

News Notes

News Notes are taken from the EASE Journal Blog (<http://ese-bookshelf.blogspot.com>). Please email items for inclusion to John Hilton (hilton.john@gmail.com) or Lionel Browne (lionel.browne@sfep.net), with "News Notes" as the subject.

TinyURLs may be given to save space and aid reading; full URLs (clickable links) can be found on the EASE Journal Blog.

New journals: what's in a name?

Three of the biggest science funders announced in June that they will be launching their own new journal. The Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI), the Max Planck Society, and the Wellcome Trust are supporting a "new, top-tier, open access journal for biomedical and life sciences research" and are investing heavily in the project.

In July, the editor-in-chief of the as-yet unnamed journal was announced as Randy Schekman, an HHMI Investigator at the University of California, Berkeley, USA, and editor of the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* since 2006. Schekman will spend about half his time on the new journal, and a team of senior editors are expected to give about 20% of their time. All editors will be paid for their time, and there will be no fee to publish in the journal for at least three years, although the funding agencies want to work with a publisher to develop a sustainable open-access model.

The journal was driven by a desire to avoid lengthy peer review ("We're not going to go through endless iterations of nitpicking," said Wellcome's Mark Walport) and to employ active scientists rather than professional editors. In an interview for *ScienceInsider* Schekman explained this move: "We just have a feeling that it's better to rely on active scientists who can appreciate the author's point of view." He also

revealed that reviewers will be paid, possibly by annual retainer. The journal will launch in 2012.

Two new, UK-based open-access general biology journals were announced in May and they do have names, although strikingly similar. *Open Biology* is published by Royal Society Publishing (royalsocietypublishing.org) and is now accepting submissions, while *Biology Open* (BiO), from the Company of Biologists (open.biologists.com), launches in autumn 2011. These new titles will compete with the likes of *BMC Biology*, *PLoS Biology*, and *The Open Biology Journal*.

UK peer review inquiry

The inquiry into peer review by the UK parliament's Science and Technology Select Committee heard oral and written contributions from many scientific and medical journal editors as well as researchers, funders, and representatives of learned societies (tinyurl.com/UKPeerReview). The inquiry was prompted by concerns that the peer review process was in crisis due to the burden on time, a lack of incentives for reviewers, failures of reviewers to spot error or misconduct, and a tendency towards conservative judgements. Journal editors were broadly supportive of peer review while acknowledging concerns about variability and lack of evaluation. Researchers also affirmed that, while flawed, peer review remained the best way of ensuring the quality of research. We await the inquiry's findings.

Who's looking after the data?

The *Journal of Experimental Medicine* (jem.rupress.org) has decided to immediately stop publishing non-essential supplementary material. An editorial in the 4 July edition of the journal announced this move, claiming that journals are being used as "data dumps". This decision comes at a time when funding agencies are increasingly asking researchers to make data accessible, and raises

questions about the role of journals and the nature of a scientific article. Are the underlying data part of the article? And if so, whose job is it to curate those data?

Apps and APIs

Elsevier has launched a competition to encourage software developers to create new applications that help researchers locate the information they need. The applications can make use of application programming interfaces (APIs) to access the company's SciVerse databases. More details are on the Apps for Science website (www.appsforscience.com). In a similar move, the Public Library of Science (PLOS) has teamed up with Mendeley, a reference manager and "academic social network", to set up a "Binary Battle" (dev.mendeley.com). Developers are invited to use both organisations' APIs to find ways of making science more open.

Journal data mining

A new report commissioned by the Publishing Research Consortium looks at how journals deal with an increasing number of requests for data mining projects. The report (available at www.publishingresearch.net) defines data mining (or "content mining") as "the automated processing of large amounts of digital content for purposes of information retrieval, information extraction, and meta-analysis". It concludes: "Few publishers have a publicly available mining policy; the large majority handle mining requests on a case-by-case basis. Approximately 30% of publisher respondents allow any kind of mining of their content without restrictions, in most cases as part of their Open Access policies. For the other publishers, nearly all require information about the intent and purpose of the mining request."

Gigascience and megajournals

If you are creating biological data faster than you can process them, then how do you publish data in a useful and timely way? That problem

is being tackled by *GigaScience* (www.gigasciencejournal.com), a new journal and database developed by BioMedCentral and BGI, a genomics institute supported by the Chinese state. Datasets submitted to *GigaScience* receive a DOI and are fully open access in advance of any manuscript submission. The manuscript will link to the data via analytical tools and will offer cloud-computing functionality to enable rapid sharing.

This scaling up applies to journals as well as data. At the 3rd Conference on Open Access Scholarly Publishing, to be held in Tallinn, Estonia, on 21–23 September 2011, representatives of most of the major open-access “megajournals” (*PLoS One*, *BMJ Open*, *Open Biology*, *SAGE Open*, *Scientific Reports*) will discuss the ups and downs of large-scale, rapid, open access, scalable publishing, and the merging of journals and databases.

The Power of Open

The Power of Open (thepowerofopen.org) is a collection of stories from individuals and groups who have used Creative Commons content to inspire, inform, or innovate. Available in print or as a PDF, the book is available in English, French, Japanese, and Portuguese, with more languages to follow. Publishers, artists, educators, and many others explain how they use Creative Commons licensing models in successful enterprises.

COPE discusses plagiarism

The Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) has published a discussion paper on plagiarism and is seeking comments from members and non-members on key questions, such as defining types and levels of plagiarism and what steps journals should take for each type of transgression. The paper, published on the COPE website (www.publicationethics.org/resources), gives an overview of the topic and

highlights where existing guidance and flowcharts may not be sufficient.

Article of the Future

Elsevier’s “Article of the Future” project has moved to a new phase with the publication of seven new prototypes for re-imagined science papers across seven different disciplines. The project, which started in 2009 with the journal *Cell*, is described as a “never-ending quest to explore better ways to create and deliver the formal published record”. You can view and comment on the prototypes at www.articleofthefuture.com.

A reviewer registry?

Would the problems with peer review be helped by making more effort to engage reviewers in the editorial process? Writing in the July 2011 issue of *Learned Publishing* (2011;24:231–223), Fay Ling of the American Thoracic Society suggests that journals could collaborate with software vendors to develop and share online reviewer registries and communities. These would supplement the journal’s own databases and would allow potential reviewers to identify the subjects and journals they wish to contribute to.

Conference highlights

If you weren’t able to attend the recent conferences of the UK Serials Group in April or the Society for Scholarly Publishing in June, you can watch presentations from both online (river-valley.tv). The “most watched” presentations include Bill Russell (Emerald Group Publishing) discussing the impact of social networks on research workflows (at UKSG) and Nathan Watson (BioRaft) on using software tools to streamline all aspects of research (at SSP).

SfEP proofreading test

The UK Society for Editors and Proofreaders has developed an online

proofreading self-test, designed to give prospective proofreaders a taste for the work and feedback on their aptitude. The test includes 20 questions about possible deletions, insertions, substitutions, and queries in a piece of somewhat imperfect writing. Try it yourself at www.sfep.org.uk/pub/train/self_test.

Who checks for conflicts?

A recent investigation by Reuters Health found that one of the authors of a 2010 *British Journal of Dermatology* paper had failed to disclose significant financial interests in the product (DHEA) being investigated. It raised the issue of whether it’s up to authors to declare conflicts or whether journals or institutions should enforce disclosure policies. Margaret Winkler, online editor at *JAMA* and past president of the World Association of Medical Editors, felt that it was “impossible to police,” but David Rothman of the Center on Medicine as a Profession, a think tank based in New York, urged editors, deans, government agencies, and others to start spot checks for verifying disclosures.

Top 15 mistakes

May’s *News Notes* included some tips on how to write a boring research paper. Now we present a checklist on how to do bad clinical research. The study of the most common mistakes made by young researchers was published in the *Journal of Prosthodontic Research* (2011;55:1–6) and reported in the Labcoat Life blog (www.nature.com/scitable/blog/labcoat-life). The Top 15 list, which includes everything from failing to search the literature adequately to failing to implement adequate bias control, may also be useful for young (and old) science editors.

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