In the beginning...

- COPE was started in 1997 as an informal forum for discussing ethical issues relating to research and publication in biomedical journal publishing.

- Membership of COPE was aimed at editors of scholarly (learned) journals.
In 2007…

• COPE was more formally established as a limited company and as a UK-registered charity

• COPE's stated aim is "The promotion for the public benefit of ethical standards of conduct in scientific research and the publication of science journals"

• In 2007/08, membership increased substantially: from around 350 editors to around 3500

• By 2010 COPE had over 5000 members
The scope of COPE

• COPE is international in scope and fully inclusive in subject matter

• All academic disciplines and fields are now covered, for example:
  – Biomedical
  – Pure and applied sciences
  – Engineering and technology
  – Arts and humanities
Ethical issues considered

- Plagiarism
- Fabrication
- Falsification
- Redundant publication
- Selective reporting
- Unethical research
- Authorship issues
- Reviewer misconduct
- Editor misconduct
- Conflicts of interest
COPE in action (1): website

COPE has produced:

- a series of flowcharts
- a Code of Conduct
- Best Practice document
- sample letters for handling common problems
- retraction guidelines (December 2009)
- other guidance (eg for editorial boards)

All are available at www.publicationethics.org
COPE flowchart
The flowcharts cover:

- Redundant (duplicate) publication
- Plagiarism
- Fabricated data
- Changes in authorship
- Ghost, guest or gift authorship
- Conflicts of interest
- General suspected ethical concerns
- Reviewer misconduct
- How COPE deals with complaints
COPE in action (2): advice and guidance to members

• COPE offers advice and guidance to its members, primarily through its quarterly Forum meetings.

• Meetings are held in London but members can take part via tele-conference.

• The Forum allows members to benefit from the views and experience of other members.

• Recommendations are published on the website.
COPE in action (3): complaints, advice and guidance

• Individuals can bring complaints against COPE members if they consider that they have not followed the Code of Conduct.

• COPE will only consider a complaint after all appropriate internal mechanisms at the journal have been exhausted.

• COPE does not adjudicate on the merits of individual cases (e.g., whether publication misconduct has occurred) but simply on whether the COPE member followed appropriate procedures.
COPE: other services

- Ethics Audit (members only)
- Newsletter (quarterly)
- Annual seminar (UK and US)

Planned services include:
- Distance learning course for editors
- Code of Conduct for publishers
Joining COPE

• Membership of COPE is currently available for:
  
  ➢ Journals
  
  ➢ Associate members
COPE: journal members

• applicants must be an Editor or Editor-in-Chief of a peer-reviewed scholarly journal;

or

• a company or body whose primary business and object is publishing that includes publishing of peer-reviewed scholarly journals
COPE: associate and associate corporate members

- Individuals or companies may apply for Associate membership

- to be eligible the applicant must be a person or company having an interest in COPE’s objects and who is working in or associated with the publication of peer-reviewed scholarly journals; or has a significant interest in safeguarding the integrity of the academic record and who is not eligible for Full Membership
COPE: cost of joining

• Journal membership fees are based on publication frequency (or turnover for continuous publications)

• COPE welcomes enquiries from individual journals or publishing companies

• Reduced subscriptions are available for developing-world journals

• Associate membership is currently £50 pa
COPE governance

• COPE is registered as a charity in the UK

• The work of COPE is guided by an elected Council

• Current officers are: Liz Wager (Chair), Sabine Kleinert (Vice-Chair), Ginny Barbour (Secretary) and Richard O'Hagan (Treasurer)

• Day-to-day management of COPE’s business affairs is the responsibility of the permanent staff:
  – Operations Manager (Natalie Ridgeway)
  – Administrator (Linda Gough)
COPE contact details

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