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From the Editors' Desks

Membership Rates for 2010

In the light of the global financial situation, Council have decided once again not to raise next year's membership subscription rates or the cost of the Handbook or subscription to *European Science Editing*. Details of the rates can be found on the website.

Annual General Meeting

The next AGM will be held at the Palazzo dei Congressi in Pisa on Wednesday 16 September. Papers for it will be circulated in July by email. If you receive them through the post, it means we do not have an email address for you. This may be by choice, but if not, please could you send it to secretary@ease.org.uk. It will help reduce postal costs!

Last call for Pisa

As this issue goes to press, final preparations for EASE's 10th triennial conference are being made. We're able to bring you some colour photographs of the ancient city of Pisa – even of the bells in the Leaning Tower – on the inside back cover. Hopefully this will whet your appetite not just for the conference itself and its networking

opportunities, but also for some sightseeing and conviviality.

EASE Secretary

Due to various pressures on her time, it is with great reluctance that Sheila has decided to relinquish some or all of her duties as EASE Secretary after the conference in Pisa in September, though she will of course be around afterwards to ensure a smooth handover to her successor. Consequently, applications are invited for this post from members who have some time to spare and would like to contribute to the further development of EASE. Please see the box on page 96 for further details.

Rising rating

European Science Editing's ICV rating with Index Copernicus International at the end of 2008 was 3.39, compared with 3.08 at the end of 2007.

Contributions for next issue

The copy date for the November issue is 15 September. Please send contributions to the appropriate member of the publications committee (see the list on the left) by then.

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Editorial

European Science Editors – recruiting the next generation

Dear Sir,

I am applying for the position of editor recently advertised in ...

Thus began for me, and doubtless for many others, a career in publishing; unforeseen at school, at university and grasped at more in desperation than as a strategic decision when two years at the bench had finally convinced me that I was not cut out to be a research scientist. I was lucky. The only one of those letters that earned a reply led to a fantastic job as a science editor with the Ciba Foundation. First, I discovered that I had a natural talent for copy editing. Secondly, that talent was honed by two very experienced editors, Julie Whelan and Maeve O'Connor. Thirdly, Maeve introduced me to EASE and thereby the greater community of science editors.

Two decades later, I find myself mentoring work experience students who are studying for masters degrees in publishing. They come from around the world to universities in London or Oxford, with degrees in the arts and “a passion for literature”, to try and improve their CVs and thereby their prospects in the job market. Computer literate, articulate, motivated – most of them are already an employer's dream. Yet only one had ever considered a career in science publishing; the others cite travel or children's books, and I often feel that our medical books' team is seen as the short straw. However, they settle down to preparing contracts, checking third-party permissions and all the “paperwork” associated with publishing books and soon realize that much of the work is the same, whether the book (or journal) covers family holidays in Sardinia or managing depression in the elderly. At “entry level”, subject knowledge is not essential – although it always helps to have an interest in or understanding of the topic. The crunch comes at the next level, when one takes responsibility for a journal or publishing programme and needs to liaise with academics, assess manuscripts in some way, plan for the development of that publication, etc. It's at that point that employers notice the absence of people with scientific backgrounds.

My question is whether we, as individuals and as an organization, should be doing something to change this. Not all science graduates want to be scientists. Some study science for interest and for basic skills, knowing that they plan to enter business or management. What about those, like me, who love science but for various reasons don't want to stay at the bench? Are they aware of the many opportunities within science editing and publishing? Some societies have career workshops at their annual meetings: has anyone ever represented EASE, formally or informally, at one of these? To be more proactive, have we ever offered speakers for such a session to societies?

Last November (*European Science Editing* 2008;34(4):94), Stuart Handysides wrote an editorial asking: “European Science Editors – who are we?” Stuart reviewed the

membership of EASE over the years by geography and type of membership and briefly mentioned subject, but he didn't ask: what do we do? Many (most) of us work with journals, but even that group covers a range of activities: copy editors, production editors, managing editors. Then we have freelancers (again covering a range of activities), as well as people working for medical communications agencies, national and international organizations, and at least one (me) commissioning books. This represents a large fund of experience and expertise that we could use, not just to train editors but to encourage more young scientists to consider a career in science publishing. How do we go about this?

Science careers are discussed and promoted at various events; one is the Euroscience Open Forum, which is held in alternate years. EASE organized two sessions at the last one in Barcelona and has applied to do so again in Turin in 2010. There are, however, limits to how much the Council and Programme Committee can achieve. Can EASE facilitate its members, as individuals, to do more to raise the profile of science editing as a career and recruit more people, preferably scientists, into our ranks.

The world of publishing is changing rapidly and the role of the editor with it: basic copy editing may now be done by computer, other jobs are being outsourced to companies beyond Europe. Some see open access publishing as obviating the need for any editing, with authors posting their manuscripts directly on the web. Threats or opportunities? If software leads to copy editors receiving manuscripts with no spelling or grammar mistakes, surely that's a good thing – for the individual and the profession? Editors are then free to concentrate on the content and to apply their skills to the more interesting matters, such as structure, accuracy, and clarity. If content management jobs are moving to countries where labour is cheaper, should we in Europe focus on content acquisition and development? If authors want to self-publish, should we work with them pre-publication, offering more training in science writing? All of these require editors with knowledge of science as well as of science editing – which means we should be encouraging more science graduates and postgraduates to consider editing and publishing as a career.

EASE has seen substantial changes in its membership since it passed its 25th birthday in 2007, with many of the original members retiring and new members taking their places. As an organization, we feel well placed to serve the needs of our members over the next few years. As a profession, are we in such good shape? If not, what should EASE be doing to help?

Joan Marsh

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Articles

Fake paper causes open access storm

Bob Grant

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This article was posted on *The Scientist's* website (<http://www.the-scientist.com>) on 10 June 2009 as "OA publisher accepts fake paper" and followed on 11 June 2009 as "Editors quit after fake paper flap"

An open access journal has agreed to publish a nonsensical article written by a computer program, claiming that the manuscript was peer reviewed and requesting that the "authors" pay \$800 in "open access fees".

Philip Davis, a PhD student in scientific communications at Cornell University, and Kent Anderson, executive director of international business and product development at the *New England Journal of Medicine*, submitted the fake manuscript to *The Open Information Science Journal (TOISCIJ)* at the end of January.

Davis generated the paper,¹ which was titled "Deconstructing Access Points," using a computer program called SCIGen that had been created at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He and Anderson signed the work using pseudonyms (David Phillips and Andrew Kent). The two listed the "Center for Research in Applied Phrenology" (CRAP) as their home institution on the paper, which featured fictitious tables, figures, and references.

"I wanted to really see whether this article would be peer reviewed," said Davis. "[Our paper] has the look of an article, but it makes no sense."

A "little experiment"

Davis told *The Scientist* that he got the idea for this "little experiment" after receiving scores of spam emails soliciting article submissions and invitations to serve on editorial boards of open access journals from Bentham Science Publishers, *TOISCIJ's* publisher. According to its website (www.bentham.org), Bentham publishes "200 plus open access journals" that cover disciplines from bioinformatics and pharmacology to engineering and neuroscience. "One of the things that made Bentham catch our eye," Anderson said, "was that they were so aggressively soliciting manuscripts."

The two wrote about the incident on the Scholarly Kitchen, the Society for Scholarly Publishing blog that they run (<http://scholarlykitchen.sspnet.org/2009/06/10/nonsense-for-dollars>). Davis said that the journal had notified him that it had accepted the manuscript, which contained absolutely meaningless statements typified by the first few lines of its introduction: "Compact symmetries and compilers have garnered tremendous interest from both futurists and biologists in the last several years. The flaw of this type of solution, however, is that DHTs can be made empathic, large-scale, and extensible. Along these same lines, the drawback of this type of approach, however, is that

active networks and SMPs can agree to fix this riddle."

He received an email from Ms Sana Mokarram, assistant manager of publication at Bentham, that the manuscript "has been accepted for publication after peer-reviewing process in *TOISCIJ*." But Davis said that he received no reviewer comments in reference to the sham manuscript.

"The publisher said that it went through peer review," Davis said. "That looks very suspect. [Bentham says] that they're a scientific publication that does peer review, but at least in one case they did not do peer review, and they said that they did."

Richard Morrissy, who's listed as the US contact for Bentham Science Publishers on the company's website, declined to answer my questions and instead directed me to his supervisor, Matthew Honan, who works in Bentham's France office. Honan does not have a phone number, according to Morrissy, and he did not reply to an email (which was CC'ed to Bentham's marketing team in Pakistan) by the time this article (<http://www.the-scientist.com/blog/browse/blogger/31/>) was posted.

Davis had submitted another fake SCIGen-generated manuscript to a Bentham journal, *The Open Software Engineering Journal*, and it was rejected after what appeared to be an actual peer review process.

Publication charges

Mokarram's acceptance email for the *TOISCIJ* article had a fee form attached, asking Davis to submit an \$800 payment to a post office box in the SAIF Zone, a tax-free complex in the United Arab Emirates. Davis wrote back and retracted the manuscript. "We have discovered several errors in the manuscript which question both the validity of the study and the results," he wrote in an email to Mokarram.

Davis said that he considered scraping together the \$800 to see if Bentham would actually publish the fake paper, but considered that taking the hoax further would be unethical. "I think that the point has been made," he said. "And, I mean, it's \$800, and I'm a graduate student."

Davis and Andrews say the episode points out potentially serious flaws in the open-access, author-pay model that is being adopted by an increasing number of publishers. "What happens to be going on is that some publishers see this as a lucrative opportunity," Davis said. "This open access environment may set up the condition under which publishers could use the good will of academics and their institutions for profit motives."

Open access journals generally charge authors fees to publish research papers. For example, BioMed Central journals charge up to \$2265 in “article processing fees,” and publishing in the PloS family of journals costs authors \$1300–\$2850. Institutional libraries, including Cornell’s, and granting institutions, such as the Wellcome Trust and the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, are offering to pay open access publication fees for faculty authors and grantees, so the potential for abuse may be increasing. “It’s almost an inevitability that you might have several publishers tempted to take advantage of this relatively easy money,” said Anderson.

But open access advocate Peter Suber from Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana, said that the problem is not the open access business model, per se: “If it were intrinsically suspect, we would have to level that criticism at a much wider swathe of subscription journals,” many of which also charge page fees when manuscripts are accepted for publication.

As for Bentham, Suber noted that “many questions about their business” have been circulating for more than a year. “There’s a whole range of quality in open access journals,” Suber said, “in the same way that there is a whole range of quality in subscription journals.”

Resignations

After learning that *The Open Information Science Journal (TOISCIJ)* accepted a fake, computer-generated article for publication, its editor-in-chief stepped down from his post. Bambang Parmanto, a University of Pittsburgh information scientist, said that he had never seen the phony manuscript that was accepted by *TOISCIJ*. “I didn’t like what happened. If this is true, I don’t have full control of the content that is accepted to this journal. I want to lessen my exposure to the risk of being taken advantage of.”

Parmanto, who became editor-in-chief of *TOISCIJ* when Bentham launched the journal last year, said that he had reviewed manuscripts for inclusion in the journal previously, but that he made up his mind to resign from his volunteer position “because of the potential for abuse” of the kind uncovered by the hoax.

He added that the perpetrators of the hoax were also guilty of some degree of unethical behaviour. “This is a process based on trust,” he said. “An author should submit something legitimate, and the process on the review side should decide if a paper is worth publishing or not. In this

case, the process was broken on both sides.”

Parmanto wasn’t the only one to react to the news of Bentham’s ignominy by terminating his association with the publisher. Marc Williams, an immunologist and stem cell researcher at the University of Rochester School of Medicine & Dentistry who served on the editorial advisory board of *The Open Stem Cell Journal (OSCIJ)*, another Bentham publication, resigned as well. After reading the story of Davis and Kent’s “little experiment”, Williams “immediately requested my name to be removed from the journal’s editorial board.”

“What upset me was the fact that this happened at all, in any of [Bentham’s] journals,” Williams said. “It really informs us that it may be a company policy that this is permitted in general.”

Williams, who had served on the *OSCIJ* editorial advisory board since the journal’s inception last year, said that in his 15 or 16 months on the job he has not reviewed a single manuscript submitted for publication, though the journal has only published one volume containing five articles since its inception.

Looking at open access

Both Parmanto and Williams said that they support the idea of open access journals. “The open access system is definitely the way forward,” said Williams. “At face value, it is an extremely valuable way of making scientific data widely available.” But Parmanto, though he said that he “believes in the open access system,” noted that the business model of charging authors fees to publish in OA journals might become problematic. “I see that [Bentham would] have the incentive to maintain the credibility of the journal, but I also see the potential for abuse.”

Parmanto said that upon reading the story about Davis and Andrew’s hoax on *The Scientist’s* website yesterday, he contacted the publisher of *TOISCIJ* to ask what was going on. Parmanto said that he was told that “someone on the editorial board reviewed” the fake paper. I contacted Parmanto in reporting the original story, but he said that he wanted to hear from *TOISCIJ’s* publisher before getting back to me.

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- 1 <https://confluence.cornell.edu/download/attachments/2523490/Access+Points.pdf>

Editor’s note

So, who are we to trust? It seems that neither authors nor publishers are immune to the temptation of one more citable paper or the lure of extra income. Although this is not an “Original Article” in the true sense, we thought that our readers (especially those of you who do not regularly browse the world wide web) might be interested in seeing this. It certainly highlights that we should all be vigilant when editing manuscripts – presumably, had this

manuscript completed its journey through the publication process, then at some point it would have passed across the desk of a scientific editor, who one hopes would have suspected the quality of the science and had the moral fibre to raise the alert.

You can follow the various discussions on this debacle, and access other science news items, on *The Scientist’s* website (<http://www.the-scientist.com>).

Essays

How can we evaluate the quality of abstracts?

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	Abstract 1	Abstract 2	Abstract 3
How do you judge an abstract to be good or bad? Do you just feel it, or do you have more systematic ways of doing this? We will discuss three methods for evaluating abstracts, indicating their pros and cons. First we will ask you to rate three abstracts and to compare your ratings with those of other judges. Then we shall contrast such rating scales with two other methods, namely checklists and readability measures. Our aim is to allow you to compare these three methods: choose one or two or three – whichever work best for you – and use them when there is a need.			
Understandability	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Grammar	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Spelling	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Structure	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Selection of information	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Brevity	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Suitability for international readership	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

Rating scales

Please read carefully each of the three abstracts below and rate them in respect of the characteristics listed on the scale: 1 = very poor, 2 = poor, 3 = average, 4 = very good, 5 = excellent.

Abstract 1. Evidence that mercury from silver dental fillings may be an etiological factor in multiple sclerosis

This paper investigates the hypothesis that mercury from silver dental fillings (amalgam) may be related to multiple sclerosis (MS). It compares blood findings between MS subjects who had their amalgams removed to MS subjects with amalgams. MS subjects with amalgams were found to have significantly lower levels of red blood cells, hemoglobin and hematocrit compared to MS subjects with amalgam removal. Thyroxine levels were also significantly lower in the MS amalgam group and they had significantly lower levels of total T Lymphocytes and T-8 (CD8) suppressor cells. The MS amalgam group had significantly higher blood urea nitrogen and lower serum IgG. Hair mercury was significantly higher in the MS subjects compared to the non-MS control group. A health questionnaire found that MS subjects with amalgams had significantly more (33.7%) exacerbations during the past 12 months compared to the MS volunteers with amalgam removal. The paper also examines epidemiological correlations between dental caries and MS, as well as how mercury could be causing pathological and physiological changes found in multiple sclerosis.

Abstract 2. Accumulation and use of nitrogen and phosphorus following fertilization in two alpine tundra communities

To determine whether there are differences in the relative capacity of communities to accumulate nutrients and translate nutrient uptake into growth, N and P standing crops and use efficiencies were measured following fertilization in two alpine tundra communities. In general, differences in nutrient dynamics between the communities corresponded with the type and degree of nutrient limitation of production. The N-limited dry meadow had greater increases in aboveground N standing crop and tissue N concentration in response to N fertilization, higher N-use efficiency, and higher N resorption than the wet meadow. Conversely the N-P co-limited wet meadow had a greater P accumulation response to P fertilization and higher P-use efficiency than the dry meadow. Differences in the response to the treatments and in nutrient use efficiencies were mediated largely by individual plant growth forms. Although there was a substantial amount of luxury consumption of N and P, there was evidence of co-regulated uptake relative to the availability of these nutrients in the soil.

Abstract 3. Relation of berries crop to measure features of overground parts of blueberry (Vaccinium myrtillus L.) defined for huge and small harvest

Examinations were conducted according to cropping of blueberry in relation to features of its overground organs. Results based on examination showed that relation between berry crop of blueberry and chosen group of measure features of overground twigs in years of huge harvest is higher than similar relation in small harvest years. Besides it was concluded that number of twigs (observations) in that does not guarantee the increase of level of researched relation.

Which one of these abstracts is best in your opinion? Clearly there is no one way of assessing their quality. However, with rating scales, you can compare your results with those of others. In this paper the open circles and the crosses in Figure 1 show the ratings of two highly experienced scientists (ecologists), native speakers of English. The solid circles show the mean ratings of 33 postgraduate students (all non-native English speakers) on an international Summer Program in Environmental Sciences and Policy organized by the Budapest College of the Central European University.¹

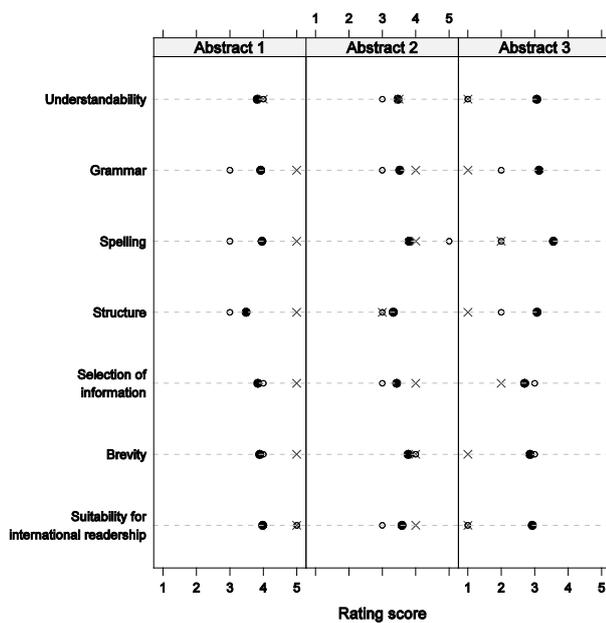


Figure 1 Comparison of the evaluation of the sample abstracts by highly experienced native speakers of English (x = Expert 1; o = Expert 2) and by an international group of postgraduate students (• mean value).

Abstracts 1 and 2 are published abstracts,^{2,3} and Abstract 3 is an unpublished text. The data in Figure 1 show that Abstract 1 usually received very good scores, Abstract 2 did slightly less well, and Abstract 3 was generally regarded as average by students, but as poor by both experienced authors. Thus the students apparently evaluated the abstracts quite adequately, but seemed reluctant to use the highest and the lowest scores (perhaps they did not regard themselves as sufficiently qualified to judge). However, most of them have not noticed spelling mistakes in Abstract 3. (In fact, even one of the experts did not notice a spelling mistake in the title of Abstract 1.) Some remarkable differences can be noticed between the ratings made by the two native speakers, but still their overall rankings of the abstracts were similar to the mean ranking by students.

It is fairly common to use rating scales in this way to evaluate abstracts but it is not without difficulties. In this essay we contrast this method of evaluating abstracts with two other methods – checklists and readability scores – to

illustrate the strengths and weaknesses of different measures.

Checklists

Checklists require the reader to note the presence or absence of particular features of abstracts, but not to rate them for their quality. Figure 2 provides a brief checklist.⁴ You might like to complete it with respect to the three abstracts above: please tick each box that applies for each abstract.

	Abstract 1	Abstract 2	Abstract 3
Background			
Aim			
Methods			
Results			
Conclusions			

Figure 2 Short checklist to assess key features in abstracts.

Do you think all of the items on the checklist are adequately covered in the above abstracts? We judge, for example, that the aims, methods, and results are included in Abstract 1, while the conclusions are not clearly stated, but they are explicit in the title (a common procedure in medical journals). This suggests that abstracts should be evaluated jointly with the title. In Abstract 1, the background to the study (that led the investigators to want to carry it out) is not given. However, one may ask: does the background always need to be explained in the abstract? An educated reader knows that mercury is toxic and that multiple sclerosis is an important neurological disease, so the lack of background in Abstract 1 may seem justifiable. However, if an author seeks to attract the attention of a wider range of readers, such background information can be helpful.

Other investigators have provided different checklists for evaluating abstracts, and most contain many more items than the five basic ones listed above.⁴ This is especially true in the medical field. Whatever the case, authors and editors should make sure that the abstract is not misleading and that it adequately reflects the content of the article. It is also important to check that all of the information found in the abstract is included in the main body of the article.

Readability measures

A different way of evaluating abstracts is to judge how readable they are, and thus how suitable they might be for a particular readership. One such measure, the Flesch Reading Ease score, is based on the length of sentences and the length of words in these sentences.⁵ The scores range from 0 (very difficult) to 100 (very easy). A score in the mid-20s is typical of abstracts and scientific articles in general. This means that they are not easy to read. Indeed, abstracts are often more difficult to read than are Introductions, which are often more difficult to read than are Discussions.⁶ In our examples, the Flesch score is 26.4 for Abstract 1, 19.6 for Abstract 2, and 34.4 for Abstract 3. This would suggest that the first abstract is more readable than the second, which agrees with results of their rating by readers. However,

the most readable would be the third one, although this abstract scored lowest in the ratings presented above. This disparity shows that the Flesch Reading Ease measure alone is not a reliable method of assessing the quality of abstracts. It can be used, however, to flag up excessively long words and sentences.

Final remarks

We think that there is no ideal way of assessing the quality of abstracts: different methods have different strengths and weaknesses, and different readers will have different expertise in the subject matters of the papers that they are reading. Reader evaluations are possibly the most useful, although they can be substituted by a checklist combined with some form of readability measurement, if the spelling and grammar pose no problems.

The readability of abstracts can be enhanced or reduced by their typographic settings.⁷ Unfortunately, abstracts are often printed in smaller typefaces than the ones used in the main text. For the sake of readers this practice should be discouraged because abstracts are read much more often than whole articles. Furthermore, abstracts are typically presented as a single block of text (as in the examples here). Separating the components of abstracts under subheadings (to create structured abstracts) can make them more readable.⁸

Linguistic data suggest that some problems with scientific abstracts written in English may be characteristic of authors who are non-native speakers of English, as expectations differ between countries about what is the best way to proceed.^{9,10,11} Martin, for example, shows that many Spanish authors may omit the results in their abstracts.⁹ For this reason, we suggest that handbooks about scientific writing in English should be published in languages other than English. For example, such a handbook has already been published in Polish.¹²

Swales and Feak provide useful suggestions on writing abstracts, especially for non-native speakers of English.¹³ As a general rule, though, it is useful for authors to complete a brief checklist, to make sure that the abstract reflects the content of the article; and to ask one or two colleagues to rate the quality of the abstract before submitting the manuscript. Thanks to this, the abstract should be improved and the manuscript more likely to be accepted for publication.

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Editing around the World

Publishing qualitative research: ten years' experience

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If you have an apple and I have an apple and we exchange these apples then you and I will still each have one apple. But if you have an idea and I have an idea and we exchange these ideas then each of us will have two ideas. – George Bernard Shaw

Starting points

When in 1999 we started to think about using the internet for the social sciences – more precisely, for qualitative research – there were hardly any models, and the very few examples that did exist were limited to North America. For example, an open-access journal, *The Qualitative Report* (<http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR>) had existed since summer 1990 (published irregularly, and not using the label “open-access” at that time), and in September 1991 the mailing list *Qualitative Research for the Human Sciences* started (<http://www.listserv.uga.edu/archives/qualrs-l.html>). German qualitative research was more or less invisible, and only a small number of German social scientists were familiar with the internet and its possibilities (the same was true for traditional print publications: publishers at most provided rudimentary websites).¹

Since that time we have established online resources for qualitative researchers – for example, a German-language mailing list (currently about 1200 subscribers), the platform *NetzWerkstatt* for supervising PhD students by means of the internet, the *Social Science Open Access Repository* (<http://www.ssoar.info/en>) with qualitative research as a starting point, and, from the very beginning, the online journal *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research* (FQS; <http://www.qualitative-research.net>). In 2005 we founded the Institute for Qualitative Research (<http://www.qualitative-forschung.de/en>) to integrate these efforts.

As qualitative methods are used in many different disciplines, one main intention for starting our online journal has been to provide access to knowledge beyond disciplinary boundaries. Furthermore, we wanted to make the stock of German-language qualitative research accessible to an international audience; at the time these resources were rarely known because of language barriers. By the same token, we wished to improve access to international knowledge for German researchers, at that time limited to a few classic texts. To achieve this we needed at least a bilingual approach, English and German, and in January 2000 the first issue of FQS, with a total of 31 articles, was published.

Since that time FQS has expanded continuously. FQS issues are published in January, May, and September. Articles not directly linked to the issue topic are published every second month and announced in a newsletter (<https://lists.fu-berlin.de/listinfo/fqs-e>) we have been distributing since March 2002, which contains news about conferences and resources of interest to qualitative researchers, and news about open access. Thirty one issues of FQS have been published, with more than 1200 articles by around 1150 authors from all over the world (<http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/search/authors>). We will summarize some of our experiences in managing our journal over the past 10 years, keeping in mind the traditional German print market on the one hand and developments in the field of international qualitative research on the other.²

A publisher and an international collaboration network

When starting FQS we (the editors at the outset, mainly coming from [qualitative] psychology) had different experiences as authors, and some of us had served as members of advisory boards or in editorial teams, mostly for small German print journals. None of us had previous experience as a publisher or in using internet technology. We had to learn how to obtain an ISSN, and it was difficult to understand how to transfer a file from a local PC to the internet, etc. Our first steps were rather wobbly and extremely time-consuming (though at the same time exciting and informative). But soon – despite some initial distrust about the idea of establishing an online-only journal – colleagues from other disciplines and countries joined us. They were interested in the concept of FQS as a “Forum” for qualitative research: they became members of the editorial team, of the advisory board, authors and readers. Some of them engaged as a kind of ambassadors, bringing FQS to other places in the (scientific) world and in this way provoking further interest in this project.

From today's perspective the most surprising experience has been the extent to which “the project FQS” worked. Already by 2001 we had decided on a third language, and since then the complete website is available in English, German, and Spanish. Authors can submit articles in any of these three languages and all articles are then peer-reviewed. Those recommended for publication are copy edited by native speakers, and for articles available in only one language, abstracts are provided in the two other

languages.

To accomplish this we had to establish editorial teams, able and willing to organize all the necessary work. We learned to collaborate – beyond national and disciplinary borders – reliably, accurately, on time, and (most important) joyfully, as all editorial work is voluntary. Participating in FQS and its reach brings immaterial benefits. Even today we are amazed that we can send a text, for example, to Pittsburgh and immediately receive a response from a colleague with whom we have been collaborating closely for the last 10 years without meeting him or her face-to-face. Colleagues from different countries such as Mexico, Canada, UK, Spain, or Japan have visited us and we have enjoyed the talks and personal encounters, but there have never been any editorial real-life meetings – the workflow is organized virtually.

Keeping in mind the enormous output of more than 1200 published articles, this process surely needed some professionalization, starting by tinkering with HTML, followed by proprietary and non-innovative technologies, and finally ending with *Open Journal Systems* (OJS; <http://pkp.sfu.ca/?q=ojs>), a community-based open-source publishing software. That FQS, a rather large social science journal, decided to use OJS probably contributed to the improvement of the system. OJS was initially based on a North American science publishing model, and to transfer FQS to the OJS platform we needed a multilingual navigation tool that would allow us to switch between the different language versions. This was realized with financial assistance from the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (German Research Foundation; <http://www.dfg.de/en/>), and is now available from OJS version 2.2.0 upwards for all interested users. In order to manage files for the German version of FQS, we needed to properly translate the OJS peer review and publishing process, and this is work that we at Freie Universitaet Berlin are still involved in for version 2.2.2 and future releases (see <http://pkp.sfu.ca/ojs-languages>). Further work will be necessary to improve OJS and make it more suitable for publishing demands in the humanities and social sciences.

A well-rehearsed team and a reliable and innovative technology would not have been sufficient if FQS was not committed to the open-access paradigm from the very beginning (in 2002 we were asked to provide the initial German version of the Budapest Open Access Initiative, <http://www.soros.org/openaccess/index.shtml2003>). FQS articles are available free of charge for all interested colleagues and the general public.

To demonstrate the enormous reach of open-access publishing, we provide a short example. Apart from FQS, two other journals for qualitative research(ers) were established in 2000, both of them print, closed access, and German only: *Sozialer Sinn. Zeitschrift für hermeneutische Sozialforschung* (<http://www.sozialer-sinn.de>) and *Zeitschrift für qualitative Bildungs-, Beratungs- und Sozialforschung* (<http://www.uni-magdeburg.de/iew/zbbs/zeitschrift>; renamed *Zeitschrift für Qualitative Forschung*). If you search Google for these journals (and many researchers use the internet and Google as a search

engine) you will get 711 hits for the first and 640 hits for the second journal – compared with 28,700 hits for “Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research”.

Such visibility has consequences for both the authors and the editorial team. Publishing in FQS and being involved in FQS means receiving requests for reprints of articles originally published in FQS, invitations for contributions to books and conferences, etc, as we know from authors’ responses and based on an evaluation done in 2008.³

Marvelous new worlds?

Are these marvelous new publishing and networking worlds? The answer is “to some extent!” The internet had already changed many daily scientific routines for German qualitative researchers, a clientele not too affiliated with new technologies. Our computers are getting faster and better; many of us are using computer-assisted software tools and provide our own homepages at our universities. Some provide texts within their homepages, some started with Web 2.0, and almost all are using emails and search engines. But deep inside there is an old and solid tradition which provides us with a kind of intuitive knowledge of what a scientific publication must be, what it should look like, who it is addressed to.

Especially in the first years of working with FQS, some authors were grateful for all the wonderful extensive peer review and copy-editing work done on their article (work that most small and also some large publishers do not invest in any more), as the result seems worthy of publication “in a real journal”. We have had to explain time and again why FQS is a “real journal” – a scientific journal, but online and open access. Still, some publishers and editors of print journals dislike authors citing FQS and similar journals and resources. Old prejudices against online as “junk science” and reservations against open access – for different reasons – still exist. And this practice (and the old tradition) is also visible when a colleague on an international mailing list raises the question of which journals might be especially suitable and attractive: the good old names of good old print journals will be suggested, as if some Pavlovian reflex is at work.⁴

DEUTSCH ESPAÑOL HOME ABOUT LOGIN REGISTER SEARCH CURRENT ARCHIVES ANNOUNCEMENTS

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Journal Title

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FQS is a peer-reviewed multilingual online journal for qualitative research established in 1999. FQS thematic issues are published tri-annually. In addition, selected individual contributions and contributions to the journal's regular features FQS Reviews, FQS Debates, FQS Conferences and FQS Interviews are published as soon as they have undergone peer review.

FQS is an open-access journal, so all articles are available free of charge. Please register if you are interested in receiving information about new publications once they are posted online.

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CURRENT ISSUE

CURRENT ISSUE

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On the other hand, the unique characteristics of internet publishing – which really differentiate online journals from print journals – are hardly used. In May 2008 an FQS issue on performative social science was published making extensive use of media besides traditional texts (<http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/issue/view/10>), but this still is an exception. All in all, FQS as a place open for innovation and experiments – for new ways of writing and presenting, for providing different kinds of data and media, for immediate discussion of articles, already published – still awaits discovery.

From a social scientist's perspective, the digital future has only just begun. But the process has started and it is not reversible, just as the idea to get back to stones to fix and distribute scientific knowledge after Gutenberg would not have been. The internet has already changed the traditional value chain of scientific information, communication, and publishing, and old and new agents will have to find their place within the future scenarios. At the time of writing, a sociology student from Nepal, a psychology professor from Serbia, a German doctoral student in the field of communications, and an Australian market researcher, all interested in a special group of

research methods, are accessing our site and looking for articles that will help them in their work. Ten thousand colleagues from more than 170 countries will receive our next newsletter pointing them to resources that didn't exist 10 years ago. And FQS is just one very small pixel in a developing scientific world...

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English as she is wrote

I was interested to read the comments of Stephen Lock and Sylwia Ufnalska on English as a foreign language (*ESE* 2009;35(2):45). Lock has been fortunate in apparently only having encountered minor spelling mistakes and never a text that was “frightful”. “At worst,” he states, “commas may be left out.” By sheer coincidence, the day I received *ESE*, I also received a 20-page document for “language washing”. Here is the opening paragraph:

1. Introduction

The introductions of the triple helix as a concept in the end of 1990s boost development of new forms of tripartite structure between industry, university and governmental institutions. There is nothing new about university working in close relationship with industry as scientist has a long history and tradition of foster new ideas to be used in enterprise development. The new about this form of relationship is the scale and the systematically approach of stimulating industry to use knowledge based R&D to increase its innovation capacity.

It would be interesting to hear which adjectives Lock finds appropriate to describe the quality of this text. Considering that all PhD candidates have to show proficiency in English before commencing the course, one should expect a reasonable standard, certainly higher than this. Further, 90% of the literature in most fields is also in English. My book – using terms in Norwegian and English, illustrating pitfalls facing the Norwegian author – should have presented no problem for any Norwegian academic. I do agree with Sylwia that good translators are a rarity. But this places even more responsibility on the author and the pre-editor. When I find it necessary, as with the above text, to re-write virtually every sentence, this clearly goes beyond the bounds of pre-editing. As Sylwia rightly emphasizes, there is a need for education of authors and scientific translators. It will be interesting to see what possible solutions emerge at Pisa.

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Viewpoints

Let's turn posters upside down!

The EASE Forum has recently included discussions on inverting the order of items in an abstract, and also in posters. In my academic English courses, medical doctors (MD in the USA, BM in the UK) earning research PhDs are willing subjects for action research. All have attended poster sessions, and some have themselves designed and displayed posters. Participants range in age from 24 to over 60, averaging around 35 years. The majority are Finnish, but some are Russian, Turkish, Chinese, Spanish, German, plus occasionally an English native speaker. In my course on conference presentation, some 30 participants per year for five years have been rating a set of posters that I have photographed at Helsinki medical conferences and printed in colour at twice A3 size (A2; 49 cm x 59.4 cm).

In these presentation courses, the participants – having received no advice on poster design as yet – enter the room to find about 20 posters lying on tables. I ask each participant to choose a favourite. They judge them quickly for clarity-at-a-glance.

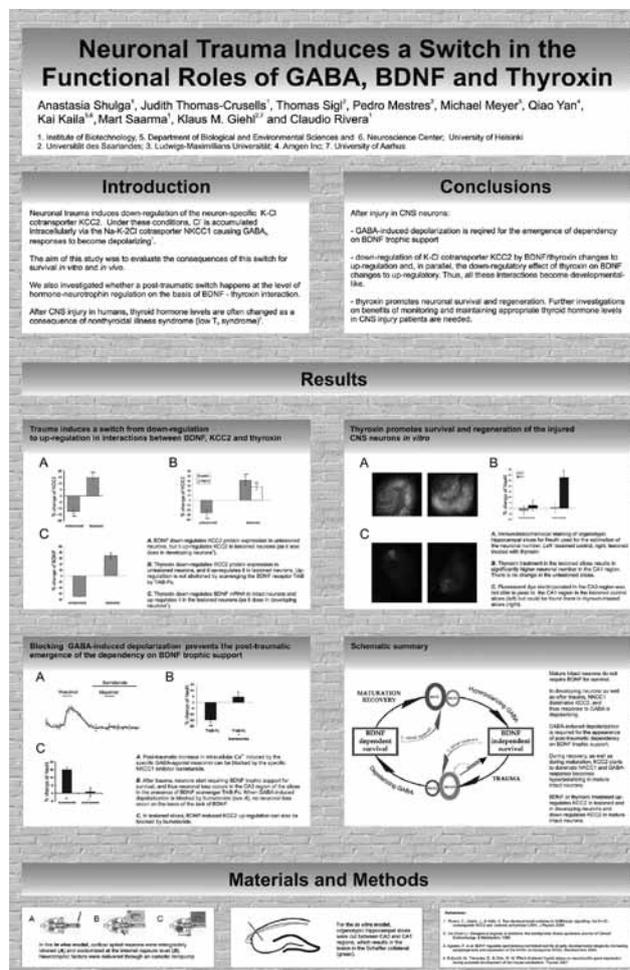
As each then removes a favourite poster from the tables, the pool shrinks, latecomers taking the best of the leftovers. A major difference from a normal poster display is, of course, that because all posters lie flat, the height and agility of the reader of a hanging poster need not be a factor.

The standard layout of these posters seems to be two columns, each reading downwards, with Introduction/Abstract at upper left, above Methods, with Results at bottom left, graphics on the right, and Conclusions at bottom right. An evolution in tastes seems to be emerging, however. I find that the standard design following the IMRaD pattern – or IMRaC, with Conclusions replacing Discussion – seems to be losing ground.

Some recent Finnish posters attracting praise in my course – to the surprise of us all – present Conclusions at the top, just under the title, authors, institutions lines, usually to the right of Background or Introduction. Their Methods, Results, or both sit at the very bottom. In one case the conclusion even sat above the title!

These posters are now attracting the eye of early arrivals to class. Later arrivals now tend to choose three posters (in English) of Spanish origin that share this design of Introduction/Conclusion first, even though their overly bright colour schemes had rendered them unpopular earlier. To me, this indicates a recent shift away from the standard IMRaC poster layout. In short, many of those having to forego their first-choice poster choose another one that, despite its weaknesses (crowded text, small font, long sentences, jarring colour scheme), places its Conclusions at the top.

A fellow teacher who, in his own conference presentation course shares this same poster collection, is reporting the same evolution in tastes. His own University of Helsinki doctoral students are not only from the medical faculty,



but from faculties for other natural sciences plus the social sciences as well.

I took this issue to one of my medical academic writing courses in spring 2009. I would normally never discuss posters in this course. Without comment, I handed each of 14 Finns a black and white A4 photocopy of the poster shown here plus a newer University of Helsinki poster not yet in the public domain, which has its Conclusions at top right and histograms in a column down the centre. Every doctor wrote, anonymously, a quick general review of these two posters on a slip of paper. These ranged from shock at the inversion (“Conclusions should be the last paragraph!” and “Strange!”) to approval (“Introduction and Conclusions start the poster – GOOD!” and “conclusions up where they ‘catch your eye’ and are easier to read”). Some critiqued the posters without apparently noticing the novel layout.

If some abstracts might improve in accessibility had they begun with their Conclusions, would clarity not also improve for some posters? Clarity would also depend on the appropriateness and information value of poster and article titles. Titles themselves deserve further discussion on the EASE Forum.

In contemplating such inversions, one must certainly keep in mind Ed Hull's distinction between Results and Conclusions, which differ greatly. Conclusions emphasize the consequences of the answer to the research question, which appears in Results.

Would these inversions – in our busy world – indeed result in a more rapid and efficient information transfer?

At least, obtaining the most crucial information from a poster would no longer require the viewer to bend double or reverently to kneel.

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Last paragraph: the voice of a naive scientist?

Recently I came across an interesting commentary on an editor's work in the *American Journal of Epidemiology* by Jonathan M Samet.¹ Among various aspects of writing and author-editor cooperation, Samet mentions the importance of a last paragraph in a scientific paper. He says, "Watch that last paragraph. This is where authors often lose control, offering sometimes naive policy recommendations or generic calls for more research (possibly in support of their next grant). Manuscripts do need an ending but go out with restraint."¹ This seems a natural follow-up to the importance of a first paragraph in a scientific paper, which I discussed recently.²

First things first, so let us note that whatever one writes, one will for sure have to write the last paragraph. No matter how much one can want to give it up, something will always constitute it. Unavoidable, it must be written skillfully, then. The questions are: How? What should it contain? How should it be written so that it is not a bad last paragraph?

I agree with Samet that "naive policy recommendations" and support for the authors' next grant should be avoided, and I agree that a paper's last paragraph is very important (though less crucial than the first). But I am not sure that as a rule policy recommendations (not naive, of course) and calls for more research in the particular research area are bad things in a scientific paper. They can constitute a basis for a good last paragraph that links the authors' results to practical problems; they can stress the main conclusions; they can suggest what may or should be done in future; but they must be adroitly worded. We are talking about science, so why should we hide future perspectives from others' eyes? (The only reason that suggests itself is the possibility that someone else will do that research before us. This would be naive thinking – there are many scientists around the world who after reading an article without such perspectives explicitly stated will figure them out immediately.) But of course, recalling Samet's words, anything that ends a paper must not be naive; I would rather say, nothing in a scientific paper should be naive, let it be a first, second, last but one, last, or any paragraph.

The last paragraph is almost as important as the first one. A skillful writer will make it a good paragraph whether or not he or she refers to policy recommendations or calls for more research. A good last paragraph could contain summaries, conclusions, recommendations, perspectives, thoughts in general. It should smoothly – but not without strength and emphasis – complete the article. After reading the last paragraph, the reader should feel like he does after drinking a last sip of coffee: rewarded, fulfilled, refreshed, bright, full of ideas. The only difference is that the last sip of coffee should actually be the last but one (unless you are ready for various surprises waiting for you at the bottom of the cup), while the last paragraph should be read from A to Z. I myself don't like last paragraphs that merely complete results or discussion; in such instances I have a peculiar feeling of missing something. I do need that last (but one) sip. I just hate finishing my coffee when the cup is still half filled: everything that should go with the last sip goes away, leaving me with no refreshment and no ideas.

Please do read the last paragraph of this paper carefully and throughout, paying equal attention to generalities and details. I promise I will try my utmost to avoid being called unskillful (no matter how close to truth this would be). To meet this aim, I won't lose my control and I will make the last paragraph strong, as strong as possible. I will recommend nothing and disregard any perspectives.

Free your mind. Relax to take that last sip. Enjoy it and learn from it. Take your reward.

Whatever.

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Reports of Meetings

How to be a successful journal editor

Oxford, January 29-30; ALPSP and PSP Consulting, in association with EASE

Editors are busy people, so for 24 of them to travel to Oxford (from the USA, Iran, Netherlands, Germany, etc) (oh yes – and from the UK) for a two-day course on editing a journal was pretty impressive. And an impressive crowd they were. The two-day course required everyone to participate, and from the start everyone took part with enthusiasm – some with gusto. From taking an active part in group exercises and discussions to sharing stories and experiences, it was evident that everyone was extremely enthusiastic about editing journals.

This training course is based on a course specifically for medical journal editors that has run for over 10 years and has now been adapted for editors working in any discipline. Participants came from social sciences, pure and applied sciences, and biomedical titles – which made for some interesting comparisons! During the two days we covered how to attract and keep good authors, how to ensure the journal is accessible to readers, and how to make strategic decisions to ensure the survival and success of a journal. The course included some presentations, but it focused on group work around examples and real-life situations which

required the participants to think on their feet.

The course was facilitated by Pippa Smart and Mike Jackson, who was the editor of *Annals of Botany* for many years and oversaw its transformation into the highly successful journal that it now is. Mike's extensive experience provided the participants with a wealth of information – and as he is launching a new journal, he was able to use them as a sounding board to test his ideas on!

The course was well received and participants scored it highly for content and presentation. Some of the notable comments received were: "1.5 days not long enough to do justice to the amount of material covered"; "excellent, interactive course"; "I learnt more about publishing practices than anticipated"; and "I think my journal needs a younger editor!"

It is planned to make this an annual event, so watch the calendar for the next one.

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COPE Seminar 2009

London, 27 March 2009; Committee on Publication Ethics

The first meeting of the Committee on Publication Ethics in 1997 was an informal gathering of editors who were a bit concerned about misconduct and ongoing shenanigans. Now in 2009 it is highly respected and has many publishers signed up, including Elsevier, Wiley-Blackwell, Springer, and Taylor and Francis, and over 5000 members, as well as a blog and a new newsletter. Harvey Marcovitch has stepped down as chairman and has been succeeded by Liz Wager.

Introducing the newsletter "Ethical Editing", its editor, Jeannie Wurz, highlighted its goals: engaging the members and informing them of ethical publishing. It will be an eight-page pdf, published quarterly.

Mischief, malfeasance, and incompetence: the editor's enemies

John Hoey started off by saying that it's funny to think that you can become famous for being sacked. John was the editor of *CMAJ* until in 2006 he was summarily dismissed. The journal and its owners were in a long running dispute about editorial decisions and editorial freedom.

John talked about the editor's contract and how explicit it should be. Make sure that the Helsinki declaration ([http://](http://www.wma.net/e/policy/b3.htm)

www.wma.net/e/policy/b3.htm) is in it, that the guidelines on WAME and the ICMJE are mentioned, and know what the publisher's goals are, and that all editorial and publisher conflicts of interest are readily available or published.

Once the contract is signed, the editor is to commission articles and run everything through peer review, choosing relevant external reviewers, making editorial decisions, editing articles, etc. When looking at manuscripts there is a need to weigh up the reporting bias and the conflicts of interest.

Conflicts of interest can be a bit of a minefield. Is disclosure enough? Should authors report who was responsible for what? Journals need good checklists that include the design, data collection, analysis, who wrote the article, etc. The EQUATOR network covers a lot of this, and there are about 160 reporting guidelines, such as CONSORT and QUORUM.

The publisher and editor relationship should have a clear and explicit contract from the start, state that they follow the Helsinki Declaration and use the guidelines from WAME and ICMJE, be clear on the publisher's goals, and also disclose any conflicts of interests. The goals of

the author-editor relationship should consist of the high quality of articles, having up to date and good instructions for authors, using the reporting guidelines, and using submission checklists.

Editorial professionalism and ethical concerns in small journals

Behrooz Astaneh, deputy editor of the *Iranian Journal of Medical Sciences*, said that small journals have the same ethical concerns as most journals, but they have a harder time finding the resources or money to pay for plagiarism tools and image manipulation tools and to interact with authors and reviewers.

Small journals tend to have a low circulation, and some do not have editorial independence. The editorial board may not have followed the articles all the way through the peer review process, leading to inappropriate decisions.

Behrooz suggested having a good system to replace the author-editor contact and take the pressure off the editor, which reduces bias, and having a board of professional editors to decide which articles to accept or reject.

In journals that are from a non-English speaking countries, trained editors would learn better English and tackle the language barrier, which is sometimes causing the unethical misconduct.

Iran has more than 140 medical journals, many of which are being printed in English. Workshops were constructed for editors and medical journalists, boards, and faculty members, to teach the basics of medical journalism, how to write, the screening process, peer review and critical appraisal, ethics, etc. They also founded an academic course in medical journalism, covering epidemiology, biostatistics, online production, and magazine production.

In the breakout workshop, four groups discussed two cases, one a potential conflict of interest and the other an authorship dispute. Everyone pretty much had the same ideas and people who were not sure are much wiser now; this worked very well and got people talking.

Editorial and publishing ethics: a non-bio(medical) point of view

Randell Stephenson is editor in chief of the *Journal of Geodynamics*, a fairly small journal with 10 issues a year, no editorial office or editorial assistants, just an EIC and an advisor (the ex-EIC) and about 20 board members.

Being an Elsevier journal it is new to COPE but does use the Elsevier PERK – Publishing Ethics Resource Kit – which is linked with COPE structuring guidelines and policies and letter templates. PERK uses the COPE flow charts, which consist of authorship complaints; plagiarism; multiple submission; research results misappropriation; research errors and fraud; research standards violations; undisclosed conflicts of interests; reviewer bias or competitive harmful acts by reviewers.

The reviewing policy is single blind peer review, with about 80% of reviewers wishing to remain anonymous. They get all the usual reviewer types: the four-minute review –

yeah, great paper publish it; the four-month review – very normal and very annoying; reviewer rage – this is where the reviewer has a pop at the author or feels very strongly about something and forgets the rule of critical appraisal; the refuse to review. And if you can't get a reviewer after many tries then the paper is probably not worth publishing. Having double blind peer review would make finding reviewers more difficult.

Randell summed up with a few pointers. There is no difference when it comes to ethics whether you are a small or large journal; ethics is not a luxury; there is less scope in this small journal for undisclosed conflicts of interest, as there is not much funding; the PERK decision tree is closely tied into the peer review process. Reviewer bias, both positive and negative, is the main ethical issue affecting the *Journal of Geodynamics*; negative bias is heightened in a small community in an environment of reduced research funding.

Publication ethics in small journals

Margaret Rees, editor in chief for *Maturitas*, gave an insight into how to deal with ethical issues facing a very small journal. She comes from a background of not having many staff on the journals she has been the editor of, just one editor, one typesetter/production editor, and a printer, no backup of a big publisher, and all on a limited budget. She gets all the usual suspects, plagiarism, duplicate publication, etc, but finds it more difficult because of the lack of resources on a small journal.

Another problem is the detection of problems. Many times an editor walks into the EIC role and thinks “I can do this” but actually has no training or any idea about what publication ethics means. Sometimes if a journal has a small manuscript flow it is tempting to ignore some matters, and to deny there are matters arising. Some editors have been known to use bully tactics to get what they want. Lastly, the experience of reviewers and boards may be limited.

Retraction seems to be a grey area. When an investigation has shown that an article contains faked data or has been plagiarized, the journal tells the reader to ignore that article. But this is easier said than done – the article can go on being cited. If a journal is seen to be not very responsive to publication ethics then it could mean financial loss, circulation revenue and advertising revenue, etc.

Some preventive strategies can be put in place: you need to train your editors and make them vigilant, and have clear and informed instructions for authors and keep them up to date. Maintain accurate documentation and be prepared to contact institutions if authors are non-compliant. For society journals, it is important for the journal to maintain its editorial independence; owners or societies should not interfere with the selection or editing of content. All conflicts of interests should be established.

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Book Reviews

Creating Effective Conference Abstracts and Posters in Biomedicine: 500 Tips for Success. Jane Fraser, Louise Fuller, and Georgina Hutber. Radcliffe Publishing, 2009. 146pp. £21.99; \$39.95. ISBN 978-1-84619-311-8.



Except for the fact that there are 527 tips and not 500, this book is everything the title promises it to be. For anyone involved in writing in biomedicine – whether an affirmed researcher, a medical writer, a university student, or a representative of the pharmaceutical industry – this is definitely a good book to keep on the desk for reference.

Presented as an organized collection of suggestions, the text leads the reader through all the steps involved in the development of abstracts and posters for a conference. The authors begin in a straightforward manner with a convincing argument for “Why you need good conference abstracts and posters” in chapter 1, and then turn to addressing the truly technical matters first of abstracts and then of posters. Chapters 2 to 5 deal with abstract planning, writing, and submission, and chapters 6 to 19 span topics from the general guidelines for posters, to the banner, the main text, tables, graphs, charts, drawings and photos, editing and proofreading, and submission, and even make suggestions as to the best way to transport the poster to the conference venue. A final chapter is dedicated to e-presentations.

Although “conference abstracts and posters” could appear to some sceptical readers as an unassuming topic, and one on which everything has already been said, this book will convince everyone reading it to reconsider the effort that they ought to put into the abstracts and posters going to out to the next congress.

The authors provide a fitting portrait of the delegates’ universe, in which the readers can easily reflect themselves. While reading through the book, I found myself quite involved: in some instances nodding in agreement with the authors’ suggestions, at others smiling in amusement at the thought that few of the suggestions even would need to be made, and at still other instances manifesting concern (“Oops, forgot to do that”) while thinking back to what I should have done for the last abstract or poster I sent out. Oh, if only I had come across this book earlier ...

Extremely user-friendly and easy to jump into at any of its 21 chapters, the text is broken down into a sequence of paragraph-long tips, each introduced by direct and informative subheadings, such as “Present your results clearly ... And precisely ... And accurately ... And [by the way] focus on those results that relate to the study objective”, just the way teachers would do in the classroom talking to

students. And so it is – the authors of the book, Jane Fraser, Louise Fuller, and Georgina Hutber are teachers indeed, with a background in research, too; and here they share with their readers over 20 years of experience in teaching and writing in the field of medical communication.

Reading through the pages, one can easily tell that the authors have paid great attention to the needs of their readers, putting their communication skills into practice very effectively. But I was a little disappointed with the two checklists provided in the Appendix section, one for abstracts and one for posters; these are basically just “lists”. I would have expected the checklists to at least have boxes for checking off every item on the list – and perhaps signalled at the end of the book by some grey tab, and (why not?) located on a ready-to-use tear-off sheet. In the same way, I would have also liked to see some of the topics, such as the technical step-by-step instructions for setting up a PowerPoint presentation, highlighted in a text box to make consultation quicker. However, the poor graphics of the checklists and the lack of text boxes could be more an issue of editorial choice, rather than of the authors’ intentions.

All things considered, this handbook is absolutely a precious addition to a writer’s reference toolbox, to be placed right next to other classics on writing and scientific communication. Compared to the classics, this book offers some additional features. It focuses exclusively on abstracts and posters, so readers can find all the information they will probably ever need right in one book. The subheadings are so informative that the reader could even go quickly through the entire book just by reading headings alone, and still get a great deal of sound advice from it. And being published in 2009, this book is up to date with the current trends in scientific and technical communication. It provides mention of abstract requirements according to the recent 2008 extension of the CONSORT Statement, and on other hot issues such as conference abstracts being considered “prior publication” by some biomedical journals. Finally, it has some humour that fits in nicely with the content. In Appendix I take a look at the example of a structured abstract “Effect of hot and cold drinks on thesis-writing performance in final-year research institutes” on the effects of tea, black instant coffee, and a high-caffeine instant drink by the name of “Bluesheep™”.

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Reader-Friendly Biomedical Articles: How to Write Them! 3rd ed. Ann Bless, Ed Hull. Van Zuiden Communications BV, the Netherlands. 73pp. £21.99, \$39.95. ISBN 978-90-8523-167-7.

As Bless and Hull state in the preface to the third edition of this little blue book, “The goal of today’s researcher is to be cited. This goal considerably sharpens the requirements for reader-friendly writing” – the infallible logic being that if an article offers readers something they can use in their own work, then they will cite it. The aim of all of us, then, should be to write the readable and credible scientific article, one that does not make the reader work hard to find that all-important citeable information. In “Reader-friendly biomedical articles” we are led through the various stages in communicating science in a form that is readable, credible, and valuable.

The book is neatly divided into five chapters, the first of which describes the “Golden Rule of scientific writing” and offers easy-to-digest snippets of advice, supported by exercises on the CD that is cleverly attached to the inside back cover. Here we are taught to consider our reader – and make reading what we have to say easier by avoiding the use of unnecessary jargon and unnaturally convoluted sentences. Equally important is the need to avoid “empty sentences”, those meaningless strings of words that add nothing of value to the content.

We then move on to the structure of a scientific article – chapter 2 explains how logic should flow throughout a manuscript and the purposes of each different section. The importance of formulating a clear and concise research question is stressed – a clear question means that your article is more likely to be read, and hence cited. Don’t get “bogged down” in the Introduction, and “Data are not results”, are important messages, and we are given useful advice about the difference between actual results and the interpretation

of them – a point which seems to elude many inexperienced writers. Finally in this chapter, the last paragraph of the article is described – this is where you tell the reader how your answer to the research question changes the “bigger picture”, pointing out the value of your work.

Chapter 3 goes on to enlighten us on the Title and the Abstract – those all-important first impressions that must be carefully considered: the title serves to attract readers’ interest, and, as many readers read only the abstract, this should be a miniature version of the manuscript. There is a useful table of signalling phrases to assist in writing the abstract – and I am sure I will be making good use of this in the next months.

The value of Tables and Figures is covered in the penultimate chapter, which gives plenty of information that every research student should know before beginning to design Tables and Figures for a potential publication. How much time could I have saved if every researcher who needs my assistance had read this book! Much of the advice is common sense, but these things are so often ignored when students get their hands on the “all-singing, all-dancing” graphics software.

The last chapter is devoted to helpful hints on writing your article, and a collection of checklists, again mostly common sense, but easily overlooked in the “great citation race”. This book is aimed at the novice writer of research articles, but it has plenty to offer to the more experienced among our community.

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Units, Symbols, and Abbreviations: A Guide for Authors and Editors in Medicine and Related Sciences. Sixth edition. Denis N Baron and H McKenzie Clarke. Royal Society of Medicine, 2008. £7.95. ISBN 978-1-85315-624-3.

It has been, according to the preface, 14 years since the RSM published the fifth edition of this title (the first edition was published in 1971). This latest update was prompted by the changes and developments of recent years, particularly in relation to the use of electronic media, new recommendations in the International Systems of Units (Système Internationale: SI), and new terminology in the medical and biological sciences. Retaining the layout of the previous issues, this is a very handy, and space economic, addition to the editor’s armamentarium (to use in the daily battle against poorly presented, inconsistent text).

The volume is divided into four chapters: Units, Symbols and Nomenclature, References, and finally Proof

Correction Marks (the most commonly used of) according to the updated British Standard (2005). In fact, specialist knowledge of the subject area excepted, everything you need to correctly annotate a medical or biological text or proof is here in just 56 pages. For more specific areas, such as anatomy, genetics, pharmacokinetics, and virology, reference is made to more detailed sources. This useful little volume is well worth both the cover price and the shelf space.

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News from Editing Societies

NECOBELAC, a European project to promote the diffusion of scientific information in public health

Paola De Castro, Elisabetta Poltronieri, Daniela Marsili, and the NECOBELAC Working Team*

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NECOBELAC – Network of Collaboration Between Europe, Latin American and Caribbean Countries, www.necobelac.eu – is a three-year project started on 1 February 2009 and funded by the European Commission within the 7th Framework Program. It aims at enhancing the production and dissemination of quality scientific information in the field of public health and focuses on two main objectives: the promotion of training initiatives intended to improve the scientific writing skills of all professionals working in the health-related areas, and the implementation of scholarly communication systems based on the concept of immediate, open, and permanent access to research results. The six partners are represented by academic and scientific institutions from Italy (project coordinator), UK, Spain, Portugal, Brazil, and Colombia; they have gained sound experience in providing information services and outputs through networked initiatives. The project intends to raise awareness on shared principles of good practice among all stakeholders (authors, editors, publishers, information professionals, funding agencies, institutions, learning societies) of the scientific information chain and to promote a cultural change in the information production and dissemination process.

Project motivations and ideas

Since 2006, the descriptions of all scientific works published by ISS (about 1600 publications including contributions on ISS serials) have been accessible online through DSpace ISS (<http://dspace.iss.it/dspace>), the institutional repository, which complies with open access (OA) principles. It holds more than 25,000 items and is a focal point for the scientific papers produced by Italian research institutions in the biomedical area.

All NECOBELAC partners play a significant role within the OA community at both national and international level. Their shared opinions on OA strategies strongly enhanced the NECOBELAC partnership. Several project partners and supporters are members of EASE (European Association of Science Editors) and guarantee full and professional awareness of editorial issues from both technical and ethical points of view; other partners are actively involved in the main networks created for scientific information dissemination both in Europe and Latin America (SHERPA,

www.sherpa.ac.uk; DRIVER, www.driver-repository.eu; SciELO, www.scielo.br/; Virtual Health Library, www.virtualhealthlibrary.org). They have common expectations towards the idea of integrating the existing initiatives in health information services, such as those provided by the National Library of Medicine in the framework of the Medline system. Their collaboration is also oriented towards a democratization of knowledge, particularly in the field of public health.

The project's design envisages an evaluation of the single phases of the project by a subcontractor party involved as consultant within similar international initiatives.

Project characteristics

One of the key elements of the NECOBELAC project is facilitating cultural change in the production and dissemination of scientific information, not merely changing infrastructures. The project's main aim is to promote a bidirectional exchange between Europe and Latin America/Caribbean countries, to overcome the Eurocentric perspective of a unidirectional transfer of information and training activities towards Latin America.

The wealth and variety of the informative resources available in the two continents will be of benefit to all the countries that are involved and promote new collaborative research activities.

European partners, particularly the University of Nottingham (United Kingdom) and the Universidade do Minho (Portugal), have been leaders in the Open Access community in Europe. The Centro Latino Americano e do

NECOBELAC partners

Istituto Superiore di Sanità (ISS), Italy; Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC), Spain; University of Nottingham (UNOTT), United Kingdom; BIREME, PAHO, Brazil; Instituto de Salud Pública (ISP), Colombia; Universidade do Minho (UMINHO), Portugal.

Key Perspectives Ltd, United Kingdom, and Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED), Spain, are respectively subcontractors and third party within WP2 and WP4.

Caribe de Informação em Ciências da Saúde, BIREME, PAHO, the Brazilian partner (a PAHO specialized centre), has expertise in the management of online scientific information services.

NECOBELAC is unique among OA initiatives in focusing on public health. This will provide a well-focused operative strategy able to meet the specific information and training needs in this domain.

Project activities

The NECOBELAC project foresees the creation of a network of institutions collaborating to implement a training plan on scientific writing and on the spread of the Open Access movement to research outputs.

The first phase of the project is to implement a prototype flexible training course for teaching staff in European, Latin American, and Caribbean countries. It will be adapted to train authors of scientific publications at a local level, according to the specific needs of the different institutions participating in the network. The project's website (www.necobelac.eu) will facilitate the communication and availability of the training initiatives.

The project is split up into seven work packages (see box), to which all partners contribute, to ensure awareness and collaboration during the different phases of the project.

Work packages in the NECOBELAC project

WP1 – Project Management (ISS) – Implementation and administrative aspects of the project management directly associated with WPs development and “rules and procedures” to be followed by project management.

WP2 – Project Strategy and Impact Assessment (ISS) – Definition of appropriate strategies and networking EU-LAC within a shared operational plan, as well as assessing the impact of the project activities as a whole.

WP3 – Cross-National Advocacy Infrastructure (University of Nottingham) – Development of a cross-national advocacy infrastructure including a website for all stakeholders within the network EU-LAC countries.

WP4 – Training Activities (CSIC) – Organization of training activities for trainers to spread know-how in health information production, dissemination and use in EU-LAC countries.

WP5 – Promoting the Project Infrastructure to Guarantee its Usage in EU-LAC Countries (UMINHO) – Development of the most appropriate actions so that the new infrastructure is fully utilized in EU-LAC countries and training activities fully developed.

WP6 – Networking EU-LAC Countries (BIREME) – Stimulation of the production of information tools and infrastructures on ongoing health activities in LAC and EU countries.

WP7 – Focus on Health-Related structures in LAC Countries (ISP) – Creation of awareness and collaboration among health-related structures in LAC countries to further increase the impact of the project.



A core element of the work packages is networking. The joint efforts of all partners and their background of experiences represent an investment aimed at launching and stimulating new collaborative research activities.

Project activities are closely connected, and will be performed simultaneously (see figure). The shared operative strategy, the constant evaluation of its impact (WP2), together with the web infrastructure (WP3) and the training activities (WP4), are integrated with the tasks of WP5, WP6 and WP7, which are intended to create awareness of the importance of networking institutions to achieve the project goals.

The project benefits from the collaboration of Key Perspectives Ltd (UK) in the evaluation of activities (WP2) and relies on the experience of the Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (Spain) for the training initiatives (WP4). It will include an external evaluation panel of experts on scientific writing and OA communication models.

Expected achievements

The duration of the project is three years; its results will include activity reports, training course prototypes, online and residential training courses, production of teaching materials, and pilot programmes for the implementation of digital archives that are OA compliant.

A grid of indicators will facilitate collection of all the information relevant to the capacity of each partner to produce scientific publications in public health and to disseminate them through the internet. This will allow monitoring of progress in terms of training courses performed, number and type of scientific publications issued and posted onto institutional repositories, free access to online journals, and establishments of new collaborations, etc.

The project will promote the launch of new international collaborations through training programs on scientific writing and OA models and through a network of health institutions that will continue to work towards common goals even after the conclusion of the project. The ultimate objective is the long-term use of the materials and services provided by NECOBELAC in the framework of an increasing cooperation between Europe and Latin America for the progress of scientific culture. The project has promoted the collaboration of FAO with regard to applying the training programmes in other geographical areas.

sTANDEMpex: a standardized assessment system for English for medical purposes

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The main objective of this multinational project is to achieve international educational harmonization in the assessment of language skills related to English for medical purposes (EMP) by designing, implementing, and providing a standardized system of EMP tests for levels B1, B2, C1, and C2 as described in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

The project was initiated by leading EMP specialists at universities from seven countries of the European Union (Austria, France, Hungary, Romania, Poland, Spain, and the UK) and Japan and Serbia. Currently the European Association of Science Editors (EASE), the European Medical Writers Association (EMWA), and the Groupe d'Etude et de Recherche en Anglais de Spécialité (GERAS, France) are supporting the project as silent partners. Further participants and partners are welcome to cooperate in the sTANDEMpex platform.

Objectives

At a conference held in Budapest, Hungary, in January 2009 the following objectives were decided upon.

The sTANDEMpex project is supposed to satisfy the needs:

- (1) of health care professionals to demonstrate their ability to communicate effectively in an international environment, eg when they work in other countries (above all the EU);
- (2) of universities and other organizations to develop a framework and standards for their EMP programmes;
- (3) of health care providers and other stakeholders to ascertain that those co-operating with institutions abroad, and seeking training opportunities or employment in an international medical setting are able to communicate effectively in an international environment.

Target groups are:

- (a) physicians, nurses, pharmacists, and other allied health professional staff;
- (b) European medical and health sciences students;
- (c) researchers in the fields of medicine and biomedical sciences.

Objective (1)

For the first objective, the distinctive needs of the different target groups were specified, eg for physicians, pharmacists, and nurses.

For physicians:

- to enhance the transfer of clinical research information of import to the potential improvement of patient care;
- to enhance communications among international colleagues (medical and allied health) regarding

diagnoses and treatment;

- to rapidly access and extract essential information from the international literature (printed and electronic);
- to be able to write papers that will be accepted in international journals and contribute to textbooks in their speciality;
- to attend international conferences and seminars held in English.

Similar needs analyses were performed for the other target groups.

Objective (2)

The following needs were identified in relation to the second objective:

- a common assessment system to facilitate the exchange of students, teachers, and other staff, as well as for carrying out different kinds of collaborative programmes;
- suitable and updated preparatory programmes and materials regarding EMP;
- a common framework of reference in EMP according to the CEFR;
- promoting the implementation of transnational collaboration projects in order to meet the objectives of the European Commission.

Project objectives

Specific objectives of the project are:

- to research the particular situation of EMP education in the countries involved;
- to design, implement and provide a common standardized assessment system of competence in EMP according to the guidelines of the CEFR.

Products

The targeted products of sTANDEMpex consist of:

1. a report on the situation and needs of universities and different organizations providing EMP courses;
2. a standardized assessment system for EMP competences;
3. test specifications to be used as a basis for the production of a common framework of reference for EMP in accordance with the guidelines of the CEFR;
4. printed materials based on this framework that promote harmonization of medical English education;
5. a sTANDEMpex website providing a platform for project development, information, and implementation, as well as for the dissemination of project results.

The proposal, which has already been broken down into work packages, will be submitted for the next calls of the appropriate EU programmes (Erasmus or Leonardo da Vinci) in February 2010.

ISMTE: a new society connecting editorial offices

Jason Roberts

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The International Society of Managing and Technical Editors (ISMTE) was launched in early 2008. Its mission is to enhance the professionalism of staff in scholarly journals' editorial offices by providing peer-to-peer networking and training infrastructure; establishing and providing resources for best practices; and studying, benchmarking, and reporting on editorial office practices. Our members are drawn from the entire spectrum of journals and include managing editors, administrators, editorial assistants, and editors-in-chief.

The society fills a valuable niche for an underserved community. Editorial office professionals have traditionally worked in isolation, with limited opportunities to meet and share ideas. Opportunities for training and updating current thinking have been sparse. Despite the dispersed nature of the community and different experiences based on journal size and subject matter, editorial offices have many goals and challenges in common.

Across the industry, editorial offices are gradually undergoing a makeover, with many staying rooted to one location thanks to the possibilities of editors and other colleagues working remotely through online submission and peer-review systems. Continuity of editorial office staff provides possibilities and benefits, and publishers are encouraging the emergence of a new class of professionals who are able to grasp best practice ideas, are better informed about ethical issues, and are able to perform a critical support role in journal development strategies. Indicating their belief that ISMTE can deliver enhanced professionalism to the editorial office, several publishers have invested in corporate memberships in the society.

ISMTE has begun developing a rich and informative website that serves as both a virtual gathering place and a source of information (www.ismte.org). This is one of several benefits members enjoy. Most notably, we offer a monthly online newsletter, *EON (Editorial Office News)*, which contains valuable instructional articles, tips and tricks, topical debates, and editorial office profiles. Recent articles have included information on sophisticated methods of reviewer assignment, analysing/reporting peer-review data, handling publication ethics and how to cope with increasing submission levels. We also offer a lively discussion forum and are now starting to provide a suite of resources of practical use for enhancing journal peer review.

In 2009 ISMTE will hold two international meetings under the banner "The Professional Editorial Office in 2009".

The first, "Managing your Journal in Print and Online", will be held in Baltimore, USA, on 4-5 August and will feature workshops and discussions on editorial office best practices as well as keynote presentations from Kent Anderson (Executive Director, International Business and Product Development, *New England Journal of Medicine*) and Peter Binfield (Managing Editor, PLoS). Our second meeting, "Managing Ethical Issues and Ensuring Best Practices in Peer Review", will be held at St Hugh's College, Oxford, UK, on 25 August. In addition to opportunities to discuss handling ethical issues with peers, the keynote speakers are Harvey Marcovitch, former chairman of the Commission of Publication Ethics, and Professor Roy Pounder, founding co-editor of *Alimentary Pharmacology & Therapeutics* and editor-in-chief of *GastroHep.com*.

ISMTE looks forward to continued growth and new member benefits in 2009. For more information on membership and upcoming meetings, please visit our website, www.ismte.org, or contact me directly at journal@ahsnet.org.

EASE-Forum Digest: March to June 2009

You can join the forum by sending the one-line message "subscribe ease-forum" (without the quotation marks) to majordomo@helsinki.fi. Be sure to send commands in plain text format because only plain text is accepted by the forum software; HTML-formatted messages are not recognized. More information can be found on the EASE web site (www.ease.org.uk). When you first subscribe, you will be able to receive messages, but you won't be able to post messages until your address has been added manually to the file. This prevents spam being sent by outsiders, so please be patient.

Over the spring months participants on the forum valiantly tackled some old and not quite so old chestnuts: open access, the merits of name and numbering citation systems, and a suitable metric for scientific writing courses.

Do we know what open access is?

Marcin Kozak started a lively debate on open access (OA) by asking what "open access" includes. Many discussions assume that OA journals charge for publication, but some do not. What they all have in common is that they do not charge readers for access. Pippa Smart pointed out that OA journals also have in common that they allow republication of their content without permission so long as credit is given to the original authors. She provided a useful list of the usual publication funding models – an OA journal could be:

- run by scientists in their spare time, charging no-one, and covering any costs (eg web hosting) personally;
- supported by organizations, where the organization funds the costs of employment of staff, editors, design, web-hosting, etc;
- supported by grant funding, eg *PLoS Medicine* is supported by funding from the Rockefeller Foundation and others;
- supported by publication fees (paid by the submitting authors, or their institutes), which is the funding model used by the publisher BioMed Central. Many publishers who use this model offer libraries/institutions a subscription whereby, if the institution pays the publisher an agreed annual fee, then any author from that institution will not be charged a publication fee.

Journals are often supported through a combination of the models.

Karen Shashok emphasized that it is important not to confuse a model of information dissemination (OA) with the funding model used to support it (manuscript fees, sponsorship, etc). However, Andrew Davis argued that because OA explicitly outlaws one funding model (payment by readers), OA and funding models have to be discussed together because how information is disseminated is inextricably tangled with how dissemination is funded.

Experts at his own institute, the Max Planck Society, believed that most scientific publication in the future will be paid for by the authors or their institutes and alternative funding models will not be important. His concern was that this funding model puts yet another obstacle in the way of poor authors, a point taken up by Marge Berer, who feared that OA will exacerbate the inequity between authors in the developing and developed worlds, although she agreed costs are less if a journal is web-only.

Reme Melero pointed out that OA not only relates to journals but includes access to other scientific outputs such as theses, data sets, lectures, etc. She recommended that anyone who is confused by OA should read "A field guide to misunderstandings about open access" by Peter Suber (<http://www.earlham.edu/~peters/fos/newsletter/04-02-09.htm>).

Organizations supporting OA would not necessarily recommend publishing in "pay to publish" OA journals. Indeed Reme noted that the MPS homepage of the Max Planck Society strongly encouraged institutional or discipline-specific self-archiving (green OA) of research publications – meaning uploading the peer-reviewed version of the manuscript on a publicly accessible server, such as eDoc (institutional) or arXiv.org (specific for physics and partly computer science and mathematics). The RoMEO Study had found that half of journal publishers are allowing self-archiving of either a preprint (article before it is refereed) or postprint version (article after review and publication in the journal).¹

Reme explained that self-archiving should not be misconceived as self-publishing. Self-archiving is about making available, online, research output that has undergone (or will undergo) the necessary peer-review and editorial quality control process by journals. Nevertheless, eDoc also provides a quality control mechanism on the institute level.

Andrew argued, however, that even self-archiving of quality assured "published" items required authors, or their organizations, to be wealthy enough to pay for the service and to keep it stable and accessible. Some of his Central American and Ukrainian colleagues could not rely on stable local area networks, and downloading a pdf from a remote repository could take 30 minutes – provided the electricity connection stayed that long. Reme agreed, but some experiences in Africa and Asia revealed that the green route of repositories is a way for these researchers to increase the visibility of their own works.

Sylwia Ufnalska's solution for developing countries was for the costs to be covered by some grants from the state or charitable foundations. She accepted that many authors from these countries lack computer skills and can't understand English but this didn't mean that OA is a bad idea. Charitable foundations can also be powerful, she added. Hardly anybody imagined a few years ago that Wikipedia would be possible. Françoise Salager-Meyer suggested that, as an alternative to an institutional

repository, papers could be posted on a personal website, which required no special skills. Françoise drew attention to a recently released student statement on the Right to Research which calls for universities to adopt OA, adding students' voices to those of faculty and librarians supporting OA mandates: www.righttoresearch.org. She also provided a statement from Stevan Harnard about the green OA self-archiving mandates that have been proposed and adopted – for example, one has been proposed for the European University Association (791 universities in 46 countries).

I noted that institutions hold copyright to documents that researchers produce in the course of their employment. Institutions traditionally relinquish copyright but in future they could use this potential. A recent article contends that current institutional repository solutions have failed to deliver and proposes a more robust repository infrastructure based on macroscopic academic settings. The proposal would better support the funders' mandates (<http://ssrn.com/abstract=1425692>). Another recent report that compared the costs and benefits of subscription publishing, OA publishing, and self-archiving in the UK, the Netherlands, and Denmark showed that generally applied OA would be the most cost-effective mechanism of scholarly publishing. OA applied globally would also allow increased access to research results for researchers and the general public. The report found that the best model for financing OA would be for the party financing the study to pay for publication, which would lead to savings of €70m in Denmark, €133m in the Netherlands, and €480m in the UK (<http://www.knowledge-exchange.info/Default.aspx?ID=316>).

Finally, James Hartley thought forum colleagues might be interested in a recent case (<http://www.the-scientist.com/blog/display/55759/>) in which a fake paper was accepted for publication by an OA journal, after it had supposedly been peer reviewed, pending receipt of \$800 author fees (see p 67 in this issue). What should not be overlooked in this story is that one of the authors of the fake paper was the executive director of international business and product development at the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

References: names vs numbers

A request by Mary Ellen Kerans for an example of a journal that listed authors alphabetically in the reference list but used numbers in the text (so that the first reference in the Introduction is unlikely to be 1 unless the first author's name began with A) led to a discussion about the merits of citing references by number versus citing the author's name, and possibly date of the publication, in the text. Mary Ellen commented that as an applied linguist she knew that readers get used to whatever they handle every day. This means that if people do not like a particular style it could well be that this was because they were not used to it.

The pro-number argument was that it's easier for readers to skim past numbers in the text than a string of names in parentheses, especially if many citations are given together. The disadvantages, as pointed out by James Hartley, are that numbers do not convey the date of the publication and therefore how recent it is, and by Norman Grossblatt, that

readers immediately know who did the work. Adding to this, Will Hughes' preference for names was that he could recognize immediately if he knew the work, and an author-year combination becomes part of the fabric of the text and familiar when repeated in the text. Will was keen to impress on authors that they should explain what the cited researchers had done to reach their conclusions, rather than peppering the text with arbitrary citations without making a specific connection to the construction of their own argument.

From the author's viewpoint, getting the numbers in the correct sequence in the text and list when adding or deleting one, especially in a proof, is arduous and easily results in errors. To overcome this Norman suggested leaving the name-date in the text until the final draft and only then numbering the references and replacing the name-date with the number in the text.

It seems from James' comments that the name-date system is common in the social sciences, whereas Norman pointed out that numbers are more common in life sciences, possibly because they save space. Diana Epstein found listing references alphabetically outdated. She manages a European-based journal in ophthalmology that had used the system for 175 years before, following a three-year debate by the editorial board, it changed to the number system in 2006.

Norman gave the URL of a site that contains instructions to authors for about 3500 journals in the health sciences: <http://mulford.meduohio.edu/instr/index.html>.

How effective are courses in scientific writing?

This million dollar question was posed by Ed Hull, eager to know how he should formulate a questionnaire to establish if the courses he gave helped participants write more efficiently and resulted in more publications and citations. Andrew Davis tussled with the enormity of such a task: comparison of un-self-selected matched groups who had and had not followed the course, defining "publication", and attributing a value to different publications. He also considered that even if immediate positive effects could be assessed, courses should be seen as reaping benefits over a lifetime. In his experience only about 10% of students followed up with thanks. These would likely be the successful ones, and they might have been successful anyway. Andrew concluded that a questionnaire a year or so after the course would be interesting but not much more informative than simply asking "did you find my course useful?"

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¹ <http://www.lboro.ac.uk/departments/dils/disresearch/romeo/index.html>. Up-to-date information on publishers' policies is available at <http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/romeo.php>.

My Life as an Editor



Hervé Maisonneuve, MD (herve.maisonneuve@yahoo.fr) was President of EASE from 1994 to 1997, and Chief Editor of ESE from 2000 to 2006. In 2004 Hervé was awarded honorary membership of EASE. We asked Hervé some questions about his long career in science editing.

ESE: What is your present job title?

HM: I have held the position of part-time associate professor of public health, School of Medicine, Paris Sud 11, since 2009, and have started consultancy activities in various scientific domains.

ESE: How do you spend your working day?

HM: My time is currently divided. One day a week I manage a new diploma at the School of Medicine supported by the Sarkozy Alzheimer plan 2008-2012. The objective is to build a national network of clinical researchers in order to increase their participation in multinational trials. As editor of *La Presse Médicale* (the leading French Elsevier journal for hospital doctors), one day a week I review and select articles, copy-edit original papers, and help authors to improve poor papers. I regularly teach medical writing in French hospitals; I have short-term WHO missions in Africa, where I lead courses for civil servants from the public health bodies on drug development and management processes (authorizing a trial, controlling good practices, conducting an audit). This new life makes me happy; it is a far cry from the huge multinational companies that are both exciting and difficult to understand.

ESE: What was your previous role, and why did you decide to move on?

HM: I recently left Pfizer in Paris, having spent four years as head of continuing medical education and scientific media. I left the company as they fired 40% of employees in 2009, and suggested that the older ones among us should retire (I am 59 and never planned to retire early!).

ESE: Tell us something about your career history.

HM: My 30-year career has been unusual: I spent half of my time in the drug industry, and the other half in public organizations (public hospitals, national agencies, not-for-profit associations). I was happy in both worlds and cannot say where the grass is greener. However, the behaviour of people is amazing when they cannot accept that these two worlds (public and private) have their advantages and drawbacks. I have met exceptional people and crooks in both worlds.

ESE: How did the editorial part of your career begin?

HM: During my internship I got a position on the editorial committee of a regional journal, *Les Cahiers Médicaux Lyonnais*. In 1977, articles on medical writing from J A Farfor, a former *BMJ* editor, were published. He tried to educate French opinion leaders and taught in Paris

after he retired from the *BMJ*. After the publication of 10 of Farfor's papers, we received correspondence from readers who were concerned that by publishing articles on medical writing the editorial board was losing space for clinical topics in the journal. Farfor wrote an aggressive but realistic editorial expressing the opinion that teaching medical writing to French leaders was useless, as a common French practice was to use the style of Victor Hugo or Marcel Proust. Thirty years later the situation has not changed!

ESE: What was the next step?

HM: In 1984, I joined the editorial board of *La Presse Médicale*. The chief editor was an old surgeon convinced that good medicine existed only in Paris. I have anecdotes of that time: once I explained to this chief editor that the statistics in a paper were muddled. He answered "But the style is good, it is written by Professor X" and so we must accept it. Another time we received evidence that data in a paper had been stolen from another scientist. The editorial decision was to calm both authors but not to disclose the theft to the readers!

ESE: Have you written any books about editing?

HM: Medical writing has never been taught at French medical schools. In 2009 fewer than five people teach irregularly in France: the French know how to write and cannot learn these methods. In 1988, I co-authored a book (*La rédaction médicale*) that is still successful and soon will appear in a fifth edition. In 2000, I wrote a small book for interns (*Le guide du thésard*) that was widely circulated by a pharmaceutical company; a total of five editions were published.

ESE: When you look back to your time with EASE, what are your thoughts?

HM: I have a lot of good memories of EASE, and regularly read the journal and attend conferences. I enjoy the networking activities and always learn more about editing. I feel that I failed in not being successful in attracting French scientists to join EASE! But I was happy to transform the old bulletin into an informative journal, and I am very happy to see that young editors are now involved in the EASE journal.

ESE: Now that you are less involved with EASE, how do you fill your "spare editorial time"?

HM: I am involved with an international society for medical education (www.game-cme.org) and recently invited Richard Smith and Fiona Godlee to speak at a congress in Lyon. Having editors speak to educators was a great success for both parties! We must share experiences between disciplines for the benefit of all of us. Besides this, I spend about an hour each day to find news for my blog (*La Rédaction Médicale*, www.h2mw.eu), where you can exercise your knowledge of the French language; please come and comment.

Part of my spare time is now filled by my two grandchildren (very soon to be three) and my wife, as we like to enjoy the mountains and various artistic activities.

This Site I Like

Notes from the blogosphere

As a blogger since 2006, approaching my 1000th post, I'm interested in what's going on in the corner of the blogosphere that's concerned with editing and related subjects. Reading blogs is a good way to keep your finger on the pulse, to find out what's new and what the latest thinking is on the current hot topics – and isn't it interesting to be exposed to some quite extreme opinions, sometimes! Here's a list of some of the web logs I read, or at least dip into, to find out what's going on not just in biomedical editing but more widely.

High on my list is the COPE Council blog – <http://publicationethics.org/blogs>. Since October 2008, members of the Council of the Committee on Publication Ethics have been writing succinctly about matters of concern and interest to them (and us as ethically-aware editors). Recent topics include: Should all journals have one universal referencing style?; Concern about UK libel laws; When an editor knows that a submitted article omits to reference key works in the area, what should he or she do?

Ben Goldacre's series of "bad science" articles in the *Guardian* led me to his blog – <http://www.badscience.net>. At the time of writing, the latest post is about inaccurate science journalism: "There's nothing like science for giving that objective, white-coat flavoured legitimacy to your prejudices, so it must have been a great day for *Telegraph* readers when they came across the headline 'Women who dress provocatively more likely to be raped, claim scientists.' Ah, scientists. 'Women who drink alcohol, wear short skirts and are outgoing are more likely to be raped, claim scientists at the University of Leicester.' Well there you go. Oddly, though, the title of the press release for the same research was 'Promiscuous men more likely to rape.'" Read the rest at <http://www.badscience.net/2009/07/asking-for-it>.

After all those years of working at *BMJ*, I hasten to mention its blog, <http://blogs.bmj.com/bmj> – which has a variety of writers from the journal and from the BMA writing on current biomedical concerns. The list of categories on the *BMJ* blog consists mostly of the names of regular writers, but also includes some topics: carbon, conferences, credit crunch, digital media, flu pandemic updates, junior doctors, students, swine flu – and 245 posts by guest bloggers.

Nor is the *BMJ* the only journal with daily posts on topics of interest to its readers (often related to articles they have just published, or are about to – and why not?). Since the *Wall Street Journal* started in 1998 (blogs.wsj.com), every magazine and newspaper has hopped on the bandwagon, and as journals have gone online, they've often found they "need" to add a blog. Keeping up with them all will keep you busy; I can list only a few from well-known international journals: <http://www.biomedicaleditor.com/biomedical-editor-blog.html>; <http://blogs.sciencemag.org>; <http://everyone.plos.org>.

The best "one stop shop" must be <http://blogs.nature.com>. It's busy with "tracking blogs from nature.com and beyond. Find great science blogs, keep up to date with the latest buzz and read the latest posts from our editorial staff" – and yes, it does what it says on the tin, in the subject areas of Bioinformatics, Chemistry, Clinical Practice & Research, Earth & Environment, Life Sciences, Neuroscience, Physics, Science and Society. Some of the blogs it includes are Gobbledygook, Martin Fenner's blog on scientific publishing in the internet age (<http://network.nature.com/people/mfenner/blog>); Journalology: science publishing trends, ethics, peer review, and open access (<http://journalology.blogspot.com/>), 80beats "news aggregator, weaving together the choicest tidbits from the best articles covering the day's

most compelling topics" (<http://blogs.discovermagazine.com/80beats>), and blogs for NPG authors (<http://blogs.nature.com/nautilus>) and peer reviewers (<http://blogs.nature.com/peer-to-peer>).

Blogs are available in many languages, and I hope readers will share their non-English favourites. Being educated in Canada, I'm not uncomfortable with reading French and am glad to know about the blog of ESE's former editor-in-chief, Hervé Maissonneuve. At <http://redactionmedicale.typepad.com/redactionmedicale> (also accessible as www.h2mw.eu) he writes punchy posts about current stories in the biomedical field.

The blogs of practising editors are often on their professional websites, and pass on grammar and style tips (for example, <http://www.biomedicaleditor.com/biomedical-editor-blog.html>) or generously give general writing and publishing advice (<http://lillieammann.com/blog>).

If you're new to the blogosphere, you'll find a plethora of blogs for any topic of interest. Apart from the writing and opinions of the writer, characteristics of the blogs themselves make some more pleasant than others. An uncluttered layout, and use of black text on a pale background (not vice versa), make it easier to focus on the words, the argument. Visual material can be important – those without photos can use the catchiness of the headline, and the words highlighted with clickable links. Categories and tags are useful for finding similar items in the archives; a list of related blogs is useful for "joining the community" – as reader or as blogger. We'd be interested to hear from EASE members involved in blogging on their journal's website: what's your experience?

Margaret Cooter

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<http://margaret-cooter.blogspot.com>

News Notes

News Notes are taken from the *EASE Journal Blog* (<http://ese-bookshelf.blogspot.com>), which has clickable links to internet sources. Please email items for inclusion to Richard Hurley (rhurley@bmj.com), with "News Notes" as the subject.

Many Chinese trials flawed

The design of more than 90% of 2235 randomized controlled trials published in Chinese medical journals was flawed, concludes a review (*Trials* 2009;10:46). Researchers trawled a Chinese national database for studies of 20 common diseases published between 1994 and 2005. Only 207 of the studies used accepted randomization methods. Data from falsely reported trials can mislead healthcare providers, consumers, and policy makers. In a recent *Lancet* article (2009;373:2091-3), Jia He and colleagues at the Second Military Medical University in Shanghai said, "Over the past 20 years biomedical articles authored and published by Chinese researchers have improved greatly in quality." (*BMJ* 2009;339:b2729)

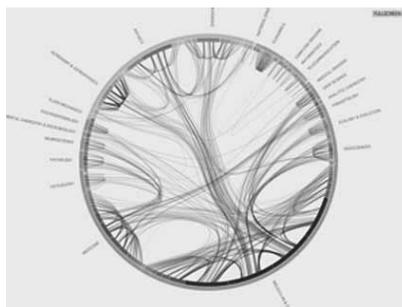
Google affects the brain

The act of searching with Google changes patterns of cognition, research has shown. An exploratory study of people aged 55-76 found that internet searching may engage neural circuitry that is not activated while reading text pages, in people with prior internet search experience. The researchers used functional magnetic resonance imaging of the brain to compare activity in net savvy and net naive users. The net savvy group had more signal intensity in additional regions controlling decision making, complex reasoning, and vision. More research is needed, particularly in younger web users. (*American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry* 2009;17:116-26.)

Publisher censors sexuality article

Taylor and Francis has prevented

an article on pederasty from being published in the *Journal of Homosexuality*, blogged Harvey Marcovitch on bmj.com (tinyurl.com/lcnsv). The article had been accepted before the publisher acquired the journal. Advance online publication of the abstract of the article caused uproar after a conservative US pressure group made "the baseless accusation that [the author] was . . . advocating sex with children," according to an editor. In compromise the author was invited to revise the article for a theme issue, but Taylor and Francis, whose journals belong to the Committee on Publication Ethics, then decided against publication.



Beauty in information flow

As researchers use journals to build knowledge they leave "a latticework of citations, from which we can reconstruct the geography of scientific thought," say developers at the Eigenfactor Project (www.eigenfactor.com). And they display this geography in appealing ways—for example, the many connections between journals and disciplines as a circle crisscrossed with curves (see tinyurl.com/bk7fey). The project is a non-commercial academic research project sponsored by the University of Washington. It aims to use advances in network analysis and information theory to rank journals' influence and to map their use in research.

Help for developing-world authors

Free editorial feedback for authors in the developing world is being provided by students from leading academic institutions in Canada, Europe, and the United States,

reports Naomi Antony on SciDev. Net. SciEdit (www.jyi.org/sciedit) adapts texts in accordance with the editorial standards of journals such as *Nature*. SciEdit is the brainchild of the *Journal of Young Investigators*, a student led, peer reviewed journal for undergraduates, with members from more than 30 academic institutions including the All India Institute of Medical Sciences. Most international scientific journals are written in English, making it difficult for non-native English speaking scientists to compete, says Justin Chakma, cofounder of SciEdit. (tinyurl.com/mkt84e)

Wiki or perish

Contributors to a section on descriptions of families of RNA molecules in the journal *RNA Biology* are required to submit also a Wikipedia page that summarizes their work. The journal will peer review the page before publishing it in Wikipedia. The Wikipedia-publishing initiative is a collaboration between the journal and the consortium that produces the Rfam database of RNA families, which contains information about non-coding RNA families and other structured RNA elements. (www.nature.com, 16 Dec 2008, "Wikipedia or perish")

A pedant and proud

"Pedant is not a term I choose, but nor is it one that I any longer regard as the insult that is generally intended," writes Oliver Kamm, in an introduction to his new column on the English language in the *Times*. The column will prescribe usage because "language needs its protectors because it is not infinitely malleable," he says. "Rapid change causes much of the literature of the past to become obscure to modern readers. A society with a diminished sense of its literary inheritance is inevitably coarsened. The same goes for its understanding of history." (www.timesonline.com, 26 Jun 2009, "Say it loud—I'm a pedant and I'm proud")

Journal's integrity questioned

An academic has branded the Indian journal *Scientific Medicine* a “scam,” according to reports in the *BMJ*. A publicity email sent by a student representative wrongly listed Richard Smith, former *BMJ* editor, Gavin Yamey, a senior editor at *PloS Medicine*, and others, as members of the editorial board. The student says that he tried to correct this mistake, but the email had already been circulated further. *Scientific Medicine* says that one of its aims is to give students in developing countries the opportunity to learn about medical research and the publication process—for which it charges them \$100. (*BMJ* 2009;338:b735 and b804)

Court silences science writer

The science writer and broadcaster Simon Singh is being sued for libel in the UK courts by the British Chiropractic Association. Singh wrote an article on 19 April 2008 in the *Guardian* that criticized claims made by chiropractors about the efficacy of spinal manipulation for childhood conditions such as asthma, colic, and ear infections, citing a lack of evidence. He also complained that the association “happily promotes bogus treatments.” In a preliminary hearing the judge ruled that Singh's words imply conscious dishonesty and that they amount to a statement of fact rather than comment. English libel law demands that to win the case Singh will effectively have to prove that the association recklessly promotes chiropractic. The charity Sense About Science has a campaign to keep libel laws out of science (www.senseaboutscience.org.uk/freedebate). More than 100 prominent supporters, including David King, former chief scientific adviser to the UK government, call for an urgent review of English libel law in a statement. (*BMJ* 2009;338:b2254)

The end for embargoes?

Embargoes turn journalists into propagandists for scientists and academic journals and reduce science to an artificial series of “eureka moments,” according to Vincent Kiernan, associate dean at

Georgetown University, speaking at the World Conference of Science Journalists, according to blogs. nature.com. Richard Horton, editor of the *Lancet*, said, “You’ve sold your soul to publicity masquerading as science.” Many journalists think that embargoes ensure that they don’t miss a story and have time to report. Losing the system would force editors to employ reporters who understand science rather than simply regurgitate weekly press releases, Horton concluded. Horton suggested a randomized trial in the *Lancet* to see if embargoed papers get more and better coverage in the lay press. (tinyurl.com/mlklqj)



Editors must cover climate change

That editors must do more to encourage articles about climate change was a recurring theme at the World Conference of Science Journalists, according to Sian Lewis on SciDev.Net. The problem is that climate change is “tomorrow’s story, or next year’s—but not today’s.” International climate talks, such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change conference of parties and the negotiations planned in Copenhagen, can be used as hooks for articles on global warming, a delegate suggested. Another ruse is to use local events to bring up related issues of climate change. “Humanise it,” was the advice from the *Guardian*’s Damien Harrington. (tinyurl.com/kr3heg)

Millionth word was nonsense

“The biggest load of chicken droppings” is how the linguist and academic David Crystal (tinyurl.com/ctvakt) described claims that

the English language would get its millionth word at 10.22 am on 10 June, on the BBC programme *Newsnight*. The Global Language Monitor (www.languagemonitor.com) announced in June that “Web 2.0” had become the millionth English word or phrase to enter the language. Crystal blogs, “All it means is that the algorithm they’ve been using to track English words has finally reached a million.” He considered technical dictionaries: “There are over a million insects in the world, for example, and English presumably has words for most of them—even if several are Latin loan words.”

Drug company made journal

Merck paid Elsevier an undisclosed sum to produce several volumes of the *Australasian Journal of Bone and Joint Medicine*, which might be mistaken for a peer reviewed journal, *The Scientist* reports. However, it contained only reprinted articles that seemed to act solely as marketing tools, with no disclosure of company sponsorship. The journal was not indexed in Medline and carried advertisements for the Merck drugs Fosamax and Vioxx. A spokesperson for Elsevier told *The Scientist*, “I wish there was greater disclosure that it was a sponsored journal.” (www.thescientist.com, 30 Apr 2009, “Merck published fake journal”)

Web 2.0 opens conferences

Social networking is changing behaviour among conference attendees, *Nature* reports. Delegates can informally discuss presentations as they occur, with each other and with outside parties. Some see this collaboration as the way forward. Others think that the blurring of the line between journalists and researchers may make scientists reluctant to present unpublished data. Some conference organizers have banned digital photography in talks and poster sessions and some consider bloggers to be members of the media and subject them to reporting restrictions. In an accompanying editorial, *Nature* says that organizers must decide whether meetings are completely open or “off

the record" (*Nature* 2009;459:1050-1, doi:10.1038/4591050a and 2009;460:152, doi:10.1038/460152a)

Seminal *Nature* editor dies

John Maddox, editor of *Nature* from 1966 to 1973 and again from 1980 to 1995, died on 12 April 2009. During his first stint he laid the foundations for *Nature* as it is today. He replaced cronyism with an impartial system of peer review, but he liked to say that the 1953 paper on the structure of DNA would never have passed peer review. He also established a strong tradition of journalism in *Nature*, and he established the voice of *Nature* in unsigned editorials, although the voice was often unmistakably his own. (*Nature* 2009;458:807, doi:10.1038/458807a)

Train for open access

The Open Access Scholarly Information Sourcebook (www.openoasis.org) provides authoritative online training for anyone who wishes to provide open access to their research publications. It covers the concept, principles, advantages, approaches, and means to achieving open access. The project wants more trainers and centres of expertise worldwide, to share resources and best practice, and to demonstrate and record successful outcomes around the world. The sourcebook has information for researchers, librarians, and repository managers. The site highlights developments and initiatives from around the world, with links to diverse additional resources and case studies.

Gifts for good reviews

The publishing company Elsevier has confirmed that it was a mistake to offer \$25 Amazon gift cards to academics contributing to the textbook *Clinical Psychology* to encourage them to post favourable reviews. An email sent by the company offered to pay them for positive online reviews. A spokesman for Elsevier said that the email did not reflect company policy and said that it had been a "mistake". He said,

"Encouraging interested parties to post book reviews isn't outside the norm in scholarly publishing . . . But in all instances the request should be unbiased." (*BMJ* 2009;339:b2841, doi:10.1136/bmj.b2841)

Twitter meets arXiv

"Tweprints" will eventually begin to display the most talked about scientific papers using the largest open collection of online papers available (arXiv) and the most prolific and popular open social networking tool (Twitter), hopes its creator Robert Simpson at Cardiff University. For a tweet (a post of up to 140 characters) to be detected it must include the word "arxiv" and the eight digit arXiv paper identifier (for example, 0906.1234). ArXiv links hidden within short URLs from tinyurl.com and is.gd are also picked up. Eight tweets a day on average are detected. You can see the latest detected tweets at <http://orbitingfrog.com/arxiv>.



Turkey censors evolution articles

The Turkish government has provoked outrage by censoring magazine articles on the life and work of Charles Darwin, *Nature* reports. The article was dropped from the March issue of the popular science magazine *Bilim ve Teknik* (Science and Technology; www.biltek.tubitak.gov.tr). The magazine is published by the Turkish government's research funding and science management organization, Tübitak. A planned cover picture of Darwin was switched for an illustration relating to global warming. The editor, Çiğdem Atakuman, has been removed from her post. The claims have fuelled

speculation that the Islamic-oriented government in Turkey wants to increase the role of religion and promote Muslim creationism. The website of the evolutionist Richard Dawkins is banned in Turkey. (*Nature* 2009 Mar 10, doi:10.1038/news.2009.150)

China publishes more in top journals

China has tripled its research published in leading international journals in the past decade, a study by *Nature China* has found, reported by SciDev.Net. The study reviewed the number of mainland Chinese research papers published in *Cell*, the *Lancet*, *Nature*, the *New England Journal of Medicine*, and *Science* from 2000 to 2009. It found that the average number of published papers per journal has risen from seven in 2000 to 25 in the first half of 2009. By June 2009, mainland Chinese scientists had published 81 papers in *Nature* and 59 in *Science*. An analysis of papers registered by Institute for Scientific Information found that 37% of China's high citation papers in 2006 were chemistry related. (tinyurl.com/lesppo)

Comic Sans walks into a bar

Who would have thought a typeface could cause such controversy? Comic Sans, designed by Vincent Connare, has attracted the wrath of designers, who are offended by its use in contexts such as restaurant signage and even medical information. "These widespread abuses of printed type threaten to erode the very foundations upon which centuries of typographic history are built," says www.bancomicsans.com, arguing for a total ban. But the *Guardian* declares, "It can be a welcome break from those corporate Arians and oh-so-chic Helveticas. It has even given rise to jokes: "Comic Sans walks into a bar. Bartender says, 'We don't serve your type.'" (tinyurl.com/cs6p6e)

Thanks to Margaret Cooter, John Glen, and Alison Clayson.

The Editor's Bookshelf

A reminder that we are still looking for volunteers to find new items for inclusion in the bookshelf and to regularly search just one or two journals of relevance to science editors. Please write to paola.decastro@iss.it or pennyhubbard@gmail.com if you wish to send new items or become a member of the EASE journal blog (<http://ese-bookshelf.blogspot.com/>) and see your postings published in the journal.

ECONOMICS AND FUNDING

Van Orsdel LC, Born K. **Reality bites: periodicals price survey 2009. In the face of the downturn, libraries and publishers brace for big cuts.** *Library Journal* 2009;4:15.

Libraries of all types and sizes are facing dramatic budget cuts. This discussion of journal prices provides data for the average 2009 price per title in different scientific disciplines (chemistry ranking first at \$3,690) and the average price per ISI title by country (Russia ranking first at \$3,712). The article also includes cost history per groups of disciplines since 2005 and projection prices for 2010. Wide commentary is provided on the possible making of open access mandatory.

<http://www.libraryjournal.com/article/CA6651248.html>

EDITORIAL PROCESS

Neill US. **All data are not created equal.** *Journal of Clinical Investigation* 2009;119(3):424.

Journal editors continue to screen all figures from accepted manuscripts, and they continue to find irregularities. In several cases, the alterations in the figures led to the discovery of some fundamental problems with the data. Many of the papers suffered from the same

problems, and this led the editors to consider whether it was time to revisit some experimental basics.
doi:10.1172/JCI38802.

ETHICAL ISSUES

Brumback RA. **Impact factor wars: Episode V-The Empire Strikes Back.** *Journal of Child Neurology* 2009;24(3):260–262.

A really amazing piece on the war of authors and editors to get to the empire of impact factor; cheating and tricks, cutely told in a short story, supported by sound references.
<http://jcn.sagepub.com/cgi/content/refs/24/3/260>

Gallagher R. **Citation violations.** *The Scientist* 2009;23(5):13.

The authors of scientific articles do not always properly cite previous research works. This “bibliographic negligence” or “citation amnesia” is due to the fact that actually there is no best practice for citing prior work. Moreover, this behaviour is reinforced by the hard competition in the scientific environment that pushes authors to omit mention of competitors' results. Journals should adopt a code of practice for citation. Many years ago Eugene Garfield suggested that authors declare and sign that they have done a minimal search of the literature and that to the best of their knowledge there is no other relevant work. However, the question still remains open...

Greenhalgh T. **Sharing medical research data: whose rights and who's right?** *BMJ* 2009;338:b1499.

Objections to Groves' article “Managing UK research data for future use” (see Science section below) include issues with data interpretation when data is “cleaved” from the context in which it was collected or the people who supplied it and interpreted it, and the breakdown of the trust between researchers and research participants.

http://www.bmj.com/cgi/content/full/338/apr14_2/b1499

Landis GA. **APS copyright policy still no good.** *APS News* 2009;18(4):5.

Letter querying why the American Physical Society's “improved” copyright policy (*APS News* 2009;18(2):8) still demands transfer of copyright on the grounds that “we must have this to continue to provide quality publication” when commercial publishers do not make such a demand.

<http://www.aps.org/apsnews/>

Reich ES. **The rise and fall of a physics fraudster.** *Physics World* 2009;22(5):24–29.

Article based on the author's 2009 book: *Plastic fantastic: how the biggest fraud in physics shook the scientific world*. The author traces the history of Jan Hendrik Schön's career and what led him to fabricate data, how this affected the work of others who tried to replicate his results, and how eventually the fraud was detected.
<http://physicsworld.com/cws/article/print/38903>

LANGUAGE AND WRITING

Fraser VJ, Martin JG. **Marketing data: has the rise of impact factor led to the fall of objective language in the scientific article?** *Respiratory Research* 2009;10(35).

The use of value-laden terms in clinical and biomedical journals has increased in the past 25 years, and this is particularly valid for important research journals of high impact factors. The recent trends in the use of biased words in a scientific manuscript show an exaggeration of the importance of findings and a loss of scientific objectivity. This may fuel skepticism and alienate the reader. It is better to encourage more modest claims and a return to objectivity: “The numbers and not their interpretation, must speak for themselves”.

<http://respiratory-research.com/content/10/1/35>

PUBLISHING

NFAIS best practices for journal article publishing. National Federation of Advanced Information Services, 2009.

This association wishes to disseminate the document widely throughout the information community in order to generate discussion and get additional input. http://www.nfais.org/Best_Practices_Final_Public.pdf

Houghton J, Rasmussen B, Sheehan P, Oppenheim C, Morris A, Creaser C, Greenwood H, Summers M, Gourlay A. **Economic implications of alternative scholarly publishing models: exploring the costs and benefits.** JISC EI-ASPM Project. **A report to the Joint Information Systems Committee.** JISC, 2009 (Document 510 Version 1.1).

A detailed report on the ongoing debate on the economics of scholarly publishing and alternative publishing models; it focuses mainly on costs, pointing at the most cost-effective system, but not necessarily the cheapest. The report will help stakeholders understand the institutional, budgetary, and wider economic implications of three of the major emerging models for scholarly publishing: subscription publishing, open access publishing, and self-archiving.

<http://www.jisc.ac.uk/media/documents/publications/rpteconomicoapublishing.pdf>

Research Councils in UK. **Report on open access study.** May 2009.

The purpose of RCUK's independent study was to identify the effects and impacts of open access on publishing models and institutional repositories in light of national and international trends. This included the impact of open access on the quality and efficiency of scholarly outputs, specifically journal articles. In response to the study, the Chief Executives of the Research Councils have agreed that over time the UK

Research Councils will support increased open access, by building on their mandates on grant-holders to deposit research papers in suitable repositories within an agreed time period, and extending their support for publishing in open access journals, including through the pay-to-publish model. www.rcuk.ac.uk/cmsweb/downloads/rcuk/news/oareport.pdf

Sandweiss J. **Essay: the future of scientific publishing.** *Physical Review Letters* 2009; May 11.

Last in a series of nine essays written to celebrate last year's 50th anniversary of *Physical Review Letters*. Both physicists and editors contributed to the series. This particular offering looks ahead to the future of scientific publishing and suggests that most difficult problems that it faces are a result of the ever-increasing volume of published scientific research. Aids to the individual physicist in wading through the mine of information include virtual journals and artificial intelligence programs. <http://prl.aps.org/edannounce/PhysRevLett.102.190001>

RESEARCH EVALUATION

Bornmann L, Mutz R, Daniel HD.

Do we need the h index and its variants in addition to standard bibliometric measures? *JASIS&T* 2009;60(6):1286–1289.

Investigates whether there is a need for the h index and its variants in addition to standard bibliometric measures (SBMs). One type of index (eg, h-index) describes the most productive core of a scientist's output and tells of the number of papers in the core; the other (eg, a-index) depicts the impact of the papers in the core. In evaluative bibliometric studies, quantity and quality of output are usually assessed using the SBMs "number of publications" (for quantity) and "total citation counts" (for the impact dimension). The authors included the SBMs into the factor analysis. The results of the newly calculated analysis indicate

that there is a high intercorrelation between "number of publications" and the indices that load substantially on the factor Quantity of the Productive Core as well as between "total citation counts" and the indices that load substantially on the factor Impact of the Productive Core. The authors propose the use of any pair of indicators (one relating to the number of papers in a researcher's productive core and one relating to the impact of these core papers) as a meaningful approach for comparing scientists.

Bourne PE, Fink JL. **I am not a scientist, I am a number.** *PLoS Computational Biology* 2008;4(12): e1000247.

Having scholarly output properly characterized is not out of reach, since articles are already identified uniquely by a Digital Object Identifier, books or journals by an ISBN, citations by PubMed identifiers. The ideas discussed here take this identification process for individual publications and citations to the point of providing unique descriptors for each author and uniquely identifying all of each author's scholarly work. <http://www.ploscompbiol.org/article/info:doi/10.1371/journal.pcbi.1000247>

Fanelli D. **How many scientists fabricate and falsify research? A systematic review and meta-analysis of survey data.** *PLoS ONE* 2009;4(5):e5738.

Many surveys have asked scientists directly whether they have committed or know of a colleague who fabricated and falsified data or committed other forms of research misconduct, but their results appeared difficult to compare and synthesize. This is the first meta-analysis of these surveys. Considering that these surveys ask sensitive questions and have other limitations, it appears likely that this is a conservative estimate of the true prevalence of scientific misconduct. <http://www.plosone.org/article/info:doi/10.1371/journal.pone.0005738>

Fersht A. **The most influential journals: impact factor and eigenfactor.** *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 2009;106(17):6883–6884.

To rate the influence of journals a new bibliometric parameter, the Eigenfactor (www.eigenfactor.org), has recently been created and is now listed by Journal Citation Reports. The Eigenfactor ranks journals in a manner similar to that used by Google for ranking the importance of websites in a search. Practically, there is a strong correlation between Eigenfactors and the total number of citations received by a journal. New and emerging measures of scientific impact are continuously developed and improved. However, scientists should not rely solely on one standard measure. After all, science is about progress, which is ultimately assessed by human judgment.
doi: 10.1073/pnas.0903307106
<http://www.pnas.org/content/106/17/6883.full>

Iribarren-Maestro I, Lascurain-Sánchez ML, Sanz-Casado E. **Are multi-authorship and visibility related? Study of ten research areas at Carlos III University of Madrid.** *Scientometrics* 2009;79(1):191–200.
Opinions on the possible relationship between co-authorship and number of citations vary. This study shows that while multi-institutional and multi-national authorship raise the number of citations, co-authorship and number of citations are unrelated. Correspondence analysis failed to show any correlation between the quartile of the citing journal and multi-institutional or multinational authorship, but did reveal a relationship between citing journal quartile and departmental area.
doi: 10.1007/s11192-009-0412-4

Johnston R. **The extent of influence: an alternative approach to identifying dominant contributors to a discipline's literature.** *Scientometrics* 2009;78(3):409–420.
Most studies of scholarly influence within disciplines using citation

data do not investigate the extent of an individual's influence. Using bibliographic data from a series of quadrennial reports into developments in UK geography, this paper finds that few authors are cited on more than one occasion.
doi: 10.1007/s11192-007-2015-2

Sypsa V, Hatzakis A. **Assessing the impact of biomedical research in academic institutions of disparate sizes.** *BMC Medical Research Methodology* 2009;9:33.
A valid and transparent evaluation of universities is increasingly needed but continues to be a controversial issue. In particular, as regards the assessment of biomedical research, peer-review is not adequate for large-scale evaluations and the authors propose, beyond the usual bibliometric indicators, a new impact measure: the Modified Impact Index (MII). This indicator is suitable for large as well as for small field specific publication sets in biomedicine and should be used together with the h-index when research output of institutions of disparate sizes is compared.
doi:10.1186/1471-2288-9-33
<http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2288/9/33>

Van den Besselaar P, Leydesdorff L. **Past performance, peer review, and project selection: A case study in the social and behavioral sciences.** *Sigmetrics* 2009.
Do grant allocation decisions correlate with past performance of the applicants in terms of publications and citations? The findings of the Netherlands Research Council for the Economic and Social Sciences distinguish grant applicants with above-average performance from those with below-average performance, but within the former group no correlation could be found between past performance and receiving a grant. Researchers who were denied funding significantly outperformed those who were funded, and the best rejected proposals scored as high on the outcomes of the peer review process as the accepted proposals.

(SIGMETRICS is a listserv that covers bibliometrics, scientometrics, informetrics, and metrics as related to the design and operation of digital libraries and other information systems. It is a Virtual Special Interest Group of the American Society for Information Science and Technology.)
<http://home.medewerker.uva.nl/p.a.a.vandenbesselaar/bestanden/20090327%20magw.pdf>

Williamson JR. **My h-index turns 40: My midlife crisis of impact.** *ACS Chemical Biology* 2009;4(5):311–313.
The h-index, or Hirsch index, is a sort of personal impact factor, based on citations of published work. In this letter the author tells about his recent discover in the web of science on how to “Create Citation Report” through the “Author Finder”. Then he goes on to advise how to boost the h-index.
<http://pubs.acs.org/doi/full/10.1021/cb9001014?cookieSet=1>

SCIENCE

Groves T. **Managing UK research data for future use.** *BMJ* 2009;338:b1252.
The *BMJ* has recently joined a host of other journals in encouraging authors to make raw research data available to others. Authors are being asked to include a data sharing statement at the end of their original research articles. This will explain what additional data are available, to whom, and where they can be found. Sharing clinical research data has ethical implications for medical journals; maintaining patient confidentiality is a major challenge. A list of proposed solutions is given.
doi:10.1136/bmj.b1252
http://www.bmj.com/cgi/content/full/338/mar25_1/b1252

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Forthcoming Meetings, Courses, and BELS Examinations

The Professional Editorial Office 2009: Managing ethical issues and ensuring best practices in peer review

25 August 2009; Oxford, UK
<http://ismte.org/conferences2009/html>

6th International Congress on Peer Review and Biomedical Publication

10–12 September 2009; Vancouver,
Canada
<http://www.ama-assn.org/>

SfEP 20th Annual Conference - Editing in the 21st Century

14–15 September 2009; York, UK
<http://www.sfep.org.uk>

Technical Communication UK (ISTC)

22–24 September 2009; Nottingham,
UK
<http://www.technicalcommunicationuk.com>

Plagiarism: detection and management

30 September 2009; London, UK
<http://www.alpsp.org>

10th European Molecular Biology Organization (EMBO) and European Molecular Biology Laboratory (EMBL) Science and Society Conference

6–7 November 2009, Heidelberg,
Germany
<http://www.embo.org/events>

11th Latin American Colloquium of English for Specific Purposes and 1st Latin American Colloquium of Languages for Specific Purposes

9–13 November 2009, Mérida,
Venezuela
<http://eventos.saber.ula.ve/coloquiolfe2009>

29th European Medical Writers Association Conference

12–14 November 2009; Frankfurt,
Germany
<http://www.emwa.org/conferences.html>

10th EASE Conference: "Integrity in Science Communication"

16–19 September 2009;
Pisa, Italy

Editing medical journals: a short course for editors-in-chief, editorial board members and managing editors

18–20 November 2009; Oxford, UK
<http://www.pspconsulting.org>

American Association for the Advancement of Science: Bridging Science and Society

18–22 February 2010; San Diego, USA
<http://www.aaas.org/meetings>

COURSES

ALPSP training courses, briefings and technology updates

Half-day and one-day courses and
updates.

Contact Amanda Whiting, Training
Coordinator, Association of Learned
and Professional Society Publishers,
Tel: +44 (0)1865 247776; training@alpsp.org;
www.alpsp-training.org

Publishing Training Centre at Book House, London

Contact: The Publishing Training
Centre at Book House, 45 East Hill,
Wandsworth, London SW18 2QZ,
UK. Tel: +44 (0)20 8874 2718;
fax +44 (0)20 8870 8985, publishing.training@bookhouse.co.uk
www.train4publishing.co.uk

Society for Editors and Proofreaders

*SfEP runs one-day workshops in
London and occasionally elsewhere in
the UK on copy-editing, proofreading,
grammar, and much else.*

Training enquiries: tel: +44 (0)20
7736 0901; trainingenquiries@sfep.org.uk
Other enquiries: SfEP, Riverbank

House, 1 Putney Bridge Approach,
London SW6 3JD, UK. Tel: +44
(0)20 7736 3278; administration@sfep.org.uk;
www.sfep.org.uk

Society of Indexers workshops

*The Society of Indexers runs
workshops for beginners and more
experienced indexers in various cities
in the UK. Details and booking forms
can be found at www.indexers.org.uk;
admin@indexers.org.uk*

University of Chicago

*Medical writing, editing, and
ethics are among the many courses
available. Graham School of General
Studies, The University of Chicago,
1427 E. 60th Street, Chicago, IL
60637, USA.
Fax +1 773 702 6814.
<http://grahamschool.uchicago.edu>*

University of Oxford, Department for Continuing Education

*Courses on effective writing for
biomedical professionals and on
presenting in biomedicine, science,
and technology.*
Contact Leanne Banns, CPD
Centre, Department for Continuing
Education, University of Oxford,
Littlegate House, 16/17 St Ebbes
Street, Oxford OX1 1PT, UK.
Tel: +44 (0)1865 286953; fax +44
(0)1865 286934; leanne.banns@conted.ox.ac.uk
www.conted.ox.ac.uk/cpd/personaldev

BELS - Board of Editors in the Life Sciences examination schedule

www.bels.org/becomeeditor/exam-schedule.htm

17 September 2009, Pisa, Italy (EASE
Triennial Conference); register by 27
August 2009

21 October 2009, Dallas, TX
(AMWA meeting); register by 30
September 2010

14 May 2010, Atlanta, GA (CSE
meeting); register by 17 April 2010

EASE Business

Nominations for Members of Council to serve from 2009 to 2012

No further nominations for Council were received by the deadline of 18 June 2009. As given in the May issue of ESE, the proposed members of Council to serve for three years, from the Annual General Meeting, which is to be held in Pisa on 16 September 2009, are as follows:

President	Joan Marsh (United Kingdom)
Vice-President	Alison Clayson (France)
Vice-President	Reme Melero (Spain)
Treasurer	Roderick Hunt* (United Kingdom)
Secretary	Sheila Evered* (United Kingdom)
Members	
	Eva Baranyiová (Czech Republic)
	Mare-Anne Laane (Estonia)
	Moira Johnson* (United Kingdom)
	Ana Marusic** (Croatia)
	Petter Oscarson** (Sweden)
	Edward Towpik** (Poland)
	Sylwia Ufnalska** (Poland)

* In attendance *ex officio*

** New members of Council

EASE Secretary

Sheila Evered will be relinquishing some or all of her duties as Secretary to EASE after the conference in Pisa in September. We are therefore seeking a successor for her and would like to encourage members to apply. Exact hours (minimum probably 2 days) and honorarium to be determined. Please send a CV with covering letter, marked PRIVATE, to:

Arjan Polderman
Pharmaceutisch Weekblad
Alexanderstraat 11, Postbus 30460
NL-2500 GL Den Haag
The Netherlands

Deadline for receipt of applications: 1 September 2009.

Publicity Officer

EASE is looking for a Publicity Officer. This is an unpaid post, but think of the glory of putting it on your CV! You would liaise with Council and other Committees to obtain news of EASE activities, then send press releases to relevant newsletters and websites. Assembling a list of relevant newsletters would be a first task – starting with all those free e-bulletins to which people subscribe so that they can fill up their inbox. If you are interested, please contact Joan Marsh (jmarsh@wiley.com)

Membership Changes

New Members - Individual

Professor James Clayson
Paris, France
james@clayson.org

Dr Sharon Forsyth
Subiaco East, Australia
sharonf@ozemail.com.au

Dr Silvia Maina
Turin, Italy
silma75@hotmail.com

Ms Lizeta-Cristina Poenaru
Bucharest, Romania
Managing Editor, Geo-Eco-Marina
cristina.peonaru@geoecomar.ro

Ms M Ruth Ridgway
Murray-Darling Basin Authority
Canberra, Australia
ruth.ridgway@mdba.gov.au

Mr Daniel Rosario
Mumbai, India
danielr@cactusglobal.com

Dr Christiaan Sterken
University of Brussels,
Belgium

Mr Anthony Watkinson
Woodstock, Oxon, UK
*Dentistry Publisher, Wiley-Blackwell; Senior Lecturer,
Centre for Publishing, University College, London*
anthony.watkinson@btinternet.com

Changes

Mrs Elisabeth Heseltine
e.heseltine@gmail.com

Mr Basil Walby
bjwalby@gmail.com

Countdown to Pisa

Or should it be count up as we eagerly monitor the number of registrations? We have realised that the registration facility is not as intuitive as it might be and apologise for any inconvenience this may have caused. Please persevere as it's going to be worth it! We have everything in place for a fantastic conference. Each session now has an appointed chairman, busy working out how best to integrate all those submitted abstracts. The menus have been chosen – plenty of delicious Italian food, including vegetarian options.

We've had another change to the programme as Adam Wilkins is unfortunately unable to attend. Luckily, we have managed to secure David Vaux, of La Trobe University in Australia, and a member of ICSU's Committee for Freedom and Responsibility in the Conduct of Science. David will discuss the incidence of errors in the scientific literature and ways in which editors can reduce these and correct the scientific record when they occur.

There will be plenty of display space, so please bring fliers or brochures for your journal, association, or whatever. We can also display posters relating to the same: if you would be interested in doing this, please contact Sheila Evered (secretary@ease.org.uk).



Programme Committee

EASE members' news

Eric Lichtfouse (Eric.Lichtfouse@dijon.inra.fr) sends news of his forthcoming book on scientific writing in French, to be published by Springer in August 2009 [and reviewed in ESE in due course]. *Rédiger pour être publié ! Conseils pratiques pour les scientifiques* will explain to a French-speaking audience how to write a scientific article in the computing age.

Eric says: "I have designed guidelines from the main writing errors found in thousands of research papers that I have edited. Though most advice in this book aims at improving research articles, the principles explained here apply also to PhD theses, industrial reports, advertisements, cover letters, curriculum vitae, blogs, and press releases. Indeed all those documents have in common the communication of an advance, a discovery, an innovation, or a difference versus existing knowledge.

"This book describes how to structure a research article and how to correct specific errors, so that your article can be understood by a wide readership, eg your future employer or funding agency.

"I emphasize how to adapt the writing style to the new means of communication using computers and the internet. You will find also a new writing tool, called the micro-article, that will help you focus your zillions of results on only one novel finding."

Funding for research on publication ethics

The Committee on Publication Ethics – COPE – offers research grants of up to £5,000 to "fund research in the field of publication ethics for a defined research project that is in the broad area of the organisation's interests and specifically in the area of ethical standards and practice in academic publishing." Grants are awarded twice a year. Next deadline for submission of proposal is **1 December 2009**.

For more information, visit <http://publicationethics.org/research/grantscheme>