Contributions for the journal should be sent to the Chief Editor or the appropriate section editor listed above. See the Instructions to authors on Ease's website (www.ease.org.uk).
The journal is published in February, May, August and November, free to paid-up members of EASE and available on annual subscription of £54 to libraries and other non-members.

ISSN 0258-3127
Printed by MPG Impressions, Chessington, Surrey GB-KT9 2NY

From the Editors' Desks

A new look for EASE

You will be aware that the public face of EASE – its logo and visual identity – has had a facelift. This is the result of a three-year effort.

A designer submitted a suite of logo ideas, and what emerged in Council's discussions was a sense that we should maintain some continuity with the original logo, that any changes should be consistent with our mission statement and best features (skills, communication, fellowship), but that we needed to project a more dynamic image in the light of changes in the world of science publishing and also the changing face of Europe.

The result was the logo and promotional flyer that circulated in Krakow, followed by the redesigned ESE cover that you have in hand.

The blue colour provides a link with the EASE identity from before, but the diagonal thrust suggests energy and movement towards the future. Against this sober backdrop the red lettering of EASE offers a touch of glamour and draws attention to our acronym, while the prominent positioning of our internet address both defines the edge of the logo and tells people where to find us.

Membership rates for 2007

The full membership rate remains £66, with retired people and those over 60 paying the reduced rate of £33. Invoices for 2007 were sent out in January – many thanks to those who have already paid. If you have not received yours, please contact Sheila.

Going to a conference?

If you are going to an editing meeting or other meeting of interest to editors, or likely to be attended by editors, please keep two things in mind. ESE is always looking for reports of meetings of interest to editors, so capture those important topics and thoughts and share them with your colleagues in the pages of ESE.

Also, please take a few of the colourful EASE leaflets in your briefcase and make them available to conference attendees. The leaflets are available from the EASE Secretary, Sheila Evered (secretary@ease.org.uk).

Contributions for next issue

The copy date for the next issue of ESE (August 2007) is **15 June 2007**. Please send contributions to the appropriate member of the publications committee (see list on left) by then.

Articles

Some reflections on plagiarism: the problem of paraphrasing in the sciences

Miguel Roig
Department of Psychology, St John's University, New York 11439, USA; roigm@stjohns.edu

Abstract

Traditional definitions of plagiarism typically fail to provide discussion of its more subtle manifestations, some of which may occur with greater frequency than the more egregious forms. One particular area that is in need of clarification is the process of paraphrasing, specifically, the extent to which text must be modified to qualify as an adequate paraphrase as opposed to an instance of plagiarism. This paper examines some discrepancies in existing guidance on paraphrasing and plagiarism and makes a recommendation that is consistent with the US Office of Research Integrity's definition of research misconduct.

Although most scientists are familiar with the concept of plagiarism, the reality is that this ethical transgression can be much more complex than how it is typically portrayed in most official sources, such as standard dictionaries or institutional guidelines. Dictionaries define plagiarism as an author's misuse of others' material (words, ideas, or data) in a way that misleads a reader into believing that such material was that author's own creative product. Some professional writing guides provide more substantive coverage of this important subject, but some do not even mention the concept (Roig and DeJacquant 2002). Similarly, journals' instructions to authors offer some guidance on plagiarism and other authorship matters, but many provide little or no relevant information (Scheetz 2002; Roig and Marks 2004). Professional societies' codes of ethics are another potential resource for authors to consult but, as with journals' instructions to authors, the extent of guidance varies significantly across societies (Iverson et al 2003; Roig 2006b).

Definitions of plagiarism: the US perspective

The two US agencies that investigate cases of plagiarism in the sciences are the US Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Research Integrity (ORI; http://ori.dhhs.gov) and the National Science Foundation's (NSF) Office of the Inspector General (http://www.nsf.gov/oig/). These federal entities investigate scientific misconduct in publicly funded research and both agencies provide definitions of plagiarism. For example, as a form of scientific misconduct, "ORI considers plagiarism to include both the theft or misappropriation of intellectual property and the substantial unattributed textual copying of another's work" (ORI's policy on plagiarism, ORI 1994). In addition, ORI stipulates that "[t]he theft or misappropriation of intellectual property includes the unauthorized use of ideas or unique methods obtained by a privileged communication, such as a grant or manuscript review" (ORI 1994). NSF holds that plagiarism is "the appropriation of another person's ideas, processes, results or words without giving appropriate credit" and can occur at any stage of the research process from proposing research to reporting its results (Code of Federal Regulations, 45 CFR 689.1. 2002).

The above guidelines are similar to those established by European entities such as the Committee on Publication Ethics (http://www.publicationethics.org.uk/guidelines). One important difference between how the two US agencies define plagiarism lies in the fact that ORI does not consider authorship disputes as instances of plagiarism whereas NSF does. Such a difference probably accounts for the discrepancy in the incidence of plagiarism reported by each agency: of the cases of misconduct handled by ORI between 1992 and 2005, 12% involved plagiarism (Price 2006)—yet during a similar period NSF reported a much higher figure of 66% (Kroll 2005).

Finding the true prevalence

Perhaps such discrepancies are part of the reason why it is so difficult to estimate the true prevalence of plagiarism. In one study by Martinson et al (2005), 1.4% of a sample of 3247 US scientists reported using another's ideas without permission or failing to give due credit. More recently, a study of 600 grant proposals submitted to NSF indicated that approximately 2.5% contained unattributed copying from other sources. No differences between disciplines (for example, physics, chemistry) were detected, but proposals from certain areas (NSF career enhancement) yielded significantly higher copying rates (15%) than those from other areas (OIG Semiannual Report 2006).

Most of the existing data on plagiarism are based on the misappropriation of text. Little if any data exist on the plagiarism of ideas or images, though at least two of the cases described by Price (2006) involved the plagiarism of images, and another case has been recently described by Aguirre (2004). The availability of powerful image-processing software has made the inappropriate manipulation of images one of the fastest growing areas of concern within the domain of research misconduct (Couzin 2006) and has prompted the development of some helpful guidelines (Rossner and Yamada, 2004).

An examination of inappropriate paraphrasing as it relates to plagiarism

One insidious form of plagiarism occurs when an author chooses to paraphrase others' work, adds a citation, but provides few, if any, modifications to the original text. In a

series of studies, Roig (2001) asked college and university professors to make judgments about whether various paragraphs had been plagiarized or correctly paraphrased. He also asked them to paraphrase paragraphs to the best of their ability and in a manner that would not constitute plagiarism. The results indicated that a substantial percentage of professors judged rewritten paragraphs using paraphrasing criteria that could easily be characterized as plagiarism by others. Using these techniques, students have been found to be even worse offenders (Roig 1997; 1999). The sample size obtained in the studies with professors was not sufficiently large to discern differences between various disciplines, but in an earlier, similar study, Julliard (1994) reported that, relative to English faculty and medical students, physicians were more willing to appropriate portions of text as long as a citation was included. Other evidence shows that a considerable proportion of medical students plagiarize (Rennie and Crosby, 2001; Bilić-Zulle et al. 2005).

How different?

The question of how much original text should be modified to be considered an appropriate paraphrase is noteworthy because there seems to be a discrepancy between the few authoritative sources that provide guidance of this topic. For example, in discussing an incident of plagiarism in the field of psychology a plagiarized author explained how minor modifications to the misappropriated text and the addition of a citation would have been sufficient to stem a charge of plagiarism (Saxe 1996). Yet, some editors in this same discipline have complained about authors' inappropriate use of close paraphrases (Levin and Marshall 1993). Certainly, most of the student and professional writing guides that cover paraphrasing suggest that substantial modifications are necessary. Consider the following examples:

- "When paraphrasing, you restate an author's ideas in your own words. A good paraphrase retains the organization, emphasis, and often many of the details of the original passage" (Kennedy et al 2002).
- "Changing a word here and there and reversing the order of phrases is not sufficient, even though you give credit in a footnote . . . Do not substitute synonyms here and there or rearrange sentence elements" (Campbell et al 1990).
- "You also plagiarize when you use words so close to those in your source, that if your work were placed next to the source, it would be obvious that you could not have written what you did without the source at your elbow" (Booth et al 1995).

An undergraduate writing guide in biology that covers paraphrasing provides similar guidance:

- "Express your own thoughts in your own words . . . Note, too, that simply changing a few words here and there, or changing the order of a few words in a sentence or paragraph, is still plagiarism. Plagiarism is one of the most serious crimes in academia" (Pechenik 2000).

One rule for all

Surely these rules of scientific and scholarly writing aimed at students should be equally applicable to more experienced professionals? The publication manual of the American Psychological Association (APA 2001) is one of the few resources for academic writers that provides discussion on paraphrasing. However, its guidance is somewhat misleading as the manual seems to treat paraphrasing and summarizing as the same processes. In addition, it seems to advocate light modifications of text when paraphrasing: "*Each time* you paraphrase another author (i.e., summarize a passage or rearrange the order of a sentence and change some of the words), you will need to credit the source in the text." But the manual does provide a combined example of paraphrasing and summarizing that is fully consistent with the more traditional definitions that urge substantial modifications.

One other major writing manual, the American Medical Association's manual of style (Iverson et al 1998), offers a relatively lengthy discussion of plagiarism, but provides only a short paragraph on paraphrasing. Regrettably, this resource merely identifies paraphrasing as a form of plagiarism when it occurs in the absence of a citation to the original. Given the importance of this topic, it is unfortunate that most other manuals do not address it.

Scientific misconduct?

In its definition of plagiarism ORI (1994) elaborates further on the use of others' text as a form of scientific misconduct: "Substantial unattributed textual copying of another's work means the unattributed verbatim or nearly verbatim copying of sentences and paragraphs which materially mislead the ordinary reader regarding the contributions of the author." Unfortunately, the term "substantial" is never operationally defined, so it is not clear what amount of verbatim, unattributed text triggers a determination of plagiarism. In addition, "ORI generally does not pursue the limited use of identical or nearly-identical phrases which describe a commonly-used methodology or previous research because ORI does not consider such use as substantially misleading to the reader or of great significance." Accordingly, a scientist may have committed plagiarism, but in the view of ORI the plagiarism may not be sufficient to warrant a charge of misconduct. In fact, according to Price (2005), two cases referred to ORI in which the institutions had found plagiarism were dismissed by that agency as not constituting instances of research misconduct.

Although ORI's definition may seem unreasonably liberal, it is important to have a certain degree of flexibility in definitions of plagiarism and paraphrasing as they apply to writing in the sciences. As argued elsewhere (Roig 2006a), writing scientific, technical papers is not an easy task. Authors must work with very precise terminology for which equivalent substitutes may not be available. For example, consider how difficult it would be to thoroughly paraphrase the following short paragraph:

"The addition of iRap led to the translocation of the fluorescent CF-Inp from the cytosol to the plasma

membrane and a reciprocal translocation of YFP-PH(PLC-δ) from the plasma membrane to the cytosol, demonstrating inducible accumulation of the Inp54p enzyme at the plasma membrane in situ PI(4,5)P_2" (Suh et al 2006).

This particular segment would be very difficult to modify substantially without altering its precise meaning. Thus, a thorough paraphrase is not desirable in this case, particularly if this material were derived from a methodology section. If we were to insist that all Methods sections be thoroughly paraphrased, as advocated by traditional writing guides, we would run the risk of introducing changes in how this material might be interpreted and such misinterpretations could have serious negative consequences in instances where a replication of a study is being attempted. One alternative would be to encourage authors to select the material in question and enclose it quotation marks. However, for aesthetic or other reasons, this practice does not seem to be encouraged in the sciences.

Conclusions

On the basis of the above considerations, perhaps there can be general agreement that when paraphrasing material from other sources we should always insist that any original text be substantially modified. However, we should also be able to exercise flexibility when the original text is highly technical and possibly when the authors are not proficient in English (Vessal and Habibzadeh, 2007). Thus, ORI's recommendation of not pursuing "the limited use of identical or nearly-identical phrases which describe a commonly-used methodology" could be applied when limited amounts of lightly paraphrased material are used in highly technical, methodology sections, though perhaps not in other sections, such as in a literature review or discussion. Of course, as dictated by standard scholarly practices, all paraphrasing must always be accompanied by a citation that acknowledges the source of the original material.

Assuming that there is general agreement as to the soundness of such guidance, the next step would be to disseminate these standards to the scientific community. Certainly, the current practice by journals, professional societies, and other regulatory bodies of simply defining plagiarism and asking authors not to plagiarize needs to be replaced with a more detailed and meaningful discussion of this type of misconduct, its many manifestations, and steps to avoid them.

This article is based on a keynote presentation at the Mediterranean Editors and Translators conference "Plagiarism in the sciences: What do we really know?" held in Barcelona, 28 October 2006.

References

Aguirre J. 2004. Plagiarism in palaeontology. A new threat within the scientific community. *Revista Española de Micropaleontologia* 36(2):349–352.

APA. 2001. *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association*. 5th ed. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Bilić-Zulle L, Frković F, Turk T, Ažman J, Petrovečki M. 2005. Prevalence of plagiarism among medical students. *Croatian Medical Journal* 46:126–131.

Booth, WC, Colomb, GG, Williams, JM. 1995. *The craft of research*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Campbell WG, Ballou SV, Slade, C. 1990. Form and *Style: Theses, Reports, Term Pa*pers (8th ed). Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Code of Federal Regulations: 45 CFR 689.1. 2002. http://a257.g.akamaitech.net/7/257/2422/14mar20010800/edocket.access.gpo.gov/cfr_2002/octqtr/pdf/45cfr689.1.pdf (accessed 2006 August 30).

Couzin J. 2006. Don't pretty up that picture just yet. *Science* 314(5807):1868–1866.

Iverson C, Flanagin A, Fontanarosa PB, Glass RM, Glitman P, Lantz JC, Meyer H, Smith JM, Winker MA, Young RK. 1998. *American Medical Association manual of style. a guide for authors and editors*. 8th ed. Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins..

Iverson MM, Frankel M, Siang S. 2003. Scientific societies and research integrity: What are they doing and how well are they doing it? *Science and Engineering Ethics* 9:141–58.

Julliard K. 1994. Perceptions of plagiarism in the use of other author's language. *Family Medicine* 26:356–360.

Kennedy XJ, Kennedy DM, Holladay SA. 2002. *The Bedford guide for college writers*. 6th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's Press.

Kroll, J. 2005. "It's not plagiarism, it's poor citation practice" and other classic quotes from NSF Research Misconduct cases. Paper presented at the Conference on Plagiarism across the Science Disciplines, New York.

Levin JR, Marshall H. 1993. Publishing in the Journal of Educational Psychology: Reflections at Midstream [editorial]. *Journal of Educational Psychology* 85(1):3–6.

Martinson BC, Anderson MS, de Vries, R. 2005. Scientists behaving badly. *Nature* 435:737–738.

OIG Semiannual Review to Congress 2006. Computer software used to catch plagiarism. http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2006/oigmarch2006/oigmarch2006_4.pdf (accessed 2006 November 12).

ORI. 1994. ORI's working definition of plagiarism. *ORI Newsletter* 3(1):3. http://ori.dhhs.gov/policies/plagiarism.shtml (accessed 2006 August 30).

Pechenik JA. 2000. *A short guide to writing about biology*. 4th ed. New York: Addison Wesley Longman.

Price A. 2005. Misconduct cases involving plagiarism handled by the HHS Office of Research Integrity. Paper presented at the Conference on Plagiarism across the Science Disciplines, New York.

Price A. 2006. Cases of Plagiarism Handled by the United States Office of Research Integrity 1992-2005. *Plagiary* 1(1):1–11. http://www.plagiary.org/cases_of_plagiarism_handled_by_the_ORI.pdf (accessed 2006 December 15).

Rennie SC, Crosby JR. 2001. Are "tomorrow's doctors" honest? Questionnaire study exploring medical students' attitudes and reported behaviour on academic misconduct. *BMJ* 322:274–275.

Roig M. 1997. Can undergraduate students determine whether text has been plagiarized? *Psychological Record* 47:113–122.

Roig M. 1999. When college students' attempts at paraphrasing become instances of potential plagiarism. *Psychological Reports* 84:973–982.

Roig M. 2001. Plagiarism and paraphrasing criteria of college and university professors. *Ethics & Behavior* 11(3):307–323.
Roig M. 2006a. Ethical writing should be taught. *BMJ* 16;333(7568):596–597.
Roig M. 2006b. Coverage of Authorship and Publication Practices in Scientific Societies' Ethics Codes. Paper presented at the fourth Office of Research Integrity's conference on Research Integrity, Tampa, FL.
Roig M, deJacquant J. 2002. Guidelines on plagiarism in writing manuals across various disciplines. In: *Proceedings: Investigating Research Integrity*. Washington, DC, Department of Health and Human Services:281–284. http://ori.dhhs.gov/documents/proceedings_rri.pdf.
Roig M, Marks A. 2004. Integrity in 'instructions to authors': an exploratory study in a sample of psychology journals. Paper presented at the Office of Research Integrity's (ORI) Third Research on Research Integrity Conference, San Diego, CA.
Rossner M, Yamada KM. 2004. What's in a picture? The temptation of image manipulation. *Journal of Cell Biology* 166(1):11–15. http://www.jcb.org/cgi/reprint/166/1/11 (accessed 2006 January 2).
Saxe L. 1996. Scientific integrity: We have met the enemy and it is us. *APS Observer* 9(16):20.
Scheetz MD. 2002. Promoting integrity through "instructions to authors" – a preliminary analysis. In: Proceedings: Investigating Research Integrity. Washington, DC, Department of Health and Human Services: 285-295. http://ori.hhs.gov/documents/instructions_authors.pdf (accessed 2007 March 5).
Suh B-C, Inoue T, Meyer T, Hille B. 2006. Rapid chemically induced changes of PtdIns(4,5)P_2 gate KCNQ ion channels. *Science* 314(5804):1454–1457.
Vessal K. Habibzadeh F. 2007. Rules of the game of scientific writing: fair play and plagiarism. *Lancet* 369(9562): 641. http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140673607603079/fulltext (accessed 2007 March 1).

Clarifying the subheadings of structured abstracts

James Hartley
School of Psychology, Keele University, Staffordshire, ST5 5BG, UK; j.hartley@psy.keele.ac.uk

Abstract
Background: Structured abstracts were introduced into medical research journals in the mid-1980s. Since then they have been widely used but there are inconsistencies in the number of subheadings provided.
Aim: To assess the difficulties that arise when certain subheadings are proscribed in a journal's "Instructions to authors". Three studies are reported.
Method: Each study examines how the authors handle the problem of what to do with the "Background" and "Aims" of their studies when the abstracts require them to omit *either* subheading, "Background" *or* "Aim".
Results: In all three studies over one-third of the authors provided *both* the "Background" and "Aim" of their studies despite the fact that only *one* of these subheadings was allowed.
Conclusions: Journals should have at least five subheadings for their structured abstracts, two of which should be "Background" and "Aim(s)". These two pieces of information are of value to the readers, and should be separated.

The rise in the use of structured abstracts, and indeed in research on their effects, has been well documented.[1-3] This paper takes it for granted that the findings support the effectiveness of structured abstracts in general, and it focuses on more particular concerns: the meaning of the subheadings in structured abstracts, and their number.

The issues are ones of consistency and sufficiency.[2] Whilst it is clear that not all articles will fit a given format, readers would be helped by more consistency than appears to be the case at present. Currently approximately one-third of the structured abstracts published in medical journals use eight subheadings, and two-thirds use variations on the five subheadings used in the abstract to this article.[3] Indeed, one author has put it on record that only four subheadings ("Background", "Materials and Methods", "Results", and "Conclusions") are required.[4] In my view, at least five subheadings are required – "Background", "Aims", "Methods", "Results", and "Conclusions" – since these match the standard format of the traditional research article.

This paper focuses on this particular issue and asks, "What do authors do when they are instructed to use structured abstracts with four or five subheadings and when one of the key subheadings is omitted?"

Method

Three studies assessed the proportion of authors that (i) only reported the "Aims" of their study, or (ii) only reported the "Background", or (iii) reported both, when they were only allowed the single heading of "Aim" or "Background" (or their equivalents).

Study 1 — In Journal One, authors were instructed to use four subheadings, "Background", "Method", "Results", and "Conclusions" in their articles. Thus "Aims" were not included. On reading the abstracts it appeared to me that this had led to difficulties for these authors and a lack of clarity for their readers.[5]

To test this further a colleague and I examined separately 100 consecutive abstracts in the journal. For each one we classified the text written under "Background" into one of three possible subgroups: "Aim" alone, "Background"

Examples of classification of the texts

"Aim" alone—"This paper examines the social and psychological impact on victims of stalking."

"Background" alone—"Little information is available on the costs of residential care for people with mental health problems, and there are few research data on how or why the costs of provision vary."

"Background" and "Aim" together—"Delusions are assumed to reflect disordered reasoning, but with little empirical support. We attempted to study this in 16 relatively intelligent deluded patients and 16 normal volunteers."

alone, or "Background and Aim" together. The box provides examples of each. The percentage agreement between us was 92% and we resolved the discrepancies through discussion. The first column of the table shows that 26% of the authors provided "Aims" alone and 37% provided both "Aims" and "Background" under the subheading "Background". These results suggest that the first 26% were confused by these instructions and that the second 37% overrode them.

Study 2 — In Journal Two, authors are advised to use five subheadings in their abstracts – "Objective", "Research design and method", "Main outcome measures", "Results", and "Conclusions". The subheading "Background" is not included.

Here 50 consecutive abstracts were assessed to see what the authors did with these instructions. One of these abstracts contained only three subheadings, 34 contained four (all omitting "Main outcome measures"), 14 contained five, and one had seven subheadings. Not all of the authors stayed with the recommended subheadings: three added in "Background" and four changed subheading "Objective" to "Background", which is not the same thing. My estimates of the percentages of these authors writing about the "Background" to their studies under the subheading "Objectives" (or "Aims) are shown in the middle column of table 2. Here 46% of these authors provided both "Background" and Aims" together under the single subheading "Aim".

Study 3 — In Journal Three, authors are advised to use four subheadings, "Background", "Method", "Results", and "Conclusions" for their abstracts. As in Study 1, "Aims" were not required. As this journal is relatively new I was able to examine only 40 abstracts. Five used five or more subheadings, 15 used four, one used three, and seven were unstructured. For the 15 abstracts with four subheadings, five (33%) had "Aims" alone (under the unspecified subheadings of "Objectives" or "Study Objectives"), three (20%) had "Background" alone (under the heading "Background"), and seven (47%) provided both the "Background" and the "Aims" (under the various headings of "Introduction", "Objectives", "Study objectives", and "Background and study objectives"). Only three out of the 40 abstracts contained the exact wordings of the advised "Instructions for authors", again suggesting that most authors overrode them.

Percentages of authors providing the Aim, the Background, or both when instructed to provide only the Aim or the Background

	Omitted in instructions:		
Provided by author	**Aim (study 1; n=100)**	**Background (study 2; n=50)**	**Aim (study 3; n=40)**
Aims	26%	54%	33%
Background	37%	0%	20%
Both	37%	46%	47%

Conclusions

These results indicate that the problems of which subheadings to include in structured abstracts – and what happens when some key subheadings are proscribed – are more pervasive than one might think. The results were sent separately to the editors of the three journals involved. The editor of Journal One changed his practice immediately, and this journal now requires that authors distinguish between the "Background" and the "Aims" of their studies in their abstracts.[5] The editor of Journal Two thanked me for my concerns but considered that the matter was private to his journal and my letter to him on this topic did not warrant publication. The editor of Journal Three also thanked me for my pains but said that as the journal was new it was taking time to settle down. In my view the data reported in this paper suggest the need for at least five subheadings in structured abstracts, and for editors to take a firmer control over the subheadings that authors use.

References

1. Hartley J. 2004. Current findings from research in structured abstracts. *Journal of the Medical Library Association* 92(3):368–371.
2. Hartley J. 2000. Clarifying the abstracts of systematic literature reviews. *Bulletin of the Medical Library Association* 88(4):332–337.
3. Nakayama N, Hirai N, Yamazaki, S, Naito M. 2005. Adoption of structured abstracts by general medical journals and format for a structured abstract. *Journal of the Medical Library Association* 93(2):237–242.
4. Foote M. 2006. Some concrete ideas about manuscript abstracts. *Chest* 129:1375–1377.
5. Hartley J. 1998. Headings in structured abstracts. *British Journal of Psychiatry* 173:178.

Editing around the World

Student medical journals and their editors: two examples from Europe

We present two student medical journals and their editors: one is from south west Europe, another from south east Europe; one has been established for only a few years, another has a tradition of six decades. Differences notwithstanding, these journals and their editors share much in common.

European Science Editing (ESE): Can you briefly introduce yourself?

Noel Rojas Bonet (*Protomedicos*): I am Noel Rojas Bonet, a fourth year medical student at the public university Miguel Hernández in Alicante, and I am the founder, owner, and editor of the Spanish medical student journal *Protomedicos.com*.

Ana Pangerčić (*Medicinar*): My name is Ana Pangerčić, I am a fifth year student at the Zagreb University School of Medicine, and I come from Zagreb, Croatia. I have been working in *Medicinar*, our student journal, since the beginning of my studies (in 2002), and last year I became the editor.

ESE: Before we start talking about your journals, tell me something about the general situation with student medical journals in your country. What is on the market? Is there a place for students' research reports?

NRB: In Spain, medical students' congresses have spread all over the country, so almost every school of medicine has its own congress (Alicante, Granada…) and some of them are dedicated to a specific topic, like oncology (Navarra), cardiology (Salamanca), and paediatrics (Cantabria). Unfortunately, these congresses usually do not publish the reports presented by the student investigators. Some universities publish their own journals, which are mostly intended for a professional readership. The journal of Valladolid School of Medicine sometimes publishes articles by medical students who participate in research projects as part of their electives.

Some schools of medicine publish student journals, for example *Mi Facultad* in Alicante or *Alveolo* in Granada.

Noel Rojas Bonet - founder, owner and editor of the Spanish medical student journal Protomedicos.com

Ana Pangerčić, editor of Medicinar, student journal, Zagreb University School of Medicine

These student journals usually report on local events like their university's congresses and general topics like the MIR examination (the mandatory state exam before entering the specialist training). They also publish humorous articles, news, and other things to keep students informed and entertained, but generally without the intention to promote science or research. Finally, there are some forums where medical students share their experiences and discuss classroom problems (for example *MedOviedo*) and internet groups such as groups.msn.com/estudiantesdemedicina.

AP: Although *Medicinar* is the oldest medical student journal in Croatia, it is not the only one. Students at Rijeka and Osijek schools of medicine also have journals and they are trying to cover themes similar to ours. We all publish articles about science, clinical medicine, and public health. We also write about problems of student life and other themes that are interesting not only to medical students but to other students at Zagreb University. There are several medical students' forums like perpetuum.lab and shadoc.com, where students share literature, ideas, and experiences. The student section of the *Croatian Medical Journal* (www.cmj.hr) gives medical students a great opportunity to publish the reports of their research in an internationally visible scientific journal, although – as you might expect – it is not easy to get your paper published there.

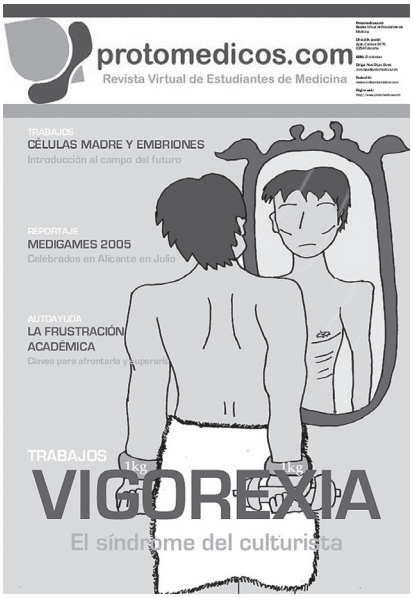
ESE: Now, let's get back to your journals. When were they established? And what was the idea behind them, what purposes were they to serve?

NRB: In 2004, just before I began my second year of study, a friend who is a medical doctor convinced me that I should create an electronic journal for medical students, and present it at the next congress in Alicante. It was a difficult task and I had to work quickly to meet the deadline. I found a teacher who was willing to supervise me, although at first he was sceptical because I had not been his student. Finally, in October 2004, *Protomedicos.com* was launched. It consisted of two parts: a medical student forum and the medical students' journal.

The Protomedicos forum is used mainly for academic and news discussions, events promotion (congresses, courses, contests), and sharing learning materials and medical information among students. The *Protomedicos* journal aims to explain some medical topics in an accessible way, so that they can be more easily understood by medical students of all years. The content of the journal is very diverse: we publish editorials, opinions, news, reviews, and even original research papers. We have a self-help section

about how to face common student problems (written by a psychology student); a technology section about medical devices and equipment; interviews, and events listings. In the next few months we will introduce new sections such as sexuality, clinical cases, anecdotes, and book reviews.

One of our main objectives is to promote scientific journalism and research among medical students. Our contributors and reviewers are mostly medical students, but we also accept articles written by professionals and non-medical students.



AP: *Medicinar* was founded in 1946, when there was a shortage of medical literature, journals, and professional and scientific works that would help students to improve their knowledge. Today, 60 years later, *Medicinar* still serves a similar purpose, but it also aims to widen the horizons of young people who are going to become doctors.

The editorial board is trying to produce and publish articles about student life and the profession, to introduce students to the latest developments in medical science, clinics, and public health, and – perhaps most importantly – to help the students develop a habit of reading the literature regularly. Our journal has several sections: Science, Student life, Culture and Medicine, Sports and Medicine, Informatics and Medicine. Science is the biggest section, and there we publish students' publicistic medical articles and educational articles from our professors. In the Student life section we try to inform students about current issues in the faculty and university and encourage our students to work in some student organization.

We also have an electronic edition at http://medicinar.mef.hr, which has been active since 2003. Now it has about 470 articles and is very popular among both students and professors.

ESE: What is your readership and how big it is? And do you receive any feedback, any indication about what the students feel about your journals?

NRB: Protomedicos.com is visited by more than 1000 unique visitors daily, mostly from Spain and Latin-American countries, but also from other countries around the world. The number is increasing by 7-30% per month. In 2004 we had a total of 1000 visits; 25,000 in 2005, 175,000 in 2006, and around 500,000 in 2007. Our readers are not only medical students but also professionals, students of other faculties (psychology, nursing), and lay people who are interested in medical issues and health. We have been cited by other websites, by blogs, and even by newspapers.

AP: *Medicinar* is read mainly by medical students and our professors, but we always have a few "outside" readers from similar faculties. It is published twice a year and 800 copies per issue are printed. Our website had about 40,000 visitors (1,607,032 hits) in 2006, and we were very satisfied with that. It may seem modest, but we live in a small country and although we have readers from all universities in Croatia and neighbouring countries, the language barrier limits our visibility among the international medical student population. The big success is that we have 470 new articles written and published in the 40 months since the introduction of our online edition. Another good thing is that students nowadays seem more interested in science and writing than ever.

ESE: How do you promote your journals?

NRB: After the first presentation in Alicante in 2004, *Protomedicos* was presented at the student congresses in Granada and Málaga in 2005. In the same year I became active in the International Federation of Medical Students' Associations (IFMSA) and as a result of that, *Protomedicos* was recently declared an official IFMSA-SPAIN project. We hope this will bring new collaborators, articles, reviewers, and fresh ideas into our journal.

Also, I have contacts with people from around the world who promote *Protomedicos* in their faculties, and lots of students have discovered us by looking in search engines for medical information.

AP: When a new issue of *Medicinar* is published, members of the editorial board and their associates try to promote and sell the journal in the faculty hall, where we keep a booth open for several days. To advertise our electronic issue we designed posters, and when we have some interesting articles or an exhibition of students' photos we make announcements. We also present our journal on some special occasions at our school of medicine, and in student congresses.

Medicinar recently became a member of SPINE (students press in Europe) organization; by belonging to such organizations, we are trying to promote ourselves abroad.

ESE: What problems are you facing as editors?

NRB: Funding is one of the biggest problems. At present, the journal is mostly funded by myself, so I have to keep

expenditure as low as possible. It is difficult to get students to write articles, especially if they have never done that before. But my experience is that when someone succeeds in writing the first article, it is much easier to obtain another contribution from him or her. Another problem I'm facing is that I'm not only the editor, but also the webmaster of *Protomedicos*, so I do not have enough time to realize all the ideas that I have. I must admit that sometimes I feel discouraged, but then I receive support from my friends and readers of *Protomedicos*, and even from physicians, and somehow I find strength to go on.

AP: There are lots of problems that we are facing as student journal editors. The major challenge is the lack of time: we have to balance our study obligations and our work with the journal. Another problem is to find the themes that are interesting to future doctors, but still educating them. We have to try to stay recognizable to students and the broader academic community, to maintain journal prestige built during the previous decades, and to engage new students who want to work with us. As the editor of *Medicinar*, I have to check the articles; correct errors, oversights and omissions; think about the layout; upload new articles on the website; and take care of the promotion of the journal.

ESE: What are your plans for the future of your journals?

NRB: If our printed edition gets enough subscribers and advertisers, I hope to rent a room for *Protomedicos* and move the "virtual" editorial office to a physical one. I believe that would help the journal to attract sponsors, redactors, and collaborators. Perhaps we could even hold some courses related to scientific writing and publishing.

The next issues of the journal will be published in both Spanish and English, so Protomedicos.com will have an English edition called Protodoctors.com. We plan a special public health issue in April, and we will be part of the Global Theme Issue on Poverty and Human Development planned by the Council of Science Editors for October 2007.

AP: In the future we plan to improve our web edition and perhaps create a way of virtual learning of clinical skills, via short videos. As a new member of European student press organization, we will try to learn from experiences of our colleagues, and to implement some new ideas in our journal.

Contacts:
Noel Rojas Bonet – noel.rojas@protomedicos.com
Ana Pangerčić – ana.pangercic@zg.t-com.hr.

An international journal for medical students: the *studentBMJ*

This student medical journal is based in the UK and published in English, and has an international readership

The *studentBMJ* – a peer reviewed English language journal for medical students – is freely available online (www.studentbmj.com) and as a monthly print magazine of about 40 pages. Published by the BMJ Group, the journal won best magazine in the *Guardian* student media awards in 2002 and 2003.

The journal is edited and mostly written by medical students for medical students and hopefully feels fresh and exciting. Indeed, its founder and former editor of the *BMJ*, Richard Smith dubbed it the "the *BMJ* on speed." Recent articles include a portrayal of work as a racecourse medic, a critical analysis of a research paper about caffeine intake in pregnancy, and an interview with Richard Dawkins.

About 20,000 student members of the British Medical Association, the representative body for UK doctors, receive the print *studentBMJ* as a benefit of membership. In addition, studentbmj.com attracts an international audience of about 200,000 unique visitors a month, making it busier than any other BMJ Group website except bmj.com.

The *studentBMJ* was founded in 1992 as "a much needed forum" for medical students to debate ideas. The first editor was Luisa Dillner, a *BMJ* staff member. Subsequent editors have been medical students, who take a year out from their studies. Most have been British, but recent editors have come from as far as Brazil and India. Additional support from the editorial, production, marketing, and advertising sales departments makes up the equivalent of about one more full time employee. A global network of volunteer advisers provides peer review to help the editor select which articles to publish.

An editorial in the first issue stated the journal's aims as providing students with practical tips on being a doctor, help with exams, and insights into student life. "The aim is also to challenge students, encouraging them to question medical tradition and dogma," said Smith and Dillner. They also saw the journal as a means to change: "Students must make their voices heard if they are to have a say in their own future."

Initially, most articles were chosen from those already published in the *BMJ* that would interest students. The journal still reproduces articles from the *BMJ* and *BMJ Careers*, but

now about 90% are written first for the *studentBMJ*, either commissioned or speculatively submitted.

What's inside

Although the *studentBMJ* publishes no original research, a recently published study is critically appraised each month. Other types of article include expert-authored editorials, news pieces, longer feature articles, interviews, reviews, and opinion columns. Articles in the Education section, which must have an expert coauthor, offer an alternative to the textbook. And the Careers section is packed with useful advice. The journal has occasional theme issues—for example, one on AIDS/HIV in 2006 and a special issue on human rights will be published this summer.

Extensive guidelines for authors are on studentbmj.com; the journal has published various articles about how to write; and the journal is keen to help authors who know what they want to say but whose first language is not English.

The future is web

In 2002 studentbmj.com launched an electronic response facility, greatly increasing the ease with which readers can interact with the journal. Published letters are edited versions of these online responses to articles.

The journal is promoted in the *BMJ* and other BMJ Group products and by the student editor at conferences. The network of advisers also promotes the journal in their medical schools around the world.

A increasingly international readership, growing global access to computers, and advertising revenues switching focus from print to web are likely to increase the web presence of the *studentBMJ*. And developments in internet technology herald a time of personalised alerts and content, collaboration between different products, podcasts and other multimedia, and wikis, blogs, and other interactivity.

Richard Hurley
technical editor, BMJ and studentBMJ
rhurley@bmj.com

More information

Smith R, Dillner L. The Student BMJ. studentBMJ 1992;1:5.
Hurley R. This is how we do it: making the *studentBMJ*. *studentBMJ* 2006;14:106-8.
studentBMJ. Author guidelines. www.studentbmj.com/write/guidelines.php

.

Success stories

Experiences of some student editors of the studentBMJ — and what happened next

Pritpal Tamber, from the United Kingdom, "proposed the idea of a 'student editor'" for the journal and held the position in 1996-7. He had done a placement at the *BMJ* and wanted to be an editor "partly to write" and partly as a reaction to medical school, which, he thinks, "seems designed to destroy your ability to think or create." He fought against the journal being "what doctors thought medical students should read." He has since been a managing editor of a journal and acquisitions editor and editorial director for a publisher. He's now managing director of Medicine Reports Ltd.

Deborah Cohen, from the United Kingdom, began editing the *studentBMJ* in 2003. She'd studied journalism, taking a year out of her medical degree, and she'd been a regular contributor. She made the journal more "topical and controversial" and more magazine-like, despite its limited resources. She stayed at the *BMJ* and is now features editor. "I enjoyed the broad scope—everything from commissioning to coming up with marketing ideas."

For Tiago Villanueva, from Portugal, "becoming editor [in 2005] was the logical next step" after being a *studentBMJ* adviser and doing a placement at the *BMJ*. Despite "being bullied on the phone by angry authors" and having "millions of emails" to answer, "thanks to the background in journalism" he is now an external editor for the Canadian *McGill Journal of Medicine* while being a general practitioner registrar and family medicine resident.

Klaus Morales edited the *studentBMJ* in 2006 and is now a final year student back home in Brazil. He "always wanted to work in the media" and had done a placement at the *BMJ* and been a *studentBMJ* adviser. He encouraged "more internationally oriented content" during his tenure and found that managing authors' deadlines was the toughest challenge. He now sits on the *BMJ*'s editorial advisory board.

Balaji Ravichandran, from India, is the current editor. The studentBMJ has allowed him to explore his "deep interest in reading and writing." He "changed the outlook from a largely clinical publication to a more scientific one" and successfully introduced a page of research news. He's written articles for other publications, including the *Times Literary Supplement* and the *Spectator*.

Viewpoints

Editor-author conflict from the editor's perspective

Even though editing is part of the writing process, editor–author conflict in scholarly communication is not uncommon. Such conflict exists throughout the world, in journal and book publishing, and also in academia. An author may be an experienced and skilled researcher as well as a talented writer, but s/he may not be a meticulous editor.

Few people have the drive for perfection, or have the third eye that is absolutely essential to examine all the details of any writing intended for publication. An editor looks for punctuation, correct spelling and use of grammar, redundancies, inconsistencies, sentence structure, subject–verb agreement, jargon, reading ease, logical flow of text, clarity, and formatting. It is very hard to modify someone else's draft, and it is sometimes equally or more difficult to convince the author to accept the editorial changes made to his/her manuscript.

Editing is an unseen and "thankless job" (!) everywhere. Talukder rightly said that sometimes editors need to work like "butchers" but for a good purpose with a good intention.[1] Authors appreciate the editor when they find their manuscripts are more readable, more organized, and easier to understand. But even then, misunderstandings may arise between author and editor on some points, and this can lead to conflict that can be difficult to overcome. Such experiences of editors from developed countries are reported elsewhere.[2-4] To date little is known about editor–author conflicts in Bangladesh.

This viewpoint is based primarily on my experience in editing research reports and papers at the Research and Evaluation Division (RED) of BRAC during 1995–1999. The conflicts I experienced with authors, their reactions, reasons for such conflicts, handling of authors who reacted seriously on editorial changes, authors' compliance in incorporating the editorial changes, and suggestions are described.

About BRAC

BRAC is the largest non-governmental, not-for-profit development organization in the world, working throughout Bangladesh to reduce poverty and empower the poor and women. BRAC works with people whose lives are dominated by extreme poverty, illiteracy, disease, and other handicaps. With multifaceted development interventions, BRAC strives to bring about positive change in the quality of life of the poor people of Bangladesh. The major development interventions of BRAC include socioeconomic development, primary education, and essential healthcare services. The development interventions include microfinance, micro-enterprise development, advocacy, awareness development, skill and capacity development, mobilization, institution building, and social development. BRAC Education Programme is especially targeted to poor children who never enrolled in any school or who dropped out of school before completing the primary course, and includes non-formal primary education, pre-primary education, adolescent development programmes, and post-primary basic and continuing education. Health interventions include essential healthcare through trained health volunteers, facility-based services through static health centres, community-based nutrition centres, antenatal care centres, and pilot initiatives such as maternal, neonatal, and child health, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria control, community-based arsenic mitigation, and micro-health insurance projects.

The Research and Evaluation Division, an independent unit within BRAC, provides research support to BRAC programmes by designing programmes and measuring their impacts on the community. It also undertakes collaborative studies with institutions at home and abroad. Currently, it has 53 researchers, 30 support staff, and 41 project staff of whom 47% are female. Its researchers generate research reports, papers, and reviews for publication in peer reviewed journals, as well as working papers and monographs, mostly in English, on socioeconomic development, education, public health, nutrition, environment, training, gender issues, and communication.

Participants in the study

All of the researchers at BRAC at some point become authors or co-authors, and so all of them became subjects in this observational study. The authors were a heterogeneous group, including senior, mid-level, and junior researchers, aged 22–60 years, and 43% were female (February 1999). Research experience varied between 1 and 30 years; all were highly educated (mostly masters and some PhDs and medical graduates) and had research and writing experience commensurate with their age and length of service. As of February 1999, eight staff had doctoral degrees from home and abroad, and 20 had master's degree from abroad. All authors were Bangladeshi nationals.

Problematic sentences

Problematic sentences were of several types: wordy sentences full of jargon, long sentences (range 35–116 words), and inappropriately constructed sentences, some of which were illogical and amusing (which I am sure the authors did not intend). Examples are shown in Boxes 1 and 2 (next page). A few authors tried to justify their lengthy sentences by showing examples from other international journals; however, they were finally convinced of the value of short and jargon-free sentences in direct speech.

Box 1: Lengthy sentences (unedited verbatim)

The study argues that in the post-transitional (high performing) stage, the effects of current level of micro-credit programmes on contraceptive use is expected to be minimal but if the programme addresses to tackle the sources of subordination, provides education that leads to self-worth and access to information, and help women gain self-esteem and ability to control over their own bodies, the process of women's empowerment in rural Bangladesh, if matured, would also began to transform the context for family planning programme. [81 words]

The advantages available at the BHCs were cheaper services (cheaper consultation fee, cheaper medicine), located near their homes so travel time was short, good medicine, having skilled MBBS degree holding physicians, effective treatment of TB, short waiting time, most medicine were available, doctor always available, immunization of children and pregnant mothers were available, people get better from BHC treatment, BHC staff gave more importance to patients compared to other health care providers, follow-up of patients was done by BHC staff, doctors were good and openly discussed the illness with the patients, pathology tests were available, BRAC staff visited village to village, TV available, there was a place to sit down, and good behaviour of BHC staff. [116 words]

The paper concludes that by creating a system of organising poor rural women into strongly bonded social groups and the process of learning from experience, ensuring participation in group meetings and savings, providing a set up capable of generating self-reliant economic activities to begin the process of alleviating poverty – the credit-based self employment and income generating programmes have created high hope and enthusiasm among the policy planners and development managers in Bangladesh. [72 words]

Nature of editor–author conflict

Strong disagreement between authors and editors leads to conflict. If left unresolved these conflicts can form a barrier against improving a manuscript, and they can also reduce working harmony and relationships. Such conflicts may be caused by suggested editorial changes, ego problems and overconfidence on both sides, underestimation of the other's ability, lack of patience, and inflexibility in accepting suggested changes.

Reactions from authors vary widely. One senior researcher with a higher education from abroad reacted seriously on two occasions. He became emotional, arrogant, impatient, and argued to justify his own writing style. He did not want to accept any of the suggestions made or to improve his writing. Even though the readability score of this author's unedited manuscript was very low according to the Flesch Readability Test[5] (this test can be used as a scientific evidence to help convince authors that their writing needs revision) he was extremely confident in his style of writing and he accepted corrections only of typographical and minor grammatical errors. He said *"Please indicate only the grammatical mistakes and typos in my paper. You do not need to think of the text and the construction of the sentences. I will take care of that."* However, I did not accept this and I stated clearly that an editor was not simply a proofreader. I made him understand the role, duties, and responsibilities of an institutional editor of scholarly publications and I also made it clear that if I was given a report or paper to edit I had to do just that – but without compromising with my professional ethics, duties, and responsibilities, otherwise he could take it back and should proofread himself. Finally he said, *"Well, you may do whatever you like, but I think you are wasting your time. I am not going to incorporate any changes other than grammatical and spelling mistakes, possibly not more than 10% of your changes."*

A few authors criticised the editor, and said the editor had made unnecessary changes. This group was reluctant to accept suggested changes, even if those changes were necessary to improve the readability of their reports (by reducing the length of the sentences, using short words, and reorganizing the text).

Finally, a few authors passed negative remarks, and still others were passive and indifferent, failing to interact with the editor, although interaction could have minimized the gap in misunderstanding.

The conflicts or reactions varied widely with the author's level and place of education, and with length of service. Authors who had completed a masters or doctorate overseas tended to react with the response that they knew quite good English and wrote well. Some of the senior staff thought that no editing of their writing was necessary, but afterwards serious mistakes were found in their published documents. One commented, *"It seems that you [the editor] are too busy. So, I think I should not increase your burden of editing by giving you my report. My report is in a good shape and it does not need any editing. I will submit it to the management as a final report."* A few months later I found a copy of the final version of that report; it had been submitted to the management without editing and contained serious mistakes, inconsistencies, and editorial flaws. A report such as this should not be allowed to leave the office, because it may affect the prestige and goodwill of the organization. Ultimately this paper was edited, thoroughly revised, and resubmitted to the management for acceptance.

Box 2: Complicated sentences (unedited verbatim)

When the resourceful parents found marrying their daughter difficult they would not hesitate to marry their daughter with dowry in such a situation.

A father unable to support his daughter can marry her to an able husband.

The programme through postering intended to empower whole of Bangladesh with legal knowledge.

A very high percentages of women (94%) were delivered at home as indicated by the programme records.

Mitigation of conflicts

Editors of scholarly publications try to avoid confrontation with authors. We, the editors, should accord a patient hearing to the grievances of authors on our suggested changes; we should be tolerant and should be able to justify proposed changes. Editors should not forget that the manuscripts belong to the authors and not to the editors, and as such all credit or discredit goes to the author. On the other hand, authors should also have due respect for the editor: authors need to look logically at the changes the editor has made to their manuscripts; they need not accept all of the suggested changes or modifications but they should have a strong argument for rejecting the editor's suggestions. Such tolerance on both sides will help mitigate conflicts in most cases.

Although an editor cannot be an expert in all subjects, in an office such as the Research and Evaluation Division, an editor needs to edit material from various disciplines produced by a multidisciplinary team of researchers often of mixed background and ability. To cope with this situation, an editor must read as much as possible on the subjects s/he frequently edits; this will give the editor more confidence and will earn respect from authors.

Another important task of the editor is to safeguard the prestige and goodwill of his or her employer, the organization for which s/he is working. Nothing should be disseminated unedited, with mistakes and with low readability. If an author does not comply with these requirements, as a last resort, s/he should be referred to the higher authority.

Conclusion

Conflict with others is an unavoidable part of human character. Many authors do not understand the exact role of editors, and understandably many do not like ruthless editing on their nicely typed manuscripts, however necessary such editing may be. Conflict between editors and authors will never be totally eliminated, but by tolerance and understanding on both sides, it can be reduced.

Recommendations:

- Editors should handle authors carefully. Nothing should jeopardize the self-esteem and ego of the authors.
- Editors should not insist that authors incorporate all of the editorial changes suggested.
- Editors should be patient, friendly, and polite when dealing with conflicts with authors.
- Authors should respect the editor—the editor is there to help them reach their target audience more effectively.
- Editors need to be flexible in accepting authors' valid points.
- Editors should read as much as possible in order to gain a broad understanding of each subject area.

I thank the Research and Evaluation Division of BRAC for support in preparing this paper. For details of BRAC's financial supporters please see http://www.brac.net/ and http://www.bracresearch.org/.

Hasan Shareef Ahmed
shareef.ha@brac.net

1. Talukder MHR. 2002. Experiences in scholarly editing. *Bangladesh J Commun Publishing* 1(1):33–6.
2. Szenberg M. 1995. Asymmetries and etiquette in author-editor relations. In: Science, culture & communication for the 21st century: programme and abstracts of the eighth international conference of the International Federation of Science Editors, Barcelona, 9–13 July 1995:83.
3. Glass RM, Schneiderman M. 1997. A survey of journal conflict of interest policies. In: Programme and abstract of the International Congress on Biomedical Peer Review and Global Communications, Prague, Czech Republic, 17–21 Sep 1997:14.
4. Barnes D, Yank V, Bero L, Rennie D. 1997. Redundant publication: survey of journal editors and authors. In: Programme and abstract of the International Congress on Biomedical Peer Review and Global Communications, Prague, Czech Republic, 17–21 Sep 1997:31.
5. Montagnes I. 1991. Editing and publication: a training manual. Manila and Ottawa: IRRI and IDRC, 1991:53-5.

The writer who helped writers: Donald Murray (1924–2006)

Writer and well-known writing teacher Donald Murray died last December. When I heard, I searched for two things on my bookshelves. One was a small book by Lucy McCormick Calkins (1983), one of the earliest systematic researchers on the writing process in the 1970s. She described learning to write under Murray. The other was a 1983 research article by Carol Berkenkotter in which she reported what I believe was the first truly naturalistic ethnography of an adult writer at work — that writer was Donald Murray.

Murray was a fine journalist (a Pulitzer winner) and academic writer, but I'm convinced his greatest contribution was his ability to enable others. He was demanding and optimistic. Under Murray, writers felt that difficulties were intrinsic to the task, not signs of their inability. His message was that successful writers took textual difficulties seriously but in stride, and acquired ways to solve problems by noticing how others managed and by revisiting their own work, drafting, rethinking, editing. Because he helped ordinary people build confidence as writers, he also enabled them to teach others — creating a wave that reached me in Barcelona in the mid-1980s.

Berkenkotter's article on Murray helped me to recover lost confidence in my own writing. How can one feel incapable when one sees Murray go back and forth in notebooks searching for half-remembered ideas, dealing with false starts and changing his mind as he went along? Berkenkotter's study showed how a writer deals with apparent failures in a text as opportunities to write a better one. Her portrait revealed that what seems like incompetence or lack of talent to a novice is merely a normal event for an accomplished writer:

> The writer had been editing what he thought was a final draft when he saw that more substantive changes

were in order. The flurry of editing activity was replaced by reading aloud and scanning the text as the writer realized that his language was inadequate for expressing *a goal which he began to formulate as he read . . . The next draft was totally rewritten* following the sentence in the draft: "when the teacher listens to the student, the conference can be short" (pp 162-163, my italics).

That last phrase also shed light on two important points in the passage I'd remembered from Calkins' book. When she wrote it, she was still a primary school teacher doing her first research:

> Although the only writing I'd done until then were papers for school, Murray agreed to work with my writing. Every six weeks, I'd take a day off from school and make the three hour drive to the University of New Hampshire where *Murray would confer with me for thirty minutes* and then I'd turn around and make the three hour drive back . . . *Whatever happened during those conferences, it not only made the trip worthwhile, it also transformed my writing* and teaching of writing (p vi, my italics).

I saw that a conference with Murray was short and effective, and any number of things might happen. I would soon learn to see those conferences as part ethnography, part mini-lesson about heuristics, part real-time demonstration of revision or starting and re-starting, part visualization with a writer of how to undertake the next phase of revision. Writers explored and focused on essential messages and learned ways to see what was worth writing about. When I use my own approximation of this method with scientists, by the end of a conference authors can be very explicit about what a text needs, and motivated to provide it. "I'll move this sentence up to the head of paragraph two of the Discussion and see how it works." "I'll tie the conclusion closer to the objective." "I'll re-draft this part strictly chronologically, first." True, such advice is available in any "how to" book — but the difference is that a writer-and-process-centered approach helps an author decide how to go about working the text. Possibly Murray's approach to writing is what Stella Adler's method is to acting.

Calkins' response to a half-hour conference gave me my goal for the 1980s: to study how Murray managed to make such a short intervention worth driving six hours. Before my own early meetings with scientific authors I rehearsed Murrayan questions I'd written on index cards. They were gleaned from his books or inferred from the writing process literature of that period — a line of research Murray helped inspire. How did the writing go? Do you think there are weak points? What are you worried about? What do you think might help? Why did you do this research — how/where have you made that motivation clear? Explain to me why you're including *this* reference/paragraph/information about . . . When will you start the next draft? What part of the manuscript will you work on first? And then?

I doubt that Murray imagined his method being applied to scientific authors. In fact, the "process-oriented approach" his name is associated with gave way to other schools that are much more popular with teachers of academic writing because they emphasize what the finished product should look like. Murray's often-quoted phrase, "I write to know what it is I didn't know I knew," was considered appropriate only for expressive, exploratory writing — apparently not part of prospectively planned academic reporting. Scientists, after all, look at their data, *know* what they know and simply report it logically, in relatively straightforward formats, right? But Murray had engaged in all sorts of writing for publication, and I think he'd have felt as much empathy for a novice writer of a discussion section as for any other writer. He'd have known there was nothing intrinsically easier or harder in finding meaning in a clinical or bench experience compared to the more apparently personal experiences that are the usual subjects of creative writing.

The last of Murray's columns published by the *Boston Globe* while he lived, in December 2006, was about the challenge and joy of a blank page. He wrote it to explain why he preferred the writer's job to the newspaper editor's:

> At the looking-back time of the year, I think of the jobs I was offered — and didn't take.
>
> Mostly I was offered promotion to editor. Editors make more money than writers. Editors stroll through the city room clasping their hands behind their backs and peeking over writers' shoulders while they write. Editors go to meetings.
>
> I'd respond by saying. 'I'm a writer. I want to stay a writer. No promotions please.'
>
> Those trying to hire me assured me I could do the job.
>
> I told them I knew I could do the job. I wanted to remain a writer because I *didn't* know if I could do the job.

There is no single must-read Murray book for science editors, for most of his work on writing targeted young adults or their teachers. For those curious about how he could unleash the desire to write and give confidence, a place to start reading would be a webpage to commemorate his work at the University of New Hampshire's Writers' Project (http://www.nhwritersproject.org/newfiles/Remembering_Donald_Murray.html).

Mary Ellen Kerans
mekerans@gmail.com

Berkenkotter C. 1983. Decisions and revisions: the planning strategies of a publishing writer. *College Composition and Communication* 34(2):156–173.

Calkins LM. 1983. *Lessons from a child: on the teaching and learning of writing*. Portsmouth, NH, USA: Heinneman Educational Books.

Murray D. 2006. Finding pleasure in the challenge of a blank sheet. *Boston Globe*. December 26. http://www.boston.com/news/globe/living/articles/2006/12/26/finding_pleasure_in_the_challenge_of_a_blank_sheet/ (accessed March 14).

From the Literature

Peer-selected publications: what they are and why you should care

There are now more articles and journals than ever. Library budgets are exhausted, readers are over-awed, and, given the questionable quality of a lot of research, the true value of the scientific record is being diluted. To counter this author-focused world ("we have a home for your manuscript, even if no one else can find it and even if its results are meaningless") more and more publications are emerging to help readers find what's important. Editors must understand how these publications operate, not only so that they can take advantage of their influence, but also so they can be sure that such influence serves science well.

First, let's get the confusing terminology out of the way. Some call these secondary publications, the idea being that primary journals publish primary research. However, some of the sciences prefer to call raw data, primary—and the resulting research article, secondary. Others call them overlay publications but this really describes the relationship between open access journals and the pre-print servers they may receive their articles from.

I call them peer-selected publications because, one way or another, they involve article selection by peers.The word selection gives the impression of a less rigorous process than review, helping to distinguish between peer reviewed and peer selected publications (let's leave aside the well-documented problems with peer review, for now). As well as selecting articles, peers often provide commentary and analysis to draw out and contextualise valuable messages.

Peer-selected publications come in many forms, but here are a few from the medical literature:

- The Current Opinion series in which peers select articles that they use to write annual reviews about their subspecialty (a process mimicked by the *Current Reports* series)
- The *ACP Journal Club* in which about 100 journals are scanned for high quality articles, as judged by prestated criteria applied by methodologists
- Faculty of 1000 Biology and Faculty of 1000 Medicine in which a specifically recruited group of peers select and interpret what they deem to be influential articles in their subspecialty
- Biocritique in which peers select and review so-called "impact articles"
- PeerView Press in which peers give their views and opinions on clinical advances
- And tabloids like *Pulse* in which research articles are summarised by peers or health journalists.

Journal editors should rejoice at the arrival of peer-selected publications. With so many articles competing for ever-decreasing attention spans, having publications that collect, synthesise, and organise the best can only be a good thing. They can highlight those articles of true value and positively influence the impact they have on their field. However, for editors, peer-selected publications are like impact factors – when they go in their favour (when one of their articles is picked up and hence promoted) they'll love them, and when they don't (when an article that an editor thinks is important is not picked up) they'll hate them.

Despite the possible advantages of these publications, in my experience editors and senior readers often look down on them for, I suspect, two reasons. Firstly, there is a feeling that complicated science cannot be accurately conveyed in short, accessible paragraphs: readers should go to the source of a story (the research articles and data). And secondly, there is a feeling that relying on someone else's selection and interpretation makes one vulnerable to their biases.

The first concern is, to my mind, intellectual snobbery. Scientists and clinicians are increasingly busy and need these one-stop-shops from which to receive a quick heads-up about recent advances in a field. Those wanting more detail can go to the source article. The second concern is more legitimate: an article could be selected by a peer and interpreted favourably due to his or her intellectual or commercial interests. Indeed, such biases might play out through what it not selected and what is not said.

Does that mean that all such publications are biased? My answer is yes – about as biased as all peer-reviewed journals are. Peer review involves the same process of selection and interpretation – an editor selects reviewers and they offer interpretations of the article.

Getting side-tracked by the possible biases within peer-selected publications is a red herring. What matters is that readers want them. What the editorial community needs to do is to deliver them in a way that serves science well. As with journals, peer-selected publications should openly declare their editorial processes, contributors should declare their conflicts of interest, those that transgress declared editorial policies should be punished, and readers should be encouraged to hold the publication to account through letters to the editor, even if there are no letters pages to speak of.

Finally, editors should look upon peer-selected publications as a possible future for scholarly communication. The peer-reviewed publication, the standard research article format, and peer review are increasingly being questioned as artefacts of a paper age. The alternative being put forward is a world in which more raw data is made available for open analysis across the web. Although peer-selected publications currently focus on articles, there is nothing stopping them from reaching further in both directions – upstream to the raw data, and downstream to how research data is applied (especially in medicine).

Conflict of interest: PST is the managing director of Medicine Reports Ltd, the publisher of Faculty of 1000 Medicine, one of the peer-selected publications mentioned.

Pritpal S Tamber
Pritpal.s.tamber@f1000medicine.com

Reports of Meetings

Scientific publishing in the European Research Area: access, dissemination and preservation in the digital age

Brussels, 15–16 February 2007

Scientific information seems to be highly valued by the European Commission (EC). In January 2006 the EC published a *Study on the economic and technical evolution of the scientific publication markets in Europe* (http://ec.europa.eu/research/science-society/pdf/scientific-publication-study_en.pdf); on the basis of this report the EC is preparing a policy document "on scientific information in the digital age: access, dissemination and preservation", and on 15 and 16 February this year two EU Commissioners addressed this conference with essentially the same title.

Policy paper

The (provisional) policy paper considers the transition process from a print world to a digital world. It states that the system by which scientific information is published is pivotal for its certification and dissemination, that scientific journals hold a central role within the scientific information system, and that the peer review process underpinning the selection of journal articles is its main quality control mechanism. Globally, there are some 2000 scientific journal publishers. The 780 or so that are located in the EU produce about 49% of the total journal output.

A debate is going on regarding limitations on access to scientific information. Researchers, research organisations, funding bodies, and libraries argue that it is the public purse that pays for research, that public actors should not need to pay excessive journal prices to have access to research results, and that open access (OA) is needed to improve access to and dissemination of these results. On the other hand, publishers argue that access has never been better than now, that any method of dissemination (not to speak of the associated peer review) has a cost, and that loss of journal subscriptions might endanger some publishing companies.

Digital information is unstable due to rapid changes of hardware and software. The EU has no clear strategies for long term preservation and usability of digital scientific information.

Overcoming the problems

The EC wants to overcome the current problems by a set of actions:

- Defining costs for publishing, including OA publishing, as eligible costs in EU-funded research projects;
- Issuing specific guidelines on the publication of articles in open repositories;
- Allocating (in 2007–2008) approximately €50m for work on infrastructures, in particular digital repositories; approximately €25m for digital preservation and collaborative tools; and approximately €10m for access to and use of scientific information through the so-called *e*Content*plus* programme;
- Performing a study on the economic aspects of digital preservation;
- Funding research on publication business models and on the scientific publication system;
- Holding further discussions with stakeholders, as well as deliberations in the European Parliament and Council;
- Promoting the exchange of good practices for new models of access to, dissemination of, and preservation of scientific information.

The EC will encourage experiments with new models that may improve access to and dissemination of scientific information, and by supporting the linkage of existing preservation initiatives at the European level.

Brussels Declaration of STM publishing

On the day before the conference, 14 February 2007, the international scientific, technical, and medical (STM) publishing community issued the Brussels Declaration of STM Publishing (http://www.stm-assoc.org/brussels-declaration/), stating that it is the role of publishers to disseminate the results of scientific research, but that costs are associated with any method of dissemination and that "one size fits all" solutions will not work. That is to say: OA is nice and publishers are willing to co-operate, but they want to recover their costs.

Meanwhile, point 2 of this Brussels declaration states that "The imprimatur that peer-reviewed journals give to accepted articles (registration, certification, dissemination and editorial improvement) is irreplaceable and fundamental to scholarship."

Access and preservation

The two key topics of this conference were access to scientific information (publications as well as data) and the preservation of this information. Janez Potočnik, the EU Commissioner for Science and Research, opened the conference. He pointed out that an efficient and healthy scientific publishing system is a key element of successful research activity, that efficient and widespread dissemination through the scientific publishing system is important for research innovation and excellence, and that peer review

is considered the central mechanism by which scientific quality is guaranteed.

Open access and funding

In the first session, Ralf Schimmer (Max Planck Digital Library), Jerry Sheehan (National Institutes of Health, NIH), and Robert Kiley (Wellcome Trust) explained the policies of research funding bodies regarding OA. All three institutions want open archives of research they support financially. The Wellcome Trust enforces a mandate but offers a fee to the publishers; at £1650 per article this amounts to 1–2% of the total research budget. NIH, which does not rely on mandates, has 4% in open archives but 10% is within reach. Max Planck has a 30% success rate but expects 80% by the end of 2008. A time lag of 6 or 12 months is often allowed between publication and OA. For NIH, 70% is accessible without delay.

Researchers' views of open access

In the second session researchers presented their views. Maria Cristina Pedicchio from the University of Trieste pointed out that researchers have the right to access information and the duty to communicate. In many developing countries, access is limited for lack of money. She also said that over 90% of raw data are not in publications and are lost when researchers change jobs. Robert Aymar from the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN) said that in the field of particle (or high energy) physics, 10 journals from five publishers present 95% of the 10,000 articles per year. CERN and related institutions supply 40% of these. According to Aymar, publishers must continue to organise peer review and to record official versions. To overcome the present subscription price crisis, €5–10 million per year is needed in high energy physics. When 300 institutions each sponsor one title with €16,000 per year, the problem is (almost) solved. Martin Hofmann from the Fraunhofer Institute of Algorithms and Scientific Computing drew attention to the 1500–3500 new data sets that are added to PubMed each day. His institute is developing automated recognition tools to retrieve information in complex and unstructured data sets.

OA and the marketplace

Session three brought three parties with different views on the scientific publication market into confrontation. Nick Fowler from Elsevier highlighted some drawbacks of OA. Journals with a long citation half-life may miss substantial income if access is free after 12 months; although authors pretend to support OA, only 6% actually co-operate; and sometimes substantial differences are found between the OA version and the printed version of a paper. One of the authors of the report on the economic and technical evolution of the scientific publication markets in Europe, Mathias Dewatripont, mentioned the financial punishments libraries experience for cancellations of journal subscriptions. Small publishers (especially the not-for-profit ones) do not survive the loss of income from cancellations. Matthew Cockerill from BioMed Central told about the success of this OA digital publisher: started in 2000, BioMed Central now publishes over 160 OA titles with over 20,000 peer-reviewed articles per year. Authors (or their institutions) pay €1000 per article, and both quality and finances are all right.

Petition to the European Commission

On the second day Stevan Harnad, after a brief speech on the advantages of peer-reviewed OA journals, showed a moving video on the petition to the European Commission to guarantee public access to publicly funded research results shortly after publication. The petition, launched on 17 January 2007 (www.ec-petition.eu; circulating also through the EASE-Forum), had by then been signed by almost 20,000 institutions and researchers.

Editors for quality

The fundamental role of editors to guarantee quality was particularly stressed in the parallel session on quality assurance and research excellence where, among others, Paola De Castro, representing an editor's point of view, pointed out the necessity of educating authors to create major awareness and empowerment in editorial matters.

The final speech was given by Viviane Reding, European Commissioner for Information Society and Media. She pointed out that according to the EC, research results should be freely available after a variable embargo. The EC through its Framework 7 Programme will support the creation of a digital infrastructure (at a cost of €50 million) and digital preservation (€25 million).

Despite the different opinions expressed during the conference by the different stakeholders, the EC believes that OA is a unique opportunity for scientific communication, even though the best way to guarantee OA and quality at the same time is not yet clear. There is still much confusion about the roles of editors and publishers, and diverse traditions are followed in the different branches of science or humanities. In conclusion, Reding stated: "Europe needs a rapid and widespread accessibility of scientific information while maintaining the highest quality. That should be our common goal."

All speakers were asked to publish their papers online, and of course they all agreed. If you wish to know more on these issues, you can go to the conference webpage (http://ec.europa.eu/research/science-society/page_en.cfm?id=3460) where you can download PowerPoint presentations or the texts of all contributors.

Arjan Polderman (Pharmaceutisch Weekblad)
a.k.s.polderman@pw.nl

Paola De Castro (Istituto Superiore di Sanità)
paola.decastro@iss.it

EASE-Forum Digest: December 2006 -March 2007

In the winter months, forum subscribers have been concerned about editors' duties to investigate plagiarism of authors' work by reviewers, the pros and cons of open access, and some odds and ends about how to label parallel axes on a graph and how to write Greek symbols—read all about it!

Should editors investigate allegations of reviewers' plagiarism?

How would you feel if you were sitting at a conference and heard ideas being presented curiously similar to those in a manuscript you had had rejected by a journal two years before? You might think the reviewer of your manuscript had pinched your ideas and you might write to the journal and ask the editor to do something about it. This is the scenario Chris Morfey had been confronted with as an editor. He asked the forum whether an editor is duty bound to investigate allegations of plagiarism by reviewers. The general consensus was that editors have a duty to investigate—a welcome move away from the washing of hands, "editors are not policemen" attitude that prevailed not so long ago.

Nevertheless Irene Hames advised caution. Investigating such cases is time consuming and requires considerable persistence and diplomacy. What's more, you need to keep an open mind. Scientists' ideas often emerge in parallel. Cases that initially appear to be misconduct can end up revealing turmoil of confusion, misunderstandings, and deficits in knowledge of research and publication ethics. Distinguishing genuine error from intended bad behaviour is crucial. Even if misconduct is established, the editor is still faced with what action to take and deciding whether the literature needs to be corrected.

Irene gave some valuable advice. Any subsequent paper based on the material presented at the conference should be compared with the original manuscript rejected by the journal. If similarities were greater than would be expected by chance, the authors of the published paper should be asked for an explanation. From Irene's experience of conducting investigations, editors should:

- Keep complete and accurate records of the investigation including dates;
- Give each party an opportunity to present their side, preferably in writing;
- Keep all exchanges confidential and involve as few people as possible—remembering that reputations can be ruined without just cause;
- Seek advice if they're afraid there might be legal implications.

Will Hughes was pleased to read solid advice on the forum rather than an exchange of anecdotes. He lamented that Irene's advice came too late for him. With the benefit of this advice his initial enquires in a complex wrangle with an author would have been more discrete. "Things are rarely what they seem," he added.

One useful anecdote for authors finding themselves in a not dissimilar position came from Carole Goldsmith. An article she had written had been republished word-for-word in another journal. She successfully claimed a second payment of her honorarium from the journal that had republished her article under another author's name. On reflection she felt had she sued for plagiarism she would have received more compensation.

The discussion drifted into what could be done against senior colleagues publishing results "stolen" from junior researchers. Sylwia Ufnalska suggested establishing a special international committee for aggrieved researchers to seek justice. Iain Patten thought groups like COPE and ICMJE already performed this function. Mary Ellen Kerans had heard of junior researchers' data that is never published because they go to work in industry or teach in high schools. This leaves their mentors, the senior researchers, at their wits' end, not knowing whether to write up the results themselves or who should be the first author. The problem could be resolved if publication were to precede the award of a doctorate.

Open access: the debate

Paola De Castro innocently asked forum participants to sign a petition to support free and open access to publicly funded European research, according to recommendations made in the EU's study on the economic and technical evolution of the scientific publication markets of Europe (www.ec-petition.eu). The study's aim is to promote and support archiving of publications in open access repositories at a time after publication to be discussed with publishers. This archiving would become a condition of funding.

Rod Hunt warned intending signatories before signing to consider that open access means "author pays" rather than "reader pays". Open access does not always mean "author pays" as in PloS or BioMed Central (not always in these cases either), rejoined Paola. Mercè Piqueras added that many non-open journals make page charges to authors or oblige them to pay for reprints of their articles. Furthermore, the long-term effect of readers having to pay for articles would be lower citation rates.

Reme Melero pointed out that "open access" includes institutional and subject repositories as well as open access journals. She also reported that the US Department of Energy and the British Library had agreed to create a gateway (Science.world) through which scientists worldwide could access information published by participating nations (www.doe.gov/news/4619.htm). To avoid a common misconception I should add that truly open access journals immediately make articles freely available online upon publication, whereas others give free access only after a certain period has elapsed, for example six months after publication.

Mercè Piqueras explained that many commercial publishers and learned societies are reluctant to join the open access initiative because they depend on their journal sales for most of their income. But there are arguments beyond economics, namely those of making knowledge accessible to everybody, especially to researchers in developing countries.

Rod Hunt came back with the argument that if the science community wants to read quality controlled science either the author or the reader has to pay for it. There are public-benefit arguments for open access, but bodies pressing for their work to be openly accessible also had their market share and public image objectives. Finally, although Science.world wanted to broaden access to obscure—yet valuable—sources, these may be the ones that would be disadvantaged by uncontrolled consolidation of open access by the major players.

Karen Shashok took issue. Some of those who promote the quality argument also have vested interests in maintaining the traditional for-profit model of journal publication; in particular, the perception that open access meant "sacrificing" peer review was a red herring. How much do commercial houses spend on peer review and editorial quality control? she asked. Peer reviewers are not paid, editor-in-chiefs receive only a small symbolic payment, and many publishers outsource editing and typesetting to countries were labour costs are low. The insinuation that open access somehow means government censorship was another red herring. Interestingly, both Karen's red herrings are ones that large publishing houses have employed the "pit bull" of public relations to promote (Giles J. 2007. PR's "pit bull" takes on open access. *Nature* 445:347). As for the societies that depend on subscriptions for survival, Karen thought putting one's eggs all into one basket is a dangerous strategy and poses a perpetual threat to sustainability. Other ways of securing income should be sought, and "Technology has moved on; so should science publishing."

The benefits of open access for foreign language journals that simultaneously publish in English were presented by Mary Ellen Kerans. All such journals she was familiar with had been fully open access from the start of their bilingual publication. Apart from translation costs she did not think open access generated many additional costs—the webpage structure would have to be in place anyway. The benefits she had seen for journals, which seemed to outweigh the cost, were more submissions, more readers (judging by the doubling of one journal's impact factor), and a gain locally in visibility and prestige. This gain had attracted more advertising and more commissions for supplements.

To stress that open access is not an Utopian idea but a reality, Reme Meleros gave the following samples:

- www.openj-gate.com with nearly 4000 journals
- www.doaj.org with over 2500 journals selected by quality criteria
- www.opendoar.org with over 800 institutional repositories
- www.earlham.edu/~peters/fos/fosblog.html giving information about new models of dissemination emerging around the world.

Label parallel graph axes as mirrors or facing the same direction?

A question asked by Aleksandra Golebiowska was whether, in a graph that has two vertical axes with different labels, the right label should be positioned mirror-like to the left label or both labels should face in the same direction. Rod Hunt thought vertically orientated text is best read by rotating it 90° clockwise: the y axes labels should both face in the same direction. Iain Patten concurred, quoting the CSE manual.

Use Greek letters or spell them out?

Sylwia Ufnalska asked whether Greek letters should be used or spelled out in a biological journal. The general consensus was that Greek letter usage depends on the house style of the journal. But Sylwia's concern was that browsers like Google do not recognize Greek letters. Arjan Polderman wrote that his journal prefers Greek symbols and uses the neat solution of spelling out the Greek symbols in the keyword index to allow web access.

Joining the forum

You can join the forum by sending the one-line message "subscribe ease-forum" (without the quotation marks) to majordomo@helsinki.fi. More information can be found on the EASE web site (www.ease.org.uk).

Elise Langdon-Neuner (compiler)
langdoe@baxter.com

Discussion initiators
Chrisopher Morfey: clm@isvr.soton.ac.uk
Paola De Castro: paola.decastro@iss.it
Aleksandra Golebiowska: algol@ciop.pl
Sylwia Ufnalska: krzys@rose.man.poznan.pl

Correspondence

Blinded review systems

Liz Wager gave an interesting picture of blinded review systems in science journals. I wish to add some points to Wager's discussion.

First, I have a terminological remark. I would prefer using the term "double-blinded review" for a review system in which both authors and reviewers are anonymous for each other. The "blinded review," then, would be a system with reviewers being unknown to authors – I do not suppose there is a journal in which authors know their reviewers, but reviewers do not know the authors. The "open review" would be, like in Wager's article, when both authors and reviewers know each other.

Let us focus on agricultural sciences, for instance, though what I will write about them may easily be linked to similar disciplines. In agricultural sciences, most studies are based on a field or lab work so it is necessary to provide information on where a study has been carried out. This simply provides an easy way to recognize a paper's authors. Sometimes a reviewer does not have to recognize the authors' names to be biased; knowledge on a campus from which the paper has been written may be enough. Some may be biased against a country, some may be biased against a university or an institute, and some may be biased against a person. It does not matter, in fact, which kind of bias a reviewer represents – any bias is unacceptable.

Nevertheless, bias based on a double-blinded review – even when the place of an experiment is clearly shown – may be tricky. We live in times of international collaboration, and it is not a rare situation that scientists from a country that may bias a reviewer publish their results with internationally recognized scientists. This information is hidden under the double-blinded review, and it is possible that the reviewer will criticize the paper only because of the bias against the country of the experiment ("guys from this country are simply not able to write a good, high quality paper").

The same applies to language issues in journals publishing in English. If a native English speaker, this international collaborator of the main authors, is hidden from a reviewer's sight, the reviewer may be incorrectly very critical about the language and presentation of the paper. I know situations in which the reviewers claimed the language was very poor even though it was not so. They simply were biased. On the other hand, I also know situations in which non-native reviewers wrote (in poor English) that the language of the paper they reviewed was poor, even though the authors were English native speakers and their language was really good (or, at least, good enough).

A double-blinded review system is effectively used in many journals, even in agricultural sciences. I suppose reviewers usually are – and if they are not, they should be – aware of the situations I described above, and this likely helps them decide not to be biased. Fortunately, many scientists are sickened at any kind of bias in review and would never be unfair as reviewers.

But there is a thing to add, this time neither funny nor encouraging. Bias in science journals is not limited to reviewers. Unfortunately, authors sometimes feel it from editors even though the editors are those who should look after the author in this regard. I want to end it with a non-trivial message: Let science journal editors be unbiased, and let them fight against bias. This is their battle.

Marcin Kozak, Department of Biometry, Warsaw Agricultural University
m.kozak@omega.sggw.waw.pl

References

Wager L. 2006. The blinded leading the blinded? *European Science Editing* 32(1):13–14.

Book Review

Susie Dent. 2006. **The language report.** Oxford: Oxford University Press, x, 164 p. Hardback. £0.99. ISBN 0-19-920766-6 [978 0 19 920766 4].

In *European Science Editing* 32(1), I reviewed the third of Susie Dent's annual surveys of changes in English; this is the successor volume which has dropped a first part from its title (although the dust jacket does read "The like, Language Report for real", with the words I have put in italics in grey). It continues the format of the previous volume and has less of immediate interest to the scientific editor, though the chapter on "Attitudes and platitudes: our changing usage" does show how some new forms we would state to be straight errors ("would of" for "would have", for example) may in time become more accepted. Thus we now seem less worried by "straight-laced" for "strait-laced" (which occurred in 66% of recorded usages).

This book will interest and amuse those wanting a snapshot of how the language is being used today.

John Glen
john_glen@jgla.demon.co.uk

The Editors' WebWatch

The Editors' WebWatch is a membership-driven resource guiding editors and writers in the sciences to websites and services of interest. This is the last column compiled by Mary Ellen Kerans. Suggestions for the August issue should be sent to ese.webwatch@gmail.com

Creating a discipline-specific search engine to guide editing

http://www.rollyo.com

Copyeditors with doubts about how to handle the language surrounding scientific terms have been harnessing the power of Google and Google Scholar gratefully. Even better would be a single-purpose search engine to guarantee highly relevant examples from a limited set of topic-and-register-specific websites.

A service called Rollyo lets anyone open a free account and set up such a "searchroll", tailored to a particular client in a few minutes. All you do is give your searchroll a name and then specify the URLs of sites you trust to give you good guidance on terms, usage, and style for that job. It's also possible to import searchrolls constructed by others onto your interface.

The screenshot (right) shows the searchrolls that guide some of my work. "Resp Med-Chest Surg", for instance, informs choices by a team of translators of a pneumology and chest surgery journal. It gives hits only from a collection of pneumology journals, a handful of major general medical journals, and a few general surgery and radiology journals. Others with clear names guide work for other clients.

Although language in medical disciplines overlaps, the high level of specificity of microsearch engines helps sort out usage preferences, turning up some curious patterns. I've found, for example that the frequency of *utility* is higher than that of *usefulness* for the same sense and contexts on the anesthesiology searchroll, whereas *usefulness* seems to be preferred by the pneumologists.

The name Rollyo derives from the phrase *roll your own*, an unfortunate allusion to smoking and apparently an expression denoting independent thinking in some circles! Another small quirk to overlook is that the user interface is called a dashboard (figure). Such imagery may reflect who the developers and users of this service are, as an ongoing survey on the website suggests that 60% of users are under 24 years old, none at all are aged between 40 and 54 years, and only 20% of us are 55 years old or over. Based on the smoking and driving imagery, one suspects there might be gender differences too!

A real shortcoming is that searching is slower than on Google. The specificity makes up for everything, however, as it's particularly useful on projects where the usage of several editors or translators needs to converge quickly.

Guidelines for grey literature

www.glisc.info

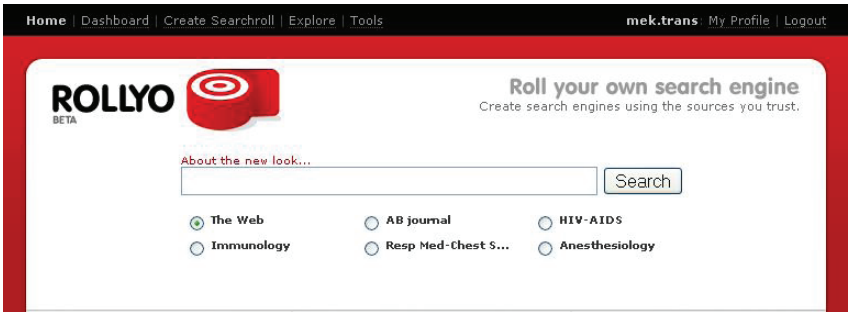
The Grey Literature International Steering Committee (GLISC) has launched its website, writes Paola De Castro. The "Nancy style", named after the site of the group's 2005 meeting, fills a gap for authors and issuers of documents circulated in limited editions. Many useful sections will seem familiar to readers of other guidelines, but a novel one that caught my eye was on "revision editing". It gives advice on what to pay attention to when editing at three different speeds—a rush edit, a standard edit, and a professional edit. I can imagine the steering committee ruminating over what to call the highest level, which addresses improvements in comprehensibility for the intended audience, appropriate balance of content on different subtopics, and the logical hierarchy of sections.

The rationale for this section was interesting too: that grey literature is often unsupported by professional publishing services, meaning that more responsibility falls on the authors to provide polished, ready copy. Editors of smaller scientific journals might also find that section useful, as publishers' routine provision of "professional edits" for journals has been gradually curtailed over the past 25 years or so. Therefore, authors submitting to scientific journals might also benefit from hints on how to make their manuscripts closer to photo-ready before submission.

Open post-publication review

www.biowizard.com and www.journalreview.org

PubMed Central started the "wizard" site to host post-publication responses to articles and discussion has begun to appear. A posting on the World Association of Medical Editors' listserve (www.wame.com) noted that an earlier virtual



The Rollyo interface allows terms to be searched in different microsearch engines created by the account holder or imported into the account from the engines created by others.

journal club exists at JournalReview.org. These sites have the potential to provide forums for critical peer review of articles in journals that don't include rapid response forums on-line. They're free to join and serve as a place to post letters to the editor that may have been rejected. The WAME posting recommended the following dialogue by way of example: http://journalreview.org/view_pubmed_article.php?pmid=15787813&specialty_id.

When I visited the Journal Review site independently, however, I saw that one criticism needs to be registered against it. Anonymous postings are allowed, and it seems unwise to me to encourage unreviewed discussion among reviewers unwilling to sign their names. After all, authors have gone public with theirs. The posts can be refreshingly informal ("Cauliflower allergy??? Proof by a prick test??? Does anyone else think this is bunk?"). But such off-hand comments leave the door open to hiding motives for criticism, and unlike the exemplary posting (link above), they don't seem to elicit dialogue anyway.

Toward clearer prose, writing worth citing, and better writing instruction

Raise your awareness of how yesterday's buzzwords become today's irritating jargon by visiting Jargon Finder (http://www.comnetwork.org/jargonmain.htm) by the Communications Network, a group dedicated to improving the capabilities of non-profit organizations. Terry Clayton sent word of this site, and when I visited it I found two layers of information. First comes a list of words to think twice about using. There may be nothing intrinsically wrong with *paradigm, maximize, empowerment,* or *engagement* in general, but prose or speeches stuffed with them make one sleepy. Clicking on a link to new additions brings up a discussion between Tony Proscio — author of three essays about the words in the basic list — and others about new irksome turns of phrase. I learned that *baseline* has been transformed into a verb that means send a project back to square one. I also learned that *out of pocket* is being used to mean *out of the loop* — surely a malapropism in its new use.

One of the best advice guides to scientific writing I've seen in a long time calls itself an "unofficial guide" on writing articles worth citing. Sponsored by the European Union's Joint Research Center, it was posted in 2006 as a printable pdf file at: http://eusoils.jrc.it/ESDB_Archive/eusoils_docs/other/EUR22191.pdf. Authors Tomislav Hengl and Mike Gould's prose is crisp, and they've brought their ideas together in fresh ways implied by the "worth citing" part of their title. This guide of only 66 pages is frank about its "make an impact or perish" message (p 6). But the authors clearly admire the underlying scientific enterprise, and the guide isn't cynical. It leaves me feeling that science is worth writing well about — and editing well too. I can imagine its use in journal clubs or scientific writing workshops.

I learned about Hengl and Gould's guide from a post on the listserve of the EATAW — the European Association for the Teaching of Academic Writing (http://www.eataw.org/). Joy Burrough-Boenisch first spread the word about EATAW, which is free to join. Ostensibly started to disseminate information about resources for writing teachers and students, the listserve has recently included excellent postings by some of today's most important researchers on the nature of writing. Activity has been stimulated by the Bologna accords to promote mobility in European higher education.

Language fun

Two suggestions on the lighter side came from Terry Clayton in Thailand:

www.langaugelog.com

This blog is written by a bunch of top-notch linguists who comment, usually hilariously and with elegant turns of phrase as well as actual evidence, on silly language stories in the news. If it's bunk, they debunk it.

www.doubletongued.org

Lexicographer Grant Barrett finds the words that dictionaries have overlooked, such as "hump strap" and "briffit", and posts them on Double-Tongued, with full citations. These are words that are actually in use, not ones made up by teens for cheap thrills.

Thanks to EASE members Terry Clayton, Paola De Castro, and Joy Burrough-Boenisch – and to the many fine posters on the EATAW and WAME listserves who have guided my googling toward new directions.

News Notes

Essential source of prescribing information sold

The *Drug and Therapeutics Bulletin*, an important resource on prescribing for doctors, was bought in November by the BMJ Publishing Group. The trusted monthly review is independent of government, industry, and regulators and carries no advertising. Which?, formerly the UK Consumers' Association, had owned the journal since its launch in 1962. The sale follows the decision of the English Department of Health to not renew a longstanding subscription for about 120,000 copies, which expired in March 2006 (*BMJ* 2006;332:1109). The *BMJ* says the bulletin is a natural stable mate to its other evidence based products and hopes to develop a direct subscription market. (www.dtb.org.uk/dtb/do/articles/2007/Jan/1.html)

Royal Society tests open access

The Royal Society, the independent science academy of the United Kingdom, launched a trial open access journal service last June. Any paper accepted by one of the seven Royal Society journals can be made available to read online for free immediately after publication. The costs of peer review and production are borne by the paper's authors—£300 per A4 page, discounted for an initial period to £225. The Royal Society hopes the trial will provide evidence about the long term viability of the open access model. (www.royalsoc.ac.uk/news.asp?year=&id=4838)

Richard Doll didn't declare interests

The celebrated epidemiologist Richard Doll did not declare potential conflicts of interest when he acted as a paid consultant to the chemical industry while researching the dangers of exposure to vinyl chloride. An article in the *American Journal of Industrial Medicine* says that a review that Professor Doll finished in 1998 found no link between vinyl chloride and brain cancer (2007;50:227–33, doi: 10.1002/ajim.20357). But he was concurrently receiving funding from ICI, Dow Chemicals, and Monsanto, which make vinyl chloride. Professor Doll died in 2005. His former colleagues say it was not standard practice to declare competing interests at the time the work was done. (*BMJ* 2006;333:1142, doi: 10.1136/bmj.39035.565648.DB)

Author's death leaves questions

The conclusions of a *Lancet* study about sudden infant death may have been flawed because the author largely responsible for the study died two years before the paper was written (2005;365:29–35, doi: 10.1016/S0140-6736(04)17662-9). The *BMJ* also alleges that the remaining authors recategorized cot deaths as natural or unnatural after this and that one author had undeclared competing interests. The paper was written about the time paediatrician Roy Meadow was giving evidence at the trial of Sally Clark and featured in several high profile murder appeals. It has also influenced international practice. (*BMJ* 2006;333:1165-8, doi: 10.1136/bmj.39031.590914.68)

Interdisciplinary PloS One launched

The Public Library of Science launched *PloS One* in December. This open access, web only journal will report primary research from all disciplines within science and medicine (www.plosone.org). Every submitted paper that is methodologically sound will be published regardless of its findings. Submissions will be checked for flaws in only the design or analysis by at least one of an editorial board of more than 200 researchers. The journal is hoping to encourage interdisciplinary debate. Visitors can comment on and rate papers, allowing *PLoS One*'s editors to identify and promote the papers that researchers are talking about. (*Nature* 2007;445:9, doi: 10.1038/445009a)

Wiki helps whistleblowers

A secret group has created a wiki to allow documents to be anonymously published online. Whistleblowers and journalists from anywhere in the world can use the site to expose unethical behaviour by governments or corporations without fear of prison or worse. The site, www.wikileaks.org, says its primary targets include China, Russia, and oppressive regimes in Eurasia, the Middle East, and sub-Saharan Africa. The site uses an anonymizing protocol that routes data through servers while hiding the paths that the packets take. "Wikileaks will provide a forum for the entire global community to examine any document relentlessly for credibility," the site claims. (*New Scientist* 2007 Jan 13, p 26)

Google searches patents too

Google Patent Search was launched in December and allows full text searching of the US patent corpus from 1790 onwards (www.google.com/patents). The US Patent and Trademark Office already offers this service from 1976, but before this searching is only possible using metadata. Google says that its straightforward approach will "open up patent search to a lot of non-lawyers." More than seven million US patents are included. Patent applications are not, however, but could be added to the service along with non-US patents in the future. (http://searchengineland.com/061213-200005.php)

CrossRef links poor countries' journals

Journals from poor countries will benefit from the services of CrossRef, which coordinates cross-publisher citation linking systems. The organization, which is founded and led by publishers, agreed to help the International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP) last December (www.inasp.info). Journals from Nepal, Vietnam, and Bangladesh will benefit. CrossRef

will also help the National Inquiry Services Center (www.nisc.co.za), a South African publisher of eight journals and several bibliographic databases and books, and African Journals Online, a not-for-profit aggregator of more than 260 journals from 21 African countries. (www.crossref.org/01company/pr/press120506.htm)

Blackwell offers ethics guidance

Last November Blackwell launched a comprehensive guide to help its journal editors navigate the publication ethics quagmire (www.blackwellpublishing.com/Publicationethics). *Best Practice Guidelines on Publication Ethics: A Publisher's Perspective* aims to help inform journals' editorial policies and includes practical advice on key ethical principles in academic publishing. Transparency, research integrity, peer review, conflicts of interest, and plagiarism are just some of the topics covered. The guidelines aim also to help editors to develop their own approaches to publication ethics and include flowcharts on how to handle ethical situations from the Committee on Publication Ethics. (www.ringgold.com/UKSG/si_pd.cfm?pid=10&articleid=2876)

Wake up and smell the roses

Smells could hold the answer to increasing the amount you can remember, according to a recent study in *Science* (2007;315:1426-9, doi: 10.1126/science.1138581). Seventy four male volunteers had to find pairs of pictures from overturned cards. They were presented with rose fragrance while trying to remember the locations of the pairs. The men presented with the same smell while they slept that night could better recall the pictures the next day (97% compared with 86% correct). Brain scans showed that exposure to the smell during sleep activated the hippocampus, a part of the brain important for memory. (*Nature* 2007 Mar 8, doi: 10.1038/news070305-10)

What are web users thinking?

Web surfers are notoriously unwilling to spend more than a few seconds trying to find what they want at one website before giving up and going elsewhere. Eye tracking software could help because it allows users' interactions with a site to be analysed. When we visit a site, our eyes skim and scan in a hunt for prized content—we process information quickly and impulsively. Eye tracking software records these movements, giving a direct account in real time. In interviews about website use, users don't always remember where they looked, and they don't always tell the whole truth. (www.freepint.com/issues/180107.htm#tips)

Fossil journal may encourage black market

Academics are upset because a new palaeontology journal wants to publish details of privately held fossils, an article in *Nature* says. This could give scientific legitimacy to commercial fossil hunters and encourage illegal collecting of and trade in fossils. The *Journal of Paleontological Sciences* (www.aaps-journal.org) is inviting anyone to publish details of their finds, regardless of whether fossils are in the public domain and are available for future study. Traditional palaeontological journals have codes of ethics that require contributors to catalogue their specimens in a recognized repository, often a national museum. (*Nature* 2007;445:234–235, doi: 10.1038/445234b)

Learned Publishing looks at economics

April's issue of *Learned Publishing* includes an editorial that asks common sense questions about the costs of open access, which have to be balanced against the benefits (2007;20:83–4, doi: 10.1087/174148507X183542). The publisher, the Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers, is collecting signatures in support of the editorial at www.alpsp.org/ngen_public/article.asp?aid=723. Don King, the doyen of publishing economics, has written a comprehensive review of journal publishing costs. He considers often overlooked factors that can influence journals' costs. (pp 85–106, doi: 10.1087/174148507X183551)

Cheaper breakaway journals triumph

The entire editorial board of Elsevier's journal *Topology* quit in a protest over pricing last August, an article in *Nature* says. Instead they set up the non-profit making *Journal of Topology*, to be launched by the London Mathematical Society next January. The subscription is $570 a year compared with Elsevier's $1665. In other disciplines, cheap or open access journals have been created to take on expensive commercial journals, often after the editorial board had left the original publication. These new journals commonly have scholarly success, with impact factors beating their predecessor, but support from libraries can be poorer. (*Nature* 2007;445:351, doi: 10.1038/445351a)

OUP adds to maths list

Oxford University Press announced in February expansion of its mathematics list by buying four peer reviewed maths journals from Hindawi. They are *International Mathematics Research Notices*, *International Mathematics Research Papers*, *Applied Mathematics Research Express*, and *International Mathematics Research Surveys*, which is 17 years old and comprises 4500 pages a year. (www.oxfordjournals.org)

Research excludes women

Women are under-represented on the committees that approve research, and clinical trials fail to

allow for possible effects of gender, a study has found (*Journal of Medical Ethics* 2007;33:107–12). The authors investigated research ethics committees in European countries in 2003. Few had formal rules about how many women should sit on the committees and none required research to include sufficient numbers of both sexes and that any benefits or harms did not unfairly affect either sex. Although research funded by the European Union should follow its policy on sex equality in health, ethics committees "paid only limited attention" to it, the authors say.

EC to promote open access

The European Commission will promote better access to the published research it funds—to the sum of €54bn over the next seven years. Some €50m will be used to link digital repositories in the next two years. A further €25m will be directed at research on digital preservation, and €10m has been earmarked to improve the accessibility and usability of scientific content. Later this year the European Commission will investigate economic aspects of digital preservation and the impact of tax on scientific publishing. The commission's online consultation exercise on open access last year aroused conflicting views—strong support from the scientific community and strong opposition from publishers. (*BMJ* 2007;334:389, doi: 10.1136/bmj.39129.642130.DB)

Norwegian universities snub Blackwell

Norway's biggest university libraries have stopped negotiations with Blackwell over journal pricing. They say that electronic subscription agreements force them to take big packages, which include unwanted publications; subscriptions cannot be terminated during the contract; and prices are fixed, with high annual rises. Researchers and students will lose electronic access to 778 journals and will have to use interlibrary loan instead. The director of Bergen University said, "This is a paradox. Researchers . . . give up their rights to their material and have to pay through the nose to get it back". (http://nyheter.uib.no/?modus=vis_engelsk&id=35023)

Publishers set "pit bull" on open access

The American Association of Publishers, which represents scientific publishing giants Elsevier, Wiley, and the American Chemical Society, has taken advice from an infamous public relations consultant to inform their campaign against open access to scholarly work, according to emails seen by *Nature*. Eric Dezenhall has been described as the "pit bull of public relations" and lists a former head of Enron as someone whose reputation he has helped to protect. Dezenhall suggests science publishers focus on simple messages, *Nature* reports, such as "public access equals government censorship" and that they should equate traditional publishing models with the rigour of peer review. (*Nature* 2007;445:347, doi: 10.1038/445347a)

Hello science.world

An internet portal hopes to make scientific information from many different countries available at a single location online. The US Department of Energy and the British Library agreed a partnership in January to develop a "global science gateway," which they hope will aid international collaboration in research. The facility will be able to search collections around the world, enabling access to small and less well known resources. Dubbed "science.world," the gateway will offer "direct, seamless, and free searching" and will "raise the visibility and usage of individual sources." It will follow the model of http://science.gov, the US interagency science portal. (www.doe.gov/print/4619.htm)

UK gets free access to biomedical research

The UK PubMed Central database (www.ukpmc.ac.uk) will make most biomedical research in the United Kingdom available online for free. The database went live in January and is supported by nine major funders of research, led by the Wellcome Trust. Many of the organisations require that the results of work they've funded are publicly archived as soon as they are accepted for publication in a peer reviewed journal. Other bodies supporting the service include the British Heart Foundation, Cancer Research UK, the Department of Health, and the Medical Research Council. (*BMJ* 2007;334:175, doi: 10.1136/bmj.39101.551759.DB)

Nature highlights misconduct

The 18 January issue of *Nature* focused on research misconduct. One article considers how institutions might improve their investigations of alleged misconduct, which "often seem capricious and incomplete." Another article looks at the social and psychological factors that might lead a scientist to commit misconduct. And a further piece follows up previous wrongdoers, including Woo Suk Hwang, the discredited South Korean stem cell scientist. In a leader, the journal concludes that "most important of all, as the first scientific studies of the factors behind good conduct confirm, is the example set by senior researchers". (*Nature* 2007;445:229)

Nature lights up physics

Nature Photonics, a monthly peer reviewed journal devoted to the science and application of light, was launched in January (www.nature.com/nphoton). The journal will cover the study of all aspects

of light generation, manipulation, and detection, from fundamental properties to emerging technology. In addition to research papers and reviews, news, and opinion pieces, *Nature Photonics* will publish articles on commercial aspects. Nature will continue to publish exceptional photonics papers for its multidisciplinary readership. And *Nature Physics*, *Nature Materials*, and *Nature Nanotechnology* will publish papers on light that fit their remits.

Oil company pays for climate change criticism

Letters from an oil company's think tank to UK and US scientists offered $10,000 for articles to undermine a key United Nations report on climate change, the *Guardian* claimed in February. The report, by international experts, will underpin international negotiations on new emissions targets to succeed the Kyoto agreement after 2012. The letters call the UN panel "resistant to reasonable criticism and dissent and prone to summary conclusions that are poorly supported" and ask for essays that "thoughtfully explore the limitations of climate model outputs." (*Guardian* 2007 Feb 2, http://environment.guardian.co.uk/climatechange/story/0,,2004397,00.html)

Academics condemn Reed Elsevier's arms fairs

Internationally respected scientists, academics, and doctors, including Sir Michael Atiyah and Noam Chomsky, have called for a boycott of Reed Elsevier, the biggest publisher of scientific, medical, and technical information in the world and owner of the *Lancet* medical journal. They say that publishing medical journals while running controversial fairs that sell arms and torture equipment is hypocrisy. Ian Gilmore, president of the UK Royal College of Physicians, said, "The *Lancet* . . . should not be linked to an industry involved in weapons designed to cause physical harm and death." But Reed Elsevier does not acknowledge any conflict of interest between serving the scientific and health communities and the "legitimate defence industry." (*Lancet* 2006;369:987; *Guardian* 23 Mar, p 11, www.guardian.co.uk/armstrade/story/0,,2040822,00.html)

British Library may have to charge

Officials at the British Library have identified the effects of a possible 7% cut to their funding predicted in 2007, and sent this worst case scenario to the UK chancellor, Gordon Brown. The cuts would necessitate charging people to use the reading rooms or limits on opening hours; two galleries might also have to close; and spending on research journals and books would be cut, "undermining 250 years of collecting." Efforts to establish a digital library for the UK would also be devastated: "We will be unable to fulfil our statutory obligations for legal deposit of electronic material." (*Guardian* 2007 Jan 29, http://books.guardian.co.uk/news/articles/0,,2000822,00.html)

Open access will reshape publishing

More and more funding bodies are asking authors to place their research in open access repositories once their papers are accepted for publication, a BioMed Central colloquium on open access publishing heard in February. Four bodies adopted an open access requirement in January, and five more have pledged requirements. Experts predicted more multimedia and greater interconnectivity and exploitation of data in online journals. Publication would become faster, and peer review was likely to be increasingly through comment after publication. The danger of access to only short, poorly written, and misleading abstracts was highlighted, especially when used to inform clinical practice. (*BMJ* 2007;334:330, doi: 10.1136/bmj.39125.406528.DB)

Electronic preprints complement journals

Publishing electronic preprints before publishing papers in journals had no detrimental affect on subsequent readership of the journals, a study in *Learned Publishing* has found (2006;20:16–22, doi: 10.1087/095315107779490661). Once papers were published in a journal, readership of the preprints dropped off quickly. And the half life for preprints was much shorter than for the corresponding journal article. "This is because the journal article has been refereed and is . . . the 'official' version," the authors say, "E-prints have not undermined journal use." Rather they "help journal articles to gain more visibility."

"Fizz fizz bang bang"

The UK public voted miniature rockets fired metres into the air, using effervescent indigestion tablets, as their favourite science experiment for National Science and Engineering Week in March. "Fizz fizz bang bang" - demonstrating Newton's third law - took 28% of the vote, pushing "you've got gas" and "banana hammer" into second and third place. The fun poll was organized by the British Association for the Advancement of Science to attract more young people to careers in science and engineering. The demonstrations are available to download from www.the-ba.net/nsew and were intended to counter an increasingly risk adverse culture in which children see fewer and fewer experiments at school.

Thanks to Sheila Evered and Margaret Cooter.

Please email items for this section to Richard Hurley (rhurley@bmj.com), with "News notes" in the subject line.

News from Editing Societies

ALPSP
The Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers (http://www.alpsp.org) has signed a joint declaration laying out 10 principles through which scientific, technical, and medical (STM) publishing can continue to work for the benefit of the scientific community and wider society. The Brussels Declaration was issued on 13th February 2007 and is signed by eight publishing trade associations and 35 publishers. It was issued in the context of the European Commission's Communication on Scientific Information and its conference, a report of which can be found in the Meeting Reports section (p 47).

AUP
The discussion on open access sometimes becomes heated and opinions polarized. In recognition of this, the Association of American University Presses (http://www.aaupnet.org) has released a statement outlining the association's perspective on open access, with the hope of steering the debate towards productive solutions that will serve the entire scholarly community. Until recently, the debate has centred on STM journal articles, but the AAUP believes that the discussion should be broadened to included other fields and formats. Changing the system of scholarly communications will affect not only non-profit scholarly publishers but also the parent universities and academic societies and all other universities and research institutions that benefit from the distribution of scholarship. The full statement can be read online at http://aaupnet.org/aboutup/issues/oa/statement.pdf.

ACES
While looking through the website of the **American Copy Editors Society** (http://copydesk.org), I came across an item about an association I'd never heard of. The Religion Newswriters Association (http://www.rna.org) announces the first religion stylebook aimed at the mainstream media. The guide includes definitions, usage guidelines, preferred spellings, religious titles, etc. The guide is searchable on line at http://www.ReligionStylebook.org. Not really to do with science editing, but interesting none the less.

ACRL
Have you taken part in a virtual conference, and is this something for EASE? The **Association of College and Research Libraries** (http://www.acrl.org) is holding a virtual conference for those who cannot attend the "face-to-face" counterpart. The virtual conference, held completely on line, will include live interactive webcasts of speakers, as well as text-based discussion boards, blogs, speaker materials, and more. Like the "live" conference, the virtual conference will run on a real-time schedule. Participants can participate fully in the conference without having to leave their desks! Having thoroughly enjoyed the meals and social activities of the last EASE General Assembly in Krakow, I can't help but think that you'd miss something with virtual conferencing.

Communication award
The **European Molecular Biology Organisation** is looking for practising life scientists in Europe who have contributed to the public understanding of science to apply for its annual communication award. The award highlights the exceptional efforts made by many scientists to combine activities in science communication with full time research. The prize is the sum of €5000. Winners are also automatically nominated for the European Commission's Descartes prize. Candidates should complete and return an official entry form by 30 June 2007 (www.embo.org/awards/entries.html). Last year's winner was Armand Marie Leroi of Imperial College, London.

EAC
The Editors' Association of Canada (http://www.editors.ca) promotes professional editing as key in producing effective communication. It has recently has introduced certification, leading to the credential Certified Professional Editor – the first editors sat their certification tests in November. Certification is seen not only as bestowing professional status on editors but also as lending legitimacy to what editors do. Clients will still not understand what editors do, but they may recognize their importance.

CSE
The Editorial Policy Committee of the **Council of Science Editors** (http://www.councilscienceeditors.org) has published a guide to promoting integrity in scientific journal publications. The CSE's white paper is intended to provide guidance to scientists in their varied roles during the publication process. The guide covers the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved in publishing: What are the roles of the editor, author, peer reviewers, and the publisher? What are the various models of authorship and contributorship? How can editors ensure that they have a workable conflict of interest policy? It also covers research misconduct: What is research misconduct? How is it identified? What are the international models for responding to research misconduct? What is the best way to correct the literature? What is the difference between a retraction and a published expression of concern? The CSE Editorial Policy Committee incorporated information and advice

from a variety of experts from the commercial and non-profit publishing community, from international groups such as COPE, WAME, and ICMJE, from scientific societies, and from law firms and government agencies with knowledge of research integrity. The Council is to be congratulated – it will be holding its "golden" (50th) anniversary meeting this year in Austin, Texas, from 18 to 22 May.

IPEd

The **Institute of Professional Editors** (http://www/iped-editors.org) is continuing with their accreditation scheme. While accreditation by portfolio submission is considered ideal, it's a complex process that needs to be implemented gradually to ensure its efficacy and sustainability. For the moment the IPEd Assessors Forum proposes an initial basic accreditation step involving a nationwide test of copyediting and other essential skills. The test would be marked "pass" or "fail", with feedback being given to applicants on request. Such a test would make it easier to ensure fairness and consistency.

IPEd also runs EdWiki, which can be accessed via the institute's website. The site is playing host to the IPEd Standards Revision Working Group, the Interim Council's draft minutes, establishing a national organization, the Accreditation Board, and the Assessors Forum.

Plain English

The **Plain English Campaign** announces that new "waffle-buster" software will be released soon. "Drivel Defence" is a free software application developed by John Rugg of the University of West England, with help from Plain English Campaign. The software uses the Campaign's "A–Z of alternative words" guide to inspect web pages and other documents, and checks readability and accessibility issues. Many public information websites are cluttered with impenetrable information and gobbledygook. Drivel Defence will make it easy for web editors and journalists to check that their web pages are written in plain, accessible English.

Along similar lines, there is now a guide for deciphering business jargon and "management-speak". Have you encountered the phrase "alpha pup", or "apple polish"? In the business world, "sacrifice" means firing people. I rather liked "word-of-mouse", meaning referral advertising over a computer network. I'm sure that there are manuscripts doing the rounds of different editorial offices that could be termed "zombie projects" (with "manuscript" and "been rejected" replacing "project" and "terminated" in the original definition). The guide is produced by **www.theofficelife.com** and can be accessed at http://www.theofficelife.com/business-jargon-dictionary-A.html.

Poynter Institute

The **Poynter Institute** in the United States is a school for journalists, future journalists, and teachers of journalists. In August 2006, the Institute gathered a team of online journalists from across the USA to discuss the issues surrounding their work. They have created a set of guidelines for ethical journalism on the web (http://poynter.editme.com/ethics on line). An extended version can be read at http://www.poynter.org/content/content_view.asp?id=117350.

WAME

The **World Association of Medical Editors** (http://wame.org) has issued a new policy statement on authorship. The statement covers criteria for authorship, the number of authors, the order of authorship, and authorship disputes.

Sources:

The websites and publications of the associations and societies mentioned.

Contributions

Jane Sykes (j.sykes@planet.nl) welcomes news from societies and national bodies concerned with editing, writing, or publishing in the sciences.

Forthcoming Meetings, Courses and BELS Examinations

Council of Science Editors (CSE) Annual Meeting
18–22 May 2007; Austin, TX
Contact: CSE Headquarters, Drohan Management Group, Reston, VA.
Tel: +1 (703) 437 4377;
fax: +1 (703) 435 4390
www.councilscienceeditors.org

European Medical Writers Association
"Medical Communications Today"
22–26 May 2007; Vienna, Austria
Contact: European Medical Writers Association, Zug, Switzerland; info@emwa.org; www.emwa.org

Society for Scholarly Publishing (SSP) 29th Annual Meeting
"Imagining the Future: Scholarly Communication 2.0"
6–8 June 2007; San Francisco, CA
Contact: SSP, Wheat Ridge, CO.
Tel: +1(303) 422 3914; fax: +1(303) 422 8894; www.sspnet.org

First international PKP Scholarly Publishing Conference
11-13 July 2007, Vancouver, Canada
http://pkp.sfu.ca/node/493

Society of Indexers
50th Anniversary conference: "Golden Retrievers"
13-16 July 2007; Roehampton, London
www.indexers.org.uk

Society for Editors and Proofreaders (SfEP): 18th Annual Conference
"Learning is always in season"
3-5 September 2007; University of Sussex, Brighton, UK
http://sfep.org.uk

Research Integrity: Fostering Responsible Research
16-19 September 2007; Lisbon, Portugal
www.esf.org/conferences/

American Medical Writers Association (AMWA): 67th Annual Conference
"A Legacy of Leadership"
11–13 October 2007; Atlanta, GA
www.amwa.org

COURSES

ALPSP training courses, briefings and technology updates
Half-day and one-day courses and updates. Contact Amanda Whiting, Training Coordinator, Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers, Tel: +44 (0)1865 247776; training@alpsp.org; www.alpsp-training.org

Style for reports and papers in medical and life-science journals
John Kirkman Communication Consultancy courses: London, UK
One-day seminars devoted to discussion of style – tactics for producing accurate and readable texts, not structure or format.
Contact Gill Ward, JKCC, PO Bos 106, Marlborough, Wilts SN8 2RU, UK. Tel: +44 (0)1672 520429; fax +44 (0)1672 521008; kirkman.ramsbury@btinternet.com

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

Society for Editors and Proofreaders workshops
SfEP runs one-day workshops in London and occasionally elsewhere in the UK on copy-editing, proofreading, grammar, and much else.
Training enquiries: tel: +44 (0)20 7736 0901; trainingenquiries@sfep.org.uk
Other enquiries: SfEP, Riverbank House, 1 Putney Bridge Approach, London SW6 3JD, UK. Tel: +44 (0)20 7736 3278; administration@sfep.org.uk
www.sfep.org.uk

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

University of Chicago
Medical writing, editing, and ethics are among the many courses available at the Graham School of General Studies, 5835 S Kimbark Avenue, Chicago, IL 60637-1608, USA.
Fax +1 773 702 6814.
http://grahamschool.uchicago.edu

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

BELS - Board of Editors in the Life Sciences examination schedule

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

14 July 2007,
Boston, MA, Tufts University
Register by 23 June

10 October 2007,
Atlanta, GA (AMWA meeting)
Register by 19 September

The Editor's Bookshelf

The blog of the Editor's Bookshelf has been recently updated with a new version that allows labels to be attached to each post and all items under the same label to be retrieved easily. The blog is available on the web and it has been included among the journalology blogs at http://journalology.blogspot.com/

Please write to paola.decastro@iss.it if you wish to add your postings on new publications of interest for science editors.

EDITORIAL PROCESSES

PLoS Medicine Editors, Krishna S. 2006. **Drug development papers in PLoS medicine: how we try to spot a winner.** *PLoS Medicine* 3(12):e547.

Editors ask several general questions about any submitted paper: how important is the research question (both globally and in relation to the journal's audience); what is the likelihood of the conclusions holding up over time (and when is it worth publishing preliminary results that would be important if confirmed but where confirmation is uncertain); and, for a highly selective general medical journal, do the results represent a substantial advance—in understanding pathogenesis, suggesting treatment options, or with implications for public health. The editors of PloS Medicine discuss their strategy in deciding which drug development papers are appropriate for publication in a general medical journal.

Raja UY, Cooper JG. 2006. **How accurate are the references in Emergency Medical Journal?** *Emergency Medical Journal* 23(8):625–626.

The objective of this article is to access the accuracy of references in Emergency Medicine Journal during 2003. Out of the 2561 citations checked, 19% contained minor errors and in 8% the errors were classed as major, in such a way as to distract from the quality of the reference. This article makes some important points: not only does poor referencing reflect badly on the journal but it pulls into question the quality of the research in general. With this in mind, should journals expect editors to check the accuracy of citations against reliable electronic and manual resources as standard practice?

ETHICAL ISSUES

Boyd EA, Bero LA. 2006. **Improving the use of research evidence in guideline development: 4. Managing conflicts of interests.** *Health Research Policy and Systems* 4:16.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has recognized the need to use more rigorous processes to ensure that health care recommendations are informed by the best available research evidence. Literature on conflicts of interest was reviewed to search the best way to obtain complete and accurate disclosures on financial ties and other competing interests. The paper considers how to manage conflict of interests and how to enforce appropriate policies.

Graf C, Wager E, Bowman A, Fiack S, Scott-Lichter D, Robinson A. 2007. **Best practice guidelines on publication ethics: a publisher's perspective.** *International Journal of Clinical Practice* 61(s152):1–26.

These guidelines describe Blackwell Publishing's position on the major ethical principles of academic publishing and review factors that may foster ethical behaviour or create problems. Blackwell Publishing recommends that editors adapt and adopt the suggestions outlined to best fit the needs of their own particular publishing environment. They provide practical guidance in the form of Best Practice statements.

Grindlinger B. 2006. **Can I quote you on that?** *Journal of Clinical Investigation* 116(11):2832.

Research findings can be distorted in the lay press. Journalists and scientists must share the responsibilities of better explaining and interpreting science in an accessible and meaningful context for non-specialist readers.

LANGUAGE AND WRITING

Meneghini R, Packer AL. 2007. **Is there science beyond English? Initiatives to increase the quality and visibility of non-English publications might help to break down language barriers in scientific communication.** *EMBO Reports* 8(2):112–116.

Scientists must master English to obtain international recognition and to access relevant publications. English has become a communication tool also in the less erudite world, consisting of those who want to learn about and pass on knowledge. Much research is still published in languages other than English, and even if it is valuable, it will not be spread to the international community. Suggestions are given to change this trend and foster also the use of local languages – but this article that is intended for the wider international community is written in English!

PUBLISHING

The January 2007 issue of *Physics World* (http://physicsweb.org/articles/world) has three papers in its Comment section introducing an issue featuring developments in physics publishing, and a section entitled "The future of physics publishing "(p 18–36).

Editorial. 2007. **Brave new Web.** *Physics World* 29(1):13.

Physicists are slow to use the new tools: 84% have no idea what social tagging is; only 14% have contributed to a work-related wiki, etc.

Carroll S. 2007. **Blogging for physics.** *Physics World* 29(1):14.
Explains how blogging can place scientific research in a wider context.

Cartlidge E. 2007. **Peer review steps out of the shadows** *Physics World* 29(1):29–30.

Some researchers believe that the internet can be used to improve the transparency and quality of the peer review process, but as this paper discovers, "open peer review" has yet to catch on in the physics community.

Chalmers M. 2007. **A revolution in bits.** *Physics World* 29(1):18–21.

The internet is transforming the way that physicists report their findings and communicate with one another. This article shows that we are only just beginning to harness the power of the web. Its current use by physics journals, the effect of open access, open peer review, blogs including Wikipedia, and possible future problems are all discussed.

Crease RP. 2007. **Critical point: The lost art of the letter** *Physics World* 29(1):15.

The internet is affecting not only how scientists communicate, but also how future science historians will work.

Enderby J. 2007. **The open-access debate.** *Physics World* 29(1):23.

Paper warning that open-acess publishing is an unproved business model and not in the best interests of science.

Griffiths MR. 2007 **Talking physics in the social web**. *Physics World* 29(1):24–28.

From "blogs" to "wikis", the Web is now more than a mere repository of information. This paper investigates how this new interactivity is affecting the way physicists communicate and access information.

Meho LI. 2007. **The rise and rise of citation analysis.** *Physics World* 29(1):32–36.

With the vast majority of scientific papers now available online, the web is allowing physicists and information providers to measure more accurately the impact of these papers and their authors and ending the monopoly of Thomson Scientific (formerly ISI).

Voss R. 2007. **The open-access debate.** *Physics World* 29(1):22.

Making the case for open-access journals.

Harnad J, et al. 2007. **Debating the future of physics publishing.** *Physics World* 29(3):22.

Letters relating to the debate on the future of publishing.

John Harnad compares two different approaches to open access: gold OA where the journal charges nothing for reader access and green OA where the journal charges for subscriptions; he considers gold OA to be not in the interests of the research community. Richard Reeves calls for reviews of research papers to be made available to the general public. Basil Polychronopulos considers the end of written manuscripts and the dawning of e-mails not necessarily a bad thing. John Chubb comments that the rise of citation analysis as reported by Meho (29(1):32-36) takes no account of the practical value of published work as industrial applications do not leads to citations. In reply, Meho points out that up to 15% of citations are from the grey literature.

Nyström M, Merkel M, Ahrenberg L, Zweigenbaum P, Petersson H, Åhlfeldt H. 2006. **Creating a medical English-Swedish dictionary using interactive word alignment.** *BMC Medical Informatics and Decision Making* 6:35.

Translating medical dictionaries by combining electronic word extraction and automated alignment. This method permits to the rapid generation of a medical terminology dictionary. This research, which also identifies inconsistencies in currently used terminology systems, was performed in a Swedish-English dictionary with 31,000 entries.

RESEARCH EVALUATION

Campanario JM, Acedo E. 2007. **Rejecting highly cited papers: The views of scientists who encounter resistance to their discoveries from other scientists.** *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 58(5):734–743.

A useful survey about the difficulties encountered by scientists when trying to have their own articles published. Manuscripts containing new ideas are often rejected, but once they have been published, by using different strategies they can attract many citations and become highly relevant.

Csako G. 2007. **Analysis of the most highly cited articles from the 50-year history of CCA.** *Clinica Chimica Acta* 375 (1–2):43–48.

Analysis of the most highly cited articles from CCA's history. Lists are based on the ISI/Thomson Scientific database and the country of origin identified by a PubMed search. The total number of citations was positively correlated to the date of publication of the cited articles, with the most highly cited articles appearing at least 8–16 years following their publication. These results may assist in editorial policy-making and marketing decisions and in assessing the impact of individual countries on the field, as well as guiding authors' decisions when submitting articles.

Ioannidis JPA. 2006. **Concentration of the most-cited papers in the scientific literature: analysis of journal ecosystems.** *PLoS One* 1(1):e5.

Despite a plethora of available journals, the most influential papers are concentrated in few journals, especially in fields with high citation density. Existing multidisciplinary journals publish selectively the most-cited papers from fields with high citation density. The paper reports and discusses: journals publishing most-cited papers, diversity in specific fields, correlates of species (journal) diversity, concentration in multidisciplinary journals, original articles and reviews, extent of concentration of papers, citations, and most-cited papers.

SCIENCE

Giustini D. 2006. **How Web 2.0 is changing medicine**. *BMJ* 333:1283–1284.

Web 2.0 is a difficult term to define, but clearly it brings people together in a more dynamic, interactive space. This new generation of internet services and devices—often referred to as social software—can be leveraged to enrich our web experience, as information is continually requested, consumed, and reinterpreted. Web 2.0 examples in medicine are given with useful links to test them.

Godlee F. 2007. **Milestones on the long road to knowledge**. *BMJ* doi:10.1136/bmj.39062.570856.94

Seeking a way to mark the launch of the new BMJ, the editors hit on the idea of looking back at the most important medical milestones since the journal was first published in 1840. They asked readers to nominate milestones and then a panel of editors and advisers narrowed the field down from more than 70 to 15. They invited champions to write about each one; their contributions make up the commemorative supplement published on 20 January.

We thank John Glen and Renata Solimini for contributions to this issue of the Editor's Bookshelf.

The Editor's Bookshelf from the previous issue of European Science Editing is available in the Publications section of the website (www.ease.org.uk); earlier collections can be accessed via pdfs of previous issues. Current posts can be read on the Bookshelf blog, http://ese-bookshelf.blogspot.com/; if you would like to contribute, please contact Paola De Castro (paola.decastro@iss.it).

Membership changes – May 2007

NEW MEMBERS

Individual

Dr Michael Bär
Wiesloch
Germany
m.baer@science-office.eu

Mr Hrvoje Cargonja
Institute for Anthropological Research
Zagreb
Croatia
Collegium Antropologicum

Prof dr Jakov Dulcic
Institute of Oceanography & Fisheries
Zagreb
Croatia

Dr Erland Hem
Oslo
Norway
Journal of the Norwegian Medical Association

Corporate

SENSE:
Shazia Qureshi
Amsterdam
The Netherlands
Freelance medical editor and writer
Kumar Jamdagni
Zwolle
The Netherlands
English translator/editor/trainer

The Lancet:
Stephanie Bartlett
Assistant editor
Elena Becker-Barroso
Senior editor, *Lancet Neurology*
Robert Brierley
Assistant editor, *Lancet Infectious Diseases*
Emma Cannell
Senior editor, *Lancet Oncology*
Jane Godsland
Senior editor
Rhona MacDonald
Senior editor
London, UK
editorial@lancet.com

Portland Press:
Professor Anna Dominiczak
Professor David Richardson
London, UK

Scandinavian Journal of Work & Environmental Health:
Dr Antero Aitio
Finnish Institute of Occupational Health
Helsinki, Finland
Associate Professor Alex Burdorf
Department of Occupational Health & Public Health
Erasmus University Medical Center
Rotterdam
The Netherlands
Professor Bengt Järvholm
Department of Occupational & Environmental Medicine
NUS, Umeå
Sweden
Dr Gőran Kecklund
National Institute for Psychosocial Medicine
Karolinska Institute
Stockholm
Sweden
Dr Jos Verbeek
Finnish Institute of Occupational Health
Helsinki
Finland

Society for Endocrinology:
Ailsa Bailey and
Kim Marello
Bradley Stoke
Bristol, UK

For more information about the aims of EASE and for an application form, visit www.ease.org.uk