Reports of meetings

Editing in the digital world: EASE 11th general assembly and conference, Tallinn, Estonia, 8-10 June 2012

This year's conference took place at Tallinn University of Technology (TUT), who provided us with a wonderful lecture theatre and space to accommodate the informal networking and discussions around presentations and workshops.

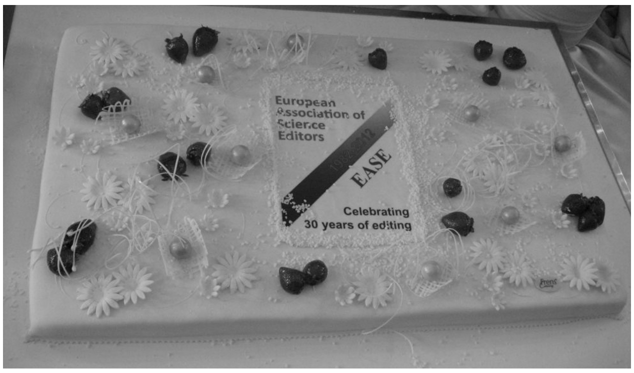
Friday … the conference opens

The conference started with a welcome from the Vice Rector of TUT who gave us a quick overview of the university which was launched in 1918 and is the second oldest in the country, providing courses in three languages (English, Estonian and Russian). He reminded us that we were in the home of Skype, and with free Wifi everywhere it was certainly true that the whole country was Internet-mad – an ideal place to hold a conference looking at the digital world!

First plenary: national journals in an international context

The plenary lecture was given by **Professor Jűri Englbrecht** from the Estonian Academy of Sciences. He quoted Armin Toffler, saying that western civilizations were good at dissecting problems, but not so good at putting them together again, and the smaller countries can contribute greatly to this type of problem solving. He stressed the link between society and science and the need for the two to complement each other. He identified the problems of language in scientific communication and that the emphasis on the English language may be a help in some senses but can prevent complete understanding of principles and theories.

Following the formal opening of the conference we were treated to a reception to celebrate EASE's 30th anniversary at the impressive Town Hall where we were served a birthday cake large enough to feed the entire EASE membership!



Saturday … the conference gets going

On Saturday the conference started in earnest with a plenary lecture on open access models from **Deborah Kahn**, BioMed Central. She stressed the importance of making research results available not only to all researchers but also to the general public whose taxes have often made the research possible. She clarified some concerns about article publication fees, saying that they were often waived for authors with no grant or institutional funding, and that research has found that only 17% of authors pay personally – the vast majority have their APCs paid by the grant funders or their institution, and this is growing.

Parallel session A: From national to international

The first parallel session looked at how national journals responded to an international world, and how the international research environment impacted on them.

Mladen Juračič from *Geologia Croatica* stressed the need to learn from other journals in the region, and to balance local needs and interests with international research. He provided a history of the journal which, over the past 100 years has grown, changed its name and evolved into a tri-annual journal in English with an international editorial board. He concluded by stressing the importance of the editors in promoting the quality and visibility of the journal, and that since there are few people speaking Croatian, and a smaller number of these who study geology, there was very little future for a local Croatian-language journal.

Sioux Cumming from the International Network for the Availability of Scientific Information (INASP) presented the findings of a study of Bangladeshi journals to investigate how access to international research publications was affecting the researchers information habits – ie whether it increased the number of recent international publications cited in Bangladesh-published articles. INASP supports the hosting of online Bangladeshi journals through its Journals OnLine programme, and there are now 89 journals on the site. During 2011 it received around 70,000 visitors from around the world and provided approximately 1.5 million article downloads. Contrary to their expectations in the research, they found that in several cases there was a reduction in the number of recent international articles being cited – the reason for which requires further investigation.

Stephan Mertens from *Deutsches Ärzteblatt*, a medical journal run by the German Medical Council, described how the journal evolved from a German language journal into a split publication with German-only print issues, and two separate websites – one for the German language- and one for the English-language journal. Since 2003 the journal has received increasing submissions leading to a greater number of rejections (from 25% to 70%) and an increase in quality resulting in acceptance by Medline. The journal translates articles into English for the authors, who are very appreciative – particularly of the international visibility that this provides them.

Parallel session B: publishing data

Anthony Watkinson from the UCL Centre for Publishing (London, UK) opened this session with a broad overview of the current debate about data publishing and curation. Publishers have traditionally not been interested in data (simply connecting it to publications as "supplementary data"), so the academic community has taken the lead. However the real 'article of the future' will be linked with data. Most publishers have made arrangements for archiving and preservation, but have hardly any archiving plans for supplementary material. Watkinson finished by urging libraries to play a stronger role in maintaining data repositories and supporting campus-based publishing.

Sarah Callaghan from the NERC Data Citation and Publication project (Oxford, UK) explained how NERC funds six large data centres in the UK. She explained that people who create datasets don't get the kudos or reward of a 'publication', which goes to those who use and analyse the data. Some scientists may be reluctant to share data, for all sorts of reasons, but funders want good value from their input, and scientists want acclaim. Both want protection as well as sharing. Callaghan promoted the role of data centres as making data available in a citeable, sustainable, organised, standardised format, whether or not there is a mandate to publish. Data journals are emerging; the latest is *Geoscience Data Journal*, published by Wiley on behalf of the Royal Meteorological Society. A data journal has a more complex editorial workflow than a traditional journal, with careful separations of repository-controlled and journal-controlled processes, and there remains some debate about what constitutes peer review of data. A new project (PREPARDE) has been set up to develop policies, processes and governance for data peer review. Callaghan closed with a quote from Jason Priem: "We share because we do science not alchemy".

Christiaan Sterken (*Journal of Astronomical Data*, Brussels, Belgium) spoke about the difficulties of organising data. His field of astronomy generates huge amounts, which is often transformed multiple times for publication. The original data is seldom published and can't be reconstructed. Other problems are data loss (retirement, death, institutional reorganisation), falsification, clipping (selective reporting), calibration (conduct) and standardisation (reporting), and maintaining long-term time-based data. Sterken also emphasised the need for peer review of data to give a quality label.

Second plenary: Social media tools

After lunch we had the second plenary lecture from **Alan Cann** of the *Annals of Botany*. True to the topic of his talk, he was introduced with information from his social network profile and we found out that he liked marmite, but disliked celery! He gave an inspiring talk about the opportunities for journals provided by social networking tools. The journal's experimentation started by recognising that one part of the journal (the editor's choice) was very similar to a blog, so it was converted into one (www.aobblog.com). Then they built on this by developing a Facebook page. He stressed that the blog, in particular, provides a parallel content stream to the journal and reaches out to a difference audience – they are younger and comprise more female readers. However, he recognised that there is no supporting revenue stream for these types of activity which may not cost anything (or very little) but do take considerable time to maintain. He concluded that "anyone not using social media is bonkers!".

Parallel session C: science translation

John Bates (University of Tarragona, Spain) spoke of the relationship between reading difficulty and academic prestige. He raised the recurring question of why academic writing tended to be obscure, long-winded and vague, rather than clear, concise and accurate. He introduced the audience to 'Dr Fox hypothesis', referring to an experiment from the 1970s, where a professional actor, presented as a leading academic, delivered a witty and scintillating scientific lecture that was littered with nonsense and irrelevance but nonetheless stimulated and convinced the audience. The conclusion was 'if you can't understand it, it must be good'! There are incentives to create obscure, waffly, passive-voice prose: greater academic reward; a desire to dignify your subject (clear simple text = clear simple topic?); increased chance of funding, and bad models.

EASE vice-president **Eva Baranyiová** (Czech University of Life Sciences, Prague) discussed the growth of translation agencies of variable quality, and gave numerous, sometimes amusing, examples of confused or careless writing or translation. Two particular aspects of note were the inability of some authors or translators to appreciate the spirit of the language and its syntax, and the use of field-specific knowledge and terminology. Eva proposed more direct engagement with authors and more sharing of examples between editors.

If you have a large team of copy editors working on documents of variable quality, how do you assess the level of work? **Yateendra Joshi** (Cactus Communications, Mumbai, India) did not offer a magic fomula, but proposed useful and imaginative metrics for quantitative assessment of copy editing, based on a matrix of operations (deletion, addition, substitution) versus level (character, word, phrase, clause, sentence).

Marek Pawelec (Krakow, Poland) introduced the audience to the concept of computer-aided translation (CAT). This isn't a way of replacing translators with machines, but it does help translators do a better job.

Parallel session D: digital tools

The fourth parallel session looked at tools for detecting misconduct, in particular how tools were being used by journal editors.

The first speaker in this session, **Rachael Lammey**, from CrossRef, described CrossCheck. CrossCheck has been running since 2008 and uses iThenticate software to check content on sites where publishers have authorised the system to access their content. Currently there are over 32 million items from more than 302 publishers being checked in the system. She considered the question of when to check articles – on submission or acceptance and the benefits and problems associated with each.

Ana Marušić, editor of the *Journal of Global Health* started her presentation by emphasising that there are a lot of grey areas in the duplication of research, and that when there are accusations or conflicts they cause a problem for the editors. She emphasised that there was a need for journals to have policies and to follow good practice processes from COPE, WAME, etc. She described using etblast which was used to develop the Déjà vu website of duplicated articles.

She concluded that it is the responsibility of journals to check for duplication and plagiarism so that readers can have trust in what they read.

The third presentation in this session came from **Sun Huh** who investigated the KoreaMed website to identify different types of duplicate publication. The reason for this was to provide categories that could be used to educate researchers and reduce instances in the future. His research showed that duplicate publications were not being reduced, and this is attributed to a lack of education and understanding of what is considered ethical. During his talk we also learnt the term IMALAS – reverse salami publication!

The session was closed by **Liz Wager,** whose report can be read on page 75.

Conference dinner

The conference dinner was held at the House of the Brotherhood of the Black Heads, where we were served delicious food in beautiful surroundings. As in all EASE events, there was no holding people back from entering lively and impassioned discussions and debates which continued late into the evening.

Sunday … the discussion continues

Parallel session E: Improving peer review management

This session was run by **Elizabeth Blalock** from the *Journal of investigative Dermatology* and **Michael Willis** from Wiley-Blackwell, both representing the International Society of Managing and Technical Editors (ISMTE). Unlike the other parallel sessions there were no invited speakers and the session was focussed on how to provide easily-understandable reports.

Michael asked the audience to consider why reports are required and what can be done with the data – analysing, interpreting and responding to it. To demonstrate how to present data powerfully we were shown Charles Joseph Minard's amazing map of Napoleon's march, published in Russia in 1812 – an inspirational way of graphically presenting information. This was followed by a demonstration of how to use graphic tools such as Google's fusion tables and word clouds. Discussion about what data to present and how to calculate them showed that there were divided opinions about how to calculate the acceptance rate: whether to take the papers submitted in a period and evaluate how many of them were accepted or to take the number of acceptances in one period against the number of submissions within that same period. To conclude the session Michael stressed that reports need to be consistent year-on-year, they need to be clearly presented and the source of data needs to be transparent.

Parallel session F: assisting scientists and institutes

Carol Norris (University of Helsinki, Finland) described her experiences teaching English writing to medical students. She noted that language, punctuation and spelling were not a problem for her students, but they did have problems with writer's block, poor organisation, choppiness, wordiness and plagiarism. Her solutions: no translating; write as if speaking; trust your ear; and get words down quickly. She went on to describe two techniques she uses: competitive shrinking and co-operative editing. Students start by working together then compete to shrink the text. Online publishing might not have word limits, but readers do.

Ed Hull's experience with students in the Netherlands was similar: they think they need help with English but they don't; they need help thinking logically. Papers are rejected because they lack a 'nugget', ie something valuable (credible science that fills a gap) that is easy to pick up (easy to read and understand). Authors face two main problems: academic writing style and getting stuck in the details. Ed Hull favoured a three-step approach: (1) focus on a logical storyline (what was the question? What was the answer?); (2) revise to sharpen the storyline; (3) edit to correct English and improve readability. Ed spoke about connecting 'reader's world' with 'author's world', and authors (methods are important) and editors (content and structure not my job).

What's the difference between skilled and non-skilled writers? Skilled writers have heuristics for dealing with writing, and accept their garbage serenely. That was the conclusion of **Mary Ellen Kerans** (Spain), who looked at research insights from cognitive psychology, anthropology, and studies of writers and writing educators, and gave some valuable tips for working with different sorts of authors. Skilled writers build manuscripts recursively (cyclical, unexpected turns, returns, excisions) not linearly (plan, draft, rewrite, polish), which enables further understanding and discovery of unplanned ideas (find out about a subject by writing about it), and a fusion of planning, drafting, revising.

Ravi Murugesan gave an overview of AuthorAid (www.authoraid.info), set up by INASP in 2007 to help researchers in developing countries publish their work. He focused on AuthorAid's mentoring system, and gave some examples of how the system has worked well. Mentors can be senior researchers or editors, and the audience were encouraged to join the scheme. Editors can help with content (choosing target journals, study design, publishing strategy, manuscript critique), publishing in general (publishing process, timelines, decisions and how to deal with them), and writing (tutorials, critiquing, copyediting, language).

Patricia Volland-Nail (INRA, France) described MISTER, an educational programme for INRA PhD students in partnership with several French universities, where scientific writing and publishing are rarely taught. The programme is based on the concept of researcher as both user and producer of scientific information (ie a cycle). The MISTER programme contains four one-day modules on: (1) searching and collecting information; staying up to date; (2) managing information; (3) communicating and publishing (strategy); (4) writing articles.

Eric Lichtfouse, also from INRA, gave a talk with the splendid title 'Cows do not eat publications'. He explained how potential authors encountered language and cultural barriers (thinking differently as well as language) in both research and publishing. Their training now focuses on abstracts (80% of papers are rejected on the basis of an abstract) and how colours and contrast can be used to identify different sections of the research: the question, the method, and the answer. Trainees work on a clever one-page 'micro-article' template with boxes representing the key components of a good research paper.

Parallel session G: publication bias

Selective reporting of 'positive' results is an on-going concern in biomedical publishing, and **Anne Brice** from the James Lind Initiative explored to what extent medical journals encouraged authors to or discouraged them from submitting their work, regardless of direction or strength of effect. Their analysis of editorial policies of 120 top medical journals was disappointing. While some journals encouraged the publication of negative findings to some degree, only five of the 120 journals featured unqualified encouragement with a specific reference to bias. Another finding of this study was how hard it was to find the information: no-one reads 'information for authors'. She ended with a call for co-ordinated action by editors and publishers to make policies more visible, raise awareness, and encourage submission of study protocols.

Another way that medical journals can help to prevent publication bias is to require registration of clinical trials. **Liz Wager**, ex-chair of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), reminded the audience that before the publication of the ICMJE standards in 2005 it was a requirement of US law, but it took the action of journals to make a real difference. Non-registration was seen as a problem with the pharmaceutical industry, but in fact the failing lay equally with industry and academia. Liz Wager looked at a random sample of 200 journals and found that about 70% of journals did not require registration (although 40% of those did require authors to abide by the Helsinki declaration), and that only 2% of journals actively encouraged registration.

The final speaker in this session, **Ana Marušić**, from the *Journal of Global Health*, spoke about preventing publication bias. She started her talk by considering what journals and their editors can do to ensure the integrity of the scientific record, and looked at the requirement for medical trial registration that journals include. She presented the OPEN (to Overcome failure to Publish nEgative fiNdings) project that worked with opinion leaders in Europe to address publication bias by evaluating, advocating and implementing policies and recommendations.

Parallel session H: bibliometrics

The first speaker, **Tom Babor,** from the International Society of Addiction, discussed his own research which showed how different author groups participated in research, and how many of them write just one article in their lifetime. His findings also showed that almost 90% of research in this area was published in English, which led to concerns about the lack of ability to publish in local languages, which may reduce the utility of the articles within their locale.

The second speaker, **Jenny Neophytou** from Wiley-Blackwell, spoke about how publishers use bibliometrics – and in particular how they should definitely not be used! She indicated that using bibliometrics can help publishers to compare their journals against others, show how disciplines are changing and where the research is coming from and whether their journals are successfully reaching authors (and readers). She identified a lot of problems in data – for example variable institution and author names, unknown data sources.

Christiaan Sterken talked about the Hirsch index and namesake authors. He showed how publication data is used to evaluate candidates and how name confusion can dramatically affect careers. He discussed the Hirsch Index and how this can be useful but also be misinterpreted to place undue importance on a researcher's output.

Final plenary

The final plenary talk was given by **Linus Svensson** from the Oikos Editorial office. He described the structure of the organisation behind the journal, and used his talk to stress the fact that editorial offices not only deal with editorial issues, but also have to manage a wide range of duties, including administration, finance, ethical and legal issues. He also emphasised the need to plan for the future and identify risks so they can be avoided. Using experiences from Oikos, he asked how journals should make decisions over problem issues, such as duplicate publication, typesetters going bankrupt, or computer systems being hacked. His talk was a fitting end to the meeting as he made us all remember that the issues that editors normally focus on are not the only ones needing to be dealt with on a daily basis.

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EASE Conference - report on session: 'Digital tools for detecting misconduct'

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The digital age has brought new opportunities for misconduct such as copy-and-paste plagiarism and image manipulation. However, the same technology also provides tools for editors to detect misconduct. One of the most widely used is CrossCheck, which was described by Rachael Lammey from CrossRef (the organization that developed it). CrossCheck combines the text-matching software iThenticate (produced by iParadigms) with a publications database provided by the publishers who use the checking tool. This allows the software to compare text against the full text of publications that are only accessible to subscribers, and would therefore not be accessed by a simple internet search. Screening submissions may not only detect plagiarism and redundant publication but may also act as a deterrant. However, the similarity reports need careful interpretation. Although CrossCheck can be set to ignore text in quotation marks and in the