14th EASE General Assembly and Conference: "Balancing innovation and tradition in science editing"

8-10 June 2018, Faculty of Law, Bucharest, Romania

The EASE conference is the largest event organised by our association. This year, the conference was held in Romania, at the Faculty of Law of the University of Bucharest. During three days, we had the opportunity to participate in four plenary lectures and nine conference sessions with thematically grouped presentations. Twelve posters were also presented, completing the scientific programme of the conference. As the professional training of editors is one of the key areas of EASE activity, five workshops were organised before and after the conference, on technical topics useful to editors, and on the ethics of publishing.

The conference began on Friday 8th June with a welcome address from Mircea Dumitru, Rector of the University of Bucharest. Professor Dumitru walked us through the history of education and science in Romania, acknowledged the effect of politics on higher education in this historical perspective, and concluded by giving examples of how the University has fought to foster honest research values.

Ana Marušić introduces Professor Mircea Dumitru

During the first plenary lecture, Eva Baranyiová, Editor-in-Chief of *Agricultura Tropica et Subtropica*, took us from the beginnings of journal publishing by the learned societies of academics during the Age of Enlightenment, to the problems encountered in the current day by Czech journals. Professor Baranyiová expressed concern about the current prevalence of industry and large commercial publishers affecting not only what, but where, scientists publish.

Isolation of publishers in Eastern Europe, and the subsequent opening up to global competition, was a recurrent theme during the first session of the conference. Tudor Toma, Journal Director of *Pneumologia*, provided the Romanian perspective in a fascinating talk about the journal's origins under the communist party. Moving to the modern times, Dr Toma provided excellent advice for smaller journals: to focus on education of new professionals in the field, and to disperse emerging, conceptual research that is not yet suitable for general interest journals. Another goal of local journals could be to increase the recognition of local researchers, said Madalina Georgescu, from Otomed Medical Center in Romania. Dr Georgescu described

the setting up of the ORL.ro journal, and stressed the importance of the quality of the research to be published, to contribute to the development of knowledge.

The second day of the conference began with a plenary lecture by Bernd Pulverer, Chief Editor of *The EMBO Journal*, who dazzled us with technology now available to change our editorial processes in the interests of scientific integrity. Dr Pulverer warned against the precipitating abuse of the journal impact factor ("one number to rule them all"). To address the opacity of publishing and to make it fit-for-purpose, the EMBO journals have taken several actions towards transparency of peer review; their portable peer review process seemed of particular interest to the audience. Finally, Dr Pulverer stressed that the published data should be accessible and reproducible, within the multi-layered papers and "smart figures" containing the linked metadata. These innovations in publishing should redress the current situation, so that the journals fulfil their role of helping the scientific community.

In the first parallel session, the topic of innovations in journal publishing was further developed. Elisabeth Bowley, from Frontiers Life Sciences, described the growth of the Frontiers journals through their use of automated workflows, built in-house and adapted in response to user feedback. Voicing a common opinion that simple publication is often not enough, Mark Hester described the work of Kudos, which provides ways for authors and publishers to see all the usage metrics they may want, and to create lay summaries of their articles, which may be posted to sites like ResearchGate. Lyubomir Penev, from Pensoft, presented their one-stop journal publishing shop ARPHA (Authoring, Reviewing, Publishing, Hosting, and Archiving). ARPHA aims to provide all these management services to smaller publishers and single journals, to facilitate and speed up their workflow.

The freelance editing session centred on practical advice and experience exchange. María del Carmen Ruíz-Alcocer and Magda Luz Atrían Salazar questioned the freelancers in Mexico City, who appreciated the freedom to choose what to work on, but were unhappy with the unstable nature of the job and no benefits. The employers mostly viewed freelance work as a great way to reduce cost, but only if the output was good, which was not always the case. Brian Harrison, from Chuo University in Japan, said that the most important rule for a new freelance project is to begin at the end: think in advance about the final outcome of the project. He stressed that appropriate name recognition can be just as important as the money gained: it is key to build your profile, but predators can profit from it, using your name without your permission. Tom Lang, consultant in medical and professional communications, claimed that medical writers and editors are in the business of efficient and effective communication, because decisions are made

on the basis of their work. He asked us to endeavour to be an expert, as that is the only way to keep ourselves in the business. This was echoed by Thomas O'Boyle, freelance translator, medical writer, and communications consultant, who sent the message that "a job well done is the ultimate sales brochure". He took a strong stance on adequate salaries, a recurring theme in the freelance world.

Our third plenary lecture prompted a lively discussion. María del Carmen Ruíz-Alcocer, from AMERBAC, praised EASE's ability to help editors from non-Anglophone countries. While English is considered the language of science, all but one of the 150 medical journals in Mexico are published in Spanish. To improve dissemination of science outside of the English-speaking world, journal editors should adhere to international guidelines, and use good quality translators who can explain discipline-related language and common phrases in scientific literature, like "an elegant study".

This plenary lecture continued with a session about multilingual publishing. The advantages and disadvantages of publishing in national languages were discussed by two Turkish editors, Cem Uzun (*Balkan Medical Journal*) and Taner Erdag (*Archives of Otorhinolaryngology*), and three Croatian editors: Iva Grabaric Andonovski (*Food Technology and Biotechnology*), Martina Petrinović (Peristil), and Zvonimir Prpić (*Journal of Central European Agriculture*). The speakers agreed that the aim of the journal should dictate the choice of the publication language. If the field of research is small, why would it need a big, international journal? — argued Martina Petrinović. On the other hand, publishing in English allowed the representation of the national medical society internationally, reminded Taner Erdag. Multilingualism also offers several advantages, including regional collaboration and recognition, and the increased pool of reviewers, as related by Zvonimir Prpić. Practical advice stemming from the transition from Croatian to English was shared by Iva Grabaric Andonovski. Cem Uzun stressed the importance of keeping up with international standards and of the quality of scientific editing, irrespective of the language of the publication.

The session "How can editors contribute to sex and gender equity in research?" organised by the EASE Gender Policy Committee (GPC), was structured as an open debate. Paola De Castro, from the National Institute of Health in Italy, provided an overview of the main output of the GPC: Sex and Gender Equity in Research (SAGER) guidelines. Shirin Heidari, from Geneva Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, reminded us of the importance of the standardisation of methods by which journals ensure adherence to the guidelines. Cara Tannenbaum, from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, argued that "sex and gender policy starts with the funders", profiling their system, where authors justify how they have taken sex and gender into consideration (or not), and peer reviewers include this section in their evaluation of grant applications. Kate McIntosh, from *The Lancet*, argued that "SAGER guidelines are not applicable to my journal" and presented three key reasons against endorsing them: sex and gender may not be the only relevant characteristics to report; required reporting may lead researchers to imply

a difference where there could be none, and may slow down the publication. Finally, Jamie Lundine, from the University of Ottawa in Canada, argued that "gender equity in research is an academic matter and not the responsibility of publishers". She presented evidence of gender bias in research content, but also of the lack of women authors and professors in Europe, Canada and New Zealand. During discussion several audience members reported endorsing the SAGER guidelines in their journals. There was a broad consensus that all actors in the publishing ecosystem have a role to play in sex and gender equity in research.

The discussions around the Saturday topics continued during the conference dinner at the Pescăruș restaurant on the shore of the picturesque Herăstrău lake to the north of Bucharest city centre.

The first parallel session on Sunday discussed various challenges appearing throughout the lifetime of a journal. The financial aspects of setting up and sustaining a journal were discussed by Elisabeth Bowley from Frontiers. Although a journal is founded on idea and community, it can take hundreds of thousands of euros and several years for a new journal to be financially viable. Cem Uzun, from the *Balkan Medical Journal*, stressed the importance of team-work in improving a journal. Kianoush Khosravi Darani, from *Applied Food Biotechnology*, spoke of the obstacles to improving journals, such as plagiarism, disagreements with authors over the publication, financial constraints, and the expensive, slow, and subjective process of peer review. Marlène Bras, from the *Journal of the International AIDS Society*, described a year-long process of changing the journal's publisher, offering advice on defining journal needs, structuring a proposal, and interviewing potential publishers. Pippa Smart, the new EASE President, finished the session with information on General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the new EU law (see editorial on p50).

The estimated global cost of research waste approaches a mind-blowing $170 billion per year. The second parallel session on Sunday discussed the actions that can be taken by journals to address this problem. Sam Hinsley, from *The Lancet*, detailed the actions taken within the Reduce research Waste And Reward Diligence (REWARD) campaign, including the requirements of a data sharing statement, and of a Research in Context section describing the broader implications of a study. Caroline Struthers, from EQUATOR, reminded us of the importance of guidelines, and the tools available to navigate them, such as goodReports.org, a multiple choice, decision-tree questionnaire to help authors to identify the most appropriate guidelines for their study, or Penelope, a software which runs checks on technical issues and missing ethics statements. Delia Mihaila, from MDPI, stressed the importance of open access to research results, and of publishing papers with negative or partial results, so that researchers do not repeat fruitless studies. Noémie Aubert Bonn, a PhD student from Universiteit Hasselt in Belgium, shared her preliminary research findings on research misconduct. The system-related determinants, like perceptions of climate, financial incentives, inadequate oversight, policy, could be causative of misconduct. However, few approaches targeted these points and most of them focused on awareness of and

compliance by the researchers, which may be insufficient.

As data citations begin to trickle through the literature (several thousand citations of datasets across a dozen publishers are reported by now), Rachael Lammey, from Crossref, told us that data published online should be "as open as possible, as closed as necessary", taking into consideration the protection of intellectual property, of personal data, and of particularly sensitive information. Crossref supports standardised practices which allow the re-use of data to be acknowledged and tracked. Bart Verberck, from Springer Nature, shared some interesting insights with us: data archiving can double the publication output of studies, and primary investigators who archived their data were more likely to publish more articles per project. These profits could overcome the obstacles and costs that prevent researchers from sharing data. Heather Tierney, COPE Council member, spoke to us about the role of COPE, as the promotor of integrity of scholarly records through policies and best practice.

Peer review is a cornerstone of journal publishing, but reviewers are often taken for granted. In the first talk of the session on peer review, Flaminio Squazzoni, editor of the *Journal of Artificial Societies and Social Simulation*, highlighted just how little we really know about peer reviewers as a group. He explained how the PEERE group is trying to bring academic rigour to the study of peer review. This academic approach was continued by Mersiha Mahmić-Kaknjo, from the University of Zenica in Bosnia and Herzegovina, who discussed the findings of her systematic review on what motivates peer reviewers. One of the biggest motivators appeared to be the opportunity for the reviewers to stay up-to-date with current work in their fields. Markus Heinemann, Editor of *The Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgeon*, provided an autopsy of the manuscripts submitted to his journal that never even made it to peer review. The most common reason for rejection before review (a quick death) was that research did not meet the criteria for inclusion in the journal. Research outside the scope of the journal died similarly rapidly, although that which lacked originality or was plagued by faulty science lingered longer. Bahar Mehmani introduced Elsevier's VolunPeers system, which allows journals to credit their verified reviewers, and researchers to suggest the journals that they would like to review for, changing the editor-reviewer relationships to a win-win situation.

The final plenary lecture, by Mark Patterson, the Executive Director at eLife Sciences, pictured the changing role of the journals in recent years. With the explosive growth in the amount of data generated, it is important to increase the visibility of scientific work, and to reward authors and reviewers. This is why Dr Patterson encouraged us to change the ruling paradigm of scholarly publishing from "Publish or perish" to "Share and shine".

The conference was closed by Pippa Smart, the new EASE president. The awards for the best posters, sponsored by *The Lancet*, went to Vivienne Bachelet, for her work on how author affiliations to Chilean universities are misrepresented in publications, and Kadri Kiran, for his work on how the journals published at the Trakiya University in Turkey comply with international best practice (read abstracts of posters on our epages).

Left to right: Taner Erdag, Orhan Yilmaz and Turgut Karlıdağ from Turkey

The EASE conference showed us that setting up and improving a journal looks differently in different countries and for different publishing professionals, although all need to pay attention to the quality of the editing process, and make sure that their journal finds its place in the publishing landscape. Outside of the journals, the community of freelancers discussed their approach to the publishing world, and regulators from different organisations introduced the new standards that should improve the scientific papers. All speakers agreed on the importance of networking for their daily work, as exemplified with the motto which was used by Cem Uzun: learn, experience and share. This opportunity for networking was a great advantage of the conference, and makes us look forward to the next conference in 2020.

Authorship statement

This report reproduces parts of the conference newsletter, Poenaru Post, which were written by Ashley Cooper, Sam Hinsley, Jamie Lundine and Kate McIntosh. The newsletter is available at the EASE webpage: http://www.ease.org.uk/ease-events/14th-ease-conference-bucharest-2018/newsletter/

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