

Summary of EASE/ISMTE meeting, Blankenberge, Belgium 23-24 September 2013

COPE was represented at the recent joint meeting of the European Association of Science Editors (EASE) and the International Society of Managing and Technical Editors (ISMTE) in September this year. The two-day meeting was held in Blankenberge, which is a coastal town in Belgium. With around 80 engaged delegates the meeting was at full capacity and everyone had gathered for the keynote address by COPE Council member Irene Hames in the main seminar room. Irene spoke eloquently on the current landscape and the future of peer review. She presented on the current practices and challenges, and also highlighted new developments in this area. Peer review is often criticised for its susceptibility to bias and lack of clearly defined standards, but it is seen by many as critical for the reliability of science. Irene elaborated on several new and innovative approaches to peer review.

Cameron Neylon from PLOS was the speaker for the first plenary of the meeting. PLOS is well known for its efforts in reporting article level metrics, and Cameron gave an insight into the impact of articles that go beyond academic citations. He used intricate graphs to demonstrate the reach of articles to a wider audience, particularly of articles such as opinion pieces and position papers, which may be of interest to for example to programme implementers and policy makers.

Steffen Pauly from Springer shared his experience on the dimension of leadership in the editorial office with the delegates. The breakout sessions that followed the presentation by Steffen Pauly included a session on “How to deal with difficult editors and authors”. The facilitators of this session discussed with the attendees challenging situations that may occur during the editorial process and we shared our experiences in how to manage, for example, unresponsive Editors-in-Chief.

In an after-dinner address, David Smith from The Scholarly Kitchen provided the meeting participants with an insight from behind-the-scenes of the blog and its “chefs”. During the discussions that followed it was remarked that there is often very little information on or evaluation of current publishing practices.

The third plenary talk was held on the morning of the second day and was presented by Anthony Watkinson, who spoke on “Trust and authority in scholarly communications in the light of the digital transition “. The audience learnt about data from a study on how scientists assign authority and trustworthiness to information sources they use in their work, in particular scholarly literature. Anthony explained that, interestingly, no significant difference in behaviour between different generations of scientists was found, and reported on the surprisingly small contribution of social media channels.

In one of the parallel sessions that followed, EASE launched its new handbook for science editors, which covers many different areas such as style conventions, editorial workflow, publication ethics and engaging the editorial board. Gender was high on the agenda at the other parallel session, which dealt with sex and gender considerations in editorial offices and in reporting of research. The Gender Policy Committee of EASE presented the first available data from its international survey into current procedures and openness to adopt gender-related policies such as a gender-balanced editorial board and ensuring considerations of sex/gender in articles. In the afternoon, the fourth plenary speaker was Rachael Lammey, who presented an update on the newest initiatives by CrossRef.

The COPE Case Study Workshop was one of the final parallel sessions of the meeting. The workshop was facilitated by Council members Irene Hames, André van Steirteghem and Mirjam Curno. Irene began with a presentation on the recently re-classified cases that have been brought to COPE for discussion and advice over the last 16 years. The classification showed interesting trends of topics in publication ethics. In smaller groups we then discussed three cases with participants that dealt with an authorship dispute, a possible redundant publication, and suspected reviewer misconduct. The participants engaged in thought-provoking exchanges on the role of institutions in dealing with ethical cases as well as how to better educate authors and reviewers to prevent these situations from arising among others.

The two-day meeting was a fantastic venue to hear about the newest developments in the publishing world, meet fellow professionals and share experiences.