Improving journal quality
1: what is quality?

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Welcome

• Who am I?
  – In academic/scholarly publishing since 1986
    • Blackwell-Science (Wiley), CABI, CUP, INASP
  – Independent consultant since 2007
    • Editorial strategies, copyright
  – Other activities include:
    • Training courses on journal development, editorial matters, copyright, Crossref, etc.
    • Write a monthly newsletter: ALPSP Alert
    • Vice President of the European Association of Science Editors (EASE)
    • Editor-in-Chief of Learned Publishing
WHY QUALITY MATTERS
How many articles … ?

And c.25% of items in GS are available for free

“Predatory” journals

• Journals that don’t conform to international standards
  – What are international standards?
• People using the pay-to-publish model without scruples
  – Fraudulent journals (plagiarised content)
Have you had experiences of encountering so-called ‘predatory’ publishers?

- 35% I have received emails from these publishers/journals
- 6% I have been in correspondence with them
- 3% I have published articles with them
- 56% No, I have no experience with them

Discussion

- What makes a journal successful?
- What makes your journal successful?
- Who judges?
Success indicators

• Financial stability
• Reputation
  – Among your peers
    • Ease of getting submissions
    • High readership
    • High citation
  – Within institutions
    • Reward for publishing with you
• “Impact”

Gatekeeper or access enabler?
Strategies for improving “success”

- Improve submission quality
- Improve review quality
- Make better decisions
- Publish better content

- Improve visibility
- Increase readership
- Raise reputation
- Increase impact

VISION
Question

- Why are you publishing a journal?

Differentiating the vision

- What makes your journal different?
- What makes you unique?
- What is the rationale for your journal?

What is your USP*?

- *Unique selling point
Not all journals are the same

• The environment which journals inhabit is not uniform
• Different communities want different things from journals:
  – Professional advice and guidance
  – High level research findings
  – News and alerts to new guidelines
  – Examples and case studies
  – And what else … ?

What about your journal?

• Who are your community?
  – What do they want from the journal?
• What does the journal want to supply to them?
Different content / formats

- Original research articles
  - Themed sections
  - Themed issues
  - Lead articles
- Review articles
- Short articles
- Editorial
- Guest editorial
- Editor’s selection
- Book reviews
- Case studies
- Case notes
- A day in the life of…
- Perspectives
- Personal view
- Quizzes (CME, etc.)
- News, events
- Letters to the editor
- Obituaries
- And … ?

Writing and communicating the vision

- Goal
  - Why are you publishing?
- Aims and objectives
  - What you are publishing?
  - Who are you publishing it for?
Good and bad aims

• Journal X aims to improve healthcare in Antarctica

• Journal Y aims to improve healthcare in Antarctica through the provision of high quality research
**Good and bad aims**

- Journal X aims to improve healthcare in Antarctica

- Journal Y aims to improve healthcare in Antarctica through the provision of high quality research

- Journal Z aims to improve healthcare in Antarctica through the provision of quality research for penguin conservationists

**Example**

- **Vision**
  - Our vision is that the journal will contribute to improved quality and effectiveness in scholarly publishing by providing a source of relevant and authoritative research and opinion.

- **Aims and scope**
  - Learned Publishing publishes peer reviewed research, reviews, industry updates and opinions on all aspects of scholarly communication and publishing. Written by and published for everyone involved with scholarly communication and publishing, our readership includes publishers, vendors, librarians, academics and researchers from around the world.
DOAJ essential criteria

• DOAJ Principles of Transparency and Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing
  – https://doaj.org/bestpractice

  – Developed in collaboration with COPE, OASPA and WAME
Governing Body / ownership

- Journals shall have editorial boards or other governing bodies whose members are recognized experts in the subject areas included within the journal's scope. The full names and affiliations of the journal's editors shall be provided on the journal's Web site.
- Information about the ownership and/or management of a journal shall be clearly indicated on the journal's Web site. Publishers shall not use organizational or journal names that would mislead potential authors and editors about the nature of the journal's owner.

Editorial team/contact information

- Journals shall provide the full names and affiliations of the journal's editors on the journal's Web site as well as contact information for the editorial office.
Peer review process

• Journal content must be clearly marked as whether peer reviewed or not. Peer review is defined as obtaining advice on individual manuscripts from reviewers expert in the field who are not part of the journal's editorial staff. This process, as well as any policies related to the journal’s peer review procedures, shall be clearly described on the journal's Web site.

Process for identification of and dealing with allegations of research misconduct

• Publishers and editors shall take reasonable steps to identify and prevent the publication of papers where research misconduct has occurred, including plagiarism, citation manipulation, and data falsification/fabrication, among others. In no case shall a journal or its editors encourage such misconduct, or knowingly allow such misconduct to take place. In the event that a journal's publisher or editors are made aware of any allegation of research misconduct relating to a published article in their journal - the publisher or editor shall follow COPE’s guidelines (or equivalent) in dealing with allegations.
Conflicts of interest

• A journal shall have clear policies on handling potential conflicts of interest of editors, authors, and reviewers and the policies should be clearly stated.

Revenue sources

• Business models or revenue sources (eg, author fees, subscriptions, advertising, reprints, institutional support, and organizational support) shall be clearly stated or otherwise evident on the journal's Web site.
• Journals shall state their advertising policy if relevant, including what types of ads will be considered, who makes decisions regarding accepting ads and whether they are linked to content or reader behavior (online only) or are displayed at random.
Author fees

- Any fees or charges that are required for manuscript processing and/or publishing materials in the journal shall be clearly stated in a place that is easy for potential authors to find prior to submitting their manuscripts for review or explained to authors before they begin preparing their manuscript for submission.

Copyright

- Copyright and licensing information shall be clearly described on the journal's Web site, and licensing terms shall be indicated on all published articles, both HTML and PDFs.
Web site / access

- A journal's Web site, including the text that it contains, shall demonstrate that care has been taken to ensure high ethical and professional standards. It must not contain misleading information, including any attempt to mimic another journal/publisher's site.
- The way(s) in which the journal and individual articles are available to readers and whether there are associated subscription or pay per view fees shall be stated.

Name of journal / schedule

- The Journal name shall be unique and not be one that is easily confused with another journal or that might mislead potential authors and readers about the Journal's origin or association with other journals.
- The periodicity at which a journal publishes shall be clearly indicated.
Archiving

• A journal's plan for electronic backup and preservation of access to the journal content (for example, access to main articles via CLOCKSS or PubMedCentral) in the event a journal is no longer published shall be clearly indicated.

Direct marketing

• Any direct marketing activities, including solicitation of manuscripts that are conducted on behalf of the journal, shall be appropriate, well targeted, and unobtrusive.
EMAME
http://www.emro.who.int/entity/emame

EASE publications & resources
www.ease.org.uk

- European Science Editing (quarterly journal)
- Science Editors’ Handbook, 2nd ed.
  - 56 chapters: editing, terminology, policies, peer review, ethics, publishing, promotion
- EASE Toolkit for Authors and for Journal Editors
  - Web links to resources
- EASE Guidelines for Authors and Translators
  - In >20 languages
Thank you

… Questions …

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www.pspconsulting.org
Improving journal quality
2: working with authors

ACSE conference
Dubai, August 2016

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WHAT DO AUTHORS WANT?
Why we publish

• **Registration**
  – establishing the author’s precedence and ownership of an idea
• **Dissemination**
  – communicating the findings to its intended audience
• **Certification**
  – ensuring quality control through peer review
• **Archival record**
  – preserving a fixed version of the paper for future reference and citation

Source: Henry Oldenburg
Editor/Publisher of Philosophical Transactions
c.1670

What we know about authors …

• What do authors want …
  • Stamp of authority
  • Journal pecking order
  • Perceived quality
  • Visibility and readership
  • Peer recognition
• Citation
• Speed
• Access
• Archive
• Positive publishing experience
• Want to publish more
(Some) reasons for submitting

- The quality of the journal
- The impact factor of the journal
- Journal Web site
- Reputation of the publisher
- The Journal’s audience
- Having a broad scope
- The speed of the review and publication process
- The review criteria of the journal
- Amount of the article processing charge
- The fact the journal was Open Access
- Recommendation of a colleague

http://dx.doi.org/10.7717/peerj.365
Why attract more authors?

• More submissions = more selectivity
• Higher quality = more attractive to authors

• Low submissions = lower quality acceptance = less attractive to “good” authors
Outreach

• Networking, networking, networking …

• Commissioning
  – Who, why, when, how?
Where do authors come from

• Your department
• Your school
• Your university / institution
• Your country
• Your region
• Your profession (meetings, colleagues)
• Your readers
• Your reviewers

Commissioning letters

• What should be included in a commissioning email:
  – Why the author was chosen
  – Why they should consider submitting to you
    • Motivation, reward
  – What they are being asked to submit
    • Topic, article type, length of article, style
  – When they are being asked to submit
  – Will it be peer reviewed
  – Do you guarantee publication
  – When it is likely to be published
How would you respond to these requests?

Pippa,
I read your article in "Learned Publishing" with interest, and wonder if you would be prepared to write a similar article for "scholarly Publishing" – about 2000 words, by the end of December?

Hello Pippa,
it’s Gabriel, long time since we spoke. How would you like some free publicity? We are doing a special issue on communication and you were the obvious person to do this. We want 10 tips for good writing by Wednesday if you can…

…or these requests?

Dear Ms Smart,
I have been given your name as a potential contributor for our Comment section. I would like a short piece on Electronic English. It needs to be a serious work, but I would also like it to be:
(a) brief, up to say 1000 words,
(b) amusing or witty if appropriate,
(c) a masterpiece of compression,
(d) topical,
(e) factual, though it could include opinion,
(f) concisely referenced.
It will be peer reviewed so it is important for you to realise that it won’t necessarily be published. I do hope you can do this!

Hi,
I’m the editor of "no-Way" journal – and I’d like you to submit your best research for our next issue. We are a really presigus journal, and publish quickly. Please send your formatted paper to my email below.
Thanks,
A good article ...

• Is attractive to the editors
  – Makes them want to read it all

• Communicates its message clearly
  – Clearly written
  – Clearly structured

• Encourages citation
  – Through its content
Research …

- Make it worth publishing
  - Research the literature
  - Ask the right question
  - Plan the right experiment and use the right methods
  - Analyse your results correctly
  - Draw sensible conclusions

(Thanks to Diabetogoia, “What does an Editor look for?”)
Have a clear message

• What is the point of the article?
• Can you clearly express the “key message”?
  – If you cannot, then how can the reader?
• Note: the key message and the title are not (always) the same

The key message

• Can be a statement of fact/finding
  – We found a difference in cognitive development between preschool singletons and twins
• … a challenge
  – We must anticipate a difference in cognitive development …
• … a question
  – Why is there a difference in cognitive development…
An article without a message is not worth publishing

Ensure the content can be understood

• Use simple words
  – Peruse/read, exceedingly/often, implement/use
• Avoid redundant words
  – Entirely absent, join together, past history
• Use short sentences
Article structure

- **Introduction:**
  - What was the point of the research?
- **Method:**
  - How was the research undertaken?
- **Results:**
  - What were the findings?
- **And …**
- **Discussion:**
  - What do the findings mean, what is the next step, where does the answer lead us?
Presentation: look professional

- Avoid spelling mistakes
- Clear layout of your document
- High resolution images

Tips for authors

“Editors cannot be experts in every area that their journal covers.”
“The author’s job is to intrigue the editor and later on the reviewers, and convince them of the relevance of their work”

*What Editors Want: Philippa Benson and Susan Silver*
Tell authors what you want
What is an "author"?

- ICMJE definition
  - “An “author” is generally considered to be someone who has made substantive intellectual contributions to a published study”
  - i.e. contributed to the idea AND execution AND writing of the study
  - “All contributors who do not meet the criteria for authorship should be listed in an acknowledgments section.”
- COPE discussion document “each journal set its own definitions”

Contributorship or authorship?

- “Who did what”
- Authors listed at start of paper
- Contributors listed at the end, with their contribution
- Taxonomy for contribution?
Contributorship

- CASRAI CRediT
- http://ref.casrai.org/CRediT

Author guidelines

- What the journal wants to publish
- How to submit a paper
- What to expect from the publication process
  – How many reviewers, what is the timing, etc.

pippa.smart@gmail.com
www.pspconsulting.org
Do you provide good guidelines?

- Detail (Too much? Too little?)
- Easy to read?
- Quick answers?

- Content
  - Article types, areas of research
- Style
  - Examples of preferred style
- Presentation
  - How to submit, what happens after submission

Useful author resources:
Taylor & Francis:
http://authorservices.taylorandfrancis.com/category/choosing-a-journal
Useful author resources:

Springer:
https://www.springer.com/gp/authors-editors/journal-authorcategory/choosing-a-journal/

Useful author resources:

OUP:
Do you help with author resources?

• Private, commercial services
  – Edanz, Editage, Charlesworth … others?

Good practice
Communication

• Is it easy to communicate with the journal?
  – Email / post / telephone / online
• How well does the journal communicate what it wants
  – Author guidelines
  – Responses (and responsiveness)

The advisory role of the journal

• Clear guidance for authors
• Constructive reviewer comments
  – Timeliness (speed of feedback)
  – Feedback (positive and negative)
• Post-decision assistance
  – Clear rationale for decision to reject article
• Author assistance
  – Editing / Rewriting
  – Advice / criticism
When rejecting

• Be clear – be kind

Reasons for rejection

• Wrong paper, wrong journal
  – Read the guidelines
• Mismatch of quality
  – Don’t aim too high
• Journal backlog increasing rejection
  – Just unlucky
• Too many articles on the same topic
  – Check before submitting – or just unlucky
• Badly written
  – Explain yourself more clearly
• Flawed science
  – Be honest with yourself

*What Editors Want: Philippa Benson and Susan Silver*
Motivating them to come to you…

• Be visible
  – Will you help raise awareness of their article?
• Be credible
  – Good reputation, good quality
• Give good service
  – Submission systems, responsive, feedback
• Be indexed
  – PubMed, Web of Science, Scopus
  – Impact Factor …
• What is your USP?
  – What “extra” can you offer?
Do you deliver . . .

- Will my peers read this?
- How quickly can I get my article published?
- Will publishing here give me sufficient credit?

Do you deliver “after-sales” service?
Using authors … ?

• Can you motivate authors to “sell” their own articles?
  – Social networking
  – Blogs
  – Alerts
  – Grow Kudos
    (NB, not GetKudos!)
    www.growkudos.com/

• Tim Albert (2016) Winning the Publications Game. CRC Press.
EASE publications & resources
www.ease.org.uk

• *Science Editors’ Handbook*, 2nd ed.
  – 56 chapters: editing, terminology, policies, peer review, ethics, publishing, promotion

• EASE Toolkit for Authors and for Journal Editors
  – Web links to resources

• EASE Guidelines for Authors and Translators
  – In >20 languages

Thank you

… Questions …

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