



*Applying scientific thinking
in the service of society*

ASSAf and unethical practices: membership and scholarly publishing

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NRF-workshop on ethics
in scholarly publishing

Unethical practices in ASSAf's membership elections

- Annual nomination and election of members to ASSAf
- Current ASSAf members nominate new members
- ASSAf subject panels that screens the nominated members according to set criteria i.e top ten publications
- Selected nominated members publications are screened
- Back to ASSAf subject panels for final discussion and consideration
- Final names to members for voting
- What did it imply for ASSAf—additional layer in the workflow of checking the publications with recommendations to ASSAf panel. (Missing articles,
- What is the incidence rate? Extremely low— 1.3% over two year period

ASSAf and Scholarly Journal Publishing (and books and conference proceedings)

- The publication of an article in a peer-reviewed journal is an essential building block
 - in the development of a coherent and
 - respected network of knowledge.
 - direct reflection of the quality of the work of the authors and the institutions that support them.
 - Peer-reviewed articles still support and embody the scientific method.
- It is therefore important to agree upon standards of expected ethical behavior for all parties involved in the act of publishing:
 - the author, the journal editor, the peer reviewer, the publisher and the society of society-owned or sponsored journals.

Unethical practices in scholarly publishing

- ASSAf commissioned CREST study
 - Investigated identified journals further
 - Only one SA journal—unethical practices
 - Most international journals have been removed from WoS/Scopus/IBSS accredited lists
 - There are still 10 journals associated with predatory publishers
- Completed ASSAf Peer review panel-reports
 - Evaluate—editorial policies and practices, and ethical practices
 - Editorial Advisory Board- does not reflect membership beyond a single institution/meetings
 - Editors publishing without clear policy guidelines
 - Scholarship should be opened to authors from multiple institutions (national, continent and international)
 - Still evidence of clicks/clubs and exclusive groups of people in scholarly publishing
 - Publishing rate very slow
 - Plagiarism
- DHET accredited SA journal list
 - Updated---14 defunct journals
- Accredited lists –negotiations with publishers

Awareness raising on quality assurance issues

- ASSAf Code of Best practices for editors and reviewers (2009; reviewed in 2018) incl long list of technical aspects that needs to be considered
- ASSAf Peer Review panels (have reviewed 170 journals of 288) Evidence based study—consists of three data sets—editor, panel and the reviewers—published open accessible!
- Assisted DHET to set up criteria and methodology for book and conference proceedings evaluation for accreditation, assisted the NRF to have the workflow automated.
- Twelve years later: second ASSAf report on research publishing in and from South Africa
- NSEF-awareness raising and discussion on a number of issues
- NSBPF (Code of best practice in the peer review of books—endorsed by scholarly publishers)
- Webinars—awareness raising on predatory publishing and unethical publishing
- Editors training on unethical practices and professional practices
- SciELO SA—quality open access journals, SciELO Citation index---ISI core databases
- Responded on City Press article—editors has chosen not to publish.....joint response from USAf and ASSAf

The way forward

Scholarly publishing and evaluating the quality thereof is part of the core business of ASSAf

- The policies are clear regarding quality and research integrity---- but who implements the independent advise being offered by ASSAf and applies what has been established in the policy?
 - Re-visit of ASSAf Peer Review Panels—criteria
 - Analysis of DHET lists
 - SA and
 - International indexes
 - Evaluation of applications for accreditation?
- Collaboration between CREST, ASSAf and DHET in giving advise
- Further coordination between relevant stakeholders (CHE, USAf, NRF, ASSAf and DHET)

Suggested issues and
activities from meeting

Publishing of research output

Research Output: Journals, book and conference proceedings

Mechanism: Policy (2016) Research Output Policy

Role players: Editors/peer reviewers/editorial boards/authors/higher education institutions

- Quality
 - What needs to be improved in the policy (punitive measurements) others?
 - Criteria: **Editorial quality vs Editorial ethics**
 - Higher education institutions: Research Integrity committees?
- Ensure accountability by different stakeholders
- Training/awareness raising
- Professionalization of editorial practices

Evaluating of research output

- Need for central listing of questionable journals (stakeholders to compile)
 - Share the lists of acceptable journals, unaccredited journals, should be avoided unethical/predatory journals
 - Alignment of PJ's amongst different role players
 - Institutions and panels ---must have access to lists
- Individual motivation for publishing not in accredited journals
- Research output categories
 - Naming
 - Section for accredited lists
 - Technical solutions—flag unethical journals, feedback to the author/institution
- Ethical surveillance
- Should we consider new ways of evaluating research outputs?

Quality assurance by all stakeholders

- Training programmes of various kinds
 - of young and emerging researchers in ethical publishing
 - research administrators and researchers
- Collaboration between CREST, ASSAf and DHET in giving advise to DHET
- Further coordination between relevant stakeholders (CHE, USAf, NRF, ASSAf and DHET)
- How do we ensure accountability?? What measurements should we put into place

What are the other broader issues?

- Incentives
 - Universities? to find alternative ways incentivise research
 - Team based research funding—national and international peer reviewed centres
 - Collaborative publishing
 - Research articulation across the system
 - Inter and multi disciplinarity
 - Engagement
- Peer review mechanism
- Where, when and how the shifting technological terrain should be considered
- Promotion systems and criteria
 - perverse consequences into the system

Outcomes expressed by organisers

- Binding mechanism
- Effect/implement the set activities identified
- Declaration on ethical scholarly publishing