

C | O | P | E |

COMMITTEE ON PUBLICATION ETHICS

Strategic plan

2016-2018

Promoting integrity in research publication  
[publicationethics.org](http://publicationethics.org)

## PROMOTING INTEGRITY IN RESEARCH PUBLICATION

Academic publishing and the technology that surrounds it is changing dramatically. With these changes comes an increased ability to detect long-established but previously poorly detected issues of publication ethics, but also some new challenges. We also have an increasing understanding of the pressures that lead to poor (or worse) publication practices. Coupled with greater scrutiny via the internet of research and finally, and probably most importantly, a real determination on the part of many who work in this area to do something about the issues identified there is renewed vigor in addressing the intertwined problems of publication and research ethics.

COPE's core mission is to educate and support; thus our remit and approach is firmly in the direction of influencing through better education, resources and support of our members, alongside the fostering of a professional debate. It is our mission over the next few years to build on this with the aim to move the culture of publishing towards one where ethical practices become the norm, part of the culture itself, not something imposed from outside.

Dr Virginia Barbour  
Chair

# PROMOTING INTEGRITY IN RESEARCH PUBLICATION

## Our purpose

COPE is the only organization dedicated to ensuring high standards in publication ethics and our mission is to “educate and advance knowledge in methods of safeguarding the integrity of the scholarly record”.

Conceived by just 3 editors in 1997, COPE is now a fully multi-disciplinary international organization with more than 10 000 members worldwide – primarily of editors, but also publishers and some related organizations and individuals. We provide resources and support to all our members on all aspects of publication ethics and, in particular, on how to handle cases of research and publication misconduct that arise at their journals. One of the main benefits of COPE is the quarterly Forum where members can bring individual cases for discussion and advice.

## Our mission

COPE’s mission is built around three core principles:

Providing practical resources to educate and **support** our members

Providing **leadership** in thinking on publication ethics

Offering a neutral, professional **voice** in current debates

To most effectively and efficiently achieve this, we bring together key groups in the scholarly publishing process and help them to share their knowledge and ideas – to ensure “ethical practices become part of the culture itself”.

# Strategic plan 2016 – 2018

Following a period of consultation with the Trustees, the Council and feedback from our members via a wide-ranging membership survey, COPE is committed over the next two years to delivering on five strategic priorities.

Underlying these priorities are the three parts of our mission:

- Providing practical resources to educate and support our members
- Providing leadership in thinking on publication ethics
- Offering a neutral, professional voice in current debates

Our strategic priorities are designed to help us achieve our mission through the work of our Council, supported by a dedicated staff.

These strategic priorities are:

- Expanding beyond our core membership base (journals and publishers) to include other key groups with an interest in the debate on upholding ethical standards in scholarly publishing
- Increasing our diversity: geographically, culturally and by discipline
- Establishing a formal and cohesive communication strategy
- Building and supporting our team of staff and council members
- Continually consolidating and improving our core business functions

# Strategic priorities

## ***Expanding beyond our core membership base (journals and publishers) to include other key groups with an interest in the debate on upholding ethical standards in scholarly publishing***

COPE's membership does not currently include representation from key bodies such as academic institutions and it has become clear that our existing core membership of journal editors and publishers would like us to work more closely with these bodies to help educate and promote an understanding of publication ethics principles from the ground up, ie working with researchers, authors, and reviewers.

This is a new direction for COPE strategically, but we feel the time is now right to work more closely with these other groups and over the next few months we will be exploring this idea further via a series of meetings and conversations with the aim that we will be able to offer a suite of educational resources aimed at the researcher, author, and reviewer. We will also explore collaborations with other groups working in this area

## ***Increasing diversity: culturally, geographically and by discipline***

Feedback from our 2015 member survey suggested that there was a desire for COPE to further enhance its resources and support for under-represented fields. This includes those regions which are still developing their publication ethics infrastructure; those regions where cultural issues play a part in publishing; and disciplines where the "traditional" forms of ethical concerns are not as apparent.

COPE intends to establish "champions" of publication ethics in these areas of need; conduct workshops aimed at specific regions/disciplines; and well as customize, or produce new, guidelines aimed at these specific areas.

## ***Establishing a formal and cohesive communication strategy***

COPE has, to date, never had a formal communications strategy. With the many groups and individuals that now work in this area, it is imperative that COPE is able to respond to issues as they arise, and provide the appropriate advice and resources that our members require as quickly and accurately as possible. This strategic aim is about ensuring that public debate on publication ethics is well informed and timely. We need to be sure that that advice is easily obtainable and appropriate to the audience's needs: particularly in light of the expansion of our membership base outside of journal editors and

publishers, as well as our need to be sensitive to cultural, or discipline, differences.

To this end we have appointed a marketing and communications officer who will be working with us to produce a formal strategy ensuring that COPE's advice is relevant, timely and "on voice".

We will also be undertaking a full review of our website to ensure that it is user friendly, easy to navigate and that we make the most of the rich resources we have.

# Strategic priorities

## ***Building & supporting our team of staff and council members***

For COPE to be able to support our membership effectively we must have an adequate infrastructure in place. We have already laid the foundations of this by updating our constitution, separating governance and operational responsibilities between the Trustee Board and Council; and committing to doubling the size of Council. Over the coming 12-24 months we

will also undertake a full HR review to ensure that we have the most up to date processes in place to support our staff; review the needs and requirements of Council to enable them to undertake their activities efficiently and effectively; and ensure that our logistical infrastructure meets the needs of our members.

## ***Continually consolidating and improving our core business functions***

This strategic goal is to review all of our current resources, functions and activities and ensure they are fit for purpose. COPE has a wealth of resources, not only on its website, but also among the knowledge and expertise of its Council. We want to ensure that our members can access this knowledge and expertise as expediently and practically as possible.

To this end we will be thoroughly reviewing our website and have appointed a new web content manager to ensure our resources are presented in

the most user friendly way on our website. We will be reviewing how we respond to our members and intend to offer a number of ways in which our members can contact us with their queries. We will be re-evaluating the ways our resources are presented and will look at other, creative ways in which our advice and support can be delivered.

All these elements, and more, will ensure we deliver maximum value to our members, whether editor, publisher or individual as well as the wider publishing community.

					2015
2012	Ginny Barbour becomes Chair	Awarded the Council of Science Editors meritosis award	Ask COPE launched for members	COPE commissions research	More staff Representation in China 2016 awards
2011	COPE becomes a charity	Code of Conduct revised	1st European seminar outside London	eBook on publication ethics	Webinar series
2010	Flowcharts published	COPE Audit produced	Authorship discussion document	Institutional membership category	
2009	Harvey Markovitch becomes Chair	2nd World Conference on Research Integrity	Sharing of information among EICs discussion document		
2008	COPE founded by Mike Farthing, Richard Horton and Richard Smith April 1997	Some publishers sign up all the journals - now more than 3000 members	Guidelines on Cooperation between research institutions and journals published		
2007	1st annual report Richard Smith: "[COPE] may not prove useful in the long term, and we will be delighted if it is made unnecessary because the international profession produces an adequate response to research misconduct"	Constitution written	1st Australasian & Middle East seminars	Ethical guidelines for peer reviewers	Membership Administrator joins COPE
2006	Good Publication Practice Guidelines published	Member survey	eLearning course released	New case taxonomy	Sharing of information among EICs discussion document now COPE guidelines
2005	Fiona Godlee becomes Chair	1st USA seminar	Discussion document on responding to whistle blowers	Revised constitution and expansion of COPE Council	
2004	350 members	Best practice guidelines published	1st discussion document - on plagiarism - published	1st version of Principles of Transparency for Scholarly Publishing	Ethics complaints from complainants who submit multiple issues discussion document
2003	COPE Operations Manager employed	Code of Conduct for Editors published	International standards for authors and editors published	COPE Digest launches	Member survey
2002	90 Members	COPE newsletter, Ethical Editing published	Retraction guidelines published	Publishers Code of Conduct	1st Introduction to Publication Ethics workshop
2001					More than 10,000 members from 103 countries