

News Notes

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Some of these items are taken from the EASE Journal Blog (<http://esebookshelf.blogspot.com>) where full URLs may be found

Principles of transparency and best practice

The Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association (OASPA; oaspa.org), the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ; doaj.org), the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE; publicationethics.org) and the World Association of Medical Editors (WAME; wame.org) have joined forces to set out 16 “Principles of transparency and best practice in scholarly publishing”. The principles have been developed in response to the growth in the number of applications to these organisations from new scholarly publishers and journals. Topics covered include the peer-review process, author fees, archiving, and direct marketing. The principles are available on the organisation’s websites.

Predatory publishers 2014

The list of ‘predatory publishers’ maintained by US librarian Jeffrey Beall has been updated for 2014. The new list, available on Beall’s blog at scholarlyoa.com, includes 477 publishers and 302 standalone journals.

Nobel prize winner boycotts top journals

Nobel prize-winner and Editor in Chief of *eLife*, Randy Schekman, provoked controversy when he announced that his lab would no longer submit papers to the “luxury journals” *Nature*, *Cell*, and *Science*. Schekman said that these journals were “damaging science” due to “distorting incentives” arising from the professional rewards to be gained from publishing in top-tier journals. Writing in *The Guardian* newspaper (9 December 2013) Schekman

called on funders and universities to assess published work on the quality of the science rather than where it was published. In a follow-up article published on The Conversation website (20 December 2013), Schekman also called on journals editors to stop promoting impact factors.

Freeing up particle physics

An attempt organised by CERN to move the entire field of particle physics to open-access publishing has been hindered by the withdrawal of the field’s largest journal, *Physical Review D*, and some reluctance from universities, which have expressed the view that most of the research is already freely available on the arXiv preprint server. The initiative, called SCOAP3 (scoap3.org), came into play on 1 January 2014 and had managed to involve 12 journals until the American Physical Society withdrew its two journals. *Nature* (2014;505:141) reports that CERN is reconsidering its publication policies, with SCOAP3 considering the long term plan for the project.

CrossRef text and data mining

CrossRef plans to launch a text and data mining service in 2014. The service, called Prospect, will include an API (application programming interface) that allows researchers to request full text content from publisher websites and a system to allow publishers to seek extra terms and conditions from researchers, if required. You can find out more at prospectsupport.labs.crossref.org.

Open Access Button

The Open Access Button, an initiative to raise awareness of lack of access to published research, was launched in November 2013. The button (openaccessbutton.org) was the idea of two medical students, who then used social media and web tools to build a team of volunteer programmers, designers, and supporters. It’s a simple web bookmarklet that registered users can install easily. The idea is that a researcher encountering a paywall can

click the button, which automatically logs relevant details and attempts to find the article using Google Scholar. If that fails, the researcher can complete a short form and share details via social media.

2013: retraction and plagiarism

The 30 December Among the inevitable end-of year round-ups were interesting articles on the top 10 retractions (*The Scientist*; the-scientist.com; 30 December 2013) and the top five plagiarism scandals (Ithenticate’s Plagiarism Blog; ithenticate.com/plagiarism-detection-blog; 2 January 2014). While the stories shine a light on specific and unusual examples of malpractice, they also provide useful case studies for editors.

Elsevier takes action

In December 2013, the publisher Elsevier issued a large number of notices to the social networking site Academia.edu asking for the removal of posted and shared articles. The *Chronicle of Higher Education’s* Wired Campus blog reports how the website had received over such 2800 notices (chronicle.com/blogs/wiredcampus; 6 December 2013). Other individuals and institutions also received notices. While Elsevier was within its rights to issue the notices, the move was widely criticised for being against the interests of science and academic endeavour.

Retraction controversy

A paper published in the journal *Food and Chemical Toxicology*, (www.journals.elsevier.com/food-and-chemical-toxicology) in 2012 has been retracted on the basis that “the results presented (while not incorrect) are inconclusive, and therefore do not reach the threshold of publication for [the journal]”. The retraction followed a long investigation by the journal and was strongly disputed by the paper’s authors on the basis that there was no suggestion of misconduct or error, merely criticism of the inconclusiveness of the data based on the methodology and findings. The Retraction Watch blog

(retractionwatch.com; 28 November & 16 January, 2014) tells the full story, which is complicated by the involvement of industry, the media, and argument about whether COPE guidelines had been followed.

Journal half-life

A study funded by the Professional & Scholarly Publishing division of the Association of American Publishers (www.pspcentral.org) has shown that most journals have a half-life (the time taken to reach half their total number of downloads) of 2 to 4 years. The study, by consultant Phil Davis, looked at 2800 journals across various disciplines and publishers. Only 3% journals had half-lives less than a year, while 17% had a half-life of longer than 6 years. Health science journals typically had shorter half-lives than other fields. The report is available from the AAP website (publishers.org/press/124).

CARE guidelines

Case reports, narrative descriptions of medical problems encountered in individual patients, are a unique resource for understanding the effects of medical interventions in particular situations. For case reports to guide clinical practice or to inform clinical study design, they need to be effectively reported. The CARE guidelines were developed on a consensus basis to improve the consistency and quality of published case reports. You can find out more and download the CARE checklist from the CARE website (www.care-statement.org). The team hope that the use of the guidelines, already endorsed by several journals, will lead to systematic data collection.

Open access survey

Wiley has repeated its survey of attitudes and experiences of open access. The survey of Wiley authors showed that about 60% of authors have experience of open access publishing, up from 32% in the previous year. About half the respondents received funding for OA publication and 30% of those who did published those journals with no charges. The survey, reported on the Wiley Exchanges blog (exchanges.wiley.com; 8 October 2013) also explored repository usage

and found that less than half of authors had deposited their article in a public repository.

Comments and questions

The US National Library of Medicine has introduced a pilot commenting system on PubMed (pubmed.org). PubMed Commons (www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmedcommons) allows readers to publicly comment on any publication indexed by PubMed. For the pilot only authors can make comments. The comments are not moderated, however, and anyone can now read them. The PubMed Commons blog (pubmedcommonsblog.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov) gives some background and examples of how people are using the system for post-publication peer review. The journal *PeerJ* (peerj.com) has taken a different approach. They have created *PeerJ* Questions (peerj.com/questions), a searchable database of questions from readers on any aspect of an article. You can read more on the *PeerJ* blog (blog.peerj.com; 2 October 2013).

Developing a data visualisation tool

A new tool from the team behind the journal *F1000 Research* (f1000research.com) allows visualisation of data within published articles. The tool, currently in experimental form, accesses datasets linked to the article and allows readers to view selected data as a scatter plot. You can read more on the *F1000 Research* blog (blog.f1000research.com; 11 November 2013) and try the tool for yourself.

New OA resource

The Copyright Clearance Center (CCC; copyright.com) and the Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers (ALPSP; alpssp.org) have developed an Open Access Resource Center, which is hosted on the CCC website (tinyurl.com/ease-news27). The site provides news, reports and other resources on open access.

BioXriv

US research institute, the Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, has launched BioRxiv (bioRxiv.org), a preprint server for life science articles. As its

name suggests, BioRxiv (pronounced 'bio-archive') is based on ArXiv.org, the physical sciences preprint server model. BioRxiv will publish articles in all life science articles but not clinical studies or trials. All articles will carry a DOI, and authors can choose from a range of licences.

US law on free access to publically funded research

The US Government has passed legislation requiring many federal agencies with annual research budgets greater than \$100 million to make scholarly articles resulting from their funding to be made freely available online no later than 12 months after publication. The bill doesn't go as far as the Fair Access to Science and Technology Research (FASTR) act, which seeks shorter embargoes, a central repository and requirements for appropriate publication formats, but it will ensure that about half of the \$60 billion worth of taxpayer-funded research output is made freely available.

eLife Lens

The journal *eLife* has launched a new tool for viewing articles. The tool is called *eLife* Lens (lens.elifesciences.org) and is designed to allow readers to explore figures, references and other items without losing the flow of the narrative. The tool was first tried out in June, and following positive feedback it has been fully adopted into the journal's website (elifesciences.org) as a viewing option for all articles.

When standards are not implemented

The ARRIVE guidelines for reporting of preclinical animal studies (available from www.nc3rs.org.uk) were published in 2010 and widely endorsed. But the standards are not being enforced, according to a recent study published in *PLOS Biology* (2014;12:e1001756). The study authors suggest that authors, referees, and editors are ignoring the guidelines and call for stringer editorial enforcement.

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