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GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN SOCIETY-OWNED JOURNALS, THEIR SOCIETY, AND PUBLISHERS

The journals of ‘*Learned Societies*’ and ‘*Professional Associations*’ are an important part of the scientific literature. Regardless of the publication arrangements (i.e., self-published by the society, published under contract with a professional publishing house, or some combination of both) and the number of journals affiliated with that society, the policies of and the relationships among the journals, any publisher and the society – both staff and volunteer leaders – must be of the highest quality, ethically sound, and as transparent as possible.

COPE has many resources to guide the development of such policies and we refer to some of these in the following key thoughts:

EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE:

‘The Short Guide to Ethical Editing for New Editors’ addresses the issue of editorial independence in statement #10. Editorial decisions must be based on the quality of submissions and appropriate peer review, rather than on any political, financial, or personal influences from society staff or volunteer leaders. **COPE** supports establishing clear boundaries or incorporating aspects of this guiding principle into any agreement between a society and its journal editor(s).

JOURNAL MANAGEMENT:

The *COPE Core Practice #8* describes journal management, and there are many resources to support editors and societies as they develop and maintain a transparent and ethical process concerning editors, authors, and reviewers. Societies should respect the need for financial support and related business decisions (eg, providing support staff, physical space, editor honoraria, email or other resources as required), for services that ensure efficient running of an independent journal.

COMMERCIAL ISSUES:

Statement #11 in the *'Short Guide to Ethical Editing for New Editors'* addresses commercial issues. For societies that self-publish, the process for selecting service providers such as printers or advertising agencies must be fair and as transparent as possible while safeguarding confidential society information and include mechanisms for managing potential conflicts of interest. Processes for selecting third-party publishers should also be fair and as transparent as possible.

WEBSITE:

'The Principles of Transparency and Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing' (guidelines endorsed by COPE, DOAJ, OASPA, and WAME) support the principle that the journal website is the public-facing statement of ethical practices in journal publishing. Regardless of who hosts or maintains the website, the information contained on the website should be a clear and complete representation of standards and expectations for authors and reviewers. Item #4 of *'The Principles of Transparency and Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing'* states that journal ownership and management must be clearly indicated on that website.

It is important to consider all of these issues when developing policies concerning society-owned or operated journals. In addition, existing policies should be reviewed periodically, perhaps most naturally when a new journal editor is hired.

COPE seeks to help address these issues because COPE membership includes self-published societies, publishers, and society-owned journals via third-party publishers.