Scholarly journal publishing standards, policies and guidelines

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Abstract

It is easy to launch and run a journal but, more difficult to ensure that it adheres to best practices and provides a sustainable, secure, validated and respected venue for research. On launching a new journal, it is vital that the publisher and editors create suitable policies, technical systems and procedures before the inaugural call for papers is sent out. This article reviews the plethora of guidance that is available but scattered across multiple websites and draws together the key issues required by any new journal. The key areas considered are: journal and article identifiers; ethical and practical policies; technical decisions and considerations; systems for submission, publication and archiving; and promotion and marketing. The article provides a snapshot of the issues that all new publishers and editors need to consider.

Keywords: best practices, journal launches, publishing guidelines, publishing policies

INTRODUCTION

'Publishing a journal is about more than simply putting ink to paper (or pixels to screen)' (Chan et al., 2019, p. 1). The editorial team needs to set up intricate underlying infrastructure in form of policy guidelines that ensure that all editorial processes conform to publishing best practices. Compliance to the practices is what differentiates an excellent scholarly journal from a mediocre one. The editor must also be aware of the various existing publishing standards. It should be noted that the practices do not happen by chance but must be actively promoted (Graf et al., 2007). The team involved in the management of a journal therefore needs to be aware of the practices in order to ensure that the journal's publishing processes are compliant. This will insulate the journal from acquiring the predatory tag. Best publishing practices developed through the collaboration between the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), the Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association (OASPA), and the World Association of Medical Editors (WAME) provide a comprehensive background to the guiding principles one can adopt in the journal publishing process (COPE/DOAJ/OASPA/WAME, 2015). Potential members of the collaborating entities are vetted based partly on the jointly developed principles and practices.

In addition to the consolidated criteria, the individual organizations have more elaborate requirements for membership. COPE for example requires that a journal policy should include statements on handling of suspected publication misconduct, ethics in authorship qualification, peer review process, handling of complaints, intellectual property and ethical issues touching on aspects such as confidentiality of data and use of human subjects in research (Committee on Publication Ethics, 2021). DOAJ and the OASPA on the other hand limit membership to open access journals and publishers (DOAJ, 2020c; OASPA, 2021). They both have additional criteria stipulating best practices in open access

publishing. Additionally, DOAJ journals that meet best practices in digital preservation, persistent article identifiers, submission of metadata to DOAJ, archiving, copyright and creative commons licensing are placed on a comparatively higher tier that is branded with a DOAJ seal (DOAJ, 2020b). A new OA journal can aspire to have the seal and prepare by putting the requisite structures in place. In regard to journals from Africa, the African Journals Online (AJOL) in partnership with INASP has developed Journal Publishing Practices and Standards (JPPS), a framework for assessing the publishing practices of journals hosted on the AJOL platform (Africa Journal Online (AJOL) & International Network for Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP), 2017). The framework is a good source of information on best practices for editorial teams involved in starting a journal.

All the mentioned requirements can only be met through hard work and investment in time, funds and human capital. However, the benefits accrued make the effort worthwhile. Some of the benefits are provision of a unique record of scholarly research, recognition of the mother institution and potential for career development for those involved (Stranack, 2008). Serving in the editorial board and contributing as an author or reviewer is a powerful addition to one's curriculum vitae. Involvement in the journal editorial work also provides immense opportunity for learning about editorial workflows, publishing standards and best practices in scholarly publishing.

Preliminary planning of a journal startup

A journal's startup may be informed by emerging trends or competitive opportunities (Binfield et al., 2008). In the initial planning, the project team needs to consider pertinent issues such as the journal's purpose and niche market, the administrative structure, funding and sustainability of the proposed journal (Reed, 2021). The eventual launch of the journal must of essence be preceded by the development of a journal strategy that should highlight how the aims are to be achieved, the unmet need to be addressed, the targeted authors and readers. These issues should culminate to the journal's mission statement (INASP, 2018). It is also advisable that the journal team develop a business plan that will articulate the financial and technical sustainability of the journal. From the onset, the decisions leading to the first journal issue must be cognizant of existing information standards covering issues such as journal identifiers, journal policies that guide the management of editorial processes, technical requirements in regards to issues such as journal hosting platforms, indexing, archiving and journal house styles. An example of such standards is those developed by the National Information Standards Organization (NISO). The organization is a non-profit institution that provides libraries, publishers and software developers with industry standards that facilitate collaboration between stakeholders. It is prudent for a journal editor to become familiar with the relevant information standards so as to adopt them in the journal publishing processes where applicable. NISO, for example, publishes documents such as KBART ('Knowledge Bases and Related Tools'), a recommended practice that eases communication of

Key points

- This paper is a literature review of policies, standards and technical and logistical considerations for scholarly publishers.
- Understanding the scholarly publishing environment aids the editor in identifying key policies and guidelines.
- International standards are created in multiple locations and there is no single source for new journals.

content to library link resolvers so that users can access articles from various interfaces, and ODI ('Open Discovery Initiative'), a recommended practice that facilitates discoverability of libraries' licensed content through their discovery service (Springer Nature, 2021b). The organization has also provided useful guidelines to best practice in presentation of a journal title, ISSN and article citation and further explains that accurate link resolution depends on provision of the correct ISSN (National Information Standards Organisation (NISO), 2013).

Journal identifiers

Journal title and ISSN

The choice of a journal title is an important one because the title and the International Standard Serial Number (ISSN) of your journal distinguish it from any other journal (Gillis, n.d.-a). The ISSN is an eight digit number issued at a fee by the International Centre for the Registration of Serial Publications (CIEPS). The Centre strongly advocates for the use of ISSN in title-level digital object identifier (DOI) to facilitate link resolution to the journal. *Online* journals that previously existed in print are assigned an e-ISSN at no extra cost. Whereas application for an ISSN for a print journal can be done 3 months in advance of the first issue, online journals are issued an ISSN only after the first issue with at least five articles is published (The International Centre for the registration of serial publications—CIEPS, n.d.). Application is done on the Centre's portal. Additional best practices in management of journal identifiers have been provided by Crossref (2020b). Scopus, DOAJ and AJOL's criteria for inclusion list ISSN as a basic requirement (Africa Journal Online (AJOL) & International Network for Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP), 2017; DOAJ, 2020c; Elsevier, 2021b).

Digital object identifier

The DOI is a standardized framework for managing online document identification. DOIs are provided by registration agencies at a fee (International DOI Foundation, 2019). The foundation has provided a list of registered agencies (International DOI Foundation, 2020). Example agencies are Crossref and DataCite. Some hosting platforms provide DOI registration as a part of their service.

Journal policies and guidelines

Journal management benefits from Journal policies that facilitate consistency in decision making and problem solving, transparency of processes and demonstration of a journal's integrity (INASP, 2018). The policies should aim at maintaining integrity in all the publishing processes. Key journal policies are editorial policy, peer review policy and publication ethics. COPE has provided extensive documentation on ethics in journal publishing (COPE, 2021). Provision of author guidelines is another key requirement of best practices in publishing. Other important policies are access model to be adopted, copyright policy and associated licensing policy. It is however not enough to merely develop the policies, best practices and indexing services dictate that they must be publicly available on the journal website (Clarivate, 2019; COPE/DOAJ/OASPA/WAME, 2015; Elsevier, 2021a).

Editorial board membership policy

Editorial boards filter research and hence influence the direction of growth of their discipline (Dhanani & Jones, 2017). Member selection should be partly based on their scholarly achievement. It is advisable for the journal steering team to refer and adhere to stipulated criteria for editorial board's membership constitution. Clarivate for example requires that the members' institutional and country affiliation be displayed on the journal website (Clarivate, 2019). The evaluation for indexing also includes an assessment of the Editorial Board's citations in WoS indexed journals (Clarivate, 2021d). The engagement of the board members should be done through a contractual agreement (INASP, 2018). On the aspect of composition, an editorial policy should strive to achieve a balanced membership in terms of gender, nationality and subject expertise (Brinn & Jones, 2008). Appraisal for indexing in WoS also involves a review of editorial composition in terms of number relative to the volume of publications generated by the journal and the members' geographic diversity (Clarivate, 2021d). In the case of an international journal, membership must also be international in geographic composition (INASP, 2018). Attaining the required diversity calls for extensive networking that can only be achieved by an editor who has a wide research circle as well as good negotiation and persuasion skills. The editor must keep up with any updates on indexing criteria of the respective service providers.

Editorial policy

The editorial policy in this case refers to policy guidelines that directly touch on the manner in which the editor undertakes his or her duties and responsibilities. This is a key policy because an editor is often faced with conflicting obligations from journal owners, the parent society, funders, sponsors, authors and government entities (Editorial Policy Committee: Council of Scientific Editors, 2018). In particular, the editor's and owner's responsibilities must be clearly demarcated and spelt out in an agreement from the onset of the journal (INASP, 2018). On this matter, the

International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) (2019) strongly advocates for the independence of the editor and stipulates that journal owners must not interfere in any way in the editorial process of any article. The editor's independence provides an enabling environment for the editor to comply with publishing best practices.

Peer review policy

Peer review is the process where scientists who are experts in their field evaluate the quality of the research work undertaken by their peers (Kelly et al., 2014). Peer reviewers therefore play a critical role in the scholarly publishing cycle. However many of them take up the role without a clear understanding of their ethical obligations (COPE, 2013). It therefore behoves journal editors to provide clear policies and guidelines that would facilitate fair and timely reviews.

The initial peer review starts at the editor's desk where the article is checked for journal relevance, originality and whether it merits proceeding to the peer review stage (Ali & Watson, 2016). Some of the peer review models available for the next stage are single, double and triple blind review and open review which comprises of models that are aimed at greater transparency (Elsevier, n.d.). A more recent development is the emergence of Post-Publication Peer Review (PPPR) where the review takes place after article publication (Ali & Watson, 2016). The PPPR model may lessen the editor's burden of looking for reviewers for the submitted manuscripts. Some of the open review models publish review reports alongside the article. The merits and demerits of the different models continue to be a subject of scholarly discourse with no consensus on the best framework for the process (Kelly et al., 2014). The peer review model adopted together with a detailed outline of the process must be explicitly displayed in the journal website (COPE/DOAJ/OASPA/WAME, 2015). The peer review policy should also include a statement on the management of author appeals in cases where an author feels aggrieved (INASP, 2018). The Council of Science Editors proposes that redress mechanisms should consider if the decision was clearly explained to the author, provide the author with an opportunity to give reasons why they feel the decision was wrong and open channels for resubmission if need be (Editorial Policy Committee: Council of Scientific Editors, 2018). The bottom-line is that the peer review statement must assure potential authors of objectivity in assessment of the submitted manuscripts.

Peer reviewers and reviewer guidelines

The responsibility of ensuring that the peer review process is fair, thorough, civil and timely falls on the docket of the journal editor (Editorial Policy Committee: Council of Scientific Editors, 2018). The requirement is met against a backdrop of challenges in identifying reviewers with the capacity to undertake the work professionally and on schedule (Vrana, 2012). The challenge is compounded by the voluntary nature of review work (Ali &

Watson, 2016). Timely completion of the review work requires keen tracking of the progress of the manuscripts. This is a tedious administrative task that may be eased by use of appropriate online submission systems. Systems such as ScholarOne, Editorial Manager and Online Journal Systems (OJS) aid the tracking of submissions through review, helping the selection of reviewers by maintaining a database of reviewers, their areas of interest, performance history and number of reviews (Public Knowledge Project(PKP), 2014). Some systems are also linked to indexes such as Web of Science, Scopus or Medline, and can provide suggested experts who have published in these indexes using a keyword-based search (Elsevier, 2019b). Parker et al. (2018) suggest that reviewers should be supported with guidelines and a checklist that should form the basis of the review. The journal editor also needs to strategize on how to build a pool of reviewers. WoS has a service labelled Reviewer Locator that aids editors in identifying and connecting with appropriate reviewers by providing information on the potential reviewers' publication history, affiliation, possible conflict of interest as well as their current contact information (Clarivate, 2021b).

Publication ethics and publication malpractice policy

Trust is the bedrock of academic publishing (Graf et al., 2007). The research pillar is threatened by a publishing environment that is rife with factors and players with potentially conflicting interests. This makes it difficult for any journal to be totally immune to publication malpractice (Rew, 2015). A journal policy must therefore provide clear and detailed guidelines in avoiding and dealing with any suspected malpractice. COPE provides policy guidelines in dealing with ethical misconducts touching on authorship, conflict of interest, ethical oversight, intellectual property, journal management and the peer review process (Committee on Publication Ethics, 2021). The policy needs to also cover the use of human subjects (Editorial Policy Committee: Council of Scientific Editors, 2018), plagiarism, editorial decisions and the journal governance structure (World Association of Medical Editors (WAME), 2016). The policy on ethics must be explicitly stated on the journal website. Journal editors can also sign up for COPE membership at a fee (Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), n.d.). Another body that has covered issues pertaining to publication ethics is the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICJME, 2019). Evidently, principles of ethics are an underlying theme in almost all the editorial processes.

Author guidelines

Editors are responsible for providing clear instructions to authors on the journal's expectations of the manuscripts submitted (Snyder et al., 2020). The author guidelines are useful to both the editor and authors because they reduce the number of submissions that are outside the scope of the journal as well as guide the author in drafting their manuscript. The guidelines cover issues such as the journal's aims and scope, article types, content

structure, copyright ownership and the type of peer review the manuscript will be subjected to (INASP, 2018). In addition to assessing a journal on the basis of author guidelines, the JPPS framework delves deeper and assesses if the published papers are consistent with the stated author guidelines (Africa Journal Online (AJOL) & International Network for Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP), 2017).

Access policy

There are several access options that the editorial team can choose from. Whereas the subscription-based model relies on fees paid to access the resources to recoup the production costs, the open access (OA) model often depends on Article Processing Charges (APCs) paid by authors or their institutions. The author pays model is referred to as the Gold OA route. An alternative policy, called Green OA, retains the subscription-based model for the journal but allows the author to deposit the accepted (but usually not the edited, typeset and published) article in an open access repository after an embargo period (Djurkovic, 2014). Another option available is the hybrid model in which the author makes an optional payment for their individual article so that it becomes free to access while the rest of the articles in the journal remain subscription based (INASP, 2018). A journal may also opt for the Diamond OA model in which the journal content is made free for readers without the author paying any APCs (Bosman et al., 2021) but this requires funding from another source, commonly the parent organization. Where APCs apply, DOAJ criteria for inclusion stipulate that the information must be displayed explicitly on the journal website. If no fees are charged, this too must be stated (DOAJ, 2020c). The model adopted and the related access rights agreed on need to be displayed on the journal articles (DOAJ, 2020c). The policies must also be registered with Sherpa Romeo. This is a service that documents journals' open access policies (JISC, n.d.).

Copyright and licensing policy

Copyright is a legal term that refers to the group of rights that a creator has over their literary output (World Intellectual Property Organization & Elsevier, 2021). In some models, the authors transfer the copyright to their work to the publisher so as facilitate publication of the work. The process is accomplished through a publishing agreement contract as in the case of publishers such as Elsevier and Taylor & Francis (Elsevier, 2021; Taylor & Francis, 2021b). The wording of the publishing contract must clearly convey the intent of the agreement. The OA movement encourages a shift towards the author retaining copyright, a move that has also been advanced by research funding organizations (Dodds, 2018) The author in such cases grants the publisher a licence to publish as in the case of Nature research journals, SpringerOpen, Taylor & Francis and open access journals in Elsevier (Elsevier, 2021d; Springer Nature, 2021a, 2021c; Taylor & Francis, 2021b). Creative Commons licences compliment copyright statements by defining and describing in a standardized

format the reuse permissions granted to the public by the copy-right owner. There are six different licences with different sets of permissions. The licence chosen must be communicated clearly and a link to the licence provided on the articles and journal website. To aid with the process of identifying and generating the appropriate licence, Creative Commons has developed a Licence Chooser (Creative Commons, n.d.).

TECHNICAL DECISIONS AND LOGISTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Key technical decisions and logistical considerations that a journal editor will need to contend with include the journal house style to be adopted, the number and scheduling of the issues, the choice of manuscript management system and journal hosting platforms, journal indexing strategies, content archiving and marketing of the journal.

Journal house style

A journal house style refers to the linguistic and format structures of the articles published (Charlesworth Author Services, 2020). From the inception stage, the journal editor must decide on the journal house style to adopt so as to ensure consistency across issues. Some of the style aspects relate to language grammar and the visual display of the content (Wiley-Blackwell, 2007). The house style also addresses issues such as theme colour, journal logo and article content layout. Other considerations are referencing and citation styles, presentation of figures and tables (Springer, 2021d), font size and style and number of words (Charlesworth Author Services, 2020). Cochran (2016) advises that online journals should display a small screenshot of a journal issue cover. This is useful in providing the thumbnail on online library catalogues. The house style chosen must be consistent across all the journal's issues. In addition to the content's visual style, the Wiley house style guide includes language issues such as spelling, punctuation, URLs in text and presentation of supplementary materials (Wiley-Blackwell, 2007). During a conference presentation, Megan Rogers who oversees the house style of the *Journal of Court Reporting* advised that an editor can adopt already existing style guides (Hogen, 2016). Examples of available styles include CSE's Scientific Style and Format (Council of Science Editors, 2021), Chicago Manual of Style (The University of Chicago, 2017) and the APA style (The American Psychological Association, 2021).

Journal publishing schedule

The editorial board needs to decide on the journal publishing frequency and schedule. This decision should be given keen consideration because the journal issues must be published as scheduled. The scheduling may be informed by factors such as the flow of submissions, turnaround time of reviewers and event calendars of mother institutions for journals affiliated with institutions. Uneven and inadequate amount of content can be filled up with conference papers and opinion pieces. INASP (2018) advises that editors can publish each article as it becomes ready. The article-by-article publishing model speeds up the publication process because editors do not have to wait for the issue to be complete (Elsevier, 2019a). The issue may be labelled as 'In progress' until it is complete (Elsevier, 2020).

Overall, the editor must anticipate any possible gaps in copy flow so as to develop an action plan to deal with the problem and avoid interruptions in the journal frequency (INASP, 2018). Adherence to the stated frequency is a key requirement for indexing service providers such as WoS, DOAJ, Scopus and AJOL (Africa Journal Online (AJOL) & International Network for Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP), 2017; Clarivate, 2021d; DOAJ, 2020b; Elsevier, 2021a). Web of Science requires the editor to submit the journal's frequency chart (Cochran, 2016). Scopus clarifies that there should be no delay or interruption in the publishing schedule (Elsevier, 2021a). AJOL criteria require the journal to have a minimum of one issue in a year with a minimum of five articles in a year. Additionally the journal must have a publishing history of two years (Africa Journal Online (AJOL) & International Network for Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP), 2017). An established publishing schedule is a basic requirement for indexing in Scopus, Web of Science, DOAJ and AJOL.

Manuscript submission and journal hosting systems

The choice of a manuscript submission system and journal publishing platform is an important one. Samuels and Griffy (2012) advise that the evaluation of the software must be preceded by detailing what the software needs to accomplish. They have provided a detailed checklist that an editor can adopt in the evaluation process.

Submission and peer review systems

Ideal workflow management systems should provide functionalities such as automation of manuscript tracking, reviewer selection, automated email alerts, facilitation of blinded peer review and monitoring and evaluation of the processes. Integration of the submission system with ORCID is an added advantage as it reduces the authors' input by retrieving most of the details required from the respective ORCID. It also facilitates early and prompt linking between contributor and researcher (Haak et al., 2012). Ultimately, usability of the interfaces is what should guide an editor in choosing one platform over the others (Salem et al., 2016). MacGregor et al. (2013) caution that the peer review interface needs to be as simple as possible because reviewers have the least motivation to use the platform. It is also important to note that the process of facilitating discovery starts at the submission stage. The submission platform should therefore facilitate the capture of the fullest possible metadata (Crossref, 2020d). Commonly used proprietary submission and

peer review systems include ScholarOne Manuscripts, a Clarivate product (Clarivate, 2021c) and Editorial Manager now owned by Elsevier (Aries Systems Corporation, 2021). Another submission and peer review system is EJPress. The system works together with the Journal Production System (JPS), a production workflow tracking engine from the same organization (EJournalPress, n.d.). In terms of cost, Scholastica is a pocket friendly peer review and publishing software that aims at making open access publishing sustainable. It also endeavours to help the hosted journals comply with core OA publishing standards such as Plan S (Scholastica, n. d.). There is an increasing number of systems available which provide a range of services at varying costs.

Journal hosting platforms

A journal hosting platform should comply with the W3C Accessibility Standards (The World Wide Web Consortium, 2021). There are tools for testing web accessibility that a journal team can utilize in evaluating hosting platforms. Borchard et al. (2015) have reported using WAVE, Fangs and Functional Accessibility Evaluator tools to test web-accessibility tools of OJS. Clarivate also stipulates that the information architecture of a journal's website must facilitate easy navigation across all the journal's content (Clarivate, 2019). However, perhaps the most important features on the hosting platform are the reading tools provided. Some basic reading tools that should be available on the journal website are citation, share features, author contact, links to related works and RSS feeds (Owen & Stranack, 2012). Other key features of a journal management systems are integration with publishing services such as Crossref, ORCID, DSpace, DOAJ, PubMed, e-commerce solutions like PayPal and Moneris for subscription journals (Owen & Stranack, 2012). Ideal systems should for example deliver necessary metadata to Crossref with ease as well as deliver Crossref services to users of the hosted journals. Crossref has provided a checklist for evaluating journal hosting platforms on the basis of ability for integration with their services (Crossref, 2020a). Another example of integration of journal systems with value addition services is OJS which provides the Crossref XML plugin to deposit metadata with Crossref (2020c). The basis of evaluation can be summarized under key themes such as navigation and interface, content presentation, editorial workflow and content production, access control and authentication, reporting and support (Ware, 2007).

OJS is reported to be the most widely used open source journal hosting and publishing software. The platform hosts more than 10,000 journals (Public Knowledge Project (PKP), 2014). Other hosting platforms albeit commercial ones include the Digital Commons platform that has a feature for journal publishing. Elsevier acquired the platform as part of the acquisition of Bepress that was announced on August 2, 2017 (Ferguson, 2018). The platform hosts about 1400 journals (Elsevier, 2021c). Commercial journal hosting platforms also include Wiley owned Atypon with more than 200 clients (Atypon Systems, 2021), Ingenta (Ingenta, 2021) and HighWire which has a submission and hosting platform. It hosts publishers such as

Cambridge University Press and McGraw Hill Education (Highwire Press, 2021). The list of hosting platforms also includes PubFactory that hosts publishers like Oxford University Press, Edward Elgar and Harvard University Press (KGL PubFactory, 2021) and Silverchair with clients such as MIT Press and JAMA Network (Silverchair, 2021).

Due to the range of available platforms, it is increasingly common that journals will move from one to another. To facilitate the move of journals, a Code of Practice has been developed by NISO which outlines the procedures that publishers and platforms should adhere to in order to ensure clear communication to all stakeholders and avoid broken links and lack of access (NISO, 2019).

Journal indexing

Journal indexing by search engines and abstracting and indexing services is a key factor in a journal's visibility and discoverability. The editor therefore needs to maximize opportunities for indexing of the journal's content by search engines such as Google Scholar. The engine has provided specific technical specifications required for indexing (Google Scholar, n.d.-a). Additionally, inclusion in indexing databases such as WoS and Scopus enhances usage and acts as a stamp of approval (Viv Gorayska, 2019). Editors must be acquainted with the scope and criteria for indexing by the targeted platforms, for example, application for indexing in Scopus can only be done after the journal has been published for three years (Cochran, 2016). The content to be indexed is vetted by an independent advisory board based on stringent qualification criteria (Rew, 2015). Unlike Scopus indexing, an editor can apply for WoS indexing as soon as the journal starts publishing (Cochran, 2016) however it will only be accepted after evaluation of the content, so it needs to have published sufficient articles to enable evaluation. WoS journals are subjected to continuous curation based on 24 quality criteria and 4 impact criteria (Clarivate, 2021a). The indexing service provider dedicated to open access journals is DOAJ. The service indexes open access journals in all disciplines and languages on condition that they meet the criteria for indexing (DOAJ, 2020a). Journals originating from Africa are eligible for indexing by the African Journal Online (AJOL) platform. AJOL's rating of indexed journal is based on the JPPS framework (Africa Journal Online (AJOL) & International Network for Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP), 2017). Other available indexing services are Medline, PMC and Google Scholar. Each index has its own criteria for inclusion. These range from extremely simple to extremely exacting. For example Google Scholar only requires the content to be scholarly and some text to be available (Google Scholar, n.d.-b). However, Medline inclusion is more demanding (National Library of Medicine, 2021). Ultimately the editor should aim to have the journal indexed in all the relevant recognized indexing services. The editor should keep abreast with updates on indexing services requirements as new criteria and strategy may be added.

Search engine optimization

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is the process of increasing the visibility of a website or website content such as published journal content. Journals that may not have resources needed for implementation of some of the SEO strategies can still implement budget friendly options such as developing websites that are easy to use and navigate. High quality content will also ensure that the journal content ranks well in search engine results (Chan et al., 2019). Other SEO strategies are using platforms in HTML and publishing journal articles in HTML. This format makes it easier for search engines to index a web page (Gillis, n.d.-b). It is worth noting that there is a relationship between SEO and web accessibility guidelines provided in WCAG 2.0 (Moreno & Martinez, 2013). Appropriate description of metadata on a website supports search engine optimization as it aids in determining the page ranking on search engine results pages (Onaifo & Rasmussen, 2013).

Archiving policy and plan

A journal must assure all stakeholders of perpetual access in circumstances such as cessation of publication. The journal's archiving and preservation plan must be publicly available. DOAJ lists digital preservation as one of the additional criteria that qualifies a journal for a DOAJ seal branding (DOAJ, 2020b). Available archiving agencies include LOCKSS (Lots of Copies Keep Stuff Safe, CLOCKSS (Controlled Lots of Copies Keep Stuff Safe), Scholars Portal, the British Library and Portico (see https://keepers.issn.org/keepers).

MARKETING THE JOURNAL

In the backdrop of a proliferation of journals estimated at over 25,000 by (Casadevall & Fang, 2014) and at 30,000 by (Johnson et al., 2018), the uptake of a journal calls for extensive marketing. Padula (2021) pegs the growth rate at 5% per year. A journal publisher must be capable of attracting papers and widening readership (Johnson et al., 2018). The success of the marketing strategy does not necessarily depend on a big budget but on careful planning and concerted effort from everyone in the team (INASP, 2018). The editor must therefore develop a clear marketing and promotional plan. The plan covers annual marketing goals, the target audience and the appropriate promotional tools (Freedman, 2018). The journal publishing team can use tools such as PDF flyers, posters, emails and social media campaigns. The impact of the campaign depends on articulate planning that ensures the right message is delivered to the right audience. The strategy must consider issues such as the audiences' preferred platform and the content plan (Taylor and Francis, 2021a). An editor can also encourage colleagues to sign up for table of content alerts. Other promotional strategies include presentations at conferences, open days and exhibitions, blogs, indexes and use of promotional items like pens (INASP, 2018), press releases and

awarding a prize to the author of the best paper (Sage Publishing, 2021). The team needs to keep in mind that marketing is not merely about hanging a flyer and distributing a bookmark but an integral part of the overall strategic plan (Duke & Tucker, 2007). The editor must therefore have a clear marketing and promotion plan. It is advisable that the marketing action plan be activated after a few interesting articles have published so as to get readers' attention (The Association for African Studies in Germany, n.d.).

CONCLUSION

Scholarly journals' editorial processes are underpinned by various journal policies. The policies should cover the whole spectrum of publishing processes from submission to publication (INASP, 2018). The policy guidelines must be developed within the framework of publishing best practices. Transparency of the publishing processes is a recurring theme in defining best practices in publishing. It must therefore be emphasized that indexing services such as Scopus, Web of Science, DOAJ and AJOL require that the journals' policies be publically available. An editorial team that may never have been involved in journal publishing can make use of the available resources on this subject. The team need not reinvent the wheel. However, any policy adopted must be realigned with the journal's intent. Statements on copyright and licensing for example should not be contradictory. One of the useful resources is a comprehensive checklist of issues an editor launching a new journal needs to be aware of that was compiled by Cochran (2016). Although the list does not address policy documentation, it is definitely a useful guide for startup journals. Another comprehensive resource is the handouts that INASP uses during training workshops. The handouts have been adapted for a wider audience and published as a handbook for journal editors (INASP, 2018). Applying the identified best practices to the publishing process is one of the significant pillars required in establishing a distinguished and reputable scholarly journal.

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