

Reflections on 4 years in the role of a Crossref ambassador in Korea

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Introduction

Crossref is a non-profit membership organization with the mission of contributing to the development of scholarly communities by making it easy to find, cite, link, assess, and reuse academic works. Currently, it has metadata on 130 million scholarly works [1]. It works with over 16,000 member organizations from over 140 countries. Publishers are prominent members of Crossref, and other institutions such as funders and repositories are also working together with this organization. Crossref is a DOI registration agency, but it also provides a variety of services to register, connect, and distribute scholarly work metadata [2], including data citation [3] and research funders [4]. When members register content, its metadata is collected in Crossref to be connected among publications, people, institutions, and other related publications. The collected metadata is preserved, and the community can use it through open APIs or search functions [5]. Participation Reports show the key metadata elements that Crossref members register to make their content more useful [6]. A survey was conducted to evaluate where Crossref stands with scholarly communities. In total, 437 survey respondents and 41 interviewees said that Crossref helped them support scholarly work and pointed out that if Crossref did not exist, the manual labor required to recreate the collaborative nature of Crossref services would impose a large overhead for individual organizations [7].

Fig. 1 shows the somewhat complex communities of Crossref. Over 16,000 members from over 140 countries, as mentioned above, form the member community. Crossref also works with sponsors and service providers, especially sponsors who independently support small publishers that find it difficult to join or work with Crossref. The most extensive community is the metadata user community, which uses Crossref metadata for various purposes. It is necessary to support these diverse communities. Crossref wants to make sure it can reach members around the globe, and to achieve this goal, it requires a wide team of people who are knowledgeable in the languages, cultures, and member needs in a variety of countries. This reason is why Crossref launched its ambassador program [8]. In this essay, I would like to describe this program and present my reflections on the 4 years I have spent in the role of a Crossref ambassador in Korea from 2018 to 2021.

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Crossref Ambassador Program

As the Crossref community expanded, more efficient community management measures were sought. For example, Crossref hopes that local experts can make immediate contributions whenever necessary to provide educational opportu-

nities in the local language at a local time; thus, the organization would like to have a representative of the Crossref team in the region who can serve as a channel for local members and stakeholders. This program was officially launched in January 2018. The primary objectives were as follows: “first, to gain a deeper understanding of certain audiences or countries; second, to increase outbound education, with both existing members and new audiences; third, to improve communication with and between non-English speaking communities; and fourth, to empower Crossref members to help and advise one another” [8]. I was one of the first three ambassadors in January 2018. Even before the ambassador program was established, some volunteers translated documents into local languages, conducted education, and gave lectures on Crossref. The ambassador program teamed them up officially and supported their activities. The ambassadors and Crossref were satisfied with the first year of the ambassador program [9].

Who Are Crossref Ambassadors?

As of January 2022, there are 29 ambassadors, who are experts in various fields, including publishers, editors, librarians, system engineers, and researchers (Fig. 2). They are from 17 countries, including Korea, China, Mongolia, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Turkey, Australia, Russia, the United States, Mexico, Colombia, Brazil,



Fig. 1. The large and complex community of Crossref. Courtesy of Crossref.

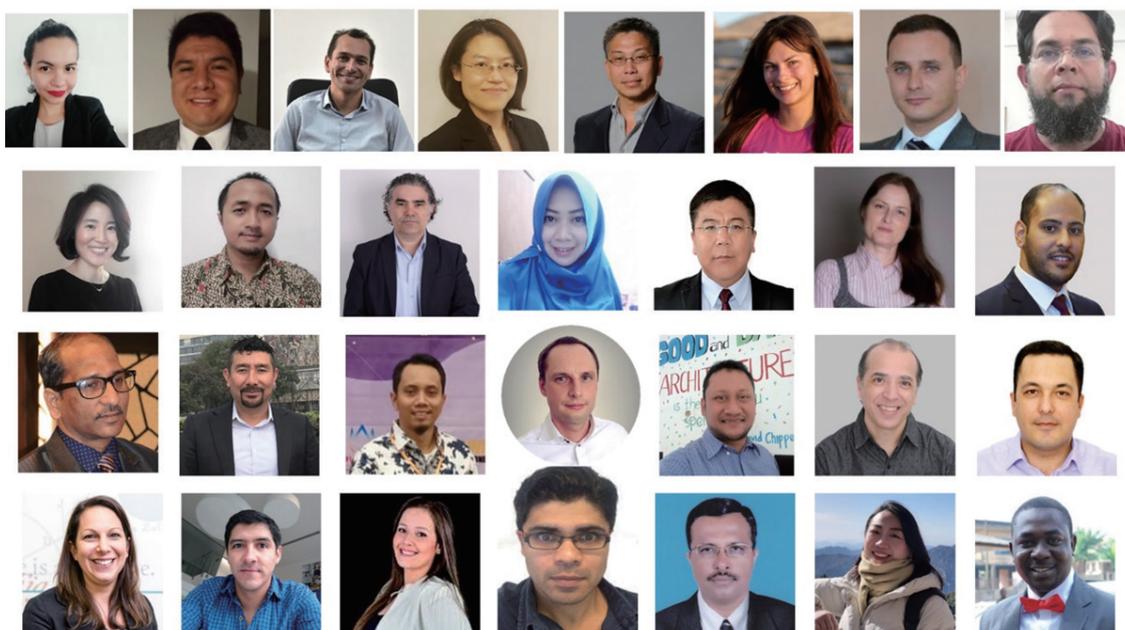


Fig. 2. The current ambassador team of Crossref consists of 29 volunteers from around the world. Photos from the Crossref website: <https://www.crossref.org/community/our-ambassadors/>.

and Nigeria. Although more global supporters are needed, Crossref tries to balance the number of ambassadors from all over the world because the initial goal was to maintain personal relationships within the ambassador team on a small scale. In the early days of the ambassador program, there were fewer than 10 people, including myself, and at that time, I was able to maintain close relationships with the other team members. However, as the scale of the ambassador program grew, I could no longer remember everyone's names.

The Role of Crossref Ambassadors

The ambassador program strives to create a place for members to help and advise each other to reach a deeper understanding of a particular audience or country, providing educational opportunities for existing and new members and smooth communication with non-English-speaking communities. To this end, the work of ambassadors is as follows: to participate in ambassadors' meetings twice a year, to participate in education, to receive the latest news about Crossref and share news in the region, to translate materials, to participate in the community forum, to conduct beta testing for new services, to provide feedback for Crossref-related events or webinars in the region, and to participate in working groups or committees. Of course, not all of this is mandatory; instead, the choice of activities can depend on the situation according to one's competence.

What Is Necessary to Become an Ambassador?

In my case, I became an ambassador through the recommendation of a board member of the Korean Council of Science Editors (KCSE). He had maintained a close relationship with Crossref staff even before the establishment of the ambassador program. In the early days of the program, Crossref appointed ambassadors mainly in countries with large or rapidly increasing membership; however, there are ways to voluntarily submit applications to the Crossref website along with recommendations (available from: <https://www.crossref.org/community/ambassadors/>). When an application is received, it is reviewed by Crossref staff. They interview the applicant to see if he or she is suitable as an ambassador. Applicants who pass are trained through a new education program. Once every 6 months, official catch-up meetings of ambassadors are held. Additionally, regular updates or opinions are shared through email, Slack messages, and Community Forums. The ambassador's status is determined through surveys and evaluations at the end of each year.

How Does Crossref Support Ambassadors as Volunteer Workers?

Crossref introduces ambassadors through newsletters or websites, provides the ambassador logo to be used, and gives a certificate. Souvenirs and gifts with the Crossref logo are also offered, including T-shirts, hoodies, mugs, diaries, badges, stickers, and ballpoint pens. The 2021 year-end gift was unique (it gave a 1-year TED subscription and a GlobalGiving gift card). For reference, GlobalGiving provides sites for those who want to donate to non-profit organizations. One finds donation projects by subject and region on the site, contributes as much as one wants, and the person who donated continues to receive emails on the project's progress. With the gift card I received, I made donations to programs that support girls' education in underdeveloped countries and projects related to welfare for the elderly. Ambassadors can use first when developing a new service, and Crossref supports ambassadors' expenses when participating in related events. In the past, I received support for flight and hotel expenses when attending an annual meeting held overseas. Since February 2020, it has been impossible to travel for Crossref meetings because all meetings have been held online due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Reflections on My Work as a Crossref Ambassador in Korea

Starting in 2012, I began to translate the Crossref Quarterly Newsletters into Korean and propagate them to Korean editors as part of my voluntary work for the KCSE. I also frequently met with Crossref staff at conferences or workshops held by the European Association of Science Editors and the KCSE and communicated with them. On June 12, 2017, a Crossref Live event was held in downtown Seoul. I met some Crossref staff at the meeting. On June 20, 2017, I received an email from the Crossref staff about the launch of the ambassador program. After a discussion about the role of the ambassador, I decided to participate in this program. The suggested tasks were not mandatory but voluntary, according to the competency of the ambassador. The following are my achievements as an ambassador since 2018: first, translation of the script of nine video slides on Crossref's work about Metadata Search, Reference Linking, Metadata APIs, Crossmark, Similarity Check, Funder Registry, Cited-by, and Content Registration, which were released on January 16, 2018 and are available from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q_yXjiinHG0&list=PL_-TawAqQj2pHiy0XZR-WctA-ac_hUcVx; second, operating the Content Registration webinar in Korean held on September 22, 2020, available

from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ofvu_LY05-U&list=PLe_-TawAqQj2pHiy0XZRWctA-ac_hUcVx&index=9; and third, publishing meeting reports on the Crossref LIVE17 annual meeting in Singapore [10] and the Crossref LIVE19 annual meeting in the Netherlands [11].

Additionally, I gave presentations on the topic of “Crossref ambassador program and new services” at the 8th annual meeting of the KCSE and “the future of Crossref” on January 17, 2020, at the pre-conference workshop of the 10th annual meeting of the KCSE. Both presentations in Korean are available from <https://www.kcse.org/bbs/workshop.php>.

Besides the above achievements, I have delivered questions and answers about Crossref services between Korean editors and Crossref staff.

My work as a Crossref ambassador aligned well with my work as a member of the KCSE. KCSE has provided me with frequent opportunities to meet Crossref staff at the meetings. In addition to being the organization that dispatched a Crossref ambassador, the KSCE became a board member of Crossref from March 2021 to February 2024 [12]. This may also have been a result of the KCSE’s contribution to scholarly communities in Korea through the dissemination of information about Crossref services.

Due to personal reasons, I left the Crossref ambassador program in January 2022. I initially struggled due to a lack of knowledge about Crossref’s work and language barriers. However, through solving various problems, I continuously learned and grew. I was able to open my eyes to a vast world of persistent identifiers and XML and broaden my understanding of other cultures by interacting with ambassadors from various countries. This personal growth was significant, but above all, I am proud that I have had this opportunity to contribute to the development of Korea’s scholarly publishing community.

Conclusion

Crossref is now an essential organization in scholarly publishing. Without Crossref services, including DOI, Crossmark, Funder Registry, Similarity Check, DataCite, the Cited-by function, Text and Data Mining, Crossref Metadata, and Participation Reports, it would be impossible to imagine the present global network of scholarly work. I am happy to have contributed to propagating Crossref’s services in Korea by translating the essential content into Korean, operating webinars, publishing meeting reports, and presenting at editors’ conferences. It was my honor to communicate with Crossref staff and other ambassadors in the world. I did my best as an ambassador, but I am not sure if my role satisfied Crossref’s initial expectations. Furthermore, I have had a chance to broad-

en my competency as a manuscript editor and editorial consultant. It was a successful experience for me from the standpoint of personal development. I appreciate all my colleagues and the Crossref staff for their support during the period when I served as an ambassador.

I would recommend that anyone apply to be a Crossref ambassador if he or she has a certain level of understanding of the Crossref organization and its services, can communicate in English, and is passionate about contributing to the development of the global scholarly publishing industry.

Conflict of Interest

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