Mapping the Terrain of Publication Ethics: 16 years of COPE Cases

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Elected member COPE Council
Competing Interests
I have none to declare
Promoting integrity in research publication

COPE is a forum for editors and publishers of peer reviewed journals to discuss all aspects of publication ethics. It also advises editors on how to handle cases of research and publication misconduct. Read more about COPE.

FEATURED

FORUM DISCUSSION TOPIC: Sharing of information among editors-in-chief regarding possible misconduct

The Forum discussion topic on Wednesday 4 September is “Sharing of information among editors-in-chief regarding possible misconduct”. Click below to learn more and leave your comments.

Learn more

NEWS & OPINION view all

News / COPE's eLearning course relaunched
27/8/2013 7.50am
COPE is delighted to announce the relaunch of the eLearning programme on the COPE website. COPE members can now access the programme directly on the COPE website http://publicationethics.org/resources/elearning once they have logged in.

News / Clarification of COPE advice to editors on Geopolitical intrusions on editorial decisions
1/8/2013 6.11am
There has been much discussion recently on government, specifically US government, sanctions against Iran, the potential effect on Iranian researchers and some publishers have cautioned editors and reviewers about handling papers from Iran.

http://publicationethics.org
COPE history

• Began in 1997 as an informal forum for editors in the UK to discuss ethical issues related to research and publication in biomedical journal publishing
• In 2007-08 established as a limited company and a UK-registered charity
• Currently >9000 members, from >75 countries
• All academic disciplines are covered
• 20 Council members from 11 countries and a range of disciplines
COPE structure

- Work guided by an elected Council and elected Officers, who work voluntarily
- Day-to-day management of business affairs handled by three permanent staff (paid): Operations Manager, Natalie Ridgeway; Administrator, Linda Gough; Web Manager, Cynthia Clerk
- Specific projects managed by various sub-committees of Council members
American Chemical Society

Accounts of Chemical Research
Editor: Prof Cynthia J Burrows
Website: http://pubs.acs.org/journal/achre4

ACS Applied Materials and Interfaces
Editor: Professor Kirk S Schanze
Website: http://pubs.acs.org/journal/aarnick

ACS Catalysis
Editor: Professor Christopher W Jones
Website: http://pubs.acs.org/journal/accacs

ACS Chemical Biology
Editor: Professor Laura Kiessling
Website: http://pubs.acs.org/journal/acbcct

Journal of the American Chemical Society
Contact:
Editor-in-Chief: Professor Peter J Stang
ISSN:
0002-7863 (print); 1520-5126 (online)
Website:
http://pubs.acs.org/journal/jacsat
Publisher:
American Chemical Society
Frequency:
Weekly
Subject:
Chemistry

http://publicationethics.org/category/publisher/american-chemical-society
Forums

COPE offers advice and guidance to its members, primarily through its scheduled forum meetings:

• Held in person or via webinar
• Allow members to benefit from views and experiences of other members
• Cases presented anonymously
• Text summaries and audio recordings published on the website (database of >500 cases, searchable by year and keywords)
• Members can contact COPE between forums for advice on urgent cases
COPE - Case Analysis Project

Analysis of 16 years of COPE Cases (1997-2012)

Team: Irene Hames (COPE Council), Charon Pierson (COPE Council), Natalie Ridgeway (COPE Operations Manager) Virginia Barbour (COPE Chair)

Presented at 7th International Congress on Peer Review and Biomedical Publication 8 September 2013, Chicago
All the cases COPE has discussed since its inception in 1997 have been entered into a searchable database. This database now contains over 400 cases together with the advice given by COPE. For more recent cases, the database also includes follow-up information about outcomes. We hope this

- Cases database – approximately 500 cases
- Updated classification scheme needed
- New scheme - 18 main Classifications, up to 2 per case
  - 99 Keywords, up to 10 per case
  - descriptive, not judgemental
- The coding exercise

*Classifications and Keywords indicate the topics discussed, not that a particular form of misconduct had occurred*
An author contacted our journal in August 2011 informing us that a paper he had published in our journal in 2005 had been published, word for word, in another journal (journal X), under a different title and author group, in 2007.

We followed the appropriate COPE flowchart and contacted the editor of journal X. The editor of journal X told us in September 2011 that he would publish a retraction and a letter submitted from the author group admitting a "disagreeable mistake".

Journal X publishes infrequently, so I checked over the past 12 months for the retraction and published letter. The notice and letter were never published and the article is still available through the journal's website and SCOPUS. I contacted the editor of journal X in October 2012 to ask him if he planned to retract the article and publish the letter, as we had agreed. He replied that the article was no longer available. I sent him the link where I was able to retrieve it and he did not reply back.

The original author of the paper contacted the author group's institution in September 2011, but he never received a response.

In the COPE flowchart for suspected plagiarism, the journal that published the plagiarized article issues a retraction; however, what should be done if that journal will not correct the record? Journal X is not a member of COPE.
What to do if you suspect plagiarism

(b) Suspected plagiarism in a published manuscript

Reader informs editor about suspected plagiarism

- Thank reader and say you plan to investigate
- Get full documentary evidence if not already provided

Check degree of copying

- Clear plagiarism (unattributed use of large portions of text and/or data, presented as if they were by the plagiarist)
- Minor copying of short phrases only (e.g. in discussion of research paper) No misattribution of data

Note: The instructions to authors should include a definition of plagiarism and state the journal’s policy on it.
Cases, Classifications & Keywords
1997-2012 by 4-year intervals

Number

Mean

COPE COMMITTEE ON PUBLICATION ETHICS
Classification of COPE cases, 1997-2012
Classification of COPE cases, 1997-2012, categories with >7 instances in a 4-year period
COPE resource development

- **eLearning modules re-launched 2013**: Introduction to publication ethics, Plagiarism, Data falsification, Data fabrication, Conflict of interest, Authorship, Reviewer misconduct

- **eLearning modules in development**: Editor misconduct, Redundant publication, Selective reporting, Unethical research

- **Discussion documents**: How should editors respond to plagiarism, Responding to anonymous whistle blowers, electronic responses to blogs and journal articles

- New and enhanced *Flowcharts* in progress

- New *Guidelines* … on peer review …
‘For his part, Moon acknowledged suggesting his friends and colleagues as reviewers, telling Retraction Watch that the results “can be mistaken for fake reviews.” But he said it wasn’t only his mistake: The editors, Moon said, invited those reviews without confirming the identity of the reviewers.’
COPE Ethical Guidelines for Peer Reviewers

Irene Hames on behalf of COPE Council
March 2013, v.1

Peer review in all its form plays an important role in ensuring the integrity of the scholarly record. The process depends to a large extent on trust, and requires that everyone involved behaves responsibly and ethically. Peer reviewers play a central and critical part in the peer-review process, but too often come to the role without any guidance and may be unaware of their ethical obligations. The COPE Ethical Guidelines for Peer Reviewers set out the basic principles and standards to which all peer reviewers should adhere during the peer-review process. It is hoped they will provide helpful guidance to researchers, be a reference for journals and editors in guiding their reviewers, and act as an educational resource for institutions in training their students and researchers.

Basic principles to which peer reviewers should adhere

‘Promoting integrity in research publication’

- Education as well as guidance and advice
- Making the Forum accessible to more members, more often, in more ways
- Resources you can use freely in your editorial work

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Website: http://www.publicationethics.org/
THANK YOU