

My life as an editor - Eva Baranyiová

Eva Baranyiová graduated at the Veterinary Faculty of the University of Agriculture in Brno, Czech Republic. She worked at the Department of Physiology of the Faculty, participated in research on the ontogeny of farm animals and published original papers. In the 1990s, she developed and taught courses in animal behaviour and in behaviour problems of companion animals. Eva is a member of several scientific societies. Since 1971 she worked as the executive editor of *Acta veterinaria Brno*, and was its editor-in-chief in the years 2000-2010. Since 2012 she has been involved with *Agricultura Tropica et Subtropica*, and since 2015 with *Veterinární medicína* as the editor-in-chief. Eva has been a member of EASE since 1992, a Council Member (2006-2012) and Vice-President (2012-2015). We talked with her about her long-standing experience, changes in scientific publishing, and her opinions regarding scientific editing.



misconduct, again using the newest, powerful detection tools. Unfortunately, these important and responsible roles of editors have been occasionally distorted by some individuals who manipulate articles in order to improve the journal's standing, when faced with the ever-present nightmare of Impact Factor.

Has the author's approach to scientific publishing changed through many years?

In my opinion it has changed. It seems to me that the authors used to be more concentrated on their written work. Everything happened at a much slower pace: the authors had (time) to look for

information in libraries, browse in printed journals to find important articles, and there was only Current Contents—the first real help in searching literature that appeared in the early 1960s—available. Also manuscript preparation was much more demanding and slow, the references had to be prepared manually to appear in alphabetical order, the graphs were made by hand using tools of those times. The pressures to publish were not as bad as they have become later and continue still to worsen.

All the tools now available to authors make manuscript preparation so easy and rapid compared to previous times. And yet we encounter unnecessary problems, careless approach, manuscripts that are just “raw material” and need time to ripen. Some authors evidently copy references from other papers (often with misspelled names, missing initials, incorrect journal names), which is unethical in the first place, and also deprives the incorrectly cited authors of their credit. We see dangerous by-products of pressures to publish in the growing numbers of unethical behaviours such as plagiarism, theft of data, manipulation of results, or double publication.

What was your motivation to get involved in editorial community?

In the late 1960s, the Scientific Editor of our university journal (founded in 1922) knew well that it should be made again available to international scientific community the way it used to be before the World War II. That was only possible through publishing in English. Since I had a quite good language background I was invited to join the journal and so I became the executive editor. I had to learn about the editorial world, and I used to go to the print-house to see the entire production process and learn about the hard work of typesetters and other professions. Therefore, I always tried to prepare the manuscripts with as few typos and errors as possible before proofreading. Doing the editorial work was an excellent chance to learn about science from the other side, and also how to write and how *not* to write. The contact with authors and peer reviewers, mostly by writing letters or by telephone, was (and continues to be) another interesting and often stimulating feature of the work.

You have been actively, and for a long time, involved in scientific editing. Have you noticed any changes in the global editing approach during that time period?

There have been many changes in the editing process since the 1970s. However, the basic principles that is editing texts for accuracy, facts, coherence, grammar, spelling and style have not changed. The interest in research work worldwide and thus also the research community have grown immensely, and the number of scientists in the biomedical field but also in others still keeps growing.

There used to be a variety of formats and type-settings of journals, some of excellent quality were printed rather modestly and published by universities and scientific societies. The articles themselves have also evolved: they used to be more narrative and prepared with greatest care. And that was at the time of typewriters, traditional typesetting and printing. Yet the editors, it seems to me, had more time for the individual manuscripts.

We have witnessed the greatest revolution in publishing since Gutenberg's times with the advent of computers, internet and all the other modern ways of communication. Technical progress has changed our editorial and printing work completely: just think of the online submission and processing systems and desktop publishing. Without these advanced technologies it would not be possible to handle the endless supply of manuscripts, flooding editorial offices worldwide. Editors can now communicate with authors within minutes when improving sentences, adding missing hypotheses etc. Editors and Editorial Boards can communicate continuously using e-mails and skype conferences and may never ever meet in person. Decisions can be made very quickly.

The editor's work is more demanding during the manuscript selection process. Sadly, we nowadays have to check the manuscripts for plagiarism and other forms of academic

According to your opinion, what is the crucial responsibility of editors?

Their key responsibility is to promote science, to help reporting truth about this world, and to keep the journals clean and free of fraud and abuse. With the ever-increasing numbers of manuscripts it is sometimes difficult to separate the wheat from the chaff. And in doing so one has always to act tactfully.

Are there some other roles for editors beyond editing and decision making?

Yes, in my opinion, the educational role is of great importance, especially in the present post-modern era characterized by rapid changes and superficial approach in many aspects of life and communication, science being not an exception. In many countries that do not have a long tradition in biomedical research, most authors are appreciative of any advice and help they obtain from editors. We need to teach young authors the ethical principles of publishing, make them understand that their work to be published has to be solid and reliable for others to build on it.

What would you classify as a “scientific waste”?

Not only is it the huge amount of money spent on research that never gets published – the shocking numbers we heard at the conference in Edinburgh in September of 2015 – but also research results published that are only made available to scientists if they pay large sums to publishers, just for access to this vital information. This situation is even more absurd when the same scientists have to pay incredible amounts of money to have their papers published. It is known that the big publishers in all silence make enormous profits on science journals they publish, having swallowed most of the smaller publishers. A fair thing to do would be to allocate a solid part of their profit back to scientists (and reviewers) who work for them for free.

What is your viewpoint on the rapidly emerging, so-called predatory journals of questionable credibility? How should the scientific community properly react to them?

This has to do with your previous question. As long as publishing in established journals remains prohibitive for many authors, the predatory journals can be expected to flourish. Young authors should be alerted and told details about these journals and how to avoid them. The scientific community should not be driven any more by the Impact Factor frenzy (journals such as *Nature* and *Science* publish increasingly articles on that topic, for example: “Bibliometrics: An obituary for the impact factor”, *Nature* 546, 600, 2017). Publishing in prestigious (ie high impact) journals has become a must for many. However, good science can also be found in small journals but it has to be looked for, acknowledged and cited. University journals that keep some degree of freedom and independence can here do an excellent service to authors, especially to the fledgling ones.

What is your opinion about Open Access in scientific publishing?

Open Access is fine, provided that it really is open. As we all know, often this is not the case. Some geographical regions are exempt from Open Access, others not but they have to pay more and more for access to databases. There is Green and Gold and Hybrid Open Access. The entire publishing scene has become a huge money making business. Many universities worldwide cannot pay their subscriptions any more. Some substantial changes have to come; the sooner the better. An important role in this context can be seen in the power of associations such as EASE, WAME, APAME, COPE and others, to make achievements of science open to scientists worldwide.

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