

case 1-429-344  
July 16, 2013

## BioOne: Open Access and the Changing Landscape of Academic Publishing

It was an unseasonably warm day in early March of 2011 in Washington, D.C. Independent publishing consultant Howard Gutenberg exited the Metro at Farragut North, opting to walk the few extra blocks to BioOne's Dupont Circle office in lieu of taking the crowded Metro car the rest of the way. Gutenberg's meeting with BioOne's management team wasn't for another 20 minutes. So he walked slowly, enjoying the spring breeze and reflecting on the reasons that had brought him into the city.

BioOne — a financially sustainable non-profit organization operating in the scientific publishing arena — had enjoyed tremendous success since its launch in 1999. By 2011 BioOne, led by a core management team of four executives and a 14-member board of directors, operated an online content aggregation of 167 peer-reviewed scientific journals published by non-profit scientific societies, associations, museums, and independent presses. Institutional subscriptions were sold on a global scale, with more than 1,400 libraries across six continents subscribing to the BioOne collection, generating more than \$8.5 million in gross revenue in 2011.

After a decade of impressive growth, BioOne was at a strategic crossroads, and the organization's leadership needed to carefully think through the challenges and opportunities presented by a changing publishing landscape. Of particular focus was the industry's growing trend toward open access (OA) publishing as opposed to traditional subscriptions. Gutenberg knew that this innovative distribution model could erode BioOne's competitive advantage, or be a major opportunity. Still, counseling a successful organization with a proven business model to change course was not something Gutenberg wanted to do. Yet BioOne had long prided itself on being forward-looking and proactive. Advising the organization to "stay the course" could be equally dangerous advice.

### About an Author and the Protagonist

Lauren Kane was employed at BioOne in a leadership role, and played a key part in the developments of the case, immediately before the case was written.

Howard Gutenberg is a fictional composite of the many individuals associated with BioOne who were grappling with the challenges presented in this case in the spring of 2011 and beyond.



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This case was developed under the supervision of Juan Florin, Visiting Associate Professor of Management, at the University of New Hampshire Paul College of Business and Economics by graduate student Lauren Kane. This case was created to be a basis for class discussion rather than to illustrate either the effective or ineffective handling of a situation.