

Editorial

Six years at the helm: view from the bridge

At the end of September, my term as President of EASE will come to an end and I will hand over to Ana Marušić, so it seems appropriate to look back at what EASE has accomplished during that time. When I was elected at the AGM in Pisa, Italy in 2009, EASE was adjusting to being a smaller, leaner association with a membership of about 550 after the glory years in the late 1990s when we were eagerly anticipating surpassing 1000 members. Successive financial crises have taken their toll and numbers have declined slowly, despite many new members joining each year: however, through rigorous cost control and careful management, EASE now breaks even financially. Even more encouraging is that EASE is more active than ever and I am proud to recount our key achievements.



“Welcome to Tallinn University of Technology!”

Our most high-profile activity is the EASE conference, which used to be held every three years. After the success of the Tallinn conference in 2012, hosted by Tallinn University of Technology, Estonia through MareAnne Laane, it was decided to move to a two-year cycle. This has created more work for Council members, all of whom are volunteers, and for our secretary. I have been fortunate to have enjoyed the support of four excellent secretaries: Sheila Evered, Samantha Contarini, Mary Hodgson and Tina Wheeler. I am sure that Dalibora Behmen, who was responsible for the smooth running of the Split conference in Croatia, will continue this tradition. We also revised the format of the conferences to accommodate our members' preferences. Gone are the days when delegates wanted a free afternoon in the middle of the conference to take a walking tour around the host city: the core conference is now concentrated over 48 hours, with

optional workshops before and after. Rod Hunt, who has been an excellent treasurer throughout my term, has created a protocol for bids and a budget template, which facilitate the choice of venue and the planning and help to keep the price affordable for delegates. The Tallinn conference was our first in several years to make a small profit and the Split conference in 2014, superbly hosted by Ana Marušić at the School of Medicine, did even better. This is essential as our reduced membership subscription income barely covers our costs, so we need the additional revenue to invest in new activities. We have upgraded our membership database and our website, although technological developments mean that more could be done here.

At the start of my Presidency, we launched EASE accounts on Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook, which are all now important ways of reaching editors beyond our membership. We also have Wikipedia pages for both the association and the journal, some in multiple languages. Communication is a perennial challenge for academic societies: we have the technological means, but how to ensure that our messages are read? Should we worry about engaging the silent majority or just look forward to seeing them every two years?

As well as being educational and networking events, EASE conferences are a good way of strengthening our ties with similar associations, such as the International Society for Managing and Technical Editors (ISMTE), the International Association of Veterinary Editors, Mediterranean Editors and Translators and the International Society of Addiction Journal Editors. We all share core aims, with slightly different target audiences and priorities, so it makes sense that we collaborate as much as possible to provide the best service to all science editors. Asia is known as an area of rapid scientific development and this is mirrored by increased activity of editors' organisations throughout the region. EASE has established good relations with several of these, such as the Korean Council of Science Editors, who regularly attend our meetings and have hosted us in return, and the Asia-Pacific Association of Medical Editors. EASE is supporting both the newly formed Council of Asian Science Editors and the Asian Council of Science Editors.



Joan with Anthony Watkinson at the 2013 joint meeting with ISMTE, Blankenberge, Belgium

Nearer home, in 2013, EASE collaborated with ISMTE to organise a meeting in Blankenberge, Belgium, with Chris Sterken proving an excellent local organiser. The two associations continue to work together, the latest activity concerning the correct use of the journal impact factor – watch this space. We held a session on ‘Misconduct in science communication and the role of editors as science gatekeepers’ in the Careers Programme of the EuroScience Open Forum 2010, in Turin (Italy). Also in 2010, Shirin Heidari organised a workshop entitled ‘Scientific integrity and ethical issues in publishing in the field of HIV and AIDS’ at the World AIDS Congress in Vienna. EASE has also been represented at the Gender Summit in Brussels (2011), ISMTE in London (2014), the World Congress on Research Integrity in Brazil (2015), and the Royal Society in London (2105). This is a great way to bring the work of editors to the attention of our core audience, research scientists, and is another opportunity that EASE should explore more in the future.

One major landmark during my term was the 30th anniversary of EASE which we celebrated in Tallinn with a birthday cake at the reception in the Town Hall. The year was marked with a special logo and the publication of several articles on the history of EASE, as well as interviews with some of our honorary life members. My thanks to Sylwia Ufnalska and Alison Clayson who organised the anniversary events. Behind the scenes, the EASE archives have been curated by Maeve O'Connor, to facilitate storage and ease of access. Maeve was the person who introduced me to EASE, both figuratively and literally – at the departure gate in Gatwick Airport when we were travelling to my first EASE conference in Basel, Switzerland, in 1989. Maeve was Secretary and knew everyone: little did I know where those introductions would lead me.



The cake celebrating EASE' 30th anniversary, provided by the late Waleria Młyniec

European Science Editing has continued to develop as a peer-reviewed journal under the guidance of three editors: Moira Johnson, Armen Gasparyan and now Ksenija Baždarić. The Publications Committee was restructured and renamed the Editorial Board, with responsibility for the website and the *Science Editors' Handbook* being transferred to the Council. Under Armen Gasparyan, an International Advisory Board was appointed to help raise the profile of the journal among the academic community. The past few years have seen two new journals launched in this field – *Science*

Editing from KCSE and *Research Integrity and Peer Review* from BioMedCentral – joining *Science Editor* and *Learned Publishing*. As with the associations, each has a slightly different remit and audience, but there is considerable overlap and we need to invest in *European Science Editing* to ensure that it attracts some of the best research in this field. To help with this, original articles are now freely available from the time of publication: other articles continue to be reserved for members for the first six months. Through Research4Life, our journal is readily accessible to editors in low-income countries throughout the world.

In 2010 we published the EASE Guidelines for Authors and Translators, developed by Sylwia Ufnalska, who has shown great vision in identifying a need for simple advice for authors not accustomed to publishing in English language journals. The guidelines are now translated into 22 languages and Sylwia and her team update them annually. Two years later, we launched the EASE Author Toolkit which provides resources for authors and for editors working with authors. The aim is to link to existing resources where possible rather than to recreate materials. This year, we added the EASE Toolkit for Journal Editors, again managed by Sylwia Ufnalska, who has developed the Golden Rules for Scholarly Journal Editors, a Publication Ethics Checklist and a simple, easy-to-use form for authors' contributions and conflict of interest statements. All of these help editors around the world to implement best practice.

The Science Editors' Handbook Second Edition was launched at the Blankenberge conference in 2013 'to critical acclaim' and sells steadily. EASE appreciates the contributions of all the authors, particularly Pippa Smart, whose enthusiasm and organisational skills brought the project to fruition. As a new initiative, we licensed the content to the Korean Council of Science Editors to print locally in Korea for use in training courses there.

At the 2012 AGM, EASE launched a programme of regional chapters to facilitate interaction among editors within countries or groups of countries. Each chapter has its own page on the EASE website to present information on local events, training and funding opportunities. Each chapter is self supporting as no central funding is available. Chapters have been established in Russia, led by Sergey Gorin, in Croatia, led by Ana Marušić, and in Italy, led by Paola de Castro. A Mexican chapter has been established through collaboration with AMERBAC. This has proven to be very active, sending several members to EASE conferences and through María del Carmen Ruíz Alcocer providing Spanish translations of abstracts of ESE original articles and essays which are freely available on the EASE website. Maria is also translating *The Science Editors' Handbook* Second Edition into Spanish. This is another excellent example of how EASE can collaborate with editors beyond Europe and help to improve the standards of science editing around the world.

Another initiative that began in 2012 was the Gender Policy Committee, chaired by Shirin Heidari and Tom Babor. They have conducted research and organised sessions at conferences and have now completed recommendations for sex and gender considerations in research reporting under the name of Sex And Gender Equity in Research (SAGER)

guidelines, which should be published later this year. The guidelines were presented at the 6th World Congress on Women's Mental Health in Tokyo in March 2015 and again we are looking to collaborate with scientists in various disciplines to promote the dissemination of this work.

In September 2015, EASE convened a strategy group to assess how best to take the association forwards over the next decade. The group, led by Pippa Smart, concluded that EASE needs to strengthen its mission statement and activities and improve its communication with both new and existing members. Three areas were identified where EASE could play a leading role: advocacy, certification/training and research. We have been active in all three areas, but our activities have been fragmented and the challenge is to coordinate and optimise our efforts to achieve the best effect.

Advocacy is an area where EASE has contributed to many initiatives, without earning the recognition we deserve. When the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment was circulated in late 2012, we pointed out that EASE had published a Statement on Inappropriate Use of Impact Factors in 2007 but this was still not included in the reference list of the final Declaration. EASE endorsed the Declaration and we have formally supported the AllTrials campaign, the Lyon declaration (an advocacy document that will be used to influence the content of the United Nations post-2015 development agenda) and HIFA2015: A global campaign: Healthcare Information For All by 2015. Paola De Castro, with several other EASE members, is working on the Bioresource research impact factor initiative towards the creation of a standard guideline for citation of bioresources. EASE has also submitted comments to the International Standards Organization and to the National Information Standards Organization regarding their White paper on altmetrics.

With regards to training, in the past few years we have



Joan with Reme Melero after the conference in Tallinn, Estonia



Joan with her science mentor and friend, Tim Hunt, and Eva Baranyiová in Split, Croatia

taken a pragmatic approach, endorsing existing activities. We are grateful that Elisabeth Heseltine and Pippa Smart have run their courses on science writing and being a successful journal editor, respectively, on behalf of EASE in various places, from Poland to Dubai and South Korea. Paola De Castro has been tireless in conducting workshops in Europe, Africa and Latin America, while others who have regularly organised seminars include Reme Meleros, Sylwia Ufnalska, Eva Baranyiová and Ana Marušić.

EASE has contributed to various research projects into aspects of scientific publishing and the more general development and dissemination of information about scientific research. Ably represented by Arjan Polderman, we have been a partner in the recently completed sTANDEM project (Standardising English for Medical Purposes). Through Chris Sterken, EASE has a seat on the Board of Atomium Culture, which is an inter-sectorial platform promoting knowledge sharing on issues regarding the development of a European knowledge society. Ana Marušić represents EASE in a COST action on peer review, which will consider the role

of scientific journals in research integrity and its breaches, and on a new project, Higher Education Institutions and Responsible Research and Innovation.

So we have achieved much over the past six years, through the efforts of many members, and I am very grateful for the support I have received throughout my terms as President. Most importantly, as well as all the initiatives, projects and proposals, EASE has continued to serve as a medium for

social networking (the real, in person type), typified by the French members' luncheons organised by Alison Clayson that I was privileged to attend once. I look forward to meeting as many members as possible, old and new, in Strasbourg next June.

Joan Marsh

EASE President 2009-2015



Networking French-style: luncheon in Paris

With thanks to Eva Baranyiová for the photos