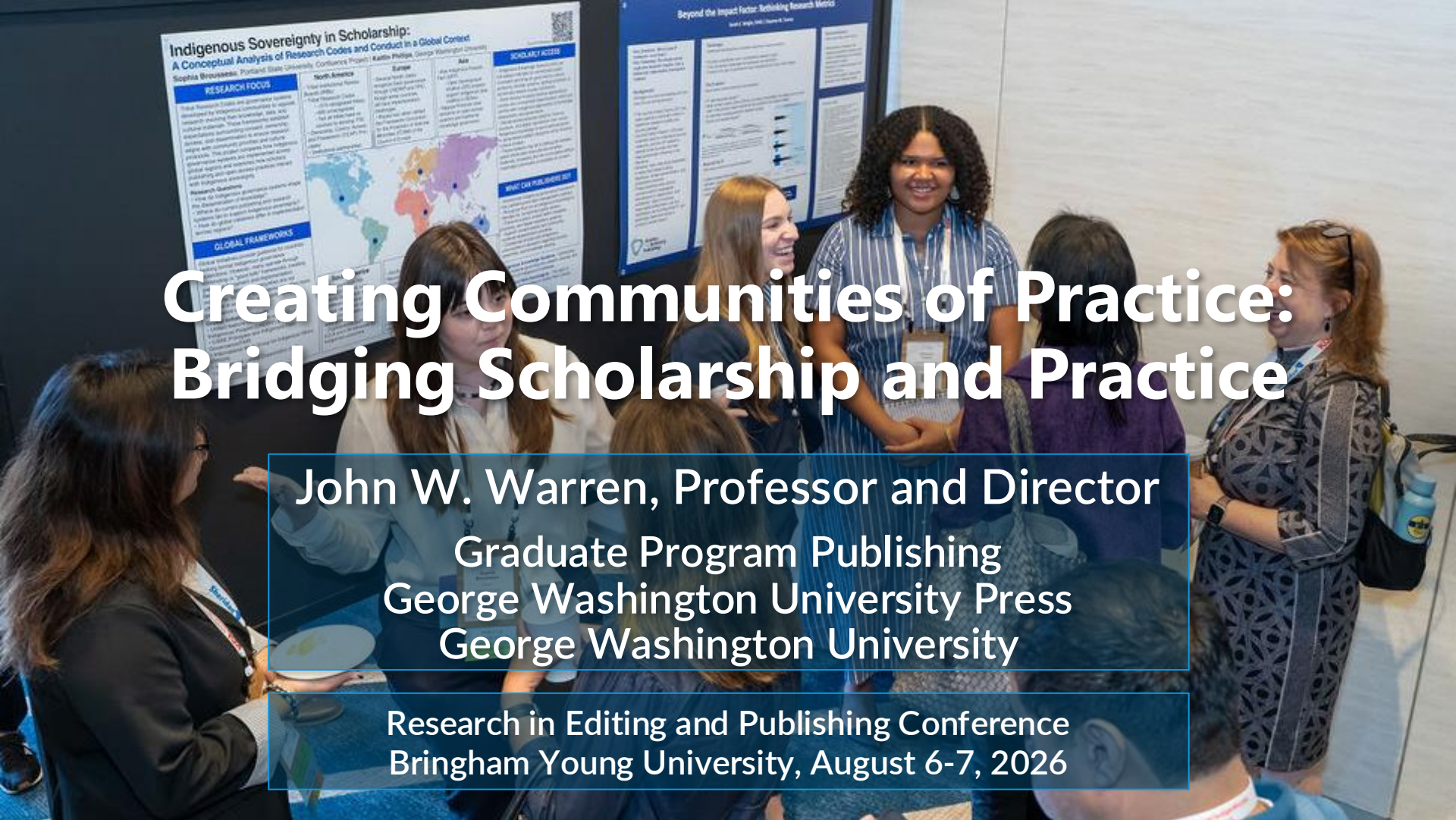


A group of people, including several women, are gathered around a booth at a conference. In the background, there are two large posters. The poster on the left is titled 'Indigenous Sovereignty in Scholarship: A Conceptual Analysis of Research Codes and Conduct in a Global Context' by Sophia Brousseau and Kaitlin Phillips. It features a world map with color-coded regions (North America, Europe, Asia, etc.) and text under sections like 'RESEARCH FOCUS', 'RESEARCH QUESTIONS', and 'GLOBAL FRAMEWORKS'. The poster on the right is titled 'Beyond the Impact Factor: Rethinking Research Metrics' and includes a flowchart. The people are engaged in conversation, with some looking at the posters and others talking to each other. The overall atmosphere is professional and collaborative.

Creating Communities of Practice: Bridging Scholarship and Practice

John W. Warren, Professor and Director
Graduate Program Publishing
George Washington University Press
George Washington University

Research in Editing and Publishing Conference
Brigham Young University, August 6-7, 2026

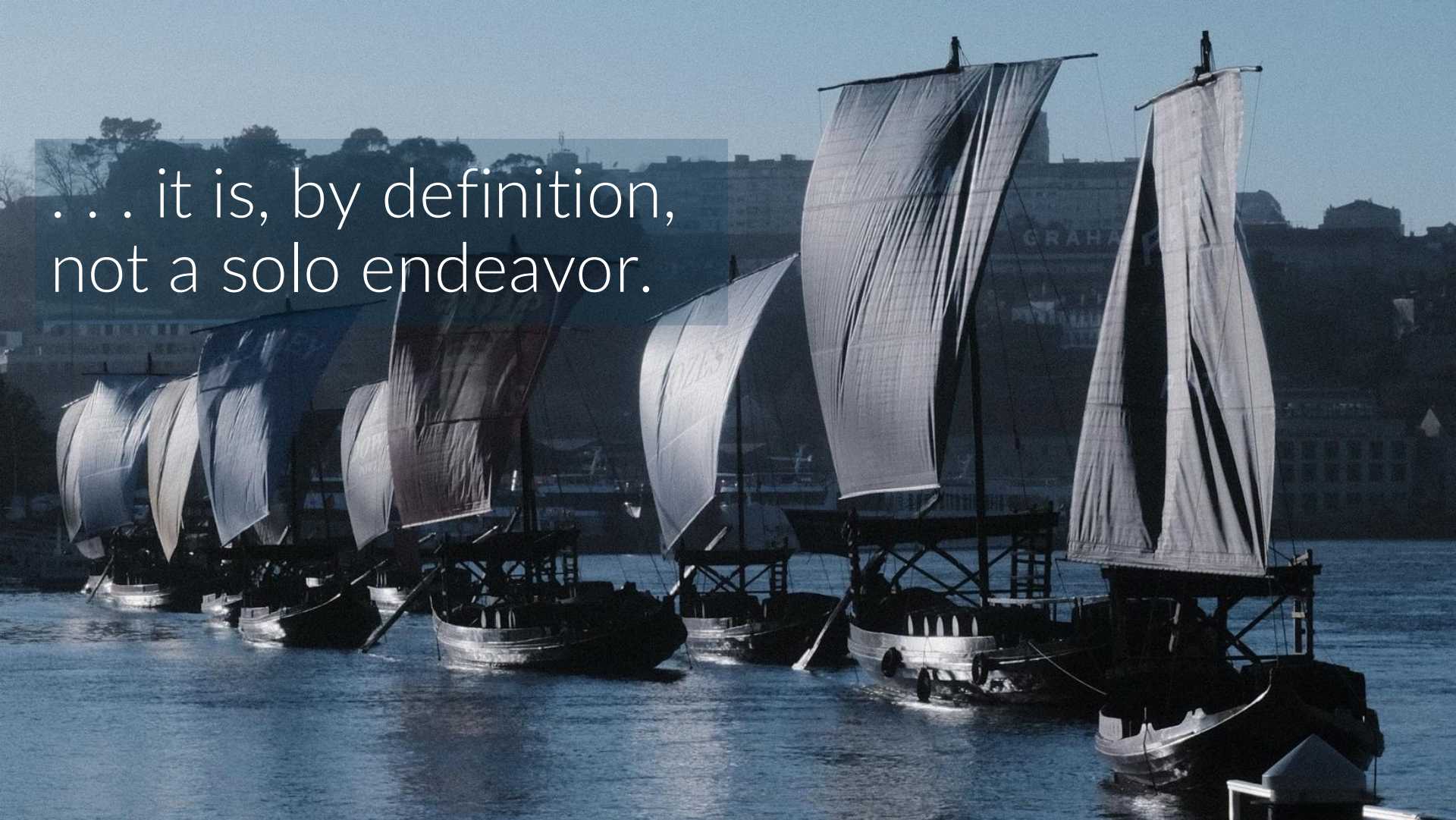
A manifesto and field
guide to creating
communities of
practice in publishing
and scholarly
communications



Though a long and perilous journey
with uncertain outcomes . . .



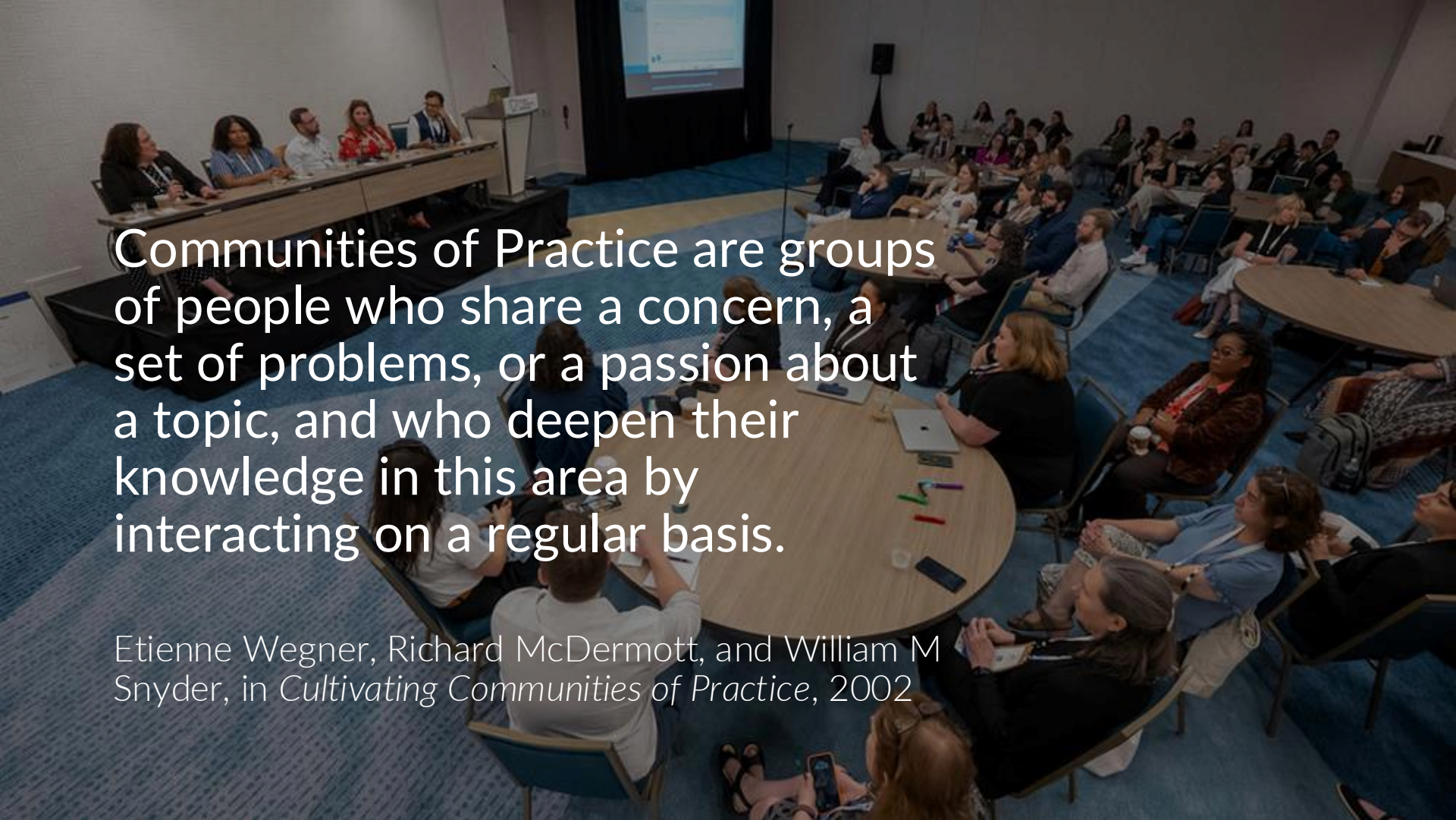
... it is, by definition,
not a solo endeavor.



Access these
slides, tools and
worksheets



bit.ly/REAP-BYU-Warren



Communities of Practice are groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge in this area by interacting on a regular basis.

Etienne Wenger, Richard McDermott, and William M Snyder, in *Cultivating Communities of Practice*, 2002



Communities of practice formed
the fabric of ancient societies
and led inexorably to writing and
publishing.

The background of the slide is a close-up, slightly blurred image of an open antique book. The left page shows a map with some text, and the right page is filled with dense, handwritten text in a historical script. The lighting is warm, highlighting the texture of the paper and the ink of the text.

Tribes and **clans** led to hierarchical **institutions**, to competitive **markets**, and to collaborative **networks**.

While versions of all four go back to ancient times, we can trace a clear progression in society over time.

Communities of practice are diverse yet share commonalities

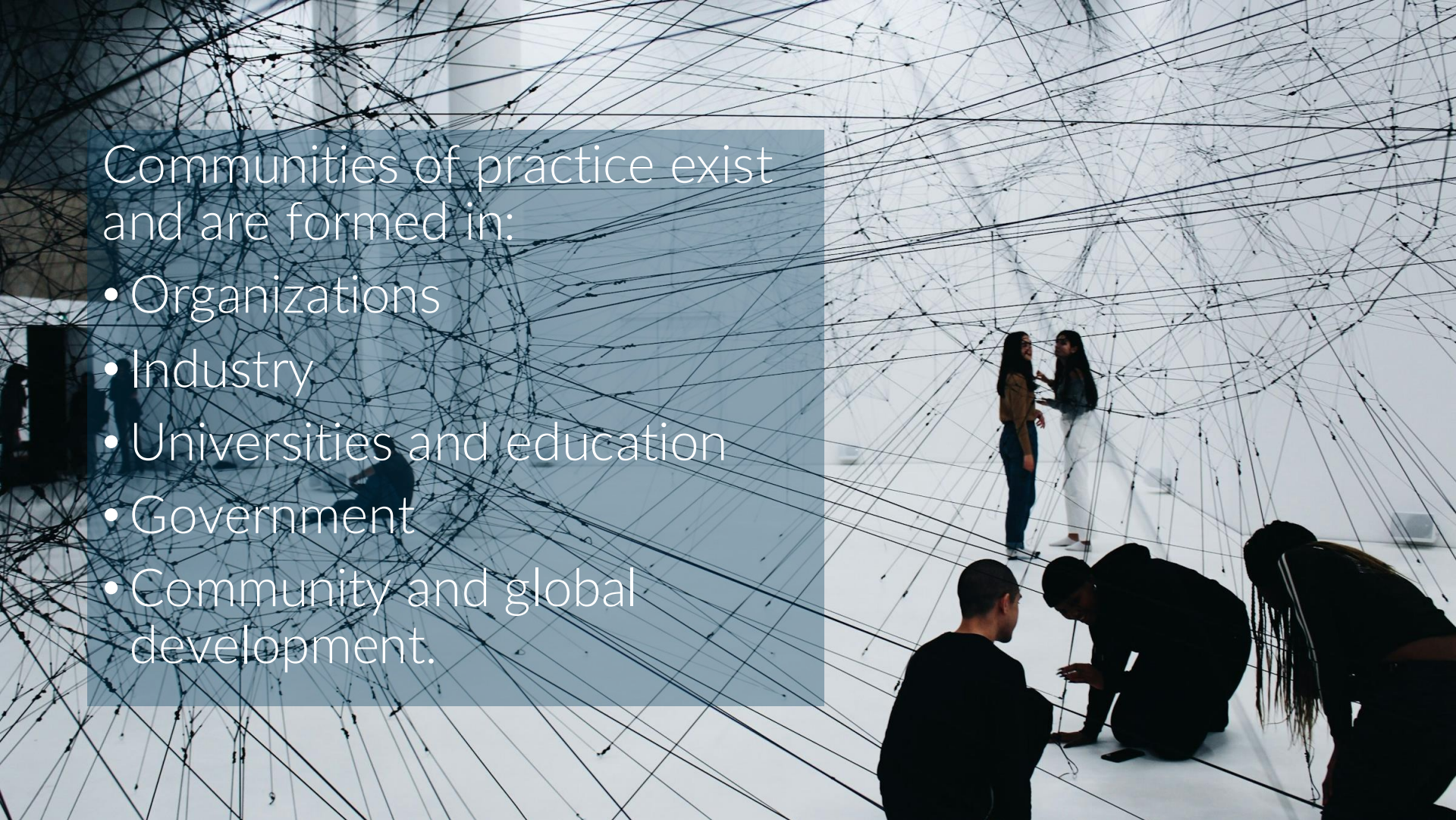
- A **(micro) niche**: A **domain** of common ground and identity, a shared purpose and desire to add value—key issues or problems members seek to address
- **Community**: Individuals who become a collective, developing **relationships** and sharing a sense of **belonging** based on mutual respect and trust
- **Practice**: **Knowledge** developed and shared by the community around the specific domain
- **Research** and **publishing** are essential components

They share common characteristics

- **Partnership** committed to learning across multiple tasks or teams
- **Ongoing learning** loops over time; continues to evolve until niche and purpose is no longer relevant
- Members participate as **individual learners** even if they represent different organizations or units; membership is **multi-modal**; participation is **meaningful** to members
- Not necessarily expected to produce a unique outcome or position
- Practitioners drive mission and expectations, driven by challenges of and relevant to practice
- **Commitment to collective progress** in practice and identification with shared domain



Communities of practice are everywhere
and are interlinked.



Communities of practice exist
and are formed in:

- Organizations
- Industry
- Universities and education
- Government
- Community and global development.

Communities of practice assume diverse forms

- **Internal:** Internal communities of practice help drive strategy, innovation, best practices, professional development
- **Networked organization:** Independent organizations work together to benchmark, form distribution networks
- **Formal network:** Membership is formal, controlled by fees or acceptance through a central organization
- **Informal network:** Self-organizing, informal network with no central authority or sponsor, voluntary membership, often virtual

A few examples...



Coalition for Diversity and Inclusion in Scholarly Communications (C4DISC)

- Founded by 10 trade and professional associations that represent organizations and individuals working in scholarly communications to discuss and address issues of diversity and inclusion within the industry.
- Developed joint Statement of Principles (2018).
- **Toolkits for Equity** project leaders received support in 2019 from Triangle Scholarly Communications Institute to create toolkits for allies, for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, and for organizations; since expanded to Disability Equity, Inclusive Editing, and others.
- **Workplace Equity** project benchmarked workforce, in 2018 and 2023; 1,755 responses across 7 continents in 2023.

University-Based Publishing Futures (UBPF)

- UBPF is a multi-community coalition of professionals at university presses, library publishers, and academy-affiliated programs supporting infrastructure of scholarly publishing.
- Goal of this 'community of communities' is to share knowledge among university-based publishers and align outreach and advocacy efforts.
- Organized by the Association of University Presses and the Library Publishing Forum, with goal of becoming a self-organizing community.
- Developed [statement](#) defining university-based publishing, shared values, and proposed initial [action commitments](#) in 2024.
- Held **Responding to Universities in Crisis: A Summit for University-Based Publishing**, in June 2026, between the AUPresses Annual Meeting and LPC Forum.

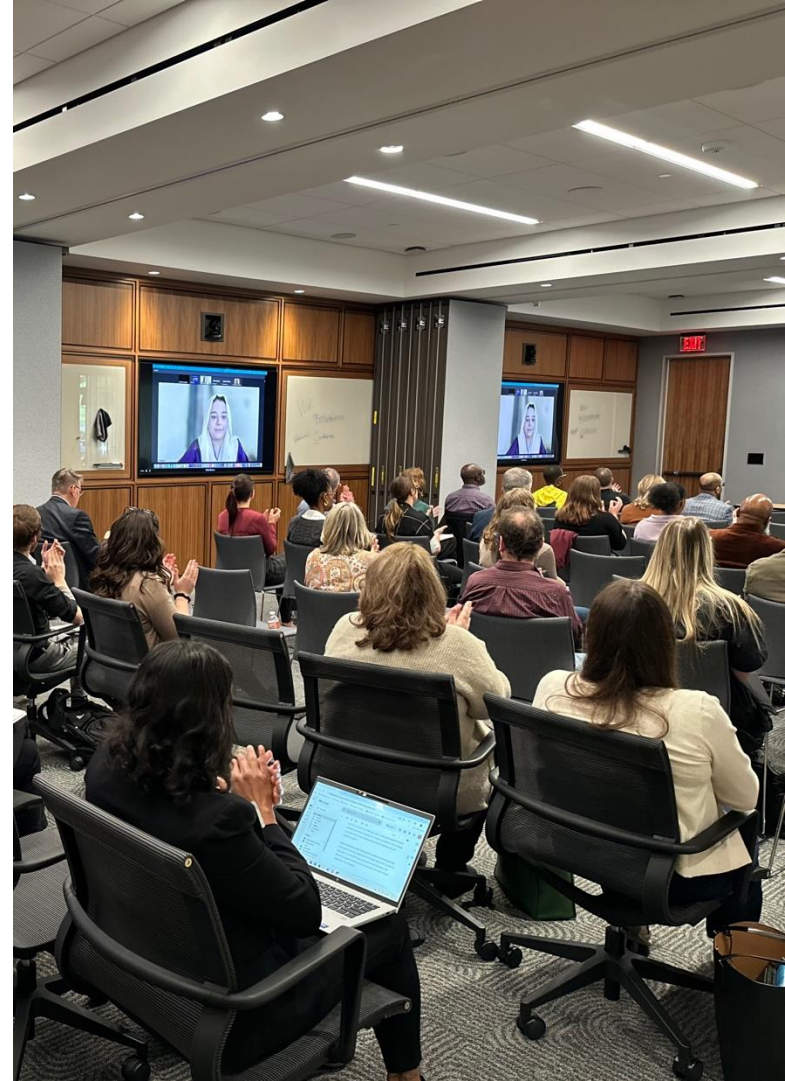
BYU: Research in Editing and Publishing

- Research in Editing and Publishing (REAP) research group founded in 2022 by Holly Baker and other researchers at Brigham Young University.
- Has grown to include ~20 established and emerging scholars from several universities.
- Overarching goal is to “produce scholarship aimed at the development of editing and publishing as an academic discipline and invite other scholars—from across the disciplines—to join us in the effort.”
- REAP Conference launched in 2026!



GW: Ethics in Publishing

- Capstone course in MPS in Publishing at George Washington University was formerly a 1-day seminar; speakers on range of ethical issues in publishing; students researched a seminar topic as case study.
- Course evolved to have students choose an applied ethics in publishing topic ("make the world better") or a case study on an ethical issue in field.
- Conference relaunched in 2020 with the goal of becoming an event for the wider trade and scholarly publishing community.
- GW Journal of Ethics in Publishing launched in 2020.



GW Journal of Ethics in Publishing

- Scholarly journal managed by GW Publishing graduate students.
- [GWJEP](#)'s **overarching goals**:
 - Provide forum for GW Publishing students to publish capstone projects alongside professionals and students from other programs;
 - Enable opportunities for hands-on experience managing a professional-level journal;
 - Involve the wider community of publishing and library professionals and scholars.
- Students serve on five student committees, as committee leads, and as managing editor.
- Students benefit from jobs and promotions through their experience.



**The George Washington University
Journal of Ethics in Publishing**



Student Journal Symposium for Literary and Research Publications

- Create dialogue on best editorial, leadership, sustainability, community practices among undergraduate- and graduate-level student-led journals, including literary, research, and specialized publications and presses.
- 3rd Student Journal Symposium, held April included ~70+ students, faculty, librarians, administrators, and publishing professionals from ~35 undergraduate and graduate student journals from 30 universities.
- Initiative includes research on landscape of and best practices for student journals.



Let's embark!



A top-down view of a wooden desk. In the upper right, a silver laptop is partially visible. To its left is a white cup of black coffee on a matching saucer. Below the coffee cup, a pair of glasses rests on the desk. In the lower center, a person's hands are writing in an open notebook. To the right of the notebook are several Polaroid photos. In the lower left, a book with a dark cover and the word 'SOUL' in large gold letters is visible. The text 'Cultivate your research interests and practice' is overlaid in the center in a white, sans-serif font, with a thin white horizontal line underneath it.

Cultivate your research
interests and practice

Spend time on reflection and personal assessment

- Discover your why
- Identify your vision
- Understand what you value
- Focus on your strengths
- Articulate both **personal** and **professional** goals



Map your Sweet Spot

Excelled
At

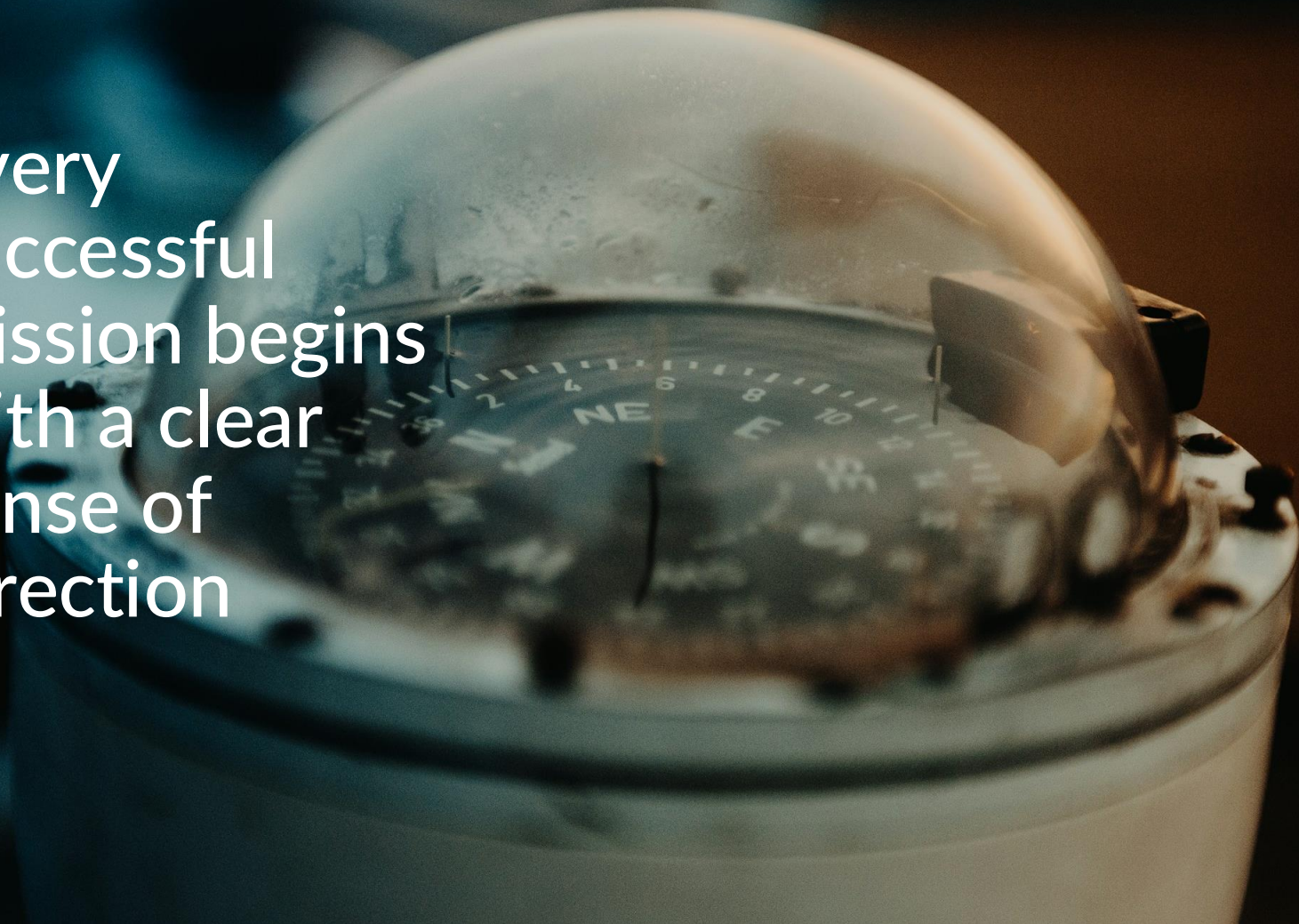
Praised
For

Loved
Doing

Open to
Testing

PLAN OF
VENTNOR
AND
BONCHURCH
Scale of 1/4 Mile

Every
successful
mission begins
with a clear
sense of
direction





Participate actively in the
publishing and scholarly
communications community

The background image shows a group of four people (three women and one man) standing around a large digital display at what appears to be a conference or exhibition. The display shows a presentation titled 'Opening the Book: Exploring Global and Cross-Sector Perspectives on Open Access Books and Emerging Initiatives'. The presentation includes a pie chart and text. To the right, another display is partially visible with the title 'Embedding DfI in Scholarly Publishing'. The people are engaged in discussion, with one woman pointing at the screen.

Become an active community member and contribute to idea sharing and learning

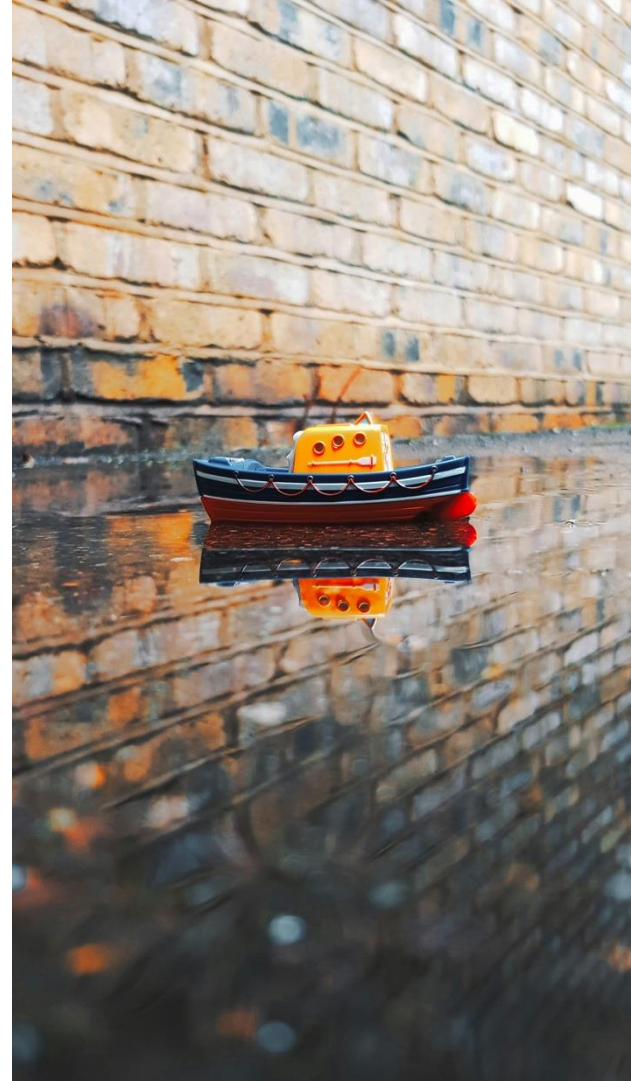
- Innumerable organizations, groups, and societies, large and small, including AAP, ACES, AUPresses, BISG, CSE, CLMP, EFA, ISMTE, SSP, STM—join one today!
- Serve on a committee or task force, serve as a peer reviewer, write a blog post or article, conduct joint research, present at a conference (like this one!), support your peers, nominate peers for awards, buy your colleagues' books.
- These organizations have existing communities of practice and germinate new ones.

A photograph of a modern office interior. In the background, a large, multi-story indoor garden wall is covered in various green plants. The office space is open-plan with wooden floors and modern furniture. Several people are standing and talking in small groups, creating a sense of community. A red 'EXIT' sign is visible on the ceiling. The text 'Develop a micro-niche and micro-community' is overlaid in white, with a white horizontal line underneath it.

Develop a micro-niche
and micro-community

Focus on adding value—to members, and the wider community

- What floats your boat?
- What is your mission?
- What do you hope to achieve?
- What is your superpower?
- What are you committed to doing?
- What can you accomplish?





Create a vision that plans for evolution

- Strategic purpose may be **helping others** in the community, **sharing best practices**, documenting and **stewarding information**, **driving innovation**, or a combination of these.
- An ideal focus or micro-niche is both **narrow** enough to be a unique proposition, and **broad** to encourage participation and wider interest.

Find and cultivate allies and strategic partnerships

- For your individual research practice, and as you develop ideas into a community or practice, personal and strategic partnerships are key.
- Seek to engage with and help improve the publishing industry and other fields; there is no shortage of challenges and potential solutions.
- Be inclusive; welcome different levels of participation and commitment.
- A core group of coordinators and thought leaders should drive community development.



Focus on solutions, stakeholders, collaboration, and impact

Challenge

- What challenge does the industry have that you are trying to solve?

Solutions / Big Ideas

- What can be done to address the challenge?

Team

- Who will be leading the challenge and collaboration?

Stakeholders and Collaborators

- What types of publishing industry stakeholders and collaborators should you focus on finding?

Impact and Benefit

- What benefit or impact will the stakeholders and collaborators see from addressing the challenge?

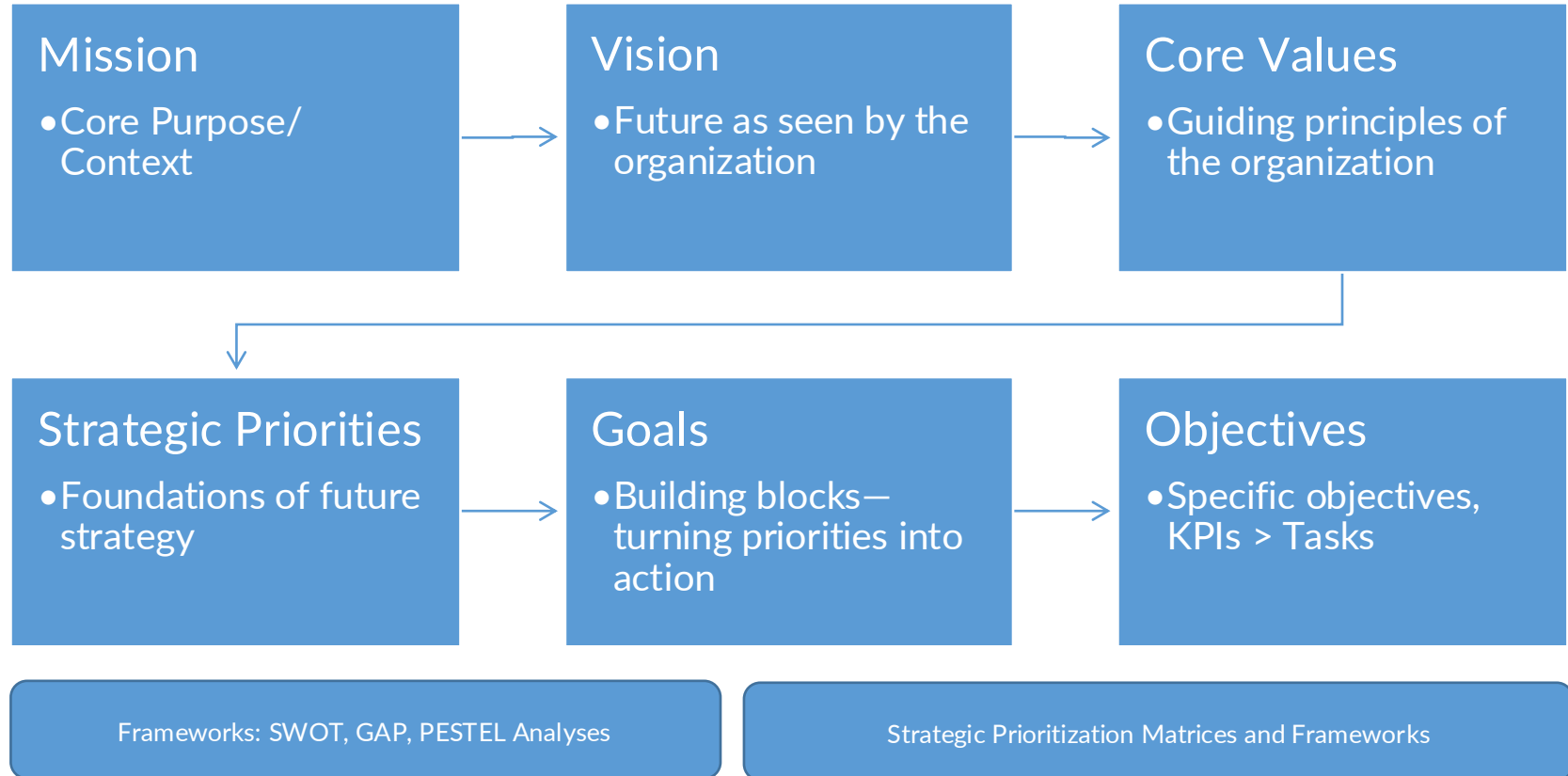
Outcomes

- What will you measure?
- How will you know if you have successfully addressed the challenge?

Set high goals and manage your expectations

- Develop a “Stretch Goal” — a goal “that appear[s] unattainable given current practices, skills, and knowledge.”
- Use the SMART(ER) framework to develop attainable, ethical, and rewarding goals:
 - Specific
 - Measurable
 - Achievable (or Actionable)
 - Relevant (or Realistic)
 - Time-bound
 - *E (Evaluative/ethical)*
 - *R (Rewarding)*

Launch (or relaunch) a Strategic Process



Develop Strategic Goals

- Define 3-5 specific strategic priorities (or themes) with collaboration in mind.
- What is the basic need and desired outcome?
 - Ensure priorities are aligned with the organization's overall strategy.
- What are the internal and external constraints on implementing these goals?
- Goals and objectives should be **specific** and **measurable**.
- Determine in advance **how** goals and objectives can be effectively measured.
- Assessment process should provide information on whether outcomes are being achieved and how programs can be improved.





AUPresses Strategic Goals Emphasize Collaboration

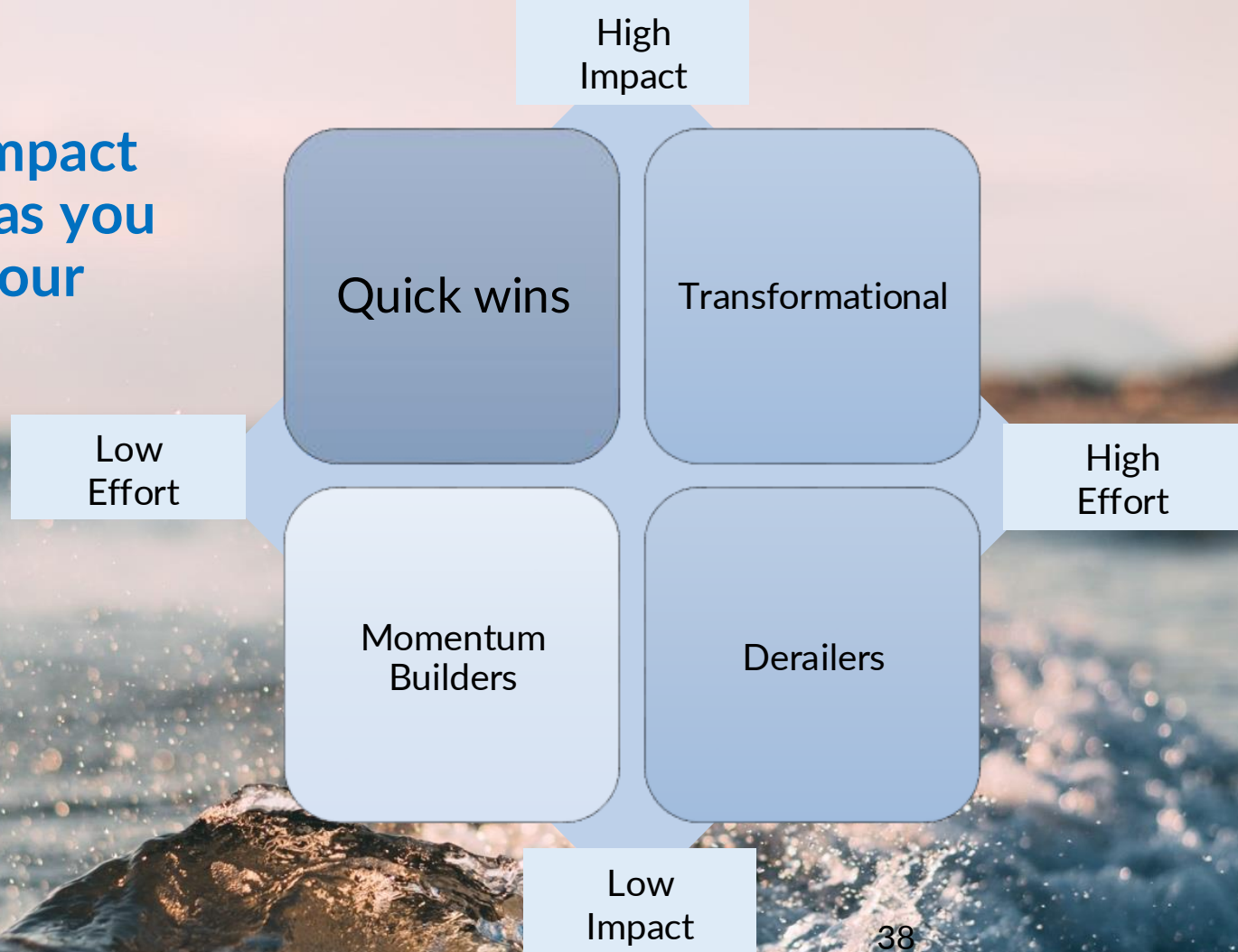
- **Collaboration:** Build membership and foster internal and external collaborations
- **Advocacy:** Increase the visibility of our members and their work through engagement with parent institutions, funders, policymakers, and the reading public
- **Research:** Conduct research that provides data and analyses to support advocacy and to inform publishing operations and new business models
- **Education:** Provide professional development leadership training
- **Infrastructure:** Ensure adequate systems and resources to execute strategic plan and mission

Each priority has specific strategies and tactics, tied to various goals, all which involve partnerships with members and a wide range of other global stakeholders.

A photograph of a wooden desk workspace. On the left, a silver laptop is open, showing its keyboard. To the right of the laptop is a white ceramic mug filled with dark coffee. Further right is a small, light-colored notepad with a pen resting on it. In the bottom right corner, a black smartphone lies flat on the desk. The background is a dark, textured wall. The entire image has a dark, semi-transparent overlay, and the text is written in a clean, white, sans-serif font.

Become intentional in
developing criteria,
prioritizing projects, and
setting goals with
collaboration in mind

Consider impact
and effort as you
prioritize your
actions



Be intentional about prioritizing

- **Interest** - How interesting is the project?
- **Learn** - What new skills or experience would you gain?
- **Strategic Fit** – How strategic is it? How well does it fit with your current knowledge/experience?
- **Benefit** - What benefit—financial or nonfinancial—would it lead to?
- **Impact** - What impact or contribution would **you** make through this project?



Not every Community of Practice needs to be a massive flagship project; sometimes you just need a nimble scout ship



Prioritize potential projects using a matrix .

PROJECT	INTEREST	LEARN	FIT	IMPACT	BENEFIT	PRIORITY / SCORE
Project 1	9	8	8	4	6	35
2	7	5	3	6	7	28
3	6	7	6	3	6	28
4	6	3	7	4	8	28
5	6	2	5	7	7	27
6	7	4	7	8	1	27
7	5	6	4	7	3	25

Strategic Prioritization Matrix

Midwest State University Press

Hypothetical Example

Process:	Goal Prioritization
Date:	6/21/23

Ranking Scale:

1 - Lowest, 10 - highest

[illegible]

[Dashboard](#)[Projects](#) ▾[Journals](#)[Projects](#) > [All Projects](#) > 16th GW Ethics in Pub

16th GW Ethics in Pub



VIEW



DELETE

Analytics

Properties

Layout

Access

People

Texts

Resources

Resource
Collections

Activity

Metadata

Exports

START DATE



07/04/2026

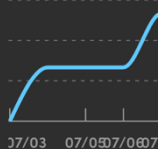
CHOOSE A RANGE PR

Last week



Visitors

14 unique visito



Learn the tech

Cultivate a wide range of technology skills that will be useful on your CoP journey:

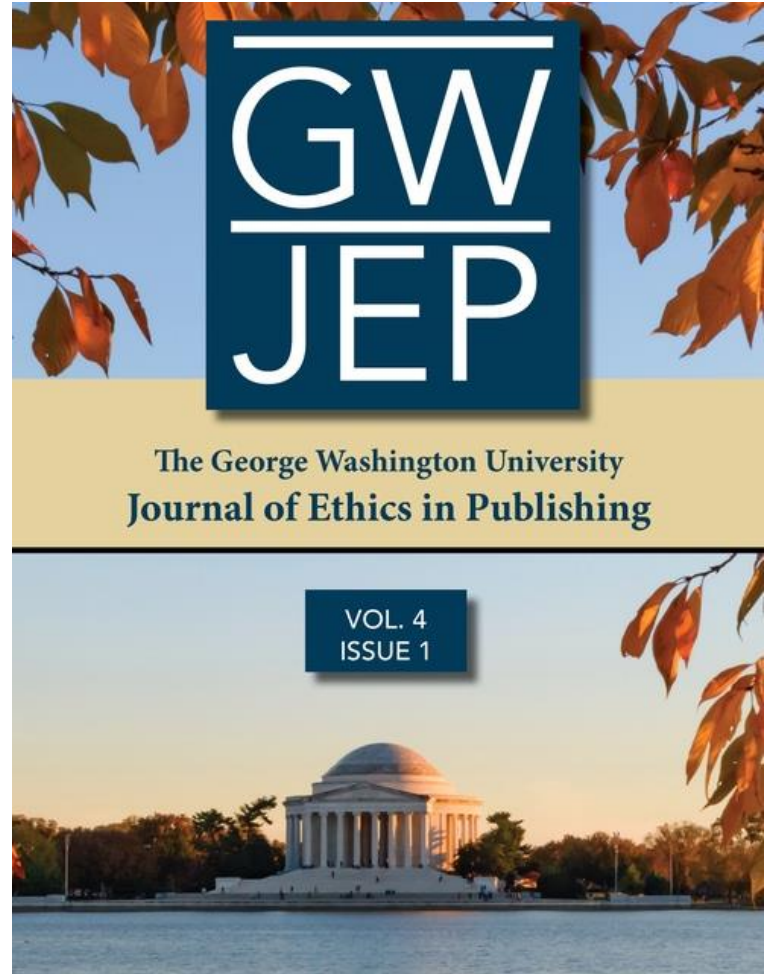
- Open source and commercial publishing platforms and software (OJS, Manifold, InDesign, etc.)
- Video and audio editing
- Design, production, accessibility
- Data analysis
- Effective use of AI.

Find reasons to gather and to collaborate—
privately and with other groups and
communities



Publish your research
and that of your
community – for today
and for posterity

- Launch a journal!
- Launch a conference!
- Launch a new press!





The new George Washington University Press: A teaching press that provides learning opportunities, publishes scholarly research, and provides publishing services to the GW community

University press dedicated to teaching and learning the art, science, and business of publishing

- Improve opportunities for learning and career prospects for students
- Staffed by graduate publishing students under guidance of professional faculty and advisory board
- Support career development, especially for students without publishing experience—relevant for job applications and interviews
- Provides leadership experience as well as practical, professional publishing experience



GW University Press: Strategic Priorities

- Align strategically with the university and GW's AAU membership
- Publish high-quality, impactful works of scholarship while providing publishing support to GW's institutes, centers, and schools
- Focus on development of a sustainable press
- Engage with communities of practice in core fields in academic and professional settings
- Integrate digital and open-source platforms

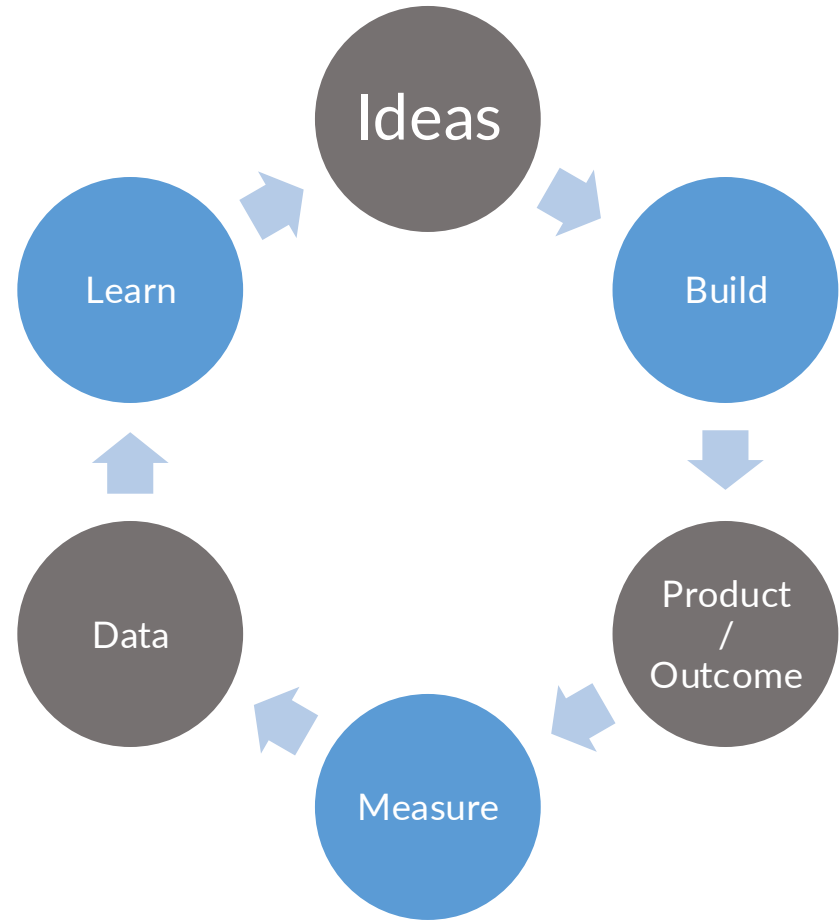
A wooden sailing ship with three masts and large sails is on the water. The ship is positioned in the lower-left quadrant of the image. The water is calm with gentle ripples. To the right, a large, craggy rock formation rises from the water. The sky is a warm, golden-orange color, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall mood is serene and contemplative.

Plan for
evolution and
constant
change — be
strategic
while open to
serendipity

Measure and evaluate

Foster continuous improvement and learning

Example: Build-Measure-Learn Feedback Loop.
Strive to minimize the total time through the loop



Your small community of practice may evolve some day into a larger society or association, but it's also fine to stay small and nimble.



A photograph of four people sitting around a round wooden table outdoors. On the left, a man in a white shirt is laughing. Next to him, a man with glasses in a pink shirt is smiling. Opposite them, a woman in a purple jacket is gesturing while talking. On the far right, a woman in a grey top is listening. The table has a small vase of yellow flowers and a glass. The background shows a body of water and a city skyline under a clear sky.

Communities of Practice don't
start with institutional charters.
They start with conversations.

Remember to have fun along
the way.

Access slides, tools and
worksheets



bit.ly/REAP-BYU-Warren

Thank you!

John W. Warren
Director and Professor
Graduate Program in Publishing
GW University Press
George Washington University

[Email](#)

[ORCID](#)

[LinkedIn](#)

Further reading and bibliography

- [Association of University Presses Strategic Plan](#) refresh
- [Coalition for Diversity & Inclusion in Scholarly Communications](#) (C4DISC); and [Toolkits for Equity](#) project
- Deanta, [Trends in Academic Publishing](#), 2026 (Whitepaper)
- [GW Ethics in Publishing Conference](#)
- [GW Journal of Ethics in Publishing](#)
- Noorda, Rachel, and Corinna Norrick-Rühl, [Research Methods in Publishing and Book Studies](#), 2025, Routledge
- [Research in Editing and Publishing \(REAP\)](#) – About REAP
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- [Student Journal Symposium for Literary and Research Publications](#); see also John W. Warren, "[Vital Voices: The Student Journal Symposium for Literary and Research Publications](#)," GW Journal of Ethics in Publishing, Vol 4, Issue 1, 2025

Further reading and bibliography (2)

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- Warren, John W., “[Manifesto Time: Do You Need a Publishing Manifesto?](#)” *GW Journal of Ethics in Publishing*, GW Journal of Ethics in Publishing, Vol 4, Issue 2, 2026
- Warren, John W., “[Reasons to Launch a Journal: Publishers Note](#),” in *GW Journal of Ethics in Publishing*, Vol 1, Issue 1, 2022
- Wegner, Etienne, Richard McDermott, William M Snyder, [Cultivating Communities of Practice: A Guide to Managing Knowledge](#), 2002, Harvard Business School Press
- Wegner-Trayner, Etienne, Beverly Wenger-Trayner, Phil Reid, Claude Bruderlein, [Communities of Practice within and among Organizations: A Guidebook](#). 2nd edition, 2023, Social Learning Lab

Photo credits—all photos from Unsplash, except as **noted**

1, 6, 26, 31, 52 : SSP Annual Meeting, 2026, San Diego

2: Flickr user: Stew Dean

3: Graphic Node

4: Pedro Vieira

7: Balazs Horvath

8: Anna Hunko

11, 12: Alina Grubnyak

14, 18, 28: GW Ethics in Publishing Conference, 2025

17: REAP research group

19, 45: GW Journal of Ethics in Publishing

**20: Student Journal Symposium for Literary and
Research Publications, 2025**

21, 30: Austin Neill

22: Thought Catalog

23: Aaron Burden

24: Annie Spratt

25: Flavio

29: Sid Balachandran

35: Hal Gatewood

37: Andrew Neel

38: Mourad Saadi

39: Clay Banks

40: Jackie Russell

43: Manifold Publishing Platform – GW instance

44: SSP EPIC Awards Reception, 2026

46, 47: GW Creative Services

49: Hector John Periquin

51: Raimond Klavins