Mathematics Scientific Advisory Council

Summary of the 2nd meeting of the Mathematics Scientific Advisory Council, held on 1st June, 2013 in New York.

Present at this meeting were: Frank den Hollander, Leiden University, Vijay Nair, University of Michigan, Tom Ward, University of Durham, and Roderick Wong, City University of Hong Kong, on behalf of the Council, and Glen Campbell, Christopher Greenwell, Elena Griniari, and Alicia Wise, on behalf of Elsevier.

Update on Events and Follow-up to the First meeting in Amsterdam

Updates were given on actions taken such as the open archive, new initiatives such as the change in the typesetting models and the status of the Cost of Knowledge boycott. The discussion was wide and varied and this aims to capture some of the discussion around those points.

In particular the following were discussed:

- The new RCUK policy especially the allowance of the policy for both gold and green open access.
- The continuing, and increasing, problem of publication ethics and authors who choose to behave unethically. There was mention of the European Mathematics Society (EMS) ethics Code of Practice and also of Elsevier’s own ethics resources.
- The added value of journals which have rigorous ethics policies in the light of the current rise in ‘predatory’ open access publishers/journals was noted. It was mentioned that in light of this the current Elsevier policy of asking authors at submission about their intentions to publish open access is not ideal as it may give an expectation of acceptance. It was noted that this is currently down to a work-around on our (soon to be replaced) EES system. It is worth noting that since this meeting Editors can no longer see which option an author has chosen.
- Editor terms were mentioned in relation to long-serving editors. It was noted that Elsevier is working to ensure that Editors do not normally serve more than two terms. It was also noted that some ‘legacy’ Editors have old contracts which may not readily allow for their replacement, even if that is the preferred outcome. The Council felt that the editor rotation policy should be explained in the next Open Letter and it will feature.
- Editor payments were mentioned in relation to a recent resignation on one of our titles. It was explained that payments for paper-handling Editors are common practice across many publishers and disciplines.
- Elsevier’s contribution to the American Mathematical Society Backlog report was seen as very positive and important in ensuring our continued trend of transparency.
- The International Year of Statistics 2013 activities such as opening the probability and statistics archives for the year, commission of special content and extensive awards program in cooperation with statistical societies.
- The new typeset models were felt to provide a significant benefit to the vast majority of readers who choose to use the PDF version of published articles. The council felt that the next logical step would be to allow content delivery associated with a journal brand in a way that would allow readers to choose their own font/view.
- Content initiatives that were discussed included inline supplementary material (the first article to contain this has just appeared in Computational Statistics and Data Analysis), entity linking to external repositories and new interactive Article of the Future.
enhancements which include the ability for authors to include interactive graphs and plots, code validation, and code.

- Pricing was discussed and the US$11 per article and our aim to reach that was noted.
- Cost of Knowledge was discussed and it was noted that the boycott has taught Elsevier lessons and that we have learnt from it but that we will continue to listen.

In all of the above the role of communication and how vital it is was again discussed. It was felt that Elsevier should look for additional distribution channels for the Open Letters. It was noted by Elsevier that ElsevierConnect has become a major avenue for our communication about general fields.

**Open Access Developments**

It was noted that the increase in Open Access at the moment is being driven by funding bodies.

However it was also noted that there is no evidence to date that it increases citations. Although the Council perceived that maths titles available OA are more highly cited, and were interested to hear this was not our evidence for articles in areas not available via the arXiv.

It was also noted that research output is still increasing by 4% per annum and is increasingly international and multidisciplinary.

The future of Open Access was felt to be probably hybrid but differing in approach by subject area.

There was also discussion of the current Institutional Repository policy and a thought that institutions should request metadata from publishers rather than repeating effort. CrossMark was also mentioned in this regard.

Open Access funding was discussed. The queries were around who decides what research is good enough for gold funding (specifically in relation to RCUK); the assertion by Elsevier, and general agreement, that green needs to be sustainable and the comment that Societies often derive a large part of their revenue from publishing.

**Societies and the Publisher’s role and involvement**

An overview was presented, mostly focusing on Elsevier’s Health Sciences publishing program. The Council found the presentation very interesting as it provided information and case studies on how we add value and support to the publication mission of those societies we partner with. Examples of this include global distribution, manuscript management systems and dedicated society web portals.

**Reviewing – experiments and improvement**

It was mentioned more than once that there was an expectation that reviewer roles need to be defined. This was especially felt to be the case as new initiatives introduced more multimedia, computational and interactive elements into articles.

Some of the new peer review models were discussed (e.g., Peerage of Science was mentioned) and there was a recommendation that these could be trialled if an appropriate vehicle could be found.

Reviewer Rewards were discussed. Whilst it was recognised payment was not practical or expected Elite Reviewer programs, certificates and recognition in general, both public and personal, was seen
as highly desirable. Elsevier is currently examining many different options and running some trials with regard to this.

**Nominations and suggestions new for Council Members**

The Council was invited to think about new members and many names were suggested. All terms will be three years so that there is a continual rotation.