

The OA Interviews: InTech's Nicola Rylett

The history of Open Access (OA) publisher InTech is a complicated and somewhat confusing one. According to a [Scribd presentation](#), the company was founded in Vienna in 2004. Over the subsequent seven years it has undergone a series of name changes, moved country, and attracted considerable criticism, both for the quality of its peer review and the way in which it markets its services. The company appears to inhabit a strange binary world: while some [accuse it](#) of repeatedly spamming researchers, and preying on the vulnerabilities and egos of researchers in order to make money, the company itself maintains that it is a victim of misinformation and misperception, and that it has a growing and happy customer base. As evidence of the latter, it cites a survey that it commissioned earlier this year. 81% of those responding to the survey, says InTech's new marketing director Nicola Rylett, rated their publishing experience with the company as either 'excellent' or 'good'.

What do we make of these conflicting pictures of InTech? The quality of peer review can be difficult to assess. Nevertheless, the publisher has acknowledged problems with its peer review in the past, and when I drew Rylett's attention to a chapter in one of its recently published books she agreed that the quality was "unacceptable". It also seems fair to conclude that the company's marketing techniques leave a lot to be desired. However, Rylett insists that InTech is addressing these issues. To that end, she explains, it is currently recruiting a new middle and senior management team.

It seems clear that InTech has proved very successful in selling its pay-to-publish services to thousands of researchers around the world. But can it persuade the wider research community, the scholarly publishing industry, and the Open Access movement to endorse it?

PLEASE NOTE THAT INTECH HAS ISSUED A [STATEMENT](#) AND [RESPONSE](#) TO THE INTRODUCTION TO THIS INTERVIEW. MY RESPONSE TO THAT IS [HERE](#).

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InTech first came to my attention in 2007, when researchers began to [raise questions](#) about a Vienna-based company called [I-Tech Education and Publishing](#) which, they complained, was sending out unsolicited emails inviting scientists to contribute chapters to books – for which a 380Euros publication charge was being demanded. Many appeared to be concluding that the company was engaged in either mass spamming, or scamming, or possibly both.

At the time, I contacted the CEO of the company [Vedran Kordic](#), who posted a response to the [American Scientist Open Access Forum](#). “[M]ore than 1,500 authors published to date in the open access mode by us,” he said. “There is no one of them thinking that this is a kind of online cheat or that we are working on pay-publish mode.”

Over the next couple of years the complaints appeared only to grow, and by now researchers were posting their grievances on blogs as well as mailing lists. At some point the company changed its name to [In-Tech](#). It also began to launch scholarly journals.

In November 2009 the company [changed its name](#) again – to [Sciyo](#). It also created a second web site that appeared to be running in parallel to In-Tech's site ([intechweb.org](#)). And shortly afterwards it [announced](#) that anyone publishing a book chapter with the company would receive royalties. These would be based on the number of times an author's work was downloaded.

An OA publisher paying royalties was a novel idea; an idea, however, greeted with some [scepticism](#). Nevertheless, it stimulated me to contact the company again – an enquiry that led to my doing an email [interview](#) with [Aleksandar Lazinica](#), who introduced himself to me as the CEO of Sciyo.

During the interview a number of issues arose, including the quality of the publisher's peer review process, the nature of its email marketing activities, and uncertainty over the relationship between Sciyo and In-Tech.

Peer review

What was the issue with peer review?

It turned out that some of the publisher's authors believed that their chapters and articles had not been properly reviewed, and possibly not reviewed at all.

As one researcher put it to me at the time, "The review process is blind, but it is actually non-existent. We never received any real review for our papers, rather just an acceptance note for an initial abstract. The full papers were not reviewed at all and, furthermore, for some papers we did not have a chance for proof reading.

He added, "Finally, two articles of ours were published without notifying us at all, in one case (the journal) the initially submitted draft was taken as it was and suddenly appeared on the web some months later (I just accidentally noticed this publication when I searched the web)."

The researcher concluded: "I do not know how their review process works internally, but from what I experienced and heard from others, I fear, in comparison to all other publishers/journals/books I have experiences with, In-Tech/Sciyo ... well, I cannot even begin to compare it. It is simply highly unprofessional."

Other researchers were [posting](#) similar concerns online and when I interviewed Lazinica, he seemed to agree that there were problems. As he put it: "Admittedly, consistency in peer review is our Achilles heel and it is also one of our priorities. We do not have a bullet proof review system yet. We have managed to improve the process a lot but there is still an unacceptably high deviation in the quality between the publications."

He also seemed to imply that In-Tech had been rebranded as Sciyo partly in response to these problems. "We were aware of In-Tech's process disadvantages," he told me, "and Sciyo has improved the services and processes which were inherited from In-Tech."

Somewhat inconsistently, he then added that peer review was in any case an out-dated practice. "[W]hat is the purpose of such reviews, other than to be seen to be abiding by some formal regulations?" he asked. "Scientific publishing today is still at the same level as it was in the 19th century, with journals and the review process still the main parts of it. After more than 100 years, I believe it's time to move on and apply new mechanisms. Readers are the ones who should review the article by reading it or not."

In the interview below Rylett tells me that I misunderstood what Lazinica was saying. "What Lazinica was talking about was his personal perception of how the peer review model could possibly evolve over the long term," she says. "The company's view, however, is that peer review remains an integral and vital part of the entire process within the open access publishing industry."

When I asked why the company had returned to using the name InTech, Rylett replied, "[W]e had underestimated the power and esteem associated with the InTech brand, and as a result we took the conscious decision to revert back to InTech,"¹

She also said that, contrary to what Lazinica had told me in 2010, and contrary to the company's various announcements at the time, InTech and Sciyo have always been separate entities – although Sciyo is not currently trading. "We have retained ownership of the Sciyo name and kept the company listed for possible future projects."

¹ As noted on page 4, the company went back to the name InTech, without a hyphen, rather than In-Technology.

Intriguingly, the name used in InTech's books is different yet again. As someone called David [pointed out](#) on my blog in May 2010: "[N]ote that in the books that they publish they call themselves 'in teh' – which is a misspelling of 'in the' which will result in hundreds of hits so you will never find it on a Google search."²

Marketing

Another issue to arise during the 2010 interview was the way in which the company markets its services. I pointed out to Lazineca that many researchers were complaining that they were being bombarded with unsolicited invitations to submit book chapters.

Indeed, some were highly suspicious about the company's motives. In March 2009, for instance, a Dr Velamparambil [suggested](#) on his blog that an email solicitation he had received from In-Tech might be a "New [Nigerian Scam](#)".

"In the last three weeks or so, I have received three e-mails from one Mr Vedran Kordic from a website called 'INTECHWEB.ORG'," he wrote. "My first reaction to this was 'Huh?' I have been nominated to write a chapter on any crap [a reference to the second paragraph of the invitation, which can be [viewed](#) on Dr Velamparambil's blog] as long as I pay \$600/– (460Euros) per chapter!"

When he answered my question about spamming Lazineca seemed to imply that he saw nothing wrong with bulk emailing pay-to-publish invitations to researchers. "Nowadays spam filters are efficient, so I believe the question of spamming had great importance and weight some years ago, but not today, and especially not in the future."

Here too, insists Rylett, I misunderstood what I was being told. "He was commenting that while spamming may have been prevalent across the publishing industry (not InTech) as a whole some time ago, it appears that the industry has done much to eradicate the issue to the extent that today, spamming is less of a concern."

I remain of the view that my interpretation of what Lazineca told me is correct, but people will have to judge for themselves, by reading the 2010 [interview](#).

Be that as it may, when I finished the interview there was a surprising twist to the story. Since both In-Tech and Sciyo had the logo of the Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association ([OASPA](#)) on their web sites I contacted OASPA president [Caroline Sutton](#) for a comment.

At this point, Sutton herself became concerned and emailed me, "OASPA takes very seriously the importance of compliance by its members with its code of conduct, including ensuring that peer review processes are genuine, and that email marketing is responsible. The issues raised regarding In-Tech/Sciyo will be carefully reviewed by OASPA, and action will be taken if they are found to be substantiated."

To Sutton's surprise, however, Lazineca responded to her concern by announcing that since they were totally separate companies, any concerns she might have about In-Tech were irrelevant to Sciyo.

Like me, Sutton appeared to be under the impression that Sciyo was In-Tech by another name. Consequently, she had simply changed the name of the company on the OASPA web site.

I was particularly surprised by this turn of events, since in the interview Lazineca had said quite clearly, "Sciyo was founded in Vienna in 2004 as In-Tech. In 2008 we moved our headquarters to Croatia to cut down on operating costs. In November the company changed its name to Sciyo"... Sciyo and In-Tech are the same company.

² Recently published books appear not to use this name anymore, but it can be seen on the cover of [this book](#).

The company's [press release](#) of 20th November 2009 said the same thing, “Effective today, In-Tech is changing its name to Sciyo and continues publishing using a new website, sciyo.com ... The company ownership and management remain unchanged”.

Yet Lazineca was now insisting that Sciyo was a completely separate company.

Sutton responded promptly. “We have taken Sciyo's name off of the OASPA website, and have asked Sciyo to remove the ‘member of OASPA’ logo from their site,” she emailed me. “OASPA has asked Sciyo to apply for membership at which time we will be reviewing carefully their practices and policies. Sciyo has agreed to apply for membership.”

However, when I spoke to Rylett (now some eighteen months after the Lazineca interview), she said that Sciyo had not applied for membership, but that the publisher plans to re-apply soon under its new name.

This perhaps is because at some point subsequent to the Lazineca interview the company reverted to using the name In-Tech, although this time without a hyphen (i.e. InTech).

Meanwhile it appears that no researcher ever received any royalties from the publisher, although when I asked Rylett for an update on this she declined to confirm either way. “Having worked in the publishing industry for a number of years with some of the industry's leading STM publishing houses, it has been my experience that information of this type is normally a confidential matter between the publisher and editor/author concerned,” she replied.

However I later discovered a Q&A on InTech's [FAQ](#) that reads: “Q: Do you pay royalties to your authors? A: No, we don't pay royalties at the moment.”

Nevertheless, the company has continued to bombard researchers with email invitations. And in response, researchers have continued to complain. Last November, for instance, [Per Ola Kristensson](#), a researcher at St Andrews' University in Scotland, [reported](#) on his blog that he had received no less than five email solicitations from InTech.

“Why on earth would I spend time and effort to write a book chapter for a random individual I have never heard of and who doesn't seem to have any credentials whatsoever in the field?,” he asked. “And who reads these book chapters? And what exactly is the point of an open access ‘book chapter’? Sounds like a web page to me. With the exception, I have to pay InTech plenty of money to put it up. I might as well just make the text available on the web myself.”

The interview I did with Lazineca has attracted a great many hits in the intervening period. Most of those accessing it come via Google searches, and they tend to arrive like London buses – in bunches. These searches often consist of phrases like, “InTech book offer,” “InTech publishing scam”, “InTech vanity”, and “InTech spam”.

I have also had regular comments about the publisher emailed to me, and posted on my blog. These comments (generally anonymous or pseudonymous) frequently contain unsubstantiated allegations about the company and its activities. Since I moderate my blog most never see the light of day.

Here is an example of the kind of email I receive, “I read your “*Open and Shut?*” blog about OASPA and InTech as they approached me to write a chapter for them ... At least I know my ego is not overblown as I don't consider myself an expert (one paper published to date that is basically a survey and hardly high quality research), nor do I wish to pay to publish, nor do I wish to trust an organisation that doesn't have any clear description of cost on their website.”

Transparency

In fact, lack of price transparency is another complaint frequently made by researchers, not least because the invitations sent out by InTech do not always appear to inform authors that if they take up the offer they will have to pay a fee. Earlier this year I was forwarded one of InTech's email invitations. It began, “I contacted you last week. I am taking the liberty of writing to you again as I

am aware that you may be engaged in other activities or my message may not have successfully reached you.”

There was no mention of a publishing charge. The message listed the benefits of OA, without saying that they came at a price. The recipient of the email was told that by publishing with InTech she could:

- Increase your visibility, impact and citation rates;
- Keep the copyright to your work;
- Receive a free hard copy of the complete book;
- Help speed up research;
- Make your work freely available to everyone, benefiting the whole of society.

[Charles Greenberg](#), a librarian in Yale University’s [Cushing/Whitney Medical Library](#) has also expressed concern about the paucity of pricing information on InTech’s web site. In a blog [post](#) he published earlier this year Greenberg said, “I can only find [a visible page](#) with an APC of 840 EUROS (\$1,165) for InTech journal articles, but we can probably assume a similar fee is presented to all authors, as these InTech books are little more than article anthologies.”

Pointing out that InTech [claims to have](#) 7,500 authors,³ Greenberg did a quick calculation. “Let’s accept for the moment the claim that InTechWeb has 7,500 authors ... Let’s say that each author paid \$1,165 for their first article or book chapter. We are talking about more than \$8,000,000.”

Greenberg’s calculations, however, might overstate things. When I asked Rylett what InTech’s [article processing fee](#) was she replied, “The APC that authors pay for books is currently 590Euros per chapter, and for journals the figure is 840Euros.”

And when I asked how much money InTech makes from the books it publishes, Rylett said that not all InTech’s authors pay a fee. “[F]or the academic year 2010-2011, we sponsored around 1,000 book chapters by waiving the APC altogether and currently 2 of our 7 Journals are ‘free for all’.” [i.e. there is no publication charge, and there is no access charge].

I asked Rylett to put me in touch with four or five authors who had been granted a waiver, which she agree to do. At the time of finishing writing this, however, I had still not been sent any names or contact details.

Greenberg is, however, correct to point out that pricing information is hard to find on the InTech web site. Moreover, when I finally tracked down the advertised prices for InTech’s journals they did not entirely match the figures cited by Rylett. Contrary to what she said, for instance, the only two journals I could find advertising an APC of 840Euros were [The Journal of Humanoids](#) and the [International Food Risk Analysis Journal](#).

The APCs for [The International Journal of Advanced Robotic Systems](#), [The International Journal of Engineering Business Management](#), [The International Journal of Agricultural Chemistry](#) and [The International Journal of Interactive Multimedia](#) (to be launched next year) all advertise a price of 870Euros, not 840.

Meanwhile, the only two journals that are “free for all” (contrary to Lazineca telling me that all the publisher’s journals would be free from publishing charges from 2010) are [Nanomaterials and Nanotechnology](#) and [The International Journal of Radio Frequency Identification & Wireless Sensor Networks](#), both of which were launched this year.⁴

I could, however, find no advertised prices for book chapters. Nor – with the exception of the pages describing [The International Journal of Agricultural Chemistry](#) and [The International Journal](#)

³ The number of authors appears sometimes to be stated as 25,000. See [here](#) for instance; and see Rylett’s comment on Page 20.

⁴ Rylett said InTech publishes seven journals, but there are eight listed on the web site.

[of Interactive Multimedia](#)) – could I find any mention of APC waivers, not even in the publisher’s FAQ.

Perhaps this will change in the near future. When I asked Rylett for information on the company’s finances, she replied. “We are currently in the process of developing our new-look website which is due for launch in the near future. The site will reflect the growth of the company and move us towards a greater degree of transparency, where information of this type (which of course won’t compromise our competitive advantage) will become widely available and in the public domain.”

With luck, the new web site will also be more transparent about the pricing of its products.

Value for money?

So what do authors get for their money when they publish with InTech, and does this represent good value for money?

Since the bulk of InTech’s business is book publishing I shall concentrate on book chapters. InTech’s [FAQ](#) lists the various stages of the publication process – a [list](#), we should note, that does not mention peer review, but refers to book chapters undergoing “editorial review”⁵. It also says that once a proposal has been accepted the author is asked to write it up and submit it, after which “Your full chapter undergoes a review by the Book Editor”.⁶

The FAQ is less clear about who reviews the initial book proposals (rather than the chapter proposals). There is mention of an [editorial board](#), but I could find no list of members. There is, however, a list of people on something called the [scientific board](#) but there is no explanation as to what role its members play.⁷

Moreover, while we can assume that some book editors self-select (by making a proposal), it is not clear who initiates those books where no proposal has been received, how an editor is selected for such books, or how potential chapter contributors are identified and vetted.

In a blog post published in May, the energy and environmental economist David Stern reported that he had been invited to submit a chapter to an InTech book, and then [added](#), “The book is available for free online but a hardcopy is mailed to each author. What I found to be even weirder is this statement: ‘To preserve the integrity of the review process the identity of the editor will be disclosed upon final chapter submission’.”

Likewise, it is not clear whether any form of external review takes place, or whether completed book manuscripts are reviewed by anyone other than the editor once all the chapters have been submitted, something that some book publishers often insist upon.

Finally, there seems to be some confusion over proofreading. At the beginning of October InTech’s FAQ stated, “Your chapter undergoes two proofreading cycles”. That has subsequently been removed, and a new section added to the FAQ stating, amongst other things, that the author must ensure the paper has been proofread prior to submission – thereby presumably shifting responsibility for the text’s quality from the publisher to the author.

That said, there is now an in-house [proofreading service](#), but this incurs an additional (unspecified) charge.⁸

⁵ A [later section](#) of the FAQ talks of double blind peer review, but this refers specifically to journal articles.

⁶ As I was writing this, the text was changed. In early October the text read, “Your full chapter undergoes a final quality check made by the Book Editor”. ([Here](#) is the previous text)

⁷ In 2010, Lazinica told me that the role of the scientific board was “to monitor and advise Sciyo on its publishing strategy, and propose improvements.” He did not however say that they did any reviewing of articles, chapters, or book proposals.

⁸ The reference to two proofreading cycles was removed while I was writing this. ([Here](#) is the text as it read in early October).

Most puzzling of all, there is no mention anywhere that I could see of [copyediting](#), a key part of the traditional book publishing process.

So what does the end product look like? Not great, argue critics. At the end of last year OA advocate [Dorothea Salo commented](#), “Looking through the current In-Tech offerings, one is bombarded with non-existent copyediting and appalling typesetting.”

Is this fair? Judge for yourself: [Here](#) are [here](#) are the first two pages of a chapter on carbon nanotubes published in an [InTech book](#) last year. Not being a researcher myself, I sent the text to several scientists for their comments. One responded, “Is this real or computer-generated context-free grammar?”

In a later email he added, “The text seems to have been proofread electronically since I do not see obvious typographical errors; however, sometimes it reads like context-free grammar: correctly spelled words are placed next to each other but do not make much sense.”

Another scientist – an OA advocate – was less charitable, “It’s Total rubbish. No proof-reader has been anywhere near it. They should be utterly ashamed of themselves. The whole thing makes me almost love Elsevier and Wiley.”

This text, we could note, was published in a book containing 36 chapters. If all the authors paid 590Euro each, InTech would have earned 21,240 Euros, or \$29,064 for publishing the book. True, corresponding authors also receive [a free hard-copy version](#) of the book so some print costs will be incurred. However, these will be offset by earnings that InTech makes from selling print versions of the book – at a [cost](#) of 100Euros (\$137) each.

A few more randomly chosen chapters from recently published books suggest there is considerable room for improvement. I link to a few further samples [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).

This, by the way, is the opening paragraph of a [book chapter](#) published in September this year: “The direst threat posted by air pollution may be its hard controlling caused by its strong flowability”.

Some might argue that in an online environment the quality of the text in some of these examples is just about acceptable (despite the solecisms, despite the frequent omission of definite articles, and despite the typos)⁹, but perhaps the question to ask is this: Would the quality of these articles be considered acceptable if the publisher were Elsevier or Wiley? (Where the authors are charged no APC and the cost of print copies is [generally comparable](#) to the \$137 charged by InTech).

We might also want to ask why, given the undeniable difference in quality, an author would opt to pay to publish with InTech rather than publish without charge with a traditional publisher. Purely in order to have their work made OA? Or for some other reason?

Another way of judging a book is to consider the quality of the design and layout, which, by the way, is one of the value-added services that InTech [commits](#) to provide for the 590Euros charge it levies. (“[You receive a print copy of your book, hard bound and professionally designed.](#)”)

Here is a [sample](#) of what would appear to be InTech’s standard layout. Would not one expect the paragraph breaks to either be indented or double-spaced? And in order to avoid confusion should not the font underneath the diagrams be different to the main text font? Likewise should not the diagrams be more judiciously placed?

⁹ E.g. on the [Scholcomm mailing list](#) recently a librarian said. “As much as I respect professional copy editors I would just point out that ‘good enough’ vis-à-vis copy editing will do in certain situations and that sometimes getting the scientific results out in a timely fashion is more important than perfection when it comes to copy editing.” However, InTech could not claim to be publishing cutting-edge science. Moreover, its books are also intended to be produced as hard copy volumes. One would also need to clarify what is meant by “good enough” in terms of copyediting.

Again I sought the views of researchers. One replied, “This is basic formatting. I can’t say there is no effort in this page. It’s just basic (put the figure on top and continue the text from the previous page). If it were me, I would have put Fig. 10 between two paragraphs, but it seems to be consistent with the entire chapter (they always put the figures on the top of the page). This is a way to save time. Another thing that’s a bit annoying is that they do not leave a space at the start of each paragraph (no hanging indents) or no space between paragraphs.”

[Here](#) is another layout sample. And [here](#)¹⁰ is the front page of a book published in 2006, and edited by the two founders of InTech. It seems fair to conclude that the typo in the description of the book – “The primarily goal of this book is to cover the state-of-the-art development and future directions in modern manufacturing systems” – has been languishing on the company’s web site for five years. Has no one noticed the mistake in all that time? Or is the error deemed too minor to warrant the three minutes that would be required to correct it?

Here is the [opening sentence](#) of the description of a book on [peritoneal dialysis](#) published earlier this month: “Progress in Peritoneal Dialysis is based on judgement of a number of abstracts, submitted by interested people involved in various aspects of peritoneal dialysis”.

Finally, here are the [first two sentences](#) of a book on bronchitis published earlier this month, “The aim of this book is to present some recent interesting novel findings in the field of bronchitis, in supplement to Bronchitis. In particular this volume focuses on the successful use of evolving and the development of novel tools diagnosing and treating bronchitis.”

Without a great deal more research, we cannot know how typical these samples are. However, their quality would seem to be consistent with the apparent absence of copyediting at InTech.

Critics like Greenberg also [complain](#) that the books are generally little more than article anthologies, with chapters thrown together often without a compelling overall theme.

Others have expressed [concern](#) that InTech book editors may not always be qualified in the subject area covered by the book they are editing.

All in all, is InTech justified in charging an APC of 590Euros per chapter?

Yes, says Rylett.

First, she explains, InTech’s relationship with its published scientists “does not end upon publication of an authors’ work, it continues indefinitely thereafter with continued PR and Marketing support often continuing several months and years post-publication.”

Second, she adds, there is the richness of the author experience itself. “From the genesis of our working relationship, our authors work closely with their Publishing Process Manager at every stage of the process and act as a single point of contact, unlike the majority of publishers who generally have a number of different contacts who they deal with regarding various aspects of their work.”

Finally, she says, InTech is the only Open Access publisher that gives its authors a complimentary hard copy of the end product “as a standard part of the overall service”.

“[I]t is important to emphasise,” she concludes, “that an APC from an InTech perspective goes above and beyond the levels of service within our industry. So yes, to answer your question, we are justified in imposing the APC.”

Rylett does concede, however, that the first sample ([here](#) and [here](#)) cited above is “unacceptable”. She adds, however, that InTech has recently introduced an in-house English proofreading service.¹¹

¹⁰ [Here](#) is the record of the page from a year ago.

¹¹ Presumably, this is the charged-for service mentioned in the [FAQ](#).

Depends on the editor

What seems clear, however, is that there is no shortage of researchers willing to accept InTech's pay-to-publish invitations. And some are undoubtedly happy with the end result. [Leonid Dolgov](#) – based at the [Institute of Physics at the University of Tartu](#) in Estonia – is one scientist who published a book chapter with InTech recently. “I am satisfied with the results of my work with InTech last year,” he emailed me. “They published the book, which they promised. It was a useful experience for me to work with InTech. In particular, I now understood some features of open access publishing.”

Another contented customer is cryobiologist [Igor Katkov](#), who is currently editing an InTech book on cryopreservation. Head of Cryobiology and Biostabilization at the Stem Cell Research Center of the [Sanford-Burnham Institute for Medical Research](#) in the US, and Chief Scientific Officer and Founder of [Celltronix](#), Katkov [posted](#) a comment on my blog in May announcing his editorship.

“I have invited over 30 prominent scientists to submit peer reviews in their areas of expertise of cryobiology, cryotechniques and cryopreservation equipment,” he wrote, adding that he personally was going to edit all the papers “So any scientific-looking junk will be filtered out.”



Igor Katkov

In a later email exchange with me Katkov reported that the book has grown to around 50 chapters. “I am now in the process of completing the second review (few chapters were accepted at the first submission round).”

And Katkov affirmed that he is more than satisfied with the service he has been getting from InTech. “My experience and compliment to the InTech Manager Mrs Maja Bozicevic – she's been very professional and helpful!”

Of note is Katkov's belief that in an OA environment responsibility for quality lies not with the publisher, but with the editor. “A lot of this Open Access business depends on the editor and his/her approach,” he told me. “I have reviewed almost 60 Chapter Proposals and 47 full Book Chapters, many of them twice, some three times. I've invited the leaders of the discipline to submit, and made sure that all the major areas of this vast field are covered.”

Some, however, might wonder why, if Katkov is doing all the heavy lifting, InTech can expect to earn \$40,000+ from the 50 chapters Katkov plans to publish, not to mention any money it earns from hard copy sales.

Katkov concedes that while he can ensure that the quality of the science published in his book will be high, he cannot control how the finished product will look. Moreover, as a Russian Cossack from Siberia, he admits that he cannot guarantee the quality of the English in the book either.

This may not be an issue for him, he says, because the in-house proofreading service is made available to editors at no charge. What about the chapters of his co-authors? What if they cannot, or will not, pay for a proofreading service, or for copyediting? “[T]he quality of English is on

author's shoulders", Katkov replies. "I don't know the process because I am waived, it's a bonus for my hard job."

The samples cited above suggest that some chapters may never be proofread before publication and, as we saw, there is no evidence that InTech provides copyediting as part of its publishing process.¹²

“Excellent” or “Good”

As we saw, Dolgov and Katkov are contented InTech customers. But how typical are they? Rylett is confident that they are entirely typical. Whatever misconceptions there may be amongst the wider research community, she says, we should be in no doubt that InTech customers are happy customers. “[T]he very fact that many of our authors who we deal with work with us on a repeat basis, highlights the point that our publications and overall service levels are regarded in high esteem by an impressive number of notable academics,” she says.

As further evidence of this, Rylett cites a survey InTech commissioned earlier this year, the findings of which were published in [a report](#) called “Author Attitudes Towards Open Access Publishing”.

The survey was outsourced to a UK-based company called [TBI](#), which [describes itself](#) as a provider of “sales and marketing services” to publishers, societies and libraries. And the work was project-managed by TBI director Melinda Kenneway, a well-regarded marketing consultant and [former employee of Oxford University Press](#). Kenneway also wrote the published report.

By email, Kenneway explained to me that the research had originally been intended for internal consumption within InTech alone. “[B]ut the results were so good (very high customer endorsement and also overall participation), and so interesting, that we felt they deserved to be made public.”

Adds Kenneway: “There was an overwhelming vote of confidence in the organisation, with 81% of responding authors rating their publishing experience with InTech as either ‘excellent’ or ‘good’. Only 4.5% rated their experience as poor or extremely poor.”

Nevertheless, OA advocates are sceptical about the survey – not just because of the way it was undertaken, but the way in which the results were put into the public domain.

For instance, they say, although the report states that 32% of the 25,000 InTech authors polled responded, it does not say how many participants answered each question.

As one sceptic put it to me, on a non-attributable basis, “They say they had 8,000+ respondents in total (out of 25,000 sampled from ‘the InTech database’). But where there are percentage responses, we don’t know how many of the 8,000 answered those questions. That’s a classic ‘fudge’ for survey interpreters!”

When I asked Kenneway to clarify, she explained that in fact only 5,167 respondents had completed the section on InTech, or 63.7% of the 8,000 who participated in the survey. She added, “[W]e make it clear in the opening section that 4,692 participants completed all the questions in the survey out of the 8,000+ that started it, so each question had variable levels of responses and each question reflects the proportion of those that responded.”

But why not state that only 5,000 of the 8,000 respondents to a survey that had polled 25,000 researchers answered the section on InTech? “If 8,000 people were polled and 5,000 responded, the right way to report that 80% rated X good/excellent is to say that 80% of the 5,000/8,000 who responded rated X good/excellent,” comments OA advocate [Stevan Harnad](#).

Does ellipsis like this really matter? It is not deception, after all, merely selective use of data. However, anyone who did not notice the elision would inevitably reach the wrong conclusion. As

¹² We should recall that proofreading and copyediting is not the same thing. See [here](#) for a reminder of the difference.

such, one is tempted to conclude that the aim of publishing the survey was not to share useful information with the world, but simply to promote InTech.

Moreover, InTech seems happy to misstate the findings in order to counter criticism of its marketing practices. When I questioned Rylett about InTech's bulk emailing activities, for instance, she replied, "We have recently commissioned an independent market research organisation to undertake a survey among 8,000 of our published authors to gauge their opinion of InTech and the processes that we operate. And the results were overwhelmingly positive, with 81% of respondents rating their publishing experience as either 'excellent' or 'good'; thereby, suggesting that had spamming been an issue, these results would be markedly different."

"This is blatantly false," says Harnad, "making it seem as if only 8,000 (not 25,000) had been surveyed and as if all of that 8,000 (rather than just 5,000 of them) had responded on the item in question."

Other OA advocates suggest that the report should have been clearer about who undertook the interviews, and that in order to demonstrate that the survey was "authentic and unbiased" (as one put it), the interview transcripts should have been published alongside the report.

After all, one pointed out, "No-one would believe that British gas customers had said that they were fully satisfied with the company's service if it did its own telephone survey and then claimed it showed that. That is why reputable companies commission market researchers to do the work, unless it's just going to inform their own decisions and not be published."

Kenneway explains, "We undertook the research as an independent agency on InTech's behalf ... [W]e developed and analysed the survey and conducted the telephone interviews and interpreted those findings."

So is TBI an "independent market research organisation" as Rylett puts it? "I want to emphasise that we are a strategic marketing agency, which is more akin to business development than sales/promotion," Kenneway told me. "We help companies deliver what their customers want from them, so research is central to our work and we provide this from an independent viewpoint helping our clients understand the reality of their market position."

When I asked to see the script used in the interviews Kenneway replied that they had not used a script but a discussion document. "In the interviews, we talked to a small number of key industry stakeholders, and not in sufficient quantity for this data to be considered quantitative," she explained. "Scripts are essential when conducting large numbers of interviews, but discussion guides have more value when you are exploring ideas and opinions with a small group, to help really understand motivations within changing markets."

Kenneway did not respond to my request to have sight of the online survey.

When I put to Rylett some of the concerns about the survey aired by OA advocates, she replied, "TBI are a highly respected market research organisation with substantial experience and an equally impressive track record within the scientific community. Having conducted research on behalf of the likes of the IoPP, BMJ, and Wiley-Blackwell et al, to question the validity of their work is to question the validity of every survey they have ever done for the aforementioned organisations — I am quite sure that neither yourself nor your peers has had occasion to do so."

I have no reason whatsoever to doubt TBI's experience, or its track record. In asking my questions, I was merely putting to Rylett and Kenneway some of the concerns raised by OA advocates in order to clarify the situation.

What I do know is that InTech's critics have long maintained that it has a tendency to promise more than it delivers — royalties to authors for instance; the cessation of publication charges for all its journals for instance. They also maintain that the publisher is prone to exaggerate its achievements. It seems they are now inclined to conclude that InTech has succumbed to the same temptation in publicising and citing the TBI survey.

Peer review lite?

Harnad also believes that the TBI survey raises a second, more important issue. As he put it, “I find more serious problems with the survey itself: These were authors who had published with X (InTech). They were recruited by ads. And they paid to publish. Some explicitly said that it was the pay-to-publish that they had sought, not particularly the OA. And although the respondents are mostly solemnly bullish about peer review, the fact is that they responded to a pay-to-publish ad from a publisher with no prior track-record – and the peer review was lite.”

Hence, he says, “it is no wonder they found the result mostly good/excellent: They wanted to be published, they paid for it, and they got it. They pay lip service to peer review, but what they paid for was peer-review-lite and high probability of publication ... I would not be surprised if 80% of the entire population was happy with the minimal refereeing: Their goal was to get published, and OA was just an excuse for not publishing with more exacting journals.”¹³

For this reason, he says, one might question the wider relevance of the survey data, and thus of the value of publishing the results, certainly under the title “Author Attitudes Towards Open Access Publishing”.

Harnad explains, “One could have done the same survey with other pay-to-publish with low or no peer review, and found similar customer satisfaction from the authors. But this low-end ‘niche’ market of the publish-or-perish spectrum has no generalisation value for the rest. What do authors who are trying to get high quality work in journals with high standards care about what authors who are more interested in getting published than in quality standards have to say about their satisfaction with the service they have paid for?”

In other words, since the views obtained from the survey were to all intents and purposes limited to a single publisher serving a niche market (where OA appears to be coincidental), the relevance of those views to the wider OA publishing market, or to scholarly publishing more generally, is questionable.¹⁴

But is it fair to describe the peer review that InTech book chapters undergo as “lite”? Rylett would presumably disagree. InTech’s peer review, she says, is “widely regarded as one of the most credible and comprehensive by our editors and authors.”

It is, however, unclear that book chapters go through a process one would recognise as classic peer review. As mentioned earlier, for instance, there does not appear to be any external review. And, as we have seen, there have been a number of problems with InTech chapters, both historically and more recently. Moreover, it seems that this is not just a question of the quality of the text, but sometimes of the underlying science too. Commenting on the nanotubes [example](#) cited above, for instance, one researcher emailed me, “I am not a specialist in nanotubes, but this abstract smells fishy to me! I think, the author is too heavily citing non-occidental sources and mixing nano-apples with micro-oranges.”

In fact, we need do no more than read some of the comments cited in TBI’s report to conclude that InTech’s review process is lite. One commented, “Overall experience is good, however, as the chapter author I did not obtain any feedback on my submission from the reviewers.”

Another said, “If there would be a review process, the writing process would be more natural and the chapter could be improved.”

¹³ Clearly, not all InTech authors are looking for minimal refereeing, or that they necessarily get it. But as Katkov points out, as InTech’s process currently operates it appears that the thoroughness or laxness of the reviewing depends entirely on the relative conscientiousness of the editor. And there appears to be no external reviewing of book chapters in order to ensure quality control.

¹⁴ Beyond learning that Biomed Central is the OA publisher respondents were most familiar with, and that their peers and colleagues are the most important influencers when respondents are deciding where to publish, we discover very little about the wider OA or scholarly publishing market.

However, we should point out the report adds that after reading these comments InTech made some changes. “There was clear feedback from the survey that a light peer review model was not felt to be sufficient,” it states. “Based on this feedback, InTech completely revised its approach to peer review to give more in-depth feedback to authors, who clearly place a high value on publishers providing peer review as part of the core service, whatever the access business model.”

Some would doubtless point out that peer review has always implied as much.

In response to scientists’ criticism of the nanotubes example cited above ([here](#) and [here](#)), Rylett said, “Clearly no publisher likes to hear such views and it is extremely disappointing to receive such harsh criticism and we wholeheartedly agree that this is unacceptable. And that is precisely what we are seeking to address with the new systems of checks and balances that are currently being implemented.”

She adds, “We have – since my tenure with the company commenced – introduced a number of initiatives that are already making a positive impact in the way that we operate not only as a business but also as an overall service provider for authors and editors within the academic community.”

It does seem regrettable, however, that these issues are only being addressed now, some seven years after the company was founded, and eighteen months after Lazineca described the publisher’s peer review process to me as its “Achilles heel”.

Niche

However, it would be wrong to say that we learn nothing particularly useful from the TBI survey. The implication of what Harnad says would seem to be that those researchers who respond to InTech’s email invitations do so because, in today’s “publish or perish” environment, they are under such pressure to publish that – regardless of the quality of the publication – they are willing to pay to publish in order to demonstrate to their institutions that their work has been published in a peer-reviewed book. The stakes are high because if they cannot show that they have been published they may not get tenure or promotion. As such, publication is all, and whether their work is actually read by anyone is beside the point.

But even if that is correct in some instances, it might be wrong to assume that it is only lazy or lacklustre researchers who choose the lite pay-to-publish route. Perhaps InTech’s niche market is not so much one catering to the needs of researchers seeking to avoid more exacting journals, but those disenfranchised from mainstream scientific discourse.

The TBI report, for instance, suggests that the majority of InTech’s authors are based in developing countries, or are otherwise outside the mainstream. The country with the highest number of respondents, for instance, was China (8.3%); and amongst the other ten most common countries of origin were Brazil, Turkey, India, Poland and Iran.¹⁵

In other words, it is researchers based in the developing world who know that they will be rejected out of hand by the traditional scholarly communication system – either because of where they are based, the quality of their written English, or both – who turn to InTech¹⁶.

When I asked Katkov if his book would be copyedited, he replied, “As you undoubtedly know, many ‘standard’ subscription journals do not accept articles in poor English and they do not help improve them, but just point researchers to expensive ‘polisher’ services. Thus, they also basically don’t do copy editing work! That is why, foreigners often must *include* an English-native *co-author* – just to get their paper accepted! And that is why scientific journals are dominated by those who are

¹⁵ Responses also included seven participants from Azerbaijan, 8 from Ethiopia, 4 from Iceland, 29 from Morocco, 5 from Puerto Rico.

¹⁶ One country not even mentioned in the TBI list of countries that InTech researchers come from is the UK – the mother of all English-speaking countries.

proficient in English, good science is often hidden in poor English and manuscripts are rejected outright. It is a *big* problem.”

For this reason, he said, Issue 2 of his book will allow, “Relatively unknown authors from diverse geographical backgrounds to publish *good science* that they would have probably not have gotten printed for several years in ‘peer reviewed’ journals.”

The fact is, he added, “You can find good and solid stuff in InTech and terrible baloney in *Nature* or *Cell*. It is better to allow 15 baloneys to be published than miss one good and innovative paper.”

In this light, one could argue that InTech is providing a valuable service for those who are currently excluded from mainstream science. And we could expect that these authors would express satisfaction with what they are getting for their money.

However, in wanting to up its game InTech is perhaps presented with a dilemma. If it insists that authors use its in-house English proofreading service it could disenfranchise its existing customer base. If authors are told that they have to pay to improve their English, after all, then might they not prefer to go to a publisher with a better brand; a publisher like Springer for instance – which, as it happens, is currently [extending the services it offers its international authors?](#)

If, on the other hand, InTech tells authors that the proofreading service remains optional (which appears to be implied in Katkov’s remarks) then it will presumably continue to publish poor quality books, and so continue to face criticism.¹⁷

Rylett insists that InTech is now committed to improving the quality of its products and services, and it will clearly need to do this if it is to be accepted by its peers, and by the wider research community. But might there be a price in doing so?

Opening up a dialogue

What is not in doubt is that InTech has shown itself to be very successful at selling its pay-to-publish service to researchers. This year alone, says Rylett, it expects to publish around 1,000 books, and it anticipates similar volumes in 2012. If the average book contains 30 chapters, we are talking about 30,000 authors a year – making Greenberg’s calculation of InTech’s earnings look like a significant understatement, rather than an exaggeration. Even if the number were lower than that, and even allowing for 1,000 waivers a year, InTech would seem to have a very profitable business.

If it wants to be embraced by the wider research community, however, InTech will need to improve its image. And that will mean being more transparent, and more communicative. Here too, however, there are signs of movement.

In July, I emailed InTech’s [Katarina Lovrecic](#)¹⁸ to ask if she could set up a new interview for me with a senior InTech executive. She agreed, replying, “I could prepare some sort of a background paper in August for you to help your question choices.”

On 18th August, I received another email from her saying, “I am sorry for my late reply. I was discussing your proposition with my superiors and they have decided not to give an interview. I hope this isn’t much of a disappointment.”

I replied that it was not so much a disappointing decision but a regrettable one, since “It sends out the wrong message altogether.”

¹⁷ We could note that the two book descriptions cited above come from books published this month, presumably after the proofreading service was introduced.

¹⁸ Community Manager, Open Access Advocate

A month or so later, I noticed a new link coming in to my site from a blog called [Gavia Libraria](#) (aka The Library Loon). This was from [a post](#) criticising The Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition ([SPARC](#)) for inviting InTech to be a “Champion” sponsor of Open Access Week ([OAW](#)).¹⁹

SPARC, we should note, is the leading OA advocacy group, and Open Access Week is now a highpoint in the OA calendar. “OAW is a SPARC initiative, inspired by our early work with students, who thought it would be a good idea to have a day devoted to educating their campuses about Open Access,” executive director of SPARC [Heather Joseph](#) explained to me. “The idea proved quite popular, and over time, the community requested that it be extended to a week to allow all geographic regions a chance to fully participate, and to allow speakers who are in demand to cover more ground.”

As such, sponsoring OAW is a great publicity opportunity for any ambitious OA publisher. The author of the Gavia Libraria blog, however, clearly disapproved of SPARC (in effect) endorsing InTech by embracing it as a “champion” sponsor. “The Loon wonders unhappily whether OA Week will even survive if taking money from InTech becomes a scandal”.

As it happens, the InTech logo was subsequently taken down from the OAW page. When I asked Joseph why she replied, “This is the first year we are experimenting with sponsorships, and we are actively refining our policy. A recent addition to SPARC’s sponsorship policy requires OA publishers who wish to provide sponsorship be members of OASPA. Upon realising that InTech was not yet a member of that organisation, SPARC made the decision to refund InTech’s sponsorship contribution to OA week.”

In the hope of getting InTech’s views on SPARC’s decision, I emailed Lovrecic again. Shortly afterwards I received a reply from Rylett. “I am the new Marketing Director for InTech. I have recently arrived to my role from the UK where I have been working in the publishing industry for over 12 years. Working with some of the STM publishers you may know, such as the IOP Publishing and the British Medical Journal Group.”

She added, “Katarina has been updating me on the conversation you have been having and how you speak frequently. She mentioned that InTech has not been the best at keeping communication channels open and that you may feel like we didn’t want to speak to you or hold an interview. I do hope we can change that perception.”

So I emailed over some questions, and the following Q&A interview with Rylett is the result.

The challenge

What do we learn from all this? We learn that InTech has a somewhat checkered past, but that it now appears keen to up its game and join the mainstream publishing community. As Rylett puts it, “[T]here are things that we have got wrong and we admit that changes need to be made, hence, the reason why myself and a number of other experienced publishing professionals are coming on board to help us address and rectify such issues.”

Undoubtedly, we should give the company the benefit of the doubt, and we should assume that it will rehabilitate itself successfully. But we should not forget that it has adopted a number of different guises over the past seven years, and assumed a variety of different names – including I-Tech Education and Publishing, I-Tech, In-Tech, In Teh, Sciyo and InTech.

The key issue is whether the promised changes will prove to be superficial or substantial changes. By the time you read this, for instance, it is likely that InTech will have launched its new web site (as promised by Rylett), and the public image it will be presenting may have changed again. (In fact, small changes have been made to the web site while I have writing this). But will the underlying services, business processes and marketing activities of the publisher have changed too?

¹⁹ Reported by Lovrecic [here](#)

Clearly one error InTech could make is to assume that it is enough to unleash on the world a plethora of upbeat PR messages and self-serving surveys, but omit to undertake the hard work necessary to improve its products, and to make the way it markets its services to scientists more acceptable.

Quality issues aside, for instance, it is not clear that InTech plans to cease bombarding researchers with unwanted email invitations. Rylett points out that InTech now gets a lot of repeat business, and stresses that its customer database consists of 130,000 researchers. The implication, presumably, is that most of those contacted in the future will be existing customers, or researchers who have opted into receiving marketing messages from the publisher.

On the other hand, InTech's FAQ [suggests](#) that the company is still actively trawling "publicly available databases" in order to target new customers. We shall have to see if the complaints about multiple unwanted invitations die away. As we saw, one researcher [reported](#) receiving five different email invitations last year.

Moreover, InTech may not be targeting researchers any more accurately today than it was in the past. Last month, for instance, an Oslo-based researcher contacted me to say, "I have received an invitation to publish a chapter with In Tech and the name Aleksandar Lazinica surfaced. I did take the invitation seriously but, as the persons on your blog, I was rather reluctant since I did not recognise any of the names they referred to within my area of work."

In conclusion, InTech has established a very profitable market for itself. Today it [describes](#) itself – not unfairly – as "the world's largest open access book publisher". It has also built up a substantial customer base of researchers. However, it is still by no means certain that it provides good value for money, either for authors themselves, or indeed for the taxpayer – since we can assume that most authors pay their APCs with public money. As such, the taxpayer is an indirect customer in the transaction. Would members of the public be happy to see their tax dollars spent on a plethora of poor quality books?

Because of these continuing concerns about the value for money InTech provides, and the concerns about its marketing activities, the publisher has struggled to win acceptance from the wider research community, from other publishers, and from the OA movement.

Consequently, if it wants to be accepted by these communities it will need to convince industry bodies like OASPA that it is a professional publisher able to deliver consistently high quality outputs, and at an acceptable price. As the TBI report itself points out, "Established bodies like the Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association (OASPA) and Open Access Publishing in Europe Networks (OAPEN) will be important for vetting and verifying organisations offering OA services."

In other words, if InTech wants to join the publishing establishment it will need to demonstrate to OASPA above all, that things have changed, and that they have changed substantially rather than superficially.²⁰

The challenge that InTech poses for OASPA – and for the OA movement at large – is that for the last fifteen years or so OA advocates have been repeating ad nauseam that OA implies no diminution in the quality of published research. Critics, however, argue that InTech has demonstrated quite the reverse. InTech is going to have to convince its critics either that this is not the case, or that it is no longer the case.

The problem may be that the particular niche InTech has created for itself, and the *modus operandi* it has built around that niche, may make it very hard for the company to up its game without eroding its customer base.

²⁰ Of course, this still leaves the problem that Katkov refers to: scientists in the developing world with good science to report, but little or no knowledge of English, and no funds to pay for an English proofreading service. However, this is an issue best discussed elsewhere, and it is far from clear that the InTech solution is the best approach.

The Interview



Nicola Rylett

RP: Can you start by saying who you are, and what your role at InTech is?

NR: I am the Marketing Director at InTech.

RP: Who are the senior management team today?

NR: Aleksandar Lazinica and Vedran Kordic are the co-founders of InTech, they currently hold CEO and COO positions.

The continued growth of the company in recent months has facilitated the need for us to recruit additional staff with extensive publishing experience gained across Europe to fill an increasing number of middle and senior management roles.

We will be announcing these new appointments and the new structure of the management team to the respective media within the next few weeks.

RP: I believe the company was originally called [I-Tech](#), or [I-Tech Education and Publishing](#). Later it was called *In-Tech*, and in November 2009 it was [renamed](#) Sciyo. As the 2009 release put it, “The company ownership and management remain unchanged. The content of the old website, [intechweb.org](#) has been transferred to the new domain [sciyo.com](#) where the new content will begin to be published.” Today the company is called InTech. What is the relationship between Sciyo and InTech?

NR: Sciyo and InTech are – and have always been – two very distinct entities unto themselves. Sciyo is no longer an active company and I can confirm that titles published by Sciyo have now been transferred to InTechOpen, our open-access reading platform.

RP: You say that Lazinica and Kordic are co-founders of InTech, and that Sciyo and InTech are two very distinctive entities. As I understand it, these same people are the co-founders of Sciyo, which is still registered at the [Croatian Companies House](#). When you say that Sciyo is no longer active I assume you mean that it is no longer trading? If so, can you say when the last accounts were filed?

NR: Sciyo is not actively trading at present. As previously explained, InTech re-branded itself as Sciyo before being reverted to its original name. We have retained ownership of the Sciyo name and kept the company listed for possible future projects.

RP: So in effect the company has gone back to using the InTech name, although now without a hyphen. In the [Croatian Companies House](#) I note the name is spelt with a space (*In Tech*). Why all these name variations and rebrandings?

NR: The rebranding of InTech to Sciyo was reflective of the way in which the company had developed during its first five years in operation. By the end of 2009, InTech was already publishing

up to 200 books a year and we wanted a name that reflected not only the company we had become, but also the one we wanted to be in the future. However, we had underestimated the power and esteem associated with the InTech brand and as a result we took the conscious decision to revert back to InTech.

The I-Tech change was little more than a technical detail: InTech was originally formed in Austria and registered with the Austrian equivalent of Companies House, under the name "I-Tech". And since we relocated and based our Head Office here in Croatia, the company became registered as "In Tech" – the variation between "In Tech" and "I-Tech" being that any company registered with the Croatian authorities must comply with the national Chamber of Commerce company naming regulations which stipulate that a name must be both Latin or Croatian compatible.

Peer review and spam

RP: *In 2010, I did an interview with Lazinica, who then described himself as the CEO of Sciyo. One of the issues we discussed was peer review. In the interview Lazinica said of peer review, "What is the purpose of such reviews, other than to be seen to be abiding by some formal regulations? Scientific publishing today is still at the same level as it was in the 19th century, with journals and the review process still the main parts of it. After more than 100 years, I believe it's time to move on and apply new mechanisms. Readers are the ones who should review the article by reading it or not." Is that still the company's position on peer review?*

NR: What Lazinica was talking about was his personal perception of how the peer review model could possibly evolve over the long term. The company's view, however, is that peer review remains an integral and vital part of the entire process within the open access publishing industry.

And as a leading player within this field, InTech's peer review system is widely regarded as one of the most credible and comprehensive by our editors and authors. We are committed to ensuring that we continue to serve the scientific community in the best possible way.

RP: *Another thing I discussed with Lazinica was the frequent complaints that the company was spamming researchers with invitations to contribute book chapters. Lazinica told me that he did not consider it to be an issue implying, I assumed, that he did not believe there was anything wrong in spamming. He said, "I believe the question of spamming had great importance and weight some years ago, but not today, and especially not in the future." Is that still the view the company takes?*

NR: We have around 130,000 InTech-published authors on our database who specialise in nine specific fields, with over 20,000 authored articles published in 2011 alone. Lazinica's comments regarding the issue of spamming were evidently taken out of context and perhaps lost in translation.

He was commenting that while spamming may have been prevalent across the publishing industry (not InTech) as a whole some time ago, it appears that the industry has done much to eradicate the issue to the extent that today spamming is less of a concern.

RP: *I ask about spamming because I had a researcher email me a few weeks ago to say, "I am originally from Croatia, doing PhD in US now. My boyfriend got an invitation email from them, and almost started to write the chapter. But he was suspicious because he is usually getting the invitations like this directly from the editor." This sounds like spam to me; and might seem to explain why many researchers have a somewhat negative view of the company. Would you agree?*

NR: We have recently commissioned an independent market research organisation to undertake a [survey among 8,000 of our published authors to gauge their opinion of InTech](#) and the processes that we operate. And the results were overwhelmingly positive, with 81% of respondents rating their publishing experience as either 'excellent' or 'good'; thereby, suggesting that had spamming been an issue, these results would be markedly different.

The views of a single researcher are not and cannot be considered to be representative of an industry of researchers or other academics. And with regard to your comment that "he is usually getting the invitations like this from the editor" – InTech has Publishing Process Managers who act as an authors' primary point of contact, providing them with on-going support during every stage of their writing career with us.

While most of our competitors will use their editor's contact details as a first point of reference, we provide an extensive level of service for each and every author with whom we work and for this reason, our Publishing Process Managers act as a single point of contact during this working relationship which, as feedback from our authors suggests, is a more effective and personable way of working.

RP: *The same researcher subsequently told me that an enquiry about InTech had been placed with the [Croatian competition authority](#). Can you say whether InTech has been contacted by this agency?*

NR: This is something that we are unaware of and we can confirm that we have received no correspondence from the Croatian competition authority.

We would be very grateful if you or the researcher you spoke to would provide us with exact details of where they obtained this information so that we can take steps to ensure that this misinformation is removed with immediate effect. Thank you for bringing this to our attention.

RP: *Actually, the information was provided to me by email. I don't know whether it has been published anywhere. But can we discuss the survey you cite. This was outsourced to TBI who, the author of the resulting report tells me, emailed 25,000 authors from your author database. Of those 25,000, only 8,105 (32%) responded, and only 4,692 (58%) completed the survey. These data are in the report. What the report does not say is that only 5,167 completed the section about InTech. Of those, 4,233 said that InTech's services were 'good' or 'excellent'. Do you think that the report should have adjusted the percentage you cited to account for the fact that only 63% of the participants in the survey responded to the questions about InTech?*

I also understand that the telephone interviews were conducted by TBI itself, and that no script was used for the interviews undertaken, merely a discussion guide. It has been pointed out to me that no one would believe that British gas customers had said that they were fully satisfied with the company's service if it did its own telephone survey. TBI describes itself not as a professional market research company, by the way, but a sales and marketing services company. Since it was paid by InTech in this capacity, should we not be sceptical about the survey?

NR: TBI are a highly respected market research organisation with substantial experience and an equally impressive track record within the scientific community. Having conducted research on behalf of the likes of the IoPP, BMJ, and Wiley-Blackwell et al, to question the validity of their work is to question the validity of every survey they have ever done for the aforementioned organisations – I am quite sure that neither yourself nor your peers has had occasion to do so.

As with the majority of research organisations throughout the UK and beyond, TBI invariably utilise both internal and external resources to conduct the actual interviews with the proverbial "man on the street" and the processes involved when working on our behalf was of no exception.

As such, their work for InTech, along with their work for other organisations within our sector, is beyond reproach and I feel that this line of questioning from yourself could be perceived as little more than an attempt to a) undermine a valid piece of research from a highly respected consultancy, and b) undermine the efforts that InTech are making to extol the somewhat 'negative' – as you put it – perception of our organisation.

I understand that Melissa from TBI has also been liaising with you on this matter and I trust that between the two of us we have been able to relay your concerns – in particular your question relating to whether we agree or disagree with the percentage stated in the research which, in our

view, is clear and speaks for itself. However, if this is not the case then I am unclear as to what we can possibly do to rectify that situation as we have had a perfectly valid piece of independent research conducted on our behalf which you feel is not credible in its own right – one wonders if our contemporaries at other leading publishing houses would agree or disagree.

Royalties and APCs

RP: *I cannot know what other publishers might say, but I can tell you that at least two leading OA advocates have indicated to me that they find the survey to be problematic. However, to return to my 2010 interview with Lazineca: The interview was sparked by a press release I received from the company in December 2009. This said that, henceforth, royalties would be paid to authors based on download counts. (It was also reported [here](#) and [here](#)). When I sent the text of the interview to Lazineca prior to publication, he emailed back to say, “I agree that you publish this interview, but in a hope that you will be willing to write about Sciyo in couple of months again when first paid downloads would start and new functions would be involved.” My interview with you is a late response to that invitation. Can you therefore update me on how the royalty programme is going, and how much money has been paid out to authors in royalties to date?*

NR: Details regarding royalties and any compensation are a confidential matter for both InTech and its authors and we reserve the right not to disclose such details.

RP: *So I am clear, are you saying that InTech is not prepared to say whether it has paid out any royalties to any of its authors, or to give me a total figure on how much has been paid out since 2010 without naming any authors?*

NR: Having worked in the publishing industry for a number of years with some of the industry's leading STM publishing houses, it has been my experience that information of this type is normally a confidential matter between the publisher and editor/author concerned.

RP: *Is InTech willing to say how much it earns on a book project, and what its total revenues and outgoings were for the last two years?*

NR: We are currently in the process of developing our new-look website which is due for launch in the near future. The site will reflect the growth of the company and move us towards a greater degree of transparency, where information of this type (which of course won't compromise our competitive advantage) will become widely available and in the public domain.

RP: *In the 2010 interview Lazineca also told me that the company planned to abandon article processing charges. As he put it, “We are currently considering several alternatives to the article processing charges and once we are positive that we can secure the long term sustainability of our publications through alternative sources, we will be making the next step. We strongly believe that the APC has no future. So this is a transition model from subscription-based to free publications.” What is the current state of play on this?*

NR: We maintain our viewpoint on this. However, it is important to understand that the fee we charge as an APC for all new authors is – in our view – considerably more extensive in terms of what a prospective author receives in return on their investment. It provides them with a dedicated team of editorial, marketing, publishing, distribution and public relations professionals with extensive industry experience having helped over 25,000 authors publish in excess of 900 books and journals to date.

Furthermore, we have recently introduced an in-house English proofreading service; we distribute hard copies of each publication to each and every author as a standard part of the overall service that we provide to all authors. Delivered via DHL's premium express delivery complete with tracking code, InTech ensures that our authors not only receive a copy of their book but also that it is delivered personally to them immediately upon publication.

I believe we are the only Open Access publisher to do so; and our emphasis on quality is manifested in the fact that we remain one of a minority of industry-wide publishers who produce full process colour publications for the medical sector. So as you can see, InTech continues to go above and beyond the industry standards.

RP: *Lazinica went on to say to me, “As of the beginning of this year, all our journals operate on a ‘free for all’ basis – both for the authors and the readers. In 2010, therefore, the journals will be subsidised from the article processing charges levied on our books.” He later explained that “free for all” here meant that “there are no publication charges for journal articles, and no journal subscriptions.” What you are saying, I think, is that this decision was later reversed. How much does InTech charge to publish today?*

NR: The APC that authors pay for books is currently 590Euros per chapter, and for journals the figure is 840Euros. Of particular note is that for the academic year 2010-2011, we sponsored around 1,000 book chapters by waiving the APC altogether and currently 2 of our 7 Journals are ‘free for all’.

RP: *Can you given put me in touch with four or five authors of book chapters that have been given waivers by InTech?*

NR: We have no objection to this whatsoever and we have already contacted a number of authors with this request and await their response. Once we have their permission we will gladly forward their contact details to you.

Unacceptable

RP: *You said that you have introduced an in-house English proofreading service. I would like to draw your attention to the first two pages ([here](#) and [here](#)) of an introduction to a book chapter published by InTech that I chose at random. I asked a number of researchers to comment on its quality. The first one responded, “Is this real or computer-generated context free grammar?” The second one said, “It’s Total rubbish. No proof-reader has been anywhere near it. They should be utterly ashamed of themselves. The whole thing makes me almost love Elsevier and Wiley.” The book in question was published by InTech last year. Do you think the quality of that chapter is acceptable? How can InTech justify charging an APC for this?*

NR: Clearly no publisher likes to hear such views and it is extremely disappointing to receive such harsh criticism and we wholehearted agree that this is unacceptable. And that is precisely what we are seeking to address with the new systems of checks and balances that are currently being implemented.

However, the very fact that many of our authors who we deal with work with us on a repeat basis, highlights the point that our publications and overall service levels are regarded in high esteem by an impressive number of notable academics.

While the question of our imposing an APC remains valid, it is important to emphasise that an APC from an InTech perspective goes above and beyond the levels of service within our industry. Our focus remains on our authors – with each one we work with assigned a dedicated Publishing Process Manager who will support them during each stage of the process, from initial contact to publication and eventually post-publication. So yes, to answer your question, we are justified in imposing the APC.

RP: *InTech was founded seven years ago. Should not the company have resolved quality issues like the one I pointed out to you long ago?*

NR: The recent results of the survey conducted by TBI demonstrate that we are indeed getting most things right. That said, there are things that we have got wrong and we admit that changes need to be made; hence, the reason why myself and a number of other experienced publishing professionals are coming on board to help us address and rectify such issues.

But as with any organisation, there is always room for improvement and our commitment to ensuring that we provide the best service to all of our stakeholders is manifested in the very fact that we have commissioned TBI to conduct further research on our behalf – the results of which will invariably determine the next stage in our continued development.

RP: Can you name some of InTech's more prestigious authors?

NR: As you are no doubt aware, Aleksandar is a robotics engineer and his penchant for his subject is reflected in the number of books on the subject since InTech first began and notable authors with whom we have worked.

Of particular note is Professor [Hiroshi Ishiguro](#). Author of nine InTech books, Professor Ishiguro is one of the most recognised and revered robotics engineers in the world, as testified in a recent [BBC News report](#). Indeed, in the BBC report, 3 of the 5 scientists featured are all InTech-published authors.²¹

Another jewel within InTech's proverbial crown is [Speech Recognition Technologies & Applications](#) (2008), by Mihelič, F and Žibert J. This text has been officially adopted as a standard educational title for use by the Federal Bureau of Investigation in the US.

Furthermore, in 2006 InTech was approached by Issa Nesnas of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory at the National Space Agency (NASA) to produce a bespoke Journal on advanced robotic systems – this was soon followed by a second volume a year later.

So as you can see, while there may be derogatory comments in the public domain pertaining to the quality and standards of some of our publications, there is a plethora of highly regarded and well-respected titles within our portfolio that it is important to never lose sight of.

RP: How many books a year is InTech currently publishing, and what growth rate are you experiencing?

NR: Within the last year alone InTech has moved from being an up-and-coming publishing house with a modest workforce to becoming arguably one of the fastest growing publishers in Europe. In 2011 alone, we are on target to have published in the region of 1,000 books – the highest number since the company formed, and we anticipate similar volumes in 2012.

RP: What would you say was InTech's USP? What makes it stand out from the crowd?

NR: Firstly, our relationship does not end upon publication of an authors' work, it continues indefinitely thereafter with continued PR and Marketing support often continuing several months and years post-publication.

Secondly, is the author experience itself. From the genesis of our working relationship, our authors work closely with their Publishing Process Manager at every stage of the process and act as a single point of contact, unlike the majority of publishers who generally have a number of different contacts who they deal with regarding various aspects of their work.

RP: To go back once more to the 2010 interview. After the interview was finished both Lazinica and I received an email from Caroline Sutton of the Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association (OASPA). In that email Sutton said, amongst other things, that as a result of Lazinica informing her that InTech and Sciyo were not the same company (as she had been led to believe), it would be necessary for the company to re-apply for membership. Subsequently it seems that both companies were removed from the OASPA membership list and I understand that you never did reapply for membership of OASPA. Can you confirm that that is so, and say why you did not re-apply?

²¹ Blogged [here](#).

NR: As you can imagine InTech took OASPA's comments and concerns very seriously and the company has spent time developing their processes and systems in preparation to re-apply for membership.

I have recently drafted an email to Caroline Sutton on InTech's behalf to see if we could meet and discuss how to start the process of gaining OASPA membership once again. We would be delighted to inform you once the process is complete and our membership has been confirmed.

Open Access Week and OASPA

RP: *In August InTech [blogged](#) to say that it was sponsoring Open Access Week. InTech's logo is no longer on the [Open Access Week](#) web page. Is that right?*

NR: InTech has been working in collaboration with the organisers of Open Access Week for some time. And in August, we were delighted to formally sign a contract and announce – in conjunction with SPARC – that we were to be the sponsors for this year's event.

A recent addition to SPARC's sponsorship policy requires OA publishers who wish to provide sponsorship to be members of OASPA. Upon realising that InTech was not yet a member of that organisation, SPARC made the decision to refund InTech's sponsorship. SPARC confirmed that if the InTech membership status with OASPA changes, they will of course revisit this decision.

At InTech we are still very committed to Open Access Week, and as such we are currently in discussions to find a suitable, more practical alternative way to support organisations and individuals to participate in this key event.²²

RP: *In late August, I noticed [this critical post](#) on the [Gavia Libraria](#) blog. I wonder if you could comment on it. It would appear that some OA advocates do not believe that SPARC should be accepting sponsorship money from InTech?*

NR: InTech has no influence over individual opinion – regardless of whether it is expressed via social media channels such as blogs or within the increasingly growing number of online forums.

InTech has had a long-standing relationship with OASPA, and as mentioned in my previous answer, we were at the time delighted to formally announce our sponsorship of OA week with SPARC. We anticipate these relationships will continue to develop in the foreseeable future.

RP: *Why do you think there is still so much suspicion about InTech amongst researchers? What can it do to allay this suspicion, and what does it need to do to be re-admitted to OASPA?*

NR: I think it is fair to say that much of this is borne out of the fact that we have not been as proactive as perhaps we could have been over the last few years with regard to addressing particular concerns within the public domain. However, we are moving towards a greater degree of transparency.

We have – since my tenure with the company commenced – introduced a number of initiatives that are already making a positive impact in the way that we operate not only as a business but also as an overall service provider for authors and editors within the academic community.

Our primary objective for resuming our relationship with OASPA is that as one of the founding partners for the association and an innovative company, we believe that we can add value to its members. By collaborating with one another, we can take the standards within the open access industry to a whole new level.

RP: *What new initiatives can we expect to see from the company in the next twelve months?*

²² Perhaps this refers to [SHOW](#).

NR: The objective for 2011/12 is to not only consolidate our existing position but also to address certain aspects of our operations and introduce a number of improvements that will enable us to grow from a position of strength beyond next year.

For that reason I would like to develop this open interaction between us and I hope that we can now move this forward and discuss some of the key projects that we are currently involved in and share with you our development plans over the short – and long – term.

RP: *Ok, thank you for speaking to me. I look forward to talking further in the near future.*

InTech Statement:

In the piece, “The OA Interviews: InTech's Nicola Rylett”, there were a number of valid issues discussed in great detail. However, despite a series of lengthy conversations which sought to not only address these historical issues but also to highlight the significant changes that InTech have implemented in recent months to eradicate said concerns, the author remains almost entirely focused on cases dating back as far as 2006. This, in our view, is an unfair representation of where the company currently stands, and this failure to shed light on more recent events with a balanced perspective may invariably lead the reader to a misinformed conclusion about InTech. We ask that readers persist with reading this comprehensive article which concludes with the full interview that Nicola Rylett, marketing director participated in with Mr Poynder – here is where the balance of the article is redressed, although it is questionable whether the reader will continue reading by the time they reach Page 17 of the piece.

The interview between Ms Rylett and Mr Poynder raised a number of important, pertinent and extremely interesting points that were not only relevant to InTech but also to the wider publishing- and- open access communities. The subject of peer review remains a hot potato among industry commentators, with advocates and critics seemingly at loggerheads over the extent to which it is enforced combined with its ability (or inability) to remain be the “quasi-sacred process that helps to make science our most objective truth teller” (Richard Horton, editor, *The Lancet*) and impartial, rather than err on the side of bias.

Finally, quality is another issue that needs to be addressed. While InTech has initiated a process of quality review within the organization in recent months, we believe the issue of quality per se is one that should be debated across the whole sector in the same manner that we need to openly deliberate how we can help increase the pace of transferrable knowledge in research globally, introduce innovative ways to meet and exceed customer requirements and expectations, and how we can maintain sustainability throughout the publishing community.

Article response, comments addressed as follows:

The statement, “Meanwhile it appears that no researcher ever received any royalties from the publisher,” is an assumption made by the author and our non-response should not be taken as an indication of confirmation nor denial. This remains a confidential matter between author and publisher.

Value for money is mentioned throughout the piece and at this point, we would like to highlight the significant differences between the article processing charges (APC) among our contemporaries. PloS, for instance, levy a c.2,086EUR APC, Biomed charge a fee of c.1,610EUR, while InTech's APC is among the lowest in the industry, between 590EUR for Books and 870EUR for Journals. It is also important to stipulate, as readers of the full interview above will note, that there are variations with regard to the overall service provided for authors under the APC.

The statement, “I asked Rylett to put me in touch with four or five authors who had been granted a waiver, which she agreed to do. At the time of writing this, however, I had still not been sent any names”, is accurate. However, due to data protection protocol we can only forward author contact details upon receipt of their confirmation that they are willing to allow us to do so. We have sought permission from authors and will duly forward their information to Mr Poynder, as requested.

The statement, “Would not one expect the paragraph breaks to either be indented or double-spaced?” We have introduced paragraph indenting along with a number of other changes to the overall layout of our books which have already taken immediate effect, which will be evident upon publication of titles published within the forthcoming twelve months.

The statement, “And here is a front page of a book published in 2006,” followed by the statement, “We might also want to ask why, given the undeniable difference in quality, an author would opt to pay to publish with InTech rather than publish without charge with a traditional publisher,” seeks to convey to the reader that the company has failed to address previous discrepancies since their airing of said example some five years ago. This argument, in our view, has little conviction and it would be remiss of anyone to judge a company as it is in 2011 based on a solitary example dating back to 2006.

The statement, “What I do know is that InTech's critics have long maintained that it has a tendency to promise more than it delivers...the publisher is prone to exaggerate its achievements [and] are now inclined to conclude that InTech has succumbed to the same temptation in publishing and citing the new TBI survey,” is the author's own opinion and not representative of the wider community. In our interview, both Rylett and TBI demonstrated the results of the survey in an open and transparent way and it should be noted that Mr Poynder has continued to refute its findings, which is his prerogative.

The statement, “In other words, researchers based in the developing world who know they will be rejected out of hand by the traditional scholarly communication system, either because of where they are based, the quality of their written English, or both”, is the authors own opinion and should not be taken or accepted as a statement of fact. China and others members of the so-called BRIC nations and other countries have been largely unrepresented in the scientific publishing community, and InTech has enabled prospective authors who would ordinarily be excluded from doing so to have their work published and freely accessible. Language should not and will never be a barrier to becoming published with InTech - providing the quality is of the standard that we deem as acceptable. Indeed, it should be noted that like most of our contemporaries within the wider publishing community, we reject a significant number of proposals that we are presented with due to their failure to meet the required standards.

The statement, “Clearly one error InTech could make is to assume that it is enough to unleash on the world a plethora of upbeat PR messages and self-serving surveys, but omit to undertake the hard work necessary to improve its products, and to make the way it markets its services to scientists more acceptable,” is 100 per cent true in so much that *if* this is the approach we were to take then yes, that will invariably be the consequences of the company's inaction. However, that is not the stance we are adopting. Moreover, as the interview above will testify, we have already made significant strides in recent months to review all areas of the way we do business (focus on quality, customer services, external communications, etc.) and reacted accordingly which will effectively dispel much of the criticism levied against InTech by critics once the seeds we have sown now come to fruition over the course of the next twelve months.

The statement, “...it is not clear that InTech plans to cease bombarding researchers with unwanted email invitations”, is a gross exaggeration. Anyone with a basic understanding of marketing could never accuse an organization which sends fewer than 5 emails over a given twelve month period of 'bombarding' the recipient.

The statement, “Today, [InTech] describes itself – unfairly – as “the world's largest open access book publisher”, is factual and not an attempt at self-aggrandizement. While there are a number of other open access players within our market, their focus is overwhelmingly focused on the publication of journals, with InTech operating predominately in books.

The concluding statement, “The problem may be that the particular niche InTech has created for itself, and the modus operandi it has built around that niche, may make it very hard to up its game without eroding its customer base”, is an unfair statement and we refute the implication from the author which suggests that the quality of both our authors and publications is sub-standard.

Comment from Richard Poynder:

I appreciate that InTech took the time to speak with me in the first place, and to subsequently respond to my introduction. Below I address those issues raised by InTech where I believe a response is called for.

WIDER ISSUES

I agree that some of the issues I raised in connection with InTech could usefully be viewed in the context of the wider problems associated with the quality of published research today, peer review, and author-pays open access publishing; and I agree that there ought to be an industry-wide debate about this. Perhaps that is something that [OASPA](#) could organise?

I disagree that my introduction was “almost entirely focused on cases dating back as far as 2006”. For instance, I drew attention to quality issues connected with recently published books, including at least two published this month (e.g. [this one](#), and [this one](#)). Likewise, I drew attention to peer review issues associated with a book published last year ([this book](#)), and I also cited InTech’s [own survey](#) (published in April) in which respondents repeated the same complaints made to me in 2010, and which have been made historically about InTech. E.g. complaints that journal articles and book chapters published with InTech appear sometimes either be reviewed too lightly, or not reviewed at all. As one of those cited in the TBI survey put it, “If there would be a review process, the writing process would be more natural and the chapter could be improved.”

ROYALTIES

I can think of no publisher that would refuse to say whether they have ever, or do now, pay royalties to their authors. And why would they refuse? I invite InTech/Sciyo once again to answer the question I posed in the interview: Has it ever paid royalties to any of its authors and, if so, how much has it paid out since 2010 (without naming any authors, or breaching any client confidentiality)?

VALUE FOR MONEY

I agree that some Open Access publishers charge a higher APC than InTech. In light of the issues raised, however, some might argue that there is a danger here of trying to compare apples with oranges. It also assumes that the other OA publishers cited themselves provide value for money, which again some might question. As such, citing what other publishers charge may be to miss the point. The issue is this: what do authors get for their APC when they publish with InTech, and does that represent value for money; it is not a case of making price comparisons with other publishers.

THE TBI SURVEY

InTech says, “Rylett and TBI demonstrated the results of the survey in an open and transparent way and it should be noted that Mr Poynder has continued to refute its findings, which is his prerogative.”

I do not think it is accurate to say that I refuted the findings of the TBI survey. I aired the concerns of some OA advocates about the wider relevance of the survey, the way in which the results had been put into the public domain, and the selective way in which the data had been presented. Since I did not get answers to all my questions, I invite InTech again to address these ones:

- Why did not the TBI survey state that only 5,000 of the 8,000 respondents to a survey that had polled 25,000 researchers answered the section on InTech?
- Can the online survey that was used be made public?

RESEARCHERS FROM THE DEVELOPING WORLD

InTech says, “China and others members of the so-called BRIC nations and other countries have been largely unrepresented in the scientific publishing community, and InTech has enabled prospective authors who would ordinarily be excluded from doing so to have their work published and freely accessible.” That is exactly the point I made. As I put it, “[O]ne could argue that InTech is providing a valuable service for those who are currently excluded from mainstream science.”

REJECTION RATES

InTech says, “[W]e reject a significant number of proposals that we are presented with due to their failure to meet the required standards.” I invite InTech to publish the figures on its rejection rates – for book proposals, chapter proposals and journal articles.

SPAM

It seems to me that there are two important issues to consider with regard to email marketing. First, the number of messages sent out and the randomness or not of the targeting. Second, the purpose of the messages and whether or not the recipients have opted-in to receiving them. As I understand it from InTech’s [FAQ](#), the publisher continues to trawl public databases for details of researchers, and then despatches multiple marketing emails inviting them to buy a service from InTech. It is not clear to me that all the recipients of InTech’s messages have opted-in to receiving them. It also seems that many of them will not be existing customers of InTech. If that is not correct, perhaps InTech could clarify?

If it is correct, then I think it would be fair to say that InTech is sending out unsolicited commercial email, and in many legal jurisdictions this is subject to regulation. I don’t know what the current law on spam is in Croatia, but I believe the country is expected to join the European Union in 2013. It is my understanding that Article 13 of the EU Directive on Privacy and Electronic Communications regulates the use of email addresses for marketing purposes, and it established an opt-in regime. As such, I am told, unsolicited emails can only be sent with the prior agreement of the recipient.

But I am not a lawyer, and I am sure that InTech has taken legal advice on this. It might, however, be helpful if the publisher could confirm that its email marketing activities are conformant with Croatian law, and that they will be conformant with European law?

WORLD’S LARGEST OPEN ACCESS BOOK PUBLISHER

My comment regarding InTech “unfairly” calling itself the world’s largest open access book publisher was in fact a typo! It should have read “Today, [InTech] describes itself – not unfairly – as the world’s largest open access book publisher”. I have corrected that.

I assume that InTech’s main competitor in this field is Bentham eBooks?



Richard Poynder

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