

Second regional conference on medical journalism in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region

10–12 October 2004; Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

After zigzagging across several countries of the region, I finally arrived in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, for the second regional conference on medical journalism in the World Health Organization's Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMRO). This year, the conference was organized by the *Saudi Medical Journal*, the WHO Regional Office, and some other Saudi science and research centres.

One hundred and fifty-five participants, including editors, scientists and researchers from 11 countries of the region, as well as several distinguished guest speakers from the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom, outlined the current status and the problems and constraints of scientific research and biomedical journalism in the region. More of our Western colleagues were present than at our first conference, held in Cairo, Egypt last year [1], but some of our colleagues — such as those from Iraq — could not attend this time.

The first day of the conference focused on the current status and importance of biomedical research in the region, with talks that considered research methodology and a workshop on biostatistics. The second and third days were meant to focus on journalism in the region, but some intriguing discussions on research that began on the first day continued through these two days. The audience contributed important questions and comments. Many of the researchers independently identified identical barriers to conducting scientific research in the region, most importantly the limited governmental funds allocated to research, the brain drain, and the lack of incentives for researchers. Although many of the participants realize they have trouble doing scientific research, and some can identify some of the problems, none reported finding practical solutions to the condition; almost all remain in a state of self-analysis.

The most important event of this conference, in my opinion, was the announcement of the official birth of the Eastern Mediterranean Association of Medical Editors (EMAME). The first regional conference on medical journalism (7–9 October 2003) set up a task force to establish the association [1]. On Sunday 10 October 2004 task force members, with Bruce Squires and Farrokh Habibzadeh of the World Association of Medical Editors (WAME), Najeeb Al-Shorbaji of WHO EMRO, James Tumwine of the Forum of African Medical Editors (FAME), and Andrew Herxheimer of the Cochrane Collaboration, finalized the EMAME constitution and agreed to wind up the task force.

Members of the task force were reassigned as members of the interim Executive Council of EMAME: Basim Yaqub of Saudi Arabia is president; Ahmad Jamal of Bahrain is vice-president; Farhad Handjani of Iran is general-secretary/treasurer; Ahmed El-Morsy of Egypt, Yusif Kordofani of Sudan, Maqbool Jafary of Pakistan and Jane Nicholson of WHO EMRO are members, and Susan Douglas of Saudi Arabia is administrative secretary. Furthermore, Najeeb Al-Shorbaji of WHO EMRO and Farrokh Habibzadeh of WAME were elected as advisers to the interim Executive Council and Bruce Squires of WAME accepted an invitation to be an honorary member.

According to its constitution, EMAME shall be a non-governmental, non-partisan, and non-profit-making organization whose mission is to support and promote medical journalism in the Eastern Mediterranean Region by fostering networking, education, discussion, and exchange, and it is to be an authoritative resource on current and emerging issues in the communication of scientific information.

EMAME's Discussion Group, though not highly active, has been working since last year. The interim Executive Council is now working on the structure of the association's committees, the registration of members, and the launch of a web site, which will be announced soon. It was agreed that the third conference will be held in Shiraz, Iran, within the next two years.

I believe that every medical editor in the region should be a member of both EMAME and WAME; EMAME will help them to discuss and face their current problems — the very basic problems specific to the region, such as lack of expertise in desktop publishing, which for lack of contributions by editors working in developing countries to WAME, are rarely mentioned in its discussions. WAME, on the other hand, will assist our editors to become familiar with obstacles that, although not yet faced by many of them, they will certainly all encounter in the future (such as conflicts of interest, contributorship vs authorship, redundant publication).

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Reference

1. Habibzadeh F. 2004. First regional conference on medical journalism in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Association. *European Science Editing* 30(1):18.

Ethics of the peer review system

32nd International Geological Congress
20–28 August 2004; Florence, Italy

Over 7000 earth scientists gathered for this congress in Florence (Italy), and over 450 presentations were delivered (in a large number of parallel sessions). One of these parallel sessions considered “Ethics of the peer review system and quality assessment in earth sciences”. The combination of topics may seem strange, but editors are perhaps more able to judge the quality of the earth science output of the various earth science organizations (universities, geological surveys, etc.) than are national or university committees. Some of the contributions of the session may be of particular interest to EASE members.

The first presentation was by Gail Ashley, former editor of the *Journal of Sedimentary Research* (and one of the few geological editors-in-chief who devoted attention, on a regular basis, to editorial aspects in editorials). She discussed the three main challenges of peer review — getting the right reviewers/reviews, handling the reviews, and filtering out “recycled science” by means of the peer review process — emphasizing that these challenges hinge on the ethics of all the people involved.

Ted Nield, a science and communication officer (and a science writer) at the Geological Society of London, discussed the reasons behind the public mistrust of science. In his opinion, scientists are wrong in their common belief (really?) that the mistrust arises from (science) journalists quoting from the grey literature. It is not true, according to him, that science writers and journalists are not aware of the function of peer review. Instead, they see no reason for going into the details of peer review when presenting a science topic to the lay public. Moreover, if the public could be made aware of how peer review works, they would probably form a very low opinion of it, particularly of the convention that allows reviewers to remain anonymous.

This last statement raised a lot of discussion about the desirability of anonymity. Those in attendance were asked what they did: some 80% of delegates (who all reviewed manuscripts more or less frequently) said that they always revealed their names, even if their comments were negative, about 10% were reluctant to do so if their comments were negative but revealed their names if their advice was largely positive, and only some 10% never revealed their names as reviewers. Obviously, the “floor” was not representative of the entire geological community (only a fraction of the participants attended this parallel session), let alone the entire scientific community, but this outcome was remarkable. The reasons for these attitudes were as diverse as they were interesting.

Monica Easton presented an insider’s perspective of ethical challenges in geoscientific publishing, focusing on the different ethical problems of authors, reviewers/editors, and publishers/senior editors. She emphasized that the various issues may be similar in some respects, but that the available solutions differ for these three groups (I have tried to convince her that she should work this information into a substantial contribution to *European Science Editing*).

John Clague, a well-known Quaternary geologist (Simon Fraser University, British Columbia) pleaded for simple language in publications. Specialization and the resultant specialist terminology are not inherently bad, but specialization has fragmented earth science (like other disciplines) and therefore has had a negative impact not only on public understanding but also on communication with specialists in related fields. According to the speaker, journal editors have a responsibility to implement editorial policies that improve the clarity of earth science literature.

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EASE–Forum digest: October–December 2004

Sequel

The discussion about outsourcing editing (*ESE* 2004;30(4):121–122) has continued. In response to calls from the crowd Terry Clayton has agreed to write an article for *ESE*, which promises to be very interesting.

How long is a readable line?

Patricia Shaffer asked what she called a plebeian question: would a journal with a heavy maths content and long equations work in 8.5 inches width with two columns. John Glen said that long equations were easily split between two lines in his journal, which has two columns and a similar width. Only rarely was

it necessary to put really long equations across the whole page. David Roseveare reported that Springer journals use this format without any problems.

Patricia also asked what the implications would be of printing this width in one column? She had reservations about excessively long lines in a single column format detracting from readability. Yateendra Joshi considered these to be well founded because a single column of 8 inches was too wide. He referred to the Charlesworth group, which gives journals awards for typographical excellence and whose experience was that readers prefer double-column formats. Furthermore, research shows that a 65–70 character line length is the maximum which is easy to use.

This prompted Margaret Cooter to muse on why abstracts often run right across the page and frequently in one dense paragraph too. Yateen had the answer for this. It harks back to index cards: abstracts were pasted onto cards for filing. Shades, he thought, of the railway gauge going back to the width of Roman chariots. This is an apt comparison except that journals should be easy to change, railway gauges less so. Having recently been involved in designing a brand new medical journal I have realized that it is only tradition that makes so many biomedical journals as dull as dishwater, but then hardly anyone reads them anyway — or do they? Perhaps we should be asking more plebeian questions.

Are abstracts, informal reports and map compilations publications?

What exactly constitutes “publication”? David Roberts, who asked the question, thought that abstracts, informal reports and map compilations are not publications. Terry Clayton suggested that a publication should be thought of as an information source, which Dublin Core defines as “anything with an identity”. Terry thought an abstract would not qualify in the context of a publication to someone’s credit and an informal report would not qualify if it was merely internal. Liz Wager quoted the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors’ advice on prior publication and concluded that the committee does not consider abstracts to be full publications. She thought the same would apply to internal reports. Items such as proceedings and informal reports are called grey literature as they are partly in the public domain but often poorly accessible, Richard Loch told us. Journals have different policies on whether grey literature is “published”. Sally Morris pointed out that *Learned Publishing* addressed this problem in 2000 and probably many of the thoughts are still pertinent (www.ingentaselect.com/cgi-bin/linker?reqidx=cw/alpsp/09531513/v13n4/s8/p251.idx&lkey=-148244447&rkey=301096213).

A good reason for using the forum

Some information can take ages to find by searching books and sifting through the internet. Why not ask an expert? All subscribers to the forum are experts in fields related to your work. Judy Baggot asked what the degree MBChB was. A quick reply came from Hugh de Glanville: it should be MB ChB and stands for Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery.

Articles that are too long

Most journals have space problems and Jane Moody’s experience (and mine too) is that it is rare to receive a manuscript that obeys the word limit. So I was surprised by the lack of response to Margaret Cooter’s question. She wanted to know if forum subscribers experienced authors who demanded to have their papers twice as long as the word limit and not edited, and what policy the editors followed in such an instance. The copy-editing I do has little to do with correcting grammar, spelling and inconsistencies and a lot to do with slaughtering repetition and

unnecessary words, or even paragraphs. But this is relatively easy. The difficult part is dealing with the authors once they have seen what you have done to their Decorated Municipal Gothic prose (term coined by Michael O’Donnell [1]). This requires insight into sensibilities, incredible diplomacy, and sticking power. A less nerve-wracking solution suggested by Jane Moody, but only for well-written long pieces, is to split the papers into two parts, along “basic science” and “clinical practice” lines if possible, but she added that this was not always easy. The journal could also refuse to publish, of course. I would have thought the answer depends on relative power, but then Margaret Cooter works at the *BMJ*.

Recap on spellcheckers

Mary Ellen Kerans asked for advice on British English biomedical/pharmaceutical spellcheckers or on how to use the US American Stedman’s-Plus spellchecker and still be able to produce documents with British English spellings. She was coordinating a group of translators who found it irritating to have their British spellings flagged on all documents once Stedman’s was installed.

Lotika Singha wrote to say she uses Dorland’s spellchecker, which allows her to switch between a medical spell check and a “normal” one by making selections in the Tools menu. She hadn’t compared Dorland’s and Stedman’s spellcheckers, but it seemed that Dorland’s, like Stedman’s, only gives American drug names and medical spellings. So what Lotika has done is make a custom dictionary with British spellings to run simultaneously.

Mary Ellen wrote again to report that her team had contacted Stedman’s and they had confirmed that it was indeed impossible to use the non-medical British spellchecker once Stedman’s spellchecker was installed. They are trying out an alternative — Spellex, which combines both British and American options so that neither *colour* nor *color* will be flagged. They’re not finding it ideal — because surely one would want either British or American spellings to be flagged, to help ensure consistency.

Joining the forum

You can join the Forum by sending the one-line message “subscribe ease-forum” (without the quotation marks) to majordomo@helsinki.fi. Do not include a subject line or signature or any text. To stop receiving messages from the forum, send the message “unsubscribe ease-forum” to majordomo@helsinki.fi. Once you have joined, you should send messages for the forum to ease.forum@helsinki.fi. Please keep messages short. If you reply to someone else’s message, make sure to delete those parts of the original message that are not essential for understanding your response. To keep other forum participants informed, check that your reply (or a copy of it) is sent to ease.forum@helsinki.fi, not just to the sender of the original message. If your e-mail software has a “reply to all” possibility, this will probably do the job. Do not use the “reply to” or “reply to sender” facility unless your message is intended for the original sender only.

Anyone who loses contact with the forum, or is unable to establish a new subscription, will be able to find information on the EASE web site (www.ease.org.uk).

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Discussion initiators

Patricia Shaffer: patricia.Shaffer@informs.org
David Roberts: David.Roberts@NGU.NO
Judy Baggot: baggott@marionegri.it
Margaret Cooter: mcooter@bmj.com
Mary Ellen Kerans: mekerans@telefonica.net

Reference

1. Michael O'Donnell. 1995. The toxic effect of language on medicine. *Journal of the Royal College of Physicians of London* 29(6):525–529.

Book reviews

Janet Mackenzie. 2004. **The editor's companion**. Melbourne: Cambridge University Press. 219 + xii p. AUD 39.95. GBP 22.99. ISBN 0-521-60569-5.

Experienced editors of science publications may not need this book for direct use, but it is a publication you should not overlook if you spend any time teaching newcomers to editing or writing. It is likely to save you many hours given over to explaining the diverse tasks of an editor and how they relate to the preparation of effective publications.

The author is a working editor, indexer and trainer who has had a 35-year career in publishing and has now produced a readable and entertaining guide to editorial practice. It will be valuable to that growing band of editors who work as individuals and as subcontractors to publishers and have no mentors on hand to answer questions about relationships with the people they meet in the process of turning words into print. I encourage you to place a copy of this companion on your bookshelves to lend to those who would otherwise keep you from pursuing more profitable activities.

The tone is stridently Australian. Most examples are from the author's wide experience in providing well-structured documents for publication in print or electronically. It is not a style guide. It is a companion to the style guide of your choice. Science editors receive no specific advice. I was unhappy to see no reference to CSE's *Scientific style and format* or to our own *Science editors' handbook* amongst the many other support items mentioned in the text. Perhaps I expected too much from a general guide such as this.

After reminding readers that an editor can save a publisher considerable sums of money by the application of good structural techniques the writer

goes on to give a comprehensive introduction to editing at the beginning of the 21st century. Members of EASE know that they belong to a truly international community of communicators. No such group exists in the southern hemisphere. The author has missed an opportunity to remind science editors in Australia and New Zealand of the importance to them of associations such as EASE and CSE.

We are faced increasingly with multi-authored works destined for publication in books or journals, particularly from international groups of authors whose first language is not the language of the publisher. Special care is needed in the preparation of these for the authors' message to be understood.

Apart from a few Antipodean insularities, Janet Mackenzie gives much good advice to all editors. Be cooperative but firm in dealing with authors. Think of your readers at all times. Question anything you do not understand fully. Take great care in checking tables, captions to figures, references, running heads and text in large type size. You will then have a fair chance of surviving as an editor. The chapters on Completeness and Consistency and on Freelance Editing are helpful to beginners. The Appendix entitled Australian Standards for Editing Practice issued in 2001 should be studied and compared with any similar document produced in your own country. Finally, you may find it cheaper to order a copy online from Australia.

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Jane Dorner. 2002. **Writing for the Internet**. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 128 pages. Paperback. GBP 7.99. ISBN 0-19-866285-8.

The thinking process and the “nuts and bolts” of how to write for on-screen reading are the subjects of this book, not web design or coding. In the introduction the real purpose of the book is summarized thus: “Even if you know everything in this book, it will still help. That is because there will always be someone else who wants you to post up some text that you know will not work on a screen. Here's the ammunition you need to persuade others that you know what you are doing.”

Part of the onestepahead series, the book is intended to be dipped into, not read from cover to cover, and you will find some chapters more useful than others, depending on your level of expertise.

Beginning with an overview of the different forms of communication online — e-mail, chat, posting on the web — Chapter 1 offers some advice on “netiquette”, or how to communicate effectively electronically. Some of the advice is common sense, but useful nonetheless.

Chapter 2 explores the concept of “internet publishing” and states plainly that the internet is a publishing medium and as such is subject to the same imperatives as publishing on paper: for example, concerning issues of design, accuracy, readability and ease of use. The traditional book and web pages are compared in terms of what they are “good for”. For example, paper is better for a long attention span, but web pages win out when access to up-to-date information is important. This chapter also considers the very important issue of copyright on the internet – laying out (at a rather basic level) what it is and is not permissible to do. There is also an excellent exploration of the concepts of “linearity” and “interactivity” and how they affect how information is presented on a collection of web pages as opposed to in a bound volume.

Chapter 3, entitled “Considering purpose”, is really self-explanatory. It covers issues such as goals, visitor benefits, how to evaluate other web sites, and how to consider your intended audience, i.e. how to attract the right “end user”. This is followed a chapter entitled “Planning” – essential reading for anyone contemplating a web site of more than six or so pages. Ease of navigation, use of levels and site maps, even things like page width and page length are considered here.

Chapters 5 and 6 are probably the most useful parts of the book for anyone wanting to write for the web. Here you will find the real nuts and bolts of this business covered: how to organize text on a page, good word-processing practice (as text will appear differently on the screens of different end-users). In

Chapter 5 the value of good summaries and wise menu choices are discussed, along with other important style issues. Chapter 6 goes on to discuss that subject closest to our hearts: “editing”. Although much of the content of this chapter should be second nature to us, there are some useful new ways of looking at the editing process, including the importance of being ruthless in editing out unnecessary words.

Also in Chapter 6 there is a discussion of indexing, with interesting facts about how search engines use ASCII numbering for the basis of sorting (there are some surprises here). The bottom line is that it is best to include a topic-based index to help users navigate your site.

The last two chapters of the book cover “Website genres” (probably the least useful section of the book for editors) and “Keeping readers”, which covers basics such as maintenance, keeping the site looking “fresh” (as opposed to static) and supplements that are possible, e.g. e-zines.

As with the other books in the onestepahead series the last 20 pages are devoted to checklists that you may wish to use during your quest to create the perfect web site. There is also guidance on how to create a house style – similar to that used for print publications, but with the emphasis on aspects unique to web sites. Finally there is a list of web creation resources – some of these may have changed or moved since the book was published – and a glossary.

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News from committees

Programme committee: 4th report

Underground activities of EASE members in Eastern Europe

Readers of *European Science Editing* will know, after the messages in the last three issues, that the next triennial conference will be held in Kraków, Poland, on 15–18 June 2006. Some information about the programme and the ambiance has already been provided, but it may come as a surprise that the Programme Committee has taken steps to go underground. Obviously, underground editorial activities were quite common in Poland during the old regime, but is there any reason now for doing so?

One of the challenges for the organizers of the Kraków meeting is the daily publication of a newsletter. Not an easy task, after the great success of the *Bath Soap*! Yet presses have been ordered, specialist conference reporters, journalists, editors (and, obviously, several times more managers) have been attracted, and a secret place for the production has been found. Will this newsletter force all those involved to go underground, just as in the time – only slightly more than a decade ago – when such controversial information could only be produced in

secret and published as a samizdat?

Fortunately no such situation is envisaged. The press will be free, accessible to all who have an interesting contribution, and those who want (and dare!) to write their names under their contributions need not (or, at least, not necessarily) fear to be sent to prison. The underground activities will be of a completely different nature: they will be part of a cultural adventure.

Coming to Poland will not be an everyday activity for the great majority of EASE members. The Programme Committee has therefore decided to give all participants the chance – at no additional cost – to visit one of the places on the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage list. It is on the schedule for Saturday, 17 June, in the afternoon. Visiting this remarkable place is worth in itself a trip to Poland. But those who want to go there should be prepared to go underground.

The site we will visit is the Wieliczka salt mine. According to legend, this mine was part of the dowry

of a Hungarian princess, Kinga, when she married Boleslaw the Shy over 700 years ago. The salt mines are thus amongst the oldest in Europe. The miners always had a difficult life, in a dark, aggressive (salt!) environment, but they nevertheless found opportunities to carve out fabulous figures, magnificent monuments and sacred altar pieces in the salt walls. These amazing pieces of art will probably never disappear from your memory.

Each treasure has its price, however. The price of visiting the salt mine is that you have to go underground – by lift if you want, by foot if you dare. Including the 2.5 km underground route, walkers will go down some 400 steps. Whether going

down by lift or by stairs, the stay underground will be rewarding. The trip will go for three levels (from 64 to 135 m below the surface), leading through galleries and chambers, including the unique and splendidly ornamented Chapel of the Blessed Kinga.

It can be foreseen that a visit to this mine will leave the participants in silence, if not from the beauty observed then from fatigue. No need to panic, however: a lift will carry everybody back to the surface and a bus will bring us home to Kraków – another exciting place where so much is to be seen.

AJ (Tom) van Loon

On behalf of the 2006 Programme Committee
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Publications committee

The Publications Committee met in London on 6 November 2004 and all its members attended. Stuart Handsides, who was introduced during the morning session, has volunteered to be responsible for the reports of meetings and the Committee welcomed him as a new member.

It was confirmed that *European Science Editing* is now being posted on the web site six months after publication. Full open access and provision of a search engine will be discussed later.

The issues of the journal for 2005 were discussed. The next two editorials will focus on ethics and discussion on this topic will be posted on the EASE forum. Comments are welcome and will be forwarded to Council so that at its meeting in spring 2005 it can discuss how EASE handles the ethical questions faced by editors.

It was noted that 100 book reviews have been published since Marie-Louise Desbarats-Schönbaum took charge of the book review section.

A section on “News from countries/learned societies” is in preparation and Jane Sykes has been very active. She has sent letters to EASE members in 44 countries asking whether they would be interested in joining a network of EASE correspondents. Where possible, local editors rather than UK or US expatriates were approached. These members have been asked to provide a short summary of their work and so far some correspondents have said they will submit contributions. Letters were also sent to 25 sister organizations asking whether they would like to contribute to a column in *ESE* on the activities of related organizations around the world.

A proposal for the redesign of the EASE web site was shown to the committee by Linus Svensson and discussed. A template should be ready by the end of December and a redesigned web site should be launched by next spring.

Hervé Maisonneuve

Chief editor
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Reminders

Science editors' handbook:

**Binder £7.50; binder and contents, £18;
postage and packing outside Europe, £3.50
Send orders to Georgianna Oja, ease@pp.inet.fi;
Nyyrikintie 14 A 1, FI-33540 Tampere, Finland**

Index for *ESE* volumes 28 and 29:

Available at www.ease.org.uk/eseindex02_03.pdf

habits

reading

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HABITS

EASE Seminar

Habits in Science Communication and Science Publishing

Barcelona, 29 April 2005

This **EASE Seminar** will focus on issues associated with habits in science communication and science publishing. The topics will cover matters of understanding, writing, reading, seeking and review of scientific publications. The panel of speakers is composed of prestigious researchers working in the fields of social and life sciences in order to provide a multidisciplinary view of these issues.

The Seminar will take place immediately prior to the **EASE Annual General Assembly**.

writing

Speakers:

Peter Brown

Department of Computer Science, School of Engineering and Computer Science, University of Exeter, UK

James Hartley

School of Psychology, Keele University, UK

Juunika Heinström

Department of Information Studies, Åbo Akademi University, Finland

Stefano Mizzaro

Artificial Intelligence Laboratory, Department of Mathematics and Computer Science, Faculty of Science, University of Udine, Italy

Jack Meadows

Emeritus Professor, Information Science, Loughborough University, UK

Date: 29 April 2005, 10-18 h.

Venue: Institut d'Estudis Catalans, Carrer del Carme 47, 08001 Barcelona, Spain.

<http://www.iceat.net>

Fees: 80 € non EASE members
20 € Students
Free for EASE members (Membership subscription before 1 April 2005, see <http://www.ease.org.uk>)

Further information:

Reme Melero - rmelero@iata.csic.es
Seminar coordinator

With the collaboration of **Institut d'Estudis Catalans**



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Registration • EASE Seminar Barcelona, 29 April 2005

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Please charge my credit card (Access/ Mastercard/ Eurocard/ or Visa only) the sum of _____

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Return this form to: EASE Secretariat, Georgianna Oja, Nyyrikintie 14 A 1, FIN-33540 Tampere, FINLAND.

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Index for *ESE* volumes 28 and 29:

Available at www.ease.org.uk/eseindex02_03.pdf

The Editors' WebWatch

The Editors' WebWatch is intended to be a membership-driven resource of web sites for editors and writers in the sciences.

The Scientist: news journal for the life scientist

www.the-scientist.com

The Scientist has been around for some 17 years, with a presence on the internet for a number of those. I was pleasantly surprised on returning to the site recently by the new design and feel of the home page. Useful dropdown menus make it easy to navigate, and the category names are meaningful. Articles are organized into sections such as Research, BioBusiness, and so on, and you can see the title of each article before deciding whether to load up another page. The content looks good — up-to-date research and topical issues. The drawback (it seems there is always one with any web site worth its server space) is that to see the full text of most titles (classified as “premium content”) you need to subscribe, and at USD 25 for the online version you may not judge this worthwhile. Take a look and decide.

GoogleScholar

<http://scholar.google.com>

This new and very useful offering from the Google team allows you to search “specifically for scholarly literature, including peer-reviewed papers, theses, books, preprints, abstracts and technical reports from all broad areas of research.” This should reduce the number of irrelevant hits one gets and (almost) do away with the need for nested searches. Google Scholar supports many of Google's regular query modifiers, and also introduces a new one — author:authorname. (Query modifiers are terms used as prefixes to the search keywords that allow you, for example, to get results only for files of a certain type or to exclude whole domains, and a whole host of other variations. Patrick Crispen of Tourbus has a very useful two-page PDF, free from <http://tinyurl.com/4hhn9>, which explains modifiers and shows you how to use them.)

Medic8

www.medic8.com

For searching drug or medical information try this specific search engine in preference to one based on full text. Medic8 claims to be a leading UK medical portal for health-care professions and consumers around the world. All of the content “has been reviewed by a

qualified UK medical doctor prior to loading, and all the sites indexed have been chosen based on the trustworthiness of their content.”

The board of Medic8 consists of 10 medics from different disciplines, mostly highly qualified. You can search for textbooks (both online and in print), clinical guidelines, drugs, even jobs, and there is also a section on the latest health-related news.

Vivisimo Clustering — automatic categorization and metasearch
www.vivisimo.com

This metasearch engine categorizes search results to make them more meaningful and useful. Results are automatically organized into folders based on topic and subtopic. Too good to be true? Not quite — it does seem to work and offers a useful way of homing in on the information you want without the need to scan hundreds of irrelevant or even ridiculous search results. Of course, you do need to know exactly what you are seeking before you begin.

The WWW Library Directory

www.webpan.com.msauers/libdir

“Currently indexing over 8800 libraries and library-related web sites in 130 countries. This site contains no ads, and is not built from a database that will only allow you to view one listing at a time.” To actually borrow anything from the libraries you need to be there and have a user card, or be prepared to pay for the photocopies and postage. But for those hard-to-find journal articles and reference books, or just for interest, this site is worth a look. (As it says, no ads . . .).

The best of everything

www.tourbus.com/best.html

This site, mainly because it is the work of one person (Patrick Crispen of Tourbus again), is based on opinion, but nevertheless it is a useful collection of good stuff, divided into around 100 easy-to-scan categories, with a description of each resource. Some are computer-related, for example “The Best ANTI-SPAM resources online” (http://tourbus.com/best_anti-spam.html) while others are of more general interest, such as “The Best ASTRONOMY resources online” (http://tourbus.com/best_astronomy.html) or “The Best of GAMES on the internet” (http://tourbus.com/best_kids_stuff.html).

html). It has the promise of being very useful for almost any aspect of life — work or leisure. Try it out and let me know what you think.

BookBrowse

www.bookbrowse.com

This site lists excerpts, information from book jackets, reviews and interviews with authors. Although the overwhelming majority of the featured titles are fiction, there is a smattering of non-fiction, so it may be worth a visit if you are planning a major reference book purchase.

Just for fun

<http://ccins.camosun.bc.ca/~jbritton/jbsymteslk.htm#TOP>

This site is part of the Camosun College web site (in Victoria, BC), and is a fascinating place to spend coffee breaks or those difficult times when deadlines should have been met yesterday. The subject material (mathematics of symmetry) is serious and is aimed at school-age students, but the exercises are fascinating and colourful (and if you like butterflies, you will love this: <http://butterflywebsite.com/>).

WordCount

www.fabrica.it/wordcount

WordCount™ is an artistic experiment in the way we use language. It presents the 86,800 most frequently used English words, ranked in order of commonality. Each word is scaled to reflect its frequency relative to the words that precede and follow it, giving a visual barometer of relevance. The larger the word, the more we use it. The smaller the word, the more uncommon it is. Enjoy.

Cricklers

www.crickler.com

If you like crossword puzzles, give this one a try; it's an interesting spin on the standard crossword.

Something to contribute?

Please send interesting or useful links to Moira Vekony (moiravekony@aol.com). Sites in European languages other than English are also of interest (but please provide a short review in English); any that relate to areas of science other than biology and medicine will be very welcome. **Contributions for this issue** came from Margaret Cooter, Alison Clayson, Marie-Louise Desbarats-Schönbaum and Moira Vekony.

News notes

Access to "lost" medical research

CABI Publishing has launched Global Health Archive, giving electronic access to almost 100 years of scientific research in public and international health. Global Health Archive is a modern, searchable, bibliographic database containing literature from 1908 to 1983, giving access to scientific research that has been difficult to unlock; much of it has been "lost" in unused and forgotten print volumes that have not been available to the wider academic community. About 300 volumes of research will be fully searchable alongside the current file Global Health. Together they provide a global picture of international public health research both past and present. They are both available through CAB Direct platform, which has recently been upgraded to a new, more advanced version, and through other leading database vendors. (UK Serials Group e-News, 8 October 2004)

What's up at CrossRef?

CrossRef, the reference-linking service for scholarly and professional content, now claims over 700 participating publishers and societies and is adding an average of 9000 digital object identifiers per day to its system. About 7% of the 12-plus million DOIs registered with CrossRef are assigned to books and conference proceedings. CrossRef recently began offering discounted registration for components, such as figures and images, and multiple entries in large reference works. It has also moved to admit other types of original research content such as working papers. Earlier this year CrossRef announced its new Forward Linking service, for retrieving "cited-by" links. The CrossRef Search Pilot, in partnership with Google, includes 29 publishers and over 3.4 million research works. The service allows users to search the full text of high-quality, peer-reviewed journal articles, conference proceedings, monographs, and other resources covering the full spectrum of scholarly research. (UK Serials Group e-News, 20 October 2004)

A "parasitic" relationship

The relationship between medical journals and the drug industry has been explained to the UK House of Commons select committee on health. In December the editor of *The Lancet* outlined some of the financial incentives that could, potentially, influence a commercially run medical

journal to publish a paper. Large among these is pressure to publish trials that will be bought in bulk by drug companies who use them for marketing purposes — because these will make more money for the journal. Although measures have been introduced across medical journals to try to reduce research fraud and to eliminate "ghost writing" of leading editorials, this is based on people being honest. (*BMJ* 1 January 2005)

Open access and the information famine

The Electronic Publishing Trust (www.epublishingtrust.org) is calling for WHO to consider the impact that support for the low-cost establishment of OA archives would achieve. Making a rapidly growing volume of free scientific and medical literature research available would be of immense benefit in developing countries, and would begin to close the south to north, south to south and north to south information gaps. Some 86% of nearly 9000 journals surveyed have agreed that authors may archive their published work in institutional archives. Since such archived papers are free of cost barriers, studies so far carried out show improved impact approaching 300% (see www.dlib.org/dlib/june04/harnad/06harnad.html).

Google goes academic

Google's new research tool available (<http://scholar.google.com>): see *Nature* 25 November, p. 423, described here in WebWatch, even found an article published in a developing-world journal that was cited in a "reputable" journal — the "cited by" feature provides links to other papers (in the Scholar database) that have cited the original.

A precaution, though: universities spend vast sums of money providing students with access to multiple databases with peer-reviewed information and also offer instruction on database searching. What will happen if students flock to Google Scholar and access papers that may not be peer-reviewed, missing out on much worthwhile information in the process? And furthermore: it may be most useful in the less developed countries as a preliminary search on a topic or researcher, but what about access to the full text, particularly in the leading peer-reviewed journals?

Serials pricing analysed

A new report published by LISU, Loughborough University, offers valuable insights into pricing of scholarly journals over the last decade. Amongst the findings are average price increases by publishers ranging from 27% to 94% during 2000–2004, and biomedical journal prices per page ranging from £0.31 (about US\$0.55) to £0.98 (about US\$1.75) in 2004 (average by publisher). LISU analysed data from 12 named scholarly publishers, taken over a five-year period (2000–2004), plus 1993 as a base year for comparison. Around 6000 journals spanning all subject areas were analysed, then detailed analysis focused on identifying average journal prices, per page and per impact factor point on biomedical titles. (UK Serials Group e-News, 7 October 2004)

Open archive for Europe?

The Wellcome Trust, Europe's largest research charity, has said that all papers reporting the results of research it has funded will in future have to be placed in a central public archive within six months of publication. This might bring the Trust into conflict with publishers who hold exclusive rights on the use of such material, and could in turn restrict researchers' choices about which journals they publish in. The Trust may establish a European version of PubMed Central, and is preparing to set aside 1–2% of its total annual spend of GBP 400 million (USD 740m) to cover the costs. (*Nature* 11 November, p. 134)

Comments invited

The US National Institutes of Health (NIH) recently proposed an "Enhanced Public Access Policy" to make all articles resulting from NIH-funded studies freely available to the public no later than six months after publication, through PubMed Central. Many members of the publishing industry fear a negative impact on their subscription revenues if they release even a subset of the articles they publish (those funded by NIH) to PubMed Central. But many others, including quite a few prominent scientists and journal editors, support NIH's prospective action to increase access to important biomedical discoveries. Comments are invited from scientists, including those from outside the US, via: http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/public_access/add.htm.

ALPSP and HighWire fund OA study

ALPSP and HighWire Press are funding a study of the financial and non-financial effects of different forms of open access journal publishing. Kaufman-Wills Group is carrying out the research. Preliminary findings were reported at the HighWire meeting in October 2004 and at the ALPSP/SSP seminar in early November; the report is to be published early in 2005. (Serials e-News, 16 November 2004)

Media use in Europe

The internet's share of media consumption by Europeans doubled to 25% in the past year. Europeans now spend a fifth of their time surfing the web, an advertising association survey has found (http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/headlines/news/article_04_12_13_en.html). More than 60% of those canvassed viewed the internet as a medium to "keep you ahead of the game", and half cited it as their favourite source of information. This has important implications for science communication.

New online journal

Globalization and Health (<http://www.globalizationandhealth.com>) will be an open access, peer-reviewed, online journal providing a forum for debate and discussion on the topic of globalization and its impact on public health. The journal will consider research, book reviews, commentaries, debate, hypotheses, methodology, reviews, short reports and study protocols.

MPs condemn government response to "Free for All" report

The UK government responded to parliament's report on scientific publishing, released in July, with a detailed response which MPs have called obstructive in a press release — a response that shows they are frustrated with what they see as "kowtowing" to the publishing lobby.

MPs on the House of Commons Science and Technology Select Committee said that the Department of Trade and Industry clearly tried to "neutralize" the views put forward by other departments and government-funded organizations, in particular the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC), an expert advisory body funded indirectly by

the Department for Education and Skills.

European science prizes

The €1 million EU Descartes Prize for outstanding cross-border research has been awarded to two pan-European teams, in the fields of life science and physics. One team has made revolutionary breakthroughs in quantum cryptography, a crucial advance towards secure global communication networks. The other contributed to greater understanding of mitochondrial DNA, which is believed to be one of the keys to the ageing process. A new EU Descartes Prize for Science Communication was awarded for the first time. Sharing the €250,000 prize were French film producer Vincent Lamy for an award-winning TV documentary on stick insects; Professor Ignaas Verpoest for an innovative mobile exhibition on composite materials; British broadcaster Sir David Attenborough for his pioneering wildlife film-making and his universally admired oeuvre; Professor Wolfgang M Heckl for his inspirational work in making hard science understandable to a broad range of audiences; and Hungarian scientist Peter Csermely for his initiative to help disadvantaged students to participate in advanced research. (<http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/press/2004/pr0212en.cfm>)

Should editors worry about literacy?

The voice of British business, the Confederation of British Industry, recently voiced unease about literacy standards in UK companies. Their annual CBI-Perstemp employment trends survey (September 2004) showed that 33% of firms needed to give school-leavers basic training in literacy and numeracy during the past year (www.cbi.org.uk). Digby Jones, Director-General of the CBI, said: "Too many school leavers are failing to make the business grade. A fundamental working knowledge of English and maths provides a vital foundation for every day-to-day business task. But the education system is letting down many young people and leaving them unprepared for the world of work." A huge increase in text-messaging as a communication tool means that spelling and punctuation mistakes are now common, making the writer seem slapdash, informal and amateurish.

Better science communication

Researchers, journalists, decision-makers, the general public — they all seem to agree on the need to express and demonstrate science through clear and comprehensible language without over-simplification. The European forum on science communication held last May took stock, and its report is in *RTDinfo* (August 2004), the newsletter of the Research DG of the EU (http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/rtdinfo/42/communicating_en.html).

What's in a name?

New Scientist's Feedback column (27 November) has a challenge for readers: dredge up some particularly non-science names that have slipped into the scientific lexicon by the back door. For example, "sponger" has slipped into the lexicon of electronic broking — the programmer who wrote the application asked the business mandarins what it should be called, and they said, "We don't care, as long as it works."

Mind games

When editing isn't challenging enough, find an opponent and try an ancient game of wits that is too challenging for a computer. The game is Go — devised in China at least 2500 years ago, and played with fervour there and in Japan and South Korea. The proverb says that chess is a battle, but Go is war — and indeed, its tactics are military (www.economist.com/displaystory.cfm?story_id=3445214).

The best approach is to spread your pieces widely so as to encircle the opponent; second best is to attack and choke off enemy formations. The worst strategy is to cling to a defence of your own territory (is there an analogy here with successfully running a journal?). The basic equipment is just a grid and some black and white counters, but if you want to invest in a proper game set, that can set you back considerably. If you get good enough, you could try for the \$400,000 Ing cup, or the \$1.6m reward for writing a winning computer program.

Contributions to News Notes

Please send items for this section to Margaret Cooter, *BMJ*, BMA House, Tavistock Square, London, WC1H 9JR, UK; mcooter@bmj.com.

Thanks to Kristina Fister, Liz Wager, Marie-Louise Desbarats-Schönbaum.

Forthcoming meetings, courses and BELS examinations

The web and after: the future of scholarly e-publishing

21st International Learned Journals Seminar (ALPSP)

8 April 2005 London, UK
(Contact ALPSP, tel. +44 (0)1245 260571, events@alpsp.org, further information/register at www.alpsp.org/events.s080405.htm)

Habits in scientific publishing

EASE seminar and AGM

29 April 2005 Barcelona, Spain
EASE's second annual seminar will again take place in Barcelona, in connection with the Annual General Meeting of EASE.
Application form: p. 23 of this issue. (Contact: Reme Melero, rmelero@iata.csic.es; see www.iata.csic.es/~bibrem/EASE/EASE-Seminar2.html for more details.)

Making your content pay: extend your range of selling models

ALPSP seminar

5 May 2005 London, UK
(Contact: Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers, tel. +44 (0)1245 260571, events@alpsp.org, www.alpsp.org/events)

CSE 48th annual meeting

20–24 May 2005 Atlanta, GA
(Contact: Council of Science Editors, Inc., 12100 Sunset Hills Road, Suite 130, Reston VA 20190, USA; tel. +1 703 437 4377, fax +1 703 435 4390, e-mail CSE@CouncilScienceEditors.org, web www.CouncilScienceEditors.org)

5th international congress on peer review and biomedical publication

15–17 Sept. 2005 Chicago, Illinois
JAMA and the **BMJ** are the organizers of this meeting on aspects of editorial peer review, scientific publication, and the dissemination of scientific information. (Contact: Annette Flanagan, jama-peer@jama-assn.org, or Jane Smith, jsmith@bmj.com; or see web site, www.jama-peer.org)

Editing in context

National Editors Conference
13–15 October 2005 Melbourne

The Society of Editors (Vic.) Inc. will host the second national CASE (Council of Australian Editors) conference, which will focus on editing as a profession and explore issues such as the public perception of editors, how editors promote themselves, keeping up to date, financial and legal issues, and health and wellbeing. (Contact: Convenor, Lan Wang, lanwant@wovenwords.com.au or see www.socedvic.org for regular updates.)

com.au or see www.socedvic.org for regular updates.)

2006

The culture of science editing

9th EASE Conference and General Assembly

15–18 June 2006 Kraków, Poland
The first circular for this meeting is enclosed with this issue.
(Contact: Georgianna Oja, Secretary of EASE, ease@pp.inet.fi, or see web site: www.ease.org.uk)

COURSES

ALPSP training courses, briefings and technology updates

ALPSP offers half-day and one-day courses and updates on the role of the managing editor, electronic publishing and marketing, journal marketing, production, fulfilment and finance, copyright, and related topics. (Contact: Amanda Whiting, Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers, tel. +44 (0)1865 247776, training@alpsp.org, web www.alpsp.org/training)

Style for reports and papers in medical and life-science journals

John Kirkman Communication Consultancy courses, London, UK
One-day seminars devoted to discussion of style — tactics for producing accurate and readable texts, not structure or format.
(Contact: Gill Ward, JKCC, PO Box 106, Marlborough, Wilts, SN8 2RU, UK; tel. +44 (0)1672 520429, fax +44 (0)1672-521008, e-mail kirkman.ramsbury@btinternet.com)

Publishing Training Centre at Book House

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

Society for Editors and Proofreaders workshops

SfEP runs one-day workshops in London and occasionally elsewhere in the UK on copy-editing, proof-reading, grammar and much else. (Training enquiries: tel. +44 (0)20 7736 0901, e-mail trainingenquiries@sfe.org.uk. For other enquiries see www.sfe.org.uk, or contact SfEP, Riverbank House, 1 Putney Bridge Approach, London SW6 3JD, UK; tel.

+44 (0)20 7736 3278, or e-mail administration@sfe.org.uk)

Society of Indexers workshops

The Society of Indexers runs workshops for beginners and more experienced indexers in various cities in the UK. (Details and downloadable booking forms can be found on the web site at www.indexers.org.uk; e-mail admin@indexers.org.uk)

Tim Albert Training

Courses on writing, science writing and setting up publications: see www.timalbert.co.uk/editors.htm for dates etc. (Contact: Tim Albert Training, Paper Mews Court, 284 High Street, Dorking, RH4 1QT, UK; tel. +44 (0)1306-877993, fax +44 (0)1306-877929, e-mail tatraining@compuserve.com)

University of Chicago courses

(Contact: Graham School of General Studies, 5835 S. Kimbark Avenue, Chicago, IL 60637-1608, USA; fax: +1 73-702 6814; web: www.grahamschool.uchicago.edu)

University of Oxford, Dept for Continuing Education

Courses on effective writing for biomedical professionals and on presenting in biomedicine, science and technology. (Contact: Gaye Walker, CPD Centre, Department for Continuing Education, University of Oxford, Suite 5 Littlegate House, 16/17 St Ebbs Street, Oxford OX1 1PT, UK; tel. +44 (0)1865-286953, fax +44 (0)1865-286934, e-mail gaye.walker@continuing-education.ox.ac.uk, web www.conted.ox.ac.uk/cpd/personaldev.)

BELS

Board of Editors in the Life Sciences (BELS) examination schedule

12 March 2005, Boston, MA
9 April 2005, University of California San Francisco (Asilomar meeting)
21 May 2005, Atlanta, Georgia (CSE)
28 September 2005, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (AMWA)
22 October, 2005, Washington, DC
20 May 2006, Miami, FL (CSE)
25 October 2006, Albuquerque, NM (AMWA)
10 October 2007, Atlanta, GA (AMWA)
Register three weeks before examination date. See www.bels.org for an application form, or contact Leslie Neistadt (neistadt@hughston.com, fax: +1 706 576 3348; Hughston Sports Medicine Foundation, Inc, 6262 Veterans Parkway, Columbus, GA 31909, USA).

The Editor's Bookshelf

The bookshelf is compiled by Jane Moody, 12A Salisbury Road, Bromley, BR2 9PU, UK; e-mail jmoody@rcog.org.uk with EASE in the subject line (e-mails that are not easily identifiable are likely to be deleted unread). Please send Jane details of articles or books of interest to editors.

Contributions in European languages other than English are welcome. Entries are arranged by topic under each heading. Suggestions for additional coverage would be welcome.

We regret that photocopies of the material referred to in these entries cannot be supplied.

Thanks to everyone who has contributed to this issue. We particularly appreciate any non-medical references.

SCIENCE

Sarachik M. 2004. **Navigating challenges in a rapidly changing world.** APS News August/September:8.

PUBLISHING

Pinfield S. 2004. **What do universities want from publishing?** Learned Publishing October;17(4):305–311. Universities want publishing to support and further their research and teaching activities. They are interested in a complex range of issues, including impact, affordability, quality and access, from a variety of perspectives. In a rapidly changing publishing environment, publishers need to work innovatively with new technologies and new business models in order to make sure they are delivering what their customers want.

POLITICS OF PUBLISHING

Nizami L, Krasnopolsky, VA, Ibison M. 2004. **Publish-or-perish perspectives: dividing co-authors, valuing referees, taming expectations.** Physics Today 57(9):11–13.

Three separate letters commenting on "opinion" article by Mohamed Gad-el-Hak (ibid. 57(3):61–62) about the problems created by the increase in number of publications and of unedited books caused by the pressures to publish, with reply by Gad-el-Hak.

Rix T. 2004. **Crisis? What crisis? The university presses.** Learned Publishing October;17(4):259–260. University presses have suffered over the last 10 years but have also shown

initiative and shown that they have a socially important future.

Rowlands I, Nicholas D, Huntingdon P. 2004. **Scholarly communication in the digital environment: what do authors want?** Learned Publishing October;17(4):261–273.

This article reports on a large-scale international survey of authors' perception and experience of the journals system. It explores the factors that inform authors' decisions on where to publish and which groups of readers they perceive to be most important and looks at the values that underlie authors' attitudes towards copyright and emerging business models. It concludes that many aspects of author behaviour are highly conservative and that a significant shift towards open access is, in the short term, highly unlikely.

Wang S, Wang H. 2004. **Challenges and strategies for Chinese university journals.** Learned Publishing October;17(4):326–330.

Both the shift from a planned to a market economy system and the advent of the information era pose great challenges to Chinese university journals. The strategy of the Chinese government is to improve the system of university journals by encouraging mergers and partnerships, with the aim of reducing the number of titles while improving their overall quality. The specific case of a geoscience journal is presented.

ECONOMICS AND FUNDING

Worlock K. 2004. **Scoping the STM publishing market.** Learned Publishing October;17(4):291–298. Analysis of the STM publishing market.

PRACTICE OF PUBLISHING

Rajgopal GNJ, Bavdekar SB, Mehta S, Salvi VS, Goel A. 2004. **Fifty years of Journal of Postgraduate Medicine: a journey in time.** Journal of Postgraduate Medicine 50(3):164–166. Review of the development of the journal over 50 years.

Models of publishing

Anderson KR. 2004. **Comparing print and online readership: matching perception to reality across media.** Learned Publishing October;17(4):313–315.

This article outlines techniques used at the *New England Journal of Medicine* to compare the print and online readerships. Findings include: print

dominates online for readership; online-only publishing generates a fraction of the readership created by joint print–online publishing practice; review articles are most often used online; the "free" status of articles does not increase the likelihood that they will be used.

Clery D. 2004. **Mixed week for open access in the UK.** Science 12 November;306:1115.

US take on the UK government's response to the Science and Technology Committee.

House of Commons Science and Technology Committee. 2004.

Responses to the Committee's Tenth Report, session 2003–04, Scientific publications: free for all? Fourteenth Report of Session 2003–04. HC1200. London: The Stationery Office. ISBN 0-215-02019-7.

Vigorous defence of the Committee's position in response to the Government response to the committee report.

Hühn V, Huter M. 2004. **The Red Jacket UTB: a model for co-operative textbook publishing.** Learned Publishing October;17(4):316–318. UTB is a joint paperback imprint of a number of medium-sized German publishers. Its working is described, together with its financial arrangements.

Jackson P. 2004. **IEE professional magazines and networks.** Learned Publishing October;17(4):281–289. The Institution of Electrical Engineers (IEE) has changed its approach to member publications over a two-year period, with an increased focus on understanding the needs of its broad membership and structuring its portfolio of magazines and web sites to meet members' needs and complement the organization's research publications. The process of market research and product development is outlined in this article and the resulting combination of online and print products is described.

Sosteric M. 2004. **The International Consortium for the Advancement of Academic Publication — an idea whose time has come (finally!).** Learned Publishing October;17(4):319–325.

The Canadian ICAAP initiative provides a unique low-cost, not-for-profit, web-based publication alternative for those seeking to move outside the commercial mainstream of scholarly publication.

Peer review

Charlton BG. 2004. **Conflicts of interest in medical science: peer usage, peer review and 'CoI consultancy'**. *Medical Hypotheses* 63(2):181–186.

The perception has grown that conflicts of interest are having a detrimental effect on medical science as it influences health policy and clinical practice, leading medical journals to enforce self-declaration of potential biases in the attempt to counteract or compensate for the problem. Conflict of interest (CoI) declarations have traditionally been considered inappropriate in pure science since its evaluation systems themselves constitute a mechanism for eliminating the effect of individual biases. Since peer review does not adequately filter out conflicts of interest in applied medical science, there is a need for the evolution of specialist post-publication institutional mechanisms. The suggested solution is to encourage the establishment of independent "CoI consultancy" services, whose role would be to evaluate conflicts of interest and other biases in published applied medical science before their implementation. Such services would be paid for by the groups who intend to implement applied medical research.

ETHICAL ISSUES

[Editorial] 2004. **Conflicts of interests and investments**. *CMAJ* 23 November;171(11):1313.

Editorial outlining the journal's new policy on acceptance of articles. Commentaries and narrative reviews or other similar articles, whether commissioned or spontaneously submitted, will not be accepted for consideration for publication if any author has any financial investments, or receives royalties or similar payments, that in total over the past year have exceeded US\$10,000 per company; or holds a patent in a company that markets a product (or a competitor's product) mentioned in the article. Nor will it accept for publication papers by authors who are employed by such companies, who have a contractual relationship of any type with such companies, or who are named officers or board members of said companies.

Kirby K, Houle FA. 2004. **Ethics and the welfare of the physics profession**. *Physics Today* 57(11): 42–46. A survey by a task force set up to look at the state of ethics education in physics reveals that younger

physicists have experience of many types of ethics violations and in particular about unethical treatment of subordinates. Also discusses problems with co-authorship.

Leys WAR. 2004. **The scientist's code of ethics**. *Physics Today* 57(11):55–59. Reprint from *Physics Today* of March 1952:10–15 of an article discussing the ethical and moral problems facing physicists concerning the use of their work.

Lim B, Schmidt K, White A, Ernst E. 2004. **Reporting of ethical standards: differences between complementary and orthodox medicine journals?** *Wiener klinische Wochenschrift* July 31;116(14):500–503.

This study reviewed the literature to assess whether there are differences in the reporting of ethical aspects of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) and mainstream medical research. Journals with a high impact factor were more likely to report on ethical standards than other journals on conflicts of interest and sponsorship. However, they were less likely to report a reference to ethical guidelines. Articles from CAM journals had more strict reporting requirements than mainstream medicine journals with comparable impact factors.

Whitbeck C. 2004. **Trust and the future of research**. *Physics Today* 57(11):48–53. Discusses situations which can lead to misconduct and suggests methods for addressing these problems.

Authorship

Weeks WB, Wallace AE, Kimberly BC. 2004. **Changes in authorship patterns in prestigious US medical journals**. *Social Science and Medicine* November;59(9):1949–1954.

To improve identification of contributors to manuscripts, editors of medical journals have developed authorship responsibility criteria. Some have specified an acceptable number of authors per manuscript. A retrospective cohort design was used to calculate the average number of authors per manuscript and the prevalence of group and corporate authorship between 1980 and 2000 for original, scientific, non-serial articles published in four prestigious medical journals. The number of authors per article increased dramatically over time in each journal.

Copyright and licensing

Langlois M, Heller RF, Edwards R, Lyratzopoulos G, Sandars J. 2004. **Restrictions impeding web-based courses: a survey of publishers'**

variation in authorising access to high quality on-line literature. *BMC Medical Education* 4:7. doi: 10.1186/1472-6920-4-7.

Web-based delivery of educational programmes is becoming increasingly popular and is expected to expand, especially in medicine. The successful implementation of these programmes is reliant on their ability to provide access to web-based materials, including high quality published work. Publishers' responses to requests to access health literature in the context of developing an electronic master's degree course are described.

Misconduct and fraud

Dalton R. 2004. **Quarrel over book leads to call for misconduct inquiry**. *Nature* 21 October;431:889.

A political scientist and former journal editor has asked the US National Science Foundation to set up an inquiry to determine whether scientific misconduct was involved in the writing of a psychological history book.

Godlee F. 2004. **Dealing with editorial misconduct**. *BMJ* 4 December;329:1301–1302.

The two professions most closely allied to medical journal editing, medicine and the press, have well-established systems for self-regulation. But self-regulation is a privilege, not a right. It brings with it responsibilities to establish and enforce standards of good practice. The new COPE code of conduct for editors is a first step.

EDITORIAL PROCESS

Pierson DJ. 2004. **The top 10 reasons why manuscripts are not accepted for publication**. *Respiratory Care* October;49(10):1246–1252.

Discusses why many research projects that have been presented in abstract form are never published as full articles. Lists 10 reasons why manuscripts are not accepted for publication in *Respiratory Care*. Common deficiencies in the methods, results and discussion sections prevent initial acceptance for publication but are potentially amenable to correction. More serious are fundamental defects in study design, which, although correctable at the inception of a project, often doom the paper once the study has been completed.

LANGUAGE AND WRITING

Durbin CG Jr. 2004. **Effective use of tables and figures in abstracts, presentations, and papers**. *Respiratory Care* October;49(10):

1233–1237.

In some situations, tables, graphs, and figures can present certain types of information more clearly and in less space than the same information would require in sentence form. This article gives guidance on the preparation and layout of tables and graphs.

Sorinola O, Olufowobi O, Coomarasamy A, Khan KS. 2004. **Instructions to authors for case reporting are limited: A review of a core journal list.** BMC Medical Education 4:4. doi: 10.1186/1472-6920-4-4.

Case reports are frequently published in the health-care literature but advice on preparing such reports in "instructions to authors" pages of journals is limited. The advice available to authors of case reports from "instructions to authors" pages of a core collection of 249 journals was surveyed. Data were extracted on items of style and content of case

reports, using a piloted data extraction form. Of the journals reviewed, "instructions to authors" pages provided limited and varied information for preparing a case report. There is a need for consensus, and more consistent guidance for authors of case reports.

INFORMATION

Jasco P. 2004. **Google Scholar beta.** Peter's Digital Reference Shelf. December:4–14. www.galegroup.com/free_resources/reference/peter/dec.htm.

"One of the most comprehensive and authoritative reactions [to the launch of Google Scholar] to have appeared so far." (Quote from Chris Beckett, Director of Scholarly Information Strategies Ltd.)

John Cox Associates Ltd. 2004. **Aggregators and the primary journal: an ALPSP report on the impact of aggregated databases on**

primary journals in the academic library market and a review of publisher practice. London: Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers. ISBN 0-907341-28-4.

An overview of the academic library market for aggregated full-text scholarly journal information databases and an assessment of the current role such databases play in the scholarly journal information market.

Rapple C. 2004. **After the goldrush — the golden age of reference linking.** Learned Publishing October;17(4): 299–304.

Reference linking is emerging as a key differentiator in the evaluation of online content. This article provides an overview of the evolution of reference linking technology, reviews the current situation and suggests some requirements for continued developments and their benefits.

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Instructions to authors contributing to *European Science Editing*

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Articles should be submitted to John Glen, 166 Sellywood Road, Birmingham B30 1UX, UK; e-mail john_glen@jgla.demon.co.uk, and must be in .txt format, **NOT** the usual .doc format.

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Viewpoints represent the opinions or personal experiences of the author rather than research (send to tom_van_loon@eresmas.com). Viewpoints should include an informative abstract.

The **Editing around the world** series focuses on specific aspects of editing in a particular country. Suggestions for contributions should be sent to Edward Towpik (redakcja@coi.waw.pl).

Correspondence is welcomed on items that have appeared in recent issues of the bulletin and matters related to the editing and management of publications (send to maeve.oc@blueyonder.co.uk).

From the literature is prepared by Liz Wager (liz@sideview.demon.co.uk), who will be glad to receive suggestions for suitable subjects.

News from countries/learned societies is in the planning stage, under the editorship of Jane Sykes (j.sykes@wxs.nl).

Reports of meetings are coordinated by Stuart Handysides (stuart_handysides@hotmail.com) and should be planned before the meeting. All proposals for such reports are welcome.

The **EASE-Forum Digest** is compiled by Elise Langdon-Neuner (langdoe@baxter.com). The objective is to summarize the discussions of recent months. The compiler may ask initiators of some discussions to provide a concise summary or rewrite their contributions for other sections of *European Science Editing*.

Books for review should be sent to Marie-Louise Desbarats-Schönbaum (Peelkenschweg 4, 5428

NM Venhorst, Netherlands), who normally commissions reviews and coordinates the review process. Reviewers should e-mail their reviews to her at desbarats@planet.nl.

The **News Notes** section is compiled by Margaret Cooter (mcooter@bmj.com), who will be glad to receive short news items related to editing, publishing and managing journals, including items from non-English-speaking countries.

Forthcoming meetings and courses: information for inclusion in this list should be sent to maeve.oc@blueyonder.co.uk.

The **Editor's Bookshelf** is compiled by Jane Moody and details of suitable articles or books should be sent to her (jmoody@rcog.org.uk). Details of publications in European languages other than English are welcome.

The **Editors' WebWatch** is prepared by Moira Vekony, who welcomes news of sites and trends applicable to editing (MoiraVekony@aol.com).

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Adam A, Eve Z. 1997. Eating apples can be dangerous. *Journal of Food Information* 8(1):51–59. [www.jfi.org.il/volume8\(1\)/Adam/apple.pdf](http://www.jfi.org.il/volume8(1)/Adam/apple.pdf). (Accessed 2005 January 1).

Deadlines and proofs

Deadline dates for contributions other than articles, review articles and viewpoints are December 15, March 15, June 15 and September 15, for the February, May, August and November issues, respectively. Articles, review articles and viewpoints should be

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- Send your report to Stuart Handysides (stuart_handysides@hotmail.com).

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