



Role of editor in scholarly journal

Sung-Tae Hong

Seoul National University College of Medicine, Korea

Editor-in-Chief, *Journal of Korean Medical Science*

Member of ICMJE

Journal Publication

A scholarly journal is distributing and archiving research articles in a certain scientific scope. Based on the published articles, the academic society is building scientific knowledge. Therefore publication of research data in a scholarly journal is important in science. There are several stakeholders in scholarly journal publication, such as publisher, editor, author, reviewer, reader, and printer. Good coordination of the stakeholders' role is essential, but editor is playing a key role for the journal publication.

Role of Editor

Researchers are authors, reviewers, and readers of a specific journal. They make scientific progress together by publishing research articles, reviewing manuscripts, discussing debates, and citing articles. The editor should make an academic community with those researchers. That is the reason why the editor's role is important. The editor decides scientific contents and quality of a journal. The editorial policy and attitude is influencing greatly to the researchers.

The editor of a journal takes care of all aspects of publication. Publication of a journal requires a well-organized workflow from submission to print. A journal should provide its own instruction (or guidelines) for authors and many related rules which guide authors in preparing their manuscripts. Manuscript submission system of a journal must be open to authors and easy to use. When a manuscript is submitted, the editor previews it and invites reviewers. After reviewers submit their review comments, the editor decides fate of the manuscript based on the comments; reject, revision, accept. When a revised manuscript is accepted, it is edited and processed for publication. The workflow of submission, peer review, revision, accept, editing, and publishing must be fluent, transparent, and efficient. All of involved staffs of editorial office and printing company should monitor the process flow and keep it fluent.

Global Position as a Scholarly Journal

Transmission and archiving of scientific articles are primary role of scholarly journals. When the pool of authors is big and global readers cite its articles, a journal becomes global scholarly journal. All of journal editors dream it. There are several index databases which supply scholarly publication information to researchers. The most influential one is the Web of Science (WOS) which includes Science Citation Index (SCI), SCI Expanded (SCIE), Social SCI (SSCI), and Arts & Humanities Citation Index (AHCI). The journals included by the Web of Science are 12,092 (excluding AHCI). This database is managed by the Clarivate



Analytics Co., a profit organization. Its information service is comprehensive including reference citations of. It is very expensive, but has powerful impact on global science. The National Library of Medicine (NLM) USA is providing a free database of abstracts named PubMed. It covers about 6,000 journals in the scope of medicine, dental, nursing, pharmaceutical, veterinary, public health, and nutrition. The PubMed supplies article information of journals enlisted in the MEDLINE and the PubMed Central. Scopus is another global database that supplies articles and journal information including citations. The global publisher Elsevier Co. produces the Scopus and related journal information services of 28,606 journals. There are more journal databases but the three are major. All editors of scholarly journals want to enlist their journals in the database because the global indexing databases supply the publication information and invite readers globally. In this context, enlisting new journals in the databases becomes a heavy duty of editor. Since enlisting is seriously competitive, every editor is trying it as a survival. Editing and publishing by global standard is the baseline and academic interest is critical for the enlisting.

Online Publication and Global Networking

Publishing a scholarly journal online becomes more and more important nowadays. Advantages of online journals are rapid publishing and spreading through the web globally. Editing and publishing online journal should follow global standard even though it is a local journal. It is better for editors to benchmark a role model journal and to make the journal reader friendly on the web. The most important item of online journals is networking through the web such as linking articles by digital object identifier (DOI), reference linking through the Crossref and CrossMark, and author linking by author identification of ORCID. The appropriate networking of articles is critical to be a reader friendly journal.

Online Visibility

Designing uniform of a journal and layout of articles are important editorial issues. Online visibility is important as well as visibility in prints, which includes online layout of text, letter font and size, color design of whole manuscript, presentation of Tables and Figures, and supplementary materials. Some journals supply audio or video materials to facilitate their publications, which is a real advantage of online journals. Since the online publication is evolving and upgraded rapidly by technical advancement continuously, and editors should know and apply new techniques for updated journal publishing.

Open Access Publication and Predatory Journals

Online publication enables Open Access journals. Classical journal publication was printing paper bound journals but now most audience read journals online. The online journals supply their full text of articles as digital files through the web. While submission journals supply full text by reader's pay, the Open Access journals supply full text free to readers. Instead, authors pay the publication cost in most Open Access journals. Open Access publication is an option for a journal to be author-paid or reader-paid. Some journals are Open Access but free for both authors and readers by funding outside. When a journal decides Open Access, the editor should take its merit by free and borderless access. The author should check whether a target journal is Open Access. However, there are many bogus Open Access journals which



advertise aggressively. They are called predatory journals and some of them are called hijacked. Researchers must be careful not to publish their articles in predatory journals. When manuscripts are published in those journals, most of them are not authorized as scholarly articles. Editors of online journals should monitor whether their journals are misclassified as predatory or hijacked.

Peer Review

Peer review is a critical process for selecting manuscripts to publish in scholarly journals. Although there are debates on biased and delayed peer review, it is a basic essential process for most scholarly journals. Inviting experts for peer review and evaluating the review comments are editor's duties. Editors should be alert when the review takes much time and delayed decision. The editor is endlessly responsible for delayed or poor quality review, delayed decision, and delayed or poor quality publication.

Global Publication Ethics

Additionally, there are several guidelines for global editing and publishing for clinical trials, research on human or animal subjects, and ethics. Any manuscript based on clinical trials must be registered at an authorized registry. From next year, it is required for clinical trials to submit a sharing plan of raw individual data after deidentification. Also approval by institutional review board for human studies and by institutional animal care and use committee for animal studies is mandatory for publication. Editors should know publication ethics well and also keep editor's ethics. Editors should follow the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) recommendations for authors and editors. Editors should remind authorship and contributorship criteria, redundant publication and acceptable secondary publication, conflicts of interest of authors or reviewers, and guidelines for ethical violations by ICMJE. Editor ethics includes no editorial decisions influenced by conflicts of interest and by unethical inflation of cites. Both must be declared and cleared by the editor. Keeping editorial freedom is another duty of editor as well as keeping ethics. Editorial freedom includes uninfluenced decision by other stakeholders.

Further Suggestions for Editors

Editorial work is a heavy burden for a scholar. For better journal editing, a good editorial team is necessary. An editorial team for a journal is composed of Editor-in-Chief, Deputy Editor, Section Editor, Managing Editor, Manuscript Editor, Editorial Assistant, and secretary in the office. One editorial team must be well-organized and well-communicated. It is strongly recommended to educate more manpower for the editorial team and professional editors in Korea.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the editor of a journal is responsible for all processes of editing and publishing and should lead academic community by keeping global standard of editing, publishing, and ethics.