

Report on the 2016 Short Course for Journal Editors at the Council of Science Editors annual meeting

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The Short Course for Journal Editors 2016 was held as a preconference of the 2016 Council of Science Editors (CSE) at the Grand Hyatt Hotel in Denver, Colorado. Four short courses were offered during the first two days of the 2016 CSE annual meeting. The course was attended by 34 participants from many countries, most of whom were editors. Among the participants, 6 were from Africa and 4 from Asia (2 from China, 1 from Japan, and 1 from South Korea). The short course for journal editors was a 2-day program of the CSE, while the others (publication management, journal metrics, and publication ethics) were all single-day programs. I attended the journal editors short course.

The course objectives were to provide (1) “an overview of the roles and responsibilities of scientific journal editors” and (2) “an introduction for newly appointed editors and a refresher for experienced colleagues, providing a survey of the roles and responsibilities of editors of scientific journals.” The lectures were clustered into four broad topics (the fundamentals of editing, the editorial board, journal management, and publishing ethics). Plenty of time for discussion, interaction, and questions was offered during or after the clusters of lectures. Thomas C. Gerber, associate editor of *Mayo Clinic Proceedings* and professor of Medicine and Radiology, Mayo Clinic College of Medicine, was the organizer of the program and invited a carefully selected list of speakers based on his extensive experience.

On the morning of May 14, Day 1, there were five lectures in the cluster on journal publishing basics: (1) setting the scene (“environmental scan”), (2) surviving as a new editor, (3) setting journal priorities, (4) creating a positive culture, and (5) editors and editorial board members.

Bruce Polsky, publishing consultant of *Mayo Clinic Proceedings*, gave a presentation on an environmental scan for science, technology, and medicine (STM) journal editors. He described the current environment of STM journals as “disruptive” because of the following events: (1) Digital publishing eliminates postal delivery fees and print costs for online-only subscribers. (2) Journals are able to cultivate worldwide authorship, readership, and global dissemination of findings. (3) Journals can be accessed by individual users across multiple devices, and cloud-based services allow users to make their content “device independent.” (4) Due to the proliferation of mobile devices, publisher statistics show a 30% increase of website traffic coming from

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mobile devices. (5) Journals need to output content concurrently to multiple devices, operating systems, and platforms. (6) While many users access digital content, the better readers have remained with the print version. (7) The worldwide economy remains moribund; money remains scarce. (8) The Internet has trained viewers to assume all content is free. (9) In constant dollars, NIH appropriations are down nearly 30% since 2003. (10) Pundits suggest open-access now encompasses 10% to 20% of all published science articles.

Christine Casey, editor of *MMWR Serials*, presented a “survival kit” for the journal editor. She recommended that newly appointed editors (1) read the previous year of the journal, (2) know the journal’s history, (3) review the budget and business model, (4) interview those who came before, (5) ask for standard operating procedures, (6) scan the website, (7) become familiar with editorial policies, (8) discover benchmarks in place, (9) mock up an author experience, (10) change or wait 6 months, (11) think about the editor’s and journal’s role in scientific publication, and (12) reflect and write entrance and exit editorials.

David Riley, editor of *The Permanente Journal and Integrative Medicine: A Clinician’s Journal*, gave a presentation on setting priorities for journals. Editors must ask three fundamental questions: (1) what kind of publication would you like to have, (2) who is your audience, and (3) how long is your runway?

Thomas C. Gerber discussed the roles and desirable attributes of editors and editorial board members. He insisted that there are four models for editorial board management: (1) “monarchy (also known as Editor-in-King),” (2) “fraternity officers,” (3) “corporate hierarchy,” and (4) “special forces.” An Editor-in-King may fit a small journal with a limited budget and temporarily benefit a start-up or journal in transition. With the Editor-in-King model, the editorial board viewed as a source of readily available reviewers. In the fraternity officers model, the editor-in-chief and board are highly socialized and desire to please. The corporate hierarchy model may fit large journals with a complex structure and high volume of submissions. The CEO-like status of the editor-in-chief works well for public communications and appearances. In the special forces model, all leadership members are highly qualified and engaged. Creativity, productivity, and flexibility are optimized.

The afternoon session on day 1 was about publishing ethics: (1) authorship, (2) ethics for editors and reviewers, (3) detecting scientific misconduct, and (4) handling scientific misconduct.

Christine Casey discussed authorship and instructions to authors. She provided examples from selected journals’ instructions to authors that can minimize or prevent problems

and described common ethical challenges. She also provided resources that can help journal editors resolve authorship issues.

Margaret Winker, secretary (past president) of the World Association of Medical Editors (WAME), gave a presentation on the ethical obligations of editors and reviewers. She recommended that a journal establish a conflict of interest (COI) policy including the following components: (1) type of COI (financial only or non-financial), (2) length of time (most commonly 5 years), and (3) amount (no magic number). She also described the ethical issues faced by editors, authors, and reviewers; journal policies; the editor’s relationship with the editorial board, owner, and readers; and editor transitions.

Margaret A. Winker gave a presentation on handling allegations of misconduct. She described three case examples in which an anonymous whistleblower alleges data fabrication/falsification, duplicate publication, and duplicate submission. She also led a discussion with the participants about how to handle such allegations.

On May 15, the morning of day 2, there were six lectures in the cluster on business aspects of publishing: (1) business drivers, (2) electronic publication/journal website, (3) making the best of journal material, (4) society-based versus independent journals, (5) working with or without a publisher, and (6) open access and/versus public domain.

Bruce Polsky gave the presentation on business drivers. He divided journal business models into three categories: (1) paid subscription journals (with or without advertising), (2) controlled-circulation publications (rely upon advertising and industry sponsorship, but may seek subscription/licensing revenue), and (3) open-access journals (assess author submission and/or publication fees; less likely to attract industry support). He recommended four principles of the business model of journals: (1) editorial advisors = fiduciaries, (2) customer satisfaction = core objective, (3) society members = primary customers, and (4) integrity = independence.

Thomas C. Gerber gave a presentation on electronic publication and web site design for scientific journals. He pointed out that the journal website must be appealing and engaging and must be part of a content platform. The contents of the website must be discoverable and accessible. The editors must review the website critically at regular intervals.

Christine Casey explained public domain and public access policy. She defined the public domain. Public domain is different from open access, which often has author fees (author page charge), and although material is “freely” available, use is permissible under different types of Creative Commons licenses. She also defined the federal public access policy and described how this affects authors, editors, and publishers and introduced CHORUS, a mechanism to comply with the Pub-

lic Access Policy.

Margaret Winker gave a presentation on open access. Open access publishing can be defined as “the free, immediate, online availability of research articles coupled with the rights to use these articles fully in the digital environment.” There are 6 types of Creative Commons licenses: 2 extremes (CC-BY Attribution, most open; CC BY-NC-ND Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs, most restrictive). Open access journals which are freely available everywhere are called “gold journals.”

The afternoon session was about the “finer points”: (1) peer review, (2) journal metrics, (3) health reporting guidelines, and (4) promoting journal content.

David Riley presented the topic of peer review. The *British Medical Journal* instituted open peer review in 1999 and has been studying the topic ever since. Open (unblinded) peer review has been shown to not adversely affect the quality of peer review. He also noted that many reviews of published articles have shown that peer reviewers fail to detect methodological errors. Some argue that peer review should be abandoned.

David Riley introduced the Health Research Reporting Guidelines and The EQUATOR Network. The EQUATOR (Enhancing the QUALity and Transparency Of health Research) Network’s origins date back to the 1990s and work begun by CONSORT, CONSORT extensions, and other health research reporting guidelines. It is an international initiative to improve the reliability and value of health literature by promoting responsible reporting of health research. Participants have included reporting guideline development groups, journal editors, peer reviewers, medical writers, and funders. At the end of the short course, all participants received certificates of attendance and took a commemorative photograph together.

In my opinion, the Short Course for Journal Editors may differ from the editors’ workshop held by the Korean Council of Science Editors. First, this course presents the big picture of the journal editor’s role. This course included sessions about the fundamentals of editing, the editorial board, journal management, and publishing ethics, giving editors a sense of the entire scope of their responsibilities. Second, plenty of time for discussion, interaction, and questions was offered during or after the clusters of lectures. Third, there was plenty of digital content with the training, including social media, journal websites, metrics, and images.

The 2015 Council of Science Editors annual meeting was

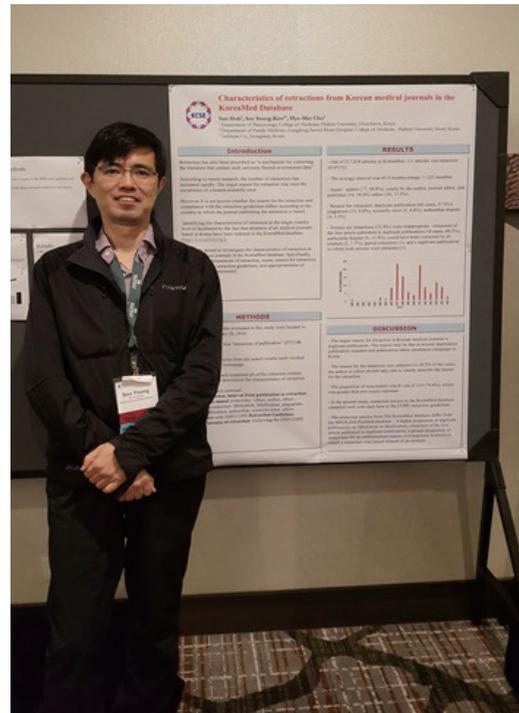


Fig. 1. Author’s presentation of poster at the Council of Science Editors annual meeting in 2016.

held after the short course. There, five poster presentations were held. I presented a poster entitled “Characteristics of retractions from Korean medical journals in the KoreaMed database” (Fig. 1).

In summary, I came away from the short course feeling that many of the presentations and discussions were quite useful and challenging. As the chairperson of the Committee on Education and Training of the Korean Council of Science Editors, I intend to prepare a strategic plan for integrating the best of what I learned from the short course into the editors’ workshop of the Korean Council of Science Editors.

Conflict of Interest

No potential conflict of interest relevant to this article was reported.

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