Correcting the scholarly record, and dispelling myths around corrections

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Dispelling myths around corrections

What is a correction?

Who decides what needs to be corrected?

Who is responsible for corrections and their impact?

What are the barriers to correcting the scholarly literature?

Take aways and questions.
What is a correction?

Mistakes happen!

A correction notice is a neutrally worded statement that informs the readership of founded or potential inaccuracies, whether intentional or accidental, and corrects, appends or updates the version of an article.
What is a correction?

This is typically a separate notice with a unique DOI.

The original article is not usually updated. However, legal or privacy concerns or a publisher’s policy can influence this.

The notice appears online and in print, if relevant, and is bidirectionally linked to the related article.
Types of corrections

There are many kinds of correction notices. These can be broadly grouped by their impact on the conclusions of the associated article.

- **Conclusions are reliable**
  - Erratum/corrigendum
  - Notice of redundant publication

- **Conclusions may not be reliable**
  - Expression of Concern

- **Conclusions are not reliable**
  - Retraction

**Batting away myths**

A correction does not always mean there is something ‘wrong’ with the research!
Types of corrections

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Some terms are used inconsistently between journals or publishers
- Publisher's Note
- Withdrawal
Industry guidelines

Key principles

- The scholarly record should be tampered with as little as possible.
- Once a paper is officially published, the publication is permanent. Content should not be withdrawn/removed unless the situation meets strict criteria.
- The version of an article a journal accepts is the version that is published.
- Notices must always sit in front of the paywall and be clearly visible on the article landing page.
- It’s important notices remain objective, and accurately explain the situation at hand.
- Publishers’ primary concern is to ensure to content we publish is accurate.
- Published content is a ‘snapshot in time’ and it cannot be updated to reflect recent events etc.
How are corrections done and what form do they take?

Batting away myths

A correction doesn’t necessarily mean the body of the article is edited.
Who decides what needs to be corrected?

Publishers who follow COPE guidelines investigate requests of an ethical nature and work closely with the Editor in Chief, editorial teams and the authors.

Publishers are custodians of the content and take this responsibility very seriously.

Correction requests will be assessed by the Publisher before issuing to ensure the request aligns with industry guidelines and their own guidelines.
Who decides what needs to be corrected?

Informed about suspected plagiarism in an article

Reader -> Editor

Publisher

Author

The readership

Author’s institutional RIO
Who decides what needs to be corrected?
Who decides what needs to be corrected?

Reader → Editor → Publisher → Author

Ask author to comment

The readership

Author’s institutional RIO
Who decides what needs to be corrected?

Reader → Editor → Publisher → Author

Consider the response, if received

The readership

Author’s institutional RIO
Who decides what needs to be corrected?

- Reader
- Editor
- Publisher
- Author
- The readership

- No response or an unsatisfactory response
- Ask institution to investigate

Author's institutional RIO
Who decides what needs to be corrected?

Reader → Editor

No response or an unsatisfactory response

Editor → Publisher

Publisher → The readership

Potentially publish an Expression of Concern

Publisher → Author’s institutional RIO

Author
Who decides what needs to be corrected?

Reader -> Editor

Editor -> Satisfactory response

Satisfactory response -> Publisher

Publisher -> Potentially issue a post-publication notice

Potentially issue a post-publication notice -> Author's institutional RIO

Author's institutional RIO -> Author

Author -> Thank the author

Author -> Inform the reader

Inform the reader -> Reader

The readership
Who decides what needs to be corrected?

- Inform the reader
- Unsatisfactory response
- Inform the author of the decision and next step
- Potentially inform person responsible for research governance
- Potentially issue a post-publication notice
- Author's institutional RIO

The readership
Every member of the research ecosystem has a role to play in ensuring and maintaining the accuracy of data and research publications.
Publishers have a responsibility to:

- Have systems and **checks in place** to avoid publication of inaccurate content.
- **Correct inaccurate**, or potentially inaccurate, content **transparently** – limiting unnecessary edits to the scholarly record.
- **Investigate** concerns brought to a journal’s attention about the accuracy of content.
- Resolve concerns about potential inaccuracies **as quickly as possible** – but any investigation should be **thorough**.

Batting away myths

A Publisher’s responsibility for their content does not stop at publication.
Authors have a responsibility to:

• Avoid publication of inaccurate content through pre-publication checks and transparent and consistent record keeping.

• Inform the publisher of their research of any inaccuracies in their work.

• Inform co-authors of any inaccuracy discovered, whether accidental or intentional.

• Co-operate with investigations into concerns about accuracy of publications.
Readers have a responsibility to:
- Report suspected errors in publications
  - Neutrally and to a body with responsibility for accuracy of the publication

Batting away myths
No author wants to hear if you spot a potential error in their work.
Reviewers have a responsibility to:

- Review manuscripts critically.
- **Report** concerns about accuracy of material under review to a **body with responsibility** for accuracy of the publication.
Editors have a responsibility to:

- **Review** manuscripts critically and **report** suspected errors.
- **Investigate** potential inaccuracies brought to their attention.
- **Collaborate** with the journal or publisher in investigations bringing their subject expertise.
Research institutions have a responsibility to:

- Promote responsible research through education and foster a transparent research culture.
- Have a mechanism for reporting and investigating potential inaccuracies in the research they are responsible for.
- Report the outcome of investigations to affected publishers.

Batting away myths

Correcting an error in a publication will have a negative impact on a researcher’s career.
Impact of correcting content

Corrections will always be a part and parcel of publishing; however, correcting content is extremely serious and should only be done if absolutely necessary.

Removing or editing content could impact on another academic's research.

Retractions are the most serious correction we can issue, and effectively mark the content as null and void. They can have a significant impact on an author's career.

Split citations.

Print versions will not match the electronic version.

We do not necessarily accept all requests to make a correction.
What are the barriers to correcting the scholarly literature – and, hopefully, the solutions to these problems?

<table>
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<th>Correcting the record</th>
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<tr>
<td>A correction does not always mean there is something ‘wrong’ with the research!</td>
<td>Mistakes happen. Correcting the record needs destigmatisation and normalisation through education and transparent communication.</td>
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<tr>
<td>A Publisher’s responsibility for their content does not stop at publication.</td>
<td>Publishers must be willing to correct inaccuracies transparently with the support of all the other parties in the research ecosystem.</td>
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<tr>
<td>No author wants to hear if you spot a potential error in their work.</td>
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What are the barriers to correcting the scholarly literature – and, hopefully, the solutions to these problems?

**Batting away myths**

Correcting an error in a publication will have a negative impact on a researcher’s career.

Published content cannot usually be withdrawn upon request. When it can, this is the exception rather than the rule.

Publishers can't agree to all correction requests they receive.

**Correcting the record**

Correcting unintentional inaccuracies in publications should be seen by research institutions, funders and colleagues as a positive contribution to the scholarly record.

Raise more awareness about how permanent a publication is and the impact of correcting content. All efforts should be made to ensure content submitted for consideration in a publication is accurate.

Requests to correct the literature should meet the commitments we’ve discussed to help streamline and expedite the issuing process.
Take aways

"Science is self-correcting"

Transparent, necessary correction of the scholarly record is the sign of a well-functioning, healthy, research and publishing eco-system.

This doesn't happen in a vacuum and requires the support of publishers, institutions, and researchers.
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS