

**Publications Committee 2009–2012***Chief editor*

Armen Yuri Gasparyan  
a.gasparyan@gmail.com

*Production editor*

Lynne Rowland  
lynne@alrsvcs.co.uk

*Secretary*

Mary Hodgson  
secretary@ease.org.uk

**European Science Editing***Articles and correspondence*

Armen Yuri Gasparyan  
a.gasparyan@gmail.com

*Book reviews*

Moira Johnson  
moiraajohnson@gmail.com

*EASE-Forum digest*

Elise Langdon-Neuner  
a.a.neuner@gmail.com

*This site I like*

Silvia Maina  
silma75@hotmail.com

*News notes*

John Hilton  
hilton.john@gmail.com

*Editor's bookshelf*

Anna Maria Rossi  
annamaria.rossi@iss.it

*Production assistance*

Penny Hubbard  
pennyhubbard@gmail.com

**Books (Science Editors' Handbook)**

Pippa Smart  
pippa.smart@googlemail.com

**Website**

Silvia Maina  
silma75@hotmail.com

**EASE Council**

Joan Marsh (*ex officio*)

*Contributions* should be sent to the Chief Editor or the appropriate section editor. See the Instructions to Authors on EASE's website ([www.ease.org.uk](http://www.ease.org.uk)). The journal is published in February, May, August and November, free to paid-up members of EASE and available on annual subscription of £65 to libraries and other non-members.

*Disclaimer:* The views expressed by contributors are their own. The Association does not necessarily endorse the claims of advertisers.

ISSN 0258-3127

Printed by Qwerty Ltd, The Markham Centre, Theale RG7 4PE ©EASE 2012

## From the Editors' Desks

This issue of ESE sees the return of a correspondence section. According to Maeve O'Connor's excellent work on our archives, the first correspondence section in the newsletter appeared in January 1980. Sponsored membership was initiated in January 1984: a scheme still running today and we are very grateful to all those EASE members who enable editors from developing countries to enjoy the benefits of EASE membership.

Interestingly, it was not until June 1999 that peer review of articles for ESE by someone other than a member of the Editorial Board (which became known as the Publications Committee in August 2003) began.

Nominations have now closed for the next EASE Council. Joan Marsh, Ana Marušić and Eva Baranyiová have therefore been elected unopposed as President and Vice-Presidents, respectively. After some candidates withdrew, we finished with five

nominees for five positions as Ordinary members of Council, so they have all been elected: see page 39.

The EASE Conference in Tallinn is approaching rapidly. Many of you have registered, coming from across Europe and beyond – Korea, Canada, Nigeria – it will be a truly international meeting. We're particularly pleased with the number of poster abstracts: there are far more than at recent conferences, covering an interesting range of topics and hopefully representing the new generation of active EASE members. The abstracts are on the EASE website. We also have plenty of participants in the optional workshops, which will take place before and after the main event. Some people wished to take part in all of them, but the schedule doesn't allow that. If people would like us to arrange any of the workshops again, please contact Joan Marsh or the Secretary.

**Errata - February 2012 38(1)**

In the 3rd paragraph of the item entitled The origins of EASE (p.17) the reference to "Editerra's second General Assembly" should read "Editerra's third General Assembly", and Lammi should not have an umlaut on the "a".

The author's name in the table of contents should read Frank-Thorsten Krell.

**EASE Council 2009–2012**

**President:** Joan Marsh, UK; [jmarsh@wiley.com](mailto:jmarsh@wiley.com)

**Vice-Presidents:** Alison Clayson, France; Reme Melero, Spain

**Members:** Eva Baranyiová, Czech Republic; Mare-Anne Laane, Estonia; Ana Marušić, Croatia; Petter Oscarson, Sweden; Edward Towpik, Poland; Sylwia Ufnalska, Poland; Armen Yuri Gasparyan, UK (*ex officio*)

**Past-President:** Arjan K S Polderman, The Netherlands

**Treasurer and Company Secretary:** Roderick Hunt, UK

**Secretary:** Mary Hodgson; West Trethellan, Trethellan Water, Lanner, Redruth, Cornwall, TR16 6BP; +44 (0)1209 860450; [secretary@ease.org.uk](mailto:secretary@ease.org.uk)

**EASE website:** [www.ease.org.uk](http://www.ease.org.uk)

*European Science Editing* is indexed in SCOPUS, SCImago Journal and Country Rank (SJR), SCIRUS, CAB International, Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, NewJour, Genamics JournalSeek, Chemical Abstracts Service (CAS), Electronic Journals Library (EZB), J-Gate, ZETOC, The British Library, The Library of Congress, Cornell University Library, The John Rylands Library of the University of Manchester, Geneva Foundation for Medical Education and Research (GFMER), Academic Index, VINITI of RAS, GeoRef, Google, Index Copernicus Journals Master List, NLM Catalog, NLM LocatorPlus, EBSCO, ProQuest: LISA, HINARI, WorldCat, and RIN

**To advertise in this journal, or on the EASE website, please contact EASE Secretary, Mary Hodgson, [secretary@ease.org.uk](mailto:secretary@ease.org.uk)**

## Editorial

### Peer review in scholarly biomedical journals: a few things that make a big difference

Peer review is currently a cornerstone of scholarly publishing in biomedicine. Most journal editors rely heavily on the support of internal and external reviewers to help them evaluate the scientific merit of submissions. In the absence of a solid evidence base justifying the use of peer review or universally accepted guidelines, each scholarly journal adopts its own rules for processing and editing manuscripts. These rules stem from the research and writing environment surrounding the authors, reviewers and editors. It is therefore not surprising that there are marked differences in how journal submissions are processed and accepted for publication within and between the mainstream science countries and the developing world. The differences relate to who the reviewers are, how many are involved in the review, how long it takes to review and what type of incentives are used. The language in which the science is written and the size of the scientific community are additional sources of diversity. Furthermore, numerous limitations of peer review and resultant scientific corruption have been reported by editors of small journals around the world.<sup>1,2,3</sup>

Misunderstandings and even conflicts sometimes arise when authors from disadvantaged or small scientific communities attempt to publish their works in journals of mainstream science countries with established traditions of peer review.

In the era of digitalisation, when journal publishing is becoming technically feasible in most parts of the world and large numbers of journal items are entering libraries and indexing services each day, science editors are encountering the ever growing issue of how to select the highest quality articles. A strict selective approach is also practised by prestigious indexing services, prioritising high-quality peer review and demanding improvements from journal editors.

How can journal editors balance the growing demands of their authors and the indexing services? Editors of large and small journals deploy different strategies. For most highly-ranked journals 'flooded' by hundreds or thousands of submissions annually, the rejection of articles on relatively small, poorly designed and redundant studies in house, before external peer review presents as a workable solution.<sup>4</sup> Most top biomedical journals also no longer publish medical case reports—a negative consequence of the current trends in scholarly publishing driven by scientometric priorities.<sup>5,6</sup> Editors of these journals are supported by a huge army of highly skilled, volunteer reviewers, who consider the invitation to review an honour and donate hours of their precious time to evaluating submissions and suggesting a set of revisions or a well-justified rejection. A reviewer's contribution to these journals is viewed by most as a service to the profession, with the reviewer acting as a gatekeeper, helping the editors select the most innovative and influential items. The response to the reviewer invitation is usually on time, comments are comprehensive, courteous, and helpful

for the authors even in a case of rejection. The incentives for the reviewers of major journals are the opportunity to take part in intellectually enriching professional debates and the acknowledgement of their service.

In less popular journals, particularly those from small or disadvantaged scientific communities, peer review has many inherent limitations, requiring a different set of measures. These journals usually suffer from submission of poorly written manuscripts which may have been rejected by higher-ranking journals or focus on a narrow scope of interests. The scientometric profile of small biomedical journals is worsening due to the absorption of small items, including case reports or case series lacking novelty and research implications.

Perhaps the most successful example of a journal published by a small community is the *Croatian Medical Journal*. This small journal, edited by experts in science editing and research methodology, became a major educational tool for its local medical scientific community and implemented an author-friendly policy, supportive towards authors lacking adequate research and language skills.<sup>7</sup> Manuscripts that might have been rejected received professional support, which later led to an increased publication rate of high-quality items, citation counts, visibility in major indexing systems and attractiveness for the international community. Obviously, this example highlighted the importance of pre-review and editing by colleagues with advanced research and science writing skills, which is practised in most leading scientific institutions<sup>8,9</sup> and by commercial editorial services supported by authors' editors, statisticians and a wide range of other professionals.<sup>10,11</sup>

No training courses have proven essential for acquiring and advancing reviewer skills. Instead, based on the example of the *Croatian Medical Journal*, publishing guidelines and educational materials for potential reviewers seems a useful strategy.<sup>12</sup> Such guidelines provide information on publishing priorities, triaging manuscripts, reasons for rejection and other points worth considering before submission or review of an article. One of the messages of these guidelines is that small and preliminary reports are low priority items for a small journal and should occupy a limited space.

There is, however, an issue overlooked in these and many other guidelines, namely the specifics of peer review for each subject category and for each manuscript type. Over the past decades, such empirical experience has been gained mainly in biomedical sciences, which influenced many other branches of science. However, one should recognise that reviewer skills required for assessing different types of manuscripts (eg systematic reviews, original papers, case reports) differ within and between branches of science.

Given the shortage of skilled reviewers and the difficulties of involving them in the peer review, science editors and publishers alike have to adopt a system of incentives and

acknowledgements. Reviewer contributions are credited by most academic and scientific institutions as a constituent part of continuous professional development and a reflection of scientific culture. Thus, listing names of the reviewers and offering editorial posts to the 'elite' contributors can be considered an attractive incentive for most reviewers. There are relevant examples from large and small journals. *The Lancet*, with its board of consultants comprising reviewers from all over the world, is one such example.

In conclusion, though peer review is imperfect and is not evidence-based, it is still employed by science editors around the world and serves as a guarantor of the quality in most cases. Improving the existing models of peer review based on positive experiences and adjusting them to the changing needs of specific scientific communities may be seen as a driver of successful editing and publishing.

**Armen Yuri Gasparyan**

Chief Editor, *European Science Editing*

Departments of Rheumatology and Research and Development

Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust

(A Teaching Trust of the University of Birmingham, UK),

Russell's Hall Hospital, Dudley DY1 2HQ, West Midlands,

United Kingdom

a.gasparyan@gmail.com

#### References

1 Ardakan MA, Mirzaie SA, Sheikshoaei F. The peer-review process for articles in Iran's scientific journals. *Journal of Scholarly Publishing*

2011;42(2):243–261. doi: 10.3138/jsp.42.2.243

2 Marušić A. Editors as gatekeepers of responsible science. *Biochemia Medica* 2010;20(3):282–287.

3 Satyanarayana K, Sharma A. Biomedical Journals in India: some critical concerns. *Indian Journal of Medical Research* 2010;132:119–122.

4 Jackson JL, Srinivasan M, Rea J, Fletcher KE, Kravitz RL. The validity of peer review in a general medicine journal. *PLoS One* 2011;6(7):e22475

5 Gasparyan AY. Combining science editors' and clinicians' efforts to advance writing and editing skills. *European Science Editing* 2011;37(4):102–103.

6 Salager-Meyer F. The importance of medical case reports. *European Science Editing* 2012;38(2): 38–39

7 Marušić M, Martinić Blase E, Marušić A. Croatian Medical Journal at the turn of the millennium. *Croatian Medical Journal* 2000;41(1):5–27.

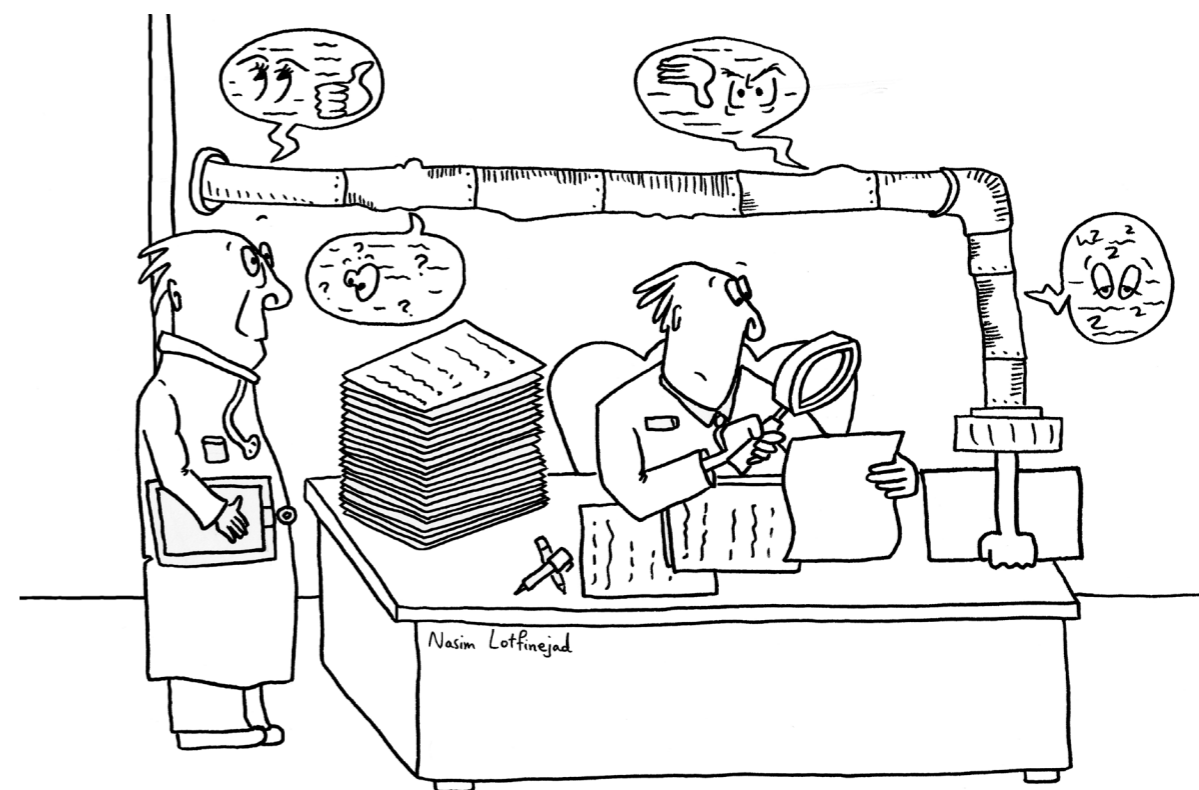
8 Bornmann L, Mungra F. Improving peer review in scholarly journals. *European Science Editing* 2011;37(2):41–43.

9 Gasparyan AY, Ayzvazyan L, Blackmore H, Kitas GD. Writing a narrative biomedical review: considerations for authors, peer reviewers, and editors. *Rheumatology International* 2011;31(11):1409–1417. doi: 10.1007/s00296-011-1999-3

10 Shashok K, Handjani F. Enhancing the quality of research publication: authorAID in the Eastern Mediterranean. *The Journal of Tehran University Heart Center* 2010;5(4):169–171.

11 Barroga EF, Turner RJ, Breugelmanns R, Barron JP. An adaptable model of electronic editorial services for medical universities. *European Science Editing* 2012;38(2): 32–35.

12 Marušić M, Sambunjak D, Marušić A. Guide for peer reviewers of scientific articles in the Croatian Medical Journal. *Croatian Medical Journal* 2005;46(2):326–332.



“An innovative method of strict selective approach”

## Essays

### An adaptable model of electronic editorial services for medical universities

Edward F. Barroga, Roderick J. Turner, Raoul Breugelmans and J. Patrick Barron

Department of International Medical Communications, Tokyo Medical University, 6-7-1 Nishishinjuku, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 160-0023, Japan; eb@imcc-tmu.jp

**Abstract** We present a model of editorial services and a filing system for medical universities. The model facilitates authors' personalised consultation throughout the writing process, full editing support following peer review until acceptance, assistance with online submissions and manuscript editing at different stages by a team of editors. The model serves as a platform for communication between academic staff and editors. It generates data that can be analysed to improve the author's competency in medical writing.

**Keywords** Electronic editorial services; filing system; online submission; comprehensive editing; medical writing.

#### Introduction

Many medical professionals often face the enormous task of writing, submitting, revising, discussing and resubmitting manuscripts in a foreign language.<sup>1</sup> Many authors use English editing companies for editorial services. To enhance publishing capacity and to reach the level of organizations such as the Mayo Clinic<sup>1</sup> and the Cleveland Foundation Clinic<sup>2</sup>, medical communication centres have been established around the world. Ideally, the centres should have tenured faculty members employed by a university to deliver undergraduate and postgraduate courses on medical English, medical communications and writing. The faculty should also act as a team of editors providing editorial support and promoting international publications.<sup>1</sup> To meet increasing publishing demands, electronic editorial services and a filing system should be established simultaneously.

Herein we present an adaptable model of electronic editorial services and a filing system for medical universities based on our own experience. The model is suitable for personalised editorial services for academic staff, particularly in medical universities of non-Anglophone countries.

#### Adaptable model of electronic editorial services

One of the main goals of a medical communications centre is to offer personalised editorial assistance throughout the whole process of writing and publishing. High-quality electronic editing is provided by academic editors with expertise in a medical specialities and language editing. Baseline electronic editorial services include comprehensive review and editing, cover-letter editing, interpretation of journal decision letters, editing responses to referees and manuscript resubmission and galley proofreading.

#### 1. Comprehensive review and editing

Editorial assistance involves comprehensive and balanced editing with emphasis on checking and correcting the style and format, syntax and language, scientific content and logical flow and overall impact of the study. Style includes the proper use of abbreviations, hyphenation, number style, capitalisation and American or British English. Format includes correct citation and listing of references, word counts, use of equations and formulae, figures, tables, paragraph spacing, indentions and page set-up. Grammar includes correct use of verbs, tense, articles, prepositions, punctuation and spelling. Words and phrases include appropriate use of parallelisms, comparisons and terminology.

During editing, each sentence is meticulously checked for transition words and phrases, grammatical accuracy and readability. Every paragraph is scrutinised for redundancy, language and structural parallelism, transition and logical flow. The AMA Manual of Style (10th Edition)<sup>3</sup> is one of the main references for editing, with The ACS Style Guide (3rd Edition)<sup>4</sup> as a supplement.

Structural review involves identifying the target journal and audience<sup>5</sup>, and checking structure to meet the requirements of the Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals.<sup>6,7,8</sup>

Equally important is a comprehensive review of *scientific content and logical flow* in a manuscript. This involves upgrading medical terminology, checking the validity of the methodology, reviewing scientific nomenclature, units of measurement, symbols and variables, and assessment of the novelty of a scientific work. Final appraisal weighs *overall impact* of scientific knowledge and depth of the study. The comprehensive review and editing model is presented in Fig. 1.

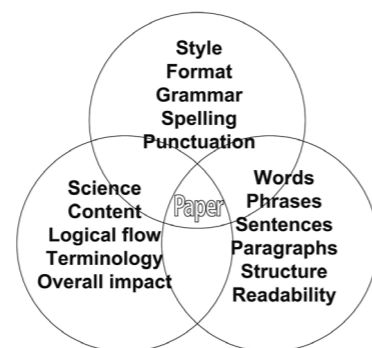


Fig. 1. Comprehensive editing model

#### 2. Cover letter editing

The text and tone of a cover letter are checked and re-written to catch attention and convince the target journal's editor of the importance of the study. Acknowledgement of contributors' efforts, declaration of any competing interest and suggestions for suitable reviewers are also checked or added, as these points are often overlooked by authors.

#### 3. Interpretation of journal decision letters

Following the peer review and the receipt of decision letters, academic editors clarify decisions made by journal editors.<sup>9</sup>

#### 4. Considering comments

Academic editors can also provide support with reviewing and responding to the following journal decisions: 1. accept without revisions, 2. accept after revisions, and 3. reject and resubmit.<sup>9</sup> After the authors revise the manuscript, academic editors re-edit and help respond to referees' comments in a point by point fashion.

#### 5. Editing responses to referees' comments

The aim of editing response letters is to ensure the following: 1. point by point responses to the comments, 2. explanations of revisions made in the text and cover letter, 3. polite and scientific rebuttal where necessary, and 4. preparation of all ready-to-deliver files with responses and changes clearly differentiated. Comments to editors and referees are copied and pasted into the response letter.<sup>9</sup>

#### 6. Re-submission

Academic editors assist with reviewing based on criticisms and comments raised and discuss them with the authors. Advice is given on the selection of a new target journal based on its subject category, impact factors, rigour of the peer review, strength and limitations of the manuscript and the need for rapid publication.<sup>5</sup>

#### 7. Editing posters and slide presentations

Academic editors provide comprehensive editorial assistance by streamlining and organising texts of poster and slide presentations.<sup>10</sup>

#### 8. Oral presentation script editing/presentation coaching

Editing aims to ensure interactivity. When requested, presentations are audio recorded according to the preferred delivery speed and audio file format used.

#### 9. Assistance with guidelines for authors

To publish in a high-quality journal, academic editors ensure adherence to the guidelines of the journal through individual consultations. Importantly, editors clarify the journal's guidelines.

#### 10. Assistance with online submission

Assistance with online submission is also provided, particularly with clarifying submission instructions of the target journal.<sup>4</sup> This is to avoid pitfalls of exceeding word count limits, inappropriate figure resolution and format, lack of a title page, incorrect abstract format, absence of

a cover letter, other missing elements and omission of the conflict of interest statement, disclosures or institutional review board approval.<sup>11</sup>

#### 11. Galley proofreading

Galley proofs should be returned by authors to the target journal within 24 to 48 hours. At this stage, academic editors assist with correction of spelling, terminology, punctuation, grammar, typescript, headers, footers and headlines. Queries on how to make changes in a PDF file are also addressed.

#### Delivery dates

Delivery dates vary and depend on the type and length of a paper. The editorial review includes pre-editing and post-editing consultations with the authors. *Full papers* may include original articles, reviews, case reports, special articles, letters to the editor and book chapters. Delivery times for full papers range from up to seven working days for urgent cases and up to 14 days for regular cases. This can be modified depending on the availability of academic editors. Delivery dates for these and other items can be modified according to the needs and resources of the medical institution.

#### Editorial workflow

An editorial workflow is designed to provide opportunities for both authors and academic editors to discuss and improve the paper either as a new submission or as a re-submission.

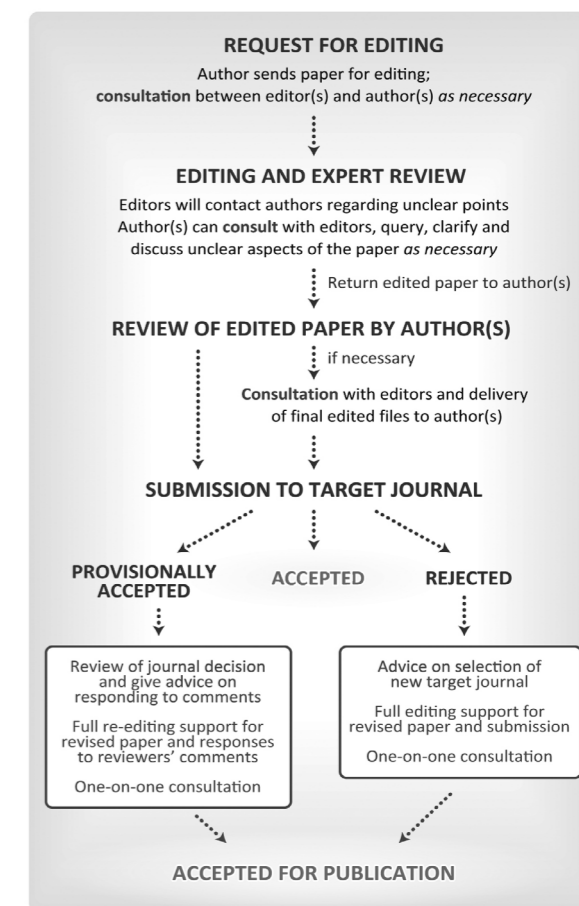


Fig. 2. Editorial workflow model

### Electronic coding and filing system

An electronic coding and filing system for manuscripts received for comprehensive review and editing facilitates efficient handling of papers. This system can be developed into an online submission system linked to an editing management system. An example of an electronic coding and filing system is presented below.

Upon receipt of a new manuscript, a coordinator checks and saves the manuscript and all accompanying files in a folder and labels the folder with a code number. An acknowledgement of receipt and information on the delivery date are then sent to the author.

An example of a code number for a paper is **10-8-1-3**, which denotes the year (2010 = **10**), month (August = **8**), ordinal sequence number (first manuscript received that month = **1**) and academic editor number (eg 1, 2, 3, 4). Therefore, the first paper that is received for editorial review in August 2010, initially edited by academic editor 3 is given the code number **10-8-1-3**.

Following this, the author's surname is added after the code number (eg **10-8-1-3 Dr Honda**), and the folder is filed electronically on a network hard disk drive. The coordinator then sends an email to all academic editors informing them that the paper is ready for review and editing. An example of an electronic coding and filing system is presented in Fig. 3.

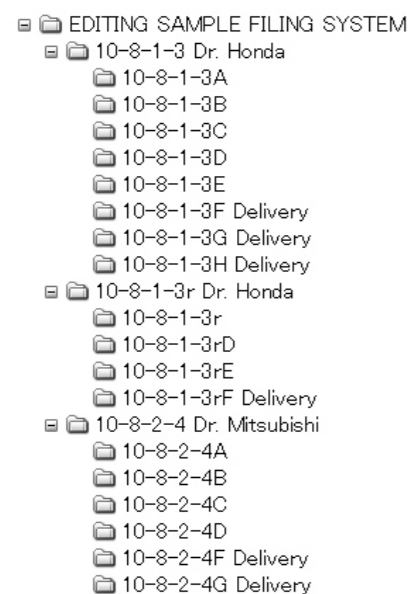


Fig. 3. Electronic coding and filing system model

### Editing stages, re-editing and express requests

Ideally, the academic editorial team should be composed of tenured faculty members who are language and medical experts. An adaptable model of the editing, re-editing and express editing stages is presented below.

#### Editing stages

The comprehensive review and editing of an academic paper can be divided into multiple stages: each stage can include multiple reviews.

For example, for **Stage A**, inside the **10-8-1-3 Dr Honda** folder, the first academic editor makes a new folder and labels it **10-8-1-3A** for the first stage of editing. All files for editing are placed by the first academic editor in this **10-8-1-3A** folder and all files for reference only (eg editing request application form or illustrations for reference only) are left inside the main folder but outside the **10-8-1-3A** folder.

All documents to be edited in this **A** folder are assigned the same code number followed by 'A' and the type of file (ie **10-8-1-3A Text**). Other types of file name may include 'Figures', 'Slides', or 'Cover letter'. Comprehensive review and editing is then performed using the 'track changes' function of Microsoft Word (Microsoft, Seattle, WA, USA).

For **Stage B**, the entire **A** folder is copied and renamed as **10-8-1-3B**, and all edited files are reviewed and rechecked.

For **Stage C**, the **B** folder is copied and labelled as **10-8-1-3C** and another review of all the edited files is done.

**Stages A-C** are completed by the first academic editor (ie a language expert) who comprehensively edits mainly for *style and format, syntax and language*.

For **Stage D**, the **C** folder is copied and renamed as **10-8-1-3D**. At this stage, the paper goes to the second academic editor, who is a medical expert. This person is a tenured faculty member of the center who is either a medical doctor or an expert with advanced medical or biomedical degree and academic status. Medical experts act as pre-reviewers, performing a comprehensive review and quality check of a paper.

For **Stage E**, the **D** folder is copied and renamed as **10-8-1-3E**. This last stage is completed by a third academic editor, either a language or medical expert, who makes a final review and assessment of the overall impact of the paper.

Queries are resolved with the authors at a mutually agreed time. The consultation process allows the centre to cover all areas of expertise by enabling its editors to clarify any uncertainties. Once the queries are addressed, corrected portions are incorporated into the **Stage E** documents, which show all track changes up to that point.

Final files can be presented to the authors in PDF format with the track changes along with Word files with accepted changes. All PDF and "clean" Word files are then saved in an **F** folder for delivery to the authors. The final files are then sent to the authors who complete the online submission to a journal.

### Re-editing and express requests

When the author requests re-editing after peer review, the same code number of the paper is used but an 'r' letter is added, denoting re-editing (eg **10-8-1-3r**). In the re-review and re-editing process, the same stage-based system as that for the first submission is used. If the paper is returned for further re-review and re-editing, another 'r' can be added (eg **10-8-1-3rr**). If an express service is requested, an 'e' letter is added to the code number (eg **10-8-1-3e**).

### Advantages of the editorial services

Firstly, e-editorial services presented here enable *personalised consultation* throughout the writing. The process allows discussing uncertainties before contacting a journal. This mode of consultation is endorsed by Benfield and Feak.<sup>12</sup> It yields a high-quality revision.<sup>13</sup> Secondly, authors receive comprehensive editorial support at all stages. Thirdly, authors can get assistance for online submissions and preparation of ready-to-deliver files. Fourthly, the editorial review, follow-up and support by editors generate data that can be used to further improve the authors' writing skills. Finally, each paper is comprehensively reviewed and edited by a team of linguists and medical experts.

### Acknowledgements

The authors are grateful to Elise Langdon-Neuner and Izet Masic for their valuable comments. Efforts of Yasuko Iwabuchi with preparing figures are also acknowledged.

### Competing interests

None declared

### References

- Breugelmans R, Barron JP. The role of in-house medical communications centers in medical institutions in non-native English-speaking countries. *Chest* 2008;134(4):883-885. doi: 10.1378/chest.08-1068
- Lang TA. Assessing the productivity and value of a hospital-based service. *AMWA Journal* 1997;12(1):6-14.
- DeAngelis CD. *AMA Manual of Style, A Guide for Authors and Editors (10th Edition)*. Oxford University Press, Inc., New York, New York, 2007: 315-425.
- Coghill AM, Garson LR. *The ACS Style Guide (3rd Edition)*. Oxford University Press, New York, 2006:59-70;105-225.
- Thompson PJ. How to choose the right journal for your manuscript. *Chest* 2007;132(3):1073-1076. doi: 10.1378/chest.07-1340
- Barron JP. The Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts submitted to Biomedical Journals recommended by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors. *Chest* 2006;129(4):1098-1099. doi: 10.1378/chest.129.4.1098
- Lang T. Documenting research in scientific articles: Guidelines for authors. *Chest* 2006;130(4):1263-1268. doi: 10.1378/chest.130.4.1263
- Zeiger M. *Essentials in Writing Biomedical Research Papers (2nd Edition)*. McGraw-Hill Companies, New York, 2000: 107-201.
- Woolley KL, Barron JP. Handling manuscript rejection: Insights from evidence and experience. *Chest* 2009;135(2):573-577. doi: 10.1378/chest.08-2007
- Hamilton CW. At a glance: A stepwise approach to successful poster presentations. *Chest* 2008;134(2):457-459. doi: 10.1378/chest.08-1078
- Welch SJ. Avoiding common problems during online submission of manuscripts. *Chest* 2007;131(5):1591-1594. doi: 10.1378/chest.06-2906
- Benfield JR, Feak CB. How authors can cope with the burden of English as an international language. *Chest* 2006;129(6):1728-1730. doi: 10.1378/chest.129.6.1728
- Benfield JR, Feak CB. With privilege comes responsibility. *European Science Editing* 2003;29(2):37.

### Tracking historical papers and their citations

#### Werner Marx

Max Planck Institute for Solid State Research,  
Heisenbergstraße 1, D-70569 Stuttgart, Germany  
w.marx@fkf.mpg.de

**Abstract** The multidisciplinary Web of Science® (WoS), in particular the WoS Century of Science archive, and some other databases enable tracking historical papers published before 1960. With historical papers we enter an area of completely different publication and citation culture. There are a number of factors making the search for historical papers a daunting task: limited coverage of journals, limitations of specific subject fields, complex author names, complicated journal titles, database errors, etc. Applying bibliometrics to historical papers, ie counting citations as a measure of the impact, may require careful consideration of a large proportion of erroneous citations. It is also necessary to apply time adjustment of the citation counts.

**Keywords** Historical papers; citation analysis; literature search; errors; bibliometrics; physics.

#### Introduction

Century of Science back files launched by Thomson Reuters in 2005 expanded coverage of Web of Science® (WoS) back to 1900.<sup>1</sup> Some specialised literature databases such as Chemical Abstracts Service (CAS) database for chemistry and INSPEC database for physics, electronics and computing also switched to the coverage of sources dating back to 1900 and even earlier.<sup>2</sup>

The availability of bibliographic information of old journal items and their citations in WoS permits investigation of the differences in publication and citation cultures over time and to comprehensively evaluate the citation-based impact. The results of the investigation are important for researchers, particularly historians of science, frequently referring to and analysing historical papers.

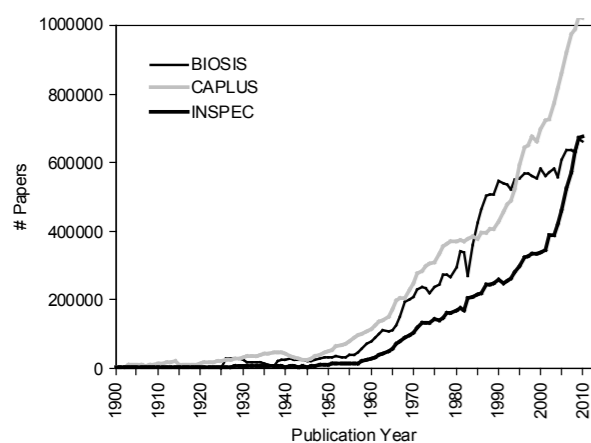
There are some limitations of the search for these papers and counting their citations as a measure of the impact: incomplete coverage of relevant journals, patchy coverage of WoS-indexed journal items, limitations inherent to specific search fields, database errors, translation errors, misspelled references, variations of author names, complicated journal names, etc.<sup>3,4,5</sup> There are also some phenomena limiting value of citation counts as a measure of the scientific impact. Long-ago publication cultures differ substantially from those in our time.

#### Publication of research papers in different time periods

Archives of available databases reveal differences in publication records over time. For example, sources in physics listed in INSPEC database slowly increased from 2,500 items in 1900 to 10,000 in 1950. Over the period between 1950 and 2010, however, the number of the items

multiplied and reached a level of 700,000 in 2010. The items published between 1900 and 1950 constitute just 2% of the total number of items indexed between 1900 and 2010. The year 1960 is particularly important for separating two time zones of research productivity and citation rates. This time point is also applicable to distinguishing citation counts of most highly-cited historical papers, for example the famous papers by Albert Einstein on the Special and the General Theory of Relativity.<sup>6</sup> The change in citations is more pronounced in the cumulative plot. Similar time-dependent features of citations are evident in BIOSIS and CAS databases, though in the case of chemical literature the role of the year 1960 is not so prominent (Figure 1).

To a certain extent, the time zone before 1960 can be seen as the period of “little science” with “big science” after 1960.<sup>7</sup> Interestingly, the shift from “little science” to “big science” coincides with the so-called Sputnik shock caused by launching the first satellite by USSR in 1957.<sup>8</sup> In response to the shock, Western countries allocated a tremendous amount of funds to research, resulting in a substantial rise in publications in physics, space and military sciences.



**Figure 1. Time-dependent changes in publications covered by BIOSIS (papers in biology), CAPLUS (chemistry) and INSPEC (physics). Source - STN International<sup>2</sup>**

#### Databases listing historical papers and tracking citations

Century of Science of WoS is the most comprehensive source for listing historical papers and tracking their citations. WoS offers general and cited reference search options. The general search retrieves all papers published since 1900 in more than 11,000 WoS-indexed journals. The cited reference search provides access to all source items cited in the WoS-indexed journals. These citations, however, may contain errors. The cited references are not limited to papers and include other published items such as books.

The SciVerse Scopus<sup>9</sup> database is also increasingly covering old literature, but counts citations since 1996 only.<sup>9</sup> Google Scholar<sup>9</sup>, CAS and INSPEC contain relevant papers, particularly those published since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Google Scholar covers citations before and after 1996 but without clear time specification. The other databases track citations from 1996 onwards.

#### Limitations and errors of listing and citing historical papers

There are some limitations and errors of listing and citing historical papers. It is primarily due to incomplete coverage of journal issues. As an example, not all old volumes of the prestigious journal *Philosophical Magazine* are listed in WoS.

The gaps in the literature coverage may have political reasons. For example, information on English editions for 1950 of *Zhurnal Eksperimentalnoi i Teoreticheskoi Fiziki* (*Journal of Experimental and Theoretical Physics*), published in the USSR and indexed by WoS, are missing. The year 1950 marks the beginning of the Cold War, when all Soviet publications were either formally or informally banned.<sup>10</sup>

Incorrect coverage of most Soviet and Russian journals is also due to the variations and misspelling of the authors' names and citing sources in non-Roman scripts. As a result, citation counts of Russian and English editions of the same sources differ, accounting for up to 30% difference.<sup>10</sup>

Author name variants are also a big issue for German historical papers, particularly when “vons” and “vans” appear as part of the names.

Another source of incorrect listing of historical papers is due to database errors and the reliance on scanned versions of old printed editions. Databases may incorrectly list the original language of the journals (eg *Angewandte Chemie*,<sup>11</sup> *Zeitschrift für Metallkunde*<sup>12</sup>). Information is missing due to errors in the links between cited references and the corresponding database records. In fact, many references to *Philosophical Magazine* do not include volumes or page numbers, and the references are not linked to the corresponding WoS source records (eg E. Rutherford, *Philosophical Magazine*, May 1911).

Translations may also add some errors and result in a loss of information. In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many leading scholarly journals were published in non-English languages (eg *Annalen der Physik*, *Physikalische Zeitschrift*, and *Zeitschrift für Physik*). For indexing purposes, titles of these publications are translated into English. However, the translation is usually not up to a high standard and is inconsistent.

Many old journals changed their titles, abbreviations of the titles, and split and merge different series or sections under the same main title. It can also be a source of errors.

#### Bibliometrics of historical papers

Sometimes it is necessary to trace works of Nobel laureates and other eminent scientists in online databases and to count citations of seminal works. The latter is of interest for illustrating basic laws of bibliometrics.

Research productivity and citation counts are sometimes used for comparisons between old and modern scientists based on the *h* index values. However, one should bear in mind the differences in the readership, publication and citation records in the periods of “little” and “big science”.<sup>6</sup> The latter leads to the need for time adjustment of citation counts of historical papers.<sup>6</sup>

The analysis of citations of historical papers reveals the phenomenon of “sleeping beauties”<sup>13</sup> – low citability in early years after publication and delayed growth of citations. The Mie paper is one such example<sup>14</sup>.

#### Implications of misspelled citations

“Reference mutations” are common with historical papers.<sup>15</sup> The earlier publication year, the higher likelihood of these “mutations”. If a reference to a historical paper is misspelled by an eminent author or in a highly-cited paper, future errors may substantially increase.<sup>16</sup> It is the case when the authors copy and cite references without accessing primary sources. Approximately 5-10% of all citations in the reference lists of WoS are erroneous because of incorrect publication year, volume and page numbers.<sup>17</sup> Errors in author names account for an additional 7% of errors.<sup>18</sup> Some historical papers are erroneously cited in up to 80% of cases.<sup>5,19</sup>

#### Factors limiting the use of citations as a measure of impact

The following two crucial factors should be considered: 1) “informal” or “implicit citations”, mentioning an author's name or name-based items rather than full references, and 2) “obliteration by incorporation”.

Seminal papers are often cited by referring to the authors' names (“informal citations”) instead of citing full references, “formal or explicit citations”.<sup>20</sup> As a result, solely relying on formal citations may diminish the impact of a seminal paper.

Seminal works are often subject to “obliteration by incorporation” described by sociologist Robert K. Merton.<sup>21,22</sup> The obliteration affects first of all groundbreaking papers rapidly being incorporated into the body of the literature such as textbooks, becoming increasingly popular in the scientific community, but, as a result of this canonisation, falling short of full citations in future papers.

#### Acknowledgements

The author would like to extend his appreciation to Frank-Thorsten Krell and Armen Yuri Gasparyan for their valuable comments and for editing the manuscript.

#### Competing interests

None declared.

#### References

- Thomson Reuters Web of Science [http://wokinfo.com/products\\_tools/multidisciplinary/webofscience/](http://wokinfo.com/products_tools/multidisciplinary/webofscience/) [http://wokinfo.com/products\\_tools/backfiles/cos/](http://wokinfo.com/products_tools/backfiles/cos/) (Accessed 7 February 2012)
- STN International [http://www.stn-international.com/stn\\_content.html](http://www.stn-international.com/stn_content.html) (Accessed 7 February 2012)
- Krell FT. The poverty of citation databases: data mining is crucial for fair metrical evaluation of research performance. *BioScience* 2009;59(1):6-7. doi: 10.1525/bio.2009.59.1.2
- Marx W, Cardona M. Blasts from the past. *Physics World* 2004;17(2):14-15. Available at <http://physicsworldarchive.iop.org/index.cfm?action=summary&doc=17%2F2%2Fpwhv17i2a21%40pwa-xml&qt=>
- Marx W. Special features of historical papers from the viewpoint of bibliometrics. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 2011;62(3):433-439. doi: 10.1002/asi.21479
- Marx W, Bornmann L, Cardona M. Reference standards and reference multipliers for the comparison of the citation impact of papers published in different time periods. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 2010;61(10):2061-2069. doi:

- 10.1002/asi.21377
- De Solla Price DJ. Little science, big science. Columbia University Press, New York, 1963.
- Dickson P. Sputnik: The shock of the century. Walker & Co, New York, 2001. ISBN: 0-8027-1365-3
- SciVerse Scopus <http://www.info.sciverse.com/scopus/> (Accessed 07 February 2012)
- Cardona M, Marx W, Vitaly L, Ginzburg – A bibliometric study. *Journal of Superconductivity and Novel Magnetism* 2006;19(3-5):459-466. doi: 10.1007/s10948-006-0173-8
- Marx W. *Angewandte Chemie* in light of the Science Citation Index. *Angewandte Chemie - International Edition* 2001;40(1):139-143. doi: 10.1002/1521-3773(20010105)40:1<139::AID-ANIE139>3.0.CO;2-4
- Marx W. The anatomy of the *International Journal of Materials Research* in the light of bibliometrics. *International Journal of Materials Research* 2009;100(1):11-23. doi: 10.3139/146.101793
- Van Raan AFJ. Sleeping beauties in science. *Scientometrics* 2004;59(3):461-466. doi: 10.1023/B:SCIE.0000018543.82441.f1
- Mie G. Beiträge zur Optik trüber Medien, speziell kolloidaler Metallösungen [Contributions to the optics of turbid media, especially colloidal metal solutions]. *Annalen der Physik* 1908;25(3):377-445.
- Specht CG. Opinion: Mutations of citations. *The Scientist* (published online 16 September 2010). Available at <http://www.the-scientist.com/news/display/57689/> (Accessed 7 February 2012)
- Cardona M, Chamberlin RV, Marx W. Comment on the history of the stretched exponential function. *Annalen der Physik* 2007;16(12):842-845. doi: 10.1002/andp.200710269
- Buchanan RA. Accuracy of cited references: the role of citation databases. *College & Research Libraries* 2006;67(4):292-303.
- Moed HF. The impact-factors debate: the ISI's uses and limits. *Nature* 2002;415(6873):731-732. doi: 10.1038/415731a
- Wassermann G. Einfluss der alpha-gamma-Umwandlung eines irreversiblen Nickelstahls auf Kristallorientierung und Zugfestigkeit [Influence of the alpha-gamma transformation of an irreversible nickel steel on crystal orientation and tensile strength]. *Archiv für das Eisenhüttenwesen* 1933,6(8):347-351.
- Marx W, Cardona M. The citation impact outside references – Formal versus informal citations. *Scientometrics* 2009;80(1):1-21. doi: 10.1007/s11192-008-1824-2
- Merton RK. *Social Theory and Social Structure*. The Free Press, New York, 1968, first edition: 1949.
- Merton RK. *On the Shoulders of Giants: A Shandean Postscript*. The Free Press, New York, 1965.

#### It's your Association and your Journal – get involved

As we enter the next triennium, we encourage all our members, long-standing or recently joined, to get involved in some way. Write for the Journal or just help proof-read an issue. Host a workshop or a seminar. Translate the Author Guidelines. Update a chapter for the Science Editors' Handbook or submit a new one. Organize a Regional Chapter of EASE in your country. Tweet the latest EASE news. All ideas welcome, though if funding is required, please consider how this might be raised. Submit to Joan Marsh.

## Viewpoints

### The importance of medical case reports

**Françoise Salager-Meyer**

Graduate School of Medicine, Universidad de Los Andes, Mérida, Venezuela; francoise.sm@gmail.com

**Abstract** The essay emphasises the importance of medical case reports. It defines the medical case report by referring to Sigmund Freud's and Paul Pierre Broca's works and analyses the attitude of the medical scientific community towards this type of publication. A question arises whether case reports still have a role in furthering medical knowledge and education. An overview of the applied linguistics literature on this subject is presented.

**Keywords** Biomedicine; case report; scientific community; applied linguistics; medical education.

Medical case reports, called "case notes" in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and "case histories" or "case studies" later on, are defined as uncontrolled scientific observations of a single clinical observation or "circumstantialities" that must be carefully documented to serve as valuable education and research tools.<sup>2</sup> Sir William Osler (1849-1919), the father of modern medicine and one of the founding professors at Johns Hopkins Hospital, himself the author of many case reports, encouraged physicians to "always note and record the unusual... and publish it".<sup>2</sup>

Case reports have made and still make a valuable contribution to the advancement of medical science.<sup>3,4</sup> McCarthy and Reilly report that a search of the MEDLINE database from 1996 to 2000 using the term "case report" retrieves more than 140,000 records.<sup>4</sup> A more recent search of Web of Science using the same term retrieved just 160 articles in 1953 and 4,011 in 2006.<sup>5</sup>

Many medical professionals may come across patients with unusual clinical presentation or reactions to medical interventions not described in textbooks. Publication of such curiosities has been a fundamental way of sharing knowledge and conveying medical experience for centuries. Throughout history, there have been famous case reports that helped to describe certain diseases and to distinguish health from disease states.<sup>6</sup>

#### Famous case reports

Sigmund Freud, best known for his psychoanalysis and theories of the unconscious mind, had a special interest in recording case histories of his patients.<sup>7</sup> Many of his case reports helped further our understanding of a number of mental health disorders (e.g. compulsive-obsessive disorder, dissociative disorders, post-traumatic stress syndrome, and phobias). A French physician and anatomist, Paul Pierre Broca, discovered the speech production centre located in the left hemisphere by studying the brains of dysphasic patients and recording their histories.<sup>8</sup> A report published in the *American Journal of Dermatopathology* was one of the first cases of what is now termed AIDS.<sup>9</sup> Taatvisainen and

Pahta noted that reports of illustrative and typical cases were instrumental in the early periods of medical education.<sup>10</sup> In our times, medical case reports largely focus on rare and atypical manifestations of diseases.<sup>11</sup>

#### Why case reports are still important

Case reports may lead to systematic or hypothesis-based research, and the accurate description of a single patient's case may form the basis for further exploration of the observed phenomenon, opening new fields of interest.<sup>12</sup> Vandembroucke stated that there is no other way but a series of cases to bring a potentially new disease to the attention of the medical community.<sup>13</sup> Matthew Cockerill, publisher of *The Journal of Medical Case Reports*, argues that unique case reports can be valuable for researchers and physicians through depicting new adverse drug reactions or disease symptoms overlooked elsewhere.<sup>5</sup>

Importantly, different branches of medical education, such as physiology, pathology, pharmacology and anatomy, are brought together in case reports, helping students and physicians develop a holistic approach to patients.<sup>6</sup> Also, writing case reports may help improve academic writing skills. Overlooking relevant literature, structuring a manuscript, and learning how to submit and revise it are essential skills for novice researchers, often started with case reports.

#### Attitude of the modern scientific community towards case reports

Case reports have lost favour since the 1990s and sole reports are now considered the lowest level of scientific evidence, owing to their anecdotal nature. Some even argue that CRs are "passé, trivial"<sup>14</sup> and increasingly irrelevant to current medical practice and education.<sup>15</sup>

Case reports are poorly cited: Patsopoulos *et al* found that of 416 case reports published between 1991 and 2001, less than two percent received at least 10 citations in the first two years of publication.<sup>16</sup> Because of this disadvantageous effect on impact factor and space limitations, many medical journals now exclude them.

Educational articles, including case reports, however, are the most widely read items of a scholarly journal.<sup>12</sup> This is why some mainstream journals are now providing more space for case reports, and there are some new, primarily online, journals dedicated to them, e.g. *BMJ Case Reports*, *The American Journal of Case Reports*, *Journal of Medical Case Reports*, *Clinical Medicine Insights: Case Reports*, *International Medical Case Reports*, *Journal of Radiology Case Reports*. These journals may serve as case banks, allowing doctors all over the world to share new and interesting cases.

#### Applied linguistics literature on case reports

Some experts in rhetoric and applied linguistics have studied case reports from their perspective. Atkinson examined the development of this narrative genre in the *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*.<sup>17</sup> Taatvisainen and Phata, by means of a qualitative analysis of some text-internal linguistic features, traced the development of case reports from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to 1995, highlighting the increasing depersonalisation of the genre.<sup>18</sup> Berkenkotter examined the evolving role of case history narratives in the growth of psychiatry as a profession.<sup>19</sup> At the same time, Hunter studied medical case narratives in general and stressed the paradox at the heart of contemporary medicine—the tension between Baconian science based on empirical observations and the laboratory-based experimental medicine of Bernard, Pasteur and Lister.<sup>1</sup> More recently, Murawska examined the construction of impersonality with respect to agency and patient presentation in the main body of medical case reports, concluding that agency and patient presentation in current medical case reports are in line with the commonly held assumption that medicine focuses on a patient as a case of a given disease and not the whole person experiencing illness.<sup>20</sup>

#### Acknowledgement

The author extends her gratitude to Altan Onat and Hasan Shareef Ahmed for their valuable comments.

#### Funding

This essay forms part of a wider research that is supported by Grant M-976-09-06A from the Scientific, Technological, Humanistic and Artistic Research Center (CDCHTA) from the University of The Andes, Mérida, Venezuela.

#### Competing interests

None declared.

#### References

- Hunter KM. Doctors' stories: The narrative structure of medical knowledge. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993.
- Coccia CT, Ausman JI. Is a case report an anecdote? In defense of personal observations in medicine. *Surgical Neurology* 1987;28(2):111-113.
- Simpson RJ Jr, Griggs TR. Case reports and medical progress. *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine* 1985;28(3):402-406.
- McCarthy LH, Reilly KE. How to write a case report. *Family Medicine* 2000;32(3):190-195.
- Gawrylewski A. Case reports: essential or irrelevant? *The Scientist*. Published 14<sup>th</sup> May 2007. Available at <http://classic.the-scientist.com/news/display/53192> (Accessed 2nd January 2012).
- Jamjoom AAB, Nikkar-Esfahani A, Fitzgerald JEF. Writing a medical case report. *Student BMJ* 2009;17:b5274. doi: 10.1136/sbmj.b5274
- Heller S. Freud A to Z. Wiley, 2005.
- Schiller F. Paul Broca: founder of French anthropology, explorer of the brain. Oxford University Press, 1992.
- Gottlieb GJ, Ragaz A, Vogel JV, Friedman-Kien A, Rywlin AM, Weiner EA, Ackerman AB. A preliminary communication on extensively disseminated Kaposi's sarcoma in young homosexual men. *The American Journal of Dermatopathology* 1981;3(2):111-114.

- Taavitsainen I, Pahta P. Vernacularisation of medical writing in English: a corpus-based study of scholasticism. *Early Science and Medicine* 1998;3(2):157-185.
- Cohen H. How to write a patient case report. *American Journal of Health-System Pharmacy* 2006;63(19):1888-1892. doi: 10.2146/ajhp060182
- van der Wall EE, Wilde AA. Case histories: increasing role for major journals. *Netherlands Heart Journal* 2009;17(7-8):272-273.
- Vandembroucke JP. Case reports in an evidenced-based world. *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* 1999;92(4):159-163.
- Rose JC, Corn M. Dr. E. and other patients: new lessons from old case reports. *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 1984;39(1):3-32. doi: 10.1093/jhmas/39.1.3
- Yadav H. The philosophy of the medical case. *Student BMJ* 2006;14:133-176.
- Patsopoulos NA, Analatos AA, Ioannidis JP. Relative citation impact of various study designs in the health sciences. *JAMA* 2005;293(19):2362-2366. doi: 10.1001/jama.293.19.2362
- Atkinson P. Medical Talk and Medical Work. London: Sage Publications Ltd, 1995.
- Taatvisainen I, Pahta P. Conventions of professional writing: the medical case report in a historical perspective. *Journal of English Linguistics* 2000;28(1):60-76. doi: 10.1177/00754240022004875
- Berkenkotter C. Patient tales: case histories and the uses of narrative in psychiatry. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2008.
- Murawska M. Impersonality in medical case reports. In Rosa Lorés-Sanz, Pilar Mur-Dueñas and Enrique Lafuente-Millán (Eds). *Constructing Interpersonality: Multiple Perspectives on Written Academic Genres*. Cambridge Scholars Press, 2010: 311-325.

### EASE Council 2012-2015

<i>President</i>	Joan Marsh (UK)
<i>Vice Presidents</i>	Ana Marusic (Croatia) Eva Baranyiová
<i>Ordinary members</i>	Paola DeCastro (Italy) Shirin Heidari (Switzerland) Izet Masic (Bosnia & Herzegovina) Chris Sterken (Belgium) SylwiaUfnalska (Poland)
<i>Past-President</i>	Arjan K S Polderman (The Netherlands)
<i>Treasurer and Company Secretary</i>	Roderick Hunt (UK)

You can read more about them on the Nominees page on the website.

### ISMTE EUROPEAN CONFERENCE

EASE members are eligible for discounted registration for this year's ISMTE 5th Annual European conference, to take place in Oxford on 23rd October. ([www.ismte.org](http://www.ismte.org) for details)

## Authorship dispute among the League of Extraordinary Gentlemen

### Farrokh Habibzadeh

President of the World Association of Medical Editors, NIOC Medical Education and Research Center, PO Box: 71955-575, Shiraz 71955, Iran; Farrokh.Habibzadeh@theijoem.com

### Harvey Marcovitch

Past Editor in Chief of the Archives of Disease in Childhood and Past Associate Editor of BMJ

**Abstract** There was no consensus over authorship criteria until 1984, when the guidelines of the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors were developed. These are now used as the standard for managing authorship credits and disputes. In 1997, Drummond Rennie, the deputy editor of *JAMA*, proposed the idea of contributorship. The order of the authors' names would no longer be important as they would be judged according to their contributions. We believe that the contributorship scheme can solve many problems and may lead to the revision of the career promotion criteria.

**Keywords** Authorship; contributorship; editorial policies.

Once upon a time, the League of Extraordinary Gentlemen conducted a study to assess ways to remove the threat of Fantom. The idea of this work first came to Mr M. Captain Nemo designed the study and asked Rodney Skinner (the invisible man) to implement the blinding and masking for the study. After the recruitment of the study population by Tom Sawyer and Allan Quatermaine, all blood samples were taken and analysed by Mina Harker (a vampire and well-known chemist). Dr Henry Jekyll (another face of Mr Hyde) examined the participants. Dorian Gray (the immortal), after a life long endeavour, wrote the manuscript ready for submission to the *Journal of Voodoo Arts*. However, they quarrelled about the names of byline authors. None of the named people who contributed to this study fulfilled the authorship criteria set by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE).<sup>1</sup> So, this manuscript is ready for submission but nobody fulfills the authorship criteria. Although this situation is not common in real life, it may be an issue in the case of multi-centre and multi-national studies. In fact, there are still many global problems with authorship.<sup>2-4</sup>

Herein, we discuss how the authorship criteria evolved, caused some ethical issues and necessitated the search for alternatives.

There was no consensus over authorship criteria until 1984, when the notorious ICMJE guidelines were developed. Inspired by Hewitt's work,<sup>5</sup> the criteria were proposed following the initiative of Edward J. Huth, then the Editor of *Annals of Internal Medicine*, and published for the first time in 1985.<sup>6</sup> The guidelines later became part of the ICMJE Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals.<sup>1</sup> They are now used by many journals and ethical committees as the standard for managing authorship credits and disputes.

Authorship disputes are the most common ethical problems.<sup>7</sup> In fact, many individuals named as authors contribute very little, if at all, to the study.<sup>8-10</sup> Commonly, at least one individual, who has done nothing but head the department

where the study is executed, is listed as a co-author.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, there are many contributors to the data collection and analysing, who do not meet the accepted authorship criteria and cannot be listed in the article bylines.

One may find the authorship criteria as a means for powerful people, such as heads of departments, to exclude powerless contributors and to list their names as honorary authors, without paying attention to the accepted ethical codes.

Editors and authors have two inseparable purposes. While editors mostly look for accountability, authors care more about credibility. The authorship criteria were solely developed by editors. Many authors either are not aware of or do not accept the ICMJE criteria.<sup>12</sup> Nonetheless, they are judged by editors and ethical committees on the basis of these set of regulations.

The authors' order in article bylines is a driver of career promotion worldwide. The first and last places in the bylines are key positions. Quarrels over the prestigious first place are common even amongst close friends. The order is usually based on the amount of work done by co-authors: presumably the first author does much of the work. Though it is unlikely that two or more authors do exactly the same amount of work, the distinction of being the first author is so strong that some journals have adopted format of equal credit to two first authors.<sup>13</sup>

How much does all this matter? If an 800-word medical case report is submitted to a journal with eight authors, does that mean the ridiculous fact that each co-author is responsible for just 100 words? Certainly, meetings of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) have to deal with tedious disputes between the authors over priority issues and unjustifiable claims of the ownership of intellectual property. Some view their intellectual property as a mother does her newborn baby.

Authorship issues can be crucial as they can hide ethical malpractice at best and fraud at worst. For example, consider the 363 patients, presented by Cruz *et al* as participants of trials on high-dose mannitol in head injury between 2001 and 2004, who were also analysed in subsequent systematic reviews and guidelines.<sup>14-16</sup> In 2007, a *BMJ* feature revealed fabrication of the data. By that time the first author had died. Three co-authors responded to the questions over the authorship by stating that their contributions were: "discussing with [the lead author] and sharing his assumptions"; "I did not know any part of the paper before he called me about the acceptance" and "my role was philosophical rather than clinical...".<sup>17</sup> The institution of the lead author does not exist, and no formal investigation is possible. The original papers in *Neurosurgery* and *Journal of Neurosurgery* remain unretracted. If indeed the co-authors were gift or guest authors, then the credibility their names added to the original submission and its acceptance

may have resulted in erroneous, if not corrupted, systematic reviews—a clear example of how authorship misconduct can harm patient care.

Likewise, ghost authors cannot be regarded as harmless players in the author-reader communication axis. These are individuals who substantially contribute to writing a manuscript but are not listed as authors. A prime example is when a native English professional writer assists a scientist with standard English writing skills and is not acknowledged by mentioning his/her name in the published article. Another example is when a manuscript is written or edited by an unacknowledged party such as employees or agents of a pharmaceutical agency promoting their own drug. Many physicians may object to such a blatant advertising, so action can be taken to replace names of ghost writers with those of academics, who, for reasons known to themselves only, are prepared to act in this way.<sup>18</sup>

It is hoped that handling authorship in a different way may preserve scientific integrity. Drummond Rennie, the deputy editor of *JAMA*, proposed the idea of contributorship.<sup>19</sup> Based on this scheme, all authors state their contributions and their statements are published in the footnotes of the article. The authors' order in the article bylines is no longer important. Many editors have supported this idea. Richard Smith, the former editor of *BMJ*, is one of them.<sup>20</sup> He states that "creating a scientific paper is much more like making a film than writing a novel."<sup>21</sup> In a large multidisciplinary study many researchers would gather together to play their own specific role. Of course, while a molecular biologist cannot judge the clinical expertise and competence of a surgeon (and vice versa), each plays a part perfectly. Similarly to what happened to the members of the League of Extraordinary Gentlemen mentioned above, none of these scientists meets the ICMJE authorship criteria. However, they can create a scientific masterpiece.

No proposed criteria can totally prevent misconduct. Even honest authors can be confused over the precise role they play in preparing a manuscript. In a prospective study on 919 authors of 201 papers submitted to a general medical journal lead authors were asked to complete contributorship forms for all co-authors. Co-authors were then asked individually to describe their part of work. It turned out that there was a poor agreement, with more than two thirds of the lead authors presenting statements different from their co-authors.<sup>21</sup>

We believe that the proposed contributorship scheme, though imperfect, can resolve many of the problems with authorship. This scheme may lead to the revision of career promotion criteria, which may, in turn, cause a new set of ethical problems. Nonetheless, the time for the old authorship criteria is up, and it is now time for the contributorship scheme.

## References

- 1 ICMJE. Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals: Ethical Considerations in the Conduct and Reporting of Research: Authorship and Contributorship. Available from [http://www.icmje.org/ethical\\_1author.html](http://www.icmje.org/ethical_1author.html) (Accessed 20 January 2012).
- 2 Mitcheson H, Collings S, Siebers RW. Authorship issues at a New Zealand academic institution. *The International Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine* 2011;2(3):166-171.

- 3 Marušić A. Problems of editors with authorship in small medical journals. *The International Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine* 2011;2(3):130-132.
- 4 Habibzadeh F, Yadollahie M. The problem of "Who". *The International Information and Library Review* 2009;41(2):61-62. doi: 10.1016/j.iilr.2009.02.001
- 5 Hewitt RM. Exposition as applied to medicine; a glance at the ethics of it. *Journal of the American Medical Association* 1954;156(5):477-479.
- 6 Guidelines on authorship. International Committee of Medical Journal Editors. *British Medical Journal (Clinical Research Ed)* 1985;291(6497):722.
- 7 Smith R. Ethical issues in the publication process. In: Wells F, Farthing M, eds. *Fraud and Misconduct in Biomedical Research*. 4th ed. London, Royal Society of Medicine, 2008: 14-28.
- 8 Flanagan A, Carey LA, Fontanarosa PB, Phillips SG, Pace BP, Lundberg GD, Rennie D. Prevalence of articles with honorary authors and ghost authors in peer-reviewed medical journals. *JAMA* 1998;280(3):222-224. doi: 10.1001/jama.280.3.222
- 9 Goodman NW. Survey of fulfillment of criteria for authorship in published medical research. *BMJ* 1994;309(6967):1482.
- 10 Shapiro DW, Wenger NS, Shapiro MF. The contributions of authors to multiauthored biomedical research papers. *JAMA* 1994;271(6):438-442. doi: 10.1001/jama.1994.03510300044036
- 11 Liang W. Honorary authorship: a hawk hovers over the lower-rank academic. *Radiology* 2011;261(3):996-997. doi: 10.1148/radiol.111052
- 12 Bhopal R, Rankin J, McColl E, Thomas L, Kaner E, Stacy R, Pearson P, Vernon B, Rodgers H. The vexed question of authorship: views of researchers in a British medical faculty. *BMJ* 1997;314(7086):1009-1012.
- 13 Akhabue E, Lautenbach E. "Equal" contributions and credit: an emerging trend in the characterization of authorship. *Annals of Epidemiology* 2010;20(11):868-871. doi: 10.1016/j.annepidem.2010.08.004,
- 14 Cruz J, Minoja G, Okuchi K. Improving clinical outcomes from acute subdural hematomas with the emergency preoperative administration of high doses of mannitol: a randomized trial. *Neurosurgery* 2001;49(4):864-871.
- 15 Cruz J, Minoja G, Okuchi K. Major clinical and physiological benefits of early high doses of mannitol for intraparenchymal temporal lobe hemorrhages with abnormal pupillary widening: a randomized trial. *Neurosurgery* 2002;51(3):628-637.
- 16 Cruz J, Minoja G, Okuchi K, Facco E. Successful use of the new high-dose mannitol treatment in patients with Glasgow Coma Scale scores of 3 and bilateral abnormal pupillary widening: a randomized trial. *Journal of Neurosurgery* 2004;100(3):376-383.
- 17 Roberts I, Smith R, Evans S. Doubts over head injury studies. *BMJ* 2007;334(7590):392-394. doi: 10.1136/bmj.39118.480023.BE
- 18 Ross JS, Hill KP, Egilman DS, Krumholz HM. Guest authorship and ghostwriting in publications related to rofecoxib: a case study of industry documents from rofecoxib litigation. *JAMA* 2008;299(15):1800-1812. doi: 10.1001/jama.299.15.1800
- 19 Rennie D, Yank V, Emanuel L. When authorship fails. A proposal to make contributors accountable. *JAMA* 1997;278(7):579-585. doi: 10.1001/jama.1997.03550070071041
- 20 Smith R. Let's simply scrap authorship and move to contributorship. *BMJ* 2012;344:e157. doi: 10.1136/bmj.e157
- 21 Ilakovac V, Fister K, Marusic M, Marusic A. Reliability of disclosure forms of authors' contributions. *CMAJ* 2007;176(1):41-46. doi: 10.1503/cmaj.060687

## Editing around the World

### Scientific editing and scholarly publishing in Bangladesh: a personal journey

Hasan Shareef Ahmed

Chief of Editing and Publication, Research and Evaluation Division, BRAC, 75 Mohakhali, Dhaka 1212, Bangladesh  
shareef.ha@brac.net



Scientific research and learned publishing are becoming increasingly important, with journal editors playing a crucial role.<sup>1</sup> Acquiring editing skills is a life-long process, particularly for editors from Bangladesh and other developing countries. There is no recognised course on science editing or publishing, and science editing is still not recognised as a profession in Bangladesh.

Most editors in the developing world enhance their skills through learning by doing. These editors have a passion for editing, an invisible and thankless job.<sup>2</sup> The editors spend their lives nurturing science editing and publishing. This is reminiscent of poets' love for writing or novelists' love for creating novels. In the long-run it gives them fame, prestige, honour and income for survival. The question arises as to why some choose science editing as a profession? Here is the right place to quote the President of the Academy of Medical Sciences of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Prof. Izet Masic "The most encouraging aspects of being an editor are respect and honour, which can be achieved by devoted and highly professional or qualified work".<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, science editing as a profession cannot flourish without a career path, continuous education and financial incentives.

The role of journal publishing in developing countries cannot be ignored.<sup>4,5</sup> Scholarly publishing has flourished in Bangladesh in the past few years. Currently 150 English scientific journals are published in this country.<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, most of these journals are still published irregularly, without proper design, peer review or correct editing. A study on peer review in Bangladesh revealed that the authors appreciate the need of effective peer review.<sup>7</sup> However, it also indicated that the effectiveness of peer review in most Bangladeshi journals is unacceptable. Another study noted that 68% of the examined Bangladeshi journals published late, 30% had inconsistencies and 86% were not indexed.<sup>8</sup> Most of the journals do not reach their target audience. Latest journal issues are usually not available in libraries. The need for proper editing and peer review is well understood by most authors, but a quarter of the respondents question the reliance of local publications on peer review.<sup>9</sup> Poor quality writing, unavailability of skilled referees and low effectiveness of peer review are among the major threats to scholarly publishing in Bangladesh.

BanglaJOL (Bangladesh Journals Online) has been established to promote local journals. It is a database of Bangladeshi journals covering full range of subject categories.<sup>10</sup> The main objective is to improve journal visibility. Articles are freely available online in PDF format. As of February 2012, 76 journals are listed in BanglaJOL. Of these, 50 journals are published with delays.

Bangladeshi journals are mostly edited by subject specialists, not by qualified science editors. This is mainly because editing is still not viewed as a profession. Editors rarely get promotion in research organisations. In most local journals professional editing is non-existent. Journals suffer from the lack of good quality papers. There is no local association of science editors, resulting in the lack of educational resources and guidelines for editing. Local journal editors are usually senior physicians and researchers, university professors and administrators, mainly concerned with their primary job responsibilities. Journal editing occupies a tiny space in their working schedule.

Remarkably, a head of Bangladeshi research organisation recently claimed that "editors are like parasitic plants surviving on other trees" (personal communication). As long as people with such mentality hold key administrative positions, it is unlikely that we will see the formation and growth of science editing as a viable profession in Bangladesh.

I have been in science editing for more than three decades, though initially I did not plan to become an editor. After studying management and law, instead of getting involved in the family business, I joined the publication section of an international research centre in Dhaka (ICDDR,B). A few years later, in 1986, I attended an extensive 14-week course on editing and publishing at IRRI, the Philippines, conducted by Ian Montagnes, the former editor in chief of the University of Toronto Press. It became a turning point in my career, which led to more editorial responsibilities. After spending 15 years in editing and scholarly publishing services, I got an opportunity to independently practice and sharpen editing skills in BRAC, the largest non-governmental development organisation in Bangladesh. I was entrusted to edit multi-disciplinary research outcomes of my colleagues from the Research and Evaluation Division. I was also fortunate to attend numerous international meetings and conferences of science editors and to exchange ideas with them.

For the first time, I launched training courses for editors and publishing experts under the banner of the Editing and Publication Association of Bangladesh. The initiative unfortunately faced serious internal conflicts and lack of funding. Senior editors did not accept the idea of being trained by more specialised editors and publishing experts.

Feeling more confident in scholarly publishing, I also founded the bi-annual *Bangladesh Journal of Communication and Publishing* (2002). It was supported by the Editing and Publication Association of Bangladesh. The journal, however, managed to publish just three issues and was suspended due to internal conflicts of the Association, unacceptable quality of submissions and financial constraints, all of which are common in the developing world.<sup>3</sup>

Some private and institutional Bangladeshi organisations publish the results of local research in "peer-reviewed" books, mostly in English language. Unfortunately, these books also fall short of the accepted quality of editing.

How to overcome these problems? The logical answer is to nurture science editing and scholarly publishing as a profession. Relevant institutional policies need revision. We have to establish supportive environment to help this profession flourish. How many trained editors and publishing experts should be available for the country? The numbers depend on numbers of research organisations and publishing houses and are subject to volume of research work.

Do we need degree and master courses? Undoubtedly, short diploma courses or one-year master programme would improve the state of science editing. An editing career path should be defined to attract qualified individuals. They should be treated as the mainstream but not support staff. Overseas trainings should be also considered a part of specialisation. Finally, job satisfaction and career prospects need thorough and regular evaluation.

To maintain a steady flow of scientific papers, researchers have to go through regular training in scientific writing. Journal editors should implement more effective and rapid peer review. Above all, sufficient institutional budgets

are required to ensure continuity and quality of journal publishing. Online versions of the journals have to be upgraded to meet the ever demanding criteria of prestigious indexing services. Both traditional and alternative impact factors need to be accepted as yardsticks of editorial work.

#### References

1. Etemadi A, Golozar A, Malekzadeh R. Editorial independence and ethics of research publication. *Archives of Iranian Medicine* 2010;13(6):465-468.
2. Ahmed HS. Editor-author conflict from the editor's perspective. *European Science Editing* 2007;33(2):47-50.
3. Masic I. Scientific editing in Bosnia and Herzegovina: a personal journey. *European Science Editing* 2011;37(4):108-109.
4. Ahmed HS. Launching a new journal in Bangladesh: is it necessary? *Bangladesh Journal of Communication and Publishing* 2002;1(1):1-3.
5. Green JL. Publishing scientific journals in developing countries: is it worth it? (Abstract). In: Global science communication in the new century: the 11th International Conference for Science Editors, 24-28 Aug 2002, Beijing, China. 2002:17-8.
6. Ahmed HS. How to make developing country journals more attractive to Western readers/subscribers. *Bangladesh Journal of Communication and Publishing* 2002;1(2):77-80.
7. Ahmed HS. Does peer review process exist in developing-country journals?: the Bangladesh experience. *Journal of Scholarly Publishing* 2003;34(4):236-246. doi: 10.3138/jsp.34.4.236
8. Ahmed HS, Chowdhury AMR, Khan MSI, Ullah AKMA. Sustainability of scientific journals in the developing world with special reference to Bangladesh. *Journal of Applied Communications* 1999;83(4):23-41.
9. Ahmed HS. Current status of scientific journals published in Bangladesh. *Journal of Scholarly Publishing* 1998;30(1):38-46.
10. <http://www.banglajol.info/index.php/index/index> (accessed on 23 January 2012)

## EASE MEMBERSHIP NEWS

#### New Individual Members

Professor Srecko Gajovic, Zagreb, Croatia; [srecko.gajovic@cmj.hr](mailto:srecko.gajovic@cmj.hr)  
 Oudah Hadjebi, Barcelona, Spain; [ohadjebi@istjournal.eu](mailto:ohadjebi@istjournal.eu)  
 Edward Barroga, Tokyo, Japan; [eb@imcc-tmu.jp](mailto:eb@imcc-tmu.jp)  
 Samir Delibegović, Tuzla, Bosnia and Herzegovina; [delibegovic.samir@gmail.com](mailto:delibegovic.samir@gmail.com)  
 Dr Caren Brown, Denbighshire, UK; [carenbrown@btinternet.com](mailto:carenbrown@btinternet.com)  
 Dr Mirjam J Curno, Vaud, Switzerland; [mirjam.curno@iasociety.org](mailto:mirjam.curno@iasociety.org)  
 Dr Louise Fuller, Isle of Mull, UK; [l.fuller@btconnect.com](mailto:l.fuller@btconnect.com)  
 Dr Trond Slagstad, Trondheim, Norway; [trond.slagstad@ngu.no](mailto:trond.slagstad@ngu.no)  
 Professor Ida Raffaelli, Zagreb, Croatia; [ida.raffaelli@ffzg.hr](mailto:ida.raffaelli@ffzg.hr)  
 Dr Jana Pospisilova, Prague, Czech Republic; [pospisilova@ueb.cas.cz](mailto:pospisilova@ueb.cas.cz)  
 Ivana Štětínová, Prague, Czech Republic; [phoyosynthetica@ueb.cas.cz](mailto:phoyosynthetica@ueb.cas.cz)  
 Yolande McLean, Quebec, Canada; [yolande.mclean@mac.com](mailto:yolande.mclean@mac.com)  
 Sera Tort, Banyoles, Spain; [tort.sera@gmail.com](mailto:tort.sera@gmail.com)  
 A C Sharman, London, UK; [anna@sharmanedit.co.uk](mailto:anna@sharmanedit.co.uk)  
 Dr Alexander Burtsev, Ekaterinburg, Russian Federation; [554412@rambler.ru](mailto:554412@rambler.ru)  
 Mr Oladipo Samson, Mushin, Nigeria; [babatundeshofolahan@gmail.com](mailto:babatundeshofolahan@gmail.com)  
 Mr Babatunde Shofolahan, Mushin, Nigeria; [babatundeshofolahan@gmail.com](mailto:babatundeshofolahan@gmail.com)

#### New Corporate Members

##### Faculty of Maritime Science, Split, Croatia

Doc. dr. sc. Pero Vidan; [pvidan@pfst.hr](mailto:pvidan@pfst.hr)  
 Prof. dr. sc. Rosanda Mulić; [rosanda.mulic@pfst.hr](mailto:rosanda.mulic@pfst.hr)  
 Ivica Kuzmanić; [ivica.kuzmanic@pfst.hr](mailto:ivica.kuzmanic@pfst.hr)

##### INRA, France

Marjolaine Hamelin, Narbonne; [marjolaine.hamelin@syoagro.inra.fr](mailto:marjolaine.hamelin@syoagro.inra.fr)  
 Claudine Alizon, Ivry sur Seine; [raestud@ivry.inra.fr](mailto:raestud@ivry.inra.fr)  
 Elodie Coulamy, Jouy-en-Josas; [elodie.coulamy@jouy.inra.fr](mailto:elodie.coulamy@jouy.inra.fr)  
 Erwin Dreyer, Champenoux; [dreyer@nancy.inra.fr](mailto:dreyer@nancy.inra.fr)  
 Anne Dufay, Sophia-Antipolis; [anne.dufay@sopohia.inra.fr](mailto:anne.dufay@sopohia.inra.fr)  
 Eric Lichtfouse, Dijon; [eric.lichtfouse@dijon.inra.fr](mailto:eric.lichtfouse@dijon.inra.fr)  
 Nadine Miraux, Saint-Genes-Champenelle; [Nadine.Miraux@clermont.inra.fr](mailto:Nadine.Miraux@clermont.inra.fr)  
 Dominique Montagu, Jouy-en-Josas; [Dominiq.Montagu@jouy.inra.fr](mailto:Dominiq.Montagu@jouy.inra.fr)  
 Marianne Peiffer, Champenoux; [peiffer@nancy.inra.fr](mailto:peiffer@nancy.inra.fr)  
 Anne Thierry, Rennes; [Anne.Thierry@rennes.inra.fr](mailto:Anne.Thierry@rennes.inra.fr)  
 Magalie Weber, Rennes; [Magalie.Weber@rennes.inra.fr](mailto:Magalie.Weber@rennes.inra.fr)  
 Sylvie Zasser-Bedoya, Castanet-Tolosan; [sylvie.zasser@toulouse.inra.fr](mailto:sylvie.zasser@toulouse.inra.fr)



## EASE 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

### Interviews with Honorary Life Members

*An article written by Maeve O'Connor about the origin of EASE was published on pages 17-18 of February's issue.*



#### MAEVE O'CONNOR

**Mini-Bio:** My first attempt at editing was in the 1950s when I improved (or otherwise) manuscripts I typed during a secretarial job at a London medical school. A year or so after that I became a proper editor, or at least one with an editorial title, at the (now defunct) Ciba Foundation. And there I stayed for 30 years, editing ever more

high-powered symposia that were organized by and held at the Foundation or, sometimes, abroad.

As far as I remember, I joined ELSE, one of EASE's predecessors, at or around its first General Assembly in London in 1970. This soon led to even more opportunities for travel — and for extra work. The latter came about because at ELSE's second General Assembly in the wilds of Norway in 1973 Peter Woodford volunteered me to be his co-author on a style manual for the association. The book was published early in 1975 and did quite well, being an early example of the genre.

I retired from the Ciba Foundation in 1987 but it wasn't a real retirement for quite a while. That year I became Secretary-Treasurer of EASE, a job that lasted 10 years. The world had begun its love affair with the computer by then so I had all the fun of getting the membership information onto a database, helping to move the bulletin (as it was then) away from being typewriter-set into the electronic era, and setting up the first web pages in 1995. After the job as EASE Secretary-Treasurer ended I continued as editorial coordinator/production editor of ESE for another nine years, until finally the Publications Committee decided that enough was enough and it was time for some old lags to retire.

Now I'm fully retired and am delighted to wish EASE a very happy 30th birthday and many more to come.

**How did you become involved in EASE and what are your earliest memories?**

A colleague attended a Royal Society meeting for editors in 1969 or thereabouts and told me that an association of life science editors might be set up soon. So when I heard about the EAEBP 1st General Assembly at the Royal Society in 1970 I joined up.

**Do you have a favorite moment, memory event, conference or entertaining encounter you'd like to share?**

Too many to count, really: all the conferences were memorable in one way or another. Best party: Soria Moria, Norway, 1985. Best dinner: probably the one at Amboise during the

meeting in Tours. Best conference newsletter: Ox-eye at Oxford 1991, edited and produced by Jenny Gretton. Greatest surroundings, perhaps Kraków, 2006 (what could beat that magnificent square?).

**What was your most difficult/embarassing or nerve-wracking experience?**

Most nerve-wracking was probably presenting my first paper in public at the IFSE meeting in Jerusalem in 1977. Most embarrassing: cutting the future editor of The Lancet short at the Oxford meeting in 1991, due to pressures produced by a locked meeting-room, a workshop leader who was a no-show, and other such events (this was when I was EASE's Secretary-Treasurer).

**What was the most glaring typo or editorial "no-no" you ever spotted in an EASE publication (or some other publication, if you prefer)?**

When the copies of European Science Editing No. 28 arrived in April 1986 I found they carried the number 27 instead of 28 on the front cover: all copies had to be corrected by hand by the probable perpetrator of the error (me).

**What are the biggest changes in publishing and EASE you have witnessed over the years?**

The changes in publishing for the Editerra/ELSE/EASE publication, like many other such publications, went from printing from material produced on a daisy-wheel typewriter to being typed on a Diamond 5 word processor, with Letraset headings and offset printing (1982), then onwards to transfer of word-processed material to audiocassette tapes for typesetting on a Linotron 202 typesetter before paste-up and printing (1983), and eventually to use of a desktop publishing program (Ventura) instead of a word processor.

**Do you have any advice or lessons learned that you'd like to share with younger members of EASE?**

Younger members probably don't need any advice but "Keep up with the technology as well as with current English as she is (preferably) writ" should always be kept in mind.



Alison Clayson, Vice-President and leader of the Anniversary Committee, with Rod Hunt, the EASE Treasurer



#### HENRI OERTLI . . . EASE's FIRST president!!

**Mini-Bio:** Born in 1927. Studies at The University of Bern, Switzerland. 1952 diploma as High School teacher (Natural Sciences), 1956 PhD (Geology-Palaeontology). From early 1956 Geologist in a French Petroleum Co (today's Total). Began there in 1967 editing a "Bulletin" and

soon special volumes, dealing mainly with reports from Company members. Got soon a full time editor's job, reason I joined in the early 70s "Editerra" (and the American Association of Earth Science Editors). Since retirement in 1988, till 1998, lectures at Geneva University (Geology) on writing about research results and their presentation in meetings.

**What has been your contact with EASE?**

Contacts from its very beginning: thanks to the privilege of having participated in its foundation, in 1982.

**What was your most difficult experience?**

No doubt the organisation of the big founding meeting (70 participants). The whole meeting took place at our company's research center in Pau (during its current activity), and needed transport from/to hotels in Pau, lunches, coffee breaks etc, as well as special events: half-day excursion to the Pyrenees, cheese and wine party, conference dinner, farewell dinner, post-conference tour to the Atlantic Coast.

**What have been the biggest changes in EASE?**

Dramatic increase of membership, leading to a worldwide representativity!

**What advice would you give to younger members?**

Never lose enthusiasm in your editorial activities, encourage others when needed!



#### ARIE MANTEN

**Mini-Bio:** Arie A. Manten (born 1933 in Breukelen, province of Utrecht, The Netherlands) studied geology and biology. His PhD thesis concerned the paleoecology of Silurian reef limestones on the Baltic island of Gotland. After a year of research on vertebrate paleontology at the University of the

Witwatersrand (Johannesburg, South Africa), he joined Elsevier Science Publishers in Amsterdam (at that time mainly issuing books and journals in chemistry and life sciences) to start a programme covering the earth sciences. In 1969 he also started a programme in the agricultural and veterinary sciences. In his later role of chief editor, he devoted much effort to researching scientific communication (growth of volume of publications in various disciplines; effects of government, industrial and other funding policies; interdisciplinary exchange of information; language barriers; new types of publications, such as print/microfiche combinations, more compact publishing, e.g. in synopsis format; role of congresses in information transfer; and finally the rise of electronic media).

**How did you become involved in EASE and what are your earliest memories?**

Since 1960 I served an international publishing house (Elsevier) that was to become the world's largest commercial science publisher. I was one of the founders of Editerra, the European Association of Earth-Science Editors, encouraged by UNESCO, functioned as secretary-general of Editerra, and participated in the amalgamation process that brought us EASE. Next, I was a member of the EASE Council for several years.

**Do you have a favourite moment, memory, event, conference or entertaining encounter you'd like to share?**

I enjoyed very much the first EASE Congress in Pau and the practical sharing of experiences there, in various respects, with life science editors.

**What was your most difficult/embarassing or nerve-wracking experience?**

My most disappointing experience in the editing field was the extreme individualism of many authors and editors in the humanities and social sciences.

**What was the most glaring typo or editorial "no-no" you ever spotted in an EASE publication (or some other publication, if you prefer)?**

I am not strong in long-term memorising failures.

**What are the biggest changes in publishing and EASE you have witnessed over the years?**

In my early years in editing (1960s) there was a large-scale and rapid globalisation in the publishing of scientific information. Subsequently I actively participated in the international standardisation of editing and publishing practises (ISO and otherwise, not easy). Following much experimenting in improving and economising scientific communication, the digitalisation process gained momentum.

**Do you have any advice or lessons learned that you'd like to share with younger members of EASE?**

There is always much to learn and improve from good contacts with colleagues.

## Reports of Meetings

### A workshop on impact factors and research reporting in rheumatological journals

The Excellence in Rheumatology (EiR) Institute, an international organisation, arranged its second conference in Madrid, Spain on 25-28 January 2012. The main focus of the congress, which gathered hundreds of leading rheumatologists, allied specialists and patients, was on pathophysiological, clinical and therapeutic aspects of the rheumatic diseases. The programme was full of educational lectures, workshops and schools for young researchers ([www.excellence-in-rheumatology.org](http://www.excellence-in-rheumatology.org)). Editors of top rheumatological journals such as *Annals of the Rheumatic Diseases*, *Rheumatology (Oxford)* and *Seminars in Arthritis and Rheumatism* were among invited lecturers. Communication support was provided by 11 indexed journals, including *Nature Reviews Rheumatology*, *The Journal of Rheumatology* and *Current Opinion in Rheumatology*.

Given the importance of science writing and editing for the advancement of rheumatology practice, the conference, for the first time, arranged a workshop on issues of interest to authors, reviewers and editors.

The workshop on science editing was chaired by president of the conference Prof George D. Kitas (Birmingham, UK), a leading British rheumatologist and editor of several journals. Lecturers of the workshop were council members of the European Association of Science Editors Prof Ana Marušić and Prof Armen Yuri Gasparyan. Attendees of the workshop were clinicians and researchers from all over the world, including those from the former Soviet republics, where interest in current standards of editing and journal indexing is on the increase. Participants were familiarised with *European Science Editing*, which was distributed at the beginning of the workshop. Topics covered by sharp and informative lectures were uses and misuses of individual and journal impact factors as well as standards of research reporting.

Assoc Prof Armen Yuri Gasparyan presented the results of own study on the *h* index, which is closely correlated with the popular 2-year journal impact factor and is used to guide authors on the citability of journal articles. Other citation metrics were also discussed and recommendations were given on target journals for different types of articles. It was stressed that top rheumatological journals were ranked high in Web of Science and SciVerse/Scopus partly because of publishing highly citable articles on large clinical trials. Young researchers and clinicians working on small studies and case reports were advised to choose their target journals after a close look at the contents and values of impact factors.

Prof Ana Marušić analysed the available Guidelines for Authors of 29 rheumatological journals indexed by Web of Science. She noticed that only 9 journals declared adherence to the research reporting guidelines of the EQUATOR Network (eg CONSORT guideline for

reporting randomised trials, PRISMA for systematic reviews, STROBE for observational studies). She also emphasised the importance of declaring competing interests and registering clinical trials to ensure transparency.

A flood of questions followed both presentations, resulting in discussion of a range of topics. Prof Marc Hochberg, editor in chief of *Seminars in Arthritis and Rheumatism*, asked questions on the role of peer review, on the frequent refusals by eminent rheumatologists to peer review papers and on authors' preferred reviewers. Prof George D. Kitas reaffirmed that many leading experts lack time for peer review and are not always available for comprehensive and rigorous review. Armen Yuri Gasparyan went on to suggest setting rules for peer review and reviewers' tasks tailored to the needs of each journal.

A number of other editing issues were discussed within the frames of the official sessions and informal meetings with experts. Prof Sherine E. Gabriel (Mayo Clinic, Rochester, USA), co-editor of the Kelley's Textbook of Rheumatology, shared her experiences in reviewing and updating content of this must-read source, which constantly expands to cover many hot topics.

Conference participants positively evaluated the workshop on science editing and suggested that it be organised on a regular basis to meet the growing research and publishing needs of rheumatologists from all over the world.

**Armen Yuri Gasparyan**

Chief Editor, *European Science Editing*  
Departments of Rheumatology and Research and Development, Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust  
(A Teaching Trust of University of Birmingham),  
Russell's Hall Hospital, Dudley DY1 2HQ, UK  
[a.gasparyan@gmail.com](mailto:a.gasparyan@gmail.com)



Armen Yuri Gasparyan and Ana Marušić at the Excellence in Rheumatology conference in Madrid, Spain, January 2012

## EASE-Forum Digest: December 2011 to March 2012

You can join the forum by sending the one-line message "subscribe ease-forum" (without the quotation marks) to [majordomo@helsinki.fi](mailto:majordomo@helsinki.fi). Be sure to send messages in plain text format; the forum software does not recognize HTML-formatted messages. More information can be found on the EASE web site ([www.ease.org.uk](http://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.

### One or two subjects

Yateendra Joshi asked for views on whether the subject in the following sentence takes a singular or plural verb 'the classification and identification of XYZ [is/are] based mainly on morphological characters'. Most respondents thought there were two subjects and favoured the plural. John Taylor mulled over the possibility that classification and identification were being used jointly as one criteria, when the singular would be correct. However he thought the plural would be correct if the organisms are to be classified firstly according to their structure and secondly according to their identification.

The sentence sounded strange in any event to Mary Ellen Kerans who suggested a re-write: XYZ is identified and classified mainly based on morphology/morphological characteristics/morphological features." This view was echoed by Peter Hovenkamp who believed the solution might be to delete either classification or identification because one implies or excludes the other.

Francoise Salager-Meyer compared 'classification and identification' as two subjects with collective nouns, which she saw as singular subjects. She gave 'the council is unanimous in their decision' as an example of a collective noun (council) taking a singular verb. Maria Craig considered that in this example Americans would use 'is' and the British 'are'. Elisabeth Heseltine went a bit further and quoted Fowler as an authority for British English allowing either the singular or plural and American English favouring the singular. The argument in my (British English) experience is that if the collective noun (council, majority, public or whatever) acts as a single unit, as the council does in Francois's example because all members of the council think the same way, it takes the singular but if the council were to disagree they would not be acting as a single unit and would therefore take a plural noun, i.e. 'The council are not unanimous in their decision'. Stuart Handysides saw things slightly differently. He thought the council should always take a plural verb because it must have the opportunity of being other than agreed.

### Which version is the original?

The Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education has

changed its criteria for evaluating those scientific journals that do not have an impact factor. Marcin was concerned that the change threatens to exclude many good foreign journals as publication venues for Polish authors. The Ministry has proclaimed that to be evaluated every issue must include a statement as to whether the original version, defined as the one which was published first, is online or in print. Angela Turner had not heard of this requirement but each article in her journal, *Animal Behaviour* published by Elsevier, gives the online publication date. She pointed out that as it is usual for journals to publish articles online first it would be pointless to include a statement about whether articles appeared in print or online first. Marcin agreed but this was what the Ministry wanted.

Liz Wager raised the point of which version was considered the definitive 'publication of record'. She had noticed that there was considerable variation in what publishers post online. Some post the accepted version before it has been copyedited or typeset, others post the version after copyediting but before typesetting, others after these procedures but before the proof is corrected and yet others post the corrected proof, i.e. the print version without page numbers or the print version with page numbers. Some, like the *BMJ*, post a longer version online than in print and consider the online version the definitive version. She added that CrossRef are about to launch CrossMark which will identify the definitive and latest version of the article (<http://www.crossref.org/crossmark/index.html>) and a speaker will be explaining this at the EASE conference in Tallin this year.

### Do journals consider long abstracts online prior publication?

Conference abstracts used to be short and published in a booklet given to participants at the conference but there is an increasing trend to put them online where they can be freely accessible. Angela Turner's journal had received an article where the substantive part of the article was already online in the form of an abstract that contained considerable detail and gave the main statistical results. People who replied to this question thought it was not prior publication because it was an abstract and was published in the context of conference proceedings. Liz Wager quoted the ICMJE guidelines ([http://www.icmje.org/publishing\\_4overlap.html](http://www.icmje.org/publishing_4overlap.html)) which state that journals can consider papers presented at a scientific meeting that have not been published in full for publication. She also referred to BioMed Central's statement that manuscripts resulting from abstracts presented at meetings or published as part of a conference represent a formal advance to the citable scientific record and should therefore be considered for peer review [by the journal as they would have already been reviewed by the meeting committee] (<http://www.biomedcentral.com/about/duplicatepublication>)

But surely the question here is when does an abstract cease to be an abstract and become a full publication that

can be considered a prior publication. Journals should decide whether to consider a manuscript, of which substantial parts are already public, for publication on a case-to-case basis taking account of their readers' interest in the topic and the space available in the journal.

#### We invite you to rewrite your article and publish it in our journal

What would you make of an invitation to write an article based on one you had already published but 80% different from the published article? Marcin Kozak was astonished when he received such an invitation from a journal he did not know "to promote the development and communication in the field". As he saw it they were asking him to publish the same material as had already been published. He wondered if others had received such invitations. Tom Lang suspected the journal was non-ISI indexed and its ulterior motive was to get enough citations to become indexed. Marcin doubted this notion because it was a new journal that only published 6 papers in 2011, so was unlikely to get indexed any time soon; rather he thought it was desperate for authors as it was one of very many new open-access journals. Chris Sterken did not see this as an open-access only practice as he had also received such invitations from editors of for-profit publishers. The true motive behind the invitation would be revealed. Sylwia Ufnalska suspected if Marcin suggested that they reprint the original paper (with permission from the copyright holder).

#### An interesting blog

Kersti Wagstaff directed forum participants to Anna Sharman's blog, <http://sharmanedit.wordpress.com/>, which includes postings on dangerous formatting errors, choosing a journal for your manuscript, The Research Works Act, open access and publisher boycotts. It's a really worthwhile blog.

#### The wrong way to measure scientific performance

Leiden University in the Netherlands recently published its list of the top research universities in the world ([www.leidenranking.com](http://www.leidenranking.com)). The listing is based on measurements of scientific performance. Ed Hull questioned the relevance and credibility of such a list as well as the consequences of it and asked the forum for views. One of the main criteria Leiden University uses to assess performance is (unsurprisingly) the number of articles published in high impact factor journals. With the Dutch researcher Diederik Stapel who faked research data in at least 30 scientific papers in mind, Pat French wondered if account had been taken of retracted papers that had been cited by others. Eric Lichtfouse from France saw another inadequacy of the measurement as most university laboratories in France belong to National Research Centres (eg Cnrs) and the addresses of scientists on papers either did not mention their university or the university's name was buried in the middle of the address. As Thomson Reuters Web of Science database only takes account of the first two words of the address, French universities and research centres are underestimated because up to 40% of their publications were

missed. Sylwia Ufnalska said that the addresses of Polish universities also hardly ever had the university name as the first two words. Pointing to the following address given on an American paper she saw this as a general problem: Laboratory for Developmental Studies, Department of Psychology, Harvard University Cambridge, MA, USA.

Tom Lang felt the problem was that, like others, Leiden was counting what was countable rather than considering factors that couldn't be counted but were more important. Universities are information-generating institutions but as information is impossible to measure he thought the *consumers* of the information were what needed to be measured. Marge Berer agreed and said in her field of reproductive health she was seeing an epidemic of demand for measurement of things that could be measured quantitatively and rejection of things that could not. The result was a refusal to fund whole areas of the work of civil society organisations. She saw this as arising from neoliberal politics, in which measurement = value = money.

#### Buyer beware it might be open access elsewhere

Karen Shashok complained that NewsRx was charging \$3 for access to an article which she had published open access in BMC Medical Research Methodology. Chris Sterken thought that if she had published it with a Creative Commons Licence she would still have the copyright and NewsRx could have breached her copyright. Pippa Smart by contrast mentioned that the licence allows reuse for commercial gain. However, she had heard that some larger publishers were investigating this entity because they were also offering copyright-protected works. Mary Ellen Kerans suggested that they were not selling Karen's article but a journalistic rehash of it, in which case they would be entitled to charge for their commentary on the article but should cite Karen's original article. Readers would then have the opportunity to read the original article open access. Karen's analysis of the Creative Commons license that applies showed that commercial reuse is allowed but that NewsRx may have violated her moral right, as copyright holder, to "integrity of the work" by not making it clear why other authors are mentioned and not seeking her approval for any changes they may have made. Karen contacted BioMed Central, Springer (owners of BioMed Central) and NewsRx. BioMed Central advised her that they had asked NewsRx to remove the item from their site. NewsRx and Springer had not replied by the time this Forum Digest item was written.

*Elise Langdon-Neuner (compiler)*  
a.a.neuner@gmail.com

#### Discussion initiators

Yateendra Joshi: [press@wisein.org](mailto:press@wisein.org)  
Marcin Kozak: [nyggus@gmail.com](mailto:nyggus@gmail.com)  
Angela Turner: [Angela.Turner@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:Angela.Turner@nottingham.ac.uk)  
Kersti Wagstaff: [kersti-w@dircon.co.uk](mailto:kersti-w@dircon.co.uk)  
Joy Burrough: [unclogged.english@googlemail.com](mailto:unclogged.english@googlemail.com)  
Ed Hull: [edhull@home.nl](mailto:edhull@home.nl)  
Karen Shashok: [kshashok@kshashok.com](mailto:kshashok@kshashok.com)  
Aleksandra Golebiowska: [algol@ciop.pl](mailto:algol@ciop.pl)

## This Site I Like

### Cochrane Summaries: a new tool to verify medical conclusions about healthcare interventions

(<http://summaries.cochrane.org>)

Keeping up-to-date with the latest research is a daunting task for health professionals. It is even more challenging for scientific editors, expected to cover a wide array of health topics. A comprehensive search of the literature is beyond the scope of most journalists, so that verifying before publication can be a problem. The Cochrane Collaboration has attempted to address this by bringing together teams of independent experts who conduct and publish reviews of the best available evidence drawn from around the world.

Cochrane contributors evaluate and synthesize research in all aspects of health care by mining the existing research to find and summarise the best possible evidence and identify research gaps. The systematic reviews produced through this process evaluate the beneficial and harmful effects of specific medical and healthcare treatments, medical devices, and also Public Health and community based interventions. This information is presented in systematic reviews, known as *Cochrane Reviews*, which are updated periodically to account for new evidence and are published online in *The Cochrane Library* ([www.thecochranelibrary.com](http://www.thecochranelibrary.com)).

These reports have been available for many years. However, full reviews are often far too technical and lengthy to be useful for the typical editor who needs to review several topics at one time. For healthcare treatments to be accurately reported by journalists and scientific editors, more concise summaries written in language that is accessible to people without technical training are required.

#### The Cochrane Summaries project <http://summaries.cochrane.org>

The aim of this project is to provide readily accessible information from Cochrane Reviews in shorter summaries that can be quickly consulted to verify health claims. The Cochrane summaries website was developed to improve access to both the summaries and also to provide other useful background information.

**Advanced search technology.** The site is powered by a Google-type search engine, which is aided by a suggestive, 'did you mean?' feature to improve the accuracy of your results. Search keywords are automatically linked to meta-tags that correlate to specific health topics in the database. The summaries can be viewed with optimal presentation on a variety of internet-friendly devices, including handhelds.

**Browse by health topic.** For a broader search of the database, the website features additional browse options by demographic characteristics, or any of The Cochrane Collaboration's 53 specialty health areas.

**Multiple databases.** Each summary provides a link to 'Find the research' which directs the user to the full review in *The Cochrane Library*. In addition, complementary tools

support each summary, such as author podcasts, recent news articles about Cochrane Reviews, and the Cochrane Journal Club's discussion forum.

**Author podcasts.** For selected reviews, audio casts created by lead authors are available, often in multiple languages. Podcasts are tailored to provide information about the significance of the topic and the reasons for conducting that specific review, in addition to the results of the review.

**Cochrane in the News.** To support editors' efforts to publish unique perspectives, each summary has a link to the most recent news articles published referencing the Cochrane Review.

**Cochrane Journal Club.** This online forum provides even more information about the topic by including discussion questions, PowerPoint slides with key figures and tables, and the potential to communicate with the authors.

#### Continuous growth

Cochrane Summaries is continuing to improve, from refining the details of which content should appear in the summaries to developing further resources for the website. Popular health topics, such as depression, dementia, asthma, and others, are being developed into portals where all the relevant information on those health issues can be presented together.

The Collaboration believes that access to information should not be restricted by language. Therefore, the website is in the process of being translated into the official WHO languages. Spanish and French are nearly complete.

Despite only having recently been launched, the Cochrane Summaries website has received global attention. This reached a pinnacle when The Cochrane Collaboration was awarded the runner-up trophy for the best public website by the Plain English Campaign. Each year, a handful of the best (and worst) examples of plain language are publicly honoured by the Plain English Campaign. The Campaign reviews documents and websites to ensure that public information is presented in a clear fashion. Websites are judged for their content, design and layout. A spokesperson for the Campaign indicated that Cochrane Summaries earned the 2011 runner-up award because of its unique ability to use plain language summaries to communicate the results of medical research.

*Catherine McIlwain*

*Cochrane Consumer Co-ordinator, Cochrane Operations Unit*  
[cmcilwain@cochrane.org](mailto:cmcilwain@cochrane.org)

The *Cochrane Summaries* website was developed by: Chris Mavergames, Martin Janczyk, Lorne Becker and Catherine McIlwain

## My Life as an Editor - Robert J Moots



Robert J Moots MD PhD,  
Professor of Rheumatology  
University of Liverpool, Editor in  
Chief, *Rheumatology*

I trained in Medicine at St Mary's Hospital London (Imperial College), then after some junior hospital jobs in London moved to the Institute of Molecular Medicine at Oxford University to undertake an immunology PhD. Following that, I became Lecturer in Rheumatology at the University of Birmingham and thereafter a Research Fellow at Harvard Medical School, USA. I returned to the UK to take up an academic post in rheumatology at the University of Liverpool, and in 2002 was made full Professor of Rheumatology (the youngest person to be full professor and head of department in Rheumatology in the UK).

### What are your main achievements as researcher and author?

Over the years, my research focus has changed from being a T Cell immunologist working on MHC/Peptide interactions to, on returning to the UK, identifying a new interest in innate immunity with a special focus on the role of neutrophils in rheumatic disease. It has been particularly satisfying to branch out into another form of research and I am delighted that this has proven so fruitful. However, the real credit for this lies with my Liverpool colleague, Professor Steven Edwards, a world authority in neutrophils who sold me the importance of studying them in rheumatic diseases with him. I am also involved in a broad spectrum of work focusing on inflammatory rheumatic diseases from bench to bedside including clinical trials and a drug discovery programme. I have published more than 100 papers.

### When did you decide to be an editor?

I never expected to become editor of a journal. I applied for the post of Editor of *Rheumatology* because I was invited to do so and assumed that there probably weren't any other applications. I was rather shocked to hear, when appointed to the post, that there was an extremely strong field and I was fortunate to secure this position – but what it really involved I had little idea at the time!

### Do your editorial responsibilities affect your work as a clinician and educator?

I believe that the journal enhances my ability to work as a clinician, perform research and educate others. One of the reasons for this is that I now see a whole spectrum of cutting-edge research, which places me in an ideal position to know far more about what is going on around the world than I had previously understood. On the other hand, the journal is constantly at the back of my mind in all my normal work, not least because I am constantly on the look out for potential topics for reviews, editorials and other such things.

### What is the main function of a scholarly journal?

There are many different potential roles for journals, ranging from education to communicating pioneering research. There is a big misunderstanding over the quality of journals that, in a blinkered way, often focus on impact factor. Main functions of a scholarly journal should be to inform, educate, stimulate debate and be interesting.

I believe that *Rheumatology* is relevant to all people involved in rheumatic diseases, including students. In Liverpool, we train students to learn from appropriate sources, including journals. A journal publishing cutting-edge research together with state-of-the-art reviews, like *Rheumatology*, is of major relevance to medical students.

### What is most challenging in the digital era of journal editing?

Online publication has improved journal accessibility and communication with readers. A lot of things have changed to accommodate this, including the business model for journals. We try to ensure that *Rheumatology* is at the forefront of new technology and have introduced podcasts – published both on the journal website and iTunes. The newer generation of researchers and clinicians will have been brought up with digital technology in the way that the older generation have not. Even at the simple level of having a Facebook presence, Twitter feeds and podcasts, we need to make sure that we can service the demands of this generation in the way that the paper journals did for their constituents in the past.

### What do you find to be the benefits of membership of EASE and similar organisations?

The worst thing in publishing is to work in isolation. The ability to interact with others in similar positions is crucial for publishing, just as it is in all other forms of life. Bodies such as EASE and COPE provide important fora to raise and share problems and help ensure that there is a structured and supportive way to take things forward.

### What are your plans for improving your journal?

*Rheumatology* is fortunate in having an extremely well committed and engaged international editorial board. Our associate editors are key leaders in rheumatology. Our editors meet regularly and, together, help drive forward the journal on different fronts, including increasing circulation and reaching out to the global scientific and rheumatologic communities.

### Your advice to young Editors?

Young Editors, like me (!) should continue to strive to do the best for their journal. It is important to appreciate that you are not working in isolation: sharing with other editors can be very helpful – seek advice, suggestions and help where required. Similarly, it is important to ensure the core community that your journal serves supports your journal. Having a vision for development is crucial – but not to the exclusion of listening to sensible advice. There is a great future for medical and scientific publishing and this future lies in your hands!

## News Notes

NewsNotes are compiled by John Hilton (hilton.john@gmail.com)

Some of these items are taken from the EASE Journal Blog (<http://esebookshelf.blogspot.com>) where full URLs may be found

### Peer-reviewing of open data

While peer review is a mainstay of the publication process, does it have a role in assessing the quality, relevance and significance of data, independent of any publication? Researchers at the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences investigated this approach by asking users of its open data repository to review the data sets they downloaded. The findings, presented at the 7th International Digital Curation Conference (www.dcc.ac.uk/events/idcc11) held in Bristol, UK in December 2011, showed that data users could provide positive but critical feedback that could enable 'tagging' of data sets in areas such as relevance, quality, and intent to publish based on the data.

### Books for students: print versus digital

Two recent reports on students' information sources had somewhat different findings. The Pearson Foundation, a not-for-profit organisation, surveyed students in the US, and found that about 60% preferred digital books over print. However, a survey in the UK by book research company BML Bowker, found that about 60% used print books, with very few relying on ebooks. So it will be interesting to see the results of the Global eBook Monitor study, an international study being undertaken by BML Bowker, Pearson, and several other organisations.

### ALPSP awards and conference

The Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers (ALPSP; www.alpssp.org) is seeking nominations for its 2012 Awards for

publishing innovation and best new journal. The publishing innovation award aims to recognise novel approaches to publishing that are sustainable and beneficial, while the new journal award honours achievements in launching, marketing and commercial viability as well as editorial strategy. The closing date for applications is 30 May 2012 and the winners will be announced at the ALPSP International Conference (www.alpsspconference.org) in September.

### FRPAA, RWA & Elsevier

The Federal Research Public Access Act (FRPAA) is currently making progress through the US legislature. It will require US federal agencies with a budget of over \$100 million to make government-funded research available for free online access, no later than six months after publication in a peer-reviewed journal. Public access and library groups have welcomed the bill but many publishers are concerned by the timescales. Debate about the FRPAA has been in the shadow of a furore surrounding another act, the Research Works Act, which aimed to stop the spread of mandates and was supported by the large publishers. Elsevier came under attack from many in the research community for its support of the act, as well as its pricing policies, and there were concerted campaigns directed against the company (eg thecostofknowledge.com). Elsevier eventually withdrew its support for the RWA and the act was withdrawn soon after.

### New ways to publish

Peer Evaluation (www.peerevaluation.org) is a new, independent 'community interest' service that "empowers you to manage and track the peer review, dissemination and reuse of your scholarly communications". The site uses a range of social media tools, indexing systems, web technologies and widgets to enable researchers to bypass or enhance traditional

publishing channels for peer review and dissemination. Uploaded files (published or unpublished) are embedded with a 'Peerev' widget that prompts and permits readers to offer formal or informal peer review, then indexed and disseminated and all feedback is aggregated and measured using the 'Total Impact' (total-impact.org) system.

Another service offering peer review, curation and sharing is Figshare (figshare.com), supported by Digital Science, a sister company of Nature Publishing Group. Figshare enables researchers to "...publish all of their research outputs to the web in seconds in an easily citable, sharable and discoverable manner." It addresses the need for attribution and citation of figures, data, tables, videos and any other file formats that can be published.

F1000, the post-publication peer review organisation, will start its own publication venture during 2012. Called F1000 Research (f1000research.com), it offers immediate, open-access publication of a range of file types, and will "address the major issues afflicting scientific publishing today: timely dissemination of research, peer review, and sharing of data".

### The future of publishing (again)

Every issue of News Notes seems to include an item about the future of publishing, sometimes doom and gloom, other times blossoming with optimism. On 29 Feb 2012, a group from Oxford University brought together representatives from publishing companies and advocates of open science to discuss "The Scientific Evolution: Open Science and the Future of Publishing." The meeting covered journal subscriptions, publishing costs, clarity, and peer review. You can watch a video of the session on the organisers' website (evolutionofscience.org), and there's a useful report of the meeting on F1000research.com (2 March 2012). Over the Atlantic, a similar

discussion took place at Duke University, Durham, NC, USA on 24 Feb 2012. Entitled “Transitions in Journal Publishing” the meeting was also recorded ([tinyurl.com/ease-news11](http://tinyurl.com/ease-news11)) and reported ([tinyurl.com/ease-news12](http://tinyurl.com/ease-news12)).

Finally, a paper by two researchers at the US National Institute of Mental Health, published in *Frontiers in Computational Neuroscience* (2011;5:55) puts forward a detailed proposal for a new approach to publishing that attempts to more efficiently marshal the energies and resources of authors, reviewers and editors by rearranging the process and the finances. See what you think.

#### Avian flu article debate

Two articles reporting ways of mutating the infamous H5N1 influenza virus were put under scrutiny when a US government body expressed concerns about the risks of publishing such sensitive information. The papers were submitted to (and accepted by) *Nature* and *Science* in November 2011, but the journals were asked to withhold publication by the US National Science Advisory Board for Biosecurity (NSABB). Both the authors and the NSABB argued their case in the two journals, but the matter seems to have been resolved by a World Health Organization panel, which has ruled that the articles should now be published in full after a reasonable delay.

#### How to repeat a citation

In academic book editing, there are numerous ways of shortening a citation after a first full mention. It varies between disciplines and publishers. While the simplest approach is “Name, short title, page number”, there are also the Latin constructions ‘ibid.’, ‘idem’, ‘id.’ ‘op. cit.’, and ‘loc. cit.’, which can be confusing and obscure. A post by Carol Saller on the *Chronicle of Higher Education’s* *Lingua Franca* blog ([chronicle.com/blogs/linguafranca](http://chronicle.com/blogs/linguafranca); 1 March 2012) explains the sometimes arcane rules regarding their usage and offers some useful guidance.

#### How to cite a tweet

With so much information exchange (and peer review) taking place on Twitter, editors may wonder how to cite a tweet. The Modern Language Association has guidelines on just that on its website ([tinyurl.com/ease-news13](http://tinyurl.com/ease-news13)). Using this guidance, here is how a recent tweet from EASE should be cited: European Association of Science Editors (EASEeditors). “New EASE website launched” 6 Feb 2012, 5:27 pm. Tweet.

#### PEER End of Project conference

The PEER (Publishing and Ecology of European Research) project was set up to investigate the impact of systematic deposition of peer-reviewed manuscripts into research repositories. Funded partly by the European Union, the project has involved collaboration between publishers, repositories and researchers and culminates in an End of Project Conference, to be held on 29 May 2012 in Brussels, Belgium. You can find out more about the conference and the final report on the PEER website ([www.peerproject.eu](http://www.peerproject.eu)).

#### Retractions: correcting the record since 1756

Retractions play an important part in maintaining the integrity of the scientific record. While there are sometimes concerns about delays, incomplete investigation and non-adherence to guidelines, a recent citation analysis published in *Research Policy* (2012;41:276-290) and reported on the *Society for Scholarly Publishing’s* *Scholarly Kitchen* blog ([scholarlykitchen.sspnet.org](http://scholarlykitchen.sspnet.org); 29 Feb 2012) showed that retractions, at least in biomedicine, remain a viable, efficient way of informing the research community about invalid work. The study looked at authorship and citation patterns of retracted papers, compared with a control group, and noted a clear effect on the citation record.

Another finding of the study, reported by the *Retraction Watch* blog ([retractionwatch.wordpress.com](http://retractionwatch.wordpress.com); 27 Feb 2012) was the discovery of the earliest known English-language scientific retraction notice.

It was submitted over 250 years ago to the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* (1756;49:682-683; doi:10.1098/rstl.1755.0107) by Benjamin Wilson, who wished to withdraw a previously expressed opinion on “minus electricity”.

#### Arabic research database

A new online database provides access to scientific research from Arab and Islamic countries. The database, called E-Marefa ([www.e-marefa.net](http://www.e-marefa.net)) was launched in January 2012 by the Jordan-based company Knowledge World Company for Digital Content. At launch the database included 45,000 journal articles and reports in Arabic with English translations, as well as access to full-text articles from 450 journals, but the developers hope to expand coverage during 2012. The database will include only peer-reviewed work, to counter a perception that publications from the Arab world are biased or of poor quality, and will be free for academic and healthcare organisations.

#### The Anywhere Article

Despite the numerous innovations in web design and technology and the versatility of HTML as a way of presenting text on the web, the PDF endures as a hugely popular format for scientific papers. One reason may be the lack of clutter, a side effect of all that design and technology innovation. While websites can offer all manner of tools and interactivity, the primary task when faced with a scientific paper is one of concentrated reading, avoiding distraction. In an attempt to combine the readability of the PDF with the benefits of HTML, Wiley-Blackwell has developed the ‘Anywhere Article’ ([tinyurl.com/ease-news9](http://tinyurl.com/ease-news9)). The aim is to have a PDF-like view that works on mobile platforms and also allows web-like enhancements and linking. Wiley-Blackwell hopes to use the model on both Wiley Online Library and new mobile apps.

John Hilton

Editor, *The Cochrane Collaboration*  
London, UK  
[hilton.john@gmail.com](mailto:hilton.john@gmail.com)

## The Editor’s Bookshelf

Please write to [annamaria.rossi@iss.it](mailto:annamaria.rossi@iss.it) 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.

#### EDITORIAL PROCESS

Fowler M. **Peerage of Science: a publishing revolution?** *Theoretically Speaking Nature.com* blog Jan 16, 2012 A high number of scientists, coupled with the pressure to publish more (often smaller units of) science, is increasing the burden on peer reviewers. Peerage of Science (PoS) is a new initiative that aims to improve on some of the perceived problems with peer review, independently from journals and publishing houses. One of its goals is that of cutting down unnecessary repetition of effort in the review/editorial process to get the work published more easily. This post assesses the pros and cons of various aspects of the POS system from different points of view (authors, reviewers, and editors).

Hartley J. **Refereeing academic articles in the information age.** *British Journal of Educational Technology* Epub 28 August 2011 In this article some of the current practices used by editors, authors and referees when using electronic submission and publishing systems are discussed. The use of new technology increases the possibilities for gathering, analyzing and presenting summary data. The author believes that refereeing should be open, ie correspondence between editors, referees and authors should be open and available, and not private. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8535.2011.01211.x

#### ETHICAL ISSUES

Fang FC, Casadevall A, Morrison RP. **Retracted science and the retraction index.** *Infection and Immunity* 2011;79(10):3855-3859 To determine whether journals differ

in frequency of retracted articles and whether there is a relationship between retraction frequency and journal impact factor, the authors carried out a PubMed search among 17 journals. Using a novel measure, the “Retraction Index”, they found that the frequency of retraction varies among journals and that it shows a strong correlation with the journal impact factor. doi: 10.1128/IAI.05661-11

Morgan C. **Understanding the Creative Commons licence.** *Learned Publishing* 2011;24(1):51-53 This article explores some of the issues relating to the use of the Creative Commons (CC) licences. Six types of CC licences are described, from the least to the most restrictive. Each publisher needs to make his own decision about whether to use them according to their advantages and disadvantages, guided by the difference between “some rights reserved” and “all rights reserved”. doi: 10.1087/20110108

Newman JC, Feldman R. **Copyright and open access at the bedside.** *The New England Journal of Medicine* 2011;365:2447-2449 What can researchers do to ensure that other colleagues can use clinician tools they developed to improve patient care? A good solution is that authors provide explicit permissive licensing, ideally with a form of copyleft. Any new tool developed with public funds should be required to use a copyleft or similar license to guarantee the freedom to distribute and improve it. Yet authors would maintain ownership and copyright of their tool and could profit by licensing it for a fee to commercial users or publishers.

Shields L, Hall J, Mamun AA. **The “gender gap” in authorship in nursing literature.** *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* 2011;104(11):457-464 There is gender bias in authorship in nursing journals in the UK similar to

that observed in medicine, with more men than women as first or senior authors of articles. Despite the small proportion of men in the nursing workforce, up to 30% of first authors in 8 non-specialist nursing journals were men. UK journals were more likely to have male authors than USA journals, and this increased over time. doi: 10.1258/jrsm.2011.110015

Souder L. **The ethics of scholarly peer review: a review of the literature.** *Learned Publishing* 2011;24(1):55-72 This review attempts to track the various ethical issues that arise among key participants in peer review systems: authors, editors, referees, and readers. These issues include: bias, courtesy, conflict of interest, redundant publication, honesty, transparency, and training. The literature since 1998 has shown few changes in the traditional peer review system, and reviewers are still not compensated or trained. Emerging online technologies have created new possibilities, as well as new difficulties. doi: 10.1087/20110109

Steen RG. **Retractions in the medical literature: how many patients are put at risk by flawed research?** *Journal of Medical Ethics* 2011;37(11):688-692 This article reports evidence that a large number of patients are put at risk by flawed research. The author evaluated 788 retracted English-language articles published from 2000 to 2010, describing new research with humans or freshly derived human material. Retracted papers were cited over 5,000 times, with 94% of citations being research related, showing that ideas promulgated in retracted papers can influence subsequent research. doi: 10.1136/jme.2011.043133

Wilhite AW, Fong EA. **Coercive citation in academic publishing.** *Science* 2012;335(6068):542-543 One side effect of impact factors is the incentive they create for many journal editors to coerce authors

to add citations to their journal. To explore the extent and nature of such coercive self-citation, the authors analyzed responses from a survey and journal-based data in some disciplines (economics, sociology, psychology, and multiple business disciplines). Results showed that coercion is uncomfortably common - especially in the business disciplines - and appears to be practiced opportunistically. Academic associations could help by officially condemning the practice. doi: 10.1126/science.1212540

#### INFORMATION RETRIEVAL

Lehman R, Loder E. **Missing clinical trial data.** *British Medical Journal* 2012;344:d8158

A large proportion of evidence from human trials is unreported, and much of what is reported is done inadequately. Missing data about trials can harm patients, and incomplete data about benefits can lead to futile costs for healthy systems. Articles are listed that look closely at the extent, causes, and consequences of unpublished evidence from clinical trials. The authors advocate a retroactive disclosure of all clinical trial data and for developing better systems for the future. doi: 10.1136/bmj.d8158

Research Information Network (RIN), Publishing Research Consortium (PRC), Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC). **Access to scholarly content: gaps and barriers.** December 2011

This report investigates and quantifies the extent to which members of different communities in the UK can gain ready access to formally-published scholarly literature, in particular journal articles and conference proceedings. The findings are based on an online survey of researchers and knowledge workers from UK universities and colleges, medical schools, industry, and research institutes. This study provides hard factual evidence on the size and significance of gaps and barriers to accessing scholarly information.

#### LANGUAGE AND WRITING

Hartley J. **New ways of making academic articles easier to read.** *International Journal of Clinical and Health Psychology* 2011;12(1):141-158 This article focuses on more recent techniques in writing academic journal articles that might help authors when writing and revising text, and readers appreciate what they are saying. In particular, new approaches to the presentation of titles, abstracts, reader guidance, introductions, methods, results, tables, figures, and conclusions are discussed.

Jamali H, Nikzad M. **Article title type and its relation with the number of downloads and citations.** *Scientometrics* 2011;88(2):653-661 The authors wondered if the type of article title affects the number of citations and downloads an article receives. They found that articles with a question mark in their title tend to be downloaded more but cited less than descriptive or declarative titles. No significant correlation was found between title length and citation, whereas titles with a colon tend to receive fewer downloads and citations. doi: 10.1007/s11192-011-0412-z

#### PUBLISHING

Bennett C, Khangura S, Brehaut JC, et al. **Reporting guidelines for survey research: an analysis of published guidance and reporting practices.** *PloS Medicine* 2011;8(8):e1001069 The authors identified any previous relevant guidance and any evidence on the quality of reporting of survey research. The results of their study showed that guidance is limited and consensus lacking. They highlighted the need for clear and consistent reporting guidelines specific to survey research. doi: 10.1371/journal.pmed.1001069

Dallmeier-Tiessen S, Darby R, Goerner B, et al. **Open access journals - what publishers offer, what researchers want.** *Information Services & Uses* 2011;31:85-91 This article describes the SOAP (Study of Open Access Publishing)

project, which analyzed the current supply and demand situation in the open access (OA) journal landscape. Several sources of data were considered (DOAJ, journal websites, publishing industry) to map the present supply of online peer reviewed OA journals, and to assess the demand for OA publishing. doi: 10.3233/ISU-2011-0624

Gasparyan AY. **Familiarizing with science editors' associations.** *Croatian Medical Journal* 2011 The role of editors' associations is evolving to solve the numerous problems of efficient writing, editing, and publishing. This article presents activities carried out by some international science editors' associations, that include developing standards and guidelines of science writing, editing, indexing, research reporting, peer review, editorial independence, and other editorial policies. They also play a central role by facilitating distribution of information and networking, conducting research, and publishing periodical literature. doi: 10.3325/cmj.2011.52.735

Godlee F. **Goodbye PubMed, hello raw data.** *British Medical Journal* 2011;342:d212 According to the Cochrane team, reviewers must have access to all unpublished data, not only from unpublished trials but also from those that have been published in peer reviewed journals. Reviewers must assess entire trial programmes, and if trial reports are incomplete, they should turn to reports from the drug regulators. Being as this approach is unsustainable across the whole of healthcare, the only real solution by the *BMJ* editor is that the raw data from trials must be made freely available. Journal editors have a key role to play in making this happen. doi: 10.1136/bmj.d212

Pettifer S, McDermott P, Marsh J, et al. **Ceci n'est pas un hamburger: modelling and representing the scholarly article.** *Learned Publishing* 2011;24(3):207-220 In spite of its apparent limitations,

the PDF remains the favourite vehicle for distributing scholarly work, representing more than 80% of all downloaded content. This article introduces the Utopia Documents, a new free PDF reader developed by the authors. This software combines all the advantages of the PDF with the interactivity of a blog or Web pages. It reads a PDF much like a human does, recognizing document content and feature and ignoring less important artefacts and non-document content. doi: 10.1087/20110309

#### RESEARCH EVALUATION

Abramo G, D'Angelo CA. **Evaluating research: from informed peer-review to bibliometrics.** *Scientometrics* 2011;87(3):499-514 This article contrasts the peer review and bibliometrics approaches in the conduct of national research assessment exercises. The comparison is conducted in terms of the essential parameters of any measurement system: accuracy, robustness, validity, functionality, time and costs. Empirical evidence shows that for the natural and formal sciences, the bibliometric methodology is by far preferable to peer review. doi: 10.1007/s11192-011-0352-7

Bornmann L, Marx W, Gasparyan AY et al. **Diversity, value and limitations of the journal impact factor and alternative metrics.** *Rheumatology*

*International ePub* 23 December 2011 This article discusses misuses of the journal impact factor (JIF) to assess impact of separate journal articles and the effect of several manuscript versions on JIF. This should not be used as a sole measure of a journal rank, but its limitations could be overcome by complementing it with new alternative journal metrics such as SCImago Journal Rank and the *h*-index. Examples of application of these new metrics in several subject categories are analyzed. doi: 10.1007/s00296-011-2276-1

Shotton D. **The Five Stars of Online Journal Articles - a framework for article evaluation.** *D-Lib Magazine* Epub January/February 2012;18(1/2) The author proposes five factors - peer review, open access, enriched content, available datasets and machine-readable metadata - and a five-point scale for each of them, by which an online journal article can be evaluated. These five stars are complementary and provide a conceptual framework by which to judge the degree to which any article achieves or falls short of the ideal. doi: 10.1045/january2012-shotton

#### SCIENCE COMMUNICATION

Barend M, van Haagen H, Chichester C et al. **The value of data.** *Nature Genetics* 2011;43(4):281-283 Data citation and the derivation of

semantic constructs directly from datasets have now both found their place in scientific communication. This article proposes a new way to represent data, information and, in particular, assertions in the form of nanopublications. A nanopublication is the smallest unit of publication: a single assertion associating two concepts by means of a predicate in machine-readable format with proper metadata on provenance and context. doi: 10.1038/ng0411-281

Walport M, Brest P. **Sharing research data to improve public health.** *The Lancet* 2011;337(9765):537-539 A group of major international funders of public health research have committed to work together to increase the availability of data emerging from their funded research, in order to accelerate advances in public health. A joint statement of purpose sets out the principles and goals through which the organizations will work to further this shared vision. <http://www.wellcome.ac.uk/About-us/Policy/Spotlight-issues/Data-sharing/Public-health-and-epidemiology/WTDV030690.htm> doi: 10.1016/S0140-6736(10)62234-9

Thanks to Paola De Castro and John Glen for suggestion of new items.

**Anna Maria Rossi**  
Istituto Superiore di Sanità, Rome  
annamaria.rossi@iss.it

## Book Reviews

**Your House Style**, Christina Thomas, available from the Society for Editors and Proofreaders (SfEP), ISBN 978-0-9563164-0-0, 21 pp

This is one volume in a series of guides "intended for copy-editors and proofreaders, both practicing and potential, and other people involved in publishing, whether in the formal or informal sectors". Other titles previously published are *Starting Out: Setting up a small business; Editor and Client: Building a professional relationship* and *Developing a Marketing Strategy: Cost-effective ways to market your editorial business*. Authors are typically senior members of the SfEP.

This latest guide gives a brief overview of the basics of a style guide, usefully pointing out what its function is and what elements it should contain. Not only does it cover how to use a house style it also offers good advice on how to create one if

none is provided, covering the essential components such as capitalization, abbreviations and acronyms, lists and references among many others. There is a brief section on Web style guides - an area still in its infancy - and some useful pointers are provided on style conventions in this newer medium. The final chapter consists of several pages describing standard publishing reference works and other published style guides for more detail on discipline-specific style points. Taking only a few minutes to read from cover to cover this guide is a handy resource for writers and editors alike.

**Moira Johnson**  
moira.johnson@ndm.ox.ac.uk

## Correspondence

### The latest developments in plagiarism detection in medical literature

Plagiarism refers to the use of others' published and unpublished ideas or words without permission, and presenting them as new and original.<sup>1</sup> Plagiarism can be divided into direct, mosaic and self plagiarism.

Direct plagiarism is the plagiarism of the text.<sup>2</sup> Mosaic plagiarism is the borrowing ideas and opinions from an original source and a few verbatim words or phrases without crediting the author.<sup>2</sup> Self-plagiarism refers to re-using one's own work without citation.<sup>3</sup>

Improvements are seen in detecting plagiarism in medical journal submissions. In the current Indian scenario, Medknow, a publisher of medical, dental and allied journals, has provided plagiarism detecting software to editors and reviewers, which enables systematic detection and prevention of plagiarism, leading to a fewer retractions.<sup>4</sup>

Plagiarism detecting tools are categorised into those tracking plagiarised text in a database provided by the user and those searching throughout the internet.<sup>5</sup> Tracking tools are also divided into open-access (eg The Plagiarism Checker ([www.dustball.com/cs/plagiarism.checker/](http://www.dustball.com/cs/plagiarism.checker/)), crossrefme ([www.crossrefme.com/](http://www.crossrefme.com/)) and eTBLAST (<http://etest.vbi.vt.edu/etblast3/>)) and proprietary (eg Turnitin ([www.turnitin.com/](http://www.turnitin.com/)), Glatt Plagiarism Self-Detection Program ([www.plagiarism.com/self.detect.htm](http://www.plagiarism.com/self.detect.htm)) and Plagiarism Finder ([www.m4-software.com/](http://www.m4-software.com/))).

The following protocol should be adhered to by the authors to report plagiarism in the published articles. The authors should inform the editor of a journal where a plagiarised article is published. Both original and plagiarised articles should be produced in hard and soft copy, with the plagiarised part(s) highlighted. The author should also ask the editor to form a disciplinary committee to investigate the case of plagiarism.

**Thorakkal Shamim**

Government Taluk Head Quarters Hospital,  
Nilambur 679 329, India  
shamu3duad@rediffmail.com

### Changing trends in peer review

The peer-review process is both necessary and useful, and many reviewers altruistically give a lot of their time in what can be called 'a service to the profession.' However, in single-blind review there is also an opportunity to make publishing difficult for those who a reviewer feels unworthy or not in line with their thinking – from both large and small scientific communities – and all without any need to reveal their potential conflicts of interest, or quite often they may not consider themselves to have any conflicts of interest, and therefore do not reveal them.

Guidelines are therefore very important. They should encourage the reviewer to review an article as objectively as possible and in line with the other reviewers. However, it seems likely that most reviewers will not take as much time or concern over the reading and adhering to guidelines for reviewing as they do for submitting, when they potentially have more to gain.

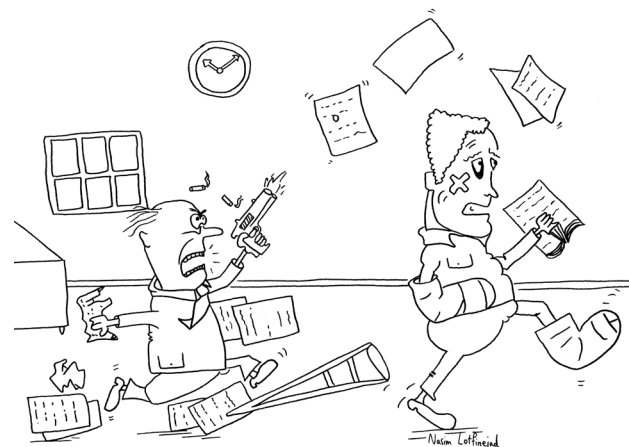
Relying on a few highly-skilled, highly-knowledgeable people to offer their opinion as to whether the submitted manuscript should be allowed past 'the gatekeeper', continues to support the hierarchy as to which ideas, people, institutions, countries are believed to be the 'best' and therefore allowed to publish in the 'best' and most highly-ranked journals. Whereas, now that the internet has enabled journal publishing to become feasible all around the world, should it not also make it possible for the peer-review to be completed by a much larger group of individuals, from a range of backgrounds, countries, experience and tendencies? By tendencies, I mean that some people have a tendency to be too mean and some too nice – making the review process by just a few individuals a bit of a lottery! A move towards public peer review would help a much wider range of scientists be represented in highly-ranked literature.

**Penny Hubbard**

The University of Manchester, Manchester, UK  
pennyhubbard@gmail.com

### References

- 1 Habibzadeh F, Shashok K. Plagiarism in scientific writing: words or ideas? *Croatian Medical Journal* 2011;52(4):576–577. doi: 10.3325/cmj.2011.52.576
- 2 Das N, Panjabi M. Plagiarism: Why is it such a big issue for medical writers? *Perspectives in Clinical Research* 2011;2(2):67–71. doi: 10.4103/2229-3485.80370
- 3 Chabner BA. Self-plagiarism. *The Oncologist* 2011;16(10):1347–1348.
- 4 Bazdaric K. Plagiarism detection - quality management tool for all scientific journals. *Croatian Medical Journal* 2012;53(1):1–3. doi: 10.3325/cmj.2012.53.1
- 5 Bamidis PD, Lithari C, Konstantinidis ST. Revisiting Information Technology tools serving authorship and editorship: a case-guided tutorial to statistical analysis and plagiarism detection. *Hippokratia* 2010;14(Suppl 1):38–48.



"The peer review process, final round!"