The Paper, the Publishers, the Protagonist, and The Academic Setting

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The Paper

The Publishers

The Protagonist

The Academic Setting
“Academic research, including the task of publishing its findings, takes place in a highly complex socio-technical system (CSS), which involves several dynamically interacting agents (e.g. authors, publishers, reviewers, regulators, funding agencies, subjects of the research, and Universities, among others).”

Tarcisio Abreu Saurin, 2016
Queensland University of Technology | The prism of today’s presentation

- **Top 300 universities globally**
  2016 Academic Ranking of World Universities (Shanghai Jiao Tong)

- **7th in Australia for QS Graduate Employability**

- **Top 50 of universities under 50 years old**
  Times Higher Education 150 Under 50

- **8 Rhodes scholars since 1998; 5 since 2010**

- **Average PhD completion time less than 4 years**

- **International HDR enrolments risen 5% between 2011 and 2016**
QUT: a university with aspirations

- Biomedical engineering and health technologies
- Biomolecular science
- Chronic disease intervention
- Creating and capturing value from new technology
- Data science, computational modelling and simulation science
- Digital media
- Education for better outcomes
- Health systems
- Injury prevention and management
- Materials science and engineering
- Plant biotechnology
- Robotics and computer vision
- Technology, regulation and society
Responsible research practice in Australia

• The system is generally self regulating
• Self reporting essential under funding agreement conditions when misconduct in research practices (including publication issues) are confirmed
• The two major national funding agencies issue guidance and policy for RRP
• Institutions and universities are responsible for initiating and conducting investigations
• The funding agencies take no role in training and education. This is left to organisations
• Research misconduct is not reported in the public domain, but de-identified reporting is encouraged
The Paper

Institutions are reliant on:

• Self reporting of publication error/s
• Reporting by others, i.e. researchers, co-authors, other institutions and or community members
• Reporting on Blog sites such as Retraction Watch or PubPeer
• Funding agencies who receive a complaint or information about a ‘questionable paper’.

*The source in effect dictates institutional process*
The Protagonist

• The literature gives us some useful pointers - hints about the characteristics of those researchers more likely to submit a ‘questionable publication’
• We understand the pressures to publish, although this notion is more likely to be confounded by situational and or cultural factors
• We understand the demand for greater transparency and accountability to ensure that researchers practice their craft with integrity
• We know that the emerging emphasis on trans-disciplinary research challenges researchers that don’t have a tradition of trans-disciplinary collaboration
• We know errors can genuinely occur for a range of reasons, other then deliberate, negligent or reckless intention.
The Publisher

• Diversity of publishing practices across disciplines and journals

• A hierarchy of contact points that can be difficult to navigate which from time to feels deliberately impenetrable!

• There are international standards for editors which look and feel good!

• When it comes to correcting the public record our respective processes may from time to time rub in opposite directions
The Academic Setting

• Cultural narrative on publication ethics, lead from the front
• Guidelines crafted around responsible research practices
• Online resources to accommodate different media usage
• Post publication responsibilities – and why it matters
• Publication and authorship training
• Encouraging use of originality software prior to publication
• Bespoke training post-integrity events
• Monitoring of research approved by an ethics committee
• Do some targeted “stuff” when needed
The Academic Setting – Priorities

• Post-investigation, correction of the public record is an imperative.
  • from an institutional perspective – reputation, integrity of reported research, and trust by funders
  • Needs to occur in the timely manner, to avoid ongoing re-agitation of publication issues
• Managing the privacy and confidentiality of respondents – often at odds to the demands of complaints and or in providing the details of an investigation outcome to publishers
• Collateral damage management for co-authors which might include early career researchers, HDR students, collaborators and funders.
How might we collectively change the future of publication ethics?

We want the same thing: publication integrity
How might we collectively change the future of publication ethics?

The new COPE and institutional membership arrangement presents an opportunity to develop and road test a cooperative workflow model which identifies key decision points and processes.

We want the same thing: publication integrity.

This could extend to an international collaboration with institutional members and integrity organisations (national or organisation based – i.e. ORI, ARIC, Tri-Agency, UKRIO).

Develop a joint statement of standards for managing publication, retractions and corrections.