

ethical editing

Theme: Connections

Developing ethical networks

Lately, no matter which direction you head, you're likely to run into an ethical issue. Walk down any street and you'll meet people with opposing views of what's right and what's wrong with the world. Turn on your TV and you'll see a world divided by its differences. Which makes the trend toward cooperation in publication ethics seem all the more heartening.

As you'll find within these pages, there are an awful lot of people committed to raising ethical standards in publishing. Representatives of science agencies from 47 countries have formed a Global Research Council, and researchers in Romania are launching an online service to expose cases of plagiarism (see *From the Field*). In *Peer to Peer*, COPE Council member Mirjam Curno reports on the wide-ranging ethical topics discussed at the Council of Science Editors annual meeting in Seattle. And in this issue's Feature, "COPE collaborations", you'll learn about no fewer than six projects COPE is undertaking with other organizations to promote knowledge of ethical issues through websites, meetings, and courses. Ethics professionals are starting to learn from each other, and discovering the value of networking.

COPE's network used to be restricted to the United Kingdom. Today, members aren't just converging on London—they're convening in locations all over the world, as depicted in our cartoon on the back page.

Couldn't make it to the European Seminar? You're welcome at the 4th US Seminar, to be held outside Washington, DC, in October, or the 1st South American Seminar, taking place in Brazil in November. And if you can't leave home, why not take part in a webinar?

Take the opportunity to make some new connections. Before you know it, your ethical network will stretch around the world!

Jeannie



The Universal Postal Union, with 192 member countries, is the second oldest international organization in the world. A fountain in Bern, Switzerland, depicts the five continents joining to transmit messages around the globe.



Editor Jeannie Wurz connects

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New COPE complaints procedure

Along with COPE's increased visibility has come an increase in correspondence from members of the research community bringing issues to COPE for comment or advice. Some of this correspondence involves claims that COPE member journals have not followed the COPE Code of Conduct for Journal Editors. COPE is taking three steps to clarify when and how it handles such complaints against COPE members:

1. New text on the website outlines the criteria that need to be met before a complaint can be submitted and the process COPE follows when considering a complaint. Individuals submitting a complaint to COPE will be asked to confirm that they have read and understood these 'rules'.
2. A complaints form has been developed for submission with complaints. Use of this form will be mandatory.
3. The English version of the flowchart "How COPE handles complaints against member journals" has been revised.

The new information is available under Contact Us on the COPE website, at <http://publicationethics.org/contact-us>.

Member update

COPE has attracted 850 new members so far in 2012. It now provides advice and support to 7,645 editors, including those working for many of the world's major academic publishers. COPE members come from a wide range of academic fields in 80 countries, including medicine, life sciences, economics, psychology, chemistry, engineering, maths, education, environmental sciences, arts, humanities, law, geography and astronomy.

"These are particularly challenging times for journals and publishers and so it's very pleasing to see that academic journals and publishers are increasingly committed to upholding the highest standards of publication ethics," said COPE Chair Ginny Barbour.

Research grant goes to data-sharing project



The June 2012 COPE grant has been awarded to Ottawa-based public health specialist Karmela Krleza-Jeric (left) and UK-based publisher Iain Hrynaszkiewicz (right) for the project "Environmental scan of repositories of clinical research data: how far have we got with public disclosure of trial data?"

Sharing of the data on which published research is based is an increasingly important issue in biomedicine. The project aims to produce comprehensive information on features and practices of existing repositories that have common interests in clinical data disclosure. The project will examine practices of public disclosure of data and other forms of data sharing of existing repositories by analyzing resources that catalogue information in data repositories, literature on the topic, and websites of repositories, and by surveying relevant stakeholders. The goal is "to understand how they have addressed the issues and summarize what can be considered good practices".

Krleza-Jeric is an Adjunct Professor in the Department of Epidemiology and Community Medicine at the University of Ottawa, Canada, leader of the Ottawa Group on Trial Registration, and the Regional Editor of the *Croatian Medical Journal*. Hrynaszkiewicz has overall responsibility for BioMed Central's open data publishing strategies and helped develop guidelines for sharing of patient data published in the *BMJ (British Medical Journal)* and *Trials* in 2010.

The project was one of six submitted for the June grant. The winners will receive £5000. For previous award-winning proposals see <http://publicationethics.org/resources/research>. The next grant will be awarded in December 2012.

Thanks to James Greenstone

COPE would like to thank Council member James L. Greenstone for his service to COPE from 2009 to 2012. Greenstone, Editor-in-Chief Emeritus of the *Journal of Police Crisis Negotiations*, served on several committees, presented at the 2010 US Seminar, and contributed a Peer to Peer article for the newsletter on "The ethics of publishing police hostage and barricade situations: protecting identities" in Winter 2009. He was COPE's first non-European Council member and the first to hail from the United States.

North American Seminar returns to DC

This year's attendees at COPE's 4th North American Seminar and Forum will gather in the suburbs of Washington, DC, on the East Coast of the United States. The members-only Forum will take place from 2 to 5 p.m. on Thursday, October 18, 2012, and the Seminar will be held from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Friday, October 19. COPE will be represented by US Council members Geri Pearson and Charon Pierson, who will be chairing and running the events, aided by Linda Gough, COPE's Administrator.

The theme of this year's Seminar, as at the European meeting in March, is "Correcting the literature". Among the topics to be addressed are why corrections are needed, the scale of the problem, ways of dealing with incorrect information, and what can go wrong.

The Seminar will feature three invited speakers: Andrew Sugden, Deputy Editor and International Managing Editor, *Science*, speaking on "Retractions and misconduct: lessons from *Science*"; Carol Meyer, CrossMark, speaking on "CrossMark: there is no final version", and Mark Seeley, Senior Vice President and General Counsel, Elsevier, speaking on "Legal issues in corrections, retractions and expressions of concern".

In addition to the three invited talks there will be breakout sessions in the afternoon, with discussion of cases posing ethical problems, and opportunities to network with other editors and share experiences and challenges. Editors, authors, and all those interested in improving the standard of publication ethics are welcome to attend.

The COPE Forum is a meeting at which COPE members with publishing-related ethical problems present anonymized cases and receive advice from their peers. Cases for the October 18 meeting should be submitted to cope_administrator@publicationethics.org by October 3, 2012. Presenters should attend the Forum on October 18, either in person or by telephone.

The venue for both days is the Bechtel Conference Center in Reston, Virginia, a short drive from Dulles Airport. The Seminar is free for COPE members and \$300 US for non-members. Registration is now open via the website: <http://publicationethics.org/cope-north-american-seminar-and-forum-2012>. The deadline to register is October 3.



Ethical Editing editors

Two members of the COPE Council have agreed to serve as Editors-in-Chief of COPE's newsletter, *Ethical Editing*. Charlotte Haug (left) is the newly elected Vice Chair of COPE and Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of the Norwegian Medical Association*. She joined the Council in 2005. Irene Hames (middle) became a Council member in 2010 following her retirement as Managing Editor of *The Plant Journal* and works as an editorial consultant. Together they will provide oversight and input for the quarterly newsletter, which has been edited by Jeannie Wurz (right) since its inception in March 2009. Former COPE Chair Liz Wager served as Editor-in-Chief from 2009 to 2012.

COPE membership for book publishers?

At the suggestion of one of COPE's member publishers, COPE is looking into the issue of whether to consider books within its remit, potentially offering membership and support to book publishers. Council member Lars Ole Sauerberg will be heading a subcommittee to consider the issue.

Persian flowcharts

COPE's 17 flowcharts providing advice on how to deal with ethical problems have been translated into Persian. They can be downloaded from the Resources section of the COPE website: <http://publicationethics.org/resources/flowcharts>.

1st COPE South American Seminar

Following on from its European, North American, Asia-Pacific and Iranian Seminars, COPE is organizing its first Seminar in South America, to be held Monday, November 12 (8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.), in Brazil. The meeting will take place during the annual meeting of the Brazilian Association of Scientific Editors (ABEC), at the Costão do Santinho Resort, Florianópolis, 300 miles south of São Paulo. The theme will be the one that has proved so successful for COPE this year: “Correcting the literature”. The Seminar is being organized by COPE Council members Irene Hames and Rosemary Shinkai, together with former Vice Chair Sabine Kleinert (Senior Executive Editor of *The Lancet*).

Irene will open with an introduction to COPE and a general talk on retractions and correction of the literature. Sabine will talk on the *Lancet* journals’ experience with retractions, providing insight from the perspective of large journals. Ana Marusic, Co-Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Global Health*, will provide an alternative perspective in a talk on “Publishing integrity and small journals,” highlighting the difficulties faced by small journals, particularly in developing countries where there may be political issues. Three journal editors from Brazil, from different disciplines, will relate their experiences of correcting the published research record, providing insight from the perspective of their journals and areas of knowledge. There will also be a session on the COPE retraction guidelines, and a discussion of case studies. The day will end with a Q & A panel made up of European and Brazilian editors.

The seminar will be open to and free for all editors. Registration will open in mid-September and will be handled through the ABEC website (<http://www.abecbrasil.org.br/>), where an English translation will be available.



COPE cited as ethical standard-setter in UK court case

The Honorable Mrs Justice Sharp, in her July 6, 2012, judgment on a UK libel case tried in the High Court of Justice, Queen’s Bench Division, between November 2011 and January 2012, refers on multiple occasions to COPE’s ethical standards, implying that COPE is a standard-setting organization for good publishing practice.

“I have been referred to two particular sets of publishing guidelines by the Defendants at trial,” wrote Justice Sharp. “First, those produced by the Committee on Publication Ethics, or COPE. COPE is an independent, respected body which provides guidelines specifically for peer reviewed journals.” (paragraph 50)

The libel suit was brought by the founding editor of the international scientific journal *Chaos, Solitons and Fractals* (CSF), who served as the journal’s Editor-in-Chief for 17 years, from June 1990 until his retirement in early 2009. The editor claimed he had been libeled by an article published in the November 27, 2008, issue of

Nature under the headline “Self-publishing editor set to retire”.

According to the judgment, of the 330 articles the editor wrote and published between 1993 and 2008, 290 were published in the journal he edited, *CSF*. In 2008 alone, he published 58 scholarly works in that journal.

The *Nature* article questioned the quality of the peer-review process used by *CSF*, stating: “Most scientists contacted by *Nature* comment that [the editor’s] papers tend to be of poor quality.” The article quoted a researcher who claimed “it’s plain obvious that there was either zero, or at best very poor, peer review, of his own papers”.

Justice Sharp writes: “The central role played by the Editor-in-Chief in ensuring the integrity of the peer-review process is emphasised by both the COPE and Elsevier guidelines. . . . The COPE guidelines state that editors must: ‘[A]dopt suitable policies for handling submissions from themselves, employees or members of

the editorial board to ensure unbiased review (and have these set out in writing).’ ” (paragraph 53)

According to the 102-page Judgment, the defendant in the libel case had to “establish that the publication concerned a matter of public interest; that the inclusion of the defamatory matter complained of was justifiable, i.e. that it made real contribution to the public interest element of the article, commensurate with the seriousness of the allegations made (and on this question, allowance must be made for editorial judgment) and that the steps taken to gather, verify and publish the information were responsible and fair.” (paragraph 326)

Justice Sharp dismissed the claim, stating: “In the result, I consider the Article was the product of responsible journalism. It resulted in the publication of information of high order of public interest.” (paragraph 382)

The editor was given until August 31, 2012, to apply to the trial judge for permission to appeal.

Networks and alliances

Global Research Council formed

In May 2012, representatives of publicly funded science agencies from 47 countries around the world formed the Global Research Council, a voluntary organization which will foster discussion of “shared goals, aspirations, and principles, and provide a vehicle to unify science across the globe.” In an article in *Science Insider* (<http://tinyurl.com/cdxtc3c>), David Malakoff reported that the Council had released its new Statement of Principles for Scientific Merit Review, “a common set of principles that frame how funders should review and choose the most worthy research projects.” The statement identifies six key principles: expert assessment, transparency, impartiality, appropriateness, confidentiality, and integrity and ethical considerations.

In the coming year, the Global Research Council plans to address two further issues: defining research integrity and promoting open access to scientific information. Its goal is to release consensus statements at a Berlin meeting in May 2013.

Romanian response to plagiarism

Researchers in Romania are launching an online service to be called Integru “which will investigate and expose cases of plagiarism and other academic misconduct in Romania,” according to an article by Alison Abbott which appeared on August 15, 2012, in *Nature News & Comment* (<http://www.nature.com/news/romanian-scientists-fight-plagiarism-1.11170>). The service has been founded in reaction to recent plagiarism scandals involving the country’s research minister and prime minister and suspicion of plagiarism at a major medical university.

An anonymous editorial board

comprising Romanian scientists both inside and outside of Romania will oversee Integru. Suspicious papers will be posted online along with commentaries from international reviewers who are independent and have expertise in the corresponding field.

The goal of the service is to “help reform and restore confidence in the Romanian research and education system.” Only a year earlier, a law designed to raise university standards strengthened the mandate of Romania’s National Ethics Council. The Council investigated 18 cases of wrongdoing and published decisions on 15 of them, but its members were dismissed by the accused prime minister’s government on June 8, 2012, just before they were to vote on the plagiarism charge against the research minister.

Ethics watchdogs interact online

On the two-year anniversary of the founding of Retraction Watch, a blog that reports news of retractions in the literature (<http://retractionwatch.wordpress.com/>), an interview with Retraction Watch Co-founder Ivan Oransky appeared in The Scholarly Kitchen, a blog established in 2008 by the Society for Scholarly Publishing (<http://scholarlykitchen.sspnet.org/>). The discussion following the article contained a comment from the Chair of yet another ethics-oriented organization—COPE.

In the article “Interview with Ivan Oransky of Retraction Watch” (<http://tinyurl.com/cldcs5m>), Oransky described the watchdog’s beginnings and commented on standards in publishing.

“We’re sometimes told that editors can’t be expected to do too much, since they’re often volunteers,” he said. “Tough. If you can’t staff a publication properly, you shouldn’t

expect people to trust it very much.”

Oransky also defended Retraction Watch: “We hear frequently from scientists that watchdog efforts like Retraction Watch are undermining trust in science. But what undermines trust in science—or any human enterprise—is when its practitioners say ‘nothing to see here’.”

COPE Chair Ginny Barbour provided COPE’s perspective on the subject of retractions: “The published article is rarely if ever perfect or the final word and so I would go further than Ivan and say that journals should take the publishing of retractions and corrections as a mark of pride, not of shame, and all who care about the integrity of the literature should applaud editors and authors who do publish them.”

In the interview, Oransky mentions that in its third year Retraction Watch will be championing a concept Oransky and Co-founder Adam Marcus are developing called the Transparency Index—a numerical indicator of the extent to which a journal discloses information. They give an overview of the concept in an August 1, 2012, article in *The Scientist* (<http://tinyurl.com/8eo9h8y>) and invite readers to comment on their website (<http://retractionwatch.wordpress.com/transparencyindex/>).

In the article, Oransky and Marcus write that “lack of transparency serves only to reinforce a sense of incompetence. Journals and editors willing to pull aside the curtain to show readers what went wrong with a particular article or group of articles send the messages that 1) they care about conveying truth to their audiences; 2) they are committed to producing a high-quality publication; and 3) potential fraudsters are not welcome in their pages.”

COPE and collaborators share their expertise

More and more, research is becoming a global endeavor. COPE is partnering with organizations addressing ethical topics in locations ranging from London to Brazil to Montreal.

COPE Secretary Margaret Rees has joined an independent panel of experts collaborating with Elsevier on their new "Ethics in Research & Publication" program. The web-based program (www.ethics.elsevier.com) aims to help educate students and young researchers about the do's and don'ts of publishing ethics, as well as showing the possible consequences of ethics violations. Among other things, the website contains fact sheets and videos in an "Ethics Toolkit", a quiz, interviews with victims of ethical breaches, links to articles about ethical issues, and links to resources from other organizations, including COPE. COPE members who have suggestions for new/improved content can contact Margaret Rees at cope_secretary@publicationethics.org. Educational materials (e.g., factsheets and posters) can be ordered from Catriona Fennell at c.fennell@elsevier.com.

COPE Council member Rosemary Shinkai was among the national collaborators at the Second Brazilian Meeting on Research Integrity, Science and Publication Ethics (II BRISPE), held May 28 to June 1, 2012, in Brazil. Liz Wager and Sabine Kleinert, who stepped down as COPE Chair and Vice Chair in March, were international collaborators at the meeting. A joint statement produced at the meeting (http://www.iibrispe.coppe.ufrj.br/images/IIBRISPE/JoinStatement/JointStatementonResearchIntegrity_IIBRISPE_2012_English.pdf) highlights collaboration: "In Brazil, growing incentives for collaborative projects that are conducted in an increasingly competitive international environment

may lead to more successful results if institutions, academic journals, scientific societies and funding agencies establish strategic measures to promote and sustain accountability and public trust in science." The statement cites the 2012 COPE document "Cooperation between research institutions and journals on research integrity cases: guidance from the Committee on Publication Ethics (<http://publicationethics.org/resources/guidelines>).

COPE is one of the sponsors of the 3rd World Conference on Research Integrity, to be held May 5–8, 2013, in Montreal (http://www.wcri2013.org/overview_e.shtml). The Conference will provide a forum for discussion and exchange of ideas, expertise, and experience among national and institutional leaders, policy makers, research funders, leaders of professional societies, journal editors, publishers, researchers, educators, administrators, and graduate and postdoctoral trainees. Attendees will have the chance to help craft a Montreal Statement which "will offer guidance on integrity in cross-national, cross-disciplinary and cross-sector research."

A meeting jointly organized by COPE and the *BMJ* (*British Medical Journal*) in January 2012 discussed the UK's lack of a concerted approach to research misconduct. An initiative in this area that was already underway, and has now been published, is a "Concordat to Support Research Integrity in the UK", a 24-page document backed by funding bodies, universities and government

departments which aims to provide a national framework for good research conduct (<http://tinyurl.com/cbvagr6>).

In a related commentary in *Times Higher Education* (<http://tinyurl.com/cdbztff>), COPE Co-founder Michael Farthing, a member of the Advisory Board of the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO), said that COPE and UKRIO "bring to the table the important influence of an independent, expert 'third party'—the principle that there should always be an external adviser on an investigatory panel."

COPE Chair Ginny Barbour recently joined UKRIO's advisory panel.

COPE and ALPSP (the Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers) will partner on a one-day course on publication ethics in 2013. Council members Mirjam Curno and Zoë Mullin are working with ALPSP to provide input from COPE. Former COPE Chair Liz Wager will co-host the course. COPE was invited to participate in the new project due to its standing as "the authority on publication ethics".

COPE and the Council of Science Editors (CSE) are planning a joint webinar for October 2012, focusing on the topic of Authorship. COPE Chair Ginny Barbour will participate on behalf of COPE. The webinar will be free for COPE members. Registration will take place via the CSE website: www.councilscienceeditors.org. Details will follow shortly.

Ethics in Seattle: Scientific integrity at the 2012 CSE annual meeting

by *Mirjam Curno*

The Council of Science Editors evolved from the Council of Biology Editors in 2000, and has as its core mission “Education, Ethics, and Evidence for Editors”. The CSE’s commitment to supporting editors in ethical issues has been long-standing, and a 2012 update to its White Paper on Promoting Integrity in Scientific Journal Publications shows the continued efforts by CSE in this domain.

Looking back at the presentations of the annual CSE meetings in the past years, the strong presence of topics in scientific integrity and ethical publishing at these meetings is apparent. From conflicts of interest to authorship disputes and image manipulation, the wide range of challenges faced by editors has continuously been high on the agenda. This year’s annual meeting was no exception in the prominence of ethical topics being discussed.

The May 2012 meeting in Seattle kicked off with an exciting joint session by CSE and COPE on “Learning to Do the Right Thing: Educating Editors, Authors, and Reviewers”, which 94% of evaluation respondents rated as “excellent/very good”. COPE Chair Ginny Barbour was among four speakers exploring what professional organizations, societies, and journals are doing to support editors, authors, and reviewers in their responsibilities towards ethical publishing. Particularly notable were the innovative approaches highlighted at the session to address the dearth of formal training available to editors, authors, and reviewers in this regard. The American Chemical Society presented their campus outreach program and video series (<http://pubs.acs.org/page/publish-research/index.html>) to engage their constituents. The American Physiological Society has the amazing

resource of a dedicated Publication Ethics Manager, who presented the Society’s processes using resources like COPE’s flowcharts and CSE’s White Paper to develop their own material, such as an Ethics Poster available in different languages (<http://www.the-aps.org/mm/Publications/Ethical-Policies/Ethics-Posters>). Ginny Barbour presented COPE’s resources, especially highlighting the recent eLearning initiative for editors, and also underlined the continued need for dialogue among editors provided by the COPE Forums.

“Coping with Retractions: What’s an Editor to Do” was the topic of another session dedicated to ethical issues in publishing, which showcased just how complicated and even stigmatized this process of correcting the literature actually is. Monica Bradford, Executive Editor at *Science*, emphasized the importance of establishing journal guidelines in this regard. Among the problems discussed were the difficulties of receiving information about scientific misconduct, for example from institutions, the lack of transparency and detail in retraction notices, the length of time the retraction process can actually take, and the role of “Expressions of concern”.

In the session “Demystifying Scientific Misconduct Issues through Instructions to Authors,” examples of journals’ instructions to authors were analyzed to determine what type of information was provided. Good practices that were identified included defining scientific misconduct, linking to available resources, explaining the journal’s processes, as well as including instructions to editorial board members and reviewers.

The results of the CSE Research



Misconduct Survey were presented in a session entitled “What Would You Do? What Should You Do?” The survey presented different scenarios with possible responses in a multiple-choice format. The wide distribution of chosen answers demonstrated how diverse the responses are by editors who are faced with ethical issues. For example, in a scenario where an institution investigating an alleged case of misconduct asks the editor for the peer reviewers’ reports, one third of respondents would deny the request, one third would provide the reports but not the names of the reviewers, and one third would ask the reviewers for permission first. The session also highlighted the legal realm of ethical issues in publishing and the possible need for more information for editors in this regard.

The 2012 CSE meeting was a stimulating environment bringing together professionals involved in publishing to discuss relevant topics. New tools, approaches and resources were shared in a number of exciting and informative sessions on publication ethics. Scientific misconduct will surely remain a hot topic of debate also at the next CSE meeting, to be held in May 2013 in Montreal, Canada.

Mirjam J. Curno, PhD, of Geneva, is the Managing Editor of the Journal of the International AIDS Society and a COPE Council member. She can be reached at mirjam.curno@iasociety.org.



COPE Forum discusses peer review

Two recent cases brought to the COPE Forum—"Author creates bogus email accounts for proposed reviewers" (case 11-27) and "Compromised peer review system in published papers" (case 12-12)—address concerns over the use of reviewers suggested by submitting authors.

Case 12-12 was brought to COPE in June 2012 by an editor who noticed that "comments were being returned very quickly (within 24 hours) and . . . [a]ll preferred reviewers favored immediate acceptance or acceptance subject to minor revisions." When questioned by the editor, the author admitted that some of the accounts were dummy accounts and several of the favorable reviews had been submitted by the author's students or collaborators.

The Forum attendees (pictured above, left and right) advised the editor to contact the author's institution regarding the fraud, and suggested that the journal re-review other papers they had published by the author, in the meantime issuing expressions of concern for them.

The Forum noted that the journal should take some responsibility for failure of its peer-review process. It is always good practice to check the names, addresses and email contacts of reviewers—especially those that are recommended by authors. Editors should never use only the reviewers suggested by the author.

For summaries of both cases see <http://publicationethics.org/cases>.

Last laugh

by Annemarie Glaser



Coping around the world

Datebook

October 2012—Joint CSE/COPE webinar on Authorship, www.councilscienceeditors.org. Date to be finalized.

October 18–19, 2012—COPE North American Seminar and Forum, Reston, Virginia (Washington, DC), <http://publicationethics.org/events>

November 7, 2012—2–3 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, Intl. Society of Managing and Technical Editors webinar, "Defend Your Journal Against Image Manipulation and Fraud," <http://www.ismte.org/Webinar>

November 7–9 2012—Medical Editors Short Course, Oxford, UK, www.pspconsulting.org/medical-short.shtml

November 12, 2012—COPE South American Seminar, Florianópolis, Brazil, <http://www.abecbrasil.org.br/>

November 14, 2012—2012 CrossRef Annual Member Meeting, London, www.crossref.org/annualmeeting/agenda.html