
Editorial

Integrity in science communication

Integrity in Science Communication is the title of EASE's Tenth General Assembly and Conference (Pisa, Italy, 16–19 September 2009). There is no need to emphasize that science communication is pivotal for science editors, but I would like to explain why we focus on integrity this time.

Integrity derives from the Latin adjective *integer* (with the noun *integritas*), meaning intact, whole, pure, complete, unimpaired, etc. When we talk about communication we definitely want our messages to be conveyed intact. In science communication this especially applies to the reliability of scientific data. We need to be certain that original research data are correct, complete, accessible, retrievable, and durable – to name but a few properties. This has everything to do with quality control, refereeing, repositories, access (open or otherwise), indexing, and storage. You will recognize several buzzwords that regularly appear in ESE's Editor's Bookshelf, News Notes, and other contributions.

Of course, editors are dedicated to maximizing the physical integrity of their publications, be they paper or electronic. This physical aspect of integrity will be the subject of the second plenary session, on Thursday 17 September 2009, followed by a set of parallel sessions.

The meaning of Latin *integer* gradually extended to righteous, honest, incorruptible, etc. In science communication we have become aware that this moral aspect is important too – alas. Of course editors have always dealt with honest mistakes and the resulting publication of errata. But in recent decades we have also had to introduce the phenomenon of retraction of papers because the published results were purposely manipulated to misrepresent the original data sets – or data sets were even invented to yield the desired results. The acronym FFP is increasingly used to indicate dishonest behaviour like falsification, fabrication, and plagiarism – and let us not forget data omission. This infringement of integrity has triggered the establishment of institutions like the US Office of Research Integrity (ORI) and the Committee On Publication Ethics (COPE), as well as the First World Conference on Research Integrity in 2007.

No doubt, editors are dedicated to maximizing the moral integrity of all parties involved in science communication. Ethical matters have always been discussed at EASE conferences, but the present upheaval warrants the inclusion of a plenary session and two sets of parallel sessions on Friday 18 September.

In order to deal with their responsibilities regarding physical and moral integrity, editors must be able to take

stands without any pressure from other parties involved in the reporting of scientific findings. Sometimes science editors must be whistleblowers, sometimes science editors must be prosecutors, sometimes science editors must be judges. This relates to editorial independence and responsibilities – the theme of the fourth and final plenary session, on Saturday 19 September. You will not be surprised that EASE pursues maximum independence and responsibility, but in practice we encounter the limits of our attempts. How do we cope with such boundaries, and what can we learn from each other's experiences? This plenary session too will be followed by parallel sessions where certain aspects of the theme can be discussed in more depth, or related subjects can be introduced.

No doubt you will have missed the first plenary session and its theme. I can reassure you: there will be a first plenary session, right after the Annual General Meeting, the triennial General Assembly, and the Opening Ceremony. We have invited a distinguished keynote speaker to introduce to the theme. This keynote address will be followed by an introduction to the place where the Tenth General Assembly and Conference is held: the historical Italian city of Pisa. In this way we can get an impression of background where the word *integer* originated.

We try to maximise the benefit of all sessions by incorporating as many aspects as our delegates want to discuss. Your suggestions for programme topics are therefore most welcome, especially if you want to contribute a paper or a poster. You have until 30 September to submit your proposals.

The English noun *integer* means a whole number or a complete entity. This meaning applies to the participants at EASE's Tenth General Assembly and Conference. I would like to see them – ie, you – attend the Conference in whole numbers, with complete, unimpaired interest. We are aware that you need to relax as well, so we have included a free afternoon and optional tours to the cities of Lucca and Florence. These tours are scheduled in such a way that you will not be distracted from the sessions that are so important for our profession.

EASE wants to maximise integral participation. So do not hesitate to register for this Tenth General Assembly and Conference.

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