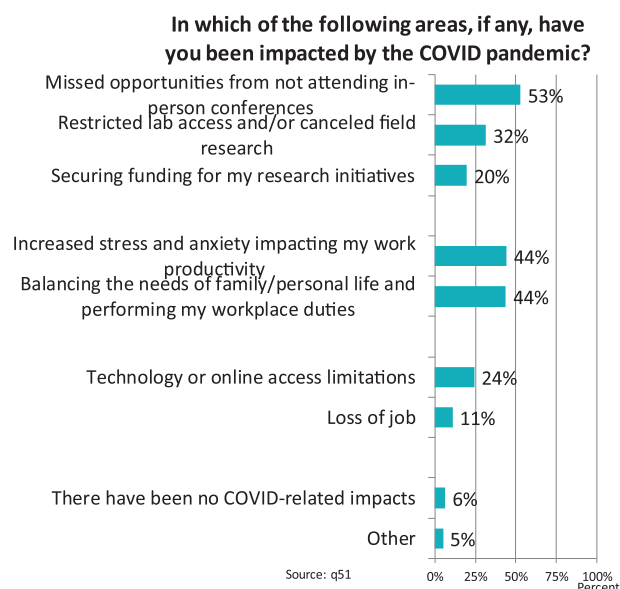


Figure 6 Impact of COVID pandemic.

research does highlight the hidden responsibilities that have been ongoing with their inbuilt gender and racial disparities, and also indicates the potential for long-term damage to career prospects for women and those from a BILPOC background if action is not taken.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The last year has had a major impact on everyone. Challenges regarding fair representation and inclusivity have been thrown into sharp relief and the need to tackle issues surrounding DE&I have been accelerated by the pandemic. It has become more urgent than ever to address those issues.

The research undertaken by Wiley has shown, however, that there are causes for optimism, if only because at least concerns around DE&I are now front and centre within the research and academic community. So, here are some ways in which societies can enable change to come about.

Forge closer working partnerships between publishers and societies

The Wiley member survey indicated that society members would like to see publishers working more closely with societies to address issues of DE&I. The survey has noted the increasing importance of open data with 53% saying it was more important than it was 12 months ago. Significantly amongst those who are members of societies that support open data, the call for more publisher support is even stronger. This suggests that societies should discuss this with their publishers in order to ensure that the services offered by societies meet the needs of *all* of their members.

Remove the barriers to training opportunities

This can be done by expanding the opportunities for under-represented groups by increasing recruitment for prestige roles or by supporting scholarships and other initiatives with the aim of rectifying inequalities. It is worth considering using society resources to improve access to development opportunities. This could be training, education and certification, career support or providing networking and collaboration opportunities, but whatever the route, the destination is to widen opportunities to the greatest number possible.

Improve engagement between members from different regions

The past year has seen conferences move to a largely virtual format. Despite the fact that the Wiley Society Member Survey indicates that this is acceptable at least in the short term while pandemic-related restrictions continue, there is little doubt that even as we move into a post-pandemic world there will be an ongoing need for a virtual component to all conferences. Not least because virtual attendance saves budgetary and

environmental resources, are an efficient use of time, and enable researchers to attend more conferences, but they also widen access to those who would not usually be able to attend for reasons of cost and location or family and caring responsibilities.

Ensure that open access is open for all

Editors have expressed legitimate concerns about equal access to funds to cover APCs, particularly for authors based in low- and middle-income countries. There are also disparities within disciplines, but equal access to funding is crucial if research is to be truly representative and inclusive. Societies could consider their priorities and more effective uses of their budget. In the face of reduced in-person conferences could travel funds be repurposed to pay for APCs? This is a time for innovative thinking.

Make editorial boards more representative

The Wiley Society Member Survey suggests that satisfaction with representation across the society is falling and editors have noted the difficulty of recruiting members from underrepresented groups. One thing is certain: change starts from the top. If members do not see themselves reflected in the society leadership, then they will not see the value of joining and the Wiley survey shows that this can be an ongoing block on recruitment. Therefore, this is the opportunity for learned societies to be a force for positive change. By ensuring that a representative proportion of an editorial board is recruited from the BILPOC community and has a corresponding gender split, society members will feel more fully recognized.

CONCLUSION

Change is always difficult, but it has never been more important. In the words of Cynthia Garcia Coll talking about the changes she instigated at *Child Development*: 'The research world is changing and so is our knowledge and our scholars. I hope that in 100 years from now this will be old history' (Coll, 2021). There is a wealth of research available giving examples of the lack of diversity, equity and inclusion in the UK judiciary (Ministry of Justice, 2021), for example, and in political and public life (Uberoi & Tunnicliffe, 2021), but what the findings of the Wiley Society Member Survey and the other research included here shows is that academic research, learned societies, and publishing all have their own DE&I issues that need to be addressed.

It is not just about fairness, however. Through improved DE&I will come better research. It is likely that through bias, prejudice and restricted practices high quality research is being misused or side-lined. As Forrester suggests, 'students of colour face further challenges when they are admitted to graduate programmes. For example, PhD students from under-represented groups in the United States have been found to produce scientific innovations at higher rates than do those in majority groups, yet their work is devalued, discounted and less likely to earn them

academic positions' (Forrester, 2020). If Coll's hope is to become a reality, then all of us in learned publishing and the wider academic community have our work to do.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

More than ever this year I would like to thank all of the individuals who participated in the Wiley Society Member survey and the other research supported by Wiley. We have all been living through extraordinary circumstances and these insights would truly not have been possible without the time and opinions they shared with us. Thanks also to my Wiley colleagues Philippa Sumner, Anna Ehler, David Kim, Jon Ray and Emma Hennessey for their support and advice in the development of the Wiley Society Member Survey. Finally, my thanks to Joseph Stephan and the team at Broadview Analytics for providing survey analysis. We are grateful for their ongoing help in Wiley's work to improve understanding of learned societies and their members.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Although the author is affiliated with the publisher of this journal, he was not involved in the review or decision process, and his position was not considered influential in the decision to accept this article.

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