
Reports of Meetings

2011 European Conference of the International Society of Managing and Technical Editors (ISMTE)

Oxford, 18 October 2011

The International Society of Managing and Technical Editors (ISMTE) is a dynamic organisation of editors founded in 2008 that is rapidly expanding in numbers. With its mission “to connect the community of professionals committed to improving peer review management”, it provides networking among peers, education and training, research, and resources necessary for best practices and development of journal policy. A sister organization of EASE, it recently held one of its two annual conferences at St Hugh's College in Oxford, UK, attended by 60 participants from nine countries.

Michael Willis welcomed the President, Elizabeth Blalock from the US, who gave an overview of the society's activities and perspectives. The two plenary sessions had one main theme, “changing landscapes” in open access and in the peer review process.

Caroline Sutton of the Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association (founded 2008 to support and represent open access (OA) journal publishers) presented the rapidly changing thinking about OA and its acceptance in the scientific community in the US and Europe. OA essentially means free access and re-use of data, including for commercial purposes, with attribution. She discussed OA by self-archiving of peer-reviewed articles and the different policies of publishers on deposition of articles.

In the US, taxpayers require free access to information, which is not the case in Europe. Here, a great change in thinking occurred in 2010, when the European Commission began to talk about OA in terms of research, innovation, and behaviour of universities. OA is now viewed as a key to economic growth in Europe. Denmark has already made great innovations, and information should be spread to all member states.

Caroline analyzed several aspects of OA saying that “knowledge is no longer property but a node within a network”. The value of an article will be measured by usage of its components: text, tables, and graphs.

Steven Hall from the Institute of Physics Publishing (IoPP) reported on OA policy initiatives in Europe such as pure OA journals, free online access for first 30 days, and hybrid OA in subscription journals, as well as on several projects and online surveys. He mentioned the costs and benefits of changes in scholarly publications and how to proceed, describing publishers' responses to these initiatives as equivalent to the “five stages of grief”: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. Constructive engagement is the key to change: a clear and approach to repositories and gold open access and commitment to multiple business models. Engagement with funding agencies should ensure robust and sustainable funding mechanisms for publication fees, help the agencies

to track the research they sponsor, and enable the adoption of appropriate copyright policies.

Adrian Mulligan, Deputy Director, Elsevier, viewed the peer review process under a virtual microscope. In 2009, over 1.4 million research articles were published in peer-reviewed journals, or one every 22 seconds, although each peer review takes from 2 to 4 hours to prepare. However, a general erosion of the process results in holding back innovative research and in research articles not being improved. The system is not good at stopping plagiarism and fraud either.

The peer review system is not a panacea: there are deficits especially in improving the quality of papers, showing the originality of the results, determining the importance of findings, and ensuring that previous work is acknowledged. The burdens of peer review are shared unevenly. For example, the proportion of global reviews in the US is 12% greater than its proportion of global research, whereas China's contribution to peer review is 5% and its contribution to science 12%. Initiatives to improve the review process include cascading peer review, passing reviews on to another journal, forming consortia with agreement to accept reviews from other journals (as for 37 neuroscience journals, for example).

The conference heard how to improve reporting standards. Jason Roberts, Managing Editor, *Headache*, gave advice on how to help authors. Workshops considered reporting guidelines; managing and involving your editorial board; attracting authors; pre-screening and triage; strategies for managing accepted articles; and building up reviewer loyalty.

Discussions were lively on all themes and continued in the extended refreshment breaks, which also gave participants the chance to network. The conference showed how quickly the editorial scene is changing worldwide, highlighting some new challenges and the never-ending effort to make the presentation of science more efficient and accessible for all.

Eva Baranyiová

*Scientific Editor, Agricultura Tropica et Subtropica
Czech University of Life Sciences, Prague
Kamýcká 129, 165 21 Prague, Czech Republic
ebaranyi@seznam.cz*

ISTME is organizing a session at the EASE conference in Tallinn - for further information go to www.ease.org.uk