



**Vanessa Fairhurst**  
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Crossref

- SCHOLARLY COMMUNICATION
- INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT
- NON-PROFIT

“Community management not only helps drive progress and innovation, but - importantly - provides an essential human connection to others.”

## COULD YOU INTRODUCE YOURSELF TO OUR READERS? TELL US A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOURSELF AND THE COMMUNITY YOU MANAGE.

Hello, my name is Vanessa and for the last four and a half years I have been Community Engagement Manager at [Crossref](https://crossref.org). Crossref is a not-for-profit membership organization that provides essential open scholarly infrastructure and associated services to ensure that research outputs are easy to find, cite, link, assess, and re-use. Our members contribute to the scholarly record by assigning persistent identifiers (DOIs) to scholarly outputs and registering comprehensive metadata about the content with Crossref, all of which can then be maintained and updated centrally.

We work with over 16,000 organizations across more than 140 countries, including publishers, funders, libraries, archives, repositories, and many other types of organizations. As such, my role can be quite demanding, but it's also incredibly interesting. I love the truly global scope of my work, as well as the opportunity to work with such a diverse community.

## WHAT WAS YOUR PATH TO SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT? WERE YOU TRAINED AS A SCIENTIST OR DID YOU COME BY ANOTHER ROUTE?

Growing up I never aimed to be a community manager (I mean, who does?), but it makes a lot of sense given my interests and skills. I earned my BA in Management and European Languages before going on to do an MA in Applied and Professional Ethics. I came away with a feeling that perhaps the high powered corporate world was not for me. However, I was keen to work with diverse groups of people and to enable others to enact positive change.

After graduating, I worked in Singapore for a couple of years as a literacy teacher and events journalist. Upon returning to the UK, I looked for roles within the international non-profit sector. I ended up working for a charity called International Network for Advancing Science and Policy (INASP) that works with a global network of partners to improve access, production, and use of research information and knowledge. While my role wasn't explicitly community management, it involved many of the same skills and activities: facilitating conversations, running training events, co-creating content, and producing effective communications. It was through this position that I came to fully recognise the importance of Open Science and my own passion for working towards a more equitable global knowledge system. When I read the description for the role at Crossref, I felt like it was a perfect next step for me.

Even though my career has ended up in a very different place from where it started, I still draw on my training. I recommend that anyone who's interested in community management take a philosophy course. Both are about understanding, being able to ask the difficult questions, and seeing things from different perspectives.

## CAN YOU DESCRIBE THE KEY RESPONSIBILITIES OF YOUR ROLE? HOW DO YOU TYPICALLY SPEND YOUR TIME?

My responsibilities can be quite varied but include:

- Organizing multi-lingual [educational events](#) both online and in-person.
- Managing our [Ambassador Program](#) which currently includes supporting 29 volunteers across 20 countries.
- Managing our [community forum](#) including leading a cross-organizational team to make improvements to its operations and co-create content and programming.
- Improving our materials and creating new ones, particularly in languages other than English.
- Speaking at global events and conferences to raise awareness of Crossref and share new developments.
- Facilitating and participating in industry groups and committees.



#### KEY

- INTERPERSONAL
- PROGRAM MANAGEMENT
- PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT
- COMMUNICATION
- TECHNICAL



#### VANESSA'S SKILLS WHEEL SIGNATURE

The CSCCE skills wheel is composed of five core competencies, with nine skills within each competency. Skills wheels are a common way of visualizing and curating information about skills that also allow for the creation of a job "signature" or "fingerprint" based on the particular skills in use. This wheel is representative of the skills Vanessa used over the last 12 months.

► For more information, see [the CSCCE skills wheel](#).

## LOOKING BACK ON THE LAST YEAR, WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR FAVORITE PROJECT YOU'VE WORKED ON?

Expanding our multi-lingual webinars was a highlight. In 2021 we ran 18 webinars in English, Spanish, Arabic, Bahasa Indonesian, Brazilian Portuguese, Turkish, Russian, and Chinese. The feedback we receive after these events is always very positive and emphasizes the importance of providing support in other languages and time zones.

This also wouldn't have been possible without the Crossref ambassadors who support our community in a number of ways including: collaborating with us on events and webinars, creating content and translating materials into other languages, taking part in beta-testing and providing feedback on our new developments, and answering queries on our community forum. Despite the geographical, language and cultural barriers, as well as working through a pandemic, our ambassadors have built strong working relationships and calls with the team are always uplifting and energizing. Participating in the [CSCCE Community Champions working group](#) has given me a lot of ideas for how to improve the Ambassador Program.

## DO YOU SHARE COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT DUTIES WITH ANYONE ELSE? WHERE DOES YOUR POSITION FIT WITHIN YOUR ORGANIZATION?

I am part of the Community Engagement and Communications (CEC) team, which also includes our Community Engagement Manager Susan Collins and our Communications and Events Manager Rosa Clark. While our responsibilities differ, we often share expertise and throw around ideas. Our CEC team fits within the outreach team at Crossref, and we often work with colleagues in the wider team. You can check out our [organization chart](#) to visually see how it all fits together.

## WHAT DO YOU LIKE MOST ABOUT BEING A COMMUNITY MANAGER?

The people! I get a lot of value out of making connections that lead to meaningful collaborations. Being able to work with a diverse community also means that work is never boring and my day-to-day activities are always varied.

## WHAT IS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE YOU HAVE FACED AS A SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY MANAGER? ARE THERE WAYS IN WHICH YOUR ROLE COULD BE MADE EASIER – SUCH AS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES OR SOMETHING ELSE?

I would say one of the biggest challenges is trying to engage such a vast community and making sure people can connect and work with us in a variety of ways. This isn't an issue that is completely solved yet, but more of a work in progress. I think talking to others working in similar roles and being able to share experiences and ideas is highly valuable.

## AND ZOOMING OUT A LITTLE, WHY DO YOU THINK COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IS IMPORTANT TO SCIENCE? HOW HAVE YOU SEEN ACTIVE MANAGEMENT IMPROVE YOUR COMMUNITY?

To be able to connect with others, generate new ideas, collaborate on projects, overcome challenges, and find the right information and support is vital in science, as it is in many other disciplines and contexts. At Crossref, community management provides more open support, promotes collaboration to improve materials and co-create content, and solicits feedback from our community to ensure that we're serving their needs. I think community management not only helps drive progress and innovation, but - importantly - provides an essential human connection to others.

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