Principles of Transparency and Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing

Introduction

Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), the Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association (OASPA), and the World Association of Medical Editors (WAME) are scholarly organizations that have seen an increase in the number, and broad range in the quality, of membership applications. Our organizations have collaborated to identify principles of transparency and best practice for scholarly publications and to clarify that these principles form the basis of the criteria by which suitability for membership is assessed by COPE, DOAJ and OASPA, and part of the criteria on which membership applications are evaluated by WAME. Each organization also has their own, additional criteria which are used when evaluating applications. The organizations will not share lists of publishers or journals that failed to demonstrate that they met the criteria for transparency and best practice.

This is the third version of a work in progress (published January 2018); the first version was posted on the COPE website on January 2014 and a second version in June 2015. We encourage its wide dissemination and continue to welcome feedback on the general principles and the specific criteria. Background on the organizations is below.

Reference
Written by COPE/DOAJ/OASPA/WAME

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Principles of Transparency

1. Website: A journal's website, including the text that it contains, shall demonstrate that care has been taken to ensure high ethical and professional standards. It must not contain information that might mislead readers or authors, including any attempt to mimic another journal/publisher's site.

An 'Aims & Scope' statement should be included on the website and the readership clearly defined. There should be a statement on what a journal will consider for publication including authorship criteria (e.g., not considering multiple submissions, redundant publications) to be included. ISSNs should be clearly displayed (separate for print and electronic).

2. Name of journal: 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.

3. 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 website, including the method of peer review used. Journal websites should not guarantee manuscript acceptance or very short peer review times.

4. Ownership and management: Information about the ownership and/or management of a journal shall be clearly indicated on the journal's website. Publishers shall not use organizational or journal names that would mislead potential authors and editors about the nature of the journal's owner.

5. Governing body: 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 editorial board or other governing body shall be provided on the journal's website.

6. Editorial team/contact information: Journals shall provide the full names and affiliations of the journal's editors on the journal website as well as contact information for the editorial office, including a full address.

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7. Copyright and Licensing: The policy for copyright shall be clearly stated in the author guidelines and the copyright holder named on all published articles. Likewise, licensing information shall be clearly described in guidelines on the website, and licensing terms shall be indicated on all published articles, both HTML and PDFs. If authors are allowed to publish under a Creative Commons license then any specific license requirements shall be noted. Any policies on posting of final accepted versions or published articles on third party repositories shall be clearly stated.

8. 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. If no such fees are charged that should also be clearly stated.

9. 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.

10. Publication Ethics: A journal shall also have policies on publishing ethics. These should be clearly visible on its website, and should refer to: i) Journal policies on authorship and contributorship; ii) How the journal will handle complaints and appeals; iii) Journal policies on conflicts of interest / competing interests; iv) Journal policies on data sharing and reproducibility; v) Journal's policy on ethical oversight; vi) Journal's policy on intellectual property; and vii) Journal's options for post-publication discussions and corrections.

11. Publishing schedule: The periodicity at which a journal publishes shall be clearly indicated.

12. Access: 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.

13. 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.

14. Revenue sources: Business models or revenue sources (e.g., author fees, subscriptions, advertising, reprints, institutional support, and organizational support) shall be clearly stated or otherwise evident on the journal's website. Publishing fees or waiver status should not influence editorial decision making.

15. Advertising: Journals shall state their advertising policy if relevant, including what types of adverts will be considered, who makes decisions regarding accepting adverts and whether they are linked to content or reader behavior (online only) or are displayed at random. Advertisements should not be related in any way to editorial decision making and shall be kept separate from the published content.

16. 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. Information provided about the publisher or journal is expected to be truthful and not misleading for readers or authors.

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In the event that a member organization is found to have violated these best practices, or other specific requirements of the organization, OASPA/DOAJ/COPE/WAME shall in the first instance try to work with them in order to address any concerns that have been raised. In the event that the member organization is unable or unwilling to address these concerns, their membership in the organization may be suspended or terminated. All of the member organizations have procedures for dealing with concerns raised about member journals.

About the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE, https://publicationethics.org)

COPE provides advice to editors and publishers on all aspects of publication ethics and, in particular, how to handle cases of research and publication misconduct. It also provides a forum for its members to discuss individual cases. COPE does not investigate individual cases but encourages editors to ensure that cases are investigated by the appropriate authorities (usually a research institution or employer). All COPE members are expected to apply COPE principles of publication ethics outlined in the core practices.

About the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ, https://doaj.org)

The mission of the DOAJ is to curate, maintain and develop a source of reliable information about open access scholarly journals on the web; to verify that entries on the list comply with reasonable standards; to increase the visibility, dissemination, discoverability and attraction of open access journals; to enable scholars, libraries, universities, research funders and other stakeholders to benefit from the information and services provided; to facilitate the integration of open access journals into library and aggregator services; to assist, where possible, publishers and their journals to meet reasonable digital publishing standards; and to thereby support the transition of the system of scholarly communication and publishing into a model that serves science, higher education, industry, innovation, societies and the people. Through this work, DOAJ will cooperate and collaborate with all interested parties working toward these objectives.

About the Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association (OASPA, https://oaspa.org)

OASPA is a trade association that was established in 2008 in order to represent the interests of Open Access (OA) publishers globally across all disciplines. By encouraging collaboration in developing appropriate business models, tools and standards to support OA publishing, OASPA aims to help ensure a prosperous and sustainable future for the benefit of its members and the scholarly communities they serve. This mission is carried out through exchanging information, setting standards, advancing models, advocacy, education, and the promotion of innovation.

About the World Association of Medical Editors (WAME, http://www.wame.org)

WAME is a global nonprofit voluntary association of editors of peer-reviewed medical journals who seek to foster cooperation and communication among editors; improve editorial standards; promote professionalism in medical editing through education, self-criticism, and self-regulation; and encourage research on the principles and practice of medical editing. WAME develops policies and recommendations of best practices for medical journal editors and has a syllabus for editors that members are encouraged to follow.