

ethical editing

Theme: The Editor-Publisher Partnership

Right in the middle

The Ancient Egyptians believed that the pharaoh was a bridge between the human and divine realms. It was the pharaoh's responsibility to maintain justice and harmony in human society and order in the universe.

On a (much) smaller scale, publishers also maintain justice and order on behalf of their journals. The Editor-Publisher Partnership is the theme of the Spring 2011 issue of Ethical Editing, and in the Feature, "Working together to address ethical issues" (page 5), seven publishers describe what they do for their editors. "Publishers should be available to provide guidance and advice and ensure the editor feels fully supported throughout the process," says publisher Niki Haunch of Emerald Group Publishing.

Publishers are also go-betweens, transferring knowledge to their editors from organizations like COPE. "Publishers sit in a unique place: right in the middle," says publisher and COPE Council member Chris Graf in this month's Peer to Peer essay on the role of publishers (page 8).

COPE, meanwhile, has been busy supporting both publishers and editors, among other things by revising the Code of Conduct for editors (page 2), producing a "Short guide to ethical editing for new editors" (page 3), awarding a grant for a project to develop guidance for users of the CrossCheck anti-plagiarism software (page 3), providing advice in a case involving a difference of opinion between a publisher and an editor (page 6), and developing a Code of Conduct for publishers (page 7).

Page 6 also features an item about a journal that is succeeding without any involvement from a publisher. The question is what the editors will do if (when) they're confronted by ethical issues. As COPE members are discovering, and this issue's cartoon illustrates, it's kind of nice to have someone to turn to for support.

Jeannie



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Editor Jeannie Wurz in Egypt

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Revised COPE Code of Conduct for editors

Now that COPE has over 6000 members, editing journals on topics ranging from accounting to zoomorphology via feminist politics and theater, the Council thought it was time to review the COPE Code of Conduct (introduced in 2003) and Best Practice guidelines (produced in 2007).

Despite COPE's rapid growth beyond the world of science publishing, we find that journal editors, whatever their discipline, face similar ethical issues. We also believe that standards of ethical editing and good practice are applicable to all areas.

However, we were concerned that the COPE documents should be as relevant as possible to all our members and, in particular, refer to a wide range of other sources and guidelines, not just medical ones. Experience at the World Conference on Research Integrity (see the Autumn 2010

issue of Ethical Editing, page 3) also showed us the importance of using language that was acceptable (and made sense) across different academic areas, as well as separating the topics that only applied to medical journals, such as issues around patient consent.

We therefore appealed to members to comment on the Code and Best Practice guidelines, specifically targeting editors working in fields that were new to COPE, such as earth sciences, mathematics and law. A revised version with input from more than 50 members has been approved by Council and will be available on the COPE website in the near future.

You'll notice a couple of formatting changes. We've combined the Code of Conduct for Editors with the Best Practice guidelines to avoid repetition and make a more coherent document. (They were

actually originally written in this way, but we later decided to issue them as separate documents.) And the clauses of the Code, which we expect all members to follow, are numbered, whereas the optional Best Practice items are marked with bullet points. We hope this will help us when we consider complaints against members, since complainants will be able to state which clause they believe has not been followed.

We'd like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the work of the many people who have contributed to the various versions over the years. We hope the Code and Best Practice will continue to be useful to members, and we'll continue to review the document periodically.

Issues for approval at AGM

Members will be asked to approve several proposed changes to the COPE Memorandum & Articles at the Annual General Meeting on March 18. Among them:

1. Reducing the Treasurer's term to 3 years from 5 years (bringing it into line with the other officers)
2. Increasing the number of council members (not including officers) from 12 to 14.
3. Simplifying the membership rates for individual journals into two bands, for journals that publish fewer than 12 issues a year and those that publish 12 or more issues a year. This will actually mean lower subscriptions for many journals, especially those that publish less frequently. Overall, we predict the changes will mean a slight reduction in our income from subscriptions.

The Council hopes that the new rate structure will be considered more fair and attractive and will encourage new members to join. COPE will continue to consider waivers or reductions for journals that are unable to pay the membership fee.



Annual UK seminar March 18, 2011

On Friday, March 18, 2011, COPE members will converge on Woburn House in London for the annual COPE seminar, this year featuring two themes: "Authorship" and "Fabrication/Falsification of data overview." The first theme will be addressed by two speakers: Ana Marusic, Editor of the Croatian Medical Journal and the recipient of a 2009 COPE grant, will present "A systematic review of authorship research across research disciplines," and COPE Council member Lance Small, Editor of Communications in Algebra, will present "'Who shall judge': authorship, attribution and accountability." The second theme will be addressed by Daniele Fanelli of the Institute for the Study of Science, Technology and Innovation in Edinburgh, who will present "The bulk of the iceberg, and what journals can do about it." As in the past, the afternoon will include small-group discussions of past COPE cases and a panel discussion of the meeting's themes. The meeting will conclude with COPE business at the Annual General Meeting. For details of the seminar see the COPE website: <http://publicationethics.org>.



Y. H. (Helen) Zhang (right) and her research group (above)



COPE grant awarded for first time to recipients from China

COPE's December 2010 research grant was awarded to Yuehong (Helen) Zhang and Xiaoyan Jia of Zhejiang University in Hangzhou, China, for the project "CrossCheck Guidance: An Analysis of Typical Cases of Plagiarism in Different Disciplines."

Zhang, who is Journal Director in the Journals Department of Zhejiang University Press, and Jia, who is Editor of JZUS-A/B/C, the Journal of Zhejiang University-SCIENCE A/B/C (Applied Physics & Engineering, Biomedicine & Biotechnology, Computers & Electronics), with their editorial group, have already used the CrossCheck plagiarism detection software to identify potential cases of plagiarism in more than 2000 manuscripts submitted to their multidisciplinary journals in the past year. Zhang reported in *Nature* that 692 of 2,233 submissions contained unoriginal material (Zhang Y. *Nature* 2010;467:153).

With the COPE grant, Zhang and her group will select 3–5 representative cases of plagiarism in each discipline, make a detailed characterization of plagiarism in these typical cases, and provide suggestions for dealing with similar

cases of plagiarism based on input from other CrossCheck users.

They plan to compile a handbook listing typical cases for CrossCheck users and authors worldwide. With this handbook, editors "can learn how to deal with different kinds of plagiarism in different disciplines when using CrossCheck" and authors "can learn more about plagiarism and CrossCheck, and how to avoid being accused of plagiarism."

COPE considers applications for grants twice a year, in June and December. The grants of up to £5000 are awarded to COPE members for a research project in publication ethics (see www.publicationethics.org/research). The first grant was awarded in 2008, and one of the first year's grant recipients, Ana Marusic, will report on her research at the March 2011 COPE UK seminar (see page 2). 2010 marks the first time that the grant recipients are from China.

Zhang reported in *Nature* that 692 of 2,233 submissions contained unoriginal material

A short guide to ethical editing for new editors

Becoming an editor of a journal is an exciting but daunting task, especially if you're working alone without day-to-day contact with editorial colleagues.

COPE Council member Margaret Rees, editor of *Maturitas*, has developed "A short guide to ethical editing for new editors," which aims to summarize key issues and to provide links to relevant pages of the COPE web site, as well as those of other organizations.

The areas covered are:

- Initial assessment of journal when you take over
- Relations with the outgoing editor
- Relations with the other editors/editorial board
- Relations with authors
- Transparency
- The submission system
- Relationship with reviewers
- The peer-review process
- Can editors publish in their own journal?
- Editorial independence/relation with publisher/journal owner
- Commercial issues (e.g., advertising, commercial supplements, tendering process)
- Responding to possible misconduct/inappropriate behavior
- Dealing with complaints

The guide will be available on COPE's website (www.publicationethics.org). Its content will be reviewed 6 monthly. Comments are welcome and should be sent to the COPE Operations Manager at <http://publicationethics.org/contact-us>.

First Brazilian meeting on Research Integrity, Science and Publication Ethics

by *Liz Wager*

Just as the UK was starting one of the coldest and snowiest winters for 20 years, I was lucky enough to spend 10 days in Brazil in December 2010 to take part in a series of meetings on research integrity and publication ethics. The initiative was led by Dr. Sonia Vasconcelos from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, and hosted by a number of academic institutes in Rio, São Paulo and São José dos Campos involved with medical, engineering, physics, and climate research. Science research in Brazil is expanding rapidly, and it is encouraging that research integrity is being discussed, even though most of the senior academics I met don't feel that there are any major problems—at least not yet.

So this wasn't a meeting convened in the wake of a national scandal, but a laudable effort to raise awareness at all levels. Attendance was a bit lower than the organizers had hoped for, but the feedback was very positive, encouraging them to hope that more people might turn up in the future, having heard that these meetings were interesting. Those that did attend were enthusiastic and keen to participate.

Each all-day session included talks given by local academics and representatives of the federal science funding programmes on various aspects of research integrity. I gave talks on current ethical demands on authors, reviewers, and editors, using the opportunity to explain the work of COPE and present our guidelines on retractions. Dr. Nicholas Steneck, a consultant with the US Office of Research Integrity, talked about the US experience, emphasizing

the important role of institutions, explaining the complicated systems by which various types of research are governed, and, refreshingly, making it clear that the US system is far from perfect. Dr. Miguel Roig from St John's University, New York, added lively contributions on plagiarism and how to avoid it.

All the talks provoked robust discussion, and I was impressed by the insightful, and sometimes challenging, comments from the young scientists.

Chatting in the breaks, we heard familiar stories of problems with authorship, the difficulties of getting published in international journals, and the writing challenges faced by non-native English speakers. I was delighted to meet a COPE member (currently only four Brazilian journals are



COPE Chair Liz Wager in Brazil

signed up, but I hope I may have persuaded a few more to do so) and also to hear from another editor (not yet a member) that he uses the COPE flowcharts. I hope that one outcome of these meetings may be to secure a Portuguese translation of the flowcharts and perhaps other COPE documents. For those of you who can read Portuguese, further details of the meetings are available at <http://www.planeta.coppe.ufrj.br/artigo.php?artigo=1282>.

Plagiarism discussion paper

In acknowledgment of the wave of plagiarism cases reported recently (see page 6 of the Winter 2010 issue of Ethical Editing) and developments in anti-plagiarism software, which may cause a rise in the number of cases detected by editors, a COPE Council subcommittee has been formed to draft a discussion paper on the various types of plagiarism and how editors might respond to them.

Unlike COPE's flowcharts and guidelines, this document will cover all the options, and aims to promote discussion rather than instruct editors on what to do. The paper is expected to be discussed by the full Council before being released publicly.

New COPE slogan

COPE's website features a new strapline. The previous slogan, "Helping journals get their houses in order," has been replaced by "Promoting integrity in research publication". Thanks to all members who submitted suggestions online.

COPE Wikipedia page

In addition to having a presence on Facebook and Twitter (see Ethical Editing Autumn 2010, page 2), the Committee on Publication Ethics has a Wikipedia page. For a brief description of the organization visit http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Committee_on_Publication_Ethics.

Working together to address ethical issues

In February 2011, COPE met with 16 journal publishers to present what COPE has been doing in the past year and to ask what the publishers would like COPE to do for them in the future. Publishers shared their views of the editor-publisher relationship and commented on the new COPE Code of Conduct for Journal Publishers (see page 7).

As a publisher, do you provide any specific assistance or support for your editors, either before or after they are confronted with ethical issues?

Phil Daly, Wolters-Kluwer

Yes, although there is nothing like real experience to focus the attention of the editor and publisher. We provide advice or can talk through a course of action. On rare occasions where an allegation may involve legal representation, I am most likely to suggest the publisher takes on the correspondence.

Cathy Kennedy, Oxford University Press

We encourage them to read up on the COPE materials in advance, and provide advice (usually starting off with COPE recommendations) and, if necessary, help with researching precedents, addresses, and so forth.

Dan Huke, SAGE Publications

We request that any ethical issues are forwarded to us as soon as editors become aware of them. Our rights team then works with the publishing editor to suggest a course of action (and frequently, wording of letters, etc.) for the editor to carry out.

Colin Bulpitt, Taylor & Francis

We provide documentation, building on the flowcharts from COPE, which are sent to editors when they start or when the charts are updated. We give advice whenever requested, often following specific discussion with COPE. We also provide presentations and workshops at our annual regional round table meetings with editors.

How does a publisher's role differ from an editor's in addressing ethical problems?

Niki Haunch, Emerald Group Publishing

Editors should take an equal interest in helping to resolve ethical publication issues. We always try to be very supportive of our editors and can often end up taking on the management of ethical issues ourselves. COPE appears to expect that this is primarily the editor's responsibility and that the publisher's role is to help support the editor, rather than take on direct management of such issues. In practice, I believe publishers take a much more "hands on" approach.

Elin Reeves, European Respiratory Society

As a society publisher, I see the roles as not differing too much, although the publisher should take a broader, overall viewpoint in protecting their journal's intellectual property, reputation etc. The editor is the expert in his/her field and can provide informed decisions on specific cases based on that field and research that has already taken place.

Dan Huke, SAGE Publications

We (the publisher) see dealing with ethical issues as primarily our responsibility, rather than the editor's, although the editor will often be the one to communicate with the author and other parties, especially if they were the first to become aware of the problem.

Jenny Hudson, BMJ Journals

We act as support and back-up with use of our direct link with COPE and the resources COPE provides. We run programs such as CrossCheck if plagiarism is suspected and for all papers that have been accepted.

What defines a good editor-publisher collaboration in publication ethics?

Phil Daly, Wolters-Kluwer

Editors and publishers should be mutually supportive and knowledgeable about publication ethics. They should have the same aims in maintaining publication ethics standards. New editors or those who are dealing with an ethical issue for the first time should be able to have the resource of advice from the publisher.

Elin Reeves, European Respiratory Society

Key to good editor-publisher collaboration is frequent communication, ensuring there is feedback in each stage of an investigation, and discussion of the best way to proceed.

What can COPE do for publishers?

Provide training sessions for publishers and publishing staff

Do more presentations at editor meetings organized by publishers

Supply a COPE leaflet for publishers' stands at international conferences

Investigate the possibility of setting up a LinkedIn group

Encourage other editors at member journals (associate, deputy, managing, etc.) to join the COPE mailing list

The eLearning course could form part of an introductory pack for new editors, along with a copy of the COPE Code of Conduct and other guidelines (audit, flowcharts, retraction, etc.)

Author non-disclosure by Editor-in-Chief: COPE case 10-10

Although most of the cases considered by the COPE Forum are brought by member editors, occasionally publishers seek advice. Case number 10-10 features a complaint brought against a journal Editor-in-Chief. The publisher and editor could not come to an agreement, and the publisher submitted the case to COPE.

The case involves a published editorial written by the Editor-in-Chief. A reader, who requested anonymity, wrote a letter to the publisher alleging that 1) the editorial contained numerous inaccuracies and unsubstantiated accusations and 2) an individual (Dr X) involved with the organization that the editorial mentioned had influenced the writing and appearance of the content without Dr X's name being disclosed.

When questioned by the publisher, the Editor-in-Chief stated that Dr X had originally been asked to co-author the editorial, but had declined, and afterwards had reviewed the editorial and provided language help. The editor denied that there was an undisclosed conflict of interest and requested that the person making the allegations bring the matter into the open and submit a Letter to the Editor. He refused to publicly

disclose that Dr X had participated in preparation of the editorial.

The publisher felt that the editor was confusing his roles as author and editor, and said that another editor should have been asked to make the decision about whether the editorial was suitable for publication. As the author of the article, the editor was required to disclose the involvement of Dr X, who helped him to write it.

The publisher obtained an evaluation of the content of the article from three independent experts. One reviewer supported publication of the editorial, whereas the other two opposed publication.

In submitting the case to COPE, the publisher stated: "It is not acceptable to us as owner and publisher of the journal to have published an editorial authored by the Editor-in-Chief who has subsequently admitted to us in writing that there was a further

individual involved in the writing and preparation of the editorial whose name has not been disclosed to the readers of the journal."

Members of the Forum thought the publisher should urge the complainant to submit a Letter to the Editor to bring the issue into the public domain, but that in any case the Editor-in-Chief should disclose his conflict in the journal. Appointing an independent advisor or adjudicator to conduct a semi-formal investigation was another option suggested.

"Ultimately, however," agreed the Forum members, "the editor is answerable to the publisher and the publisher must decide whether disciplinary action is required."

The case has not yet been resolved. For details see: <http://publicationethics.org/case/author-nondisclosure-editor-chief>



Attendees at a recent Forum

Journal successful without publisher

Writing in the January 30, 2011, issue of *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, author Jennifer Howard reports on "a well-regarded, researcher-run journal with the tiniest of budgets and no help from a publisher." *Herpetological Conservation and Biology*, founded in 2006, is a peer-reviewed, online-only, open-access journal run by seven main editors with a budget of around \$100 per year.

Graduate students and junior

researchers serve as copy editors and assistant editors. The manuscript tracking system and website were created by the editors.

The website (www.herpconbio.org) received 42,288 visitors from more than 160 countries in 2010, and the journal will be included in Journal Citation Reports, a well-known service calculating impact factors for journals, in 2012 or 2013. "What HCB's editors have

come up with strikes me as an attractive, flexible, inclusive model, one that could be transplanted to many fields in the humanities as well as in the sciences," writes Howard.

"The trick, it seems, is finding the right hard-working group of scholar-editors to run it." The entire article is available by subscription at <http://chronicle.com/article/Hot-Type-Scholars-Create/126090/>.

COPE Code of Conduct for Journal Publishers

Publishers who are Committee on Publication Ethics members and who support COPE membership for journal editors should:

- Follow this code, and encourage the editors they work with to follow the COPE Code of Conduct for Journal Editors (see www.publicationethics.org)
- Ensure that the editors and journals they work with are aware of what their membership of COPE provides and entails
- Provide reasonable practical support to editors so that they can follow the COPE Code of Conduct for Journal Editors

Publishers should:

- Define the relationship between publisher, editor and other parties in a contract
- Respect privacy (for example, for research participants, for authors, for peer reviewers)
- Protect intellectual property and copyright
- Foster editorial independence

Publishers should work with journal editors to:

- Set journal policies appropriately and aim to meet those policies, particularly with respect to:
 - Editorial independence
 - Research ethics, including confidentiality, consent, and the special requirements for human and animal research
 - Authorship
 - Transparency and integrity (for example, conflicts of interest, research funding, reporting standards)
 - Peer review and the role of the editorial team beyond that of the journal editor
 - Appeals and complaints
- Communicate journal policies (for example, to authors, readers, peer reviewers)
- Review journal policies periodically, particularly with respect to new recommendations from the COPE Code of Conduct for Journal Editors and the COPE Best Practice Guidelines (both available at www.publicationethics.org)
- Maintain the integrity of the academic record
 - Assist the parties (for example, institutions, grant funders, governing bodies) responsible for the investigation of suspected research and publication misconduct and, where possible, facilitate the resolution of these cases
 - Publish corrections, clarifications, and retractions
- Publish content on a timely basis

COPE is grateful for the input of the 23 publishers representing 14 companies who contributed to the creation of the new publisher's code of conduct. For details see the December 2010 issue of Ethical Editing.

Why should publishers care about publication ethics?

by Chris Graf

“Why should publishers care about publication ethics?” That sounds like a question with an obvious answer: “Just because... C’mon. Get with the program.” But to answer in more a meaningful—less tongue-in-cheek—way, I thought I’d start at the beginning.

I think publication ethics is about conducting editorial operations in a morally acceptable way—and while behavioral codes do differ between regions and disciplines, and not all codes are relevant to all disciplines, the shared ground is gratifyingly large. Working from that starting point, the scope of all-that-is-publication-ethics is pretty far-reaching. It encompasses:

- What authors do when they are conducting and writing up their work (including description of whether their study met appropriate standards for, for example, treatment of animals, including how authors give attribution to any work they quote, as well as including who should be listed as authors, and much more)
- What editors do when they consider each manuscript submitted to their journal, how they oversee peer review, and what peer reviewers do, too
- How editors—with publishers—deal with tricky ethical issues that arise (with simple advice, corrections, or investigations and retractions, depending on severity)

Publishers sit in a unique place: right in the middle. Publishers commission and design the technology that authors use to submit and that editors use to administer peer review. Publishers bring readers the final product: journal articles. Publishers ‘curate’ that final product; for example, by ensuring that corrections

are properly organized, rapidly published, and easy to find (better still: completely unmissable). Publishers have the means to encourage the discovery and adoption of best practice, by looking at how editors work across many journals, and by learning from and sharing what they find. For example, a few years ago some colleagues and I wrote guidelines for editors that put forward a publisher’s perspective on publication ethics. You can read them in their entirety here: Graf C, Wager E, Bowman A, et al. Best practice guidelines on publication ethics: a publisher’s perspective. *Int J Clin Pract* 2007; 61(Suppl162): 1-26. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1742-1241.2006.01230.x/abstract>. Our paper has since been cited 32 times, according to ISI Web of Knowledge. But what was the real-life outcome? What difference did we really make? We decided to find out. We conducted what may still be the world’s largest survey of science journal editors about publication ethics. We found that there was more to do and that we had our work cut out for us. You can read it all here: Wager E, Fiack S, Graf C et al. Science journal editors’ views on publication ethics: results of an international survey. *J Med Ethics* 2009;35:348-353 (<http://jme.bmj.com/content/35/6/348.full>).

Publishers have the means to develop and provide editors with tools and services that few journals alone would have the resources to develop or acquire, such as CrossCheck, or—for many editors—COPE membership. CrossCheck is a great example of cross-publisher innovation. CrossCheck is a tool that helps editors to identify plagiarized and inappropriately attributed work (including the

results of lazy ‘copy and paste’) in authors’ manuscripts—and before publication. CrossCheck accesses a huge database of published articles from all the collaborating publishers (as well as the web) to provide a list of possible textual matches and their sources that the editor can then interpret. And the benefits: occasionally spotting serious misconduct, more often identifying where authors need a little advice and guidance, and certainly avoidance of otherwise necessary corrections after publication.

When publishers get it right (and this is my personal mission, I guess, as a publisher), they can make a real difference to the people—authors, peer reviewers, editors, readers—and the techy engines that drive the publication of scholarly work in peer-reviewed journals. Who else could or would do all this important ethics work?

So I think publishers must care about publication ethics. They must care about publication ethics not only to be doing a good job of being responsible publishers, but also because no one else could or would do what they (and by that I mean we) can do.

Chris Graf is Editorial Director, Health Sciences, for Wiley-Blackwell, newly based in Australia. He is a COPE Council member, part of the team that created the new COPE Code of Conduct for Journal Publishers (see previous page), and Acting COPE Treasurer.



COPE Council meeting and Strategy Day

December 7–8, 2010



Building a winning team

COPE's growing diversity was evident in December 2010 at the COPE Council meeting and Strategy Day. Thirteen of 16 members of the Council and Executive Committee were present, along with the COPE Operations Manager, Administrator, and Website Manager. Although COPE was founded by medical editors, 5 of 16 current members are from nonmedical disciplines. There are seven women and nine men. Nine members are from the UK, 3 from the US, 2 from elsewhere in Europe, 1 from Iran, and 1 (after a recent move) from Australia. Fourteen are or were journal editors, 1 is a medical writer, and only 1 (so far) is a publisher.

Clockwise from top left: Irene Hames (formerly managing editor of *The Plant Journal*) and Margaret Rees (*Maturitas*), Lance Small (Editor of *Communications in Algebra*) and Steve Yentis (*Anaesthesia*), James Greenstone (*Journal of Police Crisis Negotiations*) and Craig Phelan (*Labor History*), and Sabine Kleinert (*The Lancet*)

