

Council of Science Editors (CSE) Annual Meeting 2016

14–17 May 2016, Denver, Colorado, USA

With the theme “Pioneers in Scholarly Publishing: Thriving in the New Frontier”, this year’s attendance was by far the highest, with 460+ attendees from across the publishing industry. I attended as a scholarship recipient, and the experience was exhilarating. I interacted with some popular faces in the publishing industry and learnt considerably from them in a short time.

Days one and two were dedicated to short courses for journal and manuscript editors and on publication management and ethics. The evening of day two was all about networking, where everyone present interacted with one another on both professional and personal levels.

Days three and four included keynote and plenary addresses and 32 concurrent sessions. The highlight of the conference was the keynote address titled “The Poisoner’s Guide to Communicating Science” by Deborah Blum (Co-editor, *A Field Guide for Science Writers*; Director, Knight Science Journalism Program, MIT). This address focussed on communicating science to the average citizen, which is particularly important in view of decisions that must be made about current affairs, ranging from climate change to the spread of the Zika virus. Deborah emphasised the fact that all citizens, particularly those who feel alienated by research establishments, should be made aware of the breakthroughs or issues noted in science, as these affect everyone. Therefore, it is necessary that researchers effectively communicate their findings so that anyone who reads a paper is likely to understand the key results and conclusions.

The first session, “Editorial and Publishing Questions – Data-Informed Solutions”, was presented by Esmeralda Buchanan (American Cancer Society), Brittany Campbell (National Academies of Sciences), Jill Jackson (American College of Physicians), Kerry Krofe (PLOS ONE), Jeanette Panning (American Geophysical Union) and Sarah Tegen (American Chemical Society). The session was composed of lightning talks by the presenters, who posed practical questions and then used data to draw informed answers. The talks included data-informed solutions about users and customers, journal growth, peer review, monitoring journal performance and social media presence adopted by different journals.

In the next session, “Data Sharing – Benefits for Researchers, Editors, and Publishers”, Abraham Haileamlak (Jimma University) described some of the proposed requirements for sharing of de-identified individual patient data published by ICMJE. Further, Meghan Byrne (PLOS ONE) discussed the data-sharing mechanism and whether data should be freely accessible, protocols for secondary data users and data-sharing practices currently used by PLOS ONE.

In “Think. Check. Submit. – The Impact of Predatory Journals and How to Identify Them”, Nick Shockey (SPARC) discussed the reasons why some researchers fall prey to predatory journals and the precautions (OpenCon) that can be taken to avoid such occurrences. Charlie Rapple (Kudos) spoke about the “Think. Check. Submit.” campaign. She discussed the implications of predatory journals for authors, such as being published in journals that are infrequently cited or not cited

at all, not indexed or archived, and poorly edited and scarcely reviewed. The campaign is intended to help researchers identify trusted journals using a simple checklist to assess credentials, thus ensuring a body of quality scholarly literature.

“Data Files and the Editorial Office – We Know What It Is, Now What Do We Do With It?” was conducted by Anita Bandrowski (University of California, San Diego), Tamara Hanna (American Chemical Society), and Meredith Morovati (Dryad), who spoke about Big Data and the cultural shift in academic publishing that is embracing data and resource sharing, and its implications for reproducibility in science. Tamara shared findings from a journal that added data review to their peer review process, and Meredith shared some guidelines on effective utilisation of data files shared during manuscript submission to make them usable for decades.

On the second day, in the session “Telecommuting: The Joys and Perils”, Nancy Devaux (Sheridan Journal Services), Nan Hallock (The Society for Laboratory Automation and Screening), Robin Switzer (ESL Medical Editing, LLC) and Melissa Blickem (American Chemical Society) shared their experiences as telecommuters or managers of telecommuters and the best practices that should be adopted by all those working remotely. Nancy said “telecommuting is a privilege and not a right,” a sentiment with which I heartily agree.

The session “Editing Medical and Scientific Tables (Or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Grid)” was straightforward and helpful. Peter Olson (Sheridan Journal Services) shared some simple tips on editing, structuring, formatting and organising tables, practises of which many editors may be aware but rarely use.

Lauren Fischer (The JAMA Network), Tom Lang (Tom Lang Communications and Training International) and Rajashree Ranganathan (American Society of Civil Engineers) conducted a session entitled “Insights and Strategies for Career Development”. As an early career professional, attending this session was important to me personally. The speakers shared interesting approaches to furthering one’s career in the publication industry, discussing traditional and non-traditional methods of career development. The former include becoming part of a professional organisation, continuing education opportunities, keeping up with technology, building knowledge of emerging topics, and honing project management skills. The latter include getting outside one’s comfort zone, seizing opportunities, learning what other teams do, looking at things from a broad perspective, and mentorship.

To conclude, I had a memorable conversation with CSE Membership Committee Chair Lindsey Buscher. She said that it is we young professionals who make all the difference and that we should be actively involved in organisations like CSE. This is what makes all the difference, and I look forward to contributing more actively to the industry and guiding early professionals ably.

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