European Science Editing

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European Association of Science Editors

From the editors' desks

Ole Harlem

We heard with sadness that Ole Harlem had died in early March. Ole was a former Vice-President and an honorary member of EASE. An obituary appears in this issue.

Annual General Meeting, Paris

Council was pleased to be able to welcome the few members prepared to spend an hour or so attending the second Annual General Meeting of EASE, and afterwards to having a glass of wine with members of Council and the editorial board. The minutes of this AGM are enclosed with this issue, together with a brief statement of accounts. The nominations for Council and officers were all confirmed by postal and proxy votes, by a large majority; details in the enclosed minutes.

The EASE Forum @Helsinki

The transfer to the new Forum site in Helsinki has gone smoothly, but some members are worried by the amount of spam that has appeared. The web master in Helsinki is working on this and hopes the controls now in place will prevent further problems.

The editorial board

If you have ever considered working on the editorial board of *European Science Editing* now is the time to speak up. Over the next few months more formal rules for joining the board, and terms of membership, will be drawn up. Before that happens we need potential new members to volunteer, specifically someone to provide regular updates as web master of the Association's web site at www.ease.org.uk. The web site is under review and professional help will be sought to set up a slightly modified version. We will also need someone to write up the Forum digest, a very popular part of the journal, and someone to maintain the indispensable Editors' Bookshelf. Write, fax or e-mail to Jenny Gretton, with a brief CV and a note of which area of the journal you would like to work on. Membership of the Board is unpaid, but expenses for attending meetings are reimbursed.

Bath plug

Sorry for the awful pun, but it is necessary to plug the Conference in Bath, 8–11 June 2003. ("Plug" in this context means to "promote interest in".) If you have not yet registered, it would help our moderators to plan their sessions if you could register very soon. Speakers and delegates are coming from all parts of the world; come and join them and make our 21st celebration a conference to remember. Do not forget that those who attend the conference will receive the revised handbook with 46 chapters, with a smart binder, as part of their registration. For those who are not able to come to Bath, an order form for the binder is enclosed with this issue.

New e-mail addresses

Tom van Loon is now at tom_van_loon@eresmas.com (postal address as listed below). Marie-Louise Desbarats-Schönbaum has changed her address to desbarats@planet.nl, and Jean Shaw is at jgshaw@supanet.com.

Contributions for the next issue

Contributions for the next issue are invited and should be sent to the appropriate member of the editorial board (see right, and the Instructions to authors on the web at www.ease.org.uk/eseguidelines.html). The deadline for the August issue is **15 June**.

Contributions for *European Science Editing* should be sent to the Chief Editor or the appropriate section editor listed above. See Instructions for authors in this issue and on EASE's Web site (www.ease.org.uk/).

Originally entitled *Earth Science Editing* (1975-1976), *European Science Editing* became *Earth & Life Science Editing* in 1977 and acquired its present name in 1986. The journal is published four times a year (February, May, August and November). It is free to paid-up members of EASE and is available on annual subscription of £50 to libraries and other non-members.

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Editorial

Hidden science and the editor

A large part of science is not published, for reasons that are not well studied. The factors in the decision not to publish information are complex and reflect the behaviour of authors, reviewers, sponsors and editors. Non-publication could affect a large ongoing study as well as a part of a study that is published.

Retractions are also part of this hidden science; they should be more frequent and have better "publicity". We were pleased to see how one retraction was publicized in March [1]. In this retraction, designed to maintain the integrity of the scientific process, the authors say: "The majority of those named as authors of the article did not have an opportunity to review and verify the data and to approve the manuscript. This unfortunate situation came to light when the article was published." In the accompanying editorial, the journal stresses that authors' signatures are important and should not be falsified. "Was the retracted article valid, questionable or fraudulent?" is the reader's question. That is not answered by the retraction. The matter is open to doubt and we can guess that the conclusions of the article were not confirmed by the co-authors, but no such firm position is taken in the retraction. Reasons for a retraction should be made very clear.

Journals publishing negative results play a role in disseminating the hidden science. An announcement for a new journal (*HeartDrug™ Excellence in Cardiovascular Trials*) was promising: "A journal which copes with the challenge of presenting negative results and offers a forum for controversy." The note continued by stating the aim of the journal, which was to improve communication between academy and industry, various experts and statisticians. Statisticians were especially important for this journal, which has clinical trials as its focus. However, you may rightly ask what reporting clinical trials has to do with science editing? The answer is: "a lot". Editors are concerned with matters that are common to all sciences: proper use of statistics, relevance of results to hypothesis, validity of data, and whether the data are fairly evaluated in the context of present knowledge.

Negative results are sometimes published but it has been shown that information on the validity of these studies is insufficient [2]. Analysis of 1038 articles published in 1997–1998 in the leading biomedical journals (the "big five") showed that 234 original articles reported negative results. Only 30% of these articles commented on the statistical power of the findings, and only half of the studies clearly defined a primary outcome. The quality of papers reporting negative data must be improved too. The online *Journal of Negative Results in Biomedicine* should attract a lot of papers. For some reason, there has been reluctance to communicate negative results. When financial interests are at stake, this is perhaps understandable, but it is highly repugnant to the scientists concerned and eventually to the public at large. Negative results have acquired long-overdue respectability and significance.

Correspondence columns in journals are important and must be considered as full publication, not as dummy science. What are the pros and cons of the rejection of letters by journals? Letters are part of the scientific reasoning and allow readers and authors to exchange ideas on previous publications and new topics. Too many journals do not allow space for correspondence, or use odd reasons for rejecting letters.

In this issue of *ESE*, we publish contributions that emphasize "hidden science". What is the effect of time to publication (see page 38) on the non-publication of science? Do authors avoid submitting papers to journals that take too long to publish?

ESE is also pleased to publish the abstract of the opening lecture of the Bath conference, by John Benfield and Christine Feak (page 37). They will discuss the place of NNS (non-native speakers of English) who are reluctant to publish in English. Benfield and Feak have studied NNS publications in the *Annals of Thoracic Surgery* and will present their experience. Are NNS publications often buried in journals with a small circulation, leading to the conclusion that NNSs are part of this hidden science?

Not all science is hidden, as powerful electronic communication technology is capable of circulating information on the advantages of treating erectile dysfunction and similar problems. We receive such junk e-mails every day! "Spam, spam, spam, spam" is the title that Moira Vekony has chosen for the Editors' WebWatch in this issue.

Marie Louise Desbarats-Schonbaum, and
Hervé Maisonneuve

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EASE in Bath: a foretaste

With privilege comes responsibility*

John R. Benfield‡ and Christine B. Feak¶
‡*Department of Surgery, University of California at Los Angeles and Davis* and ¶*The English Language Institute of the University of Michigan, USA; j.benfield@verizon.net*

The language of science, in turn, was Egyptian, Greek, Arabic, Latin, French and German. Now it is English, and authors who are non-native speakers (NNS) contribute more than half of peer-reviewed scientific publications to some of the best peer-reviewed journals. A working knowledge of English has become a requirement for academic advancement in some NNS nations. We believe that the English-as-the-international-language (EIL) burden intimidates some NNS scientists who would like to publish their findings in English, and that it impairs others who achieve this goal. We who enjoy the privilege of being native speakers (NS) have commensurate responsibility to assist NNS colleagues with their publications. What have we done and what should we do?

We began with a detailed analysis of selected editorial reviews of NNS publications during a five-year period in the *Annals of Thoracic Surgery* [1]. It was not a surprise that NNS manuscripts required more revisions than NS papers. We (a scientific peer and a professional applied linguist) focused on a subject in which the peer shared expertise with the authors. We found that most NNS authors struggled hard, particularly with introductions and discussions. NS peer revisions enhanced content and professional revisions of the language improved clarity. A summation of revisions by the peer and the language professional was better than the revisions of either alone. Our findings encouraged the new and current editor to give special recognition to the English as a foreign language (EFL) burden [2], and led to support from Elsevier Science Publishers for language workshops during two successive annual meetings of the Society of Thoracic Surgeons.

We observed that Japanese scientists were consistently the most prolific contributors to our journal (currently nearly 30% of publications). In response to this, and an invitation to speak in Japan about the special EFL problems of Japanese scientists, we sought better to understand the roots of the challenges they face. A highly regarded NS language professional who has been working in Japan for many years told us of the Japanese fixed, rigorous secondary school curriculum that lacks instruction in writing logical paragraphs, and about lack of instruction in reading or writing English in Japanese medical education [3]. More than 30 years of repeated close contact with young Japanese surgeons has given us reason to suspect that the Japanese scientists who are most skilled in English may be those who focus on content rather than those skilled in English grammar. Thus, we believe that traditional English language education may be insufficient to provide EFL scientists with useful communication skills.

We have prepared two workshops for EFL authors during the annual meetings of the Society of Thoracic Surgeons. In 2002 the three-part curriculum during successive days focused on ways to transmit a flow of ideas in the introduction, discussion and abstracts of a research article. Lung cancer was the subject matter. In 2003 the subject matter includes cardiac surgery, and the three-part curriculum includes correspondence with the editor. The 2002 workshops were over-subscribed. During a busy three-day meeting, 74% of participants attended all three parts of the workshop — a 6:45 a.m. breakfast, and two lunches. Participants ranked the quality of the material on a scale of 1 to 5 and explained any grade less than the two highest. Among written evaluations from 87% of the attendees, 89% gave the highest or next to highest grade and 91% wanted more workshops. Attendees suggested more workshops, more time, more topics, more homework, a list of frequent "mistakes" and workshops for reviewers.

What should we do?

(1) Work within the structure of existing professional societies and their publications,
(2) Form alliances between NS peers and language professionals,
(3) Enlist the support of editors,
(4) Enlist the support of publishers,
(5) Conduct regular workshops,
(6) Develop a core of NS peers interested in working with NNS colleagues in their struggle with the English language burden.

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*Summary version of keynote presentation due to be made on 8 June 2003 at the EASE conference in Bath.

Article

Time to publication of articles and control of information volume in medical journals

LIU Xue-Li
Periodicals Publishing House of Xinxiang Medical College, Xinxiang 453003, Henan Province, China; lxl@xxmc.edu.cn

Abstract
Time to publication of articles in 58 Chinese medical journals and 32 English medical journals was analysed. Overall, time to publication of Chinese and English journals differed significantly (mean 8.6 [SD 4.6] months vs 9.4 [3.7] months; *P*<0.001). Two thirds of articles were published within between 5 and 13 months. If time to publication is more than 13 months, the information volume (number of pages per issue or number of issues per year) should be increased; if it is less than 5 months, the information volume should be decreased.
Liu X-L. 2003. Time to publication of articles and control of information volume in medical journals. European Science Editing 29(2):38–39.

The interval from submission of a manuscript to its publication has been called the publication lag of an article [1, 2], which is an important index to evaluate the timeliness of a journal. Most studies of time to publication have been at the level of statistical analysis in specialized periodicals, and its practical significance has been overlooked. At the same time, the information volume (the number of pages per issue and the number of issues per year) of most medical journals was defined without a scientific and quantitative index. I investigated the time to publication of Chinese and English medical journals in order to see how this measure could be used to control the information volume of medical journals.

Methods

The two most recent issues of 90 medical journals in the library of Xinxiang Medical College were statistically analysed. There were 58 Chinese journals (5% of 1100 held in the library) and 32 English journals (9% of 364 held). The 54 (93%) Chinese journals that gave the dates that articles were received in the office contained 1341 articles and the 24 (75%) of English journals that gave received date contained 573 articles. I determined the time to publication of each article and the range of times to publication in Chinese and English journals.

Results

Table 1 shows the characteristics of the journals. The publication cycle of Chinese journals was longer than that of English journals: 62% of Chinese journals were quarterly or bimonthly, compared with 16% of English journals, but this was not statistically significant. Significantly more Chinese journals than English journals gave the date each article was received (75% vs 93%; *P*<0.025).

Table 1. Characteristics of medical journals sampled

	No (%) of Chinese journals (n=58)	*No (%) of English journals (n=32)*
Publication cycle		
Quarterly	6 (10)	2 (6)
Bimonthly	30 (52)	3 (9)
Monthly	20 (35)	23 (72)
Biweekly	2 (4)	0
Weekly	0	4 (13)
Received date given	54 (93)	24 (75)

* χ^2=5.85, *P*<0.025 for comparison of Chinese and English journals.

The time to publication ranged from 10 days to 27 months in Chinese journals and 1 to 28 months in English journals. In Chinese and English journals combined, the mean time from receipt of the manuscript was 8.9 months (SD 4.0 months). For English journals the standard deviation was 3.7 months, com-

Table 2. Time to publication of articles in medical journals

	Chinese articles (n=1341)	*English articles (n=573)*	*Significance*
Range of time to publication	10 days to 27 months	1 month to 28 months	
Mean (SD) time to publication	8.6 (4.6)	9.4 (3.7)	*t*=3.45, *P*<0.001
Quarterly	7.9 (5.0)	---	
Bimonthly	9.1 (5.0)	---	*t*=1.929, *P*>0.05+
Monthly	8.1 (3.9)*	---	
No (%) of articles with time to publication >12.9 months	222 (16.6)	86 (15.0)	*U*=0.876, *P*>0.05¶

* *F*=7.47, *P*<0.01 for comparisons among types of journal.
+Compared with English articles.
¶Mantel-Hanzel *U* test.

pared with 3.9 months for Chinese bimonthly journals, 5.0 for Chinese monthly journals, and 5.0 for Chinese quarterly journals (Table 2). Time to publication differed significantly among journals with different publication cycles (F=7.47, P<0.01).

Discussion

There was no significant difference between Chinese and English journals when the publication cycle was longer than 12.9 months (6 journals vs 4 journals). Therefore, the publication cycle of current Chinese medical journals is appropriate. There is no need to shorten the publication cycle of Chinese journals in general. Their time to publication is comparable with English journals.

Time to publication differed significantly among journals with different publication cycles, but articles in journals with longer publication cycles did not necessarily have longer times to publication. The time to publication in Chinese journals was significantly shorter than that in English journals.

The main purpose of investigating time to publication is to control the information volume of periodicals. The time to publication can be regulated by regulating the information volume of a journal — that is, increasing or decreasing the number of pages, and having more or fewer issues per year. Just over two-thirds of articles were published within an interval of 5 to 13 months (mean 8.9 [SD 4.0] months). Thus, if time to publication is longer than 13 months, the journal should be larger or appear more frequently; if it is less than 5 months, information volume should be reduced. If time to publication is greatly outside this range, changing the publication cycle should be considered.

The standard deviation of the time to publication can be used to evaluate the stability of the measure: a smaller standard deviation indicates a more stable time to publication. A major reason for instability in time to publication is a lack of contributions; editorial management of articles is another factor. Chinese journals had a shorter time to publication but a larger standard deviation than English journals. This indicates a fluctuation in flow of articles, which could be improved by obtaining more manuscripts and by better management in editorial offices.

Another factor, the proportion of articles accepted compared with the proportion rejected, must be considered before we decide to increase or decrease the information volume (number of pages or number of issues) of a journal. It is not appropriate to increase the information volume if the time to publication is longer because the acceptance rate is lower, or to decrease information volume if the time to publication is shorter because of a higher acceptance rate.

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Reports of meetings

1st international conference on scientific electronic publishing in developing countries (BIREME/OPS/OMS)

30 September–2 October 2002; Valparaíso, Chile

This conference focused on some of the issues, problems and progress in electronic publishing of interest to editors and publishers in the developing world. Some highlights from the press releases about the meeting are presented here.

In his opening lecture Abel Packer (packerab@bireme.ops-oms.org; BIREME [Latin American and Caribbean Center on Health Sciences Information]), stated that the conference "must refresh development in global scientific communication, especially for developing countries"; its aims should be to magnify both regional and local visibility and the scientific presence of periodicals.

SciELO

Later Packer, as coordinator of its design, expanded on SciELO (Scientific Electronic Library Online; www.scielo.br). Its objectives are to fortify scientific communication, to disseminate those journals from developing countries that are of medium and high quality, to measure the use and impact of these journals, and to increase the visibility, accessibility and credibility of science in the developing countries.

SciELO is proof that it is possible to sustain scientific publications in electronic format only and the methodology and the technology of the system are both the main supports and the constant challenges of this project.

For the future, the objective is to update and optimize the quality control of SciELO, increasing the use and the exchange of information on peer review and other matters.

Challenges

Sir Roger Elliot (r.elliot1@physics.oxford.ac.uk), chairman of ICSU Press, recalled that 30 years ago the business of printing scientific material started to contract, so the volume of information waiting to be published grew enormously, surpassing the capacity of existing periodicals. At the same time, the capital in hand to invest in new periodicals suffered gradual reductions. "Electronic publication saved us", affirms Sir Roger. The question he posed to the participants was how to make the advantages of electronic scientific publication available to the developing countries. How can these countries contribute more effectively to the international scientific community?

Rather than presenting ready answers, the ICSU Press chairman preferred to describe the main challenges that currently exist in developed countries which, according to him, are greatly magnified in the economic, political and social panorama of the developing countries:

(1) Infrastructure: scientific electronic publications and the internet depend on the telephone system, net communication, available equipment and software in each region.
(2) Supportability: it is clear that scientific electronic publications cost less to produce than print vehicles. This, according to Elliot, is a strong argument for stimulating the distribution of scientific periodicals and magazines on the internet.
(3) Copyright: scientific authors must be made aware that the copyright of a work belongs to the author in the first instance.

In response to Elliot's presentation four speakers discussed the solutions that had been found for the challenges that occur in their regions.

Chile

Maria Cristina Lazo of the Comisión Nacional de Investigación Científica y Tecnológica (CONICYT) explained that the agency's main challenge is to give a positive reply to the request of the President of Chile to have an efficient entity in the politics of science communication and technology.

It is the responsibility of CONICYT to ensure that Chilean scientists and researchers are in contact with the world, overcoming their physical isolation. To achieve this, centres of excellence in sciences as diverse as mathematics, oceanography, astrophysics and molecular biology have been created. CONICYT intends to develop local centres of communication, giving priority to university and government centres of inquiry and to projects that offer regional results. "All research efforts become poor without efficient services of diffusion; therefore information contribution and the exchange of data are critical" declared Lazo.

Mexico

Ana Maria Cetto (ana@fenix.ifisicacu.unam.mx; Institute of Physics of the Universidad Autónoma de Mexico), pointed out that Latin America presents many contrasts. Some countries develop more quickly than others and there are localities without internet access. Obviously, the impact of e-publications is important — for the publishers of scientific magazines and librarians the electronic process brings new challenges. They need to deal with the volatility of the web: what is standard today may not be standard tomorrow. It is necessary to follow the flow of the new features that the internet offers and, at the same time, standardize methodologies (for virtual libraries, for example) with simple and attractive interfaces. Ana Maria presented data drawn from the Latindex [see below] on the total numbers of full text scientific electronic magazines available in Latin America, Spain and Portugal (727 publications). The subject with the most titles is medicine and public health (266). In

terms of free text Spain is in first place with 194 publications, followed by Brazil (172), Mexico (132), Chile (43), Colombia (43), Cuba (41), Argentina (29), Venezuela (16), Peru (11) and Costa Rica (8).

Asia

Subbiah Arunachalam (arun@mssrf.res.in; M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation) stated that it is not possible to consider all of the Eastern Asian countries as one, therefore the investment in technology and the development of scientific electronic publishing is different for each country. He presented data showing that a decline in Indian scientific production was reflected immediately in the number of publications. In comparison with developed countries, South Asia has a weak contribution to scientific literature. China is an exception and has been a model of development. "With focus it can happen," concluded Arunachalam. The World Wide Web has great potential for organizing free access to scientific magazines. Arunachalam affirmed that the Asian countries must be at the forefront of this movement. The first step is to foment the conscience of the scientists, librarians and decision makers about the necessity of communication.

Russia

Vitaly Nechtailenko (vitaly@wdcb.ru; Geophysicist Center, Russian Academy of Sciences) said that just before its economic and political transformation the Soviet Union had made the first steps towards the development of an "internet" communication. "The level of our scientists and educators was one of the highest in the world. The universities had a network between national academies of science and research institutes. The libraries were connected with a very efficient system of exchange of information. It all generated an important indexation and references program . . . the resources for the sustenance of these programs were all governmental ones", said Nechtailenko.

The Russian crisis then led to a drastic reduction in governmental subsidies. When reorganization was planned, the region involved occidental organizations in the interchange of information. The first project based on the internet had the cooperation of agencies such as NASA, UNESCO and the British Council. Currently, the scientific publications scene in Russia and the countries of the Eastern Europe falls into three categories.

(1) *Publishers*: commercial (those that publish mainly scientific work; formed by joint ventures between North American companies and Russian research institutes); and independent societies (they own about 94 periodicals in English and 100 in Russian).
(2) *Libraries*: the best category in terms of cooperation. The majority offer free access to texts. Some are associated with scientific non-governmental organizations and societies. The electronic libraries are fully functioning and one of them — VINITI (www.viniti.ru) — has approximately 15 million articles available.
(3) Media: the countries of Eastern Europe depend on large communication groups that disseminate scientific information. The Russian Backbone Network (RBnet; www.ripn.net:8082/ rbnet/) was created to take Russian production to the centres of occidental scientific communities. In the coming years the region intends to continue investing in programmes such as the internet II (to support the traditional web as a meta-network for general use), and in developing technical support for a new generation of net users, with high productivity and a non-commercial orientation. There is also a programme for integrating the Russian academy systems, and a presidential programme for developing net communication and activities for educational use.

Mexican index

Jose Octavio Alonso Gamboa (oalonso@servidor.unam.mx; Latin American Bibliography Department, Universidad Autónoma de Mexico) described the Latindex — a system of information for research journals published in Latin America, the Caribbean, Spain and Portugal (www.latindex.unam.mx). The program has developed two databases: the Directory is an inventory that covers all journals and the Catalogue is a publication that measures up to international publishing standards. In total Latindex covers 11 562 registered headings from some 29 countries (as of 2002). Brazil accounts for 2885 (25%) of these.

In the development of the Mexican system, cooperation between the two databases has been essential. Through their bibliographical character, both databases offer the user links to electronic publication projects in scientific journals in the Latin American region. "One of our challenges is the standardization of the data," said Gamboa. This problem occurs even though the Latindex follows standard criteria in four areas: basic features, journal design, politics and publishing management, and content (e.g. original papers).

The main objective for the future is to transform the Latindex into an index of electronic research. It will contain electronic publication collections such as the Hemeroteca Nacional Universitária (www.icfes.gov.co), Hispaniola Online (www.pucmm.edu.do/hispaniola/), SciELO (www.scielo.br), and Hispania Nova (hispanianova.rediris.es).

African experience

Roger Stringer (roger@inasp.info; International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications), described two projects for the support of scientific communication in Africa. One of these is African Journals Online (AJOL; www.inasp.info/ajol) which offers its users access to tables of contents, summaries of African scientific publications and a delivery service for internet documents. Currently, the AJOL has 3000 users, with a growth rate of 100 users per month.

Chilean initiative

The *Electronic Journal of Biotechnology* (www.ejb.org) is a successful Chilean scientific publication initiative that was developed to meet ISI standards. It is totally free, offers peer review and has users from all over the

world (35% North American, 31% Latin American, 31% European, 3% Asian). The EJB receives and publishes papers from all regions (32% of the submissions are from Latin America). They have 43 000 visits per month and more than 1.3 million monthly hits. To reach world regions without internet access, the EJB team edits a CD-ROM for each new issue that includes all the previous issues. It is distributed to the poorest countries by UNESCO, with the Acrobat Reader program.

A challenge turned into a win

Cuba has overcome economic difficulties and the North American embargo and kept its scientists up to date with the best worldwide scientific publications. In the opinion of Guillermo Padrón (guipad@infomed.sld.cu; Editorial Ciencias Medicas — Infomed) this was possible only because of unconditional government support and the decision to value the human component in all public health projects.

Infomed was born in the 1990s, during the Cuban crisis, with the clear objective of communicating information about the country's scientific production. "It developed under the worst possible economic conditions", declared Padrón. There were no resources for the acquisition of high technology. "But we had the total support of our Ministry of Public Health that inspired the confidence of scientific support organizations around the world." The tools of the Infomed project include a virtual library, virtual universities, telemedicine, and a network for monitoring health and sustainable management.

Not all of these tools are active; however, Infomed places all of its data in an archive that can be accessed free of charge by its users. Besides this, Cuban health organizations are constructing databases to be placed in Infomed for use by educators and in workshops and refresher courses all over the country. "We achieve this with government support, mobilization of resources, strategy, organization and person valuation instead of technology. Bad economic scenery does not need to be a barrier, but an incentive," finished Padrón.

In the coming years, Infomed (www.infomed.org) will invest in establishing a virtual library and university and will extend the telemedicine services.

Patricia Camargo
BIREME/OPAS/OMS
Collated and edited by
Moira Vekony
DunaScripts@editors.ca

Consultative meeting and workshop for strengthening African medical journals

UNDP/World Bank/Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases (TDR)
14–16 October 2002; Geneva, Switzerland

A group of African medical editors has set up a forum to support and strengthen medical journals in Africa. The forum, known as FAME, will be chaired by Dr James Tumwine of Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda, who is editor of the journal *African Health Sciences*. FAME was set up at a meeting in Geneva convened by the World Health Organization to discuss how information published in African journals can be disseminated more widely.

Currently, most of the medical literature published in Africa is not widely "visible". Difficulties in journal production, coupled with huge distribution problems, mean that dissemination within individual countries is poor and across the continent as a whole is even worse. In addition, the African Index Medicus, an online resource for African health research, has all but collapsed.

Globally, access to African journals is limited by the fact that few are indexed in Medline, although access is possible to some via African Journals On Line (www.inasp.info/ajol/) and on CD-ROMs via Extra-MED.

Better information exchange between developing countries, and between developing and developed countries, is widely seen as crucial for health development. Free access to the international (and predominantly Northern, developed world) medical literature in the world's poorest countries has been dramatically opened up, most notably by the HINARI initiative (*BMJ* 2001;323;65), which went live in January 2002. Under this, a consortium of medical journals, including the *BMJ*, agreed to allow free access to their literature to developing countries.

What is missing, however, is good information exchange between less developed countries ("South–South" exchange) and good exchange between them and developed countries ("South–North").

Improving access to locally relevant information was a priority, said Dr Daniel Ncayiyana, editor of the *South African Medical Journal*. "Much of the information in the international journals is not useful for African healthcare workers", he told the meeting.

Several other speakers agreed. Local and regional African journals, it was suggested, could improve access to relevant material by attracting and disseminating the results of health services research, rather than trying to compete with other journals to publish original biomedical research. As internet access across Africa increases, it offers the possibility of opening up access to local literature by putting more journals online.

A recent questionnaire study of 109 African journals by Edith Certain, of the WHO's research and training in tropical disease programme, found that 29 of the 66 journals that responded have a web site.

But developing desktop publishing skills and improving the production and content of journals is not easy with poor infrastructure. Several African editors underlined the difficulties of maintaining regular publication, in print or online, with inadequate finan-

cial support and appropriate managerial, marketing, technological, and editorial skills.

A key aim of the new forum will be to link up editors across Africa and define their needs for support and training in all aspects of medical publishing.

Several international organizations are poised to offer help. Pledges of support for the forum were made at the meeting by the WHO, the World Association of Medical Editors, the Council of Science Editors, the International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications, the Fogarty International Centre, SciELO (Scientific Electronic Library Online), BiomedCentral, *JAMA*, and the *BMJ*.

Further information is available by emailing Edith Certain (certaine@who.int), information officer at the WHO's special programme for research and training in tropical diseases.

Tessa Richards
trichards@bmj.com

Reprinted from Richards T. 2002. Medical editors pledge support for African journals. *BMJ* 325:922 (26 October).

Open access to scientific and technical information: state of the art and future trends

23–24 January 2003; Paris, France

The following definition of "open access" (from Budapest Open Archive Initiative (BOAI), www.soros.org/openaccess/) focuses the philosophy of the conference: "By 'open access' to this literature, we mean its free availability on the public internet, permitting any users to read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of these articles, crawl them for indexing, pass them as data to software, or use them for any other lawful purpose, without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. The only constraint on reproduction and distribution, and the only role for copyright in this domain, should be to give authors control over the integrity of their work and the right to be properly acknowledged and cited."

The conference was held in the headquarters of the Ministère de la Recherche in Paris. Over 200 people attended from different European countries, and some came from North Africa and the USA. The conference comprised eight plenary sessions in which the speakers' contributions were followed by discussion. The first day's sessions covered issues related to the meaning of open access, the state of the art, and its economic and legal implications.

After a warm and enthusiastic welcome and introduction by the organizers, Paul Uhlir (National Academy of Sciences) presented the reasons for putting scientific information into the public domain. Scientific research is mostly supported by taxpayers and transparency and democracy are undermined by restricting citizens' access to and use of the information. Uhlir also spoke about the concept of a "republic of science" in which the economy is based on sharing results and links between researchers.

The next speaker, Jack Franklin (formerly with Elsevier), gave an overview of the development of open access. His comprehensive report is available freely on the World Wide Web (www.inist.fr/openaccess/en/etat_art.php).

The afternoon yielded commercial, financial, and legal issues. Pieter Bolman (Elsevier Science) argued that access has improved over the past seven years and there is no evidence that current players in science communications (authors, readers, librarians, publishers, administrators) are dissatisfied to the extent that an open access revolution is required to fill the need it perceives to exist. Sally Morris (Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers, ALPSP) commented that publishers are in favour of maximizing access to scholarly works because it is good for authors, readers, and journals, but publishing costs money and costs have to be recovered somehow. Therefore moving to open access is attractive but not simple. Andy Powell (UKOLN, University of Bath) clearly exposed "10 things to know about OAI" and how the Open Archives Initiative provides a stable technical framework and technical support to disclose higher research outputs. In the last session of the day, representatives of the commercial publishers Ingenta and Biomed Central concurred that the use of standards and tools that have been developed by the open access community can serve the scientific players by enhancing visibility, accessibility, and dissemination.

The second day began with a report of a project to bring the work of French mathematicians from previous centuries into the public domain. Laurent Guillopé, the director of the project, described the digitalization, conversion, creation of databases, and searching and harvesting tools used to retrieve documents (for more information visit http://archive.numdam.org). Stevan Harnad energetically defended the self-archiving idea and how it maximizes the scientific impact of research. He argued that that the maximization of research impact is in the interest not only of researchers and research progress, but also of their institutions and grant funders, and of tax-paying citizens.

A round-table discussion entitled "Open Access: what does it mean for developing countries?" was moderated by Kay Raseroka (IFLA president-elect). The panel comprised Barbara Kirsop (Publishing Trust for Development, EPT), Barbara Aronson (WHO, project manager of HINARI [Health InterNetwork Access to Research Initiative]), Didier Oillo (NTCI, Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie), Manfred Spiesberger (INTAS, E-Library Infrastructure Action Project Manager) and Jean-Jacques Pierrat (Office for Technological Devel-

opment of Information and Scientific Culture, French Ministry of Foreign Affairs). All speakers agreed that open access helps to reduce gaps between North and South or between poor and rich countries and that it could contribute to keep graduates in their local sites by sharing scientific information through the internet. Barbara Aronson spoke about the HINARI project, which is hosted by WHO: around 20 medical publishers take part, with more than 2000 journals. HINARI aims to facilitate access to numerous journals freely or at reduced price. INTAS is a similar project but addressed to the new countries that belonged to the former USSR.

The last session of the afternoon involved the participation of representatives from two well known organizations whose concerns about open access are recognized, SPARC (Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition) and the Open Society Institute (Soros Foundation). David Prosser from SPARC explained why institutional repositories can favour individuals, institutions and society by providing a central archive of research works, increasing dissemination, visibility and institutions' prestige and making information available to the rest of the world. SPARC strives to return science to scientists. It aims to open access to scholarly journals and encourage authors and institutions to be aware of keeping their rights over their works.

Finally Stefan Gradmann, project manager and head of the Virtual Library Unit at the University of Hamburg, explained the FIGARO project (European Academic Digital Publishing Initiative) whose objectives are mainly to stimulate support of scientific communication and to build a Europe-wide cooperation forum by sharing technical facilities and encouraging contacts between information players. The session ended with Les Grivell, the program manager of E-Biosci (European platform for access and retrieval of full text and factual information on life sciences). E-Biosci is funded by the European Union projects "Quality of Life" and "Information Technologies". The platform freely offers services to members of the academic community to enable them to distribute their own resources and to facilitate access to full-text searching across documents in repositories. E-Biosci welcomes principles of open access and emphasizes the concept of searching and linking referred material.

Fortunately the closing remarks of the conference were followed by a closing cocktail, which freely and openly refreshed our minds, thanks to the organizers.

Reme Melero
rmelero@iata.csic.es

EASE-Forum digest: December 2002 to March 2003

Joining the forum (new instructions)

Since 1 January 2003 the EASE-Forum has been hosted at helsinki.fi. The old address at utu.fi was closed down on 1 March 2003. 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 a signature or any other 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. 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).

Spam filters

Unfortunately, the new forum address seemed to attract a lot of spam. The EASE-Forum moderator, Tom Blom, has applied some filters to exclude unwanted email. Messages coded in HTML and messages containing the word "dollar" or the dollar symbol will not be passed on. So to avoid rejection of your message do not use HTML or "dollar" or "$".

Style checking software

Tricia Reichert was asked by an author whose first language is not English if she could recommend "some program that will look over our drafts and trouble-shoot not just spelling and grammatical errors . . . but warns us about awkward sentence/paragraph structures, over-used or wrongly-used words or punctuations, suggestions for synonyms that can be used in the same context, etc."

Daniel Kamman recommended Stylewriter (www.editorsoftware.com/) and WordDog (www.worddog.com/), and added a lot of web sites for further information. Mary Ellen Kerans is worried that such software provides "straightjacket" advice, or advice on a phrase or sentence level that might not work well in a particular paragraph, and is "really curious to see an example of how the software helped him [Daniel Kamman] make a wording or grammar decision that led to improvement in style." Karen Shashok thinks "criteria for good scientific English vary so widely . . . that it might be very hard indeed to find software that will reliably detect sentence and paragraph structures most readers would find good, acceptable or awkward." Don Odom remembers "the problem encountered by a non-native English-speaking author . . . who was attempting to use a spell-check program. Her results were not very satisfactory . . . because she didn't know which spelling to choose when several were presented at the same time. I suspect that the results would be even less satisfac-

tory for such an author when attempting to use the software as suggested by Daniel." Mary Ellen Kerans hypothesized "that there's important interaction between the software and Daniel's own language savvy, but it would be interesting to reflect on what type of interaction is involved." Elisabeth Heseltine agrees that a software program is not going to be much help. On the other hand, Linda McPhee thinks "the problem is that the criteria are generally very poorly described. Short active sentences without repetition are NOT necessarily more readable . . . yet that's pretty much the focus of current style checking software. This software is all more or less based around the ideas Rudolph Flesch outlined in *The art of readable writing* and *The art of plain talk* back in the 1940s. Linguists have learned quite a bit about readability since then, but what they have discovered doesn't program nearly so well. Flesch would probably be horrified that his work has been used in this way."

Will Hughes suggested that many good native English speakers are "willing to work for money! Are they too expensive? Students might be quite good at this kind of thing, helping with idiomatic expressions and working out goof synonyms and other elements of good practice." This horrified Elisabeth Heseltine as it implies "that even members of EASE think that any native English speaker can be a proficient editor. Surely, it is one of the raisons d'être of EASE to bring together professional editors who are aware of the intricacies of scientific editing and to promote the profession by eschewing such suggestions as the above?"

In response to all comments and suggestions, Tricia Reichert admitted that "software can be treacherous if followed blindly. I rarely use the Grammar Check program in Word, but when I do, I ignore 95% of the suggestions (35% of which are grammatically incorrect). . . . I find that my language and medical dictionaries, a Latin translating dictionary, and a good grammar book are the most reliable resources." Some replies "cut straight to the point in suggesting that a mere human might be the best grammar, usage, and syntax checker. No software can simultaneously consider denotations, connotations, proper idiomatic expressions, context, etc., in addition to the specific experiments performed and the goals of the study at hand. . . . Still, my author asked for software . . . so Dan's response is especially appreciated."

Archaic language

Marjorie Monnickendam "was always taught that technically you use I/we shall, but you/he/she/it will to refer to an action which will take place in the future. But that you swap to I/we will and you/he/she/it shall to express determination to perform that action in the future. So I have three questions: Is that correct? If so, is a business plan expressing sufficient determination to warrant 'We will' rather than 'We shall'? And finally, are these rules so archaic as to be meaningless? Frankly, I think that even if 'We shall' is the correct construction, it sounds so laboured and affected as to distract attention from the real meaning."

Harvey Shenker referred to reference books like *The new Fowler's modern English usage*, and *Overseas students' companion to English studies*. Gillian Page commented that treating the rules as archaic "may seriously damage your health, as in the cautionary tale of the person who got it wrong — crying out: 'I will drown, nobody shall stop me.' So they left him to his fate."

Kathleen Lyle (supported by Patrick Barron) thinks "the shall/will distinction only comes naturally to people speaking a certain dialect of English — it just happens to be the dialect spoken by people who write grammar books and become arbiters of usage. For me growing up in Scotland it was a thing I had to learn, as I suspect it is for most users of English. You hear 'shall' used quite naturally in informal conversation by some English people, although the usage is often masked by the 'I'll' contraction, so I wouldn't think of it as an affectation. But it may not be appropriate in written English for all readerships."

Mary Ellen Kerans advised that the will/shall distinction has long been lost in US English — with the exception of questions, which function as suggestions (with "we") or offers (with "I"). She added that "the scarcity of 'I' and 'we' in scientific articles and the tendency to use past and present forms to report and discuss research will make this dilemma easy to maneuver around unless we're working with an editorial written in a certain style." Considering that "some journals change the 'scientific' passive into active — fortunately it's the past tense that's mostly called for," Margaret Cooter wondered whether "scientific-speak" qualifies as a dialect.

Harvey Shenker quoted the well-known phrases "We shall, we shall, we shall not be moved" and "We shall return" (General McArthur). "But," Kathleen Lyle answered, "according to the rulemakers (in UK grammar books, anyway) all of these people should have said 'will', to indicate determination not just futurity."

David FitzSimons suggested that the use of will/shall (and similarly that/which) depends on the audience. "For formal publications where accuracy of meaning is essential, then one should observe the grammatical rules. This is especially important when the audience is international. . . . If a publication is intended for a more parochial audience, where colloquial use is acceptable, the audience being more interested in the overall message than the style or accuracy, then strictly correct usage presumably may be less necessary."

Barry Pless added a question about the origin of "bespoke" in the context of tailoring; the *Oxford English dictionary* did not even list it. Shenker's reply "Nail it to your wrist!" made Don Odom wonder "if there is a Biblical connection in the origin of the phrase". Phil Bungum consulted the entry "bespeak" in Webster and found that bespoke means "ordered in advance, made to special order", "which would be suitable for usage in a tailor's shop", while John Glen's *Concise Oxford* has "bespeak" with the definition "Engage beforehand; order (goods); suggest, be evidence of". It then has: "bespoke (tailor, overcoat

etc.) (seller of) clothes made to order; opp. ready-made clothes etc.".

Uses of the @ sign

Elise Langdon-Neuner asked what other editors think of the increasing use of the @ symbol in denotations of graph axes (e.g. OD @ 492 nm). To Patrick Barron "@" also means "around", which might not make it the best candidate to indicate a highly specific value. Will Hughes thinks "it is wrong to use the @ symbol to mean 'around' or 'located at'. . . . I would change it to something more intelligible!" Joseph Green said that a better way to label the axis would be "Optical density at 492 nanometers'. Tricia Reichert would just use "OD 492 nm" (with the "492 nm" as subscript) for the axis label. "If the term appeared in a sentence, we would write it out, as: 'The OD at 492 nm was 0.176' …We treat the shorthand use of @ the way we treat any other symbol that has been used inappropriately (e.g. 'The whole is > the sum of its parts') and change it to the word(s) it represents in the particular context. We would retain the symbol in genetics articles, where the @ sign at the end of a term signifies a gene family or cluster ('PGA@' is the 'pepsinogen A gene cluster')." Mary Ellen Kerans remembered that her mother used the @ sign as a preposition informally, and associates that use with informal notes among friends — "handwritten ones because getting it from a keyboard is a nuisance." The latter remark was contradicted by Kathleen Lyle: "Not from a standard UK keyboard, where it's very convenient." Lyle added that she hasn't come across the use of @ in the context of graph axes, etc., "but if I did (or when I do) I would assume it was a bit of authorial shorthand that needed to be regularized." For the history of the @ sign, Terrence Clayton referred to www.webopedia.com/DidYouKnow/Internet/2002/HistoryofAtSign.asp.

Virus nomenclature

David FitzSimons asked for guidance and/or experiences in implementing a new rule for naming viral species. The preface of *A dictionary of virology* (3rd edition, 2001) explains that "the International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses in its seventh report had introduced a new rule: 'All species taxa are now italicized and have the first letter capitalized'. The first chapter of the seventh report added that this rule (3.40) 'applies when the species name is used to refer to a taxonomic entity, i.e. an abstraction corresponding to a taxon in the classification. . . . It should be stressed that italics and capital letters need to be used only if the species name refers to a taxonomic category. . . . Such taxonomic names do not refer to physical entities like the virions in a preparation or the particles in an electron micrograph.' When, however, reference is made to 'concrete viral objects such as virions, italics and capital initial letters are not needed and the names are written in Roman script. This corresponds to vernacular usage. . . . This also applied when the names are in adjectival form . . .' So, should we discuss destruction of *Variola virus* stocks or of variola virus stocks? Or use 'influenza A virus hominis' for a strain of '*Influenzavirus A*' and '*Influenza A virus*' as a species of that genus? Circulation of *Poliovirus* or polioviruses? Lower case and Roman would seem to be the answer in most cases, but the usage in the main part of the ICTV report seems to be at variance with the advice in the introductory chapter; italics and initial capital letters are used widely for concrete viral objects, preparations and adjectival forms (e.g. "*Vaccinia virus* genome", "Electron micrograph of ... particles of *Hantaan virus*'). I know I am not the only one to be somewhat confused on the issue and would welcome feedback."

Various

Reme Melero drew attention to the web site www.inist.fr/openaccess/en/openaccess.php, with a lot of information, links and an overview about "Open Access" to scientific and technical information.

Pål Gulbrandsen offered a paper to "any of your journals . . . interested in an article that does not report the results of research, but uses an example (patient satisfaction in hospitals) to give a good guide into the reasons for and use of multilevel analysis."

Rhana Pike asked whether it is legitimate to list authors having medical degrees (MB, BS) or medical research degrees (MD) all as MD in American journals, "since that's the meaning of MB BS in the US anyway? Does anyone know if there is a US equivalent of our MD, which has higher status than a PhD?" Miles Markus answered that an MD is regarded as equivalent to a PhD and, that aside, "it doesn't seem necessary or desirable to change MB, BS to MD for purposes of publication in an American journal."

Karen Shashok informed the Forum that the PIRATES review group have produced systematic reviews on the effects of technical editing and peer review on the final texts. Information about these reviews is available from Tom Jefferson at toj1@aol.com or from Liz Wager at liz@sideview.demon.co.uk. "A letter pointing out the need to be skeptical of peer review and suggesting how its efficacy might be investigated recently appeared in *Nature* (16 January 2003; vol 421: pp 209-210). Other letters in the same Correspondence section comment on the inefficacy of peer review and the misuse of impact factors. I'm co-author of one of the letters; a "director's cut" version (which includes notes and the references, all of which had to be deleted as a direct result of peer review!) is available from me [Karen Shashok] or from Tom Jefferson on request."

Elisabeth Heseltine announced that the EASE scientific writing workshop is being written up as a handbook with the collaboration of a TEFL teacher. Its main projected readership will be scientists whose mother tongue (the language in which they received their secondary education, according to the United Nations definition) is not English. The handbook will therefore cover not only the structure of a scientific article but also pitfalls of language and expression. A publisher is being sought.

Maeve O'Connor gave some corrections to the February issue (vol. 29, no. 1) of *European Science Editing*: on p. 17 in the Editors' WebWatch the URL for the online version of the IUPAC Compendium of Chemical Terminology should end with.html (not.htm). On

p. 22 in the Courses part of Forthcoming Meetings the address for the Society of Indexers is www.indexers.org.uk (and not as printed).

Arjan Polderman (compiler)
a.k.s.polderman@pw.nl
Discussion initiators
David FitzSimons: fitzsimonsd@who.int
Pål Gulbrandsen: palgul@heltef.no
Elisabeth Heseltine: heseltin@club-internet.fr
Elise Langdon-Neuner: elise_langdon_neuner@baxter.com
Reme Melero: rmelero@iata.csic.es
Marjorie Monnickendam: MMonnick@phls.org.uk
Maeve O'Connor: maeve.oconnor@talk21.com
Rhana Pike: rhana@ctc.usyd.edu.au
Tricia Reichert: treichert@rheumatology.org
Karen Shashok: kashashok@wanadoo.es

Book reviews

E.H. Fredriksson (ed.). 2001. **A century of science publishing: a collection of essays.** Amsterdam: IOS Press. 312 p. €40, £26, $38. ISBN 1-58603-148-1.

Jamie Cameron, a UK publishing consultant and essayist for this book, reckons, with pardonable hyperbole, that "the wheel has come full circle, with research workers communicating globally and electronically with each other, much as they did face to face in establishments like the Royal Society in London, three hundred years ago". A few truly historical forays apart, this book is about the 100 years recently completed. The second half of the 20th century especially witnessed revolutions in technology that have had a huge impact on the way scientific information is distributed and accessed, permitting, among other things, the electronic face-to-face exchanges that Cameron refers to.

The book's editor, Einar Fredriksson from IOS Press, Amsterdam, places these 25 essays under one or other of only two headings — namely, publishers/publishing and tools/trends. A more detailed map would help the busier reader, as several of the early chapters are rather country-specific (Germany, Japan, China, India, the Netherlands), publisher-specific, or both, or even person-specific. Eugene Garfield and his revolutionary Institute for Scientific Information are rightly singled out. Robert Maxwell, in his capacity as science publisher, attracted loyalty and respect in doses that might surprise those who came across him in other contexts but the essay on Maxwell leaves me still unsure of exactly how important this rogue's contributions to science communication really were. German science publishing deserves its three contributions. In my lifetime the German language was still a required skill for students of chemistry, and it is good to have a reminder of why this was and what happened after 1945. IOS Press, incidentally, now publishes in German, turning the wheel back a notch perhaps.

Busy science editors are likely to spend most time with the technology chapters. It is often thought that the roots of the World Wide Web and the internet lie in military initiatives but there were many people in ordinary publishing who had the vision and the skills to develop features without which the scientific potential of internet publishing could never have been fully realized. (S)GML originally stood for Goldfarb, Mosher and Lorie not Generalized Markup Language. Internet/WWW is part of the technological revolution but not the whole of it, and other chapters touch on typesetting and on the future of subscription agents and librarianship, as well as yet-to-be-resolved matters such as the evolution (or disappearance?) of peer review. After all, this is a book about publishing not just editing.

Fredriksson has exercised great skill in recruiting this broad-based panel of writers, albeit with different styles, and every reader of *ESE* will find something of interest and importance here. Is there anything missing? Two things perhaps. One puzzle, for me anyway, is the difference in speed with which scientific disciplines adopted the new technology. At times, but not always, physics has led and biomedicine has trailed. Why? Many years ago, when the compilers of what was then the EASE Bulletin started to ask contributors to use simple codings, I groaned. Was this the beginning of the end of the essentially creative, even aesthetic, art and craft of editing? In 2003 that fear remains. Two essays, one comparing and contrasting different scientific disciplines and the other providing reassurance (or otherwise) on the future of editing, might have rounded off this otherwise excellent collection.

David Sharp
dwsharp@clara.co.uk

Michael Quinion. 2002. **Ologies and isms: word beginnings and endings.** Oxford: Oxford University Press. 280p. Paperback. £8.99. ISBN 0-19-280123-6.

This book is about affixes — the beginnings and endings we use to make new words from common roots. Michael Quinion's main aim is to provide us with a guide to the ways new scientific terms are formed, but his dictionary will also help us realize that apparently casual journalistic creations like *megastar*, *megastore*, or *megadeal* are just as respectable — perhaps more respectable — in their use of the Greek prefix *megas* (= great or large) as the scientific terms *megaton*, *megahertz*, or *megawatt*.

Quinion distinguishes four types of affixes: (1) *prefixes*, elements placed at the beginnings of words to adjust or qualify their meanings; (2) *suffixes*, elements placed at the ends of words, frequently to convert the stems into different parts of speech; (3) *combining forms*, either prefixes or suffixes added to a word to add an extra layer of meaning; 4) *infixes*, elements added within a word. In the main part of the dictionary, the four types of affixes are arranged together in alphabetic order (for example, *psycho-* is followed immediately by *-ptera*). At the end, affixes commonly related to certain subjects, such as biological classifications, chemical elements, or medicine and surgery, are listed and defined briefly.

A book like this soaks up my time: I start to look up a single entry, and half an hour later I find I am still browsing through other entries that have caught my eye! I am sure other neologophiles (*neo-+logos+-phile*) will enjoy it, too.

But this is not just a book for intrigued browsing: it will be a practical and accessible aid for today's young scientists. Ben Jonson described Shakespeare as having "small Latin and less Greek". I wonder how he would have described the products of the current British secondary school system, most of whom have vestigial Latin and no Greek. In my experience, the classical roots of much scientific terminology present considerable difficulties for many young scientists, whose school education has given them no knowledge of classical languages to help with interpretation of newly encountered words. This explanation of 10 000 examples within 1250 dictionary entries would be a valuable addition to every scientist's bookshelf.

John Kirkman
kirkman.ramsbury@btconnect.com

Anthony R. Michaelis. 2001. **The scientific temper.** Heidelberg: Universitaetsverlag C. Winter. xviii+598 pages. 13 colour plates. Hardback DM68. ISBN 3-8253-1229-1.

To many people, editors are wielders of mysterious and arcane powers denied to ordinary mortals. And given that science editors are even less understood, it is a pleasure to report that one of our number has now revealed himself in a book that documents the varied experiences of a life spent as scientist, editor, writer and film maker. Anthony Michaelis has never given up promoting science and scientific advances since the time he was awarded a PhD in organic chemistry by the University of London in 1940. For once we are able to follow the day-to-day story of a man dedicated to spreading the message of scientific achievement to any willing to listen.

Strangely, I did not meet the author until the early 1980s, when he was making one of his visits to Australia in search of authors and stories for *Interdisciplinary Science Reviews* — a journal he established in the mid-1970s. The author came first to Australia in 1950 as a maker of scientific research films. The venture did not prosper, mainly because the market was not ready for such a specialized use of the moving image at that time. Shortly after returning to Britain, just as his first book *Research films* was being published by Academic Press, the author took on the editorship of the magazine *Discovery*, a periodical then readily available in schools, colleges and public libraries. At this time, Michaelis was busy giving talks on radio, writing, and visiting science establishments in Britain and overseas In 1960, he joined the London office of CIBA for a brief period before being invited to join the staff of *The Daily Telegraph* as a temporary replacement for Dr Anthony Smith, its science correspondent. Dr Smith was away on an across-Africa balloon expedition for the newspaper. The expedition was a success and opened up new opportunities, enabling the balloonist to resign from his position in Fleet Street. In December 1963 the temporary job turned into a 10-year period for Michaelis as the paper's science correspondent, during which he racked up over 750 000 km on global journeying, chasing stories and reporting on scientific events.

Newspaper articles are ephemeral and often used to end up as wrapping material for take-away meals. In 1973 Michaelis decided to make a more lasting mark on the literature of science by joining with Dr Peter Farago (then of the Chemical Society of London) to launch a journal dedicated to exploring those places where several disciplines intersect and lead to new applications of science in industry and government. By 1976 the first issue of *Interdisciplinary Science Reviews* appeared under the imprint of Heyden, a modest science publisher based in north London. So at the age of 60, when many people are thinking of retiring, Michaelis began a new phase in his continuing career as a communicator. This phase was to last for 20 years before he handed over his editorship to Professor J.E. Harris, FRS in 1995.

I wish to commend this account of struggle and eventual success to any of our readers who may be fighting their way through a thicket of dense prose or trying to persuade a difficult author to alter some obscure text. It may inspire them to stick to a career in a broad field of endeavour worthy of lifelong joys. Few of us have had to start out in a foreign country,

learn a new language in one year in order to enter university, suffer personal disasters in wartime Britain and finally have the satisfaction of meeting such a galaxy of talented people from so many nations. It is good to have this personal record from an editor. Perhaps we shall have the pleasure of hearing from other editors with equally interesting tales to tell.

Basil Walby
basil@sciencevictoria.org.au

The Editors' WebWatch

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

Spam, Spam, Spam, Spam . . .

As a testament to the evolving nature of the English language the word "spam" has taken on a whole new meaning in recent years. Once a pale and uninteresting form of canned pork, "spam" has now come to mean the electronic equivalent of "junk mail" — unsolicited mailings containing everything from offers of office supplies or pharmaceuticals to letters asking you to launder someone's ill-gotten gains through your bank account. Having said that, what constitutes spam is a very individual thing: if you want a cheap flight to somewhere obscure then you may be delighted with messages claiming to offer you just that. However, for most of us spam is a misery: we don't want it, we don't need it, we don't really understand why we are getting it, and more importantly we have no idea about how to stop it coming. Hopefully, this WebWatch will enlighten you a little.

Why spam?

So, you open an e-mail account and within a few weeks you start to get mailings from people you have never heard of, offering you products or services in which you have no interest in and certainly have no intention of buying. How does this happen? Spam works on the principle that the more people who read an advertisement for xyz, the more sales will be made for xyz. Therefore the aim is to send the ads to as many addresses as possible. You have given your e-mail address to your family, your friends and maybe the people you work for or with, so how do you end up on all of these spam lists?

Spammers get your e-mail address by several means. First of all they can run programs that collect e-mail addresses from Usenet (network news) posting headers. Therefore, the more newsgroups you belong to, the more spam you are likely to get. They also cull addresses from subscriber lists such as AOL's member profile lists. Web-crawling programs are another means of collecting addresses from the mailto: codes in HTML documents, and e-mail addresses can also be collected when you visit a web site (without you knowing that this has been done, of course) and from online "chat rooms". Don't take this personally — spammers neither know nor care who you are; their work is done by software robots. Easier ways for a "spammer" to get e-mail addresses include using online directories ("white pages"), society membership lists or e-mail distribution lists, or simply to buy a list from someone who already has one.

Avoiding spam

Unfortunately there is no absolutely guaranteed way of avoiding spam, but you can reduce your level of vulnerability significantly. For example, never use a members' profile list for an e-mail address you use for work: have two (or more) separate e-mail addresses, one for serious stuff and one for the fun stuff (Hotmail accounts are ideal for the fun stuff, but you need to change them frequently to avoid being completely overwhelmed by spam). Or you can hide your e-mail address from spammers by "munging" your e-mail address. MUNG is an acronym for "mash until no good" and you can find details on how to "mung" your address at **http://members.aol.com/e-mailfaq/ mungfaq.html**. Another way to avoid spam is to give a fake address when you visit a web site that asks you to key in your address (obviously this does nothing to stop your address being collected surreptitiously). Use one of these: anyword@example.com, anyword@example.org, or anyword@example.net.

"Anyword" — as it implies — can be replaced by anything you choose; these domain names have been reserved by the guys at the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA) for experimentation and testing, thus allowing web programmers and technical writers to use "fake" addresses in their tests so that they don't have to give real working addresses.

Don't . . .

. . . ever reply to spam. Repeat: **never reply to spam**. If you do respond, one of two things will happen. Either the message will bounce because the spammer used a fake return address, or the spammer will know that not only do you read your e-mails, you also reply to them. This information is exactly what the spammer is hoping for — a live e-mail address, with a real live person in control of it! Also, never use any site that claims to remove your e-mail address from spammers' lists. Give this one some thought — for you to be removed from a spam list, your e-mail address is sent to a bunch of spammers . . .

. . . get mad, get even

Sooner or later you may reach the point where avoiding or deleting spam is no longer satisfying. When this happens I suggest a visit to **http://digital.net/~gandalf/spamfaq.html** where you can find information on how to work out where a spam came from and how to find and complain to the appropriate system administrators. But this all takes time and by far the simpler solution is to use a spam exterminator.

Some of the items in the above were taken from *The Internet Tourbus* — which is the work of Bob Rankin and Patrick Crispen. The Tourbus is distributed in the form of a twice-weekly newsletter. Visit **www.tourbus.com/**.

Slaying spam

Every single day, the same old story: seeking out and destroying the mindless stream of unwanted e-mail — spam. It used to be a minor annoyance for most people — just an occasional unwelcome offer of cheap Viagra, inkjet cartridges and porn, or of various opportunities to get rich quick. It was easy to spot and easy to delete without reading it.

However, between September 2001 and November 2002, spam increased from 8% of all e-mail traffic to 40%, according to the spam-filtering company Brightmail. By this time , the percentage could be close to 50%. AOL reports that it is now blocking an astonishing one billion spams sent to its subscribers every day — apparently that is 28 per member per day. I have received 162 spams in the last 30 days, which is a very noticeable increase on the same period a year ago. Most people

reading this will have experienced something similar.

At only five spams a day, I probably don't have too much to worry about. However, some people are really suffering. Try opening a Hotmail account, so that you have an e-mail address that you can access from any computer connected to the Web, and you"ll see what I mean. Even if you tell nobody the new address, your inbox will start to fill up with spam in a matter of days. Many people report over 100 spams per day, drowning out legitimate e-mail and increasing the risk of accidentally deleting an important message by mistake.

In the corporate world it's even worse. Companies have to deal with thousands of unwanted messages a day, which leads to a drain on resources and a drop in productivity. Spam on that scale costs money. My 162 spams occupy about 1 megabyte of hard disk space. Imagine a company with 500 staff receiving the same amount of e-mail: suddenly, 500 Mbytes of storage has to be found every month to handle those messages. In practice, far more would be required, as corporate e-mail addresses attract far more spam than individual ones, and messages may be stored both on the company's mail server and on individual computers. Add to those requirements the bandwidth costs and loss of working time, and dealing with spam starts to represent a real problem.

What's needed (in the absence of any way of shutting down the spammers) is a spam filter: something that can screen incoming mail and automatically detect and delete spam. The question is: how?

Spam filters

A spam filter needs to achieve one thing: detect and delete (or possibly move to a temporary storage area) all unwanted incoming e-mail. Any spam that gets through the filter is called a false negative. Any legitimate message wrongly classified as spam is called a false positive. False negatives are annoying, but false positives can be expensive: do you really want to miss out on an offer of work because the offer looked a little too much like spam?

There are several approaches to spam filtering. I'll concentrate on what individual users can do.

Filtering on the server

Ideally spam would never reach your computer. Before your e-mail reaches you, it sits on your 'sinternet service provider's server, waiting for you to collect it. In principle, therefore, it would be a good idea for your ISP to check all incoming messages and delete any spam — end of problem. Obviously, there's a catch.

The difficulty is that the tools available to an ISP are all rather blunt instruments. For reasons of privacy, ISPs cannot open and read your e-mail. Consequently, they can only really look at the message headers and subject lines. However, it's impossible to tell whether a message entitled "Your inkjet cartridge order" is spam or a genuine message about an order that you actually placed. Any sensible ISP would have to let such a message through. The same would apply to most spam — no matter how questionable a subject line might appear, for a small percentage of people the e-mail would in fact be legitimate.

The only other option for ISPs is to blacklist known sources of spam. As we shall see later, this also causes problems, so most ISPs don't do it.

It's also possible for you to check your mail on the server before you download it. The excellent MailWasher (full details below) can be used to download a list of message headers from your ISP's mail server. It classifies each one according to various criteria, and any message that you decide is spam can be deleted from the server. You may well find that MailWasher is all you need, but it does suffer from a few problems. It is vulnerable to the blacklist problem alluded to above, tricky to set up for certain mailing lists, and cumbersome to use if you get a lot of e-mail. Nevertheless, highly recommended.

Filtering incoming mail

Given the problems of filtering spam before it actually gets to you, it's more likely that you'll want to detect and filter it as you download your e-mail. There are now many programs that can do this job, and a handful of the better known ones are described briefly below. Before that, however, you need to know a little about how spam filters work.

Filtering techniques

The basic techniques are:

- Whitelists
- Blacklists
- Keyword filtering
- Structural filtering
- Probability-based (or Bayesian) filtering

We'll deal with each in turn, but it's very important to understand that these techniques are usually used in combination with each other. With one possible exception, none of these techniques is good enough on its own, and even the exception benefits from sharing the load with the other techniques.

Whitelists

Whitelists are very simple: you maintain a list of e-mail addresses from which you are willing to accept e-mail, and reject any e-mail from other addresses. For example: willow@ucsunnydale.edu is in your whitelist, so you accept messages from that address; you might also decide to permit all messages from the ucsunnydale.edu domain, just to make life easier. In contrast, you might decide that lindsey@wolframandhart.com is unworthy of inclusion in your whitelist, and will therefore not be accepted.

The problem with whitelists is obvious: you will receive many perfectly acceptable e-mails from people who are not on your whitelist, so a pure whitelist spam filter will generate a large number of false positives. The false negative rate, however, will be zero (unless someone on your whitelist suddenly becomes a spammer).

Whitelists are helpful in that they reduce the number of messages that have to be searched for spam. They should therefore be considered as a useful part of any anti-spam strategy.

Blacklists

Blacklists are highly controversial. The idea is that, when a source of spam is identified, it can be added to a publicly accessible blacklist, which can in turn be checked by your software to see whether or not a particular message should be classified as spam. Unfortunately, blacklists have serious problems.

First, the spammers are always moving their virtual addresses around, staying one step ahead of the blacklists. Even if the blacklists are just a day behind, the spammers can get their messages out.

Next, suppose that warren@ucsunnydale.edu starts sending spam, and that someone complains to a blacklist operator. Ideally, the blacklist would add just that single address to the blacklist, but all too often the entire domain gets blacklisted. Now e-mail from willow@ucsunnydale.edu or tara@ucsunnydale.edu etc. is labelled as spam by the blacklist, even though you would like to receive messages from both addresses.

Alternatively, someone might falsely report willow@ucsunnydale.edu as being a spammer. In the world of blacklists, you are guilty until you prove yourself innocent. If you are falsely accused, you can be stuck on a blacklist for days while the situation is resolved.

Here's where we see an example of using multiple techniques to deal with spam. By allowing the whitelist to take precedence over the blacklist, you can ensure that e-mail from willow@ucsunnydale.edu passes through the filter unscathed.

The biggest problem with blacklists, however, comes when they are used by ISPs to filter out spam. Legitimate e-mail can be blocked by the ISP without you ever knowing that the e-mail was sent to you. AOL, for instance, admits that "an extremely small fraction" of the billion messages a day that it blocks are not spam, but doesn't give figures. This is a particular problem for e-mail listowners: subscribers notice that they've stopped receiving messages from a certain mailing list and ask the listowner why. The listowner checks the subscriber's account and sees nothing wrong. Almost always, the problem is that the mailing list's domain is being blocked by the ISP. As a listowner, I have personal experience of this. A polite complaint to the ISP usually gets the mailing list unblocked, but this kind of mass false positive has brought blacklists into disrepute. According to one estimate, one in six legitimate mailing list messages is blocked in this way. This may be an overestimate, but the problem is real.

For the time being, blacklisting may be taken as evidence that a message might be spam, but it should not be considered sufficient to definitively label the message as such.

Keyword filtering

Given that e-mail addresses are unreliable indicators of spam, what about other techniques? The most obvious is to look for typical spam-related words in the subject line and body of the message. The following words are obvious: "free", "porn", "Viagra", "sex", "inkjet", "cash", "XXX" and "!!!!". More surprisingly, "ff0000" is a very good indicator: it's HTML code for "red", and spammers love using red text.

A little thought will reveal the problem with this approach. Words like "free" and "cash" are likely to crop up in many legitimate e-mails. Indeed, sending this article as an e-mail message is risky because it contains a large number of words that a keyword filter might seize upon. I'm writing about spam, not sending it, but a keyword filter can't tell the difference.

However, combining keyword filtering with whitelists and blacklists is obviously beneficial. For example, if a keyword filter says that a message is likely to be spam, and the sender is not in your whitelist, then it's very likely to be spam; but if the sender *is* in your whitelist, the whitelist will override the keyword filter. Blacklists work with keyword filtering in a similar way.

Spammers, unfortunately, are wise to keyword filters. They use tricks like deliberate misspelling ("incjet", "Viaggra") or inserting non-alphabetic characters ("i-n-k-j-e-t", or "V i a g r a") to bypass the filters. Humans can deal with this easily, so the message is still comprehensible; software can't cope so readily, so the message gets past the filter. Another trick is to use meaningless HTML in the middle of a word: "ink<ghdf>jet" will be displayed as "inkjet" in an HTML-formatted e-mail because HTML rendering always ignores HTML that it doesn't understand. Naturally, keyword filters can be improved to deal with these tricks, but the spammers are always staying a step or two ahead.

Structural filtering

Structural filters look at the way in which a message is constructed. Is the "From" address properly formatted? Does the message contain a lot of capital letters? Is it a plain-text message or is it HTML? Are there a lot of hyperlinks in the message? Is the message short or long? Is there a signature block at the end? Are there a lot of useless or malformed HTML tags? Are there a lot of misspelled words? From these and other factors it is possible to gauge the likelihood that a message is spam.

Structural filters provide evidence about a message's status, but no more. Spammers are also learning to avoid providing structural evidence. Nevertheless, structural filters can be used in conjunction with all of the preceding techniques, and are a useful weapon.

Probability-based (or Bayesian) filtering

If you use all of the above techniques, you will catch most spam. You will also generate a considerable number of false negatives and false positives. Reliable statistics on how well different products work in this respect are hard to come by. Software companies tend to make exaggerated claims (surprise), and comparative studies seem to compare only two or three products at most. The best seem to achieve a 5–10% false negative rate or 2–3% false positives. Note the "or" in that sentence. False negatives can be reduced at the expense of generating more false positives; false positives can be reduced by letting through more false negatives. Reducing both figures using the various rule-based approaches is very difficult.

Enter Bayesian filters (named after Thomas Bayes, the 18th century British mathematician whose work on probability underpins the technique). The idea has been around for a while (see **http://research.microsoft.com/~horvitz/junkfilter.htm**, which shows that Microsoft was looking at the idea in 1998), but it only took off in August 2002, when Paul Graham published "A plan for spam" (**www.paulgraham.com/spam.html**). Graham's article describes a technique that involves looking at all the "words" in a corpus of messages known to be spam and in a separate corpus of non-spam messages. A table of probabilities is then compiled, giving the likelihood that certain words indicate spam or non-spam. Notice that this method looks at every message, not just spam. Nor does it concentrate only on certain keywords. Once this has been done, any new messages can be analysed and compared with the known probabilities, and classified accordingly. Furthermore, the probabilities are updated after each new message, leading to a constantly adapting and improving filter.

Graham's results were impressive: false negatives were just 0.5%, and false positives were reduced to zero. Programmers almost fell over themselves to write their own versions, all with similar results. Too good to be true? Actually, no: Bayesian filters really do work that well. There are occasional false positives, but far fewer than with any other kind of filter. Most false positives in Bayesian filters are corporate mass mailings that have many spam-like characteristics — ordinary messages don't trigger the filter.

There is a cost to using this kind of approach. At the start, a Bayesian filter knows nothing about what to filter, so you have to train it by telling

it which incoming messages are spam and — just as important — which are not. Gradually, the filter will start making its own classifications, which you have to correct when it gets them wrong. After a while, the filter gets better and better, and you find yourself correcting just the occasional false negative and an extremely rare false positive. You are back, in effect, to the days when spam was just a minor irritant.

Roughly speaking, it takes about 1000 e-mails to train a Bayesian filter well enough to beat the best of the non-Bayesian filters.

What's more, a Bayesian filter is tuned to your own personal e-mail. Since everyone defines spam differently (you might welcome offers of cheap inkjet cartridges, for all I know), this means that you get better results than by using someone else's predefined rules.

Real-world spam filtering

That's a lot of background. What you really want to know is what products are available for filtering spam, and how good they are. Here's a quick run-down of some currently popular products. Given the explosive growth of the market for spam filters, this list is likely to date quickly. Treat it as a tentative map of a newly explored country.

Spam filters may come built in to your e-mail client, as stand-alone programs that you run separately from your mail program, or as add-ons that work with your mail program. Some of the add-ons only work with specific e-mail programs (and it will come as no surprise that these are usually Outlook and Outlook Express), while others are independent of program and operating system. I have used or tested only a few of these programs, so you will probably need to experiment to find the best solution for your needs.

MailWasher
www.mailwasher.net/; free (but a donation gets you technical support); Windows 95 and above; standalone program. Also available with extra features and a friendlier interface as MailWasher Pro (**www.firetrust.com/**; US$29.95).

MailWasher checks the mail on your POP3 e-mail server and tries to identify spam. It uses all of the basic techniques for spam filtering except Bayesian filters. It works well, but it also generates a significant number of false positives. You therefore have to check everything identified as spam carefully before you let MailWasher delete it. If you're not sure whether MailWasher has correctly identified spam, you can preview the body of the message.

Once you're happy that all the messages on the server have been correctly classified, MailWasher can delete the spam before launching your e-mail program to download the remaining messages. Spam can also be "bounced" as undeliverable, which might persuade the spammer that your e-mail address is invalid and should be removed from future mailings.

MailWasher also has a limited ability to spot e-mail viruses. It's no substitute for a full antivirus package, but the ability to delete a virus before it even reaches your computer is very satisfying.

PostArmor
www.postarmor.com/; free for a single e-mail account, or US$15 for unlimited accounts; Macintosh; standalone program.

Very similar to MailWasher, but for the Macintosh. It uses the same basic techniques and has a similar range of functions.

POPFile
http://popfile.sourceforge.net/; free; all operating systems; add-on.

POPFile is a Bayesian filter that works by intercepting incoming e-mail and classifying it before passing it on to your e-mail program. You then have to set up a message filter in your e-mail program that decides what to do with anything classified as spam.

Setup is fiddly, involving altering the account settings in your e-mail program. POPFile supplies specific instructions for Outlook, Outlook Express, Eudora and Pegasus, but it's easy enough to figure out how to set things up in other programs. Once it is set up, you train it via a web browser interface.

If your operating system is something other than Windows, you will need to install a copy of the Perl programming language.

MailShell SpamCatcher
www.mailshell.com/spamcatcher/desktop_fd2.html#; US$19.95; Windows 95 and above; add-on for Outlook 2000 and Outlook 2002.

SpamCatcher claims to trap 99% of spam using every technique except Bayesian filtering. It integrates into Outlook as a toolbar, and shows every sign of being very easy to use. Whether or not it can live up to the 99% claim remains to be seen.

Mozilla 1.3
www.mozilla.org/; free; most operating systems; integral part of program.

Mozilla is a combined Web browser and e-mail program. Bayesian filtering has been added to the latest version of the program. The filter works just like any other Bayesian filter, improving as you train it. In my experience, it has generated just one false positive; the false negative rate is down to around 5% and still improving. It treats your address book as a whitelist that overrides the Bayesian filter and helps to prevent false positives.

The drawback, of course, is that you have to change your e-mail program if you want to use this filter. There's also no way to install just the e-mail component: the browser has to be installed as well. Then again, Mozilla is currently the best browser available, so that ought not to be considered too much of a hardship.

Spammunition
www.upserve.com/spammunition/default.asp; free; Windows; add-on for Outlook 2000 and above.

Spammunition is a Bayesian filter that claims a false positive rate of about 1 in every 1500 messages. Like SpamCatcher, it appears in Outlook as a toolbar. One apparent drawback is that it needs to keep all the spam it receives in order to maintain the filter. Spammunition, like Mozilla, also uses a whitelist.

Spam Bully
www.spambully.com/; US$29.95; Windows 98 and above; add-on for Outlook and Outlook Express.

Spam Bully uses every filtering technique, including a Bayesian filter. In fact, it comes with a pre-trained filter, which in theory should reduce the amount of training required. In practice, because this filter is not tuned to your own specific e-mail, Spam Bully can generate false positives until it becomes fully trained.

Spam Bully can send an automatic reply to the sender of any message classified as spam. This message contains a password in the form of an image (hence readable by humans but not by the automated systems that spammers use). The suspected spammer then has to reply quoting the password; if the password is received, the sender is added to the whitelist. I suspect that it would be

easier just to examine the suspect message and make the decision myself, but such an approach probably comes into its own in a corporate environment, where potential spam can be trapped before being passed on to employees.

E-mail Magician
www.yav.com/e-mailmagician.html; US$36; Macintosh; add-on for Eudora.

E-mail Magician is an e-mail management tool that includes spam filtering. It uses all of the standard techniques except Bayesian filtering. If you use Eudora on a Mac, this is worth looking at.

SpamSieve
www.c-command.com/spamsieve/index.shtml; US$20; MacOS X 10.1 or above; add-on for various programs.

SpamSieve is a Bayesian filter for the Mac. Like other Bayesian filters, it also uses whitelists. SpamSieve offers a lot of control over the details of the filter.

Ian Kingston is a freelance editor and typesetter. He is one of the founders of The Electric Editors (www.electriceditors.net/), a support forum for individuals working in publishing.

The end of surfing as we know it?

A recent survey by WebSideStory's StatMarket division has shown that the majority of internet sites worldwide are accessed by direct navigation — typing a URL in their browser address bar or by using a bookmark — rather than through search engines and web links. Their statistics show that as of 3 February 2003 more than 64% of internet users arrived at sites by direct navigation, compared with about 53% only a year ago. (Web links are anything that links from one site to another, including text links and ad banners.) However, this does not mean that search sites or other web links are now less important, because users still have to initially find a site before they can bookmark it..
(**www.writenews.com/2003/020703_web_branding.htm**)

For details of this and other press releases about statistics related to how we use the Web, go to **www.websidestory.com** and for "News, features and resources for media and publishing professionals" visit The Write News™ at **www.writenews.com/**.

Which search engine?

As we have discussed in previous WebWatches, there are lots of search engines out there, and knowing which one to use can sometimes be half the battle won in the search for something specific. One would assume that specialized medical search engines should be more efficient than a general search engine for retrieving medical information. However, according to Ilic et al. in the March 2003 issue of *Human Reproduction* (18(3):557–561) this is not the case. Ilic and co-workers investigated the quality of online information retrieved about androgen deficiency in the ageing male (ADAM) by using keyword searches on nine search engines (four general and five medical). Search engine efficiency was compared by percentage of relevant web sites obtained by each search engine and the quality of the data was assessed using the DISCERN rating tool. More relevant web sites were identified by general search engines than by medical search engines, showing that medical search engines are no better than general search engines in sourcing consumer information relevant to ADAM. You can read the abstract at **http://humrep.oupjournals.org/cgi/content/abstract/18/3/557**.

Scientific and Technical Information Exchange (STIX)

Just when you thought that your new version of Word had as many fonts available as anyone could possibly invent, along comes another one. This time it is the work of the Scientific and Technical Information Exchange (STIX) font creation project, a group of publishers of scientific, technical, and medical journals who aim to create a comprehensive set of fonts that contain essentially every character that might be needed in a technical scientific or engineering article published in any scientific discipline. When STIX Fonts is ready it will contain more than 7700 glyphs in a "Times compatible" font set. They will resemble the basic Windows Times New Roman™ or Adobe Times™ font in appearance. STIX Fonts is expected to be completed during 2003 and will be available to anyone free of charge, including publishers, software developers, scientists, students, and the general public.

Why is another set of fonts needed? According the STIX Fonts FAQ (frequently asked questions) this is "because the process of scholarly scientific communication is highly symbolic. In addition to the standard Latin alphabet, many mathematical symbols, other alphabets (e.g., Greek, Cyrillic, etc.), and special notations are used. Today, no one source exists for all of these characters and glyphs. Instead, authors pull together fonts from many sources to create their articles, and publishers must assemble the same comprehensive set of fonts to be able to publish the articles in print. Online publication is even more complex, as the publisher cannot rely on every reader having access to every needed font on the reader's web browser. The result of missing fonts is the dreaded "missing symbol" square box: The goal of the STIX Fonts Project is to eliminate this box from all scholarly scientific communication."

For more details about the STIX Fonts Project, how it is funded and what it can do for you, go to **www.stixfonts.org/**.

The main contributors to WebWatch in this issue were Ian Kingston, Moira Vekony and Margaret Cooter. Contributions for future issues should be sent to Moira at DunaScripts@editors.ca.

News Notes

Enron, anyone?

The information world is currently having its own "Enron". The financial mess involves a Chicago technology company and its magazine subscription subsidiary, which took money from 3500 libraries to cover slumping operations instead of buying subscriptions from publishers. "The real cost of this disgusting debacle is going to be the immeasurable impact on education and research," says Free Pint (No. 130, 6 Feb 2003; www. freepint.com/), adding that in the Enron case everyone could appreciate the financial impact, so information professionals should make sure that in this case everyone understands what happens when information ceases to flow. And the *Chicago Sun Times* (3 Feb 2003; www.suntimes. com/output/business/ cst-fin-divine03. html) said: "Many … subscriptions can't be read online. And loss of paper subscriptions also will result in publishers turning off access to data bases online."

DOIs galore

The largest current Digital Object Identifier application, CrossRef (an association of the world's leading 180 scholarly publishers), now has 6.6 million DOIs registered from 6900 journals, with over 2 million DOI resolutions per month. CrossRef is a collaborative reference linking service that allows the user to click on a citation and be taken directly to the target content. "The scientific and scholarly community now demands navigational ease at the desktop," says its web site (www.crossref.org). "More than ever, publishers, librarians, and information aggregators are expected to provide seamless integration of current and archived content across publishers."

Keeping up with DOIs

DOI News is a monthly news release from the International Digital Object Identifier Foundation. It is available as a free email from the DOI Foundation web site, www.doi.org/.

Avoid these

The "worst mistakes" in web design include poor e-mail integration, lack of pricing information, horizontal scrolling, fixed font size (and tiny fonts at that) and the use of "overly literal" search engines. (www.useit. com/alertbox/20021223.html)

A challenge for editors?

CompPlexUs aims to catalyse scientific collaboration toward greater understanding of complex biological systems in the post-genome era. The formidable complexity of biological systems, says the publicity material, "demands new experimental and theoretical tools; hence, *ComPlexUs* aims to facilitate communication between researchers in a variety of fields such as medicine, neuroscience, biology, sociology, ecology and bioinformatics, as well as physics, mathematics and economics — fields from which useful analytical and experimental techniques may be borrowed." The journal will supplement original scientific articles, where necessary, with companion "translation" texts written by qualified scientific writers to aid comprehension of specialised information such as formal mathematics and computer models.

Online "pre"-publication

One way of cutting the time from receipt of a paper to its publication is to put the paper on the journal's web site immediately after acceptance, then edit it and repost it. The *JBC* web site (www.jbc.org/pips/index.dtl) has some good language describing citation matters, and *Blood* has a little more detail about process, including copyediting after online release (www.bloodjournal.org/misc/pips.shtml). But why call these papers "prepublished" — if you make information public, it's published? It could be argued that there are no degrees of publication . . .

Donations of books and journals

The BMA/*BMJ* information fund is considering applications from institutions in poorer countries for books and journals at very low cost. It arranges and pays for postage of consignments, and works closely with Book Aid International. Requests from individuals are directed to a scheme that matches them with *BMJ* readers who want to donate their used journals and books. An application form can be found at http://bmj.com/cgi/content/full/ 326/7384/298/DC1

Three -ations

Internationalization: writing for an international audience that includes native speakers of another variation of English and people with English as a second language; you want to be as culture-neutral as possible, and be aware of the needs of some ESL readers. *Localization*: writing specifically for readers in another country or culture, particularly when you need to include culture-specific information such as currency or taxation issues. *Translation*: material that has been well-written in English for either internationalization or localization is often cheaper to translate because the translator doesn't have to deal with as many cultural as well as vocabulary changes. Editors need to know which type of writing is intended; www.jeanweber.com/news/tenews69.htm has some relevant articles.

Questions — and automatic answers

Submitting a query to the *Nature* web site has interesting consequences. Once you type up your question and fill in the required boxes, if you are a "site visitor" you are asked to set up an "account". Upon submission, your query elicits some automatic links that might help you find an answer. These have their own links to related topics, and there's also a chance to provide feedback on how helpful this "answer" was — you click on 100%, 75%, 50%, 25%, or 0%, submit, and then up comes another screen, giving you a chance to add comments on how this answer could be improved.

Publishing NTO folds

The Publishing National Training Organisation, set up in March 2001 to oversee the training needs of the £30bn UK publishing industry, is to close at the end of May. The closure has been forced by the government's decision to scrap all NTOs and replace them with fewer, more broadly based Sector Skills Councils (SSCs). The government has refused to create a dedicated publishing SSC, instead encouraging book publishers to join with either the media and entertainment industry, covering television and film, or printing. (www.thebookseller.com/, 31 March)

Medical indexing

Indexing the medical sciences, 2nd edition, is the latest title in the Society of Indexers' redesigned series of Occasional Papers. It provides guidance concerning the pitfalls and possibilities in medical indexing, and includes many examples. The text of the previous edition has been extensively rewritten, and advice is

given on terminology, the choice of headings, journals indexing, the indexing of names and final preparation of the index text. There are new sections on electronic indexing, the ethical aspects of changing language and gene nomenclature. There is a comprehensive list of reference materials, including up-to-date web site addresses, and — of course — an index. (Blake D, Clarke M, McCarthy A & Morrison J. 2002. Indexing the medical sciences, 2nd ed. Sheffield: Society of Indexers. 2002. UK price £17.50 (£15.00 for members of indexing societies); overseas £20.00 (£17.50). ISBN 187-157724-1.

Feeling creative?

Perhaps you want to stimulate and develop the interaction of the visual and the language oriented parts of the mind. The Creativity Workshop series aims to "help people develop their creative process through using a unique series of exercises in memoir, creative writing, visual arts, sense perception, brainstorming, and storytelling". Between June and August the organizers are planning workshops in Crete, Florence, Paris, Barcelona, Prague, and London (www.creativityworkshop.com).

Accessibility of information

As journals develop their web sites, they need to think of making them accessible to people with special needs — such as visual handicap. Section 508 of the US Rehabilitation Act requires that federal agencies' electronic and information technology is accessible to people with disabilities. To see where the US government is heading, visit www.disabilityinfo.gov/. Outside the USA, some countries have equivalent legislation; but even if you're not legally required to produce accessible materials, you might want to do so — it's good business to be inclusive. For example, avoid tiny fonts and grey-on-grey in the navigation bar, or yards of tiny white text on a pale grey background.

Falling standards in graduate literacy

Analysis of over 1000 applications from undergraduates and graduates seeking trainee positions has shown that more than 90% of applicants had disqualified themselves before the end of the first page of their CV. Sometimes the problem was that they addressed their letters to the wrong person or referred to the wrong job, but most often the culprit was spelling mistakes. Students willing to get into debt by up to £21 000 to study at university are ill-equipped to get a job that will enable them to pay off their loans, *The Times* reported (March 18). Trainee editors, of course, are in a somewhat different league . . .

A fungus ate my data!

A special warning for those living in hot and humid climates: researchers in Spain have found a yeast, *Geotrichum candidum*, that can eat holes in compact discs and destroy data stored on them. Receiving a disc from a researcher who had been to Belize, they discovered that its polycarbonate base and aluminium coating were riddled with the fungus, which thrived in the humid and hot conditions prevailing there.

Contributions to News Notes

Please send items for News Notes to Margaret Cooter, BMJ, BMA House, Tavistock Square, London, WC1H 9JR, UK; e-mail mcooter@bmj.com.

Thanks to Marie-Louise Desbarats-Schönbaum and Maureen Phayer for contributions to this issue..

Forthcoming meetings, courses and BELS exams

EMWA 12th annual conference
14-17 May 2003 Lisbon, Portugal
This conference of the European Medical Writers Association will offer 40 workshops on various topics, including essentials of editing and proofreading, speaking in public, using statistics in medical writing, and medical and pharmaceutical English for non-native speakers. (Contact: EMWA Head Office, tel. +44 (0)1923 848 390, fax +44 (0)1923 848 391, e-mail emwa@dial.pipex.com; (see www.emwa.org).

Society for Scholarly Publishing
25th annual meeting
28–30 May 2003 Baltimore, MD
(Contact: SSP, 10200 West 44th Avenue, Suite 304, Wheat Ridge, CO 80033, USA; tel. +1 303-422 3914, fax +1 303-422 8894; www. sspnet.org)

Editing and scientific "truth"
8th General Assembly and Conference of EASE
8–11 June 2003 Bath, UK
Plenary sessions on grey areas of ethics, the evolution of peer review, and conflict of interest, with workshops on plenary session themes, followed by discussion groups with facilitators. See www.ease.org.uk/ ease2003info2.pdf for full details and the registration form and hotel booking form. (Contact: Jenny Gretton, EASE; tel./fax +44 (0)1483-211056, e-mail secretary@ease.org.uk, web site www.ease.org.uk.)

Learning from users
ALPSP seminar
4 July 2003 London, UK
(Contact: ALPSP, tel. +44 (0)1245 260571, e-mail events@alpsp.org, web site www.alpsp.org/calendar.htm, or register at www.alpsp.org/s040703. htm.)

After Gutenberg and Gates: gazing into the e-future
CASE national editors conference
18–19 July 2003 Brisbane, Australia
The Council of Australian Societies of Editors (CASE) is organizing a conference focusing on the changing nature and demands of the market for editors in terms of opportunities and skill requirements, including internet, multimedia and electronic publishing. Issues such as accreditation and marketing the editing profession will also be addressed. (Contact: Robin Bennett, beyondgutenberg@ hotmail.com)

Something for everyone
14th Annual SfEP AGM and conference
20–22 Sept. 2003 Birmingham, UK
(Contact: Society for Editors and Proofreaders, General Secretary, e-mail admin@sfep.org.uk, web site www.sfep.org.uk)

Journals development
ALPSP seminar
23 September 2003 London, UK
(Contact: ALPSP, tel. +44 (0)1245 260571, e-mail events@alpsp.org, web site www.alpsp.org/calendar.htm)

COURSES

ALPSP training courses
The Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers offers courses on electronic marketing; journal production, fulfilment and finance; and related topics. (Contact: ALPSP, 47 Vicarage Road, Chelmsford, Essex, CM2 9BS, UK; tel. +44 (0)1245-260571, fax +44

(0)1245-260935, events@alpsp.org, or see web site www.alpsp.org)

British Library training courses
(Contact: Maureen Heath, Training Courses Administrator, The British Library, Marketing RS&CD, 96 Euston Road, London, NW1 2DB; tel.+44 (0)20-7412 7470, fax +44 (0)20-7412 7947; e-mail maureen.heath@bl.uk; web site www.bl uk.services/stb/courses.html)

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. (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, proofreading, grammar and much else. (See web site www.sfep.org.uk, or contact Lesley Ward, 20 Howard Road, Wokingham, Berks, RG40 2BX, UK, tel. +44 (0)118-979 2571, or e-mail admin@sfep.org.uk.)

Society of Indexers workshops
Workshops for beginners and more experienced indexers in various cities in the UK. See details and down-loadable booking forms on the web site (www.indexers.org.uk), or e-mail admin@indexers.org.uk.

Tim Albert Training
Courses on writing, science writing and setting up publications. (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, web site www.timalbert.co.uk)

University of Chicago Publishing Program
(Contact: Publishing Program, Graham School of General Studies, 5835 S. Kimbark Avenue, Chicago, IL 60637-1608, USA; fax +1 773-702 6814, web site www.grahamschool.uchicago.edu/contact.shtml.)

University of Oxford writing and presentation courses
Courses in Oxford 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 Ebbes Street, Oxford, OX1 1PT, UK; tel. +44 (0)1865 286953, fax +44 (0)1865 286934, e-mail personaldev@conted.ox.ac.uk, web site www.conted.ox.ac.uk/health.)

EXAMINATIONS

Board of Editors in the Life Sciences (BELS) examination schedule
8 June 2003: Bath, UK (EASE meeting) (register by 25 May 2003)
4 November 2003: Miami, Florida (AMWA meeting) (register by 14 October 2003)

For more information, or to take a BELS examination certifying your editing skills and making you an ELS (editor in the life sciences), visit the web site at www.bels.org to obtain the application form and a complete schedule of upcoming examinations, or contact Leslie Neistadt (e-mail: neistadt@hughston.com, fax: +1 706-576 3348, mailing address: Hughston Sports Medicine Foundation, Inc, 6262 Veterans Parkway, Columbus, GA 31909, USA).

The Editor's Bookshelf

The bookshelf is compiled and edited by Mrs Jean Shaw, The Old Rectory, Shoscombe, Bath, BA2 8NB, UK; jgshaw@supanet.com (note new e-mail address). Please send her details of articles or books of interest to editors (after August there will be a new compiler).

Contributions in European languages other than English, especially in French or German, are welcome.

Entries are arranged (roughly) by topic under each heading, not alphabetically by author.

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

Many thanks for those who have sent contributions.

GENERAL

Adam D. 2002. **Royal Institution's director blasts scientific sexism.** Nature (London) 5 Dec; 420:453.
A report by Susan Greenfield, commissioned by the British government, advocates fellowship schemes to retrain women who have taken breaks in their career to start a family.

Weiss P. 2002. **Mystery Academy holds first powwow in private.** Science (Washington DC) 6 Dec; 298:1865.

Gonzalez LS. 2003. **Referees make journal clubs fun.** BMJ 11 Jan; 326:106.
Journal club organized in a debate team format.

Politics of science

van Leeuwen B. 2003. **Keeping scientific advice non-partisan.** The Lancet 8 Feb; 361:527.

Marchetti P. 2003. **Keeping scientific advice non-partisan.** The Lancet 14 Dec; 360:1971.
"You are correct that science should be unbiased, but your editorial was itself the epitome of partisanship."

Drahos P, Braithwaite J. 2002. **Information feudalism: who owns the knowledge economy.** London: Earthscan. 254 p. £35 hbk.
Reviewed in Nature 2003; 421:577–578, 6 Feb.

Malakoff D. 2003. **Universities ask Supreme Court to reverse patent ruling.** Science 3 Jan; 299:26–27.
Recent court ruling upsets the balance between patent holders and the needs of academic researchers.

Eisenberg RS. 2003. **Patent swords and shields.** Science (Washington DC) 14 Feb; 299:1019.
Rejection by the Court of Appeals of an "experimental use defense" has implications for researchers' and university administrators' drive to patenting inventions.

Politics and funding of science

Smith R. 2003. **Closing the digital divide.** BMJ 1 Feb; 326:238.
The Health InterNetwork Access to

Research Initiative is extending access (cheaply) to electronic versions of major health science journals. 42 middle income countries will benefit.

Page J, et al. 2003. **Attitudes of developing world physicians to where medical research is performed and reported.** BMC Public Health 3:6. www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2458/3/6
Open access at URL above. It shows that publishing the results of high quality local research in local journals is likely to be an effective way of getting research findings into practice in developing countries.

Groves T, Nicholas S, Hudson J. 2003. **Donating books and journals to less developed countries.** BMJ 8 Feb; 326:298.
A BMA/BMJ initiative.

[Anon]. 2002. **Fair benefit for research in developing countries.** Science (Washington DC) 13 Dec; 298:2133.
Report from participants at a 2001 conference on ethical aspects of research in developing countries. Covers: benefits to participants, population in general during and after research, collaborative partnership, and transparency.

Haslegrave M, Havard J. 2003. **Ethics dialogue betweeen rich and poor countries is overdue.** BMJ 25 Jan; 326:225.

Anne E. 2003. **The great language conspiracy.** Physics World 16(1):60.
The English language learnt by non-English speaking scientists is that used by English-speaking scientists when writing papers but differs considerably from that used by the same scientists when delivering papers orally. This explains why papers by English-speaking authors are so hard for others to understand at conferences — authors are advised to remember this and "talk posh".

[Anon]. 2002. **Medics sick of rising conference costs.** Nature (London) 19/26 Dec; 420:727.
The growing practice of charging delegates to attend specific sessions prevents the free exchange of ideas at conferences.

Jayaraman KS. 2003. **Indian prime minister pledges to revamp science.** Nature (London) 9 Jan; 421:101.
"India is to mount a determined effort to attract its scientists home from abroad."

Schiermeier Q. 2002. **Funding freeze leaves eastern Germany out in the cold.** Nature (London) 5 Dec; 420:452.
The efforts to boost research in eastern Germany are likely to falter. In the future scientific quality may only be maintained by reducing the number of research departments.

Schiermeier Q. 2002. **Postdoc positions axed as economic crisis takes its toll.** Nature (London) 5 Dec; 420:452.
Perhaps up to 2000 young German scientists will not get research posts as laboratories cancel planned positions.

[Editorial]. 2002. **Coping with a budget reversal.** Nature (London) 5 Dec; 420:447.
Comment on the implications of the German government's cuts in research funding.

[Editorial]. 2002. **Prioritizing Australia.** Nature (London) 12 Dec; 420:591.
Researchers have been set national goals by their government.

Cyranoski D. 2003. **Petition calls for clampdown on absentee Chinese researchers.** Nature (London) 2 Jan; 421:2.
Alleges that some researchers "receive the most sought after grants but fail to devote enough time to research within China."

[Editorial]. 2003. **Overseas abuse of China's development.** Nature (London) 2 Jan; 421:1.
"China must do more to protect the integrity of its policies that encourage greater participation by Chinese researchers overseas."

[Anon]. 2003. **Belarus seeks recompense for poached scientists**. Nature (London) 2 Jan; 421:6.
Western countries and companies will be asked to pay for Belarus-educated academics, i.e. cost of education to doctoral level.

Adam D. 2003. **British chemists warned of impending stagnation.** Nature (London) 9 Jan; 421:100.
An international panel for the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Panel suggests that innovation may be stifled by the close ties to mature chemical industry and the current funding system which does not support long term focused programmes.

Dalton R. 2003. **Bleak outlook for universities as state budget deficits bite.** Nature (London) 2 Jan; 421:5.
Severe cuts are expected in research and departmental budgets.

Blakemore C, et al. 2003. **Is a scientific boycott ever justified?** Nature (London) 23 Jan; 421

Politics of science — security

Malakoff D. 2002. **Academy asks to ease visas for scholars.** Science (Washington DC) 20 Dec; 298:2305–2306.
"Security reviews are causing delays that threaten the health of U.S. science."

Powell K. 2002. **Visa clampdown hits home at U.S. universities.** Nature (London) 28 Nov; 420:349.
More delays and refusals for non-American research visitors and students.

McDowell N. 2002. **Britain failing to bar risky students.** Nature (London) 28 Nov; 420:349.
The Voluntary Vetting System, set up in 1994, is not working. Some departments do not comply and four universities "said they had never heard of the scheme."

Malakoff D. 2002. **New US rules set the stage for tighter security, oversight.** Science (Washington DC) 20 Dec; 298:2304.
Regulations for bioscience laboratories and scientists.

Malakoff D. 2003. **Security rules leave labs wanting more guidance.** Science (Washington DC) 21 Feb; 299:1175.
Some proposals seem counter-productive.

Check E. 2003. **Law sends laboratories into a pathogen panic.** Nature (London) 2 Jan; 421:4.
Some researchers are worried that valuable samples are being dumped because of new laws.

Singh JA, Singer PA. 2002. **Isolationism is not the answer to bioterrorism.** Nature (London) 12 Dec; 420:605.
"Increased support for research in the developing world would be a better strategy."

Science and the public

[Editorial]. 2002. **Trust and how to sustain it.** Nature (London) 19/26 Dec; 420:719.
"Against a background of declining public trust in traditional institutions, scientists must work to retain their high public confidence ratings."

Leshner AI. 2003. **Public engagement with science.** Science (Washington DC) 14 Feb; 299:977.
"...need to respect the public's perspective and concerns ... and we

need to develop a partnership that can respond to them."

Dentzer S. 2003. **Science, public health, and public awareness: lessons from the Women's Health Initiative.** Annals of Internal Medicine 138(4):352–353.
The halting of the Women's Health Initiative trial could have been handled better — in hindsight. The effect of the strategy adopted was "to place the news media in the role of primary communicator of the study findings to both the clinical community and the public."

O'Donnell M. 2002. **On communication — editors and reporters should not be blamed.** BMJ 14 Dec; 325:1423.
Scientists should take some responsibility for communicating responsibly and comprehensibly.

Leifert HI. 2002. **Who broke the embargo? (It's the wrong question).** Physics Today 55(10):48–49.
Argues that the embargoes imposed by *Science* and *Nature* on scientists talking to the press about their work are unnecessary in most cases and only in the interests of the journals themselves.

Smith GD. 2002. **Data dredging, bias or confounding.** BMJ 21-28 Dec; 325:1437.
Such activities may result in "health scare of the week", but may reveal "new and precious associations: the only problem is deciding which ones should go forward."

Hughes P. 2003. **Bright students enjoy correcting textbooks.** Nature (London) 16 Jan; 421:210.
16-17 year olds can amplify and even correct chemistry textbooks using modern technology.

Science and creationism

Witham LA. 2002. **Where Darwin meets the Bible: creationists and evolutionists in America.** New York: Oxford University Press. 338 p. £25/$30.ISBN 0-19-515045-7.
Reviewed in *Science* 2003 (31 Jan);299:664.

Brumfiel G. 2002. **Ousted creationist sues over website.** Nature (London) 12 Dec; 420:597.
A popular physics website is being sued for refusing to publish an alternative Big Bang hypothesis.

Animals in research

Teitelbaum SL. 2002. **Animal rights pressure on scientists.** Science (Washington DC) 22 Nov; 298:1515.
Concern at the increasing use of terror tactics by animal rights activists in the USA.

Smith CG. 2003. **Animal research needs organized defence.** Nature (London) 16 Jan; 421:210.
Letter on the difficulties encountered in providing the information needed.

[Editorial]. 2002. **Promoting animal research.** Nature (London) 5 Dec; 420:447.
"Researchers need to be more active in explaining the value and necessity of their work [with animals]".

PUBLISHING

Abbasi K, et al. 2002. **Four futures for scientific medical publishing.** BMJ 21-26 Dec; 325:1472–1475.
1) Academics publish on the web — mostly. 2) A world of global "conversation". 3) Publishers continue to publish. 4) Large organizations take over.

Smith R. 2003. **The market for medical journals is "anti-competitive" says expert.** BMJ 25 Jan; 326:182.

Waltham M. 2003. **Challenges to the role of publishers.** Learned Publishing 16(1):7–14.
The areas of publishing affected by online availability are identified. Success for publishers rests on their ability to listen and observe online users and adapt their publications to provide value to the research community and libraries.

Swan A, Brown S. 2003. **Authors and electronic publishing: what authors want from the new technology.** Learned Publishing 16(1):28–33.
Results of a survey of "almost 1,250 academic authors around the world" on their views of electronic versions of academic journals.

Delamothe T. 2002. **Is that it? How online articles have changed over the past five years.** BMJ 21-28 Dec; 325:1475.
Predictions of five years ago are compared with what has happened in five general journals.

Editorial. 2003. **Changes in content and services to authors.** Nature (London) 2 Jan; 421:1.
Authors will retain ownership but grant exclusive licence to publish to *Nature*.

Gilchrist A. 2003. **Text retrieval: an overview.** Learned Publishing 16(1):61–69.
Looks at new developments in text retrieval — slanted towards the interests of publishers.

Kohl D. 2003. **Consortial licensing vs. tradition: breaking up is hard to do.** Learned Publishing 16(1):47–63.
Access to journals for library users has been improved by state-wide negotiation with leading publishers — OhioLINK.

Taylor D. 2003. **E-books and the academic market: the emerging supply chain.** Learned Publishing 16(1):70–73.

Open access

Dryburgh A. 2003. **Open-access journals — nice idea, shame about the numbers?** Learned Publishing 16(1):75–76.
Publishing, costs and profits of publishing on-line or print need to be looked at closely.

Jensen M. 2003. **Another loss in the privatisation war: PubScience.** The Lancet 25 Jan; 361:274.
Funding removed "Because the lobbyists of the information industry and a few large publishers made the case for unfair government competition."

Bourne PE. 2003. **Free access to publicly funded databases is vital.** Nature (London) 20 Feb; 421:786.
Letter regretting the shutdown of PubScience.

[Anon]. 2003. **Free-access group secures deal to publish journals.** Nature (London) 2 Jan; 421:6.
The Public Library of Science has received a grant to start publishing its own journal — access will be free but authors will be charged for the expense of peer review and other administrative activities.

Delamothe T. 2003. **"Author pays" may be the new science publishing model.** BMJ 25 Jan; 326:182.
"The hope is that agencies funding the original research will agree to foot the authors' bill."

Eaton L. 2003. **Online medical publishing venture gets under way.** BMJ 4 Jan; 326:11.
The Public Library of Science has received a grant to publish two peer-reviewed online journals. Authors will pay rather than subscribers.

Fletcher G. 2002. **Averting the crisis in medical publishing — open access journals.** He@lth Information on the Internet no. 30(Dec):6–7.
Available at www.biomedcentral.com/html/info/about/FletcherHOITI.

pdf. Reproduced with permission from the Royal Society of Medicine Press Ltd.

Smart P. 2003. **E-journals: developing country access survey.** INASP Newsletter Feb; no.22:13.
Survey of publishers' activities and attitudes towards the provision of their content into less developed countries.

EDITING

Davis RM, Mullner M. 2002. **Editorial independence at medical journals owned by professional associations: a survey of editors.** Science and Engineering Ethics 8(4):514–518.
Of the 33 editors surveyed a substantial minority reported having received "at least some pressure in recent years over editorial content ... Strong safeguards are also needed because editors may have less freedom than they believe."

Problem areas

Davies J. 2003. **Journals: impact factors too highly valued.** Nature (London) 16 Jan; 421:210.
"The more we couple the allocation of resources to publication in 'top' journals, the more we are effectively handing over direction of research to a small group of professional editors."

Pearson H. 2003. **Prospect of human cloning poses dilemma for journals.** Nature (London) 16 Jan; 421:199.

Coombs R. 2003. **War of words over Iraq.** BMJ 25 Jan; 326:230.
Should medical journals have a role in the debate over military intervention?

Delamothe T. 2002. **How political should a general journal be?** BMJ 21-28 Dec; 325:1431.
"There's no easy way to decide."

Anon. 2002. **TV twins pique theorists.** Physics World 15(12):7.
Three papers by Igor and Grichka Bogdanov, which an e-mail had suggested were hoax papers, are papers which a small number of theorists say have some value but most have considered worthless and two of the three journals have said they should not have been published. See cass.eahosting.com/cass/bogdanovs.htm and math.ucr.edu/home/baez/bogdanov.html.

Mojon-Azzi S, et al. 2003. **Journals: redundant publications are bad news.** Nature (London) 16 Jan; 421:209.
Electronic search tool suggests that there are a considerable number of duplicate publications in ophthalmology. This is likely to hold true of other disciplines.

Ottino JM. 2003. **Is a picture worth 1000 words?** Nature (London) 30 Jan; 421:474–476.
Guidelines need to be established concerning what manipulation or enhancement is permissible.

Security

[Editorial]. 2003. **Statement on the consideration of biodefence and biosecurity.** Nature (London) 20 Feb; 421:771.
Following discussions at the U.S. National Academy of Sciences, a group of editors met to discuss issues with reference to the scientific publication process. The statement that emerged is reproduced.

Journal Editors and Authors Group. 2003. **Statement on scientific publication and security.** Science (Washington DC) 21 Feb; 299:1149.
Statement also appeared in *Publications of the National Academy of Sciences* 18 Feb. 2003 and *Nature* 20 Feb. 2003.

Check E. 2003. **U.S. officials urge biologists to vet publications for bioterror risk.** Nature (London) 16 Jan; 421:197.
Some editors have rejected papers for security reasons but it is a difficult area to "police".

Kennedy D. 2002. **Balancing terror and freedom.** Science (Washington DC) 13 Dec; 298:2091.
"The problem is broader than science and needs a comprehensive solution."

Radford T. 2003. **Editors call for responsibility in publishing "dangerous" research.** BMJ 22 Feb; 326:411.

Kennedy D. 2003. **Two cultures.** Science (Washington DC) 21 Feb; 299:1148.
"This new problem is the separation between the cultures of science and security."

Malakoff D. 2003. **Researchers urged to self-censor sensitive data.** Science (Washington DC) 17 Jan; 299:321.

Macy R. 2003. **Scientific freedom: some face a lonely dilemma.** Nature (London) 20 Feb; 421:785.
Iraqi scientists — conflict between law of the land and ethical considerations.

International issues

Saxena S. 2003. **How international are the editorial boards of leading psychiatry journals.** The Lancet 15 Feb; 361:609.
Most leading psychiatry journals have no editors or advisory members from developing countries. This should be corrected.

Horton R. 2003. **Medical journals: evidence of bias against the diseases of poverty.** The Lancet 1 Mar; 361:712.
"A radical cultural transformation is needed within editorial offices of leading medical journals. . . . public service remit of journals needs to be carefully defined and protected."

Hussein J. 2003. **African Association of Editors of Scholarly Journals.** INASP Newsletter Feb; no.22:3.
Notice giving names of editors in the working group and contact e-mail address.

Pearce C. 2003. **Editing an African scholarly journal.** Learned Publishing 16(1):54–60.

Medical journals

Pfeffer, Olsen BR. 2002. **Editorial: Journal of Negative Results in Biomedicine.** Journal of Negative Results in BioMedicine 1(1):[2p]. Available from www.jnrbm.com/content/1/1/2. Introduction to the new journal.

Hebert RS. 2002. **Prominent medical journals often provide insufficient information to assess the validity of studies with negative results.** Journal of Negative Results in BioMedicine 1(1): [5p]. Available from www.jnrbm.com/content/1/1/1.
Analysis of research articles with negative results published in 1997 in *BMJ, JAMA, Lancet, New England Journal of Medicine* and in 1997, 1998 issues of *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

Moher D, et al. 2002. **Reflections on medical journals.** Annals of Internal Medicine 137(12):1011–1012.
Takes issue with some of the statements made by J.P.Kassirer in an editorial — *Annals of Internal Medicine* 2002;137:46-48. Response by Kassirer.

Standards

Straus SE. 2003. **Reporting diagnostic tests.** BMJ 4 Jan; 326:5.
Complying with STARD (Standards for Reporting of Diagnostic Accuracy) is likely to improve the quality of reporting.

[Various]. 2003. **New BMJ policy on economic evaluations.** BMJ 22 Feb; 326:445–446.
Letters: Response of NHS Economic Evaluation Database Research Team; Will the BMJ return clinical trials if submitted without any economic results? Economic evaluations should be judged on scientific merit; Economic evaluations are often based on many studies; Will *The Lancet* play ball? Editor's clarifications.

Standards — databases

Marshall E. 2003. **The UPSIDE of good behavior: make your data freely available.** Science (Washington DC) 14 Feb; 299:990.
Editors and others agree to the Universal Principle of Sharing Integral Data Expeditiously.

Dennis C. 2003. **Draft guidelines ease restriction on use of genome sequence data.** Nature (London) 27 Feb; 421:877–888.
"Existing rules prohibit users from publishing a whole genome analysis before the sequencer's initial publication on the complete genome." This rule will be scrapped.

[Editorial]. 2003. **Sacrifice for the greater good?** Nature (London) 27 Feb; 321:875.
Plan to remove all restrictions on use of genome data may have drawbacks. Editors and peer reviewers must ensure that sufficient credit is given to the originators of such data.

Contents pages, abstracts and references

Kennedy D. 2003. **Happy new year.** Science (Washington DC) 3 Jan; 299:17.
Changes in "navigability" of *Science* — new style table of contents, improvement in the clarity and accessibility of papers published, and guidelines to authors regarding national security.

Hartley J. 2002. **Do structured abstracts take more space? And does it matter?** Journal of Information Science 28(5):417–422.
Correction to previous description in Bookshelf. Structured abstracts take up more space, but, by and large, this does not matter. Suggestions for saving space are considered.

Ding J. 2002. **The structured abstracts writing on medical articles.** Recent Advances in Ophthalmology 22(1):73–74.

Khosrotehrani K, et al. 2002. **Qualité des résumés des articles publiés dans les *Annales de Dermatologie*.** Annales de Dermatologie et de Vénéréologie 129:1271–1275.
Abstract quality was compared in three periods over the past ten years. Structured abstracts have been required since 1993, so that it was possible to compare the quality of structured and unstructured abstracts.

Hartley J. 2002. **On choosing typographic settings for reference lists.** Social Studies of Science 32(5-6): 917–932.
Looks at and discusses the advantages and disadvantages of the major systems in use and the typographic detailing of the various elements in a reference. Suggests that greater clarity might be "achieved by choosing between one or two major referencing styles and using an agreed setting for the elements within both of them."

Ding J. 2002. **The abbreviation rules of the names of journals and persons in the references of medical journals.** Recent Advances in Ophthalmology 22(2):148–149.

Fernandez E, Garcia AM. 2003. **Accuracy of referencing of Spanish names in Medline.** Lancet 25 Jan; 361:351–352.
Double family names and non-English characters cause problems.

Letters

[Editorial]. 2003. **Lancet correspondence: old letters, new rules.** The Lancet 4 Jan; 361:12.
Submit within two weeks, submissions by mail or fax discouraged — use e-mail. Then letters should be timely.

[Various]. 2003. **Old letters new rules.** Lancet 22 Feb; 361:705–706.
Comment on changes.

Curfman GD. 2003. **Innovations in correspondence.** New England Journal of Medicine 23 Jan; 348:344.
Letters to be submitted to the NEJM website within 3 weeks of the original, and short — 175 words. "Freestanding" letters — guidelines unchanged.

Davies S. 2003. **New edicts for letters to the editor.** BMJ 11 Jan; 326:63–64.
"Be electronic, bold, and concise" — no more than 300 words.

Authorship

Flanagin A, Fontanarosa PB, DeAngelis CD. 2002. **Authorship for research groups.** JAMA 25 Dec; 288:3166–3168.
Describes the various ways in which research groups and authors for the group are or are not identified. The National Library of Medicine and ISI are working to link group names and authors so that they are retrievable. *JAMA* continues to require the identification of named and accountable authors for every article.

Drazen JM, Curfman GD. 2002. **On authors and contributors.** New England Journal of Medicine 4 July; 347:55.
All persons listed as authors must meet the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors' criteria for authors but NEJM will no longer limit the number of authors listed.

Hebert RS, Smith CG, Wright SM. 2003. **Minimal prevalence of authorship misrepresentation among internal medicine residency applicants: do previous estimates of "misrepresentation" represent insufficient case finding?** Annals of Internal Medicine 138(5): 390–392.
Previous authors have reported that a significant number of the articles cited by applicants are non-existent or falsely claim authorship. Several search strategies were used to assess this finding and the authors conclude that much of the "misrepresentation" is due to a lack of a comprehensive search strategy.

Peer review

Jefferson T, Shashok K. 2003. **Journals: how to decide what's worth publishing.** Nature (London) 16 Jan; 421:209–210.
Questions the effectiveness of peer review and suggests that other systems should be tried.

Perez Valazquez JL. 2003. **Scientific research and the human condition.** Nature (London) 2 Jan; 421:13.
Peer review is subject to the human fallibilities of the reviewer.

Dominiczak MH. 2003. **Funding should recognize the value of peer review.** Nature (London) 9 Jan; 421:111.
"This service to science is threatened by time constraints and performance assessment." Letter.

White C. 2003. **Little evidence for effectiveness of scientific peer review.** BMJ 1 Feb; 326:241.
A systematic review concluded that there is little hard evidence that peer review improves the quality of published biomedical research.

Williamson A. 2003. **What will happen to peer review?** Learned

Publishing 16(1):15–20.
The benefits and disadvantages of peer review are outlined. Technology has allowed post-publication review and in most other innovations there remains an element of peer review, for which we should be thankful.

Conflict of interest

Barnett T, et al. 2002. **Relationships between pharmaceutical and tobacco companies.** JAMA 288:2973.

Smith R. 2002. **Making progress with competing interests.** BMJ 14 Dec; 325:1375.
Should the scale of financial interests be declared? The BMJ and other journals are making progress but there is "still some way to go".

[Various]. 2002. **Association between competing interests and conclusion.** BMJ 14 Dec; 325:1420.
Letters: Denominator problem needs to be addressed; Reasons for relation are also interesting; Comment by editor.

James A, Horton R. 2003. **The Lancet's policy on conflicts of interest.** The Lancet 4 Jan; 361:8.

Chaudhry S, et al. 2002. **Does declaration of competing interests affect readers' perceptions?** BMJ 14 Dec; 325:1391.
Possibly.

Moynihan R. 2003. **Company launches campaign to "counter" BMJ claims.** BMJ 18 Jan; 326:120.
Paper concerned is on female sexual dysfunction in 4th January issue.

Villaneuva P, et al. 2003. **Accuracy of pharmaceutical advertisements in medical journals.** The Lancet 4 Jan; 361:27.
Caution is still needed if there are bibliographical references to clinical trials in reputable journals.

Fletcher RH. 2003. **Adverts in medical journals: caveat lector.** Lancet 4 Jan; 361:10.
Readers should not take claims in medical adverts at face value even if references are given.

SCIENTIFIC MISCONDUCT

Korn D. 2002. **Scientific misconduct: the state's role has limits.** Nature (London) 19/26 Dec; 420:739.
Objections to the survey being carried out by the Office of Research Integrity focus on two critical elements, which could give rise to misinterpretation of data and imprecise measures.

Teitelbaum SL. 2002. **Scientific misconduct: ORI survey is flawed.** Nature (London) 19/26 Dec; 420:739.
Survey will include records of hearsay and innuendo.

Holden C. 2002. **Planned misconduct surveys meet stiff resistance.** Science (Washington DC) 22 Nov; 298:1549.
"Biomedical societies are criticizing a proposed poll for asking broad questions" and for second hand information.

Greenberg D. 2002. **Misconduct poll prompts fury among scientists.** Lancet 23 Nov; 360:1669.

Ball P. 2002. **Paper trail reveals references go unread by citing authors.** Nature (London) 12 Dec; 420:594.
Study conducted by checking up "how often errors in citation list are passed through other papers." The conclusion is that "four out of five authors had not done their homework". M.V.Simkin and V.P.Roychowdhury. Preprint cond-mat/0212043 http://xxx.lanl.gov;2002.

Mayor S. 2002. **Proposals for UK body to investigate research fraud "lack teeth".** BMJ 14 Dec; 325:1382.
Proposals presented at a meeting of the Committee on Publication Ethics.

Individual cases

Dalton R. 2002. **The stars who fell to earth.** Nature (London) 19/26 Dec; 420:728–729.
A review of scientific misconduct reported in 2002.

Bostanci A, Vogel G. 2002. **German inquiry finds flaws, not fraud.** Science (Washington DC) 22 Nov; 298:1533.
The paper concerned, according to a Gottingen panel, was "not prepared according to good scientific practice". Scientists are still unsure as to whether the data are valid.

Adam D. 2003. **Papers retracted as co-author admits forgery.** Nature (London) 20 Feb; 421:775.
Co-authors had their signatures forged. Retracted paper W. Shamin et al., *New England Journal of Medicine* 347:1320-1333, 2002.

Curfman GD, Morrissey S, Drazen JM. 2003. **Notice of retraction.** New England Journal of Medicine 6 Mar; 348:945.
Of eight persons named as authors some claimed they had never reviewed the original data and most that they "had not seen or approved either the original version or one or more of the three revised versions of the manuscript." Several of the authors' signatures were falsified by a co-author.

Cyranoski D. 2002. **Japan ponders steps to probe data errors.** Nature (London) 28 Nov; 420:348.
The case described indicates that Japan needs a mechanism to investigate allegations of misconduct properly.

[Anon]. 2002. **Complaints prompt inquiry into Indian plagiarism allegations.** Nature (London) 19/26 Dec; 420:726.
A high-energy physicist and his group are accused of making minor changes in almost 30 papers and publishing them under their own names.

Bagla P. 2003. **Panel finds plagiarism by university leader.** Science (Washington DC) 7 Feb; 299:800.
A senior university official and his graduate student were found to have committed plagiarism. The papers they published were nearly identical to one published earlier by a Stanford University professor.

Ball P. 2003. **Physicists fail to find saving grace for falsified research.** Nature (London) 27 Feb; 421:878.
Two teams have attempted to replicate Schön's key work but find that little of use can be salvaged from it.

[Anon]. 2003. **More papers fall foul of Schön enquiry.** Nature (London) 2 Jan; 421:6.
A further six papers have been retracted.

Service RF. 2003. **More of Bell Labs physicist's papers retracted.** Science (Washington DC) 3 Jan; 299:31.

Brinkman WF. 2002. **Scientific fraud — lessons learned.** APS News 11(11):1,4.
Following the report of the committee investigating alleged misconduct at Bell Labs, the President of APS highlights three issues raised: responsibility of co-authors, whether the physics community is appropriately alert to the characteristics of misconduct, and whether the scientific process worked efficiently in revealing this fraud.

Abbott A. 2003. **Ethics panel attacks environment book.** Nature (London) 16 Jan; 421:201.
The Danish Committees on Scientific Dishonesty have ruled that the author of a book about the global environment has "misused scientific data to support his arguments."

White C. 2003. **Environmentalist accused of scientific dishonesty.** BMJ 18 Jan; 326:120.

Abbott A. 2003. **Social scientists call for the abolition of dishonesty committee.** Nature (London) 13 Feb; 421:681.
Following its controversial ruling on Bjorn Lomborg's book, the Danish Committee on Scientific Dishonesty is under fire.

WRITING AND READING

[Editorial]. 2003. **How to publish in Nature.** Nature (London) 20 Feb; 421:769.
There is a need to "communicate more effectively with important non-specialists."

Sharp D. 2002. **Two Ps better than one?** The Lancet 21-28 Dec; 360:2002.
Try reading the old fashioned way and compare it with a PowerPoint presentation.

Hartley J, Sotto E, Pennebaker J. 2003. **Speaking versus typing: a case study of the effects of using voice-recognition software on academic correspondence.** British Journal of Educational Technology 34 (1):5–16.
Although there were large differences between the experience of writing with the two technologies there were few differences between the final products.

Weeks WB, Wallace AE. 2002. **Readability of British and American medical prose at the start of the 21st century.** BMJ 21-28 Dec; 325:1451.
Results are given for *BMJ* and *JAMA* — but all articles are difficult to read.

Burrough-Boenisch J. 2003. **Examining present tense conventions in scientific writing in the light of reader reactions to three Dutch-authored discussions.** English for Specific Purposes 22(1):2–5.
In a reception study 45 readers from eight countries evaluated and annotated the same three Discussion sections written by Dutch biologists. The readers' responses to the preponderance of the present tense in the texts appeared to be inconsistent. Possible reasons are suggested and the implications of the findings for writers, teachers, editors and reviewers are discussed.

Lagnado M. 2003. **Professional writing assistance; effects on biomedical publishing.** Learned Publishing 16(1):21–27.

Evers H. 2002?. **Internetjournalistiek: nieuwe ethische vragen?** Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Askant. 100 p. €12.00. ISBN 90-5260-060-0.

Obituary

Ole Kristian Harlem
5 September 1917–14 March 2003

Dr Ole Kristian Harlem died on 14 March 2003 at the age of 85, after a few years of declining health.

Dr Harlem, who was a paediatrician by training, was editor of the *Journal of the Norwegian Medical Association* from 1962 until he retired in 1987. For 25 years he was "the" editor to more than a generation of Norwegian physicians. He was a prominent figure in Norwegian medicine and media as vice-president of the Norwegian Medical Association (1957–61) and president of the Norwegian Specialized Press Association (1967–72). He was made an Officer of the Royal Norwegian Order of St Olav in 1984.

His mission is reflected in the title of a Festschrift for his 70th birthday: "Knowledge is power — and should be shared with others." Communication and medical education were his main interests and in this he was a real pioneer. "The medical curriculum should be closely related to the health care service" and "Medicine — a lifelong study" were his slogans. His enthusiasm and creativity were shown when he chaired the task force which planned the integrated curriculum of the new medical school at the University of Tromsø in the 1960s. As a medical editor he produced audio tapes with medical updates for Norwegian doctors, who could bring with them the voice of Dr Harlem when doing house calls. Decades before health education through mass media was generally accepted within the scientific community, he published health books for children, and he wrote his own column on health and leadership in business magazines. In 1977 he published *Communication in medicine. A challenge to the profession* (Karger, Basel).

Dr Ole K. Harlem at the EASE meeting in Norway, 1985.

Dr Harlem was internationally oriented and had friends all over the world. Among his international activities he served as President of the World Medical Association (1970–1971) and as a member of the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (1979–1987).

To EASE he will be remembered as a long-time active and popular member. He joined EASE's predecessor, ELSE, in 1981 and was coopted onto EASE's Council in 1983 when he began organizing the association's first conference, held in 1985 at Soria Moria, Voksenkollen, near Oslo, Norway. He remained on the Council as an elected member from 1985 to 1994, becoming a Vice-President for the 1991–1994 term. He also attended many meetings of the editorial board of *ESE* and joined it officially in 1991. When he retired in 1994 he was made an honorary member of EASE.

OK were his initials as well as his positive attitude to life and friends. He loved music and enjoyed singing. A keen sportsman in his younger years, he still kept up with his swimming after retirement. Ole K. Harlem will be remembered as a good friend and a kind man.

Magne Nylenna
Former editor, *Journal of the Norwegian Medical Association*
magne.nylenna@samfunnsmed.uio.no

Membership list additions and changes

NEW AND REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

Corporate members

Finnish Institute of Occupational Health
Publication Office
Topeliuksenkatu 41 a A
FIN-00250 Helsinki
Finland
Tel: +358 047 471
Anna-Liisa Karhula
Vappu Laine

International Society Addiction Journal Editors(ISAJE)
National Addiction Centre
4 Windsor Walk
London SE5 8EF, UK
+44(0)20 7848 0853
Mrs Susan Savva
Addiction
s.savva@iop.kcl.ac.uk
Dr Kerstin Stenius
Nordisk Alkohol och Narkotikatidskrift
Mr Richard Pates
Journal of Substance Use

The Lancet
32 Jamestown Road
London NW1 7BJ,UK
Tel:+44 (0)20 7424 4910
Lucy Banham
Dr Helen Frankish
Wendy Sharpe
Dr Helen Swannie
Dr Charles Young

Oikos
Oikos Editorial Office
Ecology Building
University of Lund
SE-223 62 Lund
Sweden
Tel: +46 46 222 3791
Mr Roland Sandberg
JAB@ekol.lu.se

Pharmaceutical Press
1 Lambeth High Street
London SE1 7JN UK
+44 (0)20 7735 9141
Helen Bond
hbond@rpsgb.org.uk
Eric Connor
econnor@rpsgb.org.uk

Royal Society of Chemistry
Thomas Graham House
Science Park, Milton Road
Cambridge, CB4 4WF, UK
Tel: +44 (0)1223 420077
acquisitions@rsc.org
Dr Graham McCann

SENSE
Dennis Bodde
Postbus 63075
NL-3002 JB Rotterdam
The Netherlands
Tel: +31 (0)10 276 0663
ast@euronet.nl

Aart van den End
Sophialaarn 27/s
NL-3708 HC Zeist
The Netherlands
Tel: +31 (0)30 693 3126
gateway@tip.nl
Katrina Emmett
Idenslaan 6
NL-1871 DS Schoorl
The Netherlands
Tel: +31 (0)72 509 1875

Taylor & Francis
Professor Timothy J Peters
Addiction Research Unit
National Addiction Centre
4 Windsor Walk
London SE5 8AF, UK

Individual members

Mrs Elisabeth Baker
Medical Education, Peninsula Medical School
ITTC, Tamar Science Park
1 Davy Road
Plymouth, PL6 8BX, UK

Ms Bronwyn P Bennett
5-5-13-301 Tenjin
Chuo-ku
Fukuoka 810-0001
Japan
Tel: +81 092 883 3814
bronith@hotmail.com

Ms Sarah Cooney
Society of Chemical Industry
14/15 Belgrave Square
London, SW1X 8PS, UK
Tel: +44 (0)20 7598 1500
secretariat@soci.org

Dr David Cruickshank
Applied Probability Trust
School of Mathematics & Statistics
University of Sheffield
Sheffield S3 7RH, UK
Tel: +44 (0)114 222 3921
Journal of Applied Probability

Dr Serena Cubie
British Society of Rheumatology
41 Eagle Street
London, WC1R 4TL, UK
Tel:44 (0)20 7841 5190
editorial@rheumatology.org.uk
Rheumatology

Dr John S Dowden
Unit 3, 2 Phipps Close
Deakin, ACT 2600
Australia
Tel:+61 2 6282 6755
info@australianprescriber.com
Australian Prescriber

Dr Jean M Emeny
MRC Institute for Environment & Health
94 Regent Road
Leicester, LE11 7DD, UK
Tel: +44 (0)116 223 1618
jme10@le.ac.uk

Dr Rodolfo Gozalo
Departmento Geologia
Universitat Valencia
Calle Dr Moliner 50
E-46100 Burjassot
Spain
Tel: +34 963 544 398
rodolfo.gozalo@uv.es
Revista Española Paleontologia

Mr Neil J Hough
27 Wadham Gardens
Greenford, UB6 0BP, UK
Tel: +44 (0)20 8200 6868
nhough@phls.org.uk
Communicable Disease Report

Mr Torben Kitaj
Ugeskrift for Laeger
Trondhjemsgade 9
DK-2100 Copenhagen O
Denmark
Tel:+45 35 44 8275
tki@dadl.dk
Danish Medical Journal

Dr Karin A Mesches
7012 East Mountain Brush Circle
Highlands Ranch
CO 80130
USA
Tel: +1 720 351 7387
editor@scitechedit.com

Mr Paul J H Neate
IPGRI
Via dei Tre Denari 472/a
Maccarese
I-00057 Rome
Italy
Tel: +39 06 611 8233
p.neate@cgiar.org

Dr Masaaki Osanai
1-602 Koen-higashi-no-machi
2-1-1 Utase Mihama-ku
Chiba, 261-0013, Japan
Tel: +81 43 296 5042
m.osanai@elsevier.com

Dr Vaino Sinisalu
Pepleri 32
EE-51010, Tartu
Estonia
eestiarst@eestiarst.ee
Easti Arst

Professor Arnulf Skjennald
Department of Radiology
Ullevaal University Hospital
NO-0407 Oslo
Norway
Acta Radiologica

Kate Sutton
100 Sarah Wells Trail
Campbell Hall
NY 10916, USA
Tel: +1 201 831 5885
ksutton@howodst.com
Freelance

Mr Peter Thorpe
British Council (Bangladesh)
C/o FCO
King Charles Street
London SW1A 2AH, UK
Tel: +880 2 989 9225
p.thorpe@icddrb.org
Journal of Health, Population & Nutrition

Anne Vézina
Int Network Improvement Banana & Plantain
Parc Scientifique Agropolis II
F-34397 Montpelier
France
Tel: +33 4 6761 1302
a.vezina@cgiar.org
Infomusa

CHANGES

Individual members

Martha H Brookes
3560 NW Harrison Blvd
Corvallis OR 97330, USA

Dr Patricia Butler
211 rue des Fontanettes
F-01220 Divonne-les-Bains
France
Tel: +33 450 200594
pbutler@free.fr

Dr Heliane Campanatti-Ostiz
Pró-Fono Rev Atualizaçä Cientifica
Rua Gêmeos 22
Condominio Alphaville
Conde 1, Barueri
San Paulo 06473-020
Brazil

Ms Kathleen Case
American Association
Cancer Research
615 Chestnut Street, 17th
Floor
Philadelphia PA 19106-4404
USA
Tel: +1 215 440 9414
case@aacr.org
Cancer Research

Dr Stephen de Looze
Covidence GmbH
Helfmann-Park 2
D-65760 Eschborn, Germany
Tel: +49 6196 7709 313

Ms Martha Edington
Radiation Research
9139 Kettering Way
Knoxville TN 37923-7704
USA
Tel: +1 865 574 1251
edingtonms@ornl.gov
Radiation Research

Dr Susan Kentner
Avenue du Derby 55
Boîte 2
B-1050 Bruxelles, Belgium
Tel: +32 (0)2675 4347
susan.kentner@t-online.de

Dr David F Mason
Servier International
Medical Publishing Division
192 Avenue
Charles-de-Gaulle
F-92578 Neuilly-sur-Seine
Cedex, France
Tel:+33 1 4641 6717
david.mason@fr.netgrs.com
Medicographia

Dr Magne Nylenna
Folloveien 13
NO-1400 Ski, Norway.
Tel: +47 6487 1193

Dr Angela Oleandri
Via Saragozza 12
Società Italiana di Fisica
I-401123 Bologna, Italy
Tel:+39 (0)51 581569
oleandri@sif.it

Dr Joseph Ranstam
Uardavägen 54 D
SE-224 71 Lund, Sweden

Dr Fran Reader
Faculty of Family Planning
& Reproductive Health Care
27 Sussex Place
London, NW11 4RG, UK
Tel: +44 (0)20 7724 5524
journal@ffprhc.org.uk
British Journal of Family Planning and Reproductive Health Care

Dr Lewis Rowett
Dept of Clinical
Pharmacology
University of Oxford
Radcliffe Infirmary
Woodstock Road
Oxford, OX2 6HE, UK
Tel:+44 (0)1856 224873
lewis@esmo.org
Annals of Oncology

Mr Reuben Sengere
Coffee Research Insitute
PO Box 470
Ukarumpa, EPH
Papua New Guinea
Tel: 675 737 3511
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Professor Hong XIAO
319 Yue-yang Road
Shanghai 20003
China (P.R.)
Tel: +86 21 643 10500
hxiao@mail.shcnc.ac.cn

DEATH

We much regret to announce the death of Dr Ole K. Harlem (obituary in this issue).

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