COPE’s purpose is to improve publication of research through sharing and discussing best practice with our community of editors, publishers and those involved in publication ethics. We are committed to supporting members with practical guidance and bring together all involved in publication ethics in current debates to give members a global understanding of emerging issues.

Our strategic plan for 2020-2023 has been developed using the member research conducted in 2019, COPE research undertaken among arts, humanities, and social sciences disciplines (656 responses) and, more widely, emerging trends in publication ethics through an environmental scan. An independent market research consultancy, Maverick Publishing Specialists, conducted the online research sent to all members and some non-members. The survey was sent to approximately 12,000 COPE members, as well as non-members and 299 responses were received (2.5% response rate). The 2015 COPE research among members, sent to just over 10,000 members with a 7% response rate, brings some context to the 2019 results, where relevant.

In this report we summarise particular issues from the 2019 research, bringing in reference to the arts, humanities, and social sciences research. We have used the feedback from our members to help develop our 2020-2023 strategic plan.

We have listened to our members and the wider community to develop our plans for 2020-2023. We intend to bring more resources and increase engagement and awareness of COPE across all disciplines and geographical areas, while continuing to listen to the community in the discussion of emerging issues. Consistent with your input and feedback, we are also moving forward with expanding membership to include universities.
Overall performance

COPE is viewed positively by the majority of those who responded to the survey.

- **83%** see COPE as a credible authority in publication ethics, 85% in the 2015 survey.
- **71%** regard COPE as a leading voice in publication ethics, 78% in 2015.
- **75%** feel COPE is a valuable resource in assisting with issues and case handling.
- **64%** view COPE as fair and objective in considering ethics issues.

COPE is perceived to be slightly less effective in being a leading voice in publication ethics and can be slow to take a leadership position in certain areas.

“Although the resources are excellent, as new issues emerge, COPE is not as quick to lead the conversation.”

**WORKING TOWARDS...**

- We are working on our processes and procedures to allow COPE to respond more quickly to external drivers.
- We will annually report back to our members on emerging trends in publication ethics.
COPE is highly recommended by respondents, and is used in conjunction with in-house expertise when dealing with particular issues.

91% would recommend COPE to peers and colleagues, 81% in 2015

95% rated range & usefulness of resources and services excellent or good, 89% in 2015

78% would turn to COPE for publication ethics issues, 85% in 2015

“I use COPE resources at least once a month. I can almost always find what I’m looking for. COPE seems to look broadly at the landscape of publication ethics so they are on top of things.”

WORKING TOWARDS...
- We will extend the range of our resources to meet the needs of all members, irrespective of discipline, and develop new resources.
Publication ethics issues are increasingly important to the majority of the respondents:

- 96% feel publication ethics is an increasingly important subject, 87% in 2015
- 89% feel that ethics issues are becoming increasingly complex, 87% in 2015
- 88% feel research ethics is an increasingly important subject in their field, 82% in 2015

**Issues of importance in publication ethics today (multiple choice):**

- 49% lack of education in publication ethics among authors/reviewers
- 45% lack of training and education in research ethics among authors/reviewers
- 42% assessing contribution and co-authorship claims (or just generally authorship issues)
- 38% increase in plagiarism
- 35% lack of peer reviewers

The five issues with most widespread importance in publication ethics are similar to those reported in 2015.
Trends in publication ethics

What other issues are important in publication ethics? (free text):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Publishing and publisher-related</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predatory journals</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author related</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citations and reviews</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

73 responses to this question on a wide variety of topics reflects the increasing complexity of the issues.
COPE research among arts, humanities and social sciences editors in 2019 showed the top 5 publishing ethics challenges faced by today’s journal editors to be:

- **64%** addressing language and writing quality while remaining inclusive
- **58%** detecting plagiarism and poor attribution standards
- **55%** recognising and dealing with bias in reviewer comments
- **54%** issues around how authors receive and respond to criticism
- **50%** self-plagiarism
**Trends in publication ethics**

**Important emerging concerns and issues (multiple choice):**

- **77%** growth in predatory journals
- **53%** alternate or redundant routes of publication (e.g., preprints)
- **38%** use of altmetrics and other forms of assessment
- **36%** data sharing
- **34%** social collaborative networks and other forms of sharing content
- **31%** PlanS

**WORKING TOWARDS...**

- We will increase and extend awareness of COPE across disciplines, sectors and geographical areas.
- We will work on increasing the range of guidance across disciplines, sectors and geographical areas.
- We will be more responsive to publication ethics issues as they arise.
Global ethical issues

The single most challenging global issue in publication ethics (multiple choice):

- 24% cultural and regional differences in publications and research ethics
- 21% lack of understanding about the publication ethics standards of international journals
- 19% lack of education in research ethics

As research productivity increases internationally, the cultural differences gain even more importance.

“There is still a significant difference in the level of understanding and application of research and publication ethics between regions and countries.”

WORKING TOWARDS...

- We are working on producing resources that will support and advise journal editors and publishers, and increase representation on COPE Council, from all regions with specific focus on China, South Asia and South America.
Educational resources

How important do respondents think it is for COPE to provide education about publication ethics via the following initiatives?

- **63%** educating reviewers and authors
- **62%** working with universities and faculty to include ethics in their curricula
- **60%** providing educational resources for students and researchers
- **59%** working with publishers and journals to include ethical issues in author guidelines

Which ONE of the following do respondents think would be the most effective format for providing education?

```
- Online eLearning courses: 29.1%
- Providing resources for students in universities: 14.2%
- Symposia or workshops (in person): 19.6%
- Webinars: 18.5%
- Printed resources: 7.0%
- Online discussion forums: 6.4%
- Podcasts: 3.7%
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“**COPE has been my “go to” place to discuss and learn about publication ethics. Nothing else in my graduate training or professional work prepared me for the challenges I have met as editor in chief.”**
Educational resources

How important is COPE’s role in collaborating with universities and institutions on publication ethics issues? 87% responded to this positively.

Which services would respondents like COPE to provide in future? (multiple choice, up to 3 options)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Number of Promoters</th>
<th>Number of Detractors</th>
<th>Number of Neutrals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education in publication ethics for universities and institutions</td>
<td>76.3%</td>
<td>39.5%</td>
<td>33.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More flowcharts to help with publication ethics decisions</td>
<td>31.4%</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
<td>25.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-person seminars and workshops</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online live-streaming seminars</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding more research into publication ethics</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accreditation for eLearning modules</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More translations into different languages</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social events and networking with other COPE members</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guidance on book publishing</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**KEY**

- Number of Promoters
- Number of Detractors
- Number of Neutrals

**Base = 294**

**Base = 299**

WORKING TOWARDS...

- We will develop educational resources that are used by universities.
- We will extend our range of resources to meet the needs of all members.
How respondents rate their experience of the following:

- **Attended a Seminar or Workshop**
  - Excellent: 11.6%
  - Very Good: 18.7%
  - Good: 5.0%
  - Fair: 1.9%
  - Poor: 1.2%
  - Not Applicable: 61.4%
  - **Base = 251**

- **eLearning**
  - Excellent: 0.1%
  - Very Good: 16.1%
  - Good: 0.3%
  - Fair: 3.5%
  - Poor: 0.4%
  - Not Applicable: 92.0%
  - **Base = 254**

- **Forum (to discuss cases)**
  - Excellent: 13%
  - Very Good: 21.1%
  - Good: 21.3%
  - Fair: 13%
  - Poor: 9.9%
  - Not Applicable: 40.8%
  - **Base = 261**

- **Newsletter**
  - Excellent: 13%
  - Very Good: 31.1%
  - Good: 6.6%
  - Fair: 21.5%
  - Poor: 0.7%
  - Not Applicable: 30.3%
  - **Base = 284**

- **Website**
  - Excellent: 1.4%
  - Very Good: 21.7%
  - Good: 5.9%
  - Fair: 5.9%
  - Poor: 29%
  - Not Applicable: 38.4%
  - **Base = 286**

**KEY**

- Excellent
- Very Good
- Fair
- Poor
- Good
- Not Applicable

**Total Base = 1336**
Following our 2015 research we undertook a website project to understand the needs and improve usability of the COPE website. In this survey 29% of respondents consider the website excellent, compared to 15% in 2015.

How do respondents use the COPE website?

For guidance on queries and cases: 67.4%
For guidelines and flow charts: 64.9%
To get information on ethics cases: 59.7%
For news and updates on publication ethics: 54.9%
To communicate with members: 3.1%
Other use/s: 2.4%

How useful do respondents find the COPE website?

Base = 277

“I think there is still a lot of room for improvement for the searchability and findability of the information on the website.”

WORKING TOWARDS...

• We have an ongoing programme of website development to continually improve usability and findability of resources.
COPE 2019 Member Research

Our 2015 research highlighted the need to increase relevance to under-represented groups and improve navigation. Digest was redesigned with better signposting and a focus on issues that matter most to our readers. 22% say the newsletter is excellent, compared to 16% in 2015.

Do respondents read the COPE Digest newsletter, if so, why?

- 88% read the newsletter
- 69% read it to keep up to date on publication ethics
- 61% read it to learn about ethics cases
- 44% read it to learn about COPE activities

How often would respondents like to receive COPE Digest?

- 22% monthly
- 67% continuous online updating
- 11% weekly

KEY

- Monthly
- Continuous online updating
- Weekly

Base = 258

WORKING TOWARDS...

- We continue to send out the COPE Digest newsletter monthly and highlight continuous online updating on social media and the website.
COPE strategic plan 2020-2023
https://publicationethics.org/strategicplan2020-2023