

ethical editing

Theme: Exploring the ethical landscape

Setting a course

Course: "A point on the compass, especially the one toward which a vehicle, such as a ship, is moving." *The Free Dictionary*
 "...a way of acting in or dealing with a particular situation." *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*

This past spring I finally made a trip I'd been dreaming of for several years. I took the train to Amsterdam and spent 3 hours meandering through Keukenhof, the world's largest flower garden. I wanted to see tulips—my favorite flower—and I did, in every conceivable color. Approximately 7 million of them.

What I discovered, however, as I strolled among the flower beds with throngs of other visitors, was that I was lacking a plan to help me navigate the sea of flowers. I was on my own, and more than a little overwhelmed.

Ethical problems can also be difficult to navigate, particularly for journal editors who don't have a lot of resources or support. That's where COPE can help. This issue's Feature—Navigating the COPE Website—is designed to help you find the many resources that COPE offers, as well as to introduce the website's new design.

Throughout this issue of Ethical Editing—in The Scoop from COPE, the Seminar Summary, and Peer to Peer—you'll notice an emphasis on collecting input from a variety of sources to determine the best approach to a problem. And COPE isn't the only organization that has realized the advantages of asking for direction, input, and advice.

The job of the COPE Council is to set a course for COPE. To do that, it needs input from COPE members. Which direction should we go? To help answer that question, we're creating an International Advisory Board. Turn to page 2 and read how you can help steer the boat.

Jeannie



I was lacking a plan to help me navigate the sea of flowers. I was on my own, and more than a little overwhelmed.



Meandering in Amsterdam

Inside this issue

2-3 The Scoop from COPE
 AGM business; UK peer review inquiry; plagiarism discussion paper; International Advisory Board; 1st Asia-Pacific seminar; retraction paper; flowchart translations

4-5 Seminar Summary
 Highlights of the presentations at the Spring UK Seminar

6-7 Feature: Navigating the COPE Website
 New look and features for the COPE website

8 Peer to Peer
 Charlotte Haug on the support her non-English journal receives from COPE

9 The Last Word(s)

Proposed changes approved at 2011 AGM

At a brief annual general meeting following the COPE UK seminar on March 18, 2011, members heard the Chair's and Treasurer's reports, voted in the new Treasurer, and approved the new membership rates and all proposed changes to the COPE Memorandum and Articles of Association.

New Treasurer

Council member Chris Graf, Editorial Director, Health Sciences, Wiley Blackwell, was officially elected Treasurer after serving as Acting Treasurer since December 2010. His term will last until March 2014.

New subscription rates

Members' subscription rates were changed, to take effect immediately. (For background see page 2 of the Spring 2011 newsletter.) COPE had been waiting for approval at the AGM to send out the 2011 invoices

for membership. The revised rates were approved by all but one of the members present, a publisher who felt that the new rates should not be implemented until 2012.

The new rates for individual journals are based on frequency of publication, with journals producing <12 issues per year to be charged £150 and journals producing ≥12 issues per year to be charged £500 annually. Company membership is based on the number of journals signed up. If fewer than 5 journals are signed up, the rates for individual journals apply. Rates for journals that publish continuously online will be based on the number of articles published per year. Associate membership for individuals costs £50 per year, and associate corporate membership for companies costs £150 per year. A complete list of rates is available as a PDF file on

the COPE website: <http://www.publicationethics.org/join-cope>.

Changes to the COPE Memorandum & Articles

The word "scientific" in the Memorandum & Articles was replaced by "scholarly" and/or "peer-reviewed", as appropriate, to better reflect COPE's membership.

The Treasurer's term was reduced from 5 years to 3 years, bringing it in line with the terms of the Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary.

Term limits and eligibility for re-election to Council were clarified for resigning officers.

The number of seats for general Council members was increased from 12 to 14, in addition to the seats held by the four officers. Voting for candidates to fill the two new seats will begin on June 27, 2011.

COPE seeking members for new International Advisory Board

How can COPE better represent our global members? A discussion at the Council's Strategy Day in December 2010 led to the decision to establish an International Advisory Board. COPE members appointed to the board by the Council would act as representatives of their countries or regions, giving input on ethical issues facing scholarly publishing, and would serve as a local point of contact. COPE hopes to appoint representatives of a variety of disciplines. Members interested in serving on the IAB should contact Natalie Ridgeway at cope_opsmanager@publicationethics.org. More details will follow on the COPE website.

Flowcharts in Italian and Spanish!

One of COPE's main resources is a set of 17 flowcharts providing advice on how to deal with ethical problems. Translations into a variety of languages are planned to help readers who aren't proficient in English. Italian and Spanish versions are now available and can be downloaded from the COPE website: www.publicationethics.org/resources/flowcharts.

COPE's first Asia-Pacific seminar November 14, 2011

Planning is under way for COPE's first Asia-Pacific seminar, to be held in Melbourne, Australia, on November 14, 2011. The title of the seminar is "*Publication ethics at four points around the journal editing compass.*" The one-day event will feature four speakers:

From the physical sciences, Richard O'Hair, an editor at the *Journal of the American Society for Mass Spectrometry*, who is interested in duplicate/salami publication and fostering quality in peer review

From the life sciences, David Vaux of the Walter and Elizabeth Hall Institute, who is an advocate of double-blind peer review and a specialist at spotting image manipulation

From the social sciences, Alfred Allan, who teaches ethical issues in psychology at the Edith Cowan University and does research on ethics in professional practice

From the health sciences, Neville Gibbs, Editor of *Anaesthesia and Intensive Care*, an expert in dealing with the impact of medical research fraud on journals

More details will be available in the future on the COPE website (www.publicationethics.org/seminar/asia2011) and in the Fall issue of *Ethical Editing*. Mark your calendars now!

UK peer review inquiry

On January 27, 2011, the United Kingdom House of Commons Science and Technology Committee announced an inquiry into the peer review system and asked for comment from “scientists whose material has been peer reviewed, those who commission peer reviews and those who carry out peer review” (see <http://tinyurl.com/6kxq3fa>). The parliamentary Committee was interested in:

- the strengths and weaknesses of peer review as a quality control mechanism for scientists, publishers and the public;
- measures to strengthen peer review;
- the value and use of peer reviewed science on advancing and testing scientific knowledge;
- the value and use of peer reviewed science in informing public debate;
- the extent to which peer review varies between scientific disciplines and between countries across the world;
- the processes by which reviewers with the requisite skills and knowledge are identified, in particular as the volume of multi-disciplinary research increases;



Liz Wager (center) testifying before the United Kingdom House of Commons Science and Technology Committee. Photo reproduced with the permission of the UK Parliament, copyright 2011

- the impact of IT and greater use of online resources on the peer review process; and
- possible alternatives to peer review.

Ninety-three individuals and organizations submitted comments by the March 10 deadline. A comment submitted on behalf of COPE by COPE Chair Liz Wager can be viewed at www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmselect/cmsctech/writev/856/contents.htm (see Comment 34).

Liz testified on behalf of COPE before the Committee on May 11, 2011. To watch the testimony go to: www.parliamentlive.tv/Main/Player.aspx?meetingId=8362&wfs=true

Retraction paper published

The results of a study supported by a COPE research grant awarded to Liz Wager (now COPE Chair) and Peter Williams in December 2007 were published online on April 12, 2011, in the *Journal of Medical Ethics*: http://jme.bmj.com/content/early/2011/04/12/jme.2010.040964.short?q=w_jme_ah. In the article “Why and how do journals retract articles? An analysis of Medline retractions 1988-2008,” the authors reported that there has been a sharp increase in Medline retractions since 1980, but journals’ retraction practices are not uniform. According to the publication: “Retractions were issued by authors (63%), editors (21%), journals (6%), publishers (2%) and institutions (1%). Reasons for retraction included honest error or non-replicable findings (40%), research misconduct (28%), redundant publication (17%) and unstated/ unclear (5%).”

Plagiarism discussion paper

“Should we attempt to define different types of plagiarism? If so, is the distinction between major and minor plagiarism useful or do we need more categories? What types of plagiarism should prompt journals to inform authors’ institutions? What other sanctions should journals impose on authors for plagiarism? How should journals handle cases of the various forms of plagiarism in submitted and published work?”

These five questions, and an overview of the plagiarism problem, form the basis of COPE’s first discussion paper—“How should editors respond to plagiarism?”—posted on the website (www.publicationethics.org/resources/discussion-documents) in May 2011. “We want to encourage comments from both COPE members and non-members (e.g., authors/researchers as well as editors),” writes COPE Chair Liz Wager on the first page of the document. COPE members are encouraged to help promote this discussion by publicizing the paper.

This is the first time COPE has issued a discussion paper. “It’s not guidelines—it doesn’t tell you what to do,” says Wager. “It poses questions rather than answering them. Our ultimate goal is to get people talking and see if there is agreement on any of the proposals. After we’ve gathered lots of views, we might then either revise our flowcharts or develop guidelines.”

Comments should be sent by email to cope_opsmanager@publicationethics.org and should include name, affiliation, country, and email address.

Fabrication, falsification, and authorship featured at March 2011 UK seminar

The 2011 COPE UK Seminar, held March 18 in London, featured one panel, two themes, three speakers, five cases, and a record 97 registered attendees who discussed the ethics of publishing in a variety of formats.

Ana Marusic, Editor of the *Croatian Medical Journal*, was the first speaker on the topic Authorship. In a talk titled “Systematic review of authorship research across research disciplines” she presented the results of a study carried out with funds received through a COPE grant in 2009.

The study evaluated 123 articles about authorship published in 2010 and earlier, and identified four themes: 1) how we define, perceive and practice authorship, 2) the order of authors in bylines, 3) what constitutes ethical and unethical authorship practices, and 4) power issues in authorship.

“Authorship is the currency of academic life, but we really don’t know much about it,” said Marusic. Practice has changed from 1665, when it was traditional for a paper to

have a single author, to 2010, when a paper in *Physical Review Letters* had 2080 authors. Conception and design of research and writing of the manuscript were identified as the most important contributions “across sciences, geographical regions and time.”

In some disciplines, such as economics, alphabetical listing of authors in bylines is the norm, Marusic said. In biomedical journals the first and last authors are considered the most important, and there is a trend toward giving equal credit to two first authors. A 2000 article in a psychology journal stated that all authors contributed equally.

Among practices considered unethical are including authors who don’t meet the criteria for authorship and denying authorship to those who deserve it. Both were found to be common practice, and “Ethics training did not affect the willingness of students to give undeserved authorship,” Marusic said.

Fairly assigning credit to students, particularly for their theses, was

an issue in psychology, nursing, multidisciplinary areas, accounting, social work, ecology, agriculture, and education research.

Marusic and coworkers also searched the authors’ guidelines of a sample of journals looking for statements on criteria for authorship. They found statements in 53% of the 110 journals evaluated from the Science Citation Index, 32% of the 75 journals selected from the Social Sciences Citation Index, but only 6% of 260 journals selected from the Arts & Humanities Citation Index. There was no authorship statement in 86% of 557 codes of ethics from professional societies, corporations, government and academia identified by the Center for the Study of Ethics in the Professions (<http://ethics.iit.edu/codes>).

“As editors we discuss ethics a lot, but I’m not sure we really have the power to change things,” said Marusic. “Even if you teach authorship in ethics classes, it doesn’t influence practice.”



Panel session COPE Council members André van Steirteghem, Editor-in-Chief of *Human Reproduction*, and Craig Phelan, Editor of *Labor History*, joined the three speakers in answering questions from the audience. Pictured l–r: van Steirteghem, Phelan, Lance Small, Daniele Fanelli and Ana Marusic.

SEMINAR SUMMARY

Lance Small, Editor of *Communications in Algebra* and a member of COPE Council, gave a presentation titled “Who shall judge? Authorship, attribution and accountability,” which highlighted many of the differences between disciplines.

Issues in mathematics are different from those in bioethics and even physics, he said. “Data fabrication in mathematics literally doesn’t exist”—proofs either work or they don’t. PhD students are generally the sole authors of their theses—advisors are not co-authors. And authors are listed alphabetically in mathematics papers. Not doing so is considered to be either making a statement or unethical. As a result, “I always look for co-authors whose names are alphabetically after mine,” Small joked.

Who should be credited for an idea is also not always clear. It can be “very hard to assess because who did it first may be back in pre-history,” Small said.

In math and physics there is increasingly discussion of a paper’s contents before the paper ever reaches print. “We have an evolving way of looking at papers.” There is also a trend toward posting non-reviewed research on mathematicians’ personal websites or on nontraditional sites such as Cornell University’s arXiv (<http://arxiv.org/archive/math>). Frequently there are errors in posted items, Small said. He related an anecdote about a scientist at Hewlett-Packard who posted a paper on a very important question in theoretical computer science on his website. “Within hours, all sorts of people set up blogs responding.” Unfortunately, the paper “turned out to be wrong. There was a gap in the proof.”

Speaker Daniele Fanelli from the Institute of Science, Technology and Innovation in Edinburgh addressed the day’s second topic—Fabrication/

Considering cases After lunch, attendees broke into small groups to read and discuss cases on five topics: Authors as criminals, Suspected systematic data fabrication, Author trap/fabrication detection, Authorship order dispute, and A Case of gift authorship? Following individual discussions each group presented one case and the group’s recommendations to the plenum.



falsification of data—in a talk titled “The bulk of the iceberg, and what journals can do about it.”

A small number of cases of scientific fraud receive a disproportionate amount of attention, both from the public and from academics interested in research integrity, according to Fanelli. Yet evidence suggests that only a small proportion of cases of scientific misconduct are actually discovered and addressed. Bias, in its various forms (only a minority of which are recognized as clear-cut data falsification), may represent an even greater problem, and is virtually impossible to detect without a whistleblower. Even when data falsification is clear, it is hard to prove that it was intentional, says Fanelli. Yet, the distortion that this “bulk” exerts on the literature is great.

Fanelli’s talk gave an overview of existing evidence based on his and other scientists’ research. In 2009, Fanelli published a meta analysis of papers surveying scientists about their practice or knowledge of research misconduct. He found that whereas only 2% of scientists admitted they had fabricated or falsified data themselves, 14% reported that they knew of a colleague who had done so, and up to a third

admitted to questionable behaviors. Only half of people who were aware of fabrication reported it.

Fanelli showed several patterns which suggest that bias is more generalized and complex than commonly thought. He presented his own published and unpublished data suggesting that this bias is increasing, in part due to growing competition among researchers to publish in high-ranking journals.

It is well known that negative results tend not to be published. Fanelli suggested several ways that journal editors can address the problem of publication bias:

- Increase space available for articles (e.g., through electronic publishing)
- Change the criteria for selection of papers
- Use peer review to assess only the research question and methods
- Create a section of your journal devoted to negative results
- Create an archive of short papers reporting negative results

Heard in passing

“I’m from the life sciences. I didn’t even realize that mathematics does things differently.”

New look and features for the COPE website

The redesigned COPE website (www.publicationethics.org) was launched on April 21, 2011. Some of the changes and new functions are highlighted below and pictured on page 7.

HOMEPAGE (see following page)

The header at the top of the homepage contains COPE's logo, a Search field, a Sign in button for members, and tabs for easy access to the primary resources of the site. Signing in is necessary to submit a case, to use the journal audit, and to access the e-learning course, which will soon be available.

COPE's new strapline—"Promoting integrity in research publication"—appears below the header, along with a short description of what COPE is and does.

Boxes with colored icons highlight COPE's most widely used resources: the flowcharts, the guidelines, the COPE research grant, and COPE's codes of conduct (including the new code for publishers and the Code of Conduct and Best Practice Guidelines for Journal Editors). On the Resources page itself are links to other resources, including the COPE newsletter and presentations from previous COPE seminars.

Below the resources is a section for News & Opinion. The type of item—

news or opinion—precedes the title of the item (note that the screen shot on the following page contains only news items). Opinion items replace the previous Publication Ethics Blog, and their contributors are identified.

A rotating selection of logos of COPE members follows in a ribbon ending with a button to Learn more about COPE membership. The Members page can also be accessed from here.

The Cases submitted most recently to the COPE Forum appear below with hyperlinks. Click on "Recent Cases" and you'll be directed to the Cases page, which includes an archive of more than 400 cases submitted since 1997. The database can be searched by key word and year. Members who have logged in can submit a case here.

Selected cases are also available in audio form as downloadable podcasts, available directly from their pages.

Upcoming Events of interest to COPE members can be accessed in the events section or from the header at the top of the page.

The COPE Guide lists website resources which might be of particular interest to journal editors, publishers, authors and journalists. The editor's section contains the "Short Guide to Ethical Editing for New Editors," released in April 2011.

Ethical Editing, COPE's quarterly newsletter, is now featured prominently in the bottom right corner of the homepage. A hyperlink can be followed to access previous editions, and non-members can subscribe to the newsletter by entering their e-mail address.

COPE's growing presence in the social media (Facebook and Twitter) can be followed at the very bottom of the page.

ABOUT COPE

Click on this tab in the header and you'll find biographies of Council members and staff, a history of the organization, COPE's articles of association and regulations (as PDFs), guides to the website for editors, publishers, authors, and journalists, and an archive of annual reports.



MEMBERS

The Members page (partially pictured at left), which is still being improved, has several new features, including the ability to search by country and publisher in addition to alphabetically by journal name. Journals are listed with their editor, publisher, and website if available.

How a Norwegian journal has benefitted from COPE membership

An interview with editor and Council member Charlotte Haug

Tidsskrift for Den norske legeforening (The Journal of the Norwegian Medical Association) has been a member of COPE since COPE was founded in 1997. Here, COPE Council member Charlotte Haug, Editor-in-Chief of the journal since 2002, describes what belonging to COPE has meant to her and to her journal.

What is your journal's language?

We publish in Norwegian, with abstracts in English and the possibility to translate entire articles and publish them in English along with the Norwegian article. See <http://tidsskriftet.no/english>

You once described your journal as having a monopoly. Can you explain?

Our journal is the only peer-reviewed general medical journal in Norway. Almost all doctors get it, in addition to libraries, health authorities, etc. We have a circulation of almost 27,000 and publish every other week. Since we publish in Norwegian, we're not included in the impact factor system of Thompson-Reuters (they only include English-language journals), but the articles we publish have a lot of impact on medical practice and health policy here in Norway. If we reject an article, it's often not so easy to get it published elsewhere. So we have to have procedures in place to be sure we accept and reject the right articles. We currently reject about 67% of the original contributions and about 50% of the review articles.

How did you get involved in COPE?

My predecessor in the job as Editor-in-Chief, Magne Nylenna, strongly recommended that I attend the annual meetings and Forums. I started coming right away, and have

missed very few over these 9 years. In the beginning I mostly listened to the amazing cases presented and the discussions that followed.

What have you learned from the Forums?

A lot. The most important thing is the experience you get from discussing real cases with other editors. Decisions are rarely clear-cut. You learn that taking a little extra time and being careful before you jump to a seemingly obvious conclusion saves you a lot of time and problems.

It should be simple, given that all involved (authors, peer reviewers) are supposedly honest, well educated, and have the patients' best interests as their first priority. But it's not. Hearing about and discussing all the incredible things editors experienced was a "crash course" that made me much better prepared when I experienced similar problems at my own journal.

Do you use COPE materials in running your journal?

Absolutely. The flowcharts are very helpful in teaching new editors. The audit was also very useful. You think you have everything in order, but discover that there's always room for improvement!

You've been a COPE Council member since 2005. Has being on the Council changed your view of COPE?

What has changed most over these years is COPE itself, from a small, informal group of editors discussing cases and giving each other advice to a big, professional organization.

The language of COPE and its meetings is English. What is it like



Erlend Hem and Charlotte Haug

for you, communicating in a foreign language?

I would prefer being able to communicate in my native language, of course, especially since most of the people around the table speak their native language. There are so many nuances you feel unable to express when you speak a foreign language. You end up using very simple language, which is quite frustrating because using the right words is so much what editing and discussing difficult ethical questions is about. I sometimes say—half jokingly, half seriously—that I lose 10% of my IQ when I speak in English, and 20% when I write.

Your term on the Council ends in 2012. How will your leaving the Council affect your journal's relationship to COPE?

We will definitely still be a member, but I'll probably only be present at the meetings when we have cases to present, and since we've only presented two cases over the last 9 years, that will be a big change. My deputy editor, Erlend Hem, will go to the Forum meetings starting this June. If he finds it interesting, or even would want to run for a seat on Council, I would definitely support that—even if it is quite expensive for the journal.

Datebook

June 10, 2011—Closing date for COPE member applications for open Council positions

June 27, 2011—Voting begins for candidates for COPE Council

October 31, 2011—COPE North American Forum, University of California, San Diego, La Jolla, California, USA

November 1, 2011— COPE North American Seminar, University of California, San Diego, La Jolla, California, USA

November 14, 2011—1st COPE Asia-Pacific Seminar, Wiley-Blackwell Building, Melbourne, Australia

Spreading the word

COPE Council member Randell Stephenson gave a presentation about COPE at the “Eurodoc Annual Conference and General Meeting 2011” held in Vilnius, Lithuania, March 31 to April 4, 2011

COPE Chair Liz Wager gave a talk on “How journal editors can detect and deter misconduct” at the annual meeting of the Council of Science Editors (CSE), held in Baltimore, Maryland, USA, from April 29 to May 3, 2011

COPE Council member Geri Pearson is presenting at the 8th annual meeting of the International Association of Veterinary Editors, to be held in St. Louis, Missouri, USA, on July 20, 2011

COPE Council member Irene Hames is presenting at the EADI-DSA 2011 Conference, to be held in York, UK, September 19-22, 2011



Last laugh

by Annemarie Glaser



On course with COPE

Words from the wise

“You have your way. I have my way. As for the right way, the correct way, and the only way, it does not exist.”

Friedrich Nietzsche, 1844–1900

“If you don't know where you are going, any road will get you there.”

Lewis Carroll, 1832–1898

“I find the great thing in this world is not so much where we stand, as in what direction we are moving....”

Oliver Wendell Holmes, 1809–1894

Worth a 1000 words

Point of view. One of the features of the Keukenhof Gardens is a maze constructed out of towering hedges. Unsuspecting visitors who amble into the maze find it entertaining at first, but become progressively more disconcerted as they begin to realize that they can't find the way out. An elevated viewing point located in the middle of the maze offers a respite—and a new perspective. Likewise, seemingly unsolvable ethical problems can also benefit from a new point of view.