

Nurse Author & Editor

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Networks of Editors

Networks of Editors: Useful for Researchers

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As a researcher, I usually participate in conferences in my own area of study to present results, learn about new research, and network. However, every now and then I participate in conferences aimed mainly at scientific editors. Conferences for scientific editors, journalists, and publishers are arranged by international and national associations of editors, such as the World Federation of Science Journalists (WFSJ), European Association of Science Editors (EASE) and the International Academy of Nursing Editors (INANE). Conferences of scientific editors are useful for me as a researcher—for many

reasons.

First, there usually are excellent presentations about the work of editors, the ways they organize their work, the review process, or the use of technological solutions in the editing process. Knowing these things gives the researcher—me—an understanding of their work. For example, one time I was surprised to hear that not all who submit their manuscripts follow the information for authors of the journal! Furthermore, the referees (or peer reviewers) do not always stay within a given time schedule, and fail to inform editors that they will be tardy with their review. Knowing this makes it much easier to understand why the referee process can take what seems like a very long time for an impatient author. On the other hand, based on discussions at the conferences, the peer review process has been shortened due to online submission and review; these same technological solutions allow authors and researchers to follow the progress of the review. This innovation is reassuring for researchers, as we are usually very eager to receive evaluations of our work.

A special mention can be given to the reviewers' needs for support and advice. Traditionally, the peer review process requires competent reviewers. These busy professionals share their time and expertise on a voluntary basis—they are usually very busy with their “day job” and share their expertise on other challenging issues as well. Thus, while they may be passionate about their role as a reviewer, they appreciate support for their work. In an interesting survey of 116 health research journals, Hirst and Altman (2012) suggest that in order to improve the quality of evaluations, there should be an increased awareness and use of reporting guidelines in the peer review process. The need to support reviewers has also been recognized in nursing

journals (Freda et al. 2009). One very effective method to educate reviewers is to let reviewers see each other's evaluations afterwards; this is especially useful for new, inexperienced reviewers. I recall an exciting experience of this kind: there were two reviewers, and we got to see each other's evaluations when the process was complete. I remember my surprise: I had written three pages, and the other had written three lines! (We both required major revisions.) It was certainly good for scaling my own work but I like to think the other reviewer learned that detailed feedback can be valuable, too.

Second, at conferences one can meet experienced, skillful, and innovative editors. The opportunity for conversations brings us closer and makes it easier to approach them—or even submit a manuscript. One can also learn about their educational and professional backgrounds and competencies. It is, for example, interesting to know the different criteria for editors, as described in the field of biomedical journals in a scoping review by Galipeau et al. (2016). In the review, there is a list of 203 competency-related statements for editors, divided into seven main areas: 1) dealing with authors, 2) dealing with peer reviewers, 3) journal publishing, 4) editing, 5) ethical issues, 6) integrity, and 7) qualities and characteristics of editors. It is a challenging list, to be sure! At the University of Turku, we have made an effort to introduce our doctoral students and researchers to editors in the field of nursing. We have invited editors annually to present lectures about scientific writing and these have been extremely interesting. Those at the beginning of their research careers have found these lectures to be very useful.

Scientific editors are shaping the knowledge of the discipline, and this is also the case in nursing science (e.g. Kearney & Freda 2006; Freda et al. 2009).

Based on a survey of nursing editors (Kearney & Freda 2006), the most important aspects of the editorial role were to maintain scientific and editorial quality and provide vision. The best part of being an editor consisted of satisfaction when mentoring authors, shaping the nursing literature, contributing to practice and policy, and personal learning of new information. The biggest challenges were constant demands on time, scarcity of good writing, rejecting manuscripts and other difficult decisions, as well struggling with others who do not meet deadlines.

Third, different options and forms for publications are interesting discussions at the conferences. For example, the world of open-access publications and the use of secondary international data support researchers in keeping their knowledge and skills updated. In the future, the number of open access journals will increase in the field of nursing; currently the number is less than that in medicine but it is steadily increasing (Clarke & Garcia 2015). Assessing the quality of these publications is important for editors, authors, and peer reviewers. A new phenomenon in this field is predatory publishing, which is a good reason to be well acquainted with open-access journals (Nicoll & Chinn, 2015). The goal of open-access publishing is to enable free online access to peer-reviewed scholarly research with the costs paid by the authors. Open access does not mean low scientific quality. There are open-access journals applying rigorous peer review practices and standards of scholarly excellence. However, in different fields of research and geographic areas, questionable editorial standards and low publishing quality are apparent. This is known as predatory publishing, with publishers seeking to make money as the expense of reporting good science. To recognize those journals, there are some criteria listed by Kearney and the INANE Predatory

Publishing Practices Collaborative (2015). These issues are continuously discussed at conferences with scientific editors. Another new phenomenon is the “appointment” of well-known researchers to the editorial boards of new journals without their knowledge or permission.

Fourth, ethics of publication is always a relevant topic and an integral part of editor conferences. Scientific editors have a different perspective to ethics than researchers—even if both groups share an interest in honest, high-level publications. For example, the role and activities of the Committee of Publication Ethics (COPE) is important for everyone in the field of scientific writing; one can always learn new things in this field. Furthermore, editors and journals have an important role in preventing scientific misconduct, controlling fraud, and teaching authors to follow ethical guidelines. For a successful editor, there is need for a strong moral courage and knowledge in the field of publication ethics.

To sum up, I recommend that researchers participate in conferences aimed at scientific editors. At these conferences, you may not learn much about your own research field, but you will learn a lot about science, scientific writing, and the role of editors. Participation also promotes the understanding of other disciplines, research fields, and standards of scientific writing. This understanding, in turn, supports the multidisciplinary work in the researcher’s own field as well. It is always good to go out, chart the landscape and reposition yourself. If you are particularly interested in meeting most of the scientific editors in the field of nursing at one conference, I recommend attending the annual meeting of INANE. This is a real learning conference for the whole discipline of nursing science, and supports the global network of nurse researchers. Conferences are held annually, usually in late July or

early August. Upcoming INANE conferences will be in London (2016), Denver (2017), and Boston (2018). You can learn more at the INANE Nursing Editors website: nursingeditors.com

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