From the Editors' Desks

Launching a new column

This issue sees the launch of a new column "My Life as an Editor" (page 20). It is intended to illustrate the great diversity of our membership, from those lifetime editors to those just starting out, and from those highly visible to those who work industriously away behind the publishing scenes. Don't be surprised if you get an email from the Chief Editor asking if you would be prepared to be interviewed for *ESE* – and if you do get that email, please agree!

How was it for you?

After reading the editorial on a proposed nomenclature for editors, where do you fit? Do you like your "new title" - or do you disagree? We are interested in your reaction and invite you to share your thoughts on this issue. Please let us know by sending an email to ESE's Chief Editor at europeanscienceediting@googlemail.com

Editors' bookshelf secrets revealed

In this issue the Editor's Bookshelf section contains some photographs of EASE members' bookshelves; we would love to see more! Please email them to mcooter3@gmail.com.

If you run training courses

EASE is raising the profile of teaching already given by many of our members – see page 32. Information on how to join this register is in the November 2008 issue (page 122), and on the EASE website.

Resignation

After many years of sterling service on the Pulications Committee, Liz Wager (From the Literature) has stepped down. We thank Liz for her years of dedicated support, and we very much hope to see her at the EASE conference in Pisa in September.

Have you paid up?

A gentle reminder that subscriptions are now due, so if you haven't paid yet, please do. If you have received your invoice and been looking for EASE Shop on EASE's website to pay online, Sheila apologises profusely! The EASE Shop button disappeared in the creation of the new website last year; please look instead for "Join or Subscribe".

What makes your life easier?

On page 22 you will learn how to easily synchronize your files if you work on two computers. Do you have similar tips to share?

Copy date for May issue

Contributions for the next issue are needed by 15 March. Please send them to the appropriate member of the publications committee (see the list on the left) by then.

Editorial

A taxonomy of editors

European science editors – who are we? Stuart Handysides posed this question in his Editorial in November (*European Science Editing* 2008;34(4):93). In February 2008 (34(1):3), Marcin Kozak had asked a similar question: Who are you, Editors? There seems to a degree of uncertainty about who we are. Fortunately, Handysides was able to clarify several quantitative aspects of the membership of EASE – geographic distribution, gender balance, and the number of journals represented.

Kozak was perplexed by the names of editors in various positions: "It is clear that there is a mess in terminology for editors in science journals." Kozak's editorial brought to mind a suggestion made by Andrew Herxheimer at an EASE Conference a very long time ago – we need a taxonomy of editors. Kozak, once again, has shown how necessary this is.

My starting point for such a taxonomy would be the functions of editors in the realm of science publishing. The function that all editors share is the safeguarding of quality. Such quality applies to content and presentation as well as to processes.

1. *Content control*: editors decide about the fate of submitted manuscripts: reject outright, publish without modification, or return to the author for improvement. A further distinction is possible on the basis of independence and responsibility:

a. Does the editor decide on his or her own and is this decision final? Such a person may be called a "decision editor", or a "chief editor", but in general they are simply called an "editor". It does not really matter whether an appeal is possible to any decision made. Even then, someone will have the final say about publication.

b. If there is someone who can overrule this decision, this person may still be an editor, but the overruling power then definitely belongs to the "chief editor" (1a).

c. Editors may have a responsibility that pertains only to a certain part of a publication, such as sections or geographic regions. If they have decision power within their field, they might be called "editor for [region]" or "section editor" or simply "editor".

d. For some publications, decisions are not taken by one person but by a collective that may be known as an "editorial board" or an "editorial committee" or something similar. An appropriate name for the members of such a collective might be "co-editor". It may happen that one person is the chairman of this collective, which, in my view, would make him or her a "chairperson", rather than a "chief editor".

Individuals who give their view on a paper, but who have no decision power, should be considered "peer reviewers" or "referees" or "advisors", but not "editors". Editors often follow the advice of advisors – but so long as those advisors have no formal position to enforce their advice, they remain simply "advisors".

2. *Presentation control*: editors take responsibility for implementation of house style, correct use of language, appropriate and effective layout, and so on. Usual names for such people are "technical editor", "copy editor", "desk editor", and "sub-editor". This range of designations might best be combined under one name, and my choice would be "technical editor".

3. *Process control*: editors who control processes are seldom involved in or have any influence over the content of a publication. The remit of such "managing editors" is to ensure that editorial processes or projects run smoothly. A managing editor may also be the secretary of an editorial board who prepares and executes the decision of this board even though this secretary has no right to vote. For the latter position I would like to reserve the name of "executive editor".

Then, of course, there is the all-in-one editor: the lone woman or man who combines all these functions in one person. It is these "lonesome editors" who can benefit most from the specialised diversity of editors present in EASE. EASE is the nourishing environment where an undifferentiated seed can grow into a complex organism with numerous functions and tasks; where editors can learn to perform all activities that are necessary for both simple journals and complex editorial organizations like those of, say, *Nature* or *Journal of Chromatography*.

Welcome to EASE's editorial greenhouse.

Allow me to emphasise again: my primary focus is on functions, not on the names of those functions. Those readers who like to solve puzzles might try to fit the following designations into my tentative taxonomy: advisory editor, assistant editor, associate editor, consultant editor, deputy editor, senior editor – and there are still more, as we are all aware.

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Articles

How well do structured abstracts reflect the articles they summarize?

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Abstract

Background: Evidence-based medicine requires critical appraisal of published research. This is often done by reading the abstracts alone of published papers. This study examined how well structured abstracts reflect the articles they summarize in medical journals.

Methods: A total of 20 papers reporting original randomized trials were obtained from four general medical journals. Key study details, results, and conclusions were extracted from the full articles. Abstracts were examined to see what information from the article was included, and they were scrutinized for inaccuracies, data not presented in the main body, and ambiguous statements.

Results: Nineteen abstracts (95%; 95% CI 75 to 100%) correctly stated the primary outcome. Eight abstracts (40%; 19% to 64%) were deficient in some way. Three (15%; 3% to 38%) contained incorrect or inconsistent figures or data. Six abstracts (30%; 12% to 54%) contained data not present in the full article.

Discussion: Almost half of the abstracts studied contained some data inconsistent with the full article, or missing altogether. Authors and editors need to ensure that abstracts are of a high quality and accurately reflect the papers they are summarizing. CONSORT guidelines provide helpful indications as to what should be included in abstracts reporting clinical trials.

Introduction

Evidence-based medicine requires healthcare professionals to critically appraise the research knowledge base. With an increasing volume of material being published, this task is becoming ever more difficult. In many cases, readers screen published papers for relevance and usefulness by using the abstract, particularly when accessing the paper on the internet where only the abstract may be available or where a database search has produced a large number of papers. In addition, time constraints mean that professionals may read only the abstract even when the full paper is available. The quality of the abstract is therefore extremely important.[1,2] In addition, journals may use the abstract to judge the suitability of a paper submitted for publication. A study by the *BMJ*'s editorial team investigated whether decisions to send submitted papers for external peer review could be made by using just the abstract.[3] In 62% of cases a first decision (immediate rejection, send for external review, or refer in-house) could be made using the abstract alone. The *BMJ* now routinely makes screening decisions about reviewing on the basis of the abstract alone.[4]

For all of these reasons, it is vital that abstracts accurately reflect the papers they summarize; however, little work has been carried out to investigate this. Pitkin and colleagues studied abstracts in six general medical journals and found that up to 68% of abstracts contained material that was inconsistent with the main body of the paper.[5] The study did not examine what material from the main body of the paper was contained within the abstract, or if important information was omitted from the abstract. The authors recommended further study to determine the extent to which important information from articles is included in the abstracts.

We present the findings of a study investigating how well structured abstracts reflect the papers they summarise, using an unselected series of randomized trials reported in four general medical journals.

Methods

All eligible papers (see below) in the *BMJ*, *Lancet*, *JAMA*, and *New England Journal of Medicine* (*NEJM*) published between 30 April and 14 July 2005 were initially chosen for investigation, the final date being the time at which the study was begun. Working back in time from 14 July 2005 (the start date of the study), papers were obtained until there were five papers from each of the four journals, giving a total sample of 20. This sample size was chosen as being feasible in the time available, as the study was conducted as part of an assessed medical student project. Where two or more versions of a paper were available, the version published in the print journal was used as the principal source. This decision was made to ensure consistency, as each article has a print version, whereas not all have an additional online version. Where there were two versions, the abstracts were identical in each.

Eligibility criteria

Eligible articles were reports of original randomized trials, which included an abstract. Prospective studies following up groups that had been randomized in the past were

included. All other articles, including meta-analyses and non-interventional studies, were excluded.

Review of the papers

The main body of each paper was examined before the abstract was looked at. Key study details, results, and conclusions from the papers were recorded. The abstract was then examined to see which pieces of data from the main body of the paper were included. The abstract was also scrutinised for incorrect figures, data not presented in the main body, and potentially ambiguous statements or data. Where data were found that were missing from the main body of the paper and a longer web version was available, this was examined to see if the data could be found there. For each paper it was recorded whether the primary outcome was identified in the abstract and, if so, how the results were presented – for example, estimated effect sizes, P values, and confidence intervals.

Details of the study design reported in the abstract were recorded and omission of any other points that were potentially important to readers interpreting the paper, such as lack of blinding and departure from protocols, was noted. The abstract was checked to see if the key conclusion(s) from the paper were included. The accuracy of data within the abstract was tested using the same method as Pitkin.[5] Abstracts were described as "deficient" if there was inconsistency between data in the abstract and the main body, or if data in the abstract were missing from the main paper. Any statements that were unclear or ambiguous were noted.

Statistical analysis

Proportions of abstracts with different characteristics were calculated with exact 95% confidence intervals.[6]

Results

The 20 studies reviewed were all two parallel-group randomized trials, two of which were equivalence trials. Of the 18 superiority trials, six (33%) reported evidence for a difference between groups in the primary outcome. Nineteen papers were first reports of trials and one was a follow-up.

Primary outcome

All but one of the papers (95%) correctly stated the primary outcome or hypothesis in the abstract (table). The other paper inconsistently stated the primary outcome as the proportion of subjects "referred for hospice care" in the abstract and the proportion "enrolled to hospice care" in the main text. Two abstracts (10%) failed to provide any estimates for the primary outcome result, referring only to whether or not there was a "significant difference" between the two groups with respect to the outcome. Twelve abstracts provided a P value for comparison between the two groups. Sixteen abstracts presented the difference between the two groups as either a risk/hazard/odds ratio or a risk difference; the remaining four reported outcomes for the two groups separately. Fifteen abstracts provided a 95% confidence interval for the difference. Ten of the 20 abstracts provided an estimate of the difference between

Accuracy of and primary outcome in 20 structured abstracts in general medical journals

Variable	No (%)	95% CI
Accuracy:		
Deficient	8 (40)	19 to 64
Inconsistency	3 (15)	3 to 38
Omission	6 (30)	12 to 54
Both omission and inconsistency	1 (5)	0 to 25
Ambiguity	4 (20)	6 to 44
Primary outcome:		
Clearly stated	19 (95)	75 to 100
Difference between groups given as a figure	16 (80)	56 to 94
95% CI given	15 (75)	51 to 91
P value given	12 (60)	36 to 81
Difference, CI, and P value given	10 (50)	27 to 73

the two groups, a confidence interval for this difference, and a P value for the comparison.

Other key data

All abstracts mentioned that the study was a randomized controlled trial or a follow-up from a randomized trial, as appropriate. Six of the 19 first reports of trials reported on blinding in the abstract. All 20 abstracts contained the main conclusion from the paper's discussion section.

Accuracy of data within the abstract

Eight (40%) of the abstracts were deficient (table). Three of these (15%) contained incorrect or inconsistent figures or statements. In one of the papers, the denominator for a proportion was incorrectly reported (207 instead of 107). Another paper misreported the patient eligibility criteria, reporting "osteoarthritis grading of less than or equal to two", when it should have stated "osteoarthritis grading of greater than or equal to two".

Six abstracts contained data not present in the main body of the paper; mostly these were additional calculations. Two of these six papers had longer versions available on the internet, but in neither of these were the data in question present in the internet version. One paper contained both an incorrect number and a statement missing from the main article.

Four papers contained ambiguous or unclear statements that did not accurately reflect details from the main body of the paper. One was a paper that mentioned "irritant reactions" in the abstract but did not indicate which symptoms this included. Since this terminology was not used in the main article, the meaning was unclear. A different paper stated a discontinuation rate of 5% for the trial drug but failed to mention that the placebo had a discontinuation rate of 2%.

Discussion

This is the only study to our knowledge that has investigated what material from the main body of an article is contained within the abstract, and whether key information is omitted from the abstract. Our study has shown that some abstracts of randomized controlled trials published in general medical journals are deficient or inaccurate.

Inaccurate or misleading data

Almost half of the abstracts studied contained some data inconsistent with the main body of the paper or missing altogether. This is consistent with the findings of a study conducted in 1999, which found that 39% of abstracts were deficient.[5] Some of the statements found in abstracts could not be classed as incorrect or missing from the main body of the paper, but were either unclear or potentially misleading – for example, giving the discontinuation rate in the treatment group but not in the placebo group.

The high proportion of papers with inaccurate or misleading data in the abstract is of concern. Some errors may be introduced during the writing process, particularly if there are multiple authors. Further inconsistencies may be introduced when authors revise parts of their manuscript but leave other sections unchanged. Structured abstracts are an improvement compared to traditional ones,[7] but the quality of abstracts needs further improvement.

Limitations

Though the number of papers reviewed was small, our findings for the accuracy of abstracts were consistent with previous work.[5] Where two versions of a paper were available, only the print version was selected initially, but where abstracts were found to be deficient, the online version was also examined. A further limitation is that the papers were examined by only one person (PJP). However, the results were objective findings, and the abstracts were each checked twice. The study investigated only papers reporting the outcomes of randomized trials, but there is no reason to suspect that the quality of abstracts for other study types would be any better.

Other medical journals

The four journals included in this study are general medical journals with a large readership and full-time editorial staff. Further research addressing abstract quality in other types of journal would be informative.

Guidelines for abstracts

Journals vary in their specifications for abstracts. Of the four journals in this study, *NEJM* and the *Lancet* both request semi-structured abstracts of no more than 250 words, with headings Background, Methods, Results/Findings and Conclusions/Interpretation.[8,9] *JAMA* and the *BMJ* allow 300 words but give more structured headings.[10,11] In its advice to authors, *JAMA* states: "No information should be reported in the abstract that does not appear in the text of the manuscript."[10] The *Lancet* says: "If space is short, report only the primary outcomes."[9] The *BMJ* now specifies that for reports of clinical trials, the abstract should include absolute event rates in both groups, the relative risk, and a number needed to treat or harm, with corresponding 95% confidence interval.[11] These guidelines had not been produced at the time this study was conducted.

The CONSORT (Consolidated Standards of Reporting Trials) statement was devised to guide authors in reporting clinical trials, to ensure that key information was presented in a uniform format.[12] These guidelines have been endorsed by many medical journals, including the four in this study.[13] The guidelines offer some advice regarding abstracts, mainly relating to the study design, and appear to be set to ensure that the study is correctly indexed in electronic databases so that other users find them when searching. CONSORT has recently published an extension for abstracts, with new guidance as to what should be included in structured abstracts.[14] Research has shown that journal-based programmes to improve abstract quality can be successful. We support the inclusion of the extended CONSORT guidelines in the requirements of individual journals, given the findings of this paper. A follow-up study investigating the effect of new guidelines on future abstract quality would be useful, using these findings as a baseline.

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Self-archiving, metrics, and mandates

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Open access (OA) means free online access to published research articles. Some 2.5 million research articles are published every year in 25,000 peer-reviewed journals across all fields and all languages. The authors of those articles are employed and their research is funded so that it can be used, applied, and built on. The degree to which the research is used, applied, and built on is called its impact. The number of times an article is cited is one measure of impact.

Because researchers' salaries and funding depend on the impact of their research and because impact in turn depends on access, researchers have always wanted to maximize access to their work. Now the web makes it possible for all researchers to "self-archive" their articles in institutional repositories (see roar.eprints.org). Self-archived articles are preprints or postprints that the author deposits in an online repository and that are freely accessible. Thus, they do not substitute for the peer-reviewed journal articles,[1] but rather supplement the limited or expensive access that publishers provide (in much the way reprints were sent to requesters in the paper era). The OA versions come in a variety of forms. They can be the publisher's pdf; the author's revised, refereed, and accepted final draft; or an unrefereed preprint. Some have full references to the publisher's URLs and DOIs.

Estimating the value of OA

If maximal impact is the goal and if citations are one measure of impact, an important way to estimate the value of OA is to measure the increase in citations of articles that are made OA. A series of studies of citation counts across more than a dozen fields—beginning with computer science,[2] then physics,[3] then the biological and social sciences and the humanities[4]—have consistently found that OA articles are cited 25% to over 250% more than non-OA articles. That is called the OA impact advantage. The figure shows this effect for a variety of fields. More detailed data by field can be found at opcit.eprints.org/oacitation-biblio.html.

The method is simple: the metadata on all the articles indexed by the ISI science and social science indexes (on a licensed CD-ROM) are fed to a software robot that trawls the web to try to find an OA version of each article. On the average, about 15% of articles are being self-archived today. Once the free versions are found, the logarithms of their citation counts are compared with those for non-OA articles in the same journal and year. The OA:non-OA citation ratio is the OA advantage. Some fields, such as chemistry, have low rates of self-archiving (the American Chemical Society is particularly opposed to OA), so OA and non-OA in such fields cannot now be compared. However, in other fields,

such as physics, self-archiving has been extensive. For astrophysics papers posted as preprints in arXiv.org, Kurtz et al found that "the effect of e-printing on citation rates in astronomy and physics is significant."[5]

Does quality make a difference?

One question is whether article-quality differences are a factor in OA–non-OA differences. Self-selection for quality is indeed one of five potential factors that contribute to the OA advantage: (1) early advantage (earlier OA, more citations); (2) quality advantage (the top 10% of articles benefit more from OA than the bottom 90%); (3) use advantage (more downloads of OA articles); (4) competitive advantage; and (5) quality bias (selectively making better articles OA). However, the last two effects vanish when all articles are self-archived, for instance, if mandates are put into place. Kurtz et al (in astrophysics) and Moed (in condensed-matter physics) concluded that authors' selective archiving of their higher-quality papers is indeed one of the factors that influence whether they deposit them in the arXiv repository before publication in a journal.[6,7]

We have compared the usual, spontaneous self-selected self-archiving with self-archiving mandated by authors' institutions.[8] If the OA advantage were due all or mostly to self-selection (quality bias), the advantage should be smaller or non-existent for mandated self-archiving, which reduces or eliminates self-selection bias, particularly in institutions that have already approached 100% compliance, such as CERN. But there is no detectable difference in the OA advantage (for CERN or the other three mandating institutions: Queensland University of Technology, the University of Minho, and the University of Southampton), so the overall contribution of the quality bias is very small.

Association of open access and citation rate
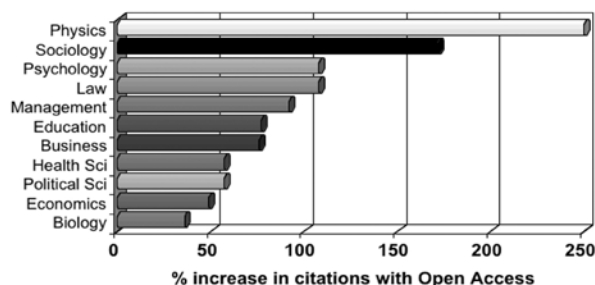
Data: Brody and Harnad, 2004[3]; Hajjem, Harnad, and Gingras, 2005[4]

The effects of embargoing access for 6 to 12 months have not yet been estimated. It is hard to measure the amount of loss in use and citations when OA is delayed. It would no doubt vary among fields (some of which develop faster than others), but research suggests that delay results in not just a temporary but a permanent loss in the research cycle: fewer accesses, fewer uses, fewer citations.[6] Because the items just listed propagate in parallel, this means less productivity and progress.

Although examining surges at the end of an embargo is not the most effective or direct way of testing the OA advantage, Brody and others have found indications of download increases when one item in arXiv is cited in another, newly deposited item in arXiv, and citation increases when an item is newly deposited.[9,10] They have also found a correlation between early downloads and later citations[9] and shown that in physics, the interval between an item's first being deposited and its beginning to be cited keeps shrinking as self-archiving grows.

Zeno's paralysis

Despite the OA advantage and despite the link between impact and researchers' salaries and funding, only 15% of researchers are self-archiving spontaneously today. I have dubbed that paradox "Zeno's paralysis" (it has at least 34 easily remedied causes: see eprints.org/openaccess/self-faq/#32-worries).[11] Institutions and funders already mandate that their researchers must publish (or perish); they are now also beginning to mandate that they self-archive to maximize their research impact. Thirty one universities and research institutions and 30 research funders worldwide already mandate OA self-archiving, and several even bigger multi-institutional and national funding agency mandates have been proposed and are under consideration (eprints.org/openaccess/policysignup/).

The UK has the strongest momentum toward OA. The first and one of the most widely used (free) softwares for creating OA institutional repositories was developed in the UK (eprints.org, University of Southampton). The UK Parliamentary Select Committee was the first to recommend mandating OA self-archiving, and six of the seven UK research councils have already mandated it. In addition, the UK has a Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) in which the research impact of every department of every UK university is ranked by an assessment panel and each department is awarded substantial top-sliced research funding in proportion to its rank. The panel's rankings turned out to correlate highly with citation counts in most fields (for example, 0.91 in 1996 and 0.86 in 2001 in psychology).[12] Panel rankings are now being converted to metrics.

Richer metrics

Besides citation counts, OA will provide a rich spectrum of potential metrics, including download counts, download and citation growth and decay rates, book citation counts (from Google Books and Google Scholar), and co-citations. OA versus non-OA download counts, however, are much harder to compare than citations. Studies are just beginning, and downloads need to be tested jointly with other potential metrics. In 2008, the RAE conducted a parallel exercise—both metrics and panel rankings—in which the metrics can be validated and calibrated against the panel rankings, discipline by discipline. The outcome of the validation exercise can now be used to create research-impact metrics. A prototype scientometric engine, citebase (citebase.eprints.org), has already been developed that can apply the metrics not only to navigation and evaluation but as an incentive to motivate and accelerate OA self-archiving and OA self-archiving mandates worldwide.[13-15]

What next?

Further analyses will be needed to test and validate the data from the 2008 RAE. Once the metrics are validated field by field against the panel rankings, each with its own (beta) weights for each metric, then OA versus non-OA impact can be compared with the full metric equation and each of its validated components. Metric displays can then also be built into the repository and harvesting software so that anyone can use OA metrics for evaluation and navigation, (and authors can also see directly the benefits conferred by OA). OA through self-archiving is optimal and inevitable for research, researchers, their institutions and funders, the vast research and development industry, and the taxpaying public that funds research. OA scientometrics is poised to usher in the OA era at long last.

For more information, visit www.ecs.soton.ac.uk/~harnad

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When I use a word: The very last word

What is the last word in the dictionary? Easy to answer, you might think. But there is a problem. We talk blithely about "the dictionary," as if there was only one. But there are many, even among monolingual dictionaries of English. And they don't all end with the same headword.

Samuel Johnson's dictionary (1755) ends with zootomy, "dissection of the bodies of beasts." *Collins English Dictionary* (6th edition) makes a better stab: Zyrian, the language spoken by the people of the Komi, in the erstwhile Soviet Union. Zyrian belongs to that curious group of languages, the Finno-Ugric (one of two branches of Uralic, the other being Samoyed). Its main members, despite the geographical divide, are Finnish and Hungarian; it also includes Estonian, Vogul (or Khanti), Ostyak (or Mansi), and the language of Sibelius's Karelia.

The *Chambers Dictionary* (9th edition, 2003) does better still: zythum, a kind of barley beer brewed by the ancient Egyptians and others. And a zythepsary is a brewery, got by adding hepsein (to boil). Hepsein also meant to smelt metals and to digest food, reminiscent of another Greek word, pepsis, meaning digestion or fermentation. And the yeast in zythum was called zyme, which gives us enzyme, a word that the Heidelberg physiologist Wilhelm Kühne introduced in 1877 to describe substances such as pepsin.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* (2nd edition) takes us further still: zyxt, which turns out to be, wait for it, an obsolete Kentish form of the second person singular present indicative of see. In other words, zyxt is "seest [thou]."

Now the *OED* is pretty comprehensive, but Philip Gove's controversial *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* (1961) went one better: zyzzogeton, a genus of large American leaf-hoppers having the pronotum tuberculate and the front tibiae grooved (well that's what the dictionary says).

No dictionary that I've seen has this other candidate: zyzzya, from *Zyzzya fuliginosa*, a marine sponge found in the South Seas. It contains pyrroloiminoquinone alkaloids belonging to the makaluvamine family, which inhibit the enzyme topoisomerase II and so produce a cytotoxic action by cleavage of DNA. And zyzzyposide (modelled on etoposide) would be a great name for an anticancer drug.

However, this is trumped by *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (4th edition, 2000), which has unearthed zyzzyva, any of various tropical American weevils of the genus Zyzzyva, and by *The Random House Unabridged Dictionary* (1997) with Z-zero particle, one of three particles, intermediate vector bosons, that are thought to transmit the weak nuclear force.

Finally, turn to *Mrs Byrne's Dictionary of Unusual, Obscure and Preposterous Words* (yes really) of 1974. Mrs Byrne, a concert pianist and composer, was Jascha Heifetz's daughter, Josefa, so it is not surprising that the last word in her dictionary is musical: zzxjoanw, pronounced ziks-jo'-un and defined as a Maori drum. But anyone with the least smattering of Maori would look suspiciously at those zeds, the ex, and the jay. Here's a sample of the real thing, from the famous haka: "Tenei te tangata puhuruhuru nana mei i tiki mai whakawhiti te ra." Zzxjoanw turns out (*Word Ways*, November 1976) to have been invented by Rupert Hughes for inclusion in his *Music Lovers' Encyclopedia* of 1914, where he says that it is pronounced "shaw" and means "1. Drum. 2. Fife. 3. Conclusion."

To which one the only possible concluding response is "Pshaw," followed by a bout of heavy zzzz-ing.

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Viewpoints

English – whose responsibility?

In the November 2008 issue of *European Science Editing*, Marcin Kozak wrote about the disappointment he felt about the review of an article submitted to a science journal with a view to publication. Kozak raises the question: "Is my writing so bad indeed?" Kozak does not say whether the article was checked for grammar, punctuation, and style.

I have been translating articles, papers, dissertations, and so forth for 30 years or so. Gradually, a demand arose for something which here (in Norway) is referred to as "language washing". Basically, this comprises correction of grammar, punctuation and syntax. In reality – and if a proper job is to be done – this is pre-editing. Pre-editing is the process whereby an article is prepared for submission to a journal, or for presentation at a congress, for example.

Hurdles

It is clear that "language washing" is just the first hurdle; the whole course has to be run. If the content is hazy, terminology is aimed to impress the professorial peers, and the profusion of references appears to be a listing of "see what I have on my bookshelf", then the author must expect a "revise and resubmit" – at best! The pre-editor would be failing in his duty if he or she did not point out these failings and, for the ordinary reader, the irritations. My approach is to consider myself not so much as a (pre-) editor, but rather as an ordinary reader who is hoping to gain new knowledge from my endeavours as well as those of the author.

My corrections include a wide range of comments. Some suggest alternative formulations or sentence structures; others enquire whether the chosen word was the first choice. But one important function of my comments is to explain why a certain change or correction was made. Occasionally these are quite elementary, for example relating the subject and the verb. "The regulations and the law was quite clear", I read in one article. The verb was duly changed. But imagine my surprise when the article was returned for a "revise and resubmit" exercise, and the verb changed back again. When I pointed this out to the author, I was informed that the *editor* had changed this "*so it will have to be retained as originally*"! I forget which comedian it was who had as his punch line "Well, there's no answer to that!"

Hard done by?

But what I did not grasp from the contributions to the debate on non-native English (*ESE* 34:4, pp. 100–104) was why there were grounds to feel "hard done by" when an article was rejected on the basis of poor English "unjustifiably so in the author's opinion" (to quote from one part of the text). Very often, when I read these articles I seriously wonder why the author did not write in his or her native language and have the text translated. I do not agree entirely with Marge Berer when she says "translated papers are notoriously *not-quite-English*" (my italics). Surely, this applies only if the translator is not translating into his or her mother tongue.

But the point I want to come to is why the non-native author insists on writing in English if his or her English really is so poor? Why not write in the native tongue and have it translated? The qualified translator will ensure that the style and all the nuances are preserved. Of course, not all authors do have a "good" style, and the translator may even be able to ensure that the finished product is better than the original.

I agree that some of the contributions may be rejected on account of language – or that this is the reason given. The result is the same: six months' research down the drain, so to speak, and at what cost. Here (in Norway), the Research Council has estimated that a researcher-year amounts to about £150,000. This includes salary, office expenses, secretarial assistance, equipment, travel, heating, lighting, journal subscriptions, and so forth. Whatever, six months wasted is six months wasted.

Another theory

I have a second theory. There is a need to write, publish, and be damned – all in English. It is a requirement in Norway that a researcher is competent in English, but "I am, therefore I can" seems to be the order of the day. The standard is generally appalling, frightful, and shocking. Each year I have about 40 clients from more than a dozen research institutions and university institutes. I am sorely tempted to bite the hand that feeds me, but valour is the better part of dissension, I find. The diplomatic way to provide instruction in the art of writing is, of course, to write a book. Sales of my publication *Writing Academic English. A Guide for Norwegians in the Preparation of Articles and Theses* swept into double figures, but struggled to make 100, despite intense advertising! Why? Because researchers are arrogant to a degree that makes Bush look like a piece of undergrowth. "I can, therefore I am."

I was invited to lecture on writing academic English at a renowned research institution in Oslo. Based on the experience I had had with material from this institution, I felt the need was for a review of basic punctuation – the dash, the semicolon, the colon, the comma splice. But who would turn up to that? After all, hadn't they studied English for eight years at upper secondary school? Admittedly that was up to 30 years ago, but how many had been on a brush-up course? Hadn't the rules and regulations on commas changed? What were the major differences between UK and US English as had emerged in recent years?

Returning to the main theme, yes, I agree that some editors seem to choose "poor language" as the basis for rejecting an article that might have much merit in its academic content. But the language is the first line of offence. The reputations of the journal, the editor, and the referees are all at stake here.

If you really are poor in English, then a qualified translator is the obvious answer – alternatively, submit the article to a national journal.

On the other hand, you may have a point. Few editors are language experts, and even fewer referees. As Marcin Kozak quotes: "The English at present is not at a standard, which allows publish the manuscript in an international journal … Actually nearly each sentence needs corrections." If this really is the English punctuation and syntax applied in the letter of rejection, he has a good point.

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The author thanks the anonymous referees for their valuable comments

Science authors love acknowledging anonymous referees of their articles. I have anonymously refereed papers more than once, and not once did I receive acknowledgments from authors whose papers I reviewed.

Can the referee who receives such appreciation, however, be sure the authors indeed thought of his or her work as so valuable? Maybe the authors thought it might help them have their paper accepted by the referee? Or maybe there were some other reasons underlying this decision?

Let's try and consider why authors are keen to acknowledge referees of their papers. First of all, the authors indeed think the comments they receive are of such a high value that they decide to appreciate the referee's contribution to the article by acknowledging this. Second, they think it might help them to have the paper accepted. Third, this is their standard procedure, without too much consideration whether they should do it or not. Fourth, they are asked to do this by the journal editor.

Unfortunately, all of these reasons can be true. Of course, the first one should be a hundred-percent situation, but I am sure I am not the only person who does not believe that it is. Some authors may want to appreciate a referee's work, at the same time hope that it might be also helpful. I am not going to claim here that there are no authors who acknowledge their referees only because the latter deserve it. Of course, there are many such authors. But …

The second group of authors may be the biggest one. Such authors believe—and who knows, maybe sometimes correctly—that to acknowledge a referee's work will make the referee happy, and account for his or her at least slightly more favourable review. It may indeed, but we should always remember that referees are (most of the time) anonymous, which is why such thank-you notes will remain only in their, and maybe the editors', memories (for how long, if at all?). What's more, the majority of the referees are aware that they may be acknowledged with this aim only, thus they may be quite "resistant" to this kind of acknowledgment. Some may even find this tasteless.

The third group consists of those who don't think of such things; instead, they simply add a thank-you note to all revisions. There are even authors who are so eager to thank their referees that they do so in a first submission! (Don't think this is just a joke; I myself know at least one such person.)

The fourth group, finally, consists of authors who receive suggestions to thank the referee from a journal editor. Believe me, I would not have figured this out had it not been suggested that I do this myself. The editor of a journal I submitted my article to asked me (suggested? recommended? you never know) to thank the referee for his/her comments. After brief consideration I thought I should (for obvious reasons), and I did so, even though I did not think the referee's comments deserved acknowledgment. This was some time ago; now I wouldn't do that. Just to make it clear, I do thank referees if their comments are useful. But as a referee it does not make me feel good to see acknowledgments for my comments if they do not deserve it (for example, when the paper was very good and I suggested only minor changes in presentation).

In summary, I think it is a nice thing for a referee to be acknowledged by authors when he or she merits this. Nevertheless, in today's science publishing the value of such acknowledgments is limited for the reasons given above. Maybe we could apply a blind-acknowledgment system, in which any acknowledgments for referees should be revealed to them after the final acceptance of a paper, and authors should be informed about (and kept aware of) this? This might, at least to a reasonable extent, limit unethical acknowledgments. (Yes, I wrote unethical, though I am aware that not all of them are really unethical.) And maybe referees might finally feel that their work was acknowledged because the authors thought it was worth acknowledging?

Please, do treat this proposition as a joke.

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Editing around the World

Transition to on-line journal management – how we switched to Open Journal System and stopped worrying

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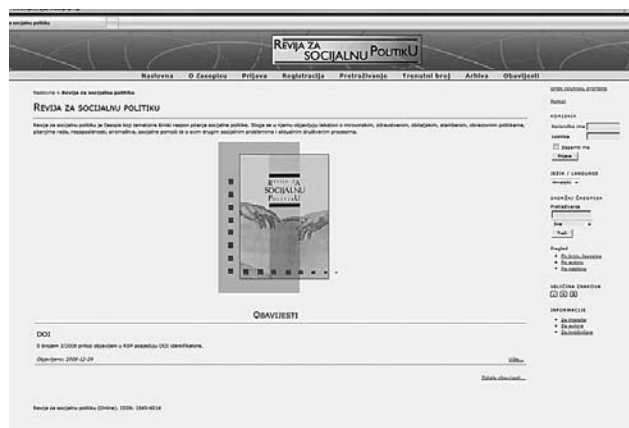
Although they are vital to scientific infrastructure and a key backdrop to research activity, academic journals are not commonly considered to be particularly innovative in the way they carry out their day-to-day business. Yet, the steady march of change has not spared journal management practices – journal editing and publishing methods first became digital for purposes of archiving, editing, workflow tracking, and correspondence, and then became integrated in journal management packages. Of course, eventually they went on-line.

Following these trends might have been a routine chore for the first and second tier international journals with decent resources and professional staffing. For journals operating on the periphery, in two languages, with modest readership and limited resources, and based on part-time editorial efforts, the latest transformation in the journal management process has been a very challenging one. Here follows the account of one such example.

Our journal *Revija za Socijalnu Politiku* (*Croatian Journal of Social Policy*) was established as recently as 1994, fitting the specific disciplinary niche in the region, handling about 30 peer-reviewed submissions and as many other contributions during a year. Formerly publishing only in Croatian, in 2004 we introduced the policy of accepting and publishing articles both in English and Croatian, thus attracting some international submissions and slightly increasing our reach.

In the early 2000s, the patchwork of filled-in notebooks, printouts, spreadsheets, and emails strewn around several rooms and computers in our editorial office was getting out of control, while feeling increasingly obsolete. In the end, it was the need to have our journal properly digitally published that give us impetus to move on in late 2004. We immediately faced some substantive challenges. On the budgetary front, we had reliable but limited income and could not spend thousands of euros on commercial software or custom-made development – this would be overkill for a journal of our size. On the language side, our system of choice should have had support for multiple languages and the possibility of integrating a Croatian interface. Needless to say, the market had little to offer (or gain) in respect to our needs. Finally, we were clueless about online editorial practices.

Upon the advice of a librarian colleague, we decided to try the then-still-fledgling Open Journal System (OJS), an open source, free software offering web-based journal management and publishing under the auspices of the Public Knowledge Project (http://pkp.sfu.ca).[1] This resolved our resource obstacle, providing a functional, moderately adjustable, potentially multilingual editing platform with minimal demands in terms of maintenance. Newer versions of OJS have since been released (the current version is 2.2.2), modified according to the constant feedback of a growing user base, and we have benefited by updating our installation. This kind of developer support helps us greatly without consuming any of our valuable resources. Had we developed a custom system, it would be more likely to become outcome- or maintenance-hungry. That the system is not proprietary also has benefits: there is no risk that if the publisher folds up, the entire service (and the whole electronic trail of editing) will disappear, or that data will become inaccessible if the commercial software solution is discontinued. Although OJS will most likely evolve further and eventually be discontinued or phased out, it is open source software that is now used by more than 2000 journals, so there is some kind of guarantee that the legacy will live on.

The language issue

As for the language issue, we made it harder for ourselves. Sometimes there is a rationale for a journal to accept and publish submissions both in the native language and in English. *Revija za Socijalnu Politiku* is one such journal: it strives to reach local practitioners, policymakers, and students while remaining open to international submissions and to authors who aspire to publish in English. Whereas it is trivial to adhere to such a policy within the traditional "manual" journal management process, it is challenging to update it in line with contemporary editorial software tools. The specific advantage of OJS in this respect is that it allows for all the interface, correspondence, and content to be entered and managed in multiple languages.

The first substantial obstacle is the translation of the user interface into the required language. Fortunately, OJS is already translated into several languages (currently Chinese, Croatian, Farsi, French, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Turkish, and Vietnamese) and there are convenient tools for updating translation. Second, all of the procedures, guidelines, and email templates related to the journal had to be entered in a consistent fashion in all the languages used.

But after these steps are done (once and for all), managing and submitting articles in different languages is as easy as switching the working language option. There is an additional benefit for users working in the language they are most comfortable with, regardless of the language of submission (Croatian authors can submit English language text via the Croatian interface, and the English-only speaking reviewer will not see a word of Croatian text during the review process).

Editing practices

When it comes to editing practices, it was challenging to marry the editorial workflow offered by OJS with local and disciplinary customs of academic journal management and publishing. It helps greatly if other journals in the country or the discipline use the same journal management system, so an exchange of experiences and establishment of best practice can happen. For us that was not the case, so we had to muddle through, learning from our own editorial mistakes and suboptimal solutions and gradually switching the journal management functions to OJS. Fortunately, the documentation and support offered for OJS was adequate (and has improved since).

OJS is most certainly not perfectly tuned to everyone's publishing needs and procedures, although recent versions have resolved many issues and added some functionality (at the cost of an increase in complexity). Choices and options can be adopted about the editorial workflow, roles, and publishing process, and while setting up such a system the editors will most certainly have to change at least some of their established editorial practices.

This we did. With the benefit of hindsight, this was a good thing, as we were forced to streamline our workflow, define editorial roles, and establish a firm set of rules and guidelines. Had our journal moved to digital journal management with a tailor-made system, we would most certainly have retained some of the more cumbersome practices.

In retrospect

So, what are the outcomes of this transition for our journal four years down the road? We fully embraced this system at the beginning of 2007, and since then all submissions have been entered via the web interface. There has been steady growth in the number of submissions and a diversification of the reviewer pool. The journal management system enabled our editors to work more efficiently, greatly increasing the quality and procedures of the review and editing process, with much more (double-blind where appropriate) feedback

between authors, editors, reviewers, and copyeditors. We ourselves have a far better overview of the current state of the journal, while all the users have benefited by being able to work either in English or Croatian. And our print subscription increased slightly.

Another benefit of adopting the OJS was the digitalization of the entire published archive and switch to open access for our content (this has over past five years become the norm for Croatian scientific journals). Although we believe that it has greatly benefited our journal, open access is not a choice imposed by OJS. It offers options for delayed open access, closed subscription access, or imposing a publication or submission fee for authors.

The bigger picture

On a wider scale, out of about 200 scientific journals that are published in Croatia, a few developed their own tools for managing parts of the editorial process in the early 2000s, but most were too resource-strung and isolated to adopt new practices or move to on-line publishing. Adopting and translating the OJS presented an opportunity for journal editors to gather and communicate. What started as education about on-line journal management slowly turned into mutual learning about how the editorial process is managed in various journals, and occasionally led to the exchange of good editorial practices. This might lead to less autarchic and individualistic journal editing standards across the country.

Sharing expertise helps, and about a tenth of all journals have now made some steps towards adopting OJS, whereas many others are considering it. Adoption costs are much smaller since there is a pool of experience of how to operate OJS journals in the local academic environment, and the rather large one-off costs of translation are taken care of (although the translation files are open for all to improve). Then again, there is little incentive for the small, struggling scientific journals with limited or mostly an in-house pool of submissions (often "one man editorial band" journals) to switch to on-line editing. At the other end of the scale, large journals with substantive submission inflow are rightly anxious and cautious about switching their editorial process because this is likely to cause a temporary disruption if it not thoroughly planned.

The first five years of adaptations to online journal management in *Revija za Socijalnu Politiku* do not seem like major breakthroughs in e-editing. However, as the new generations of editors become more technologically savvy, and with a seemingly unstoppable penetration of on-line procedures in every aspect of our professional and private lives, it is likely that within the next five years such editorial practices will, in most European countries and languages, be as common as sending email.

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Reports of Meetings

Anglo-German Medical Society

49th annual meeting, Cologne, 11-14 September 2008

The Anglo-German Medical Society (Deutsch-Englischer Ärzteverband, www.agms.net) "was born after 1945 in order to rebuild the professional and personal relationships that had significantly cooled down between medical doctors of the two countries. Achieving a ready exchange of ideas, knowledge and personnel has been the aim of the AGMS ever since its foundation in 1959." Its two national committees consist of practising doctors based in Germany and in the UK.

The society encourages collaboration between doctors and medical scientists in the two countries, as well as facilitating a constant exchange of knowledge and ideas. It provides grants for international projects and also has practical advice on how to find work. As someone who does German-English medical translation work in her spare time I was intrigued.

The theme of the meeting was palliative care, and the three blocks of sessions were grouped around pain, hospices, and miscellaneous, followed by a debate on physician assisted suicide. The first day was given over to the subject of pain. Traditionally, the brief to speakers is to speak in their mother tongue, with their slides appearing in translation, and a good few actually stuck to this, which to me seemed a very good idea as I find it easier to remember things that are explained in two languages.

Pain

The day started with a presentation from Cologne-based neurosurgeon A Kousoulakis, who introduced the concept of neuromodulators for pain management – and while it did get very scientific it was easy to follow, thanks to very good slides.

This was followed by a presentation from an Anglo-German specialist registrar in palliative medicine, Mark Taubert from Cardiff University Hospital, who spoke about pain therapy in malignant disease and compared and contrasted the British and German systems from the perspective of someone who has lived and worked in both countries.

Research surgeon Professor Edmund Neugebauer from the private University of Witten-Herdecke, near Cologne presented his concept of establishing a "pain-free clinic," with the required surgical training and quality assurance standards and measures to put this into practice.

This presentation was followed by the practical perspective: surgeon Karl-Heinz Moser focused on pain therapy after outpatient surgical procedures (hernia operations) and explained how "pre-emptive" analgesia (given before the actual procedure) and the application of modern business management techniques had streamlined his practice and yielded satisfactory results for both doctor and patients.

The ensuing discussion was lively, and touched on, among other topics, national differences in medical training and grades, as well as semantics ("clinic" versus "Klinik").

Hospices

Saturday's theme was hospices, and again, the comparisons between the two different countries made the contributions extra fascinating. Hospice doctor Susanne Hirsmüller from Düsseldorf gave a historical overview over hospices in Germany – an idea that caught on some 20 years after Dame Cicely Saunders founded the first hospice in the UK. She explained funding models – as with health insurance, one of the fundamental differences from the UK – and introduced the hospice she herself works at, where the care is delivered by patients' family doctors, as a case study.

Barbara Downes, palliative care consultant at Bolton Hospice, provided an overview of the UK system (where patients will be looked after by a palliative care doctor as well as their own general practitioner) and reported on the case of a patient in the care of her own hospice. Barry Miller, consultant in pain management and anaesthesia at the Royal Bolton Hospital, added the interventional anaesthetist's perspective to the case report, after giving an overview of the integration of interventional and palliative care in the UK and outlining requirements for this to work.

Dorothea Kingreen, oncologist and haematologist from Berlin, reported on the "Home Care Projekt Berlin," which integrates outpatient and inpatient hospice services in the city, using a range of affiliated specialists. The service is available only to people in Berlin whose health insurance covers Berlin, which would cause problems for those insured in their local statutory sickness funds, and is as such not a standard service available to all.

For me, Saturday's session was one of two highlights of the meeting – Germany's "Vorsprung durch Technik" and methodical approach to developing systems and delivering to an extremely high standard are impressive, but the NHS has 20 years' more experience with hospices and has made greater inroads into palliative services and training, and patient care does not depend on location in the same way. And then there is the British sense of humour ...

Miscellaneous

The start to Sunday's programme was made by orthopaedic surgeon Rainer Koll, who shared with the audience what it takes to look after Germany's (winning) national hockey team. Norwich-based junior doctor and AGMS grant recipient Julia Ferié then briefly reported on the work of the Forum for International Health (www.foring.org). The next two sessions were my second personal highlight of the meeting and focused on paediatric palliative care:

Christoph Kramm from the University of Halle/Saale (and also a recipient of an AGMS grant) presented a vast collection of data comparing systems in Germany and the UK, and Professor Klaus Eugen Bonzel spoke about paediatric nephrology and terminal care at the university hospital in the German city of Essen and showed a short TV feature film about a teenage girl's kidney transplantation at his centre.

My impression was that the society more than delivers on its aims, which are to achieve a ready exchange of ideas, knowledge, and personnel, and to encourage collaboration between doctors and medical scientists in the two countries.

At the Cologne meeting, a motion was passed that members of health professions or professions allied to medicine can become associate members. I would recommend this to all medical editors and translators.

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EMAME conference

Fourth regional conference on medical journalism in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region, Manama, Bahrain, 5-7 November 2008

In the first two of these conferences on medical journalism, held in Cairo, Egypt,[1] and Riyadh, Saudi Arabia,[2] I had to spend hours in several airport transit zones to reach the venue. The third conference was held in January 2006 in my homeland, Shiraz, Iran. The fourth conference, a joint effort between the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean, *Journal of the Bahrain Medical Society*, Ministry of Health, Bahrain, and the *Eastern Mediterranean Association of Medical Editors* (EMAME), was held in Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain. I thought I could get there with a direct flight from Shiraz – but "whatever can go wrong, will go wrong." In Bahrain we waited for one and half hours for the security check as they had not been informed about the meeting and its foreign guests.

Warm welcome
After this little problem, we received a warm welcome and hospitality, which continued throughout our stay. The Minister of Health of Bahrain, Dr Faisal Bin Yaqub Al-Hamer, came to the conference, had dinner with us, and gave all speakers a present. The conference venue was very good, as were the social programmes.

The conference was preceded by one-day workshops on medical writing and medical statistics for local editors and physicians. There were also four parallel short workshops in the afternoon of the first and second days of the conference on editorship, the Cochrane library, peer review, and statistics.

During the three days of the conference, almost 60 talks were presented. Almost 180 delegates attended the meeting from more than 20 countries in the region and also from Switzerland and India. After Bahrain, Iran and Pakistan had the highest number of participants. Many journals from the region were represented. Bahrain has two important medical journals—*Bahrain Medical Bulletin* and *Journal of the Bahrain Medical Society*—which had good presentations.

Aspects of journalism
Many talks were given on different aspects of journalism, including indexing of journals, editorship, ethics, and peer review. However, some of the presentations were not scientifically sound. Too many abstracts were accepted for oral presentation, and there was no poster presentation session. This was the weak point: to present so many talks within such a short period, the organizers had to divide the presentations into two parallel sessions. Some of the participants could not be in the hall they really wanted, because they had to be in another hall giving a talk or being one of the chairpersons. In this way, some participants missed some great presentations.

The presence of outstanding guest speakers, among them John Overbeke, the vice president of WAME, from the Netherlands; Tim Albert from the UK; and Ana Marušić, president of the Council of Science Editors (CSE) and editor of the *Croatian Medical Journal*, from Croatia, was an opportunity that could have increased the quality of the scientific discussions at the meeting. However, the organizing committee did not use the full capacity of some of these scholars; as an example, Dr Overbeke gave only one short presentation on journal impact factor and chaired two sessions. Also, the conference could have arranged for oral presentations in only one hall and a poster presentation session.

One of the important events of this conference was that the newly elected EMAME Executive Council took over their positions. The term of these new officers is two years.

The next conference in this series will be held in Pakistan in 2010.

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Communication support across the disciplines

Mediterranean Editors and Translators Meeting 2008, Split, Croatia, 11-13 September 2008

The Mediterranean Editors and Translators (MET) had their 2008 annual meeting and general assembly in the Croatian city of Split. It was the fourth annual MET event and the first to take place outside Spain, which makes this young association of language professionals working with English now truly Mediterranean. METM08 was attended by some 85 participants, mostly from countries around the Mediterranean, although northern Europe and even the United States and Brazil were represented. The focus of the meeting was on differences in language use and language support needs in different disciplines, ranging from hard sciences to humanities. The presenters included representatives of scientific journals in diverse fields – from applied linguistics to sociology, marine biology to medicine – and they all had captivating stories to tell.

Keynote speeches

METM08 keynote speakers were John Swales and Liz Wager. John Swales is professor emeritus of linguistics and former director of the English Language Institute of the University of Michigan. He initiated the genre-analysis movement and his contribution to METM08 focused on the genre of the research article, with a workshop on abstracts and the writing of abstracts, and a keynote address about the methods sections of research articles (how and why they differ between disciplines). He also pointed out salient variations in the rhetoric used in research papers from different disciplines.

Liz Wager, a freelance publications consultant, secretary of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), and member of the BMJ ethics committee, gave a keynote speech about publication ethics in the electronic era. With the advent of the internet, local and international journals alike have become global, and there is a great deal of international collaboration on all levels of publication. But the internet hasn't brought universal standards or harmonization of practices. What's more, it has made plagiarism, copy-paste writing and copyright breaches much easier than before. There are no universally accepted standards of publication ethics: different individuals, institutions, countries, or cultures may set their own boundaries. Many rules are unwritten, and many are unknown by authors and reviewers or perhaps not generally accepted. Liz Wager indicated how manuscript editors and translators can spot ethical problems and contribute to solving them, and her occasionally provocative statements gave the audience ample food for thought and discussion.

Workshops

As a copy editor of several English-language medical journals published in Italy with an international but mostly Mediterranean authorship and readership, I deal with many of the issues mentioned by Liz Wager. There's a fair amount of copy-paste writing in the manuscripts that end up on my desk – prepublication plagiarism, fortunately caught in time, but still problematic because these papers have already been accepted for publication. Reason enough for me to attend the workshop by MET chairperson Mary Ellen Kerans entitled "Managing plagiarism: an approach to dialog between authors and editors." This provided background information on the plagiarism problem as well as useful directions on how to resolve it at different levels, and the role of language editors and translators in this process.

A recurrent theme was the use of English in research publications: which disciplines and situations really require the use of English, and when might the national language be more appropriate; when is multilingual publication the best choice, and how best to manage this; and what quality of English should be expected when it is produced by non-native speakers. There were panel discussions about multilingual publication, linguistics research relevant to wordface practitioners, translation revision and quality assurance, and cultural differences in communication among disciplines. The parallel presentations were subdivided into three threads: research, promising practices, and knowledge updates. In addition to the more academic presentations, there were all kinds of practical items on the programme, such as a demonstration of dictation software by two of its users, tips on how to "create" time for busy freelancers, and how to help academics prepare oral presentations in English when this is not their mother tongue.

The first day of the meeting offered a series of training workshops on practical tools for improving text flow, the anatomy of the thorax, statistics for editors and translators, and storytelling techniques to create high-impact PowerPoint presentations, to name just a few. And there was a pre-METM extra: a half-day computer workshop on corpus-guided editing and translation.

The meeting was impeccably organized at the University of Split Faculty of Medicine by a local team of volunteers. Special mention is due to Darko Hren of the *Croatian Medical Journal* and Anita Marušić of *Acta Adriatica*. METM08 ended with a wonderful closing dinner, where John Swales gave a sweeping performance with a toast to friends present and absent: "Although they are not in our sight, we can recognise them with our glasses."

MET will return to its home town, Barcelona, for its next annual meeting on 30 and 31 October 2009, preceded by a workshop day on 29 October. The website (www.metmeetings.org) has further details on the meeting and also on MET's spring workshop programme.

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Ensuring research integrity in biomedical publishing

ALPSP Seminar in association with COPE, London, 22 October 2008

This much needed seminar on publication ethics was aimed at editors, editorial directors, managing editors, and publishers of peer reviewed scientific journals. It covered how to adopt policies, implementing policies, what the implications are, and how to communicate the policies to your authors, editors, and readers.

Reporting guidelines

The day kicked off with Doug Altman (Centre for Statistics in Medicine, University of Oxford) presenting "Reporting guidelines and the practicalities in signing up to them". He began with the importance of transparency in reporting of research so that readers can make their own conclusions of the results, the reliability of reporting research, and the criticalness of published research.

Poor reporting in studies can be from missing or incomplete methods and findings; the study can be misleading and also biased as studies that do not report any major significance have less chance of being published. If the reader cannot tell how the research was done then the article does not contain the necessary information.

When it comes to who is at fault for poor reporting, it can be authors, peer reviewers, and editors. Authors may not know what to include and editors do not know what should be included. (No one said this was easy).

The authors need more information and help with their reporting, so where better than the good old Instructions for Authors: there are never enough, if any, on reporting guidelines. The aim is to help authors be less biased and more accurate with their findings.

CONSORT statements for reporting randomized controlled trials was a good start, a set of 22 essential items to evaluate the study plus the flow diagram to take you on the patients' progress throughout the trial. Now many guidelines have been adopted by journals – STROBE, QUORUM, STARD, and many more.

Doug figures that there are four key principles with reporting guidelines: transparency, accuracy, clarity, and completeness.

The EQUATOR network, launched in June 2008, grew out of CONSORT and other guideline groups. It seeks to improve the quality of scientific publications by promoting transparent and accurate reporting of health research. The responsibilities for editors now are to take reasonable steps to ensure the quality of the research they publish.

Barriers to adopting this? Authors think compliance will be too much work, and they may ask "Who checks it anyway?" Peer reviewers may see it as the editor's job, then editors may think it is taking too much of their time and not fully understand the guidelines.

So EQUATOR needs to be on your Instructions for Authors and shared between colleagues – you can write an editorial in your journal and get people to sign up to EQUATOR's newsletter.

Screening

Next up was Mandy Hill (editorial director, Oxford University Press) presenting "Screening procedures. How publishers can help". Mandy categorized the screening procedures into six sections, but I am only going to touch on policy, instructions for authors, the submission process, and pre-acceptance checks.

The journal or publisher needs to be clear on its own policies and what they see as good practice, and they need to be clear how they relay these policies to their authors, peer reviewers, and editors. The journal or publisher needs to be aware of changing trends and policy changes and to be able to feed it back to the relevant readers. A good start would be to discuss at board meetings or publisher meetings and to have slides on ethical policies that have recently arisen and that editors need to be more aware of. For example, conflict of interest: authors need to be aware they may have conflicts of interest, and so do reviewers – how many of you ask the reviewer to submit a conflict of interest statement? Also the editor has to declare any conflicts of interest towards any article or his/her actual position as editor. Ethics approval is another policy, and authors and editors need to be aware of the Helsinki Declaration, ethics approval, patient consent, etc. Appropriate guidelines need to be in place and it must be stressed that they are guidelines only: you need to decide what would be mandatory and what would be recommended. For example, the clinical trials registration is required and made mandatory, but who is checking this information and that it has been registered?

Instructions for Authors are important: get this right and you're half way there. Be as clear and as transparent as you can: if your instructions are good and clear and to the point and the authors read them (ha ha) then you are informing and instructing them about good practice. Mandy reminded us that we should always be updating the instructions for authors, which I am sure many of us do (hmm...). They should be clear, easily searchable, and easy to navigate, and there should be instructions for reviewers and instructions for editors.

It's very important to get the submission process right. Now that we have online manuscript tracking systems we can enforce authors to submit things such as their conflicts of interest, tell us whether they have got ethics approval and where they got it from. These systems are quite clever and can be configured to how you wish to use the screens – you can have mandatory boxes and you could have links to your instructions for authors in the submission pages.

Pre-acceptance checks are what takes the time for manuscripts to get past our journal policies. Plagiarism is hard to track but it does happen and it probably happens more than you know, and fortunately software can track the articles to see if they have been published elsewhere. Digital manipulation also takes up time and energy and different kinds of software can detect if anyone has manipulated the

figures. These both cost money and resource but are highly recommended for publishers to keep your ethics policy robust. COPE will be able to advise you on how to deal with cases that arise, and they have some very useful flowcharts that everyone should read.

Workshop cases

After an extended lunch and a very exciting fire drill, which turned out to be a real fire in the next building, we quickly worked through the workshop cases with Jeremy Theobald (Emerging Health Threats Forum). One session was on ethical approval of studies and the other was on conflicts of interest. The discussion showed that most people have the same views on ethics approval, even though it is not so black and white. I have always struggled with when to ask and when not to ask authors about ethics approval: there are good guidelines around but there is still that 5% of articles where I do not know, and I would like to see that 5% become clearer. Sometimes one editor will say "No need to get it because it is a such and such an article" and another editor will say "Yes of course you need it."

Conflict of interest was much clearer and straight forward as most guidelines for this are similar, and most people agreed with the conclusions of the three cases that were discussed.

Making peer review effective

Ginny Barbour (chief editor, *PLoS Medicine*), presenting "How to make peer review as effective as possible", started us off by saying how little evidence is available for the peer review mechanism ensuring quality of biomedical research. This has always fascinated me; when I first attended the peer review congress in 2001 all I heard was the good and the great bleating about how peer review is not the perfect model, it is the cause of bias and it is slow and it costs an arm and a leg (the UK delagates would say that). Then Ginny went on and again I was fascinated.

Why do we do it then? We receive thousands of articles a year and they all need a decision, so peer review is a critical tool to make those decisions. Also authors and readers expect it, and it helps the editors out as the whole process is not just on their shoulders. Critical review helps an article to become a better article; no one likes a good moan about their paper but it does help the author get it published. They can cut out the inaccuracies and improve the quality. On the downside it takes time to get good reviews (moans) and non-biased ones too.

Ginny had some suggestions for the stages of peer review. Editorial triage: see if you can get rid of the bad and ugly before you send them out for external review – this is a good way of saving time and improving your turnaround times. Checklists: when articles are out for external review it is important the reviewer has a checklist to work from so they are giving a structured critique of the article. Editorial committee meetings: articles need to get a decision from the editors, hence the editorial committee meeting where a number of editors look at all the data and make recommendations and decisions on the articles. The struggle for reviewers: if you send out articles to quite a few reviewers and you struggle to get reviewers to agree to do the review then the article is probably not worth reviewing in the first place as some reviewers will review only good papers. Mechanics of peer review: have a good online tracking system so that people can easily use and access it; keep your reviewer database up to date; thank reviewers and give feedback as they are doing you the favour.

Complaints

Last up was Sabine Kleinert (senior executive editor, *The Lancet*) presenting "Complaints procedure." (Just sweep them all under the carpet – oops maybe not.)

Sabine differentiated between appeals and complaints: a complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with an editor's or a journal's way of working, like flawed process of decision making, whereas appeals are an act of serious or a heartfelt request to reconsider a decision. This is quite an important matter as I have often heard appeals being in the complaints category.

So to save time and energy we go back to the Instructions for Authors: to cut your complaints down you need to prevent them in the first place and that is by telling your authors exactly what to expect when they submit to your journal – tell them about timeframes, process, and decision making. This way there are no shocks. It will not stop complaints altogether, but we can learn from those complaints and use them to our advantage.

Some complaints are timeframes not being met in the peer review process, editorial misconduct, conflicts of interest not explained on commissions, etc (the list can go on, not that I am complaining).

A prime example of editorial misconduct was the Sir Cyril Burt case. He founded the *Journal of Statistical Psychology* and published 63 of his own disputed articles in the same journal. He also altered work of others without their permission, added references to his own work, published a letter he wrote himself under a pseudonym, and responded (also by himself) under a different pseudonym to attack a colleague. (The last is my favourite.)

Sabine went on to say how to handle complaints. Don't get angry is the most obvious, we all make mistakes; try to distinguish the difference between a genuine complaint and just a strop from an author because he/she has been rejected again. Investigate what went wrong, offer an explanation and an apology, and if you need to change policy or a process because of the complaint then let the person know – in most cases they will be pacified.

In 1996 *The Lancet* hired an Ombudsperson to deal with authors who were still not happy. This is an honorary position for usually 3-4 years; they independently assess cases but have no input into the peer review process or decisions on articles. They then write a report for the journal and will advise whether it needs to change policy or to do anything else. You can also get advice from COPE if you are a member.

Appeals are a journals nightmare; there are many appeals with journals, especially the general ones with high rejection rates. Some authors appeal for the sake of it, but having criteria to follow makes it easier for editors: do they

have a reasonable argument? They may have pointed out where the reviewer was incorrect or misunderstood. They should have appealed quite quickly too, not leaving it six months after they have been rejected three times elsewhere. Appeals are an author service, save prolonged phone conversations, and are a good safety net for inexperienced editors. On the other hand they are time consuming for the editors and reviewers, and may lead to a prolonged process and still end in tears. Sabine's final note was perfect: "Editors are human after all" – but she would say that ... she is an editor.

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Resources

http://www.alpsp.org
http://www.equator-network.org
http://www.wma.net/e/policy/b3.htm
http://publicationethics.org
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyril_Burt

From principles to practice: implementing research integrity guidelines

A workshop of the European Science Foundation Member Forum on Research Integrity, Madrid, 17-18 November 2008

This workshop aimed to provide a forum for discussion of the practicalities of implementation of research integrity guidelines and codes of conduct, and to present recent initiatives in international, collaborative promotion of research integrity. The closing session gathered feedback on the actions and activities needed for a coordinated approach on research integrity in Europe (and beyond). Working groups of the European Science Foundation (ESF) Member Forum on Research Integrity will take forward four actions that were developed as an outcome of the workshop:
• Develop and implement activities to continue raising awareness and sharing information on good practices to promote research integrity;
• Develop a code of conduct that can be used as a template for national codes;
• Develop a checklist for setting up national (and institutional) structures to promote good research practice and deal with research misconduct;
• Develop and promote "research on research integrity".

Although the primary focus was on the activities of researchers, research organisations and academies, and funding bodies, there was great interest among the 50 participants in the role of science journals and their publishers, editors, and peer reviewers in research integrity issues. I gave a presentation on "Research integrity in scientific communication" on behalf of EASE. A lively discussion ensued, covering topics such as whether research integrity could be improved by promoting communication between journals. For example, if suspected misconduct had been identified by one journal, could duplicate submissions of the manuscript in question be prevented by notifying other journals of the manuscript's details? Also discussed was the format of journal article retractions: is there a need for standardisation, to ensure that complete and appropriate details are published?

Pieter Drenth of All European Academies (ALLEA) called for research integrity to be enforced by the research sponsor. Discussants felt that role of journals was relevant: transparency and communication between publishers and funders would help funders to gather information from journals on misconduct by researchers, and vice versa. Such information exchange could hinder those who persistently breached guidance on research integrity.

Carthage Smith from the International Council for Science (ICSU) questioned why journals do not always respond when they receive allegations of fabricated or falsified data, and provided examples of such situations. Many workshop participants favoured journals publishing annual reports on the number of cases of misconduct identified in the year, and the outcome, to demonstrate the scale of the problem, how it is dealt with, and how successfully.

Another topic that generated enthusiastic discussion was the misuse of impact factors. ICSU is promoting the use of instruments not related to citation measures. Delegates agreed that the impact factor is an inappropriate measure of scientific success, and that its use as an incentive for career progression encourages research misconduct, because of the desire to publish an impossibly large number of articles. Many were in favour of a return to peer review of grant proposals instead of reliance on impact factors, though it was acknowledged that impact factors provide a faster means of assessment and peer review is not without its own limitations.

The "Scientific Red Cards" project (http://www.scientificredcards.org/) was presented by Claire Ribrault, one of a group of researchers and PhD students who aim to increase the visibility of retracted publications and details of why they were retracted, using their website to disclose the information. They argue that such publicity is not necessarily bad thing for the public image of scientific research. This presentation attracted heated debate among the audience, but there was much support for the project, which is still in development. The Red Cards team are keen for editors and publishers to contribute, for example by sending content on retracted articles for their website, and they will present an update on their project at the EASE conference in Pisa in September 2009.

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EASE-Forum Digest: October to December 2008

Discussions on the forum over the last quarter have focused on sensitive terminology and the equally delicate topic of whether active verbs should be used in biomedical article titles.

Defining a country's developmental status

Richard Hurley is a copy editor at the *BMJ*, which has an excellent and constantly evolving style guide. A current debate among his fellow copy editors is whether the term "developing country" should be changed to the possibly less euphemistic term "poor country". Richard pointed to the terminology's minefield reviewed in http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Developing_country. Linda Free replied that "developed", "developing", and "least developed" are the terms favoured by UN agencies and WHO. Pippa Smart said that the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) maintains a list of countries under a "human development index", which grades countries as "high", "medium" or "low" according to GDP, literacy, life expectancy, etc. Wikipedia has an article about the grading linking to the index. Linda suggested "less-developed" as did Pippa who added that "non-industrialized" is another favoured term. Judith Baggot referred to *The Economist*'s special report on globalization (20 September 2008, p.10) which proffered the term "emerging", noting that "if a recession comes along.... it might call for a new tag—"submerging". Judith thought "developing" better for general use because "emerging" refers to the level of market activity, which was the focus of *The Economist* piece.

Finally Mary Ellen Kerans asked "Would the 'poor countries' cover the ones where large numbers are poor but the leaders and their friends have Swiss bank accounts they tap into on their ski trips, etc, etc. Or countries whose financial system collapses but whose banking leaders, educated with Fullbrights in the US, somehow manage to keep their money in the right foreign accounts at the right time." (This posting was made before the onset of the banking crisis in the US.) Mary Ellen did not think "developing" any worse or more euphemistic than "poor" and saw it as a term that connotes a country that is changing out of some feudal or colonial situation into another sort of situation as yet to be defined.

Controls

Is "control" a treatment and does the word take the definite article, asked Yateendra Joshi, giving the following examples:

The experiment comprised four treatments, namely the three concentrations (X, Y, and Z mg/litre) and control.

The experiment comprised three treatments, namely drying the flowers under shade, drying them in the open, and drying them in a hot-air oven; fresh flowers served as control [the control?].

Forum contributors unanimously rejected "control" as a form of treatment and assured Yateendra that the word takes the definite article (which makes me wonder why I increasingly encounter "control" alone and forlorn without its article). Rod Hunt suggested editing Yateendra's examples to read:

The experiment comprised treatments of concentration X, Y, or Z mg/litre, and an untreated control.

The experiment compared three drying regimes for flowers: under shade, in the open, and in a hot-air oven. Fresh flowers served as a control.

Elisabeth Heseltine saw "control" as a tricky word when describing participants in case-control studies because "cases" are files not people. Referring to patients as "cases" is therefore dehumanizing. However, participants who do not receive treatment are referred to as "controls". I wonder if using "control" to denote a human is equally dehumanizing. "Control participant" or "volunteer" could be used to avoid this problem.

Questioning informative titles

While on 17 December Father Christmas was busy preparing his reindeer at his home in Rovaniemi, Finland, Carol Norris at Helsinki University was pondering titles of academic articles that comprise a sentence. Nancy Boston pointed out that many journals do not allow active verbs in titles, to avoid informative titles that announce the results/conclusions of the study. These journals prefer descriptive titles which indicate the rationale for the study. Nancy had noticed that informative titles are found in more informal journals or those with a general readership, or were used for non-research type articles. Vivienne Mawson saw not objection to informative titles and felt that getting round active verbs by using the "ing" form could infer that the study was still ongoing.

It is a shame that this discussion arose when not only Father Christmas but also many forum contributors were preoccupied with seasonal festivities. Journal editors should perhaps give more thought to article titles. Neville Goodman has shown (*BMJ* 2000;320:914-915.) that informative titles are becoming more common, a trend he found worrying because these titles can be an inaccurate description of study findings. Busy physicians might base their clinical decisions on informative titles of papers, which they might

not even read. Goodman gave an example of a title that stated that an intervention prevents infection, whereas in the abstract the intervention was said to significantly reduce infection. The article provoked a lively, informative title vs descriptive title correspondence from readers (I referred to this debate in: Titles in medical articles: what do we know about them? *The Write Stuff* 2007;16(4):158-160, and would be pleased to send the article to anyone who is interested).

On a different tack, Carol had read that verbs in titles should be in the past tense to reflect the reporting of results. Neither Nancy nor Vivienne saw any sense in prescribing that verbs in titles should be in the past tense.

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My Life as an Editor: John Glen

The November 2008 issue of *European Science Editing* (34(4):121) reported that John Glen, one of the founders of EASE and an honorary member, had been granted honorary membership of the International Glaciological Society in recognition of his work on their journal, the *Journal of Glaciology*. We asked John a few questions.

ESE: John, can you tell us about your early career?

JG: I was an undergraduate at Cambridge 1946-1949, reading engineering in my first two years and physics in my third. I was recruited to work with Egon Orowan in the Metal Physics group at the Cavendish Laboratory, and he asked me to look at the mechanical properties of ice with a view to giving a better physical basis for theories of glacier flow.

ESE: How did you become a journal editor?

JG: In the course of doing my work on ice I was visited by Gerald Seligman, the founder and editor of the *Journal of Glaciology*, and he invited me to join its Editorial Board. As a result, when I left the Cavendish and took up a post at the Atomic Energy Research Establishment at Harwell I got permission to continue my editorial work there, and this continued when I returned to Cambridge as a Research Fellow and when I moved to the Physics Department at the University of Birmingham.

ESE: In your editorial role, what was your job title?

JG: Initially I was a member of the Editorial Board, and then became Assistant Editor. When Gerald Seligman retired I took over as Editor. Restructuring made me Editor-in-Chief and then when that role went to someone else, Scientific Editor, which I still am today.

ESE: What were your main duties?

JG: Selecting referees, getting their reports, corresponding about them with authors, preparing the manuscript for sending to the printers. Then, receiving proofs, sending those to authors, reading them myself, collating a corrected proof for sending to the printers, receiving and reading page proofs, and returning them with any corrections distinguishing those that were printers' errors and those that were last minute editorial changes.

ESE: How did the job compare with your expectations?

JG: I don't think I had expectations – I was taught what to do by Gerald Seligman!

ESE: What was the most difficult editorial decision you have had to make?

JG: Negotiations with a fiery French/Catalan author, eg when the word "ignore" was used in a referee's report and the differences between the French and English meanings of that word caused problems!

ESE: What changes have you seen in the world of editing during the course of your career?

JG: Mainly the change in printing techniques. The copy is now prepared in-house by the Society in its Cambridge office, thus page proofs are a thing of the past. Also, electronic communications have both speeded things up and mean that there are no financial implications in having a referee in Australia for a large paper with many illustrations!

ESE: Would you have done anything differently?

JG: I would have avoided the fall in quality that occurred when in-house setting first started, before full typographic possibilities were available on word processors.

ESE: In the course of your editorial duties, where in the world have you travelled?

JG: Mainly to conferences whose proceedings we were publishing – for example to Fort Collins, Colorado. Many of my trips to conferences were, however, to present papers myself as I was a working scientist throughout – this took me to Australia, Japan, China, etc.

ESE: What makes you happy or sad about progress in the publishing industry?

JG: The ease of communications and manuscript alteration now makes me happy. The proliferation of poor journals and the potential threats to the viability of journals make me sad.

ESE: Do you have any advice for young editors?

JG: Learn how to do all parts of the job. Attend editor conferences and learn from others that attend. Be concerned with detail.

ESE: Will you ever retire from being an editor?

JG: I don't know! I am now 81 and still at work – though no longer asked to prepare manuscripts for printing, but would do it if asked. Perhaps if I lose my sight – or marbles!

The Editors' WebWatch

The Editors' WebWatch is a membership-driven resource guiding editors and writers in the sciences to websites and services of interest. Suggestions for the February issue should be sent to ese.webwatch@gmail.com. We are using the Editor's Bookshelf blog at http://ese-bookshelf.blogspot.com *to collect entries; contributions are welcome .*

Regular expressions

http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/help/HA010873051033.aspx
http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/help/HA010873041033.aspx
http://wiki.services.openoffice.org/wiki/Documentation/How_Tos/Regular_Expressions_in_Writer

One of the most powerful features of any text-editing package is its support for regular expressions. Using regular expressions as part of a find-and-replace operation enables you to make systematic edits to a document with remarkable speed.

Querying a search engine for something like "regular expressions" produces lots of helpful results, but in Microsoft Word and OpenOffice the syntax used for regular expressions, or regexes for short, is rather different.

Say one wanted to change "vapor" into "vapour", but only in those cases where it was a word on its own, not, for example, in "vaporous" or "evaporate". **<(vapor)>** (Word) and **\<vapor\>** (OOo) catch these cases, where the < and \< stand for the beginning of a word. Likewise, word-final "-ize" can be identified by **(ize)>** (Word) and **ize\>** (OOo). This, however, would be an unwise thing to do as it would also catch "size", "prize", "seize" and so forth. One can restrict the search to words longer than, say, six letters by writing **[a-z]{3,}(ize)>** (Word) and **[a-z]{3,}(ize)\>** (OOo), where the square brackets introduce a set of characters to be matched (this can be as simple as a single character,

[n], or a range, **[A-Z]**, or a mixture, **[aeiou0-9]**), and the braces indicate the number of characters to be matched, in this case at least three.

In general, the trickier the task being asked of the regular expression, the more similar the syntax in Word, OOo, and in programming languages such as Perl.

The above examples might seem somewhat contrived, but regular expressions come into their own for tasks such as rearranging formulaic subject matter such as addresses and bibliographies, and the Microsoft Word-specific pages are particularly focused on the tasks of rearranging names and dates. It's confusing that the full stop in Word regex syntax stands for a full stop, whereas in OOo it stands for any character, while in Word a question mark stands for any character and in OOo it means zero or one of the preceding character.

In short, regular expressions are so powerful that it is a very good idea to practise on test documents and compare the results carefully with the original before trying them out on a live piece. But they may well change your life.

As with many things, this has apparently changed in Word 2007 – but that is a matter for another column.

What is this file?

http://extensions.pndesign.cz/

RAR, SIT, CDR... A special case of three-letter abbreviations, and one that plagues technical editors, is the file extension. Authors are endlessly inventive at submitting files in peculiar formats, and the first question you need to answer is "What program did they use to generate that?" This page answers that quickly and neatly. The site is lightweight and simple to navigate.

I should note in passing that while Wikipedia is always something of a lottery, documenting the peculiar programs that can be used to open peculiar files is one of its strengths.

Abbreviations for editors

http://www.nactem.ac.uk/software/acromine/

Anyone with experience of lists of abbreviations and acronyms will have spotted that they're seldom up to date and often contain abbreviations and acronyms which, from a cursory internet search, seem to exist only in lists, rather than out in the wild. So an abbreviation list that is somehow automatically generated from current material would be extremely welcome.

AcroMine has been around for a few years but you may not have seen it before. The idea is to take all of PubMed and look for word sequences that regularly co-occur with expressions in brackets that match.

But how well does it work across disciplines? My first attempt was a term used in nuclear magnetic resonance spectroscopy: INEPT. AcroMine correctly identifies this as "insensitive nuclei enhanced by polarization transfer". AcroMine offers 22 hits for "MMR"; the most common is, surprisingly, not the vaccine against measles, mumps, and rubella but "mismatch repair". AcroMine even correctly offers "Large Hadron Collider" as an expansion for "LHC", demonstrating that these days PubMed is a resource for scientific, technical, and medical editors of all disciplines.

Online biochemical and chemical nomenclature

http://www.chem.qmul.ac.uk/iupac/

This website may look old-fashioned, but it will still be invaluable when the likes of Facebook are a distant memory. Here on a single page are many of the recommendations of the International Union of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology (IUBMB) and those recommendations of the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry (IUPAC) that are particularly relevant to editors working in the life sciences.

Blog update

http://scienceblogs.
com/notrocketscience/
http://www.badscience.net/
http://david-crystal.blogspot.com/

Many journal publishers (BMJ, OUP, NPG, RSC, ACS) are using blogging to promote their own articles, but I thought it would be more interesting to look at some contrasting blogs from the very different worlds of science and medicine.

Ed Yong's *Not Exactly Rocket Science* concentrates on readable accounts for non-experts of peer-reviewed published material. Readers outside the UK might be unfamiliar with Ben Goldacre's *Bad Science*, which is both a column in *The Guardian* and a rather longer and more-often updated blog covering how the media reports medicine. It is a sobering but immensely entertaining read.

Lastly and most relevantly for people whose job is working with language, David Crystal, scourge of prescriptivists, has a blog about how language *actually* works which is well worth following and learning from. An excellent comment on style guides is worth repeating in full:

> Style guides should be explaining to people what English allows us to say and write, and pointing out the strengths and weaknesses of different usages in different contexts. Blanket bans are a nonsense.

Physics and physical chemistry

http://old.iupac.
org/publications/books/gbook/

The International Union of Pure and Applied Physics (IUPAP) doesn't put its recommendations online, but IUPAC's Green Book, which is based in part on the recommendations of IUPAP and also on ISO 31 (now superseded by ISO 80000-3:2006, which costs only CHF 96), is online as a PDF of its second edition, and the third edition will appear online soon.

It's an indispensable *vade mecum* for editing equations and the kind of mathematical expressions that one sees in running scientific text and was immensely useful throughout my doctorate and my years as a technical editor.

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With thanks to Richard Hurley.

Technical Tips: Synchronizing files on different computers

"My Briefcase" in Windows is useful for synchronizing files between one or more computers (eg at work and home) and an intermediary pen drive (or other electronic media). You can work on files in either location - the Briefcase or the pen drive - and then with a single click at the end of your session synchronize the copies (and then do the same on your other computer).

Start by having one Briefcase on computer A and another on computer B and then synchronizing each with the files on the pen drive - rather than having a single Briefcase on the pen drive and then synchronizing files in each computer with what's in the pen drive. This is because the file locations of the documents you are synchronizing would inevitably be different on the two computers.

So on each computer you need to:

1. Right click in the folder where you want to locate the Briefcase, eg desktop or "My Documents" then go down to "New" and then "Briefcase".

2. Rename the Briefcase to something memorable, eg "Current work" or "Portable files".

3. Select (highlight) one or more documents from the pen drive that you want to keep synchronized. You can select whole folders and subfolders if you want. You then drag the items into your Briefcase, but using the *right click* button, not the left. You are then offered the choice of "Make synch copy", "Move", "Create shortcut", or "Cancel". You need to select "Make synch copy".

4. Later do the same thing on computer B.

You can now work on documents in either location (the Briefcase or the pen drive). At the end of the day or whenever you want, you insert the pen drive, open the Briefcase (double click on it, or you can create a shortcut on your taskbar and click on that), and click the button with file icons and green arrows going in opposing directions ("Update all"). This synchronizes all documents — or you can update documents singly by using the button to the right.

Hitches etc:

* You have to close any document that you want to synchronize before you "Make synch copy".

* The non-Briefcase location obviously has to be on the pen drive. Clearly you can make "synch copies" in your Briefcase from documents in another folder on the computer, say, "My Documents", but then you won't have copies in your pen drive to synchronize with computer B. "My Briefcase" is useful only for things you'll be working on over time in both locations.

* Very rarely (maybe twice in the several years I've been using it) the Briefcase seems to become corrupt, and you have to delete it and create a new one. Not too much of a problem, as you will still have copies of all the files in the other location, though they may not be up to date, depending on how recently you have clicked the "Update all" button.

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News Notes

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

Outcome reporting bias exposed

Only 11 of 73 funders of randomized controlled trials who were contacted mentioned the importance of publication of negative as well as positive outcomes, a study in *Trials* has found (2008;9:66, doi:10.1186/1745-6215-9-66). The report highlights the need for more detailed guidance from funders to prevent outcome reporting bias. Publication bias, where statistically significant results are more likely to be published than those that are not statistically significant, is well recognized. However, outcome reporting bias, where only a subset of the original variables are reported according to the nature of the results, is less well documented. (www.knowledgespeak.com/newsArchieveview.asp?intMonth=11&intYear=2008, 28 Nov 2008 "More guidance needed to check outcome reporting bias, says report") online")

Professor charged with ghostwriting

A US inquiry has charged an Australian professor for being author of an article in the *American Journal of Obstetrics & Gynecology* that was sympathetic to a treatment after it was linked to cancer. The inquiry is investigating whether drug companies pay ghostwriters to favour their products. The professor stands by the article, and the drug company, Wyeth, denies paying authors and says that they have "substantive editorial control". Elsevier will investigate the allegations. In December Senator Chuck Grassley alleged that Wyeth commissioned articles to promote its hormone replacement therapy and had them ghostwritten by a medical communications company. (www.knowledgespeak.com/newsArchieveviewdtl.asp?pickUpID=7381&pickUpBatch=1060#7381, 29 Dec 2008, "Australian professor charged in US enquiry on ghostwriting for medical journal")

More resources with open access

The *Bahrain Medical Bulletin* went open access from December 2008 and is published under a copyright that allows reuse of articles provided they are cited correctly. In the open access Global Library of Women's Medicine (www.glowm.com), recently launched by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists in London, more than 650 experts discuss the latest options in women's medicine. And BioMed Central has unveiled the open access journals *PathoGenetics*, for researchers investigating the mechanisms of genetic disease, and *Epigenetics and Chromatin*, to discuss heritable changes that involve stable modifications of chromatin, DNA, or protein conformation.

Google feels credit contraction

The internet search provider Google will close its scientific data service, Google Research Datasets, in January, before the product's official launch. The experimental service was to offer scientists a way to store the terabytes of open source data that are generated in life sciences, pharmaceuticals, and other fields. A few weeks ago, the company's chief executive, Eric Schmidt, told the *Wall Street Journal* that Google would cut back on experimental projects. Research Datasets is its third project to be abandoned in the latter months of 2008, after the SearchMash search results test and the Lively virtual reality program. (http://googlewatch.eweek.com/content/failure_to_launch/failure_to_launch_google_research_datasets.html, 19 Dec 2008, "Failure to launch: Google Research Datasets")

EU promises open access

The European Commission has launched a pilot project that will give unrestricted online access to research results funded by the European Union, primarily research published in peer reviewed journals, after an embargo of 6-12 months. The pilot will cover about 20% of the budget of the Seventh Research Framework Programme – €50bn between 2007 and 2013 – in disciplines such as health, energy, environment, social sciences, and information and communication technologies. Grant recipients will be required to deposit final manuscripts into an online repository and to ensure open access to these articles after publication. See http://ec.europa.eu/research/science-society/index.cfm?fuseaction=public.topic&id=1680

BMJ: 10 years' free access

The *BMJ* is officially an open access journal and has provided free access to its peer reviewed research online for 10 years. In 1998 it started to provide free access to the full text of research articles, to deposit the full text in PubMed Central, and to allow authors to retain copyright. The BMJ Group has also announced BMJ Unlocked (http://adc.bmj.com/info/unlocked.dtl), which allows authors who submit research to 19 specialist journals to pay a fee and make their work open access. For *Archives of Diseases in Childhood* the fee is £1700. (www.knowledgespeak.com/newsArchieveview.asp?intMonth=10&intYear=2008, 16 Oct 2008,

"*BMJ* completes 10 years of offering open access content")

Pressure to publish scoop science

Research in *Cell* has been criticized by five researchers from four research groups in three countries for not properly crediting their earlier findings (2008;133:1093–1105, doi:10.1016/j.cell.2008.04.048). One critic, Peter Lawrence, said, "There's a pressure on scientists to publish in these top journals to promote their work as more novel than it really is." The paper's main author has defended the work. In an unpublished letter to *Cell* Lawrence said that the paper "amounts to a theft of our intellectual property. . . A paper in *Cell*, whatever the quality, will gain citations and eclipse our own discoveries." See *Development* 2004;131:4651-4664. (www.the-scientist.com/templates/trackable/display/blog.jsp?type=blog&o_url=blog/display/55240&id=55240, 25 Nov 2008, "Critics rip *Cell* paper")

Subeditors demand writer's respect

A leaked email, splattered with expletives, showed the contempt that the restaurant reviewer Giles Coren has for subeditors at the *Sunday Times* newspaper. Coren's 1000 word rant was complaining about the removal of a single indefinite article: "I do not enjoy the suggestion that you have a better ear or eye for how I want my words to read than I do . . . And the way you avoid this kind of fuck up is by not changing a word of my copy without asking me, OK? It's easy. Not. A. Word. Ever." The subeditors replied, "Subs are no more infallible than writers. So, let's all try a little mutual respect, shall we?" (www.guardian.co.uk/media/2008/jul/23/mediamonkey, 23 July 2008, "Read Giles Coren's letter to *Times* subs" and www.guardian.co.uk/media/2008/jul/29/sundaytimes.pressandpublishing, 29 July 2008, "*Sunday Times* subeditors reply to Giles Coren").

Service aggregates journal contents

The tables of contents of 11,469 scholarly journals from 421 publishers can be viewed together in a service from the UK Joint Information Systems Committee. The service, www.tictocs.ac.uk, is free to use and seeks to help researchers keep up to date with the most recent issues of journals on almost any subject. Users can view the latest contents for each journal; link to the full text; and save journals to view future tables of contents. And the service makes it easy to export webfeeds to popular readers. (www.knowledgespeak.com/newsArchieveviewdtl.asp?pickUpID=7340&pickUpBatch=1054, 18 Dec 2008, "JISC funded TOCs service launched for scholarly journals")

Libraries make comeback

Almost 60% of respondents said that they used library technology to help navigate to scholarly content 95% of the time, in a three year study. But publishers have responded less well to changes in users' behaviour: readers are more likely than ever to visit a journal's website at the article or abstract level. The white paper *How Readers Navigate to Scholarly Content* compared changes in users' behaviour between 2005 and 2008 and the impact on the design and function of publishers' websites. (www.sic.ox14.com/)

Springer buys BioMed Central

Springer Science and Business Media agreed in October to acquire the BioMed Central Group, a global open access publisher. BioMed Central was launched in May 2000 as an independent, for-profit publisher, committed to providing free access to peer reviewed biological and medical research. It is the largest open access provider in the world, with more than 180 peer reviewed journals. Biomed Central's publisher, Matthew Cockerill, assured editors that a board of trustees "will continue to safeguard BioMed Central's open access policy." Springer "has been notable . . . for its willingness to experiment with open access publishing," he said. (www.sciam.com/blog/60-second-science/post.cfm?id=open-access-publisher-biomed-centra-2008-10-07, 7 Oct 2008, "Open access publisher BioMed Central sold to Springer")

Open access association launched

The Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association (www.oaspa.org) was launched in October. Its mission is to support and represent the interests of open access journals publishers globally in all scholarly disciplines through an exchange of information, setting industry standards, and advancing business and publishing models. Membership is open to signatories of the Berlin or Budapest declarations, and organizations must publish at least one fully open access journal. Other parties that support open access publishing are also welcome. Founding members include BioMed Central, Copernicus, Hindawi, and the Public Library of Science. (www.ringgold.com/UKSG/si_pd.cfm?AC=0861&Pid=10&Zid=4119&issueno=181, 14 Oct 2008, "The Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association launched")

Treat Déjà Vu with caution

Déjà Vu (http://spore.swmed.edu/dejavu), a free database of "extremely similar Medline citations," which might represent duplicate publications, is not always to be trusted. An editorial in *Clinical Chemistry* points out many false entries in it, and warns that inclusion might damage the reputation and career of honest scientists. Reasons for misclassification include publishers' error, follow-up studies from the same cohort, guidelines that are adopted or published by several cooperating journals, and articles republished in a different language. "A large number of authors may have to defend themselves to free their names from such unfounded allegations," say the editorialists. (*Clinical Chemistry* 54;777–778, doi:10.1373/clinchem.2008.104794)

Misconduct policy criticized

The UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) has issued a standard procedure for universities to deal with allegations of research misconduct. But it has been criticized, with one campaigner comparing it to a "Band-Aid on a cancer." The guidance says that universities should use at least one external investigator, but only after senior staff have decided whether the complaint is serious enough. Harvey Marcovitch, chairman of the Committee on Publication Ethics, said that the committee would prefer a mandatory system, but UKRIO thinks universities should continue to have responsibility for investigating complaints about their staff. (www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/story.asp?storyCode=403617&sectioncode=26, 18 Sep 2008, "Misconduct policy branded 'Band-Aid' for cancer")

SfEP chair thinks strategy

Sarah Price has taken the helm as chairperson of the Society for Editors and Proofreaders (SfEP). The society hopes that other appointments to the council will strengthen its strategic planning. "Our new professional development director will be building our portfolio of qualifications after our recent addition of the licentiateship in editorial skills with the City and Guilds. Proof of editorial competency is essential for client confidence," she said. "Everyone wants a top quality read. Our members always have this in mind. The challenge now is to take a strategic path to guide the development of more efficient editorial practices."

COPE redesigns website

The Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) has a redesigned website and a new URL – http://publicationethics.org. It has also prepared guidelines for boards of directors of learned journals (http://publicationethics.org/guidelines). Journals should update any link to COPE's website in their instructions. COPE welcomes comments on the guidelines and the new website. The committee is concerned with the integrity of peer reviewed publications in science, and has more than 5200 members from all continents, mostly editors. COPE will appoint a full time director after a tenfold increase in membership this year. The publishers Elsevier, Wiley-Blackwell, Springer, Taylor & Francis, and the BMJ Group have signed up all their journals as members.

Lust in translation

The prestigious Max Planck Society has apologized after using calligraphy on the cover of a special China issue of its flagship magazine that turned out to advertise a Hong Kong strip club. The institute replaced the cover, which advertises "hot, young housewives," of the online and English edition of *Max Planck Forschung*, but not before the German language version had been sent. The institute said that the Chinese text "had been chosen by our editorial office . . . To our sincere regret, however, it has now emerged that the text contains deeper levels of meaning, which are not immediately accessible to a non-native speaker." (www.smh.com.au/news/home/technology/how-eminent-science-mag-got-hit-for-sex/2008/12/11/1228584998876.html, 11 Dec 2008, "Eminent scientific journal gets hit for sex")

Geophysicists review colleagues' papers

Scientists at the Institute of Geophysics in Paris have been accused of reviewing papers by their colleagues at the institute. The papers were published from 1992 to 2008 in the Elsevier journal *Earth and Planetary Science Letters* while they were members of the editorial board, *Nature* reports. The scientists say that the editorial process is open and that the allegations are "ridiculous." The publisher maintains that reviewing papers from your own institution is unethical. One online response to the news story in *Nature* said, "This case exposes a general problem in French science: inbreeding, centralism, lack of transparency, and disregard for internationalism." (*Nature* 2009;457:140, doi:10.1038/457140a)

Christmas lunch not dinner

Most *Daily Telegraph* readers eat "Christmas lunch" rather than "Christmas dinner," said Simon Heffer, the paper's associate editor, in an angry email to staff. "This is not the *Daily Star*," he said. "I have exhorted you all to read carefully what you write. I think some of you are now doing this, but not always thinking about what it is that you read." His favourite literals of that week were "hocky mom" and "plumb compote." One reader wondered whether the newsroom was being run by "mnokeys." Heffer said, "While it is good to provide the customers with amusement, it should be intentional." (www.guardian.co.uk/media/2008/nov/28/simon-heffer-daily-telegraph)

"Going forward" is step backward

Office jargon "cloaks the brutal modern workplace in such brainlessly upbeat language," says Lucy Kellaway, complaining on the BBC's website, and usage trickles down into common parlance. "Like 'like,' 'going forward' is as contagious as smallpox. It started with business people, and now has not only infected farmers, it has reached epidemic proportions with footballers." She also hates the phenomenon of "up": "to free up", "to head up", and, worst, "to give a heads up". To find out more about "idea showers", "let's touch base about that offline", and "low hanging fruit" see http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/magazine/7457287.stm

The Editor's Bookshelf

ECONOMICS AND FUNDING

Banks M. **The price of free papers**. *Physics World* 2008;21(12):12–13.
Discusses the present state of open access journals and the economics of their publication, and also the preprint server arXiv and its relation to journals. In Springer's "open choice" database, the journal is subscription based but offers authors the option of making their papers open access for a fee of $3000.

EDITORIAL PROCESS

Harnad J. **Free for all**. *Physics World* 2008;21(12):16–17.
Discusses open access journals and the danger of lowering standards of refereeing because of financial pressure. It also discusses the formation of large common-interest groups such as SCOAP (the Sponsoring Consortium for Open Access Publishing) in high-energy physics, which has negotiated terms for its member organizations to pay a standard fee to open access journals

for each paper published. The future for journal publishing is likely to retain both subscription and open access models.

Wiley S. **Peer review isn't perfect ... but it's not a conspiracy designed to maintain the status quo**. *The Scientist* 2008;11:31.
When peer review is negative, it is counterproductive to consider it as a personal assault. The author, a Pacific Northwest National Laboratory Fellow and director of PNNL's Biomolecular Systems Initiative, recalls personal experiences and suggests waiting before reacting to a negative review, and then to pretend that it was written by his best friends. This helps him discover the truly useful comments contained in the review.

ETHICAL ISSUES

Bjorn G. **Publication is positively skewed**. *Nature Medicine* 2008;14:1133.
(doi:10.1038/nm1108-1133b)
Positive results of clinical trials for drugs or devices have a higher chance of getting published in the medical literature than negative trials. This leads to "positive publication bias", a serious problem that can make a drug or device appear to be more effective than it really is. The FDA Amendments Act of 2007 has improved transparency: it mandates that sponsors or primary investigators of clinical trials for approved drugs post a summary of their results in a national open-access database, but it does not cover every type of clinical trial, nor does it directly affect medical journals.

Frank DN. **Don't release other people's data without their consent**.

Nature 2008;455:589.
(doi:10.1038/455589a)
Letter commenting on *Nature*'s report that data photographed during a conference publication were later published without the presenter's consent. The issue is whether the data are released in a fair and representative manner. Biology operates under the implicit, or often explicit, ethic that data presented at meetings are personal communications, publication of which requires formal approval by the originating researchers. Anyway, what is the purpose of reporting incompletely vetted and possibly erroneous experimental results?

Levi BG. **Bubble fusion scientist disciplined**. *Physics Today* 2008;61(11):28–30.
In the third investigation by Purdue University into alleged scientific misconduct by Rusi Taleyarkhan in connection with claims to have produced nuclear fusion in a tabletop experiment, the committee considered 12 allegations and found sufficient evidence of research misconduct in two cases. The first concerned a paper originally submitted by one author, a postdoctoral fellow, of work in which Taleyarkhan had been involved, and to which he subsequently persuaded one of his masters students to add his name as coauthor after referees' criticism of the first submission. The second concerned a paper in which Taleyarkhan said his earlier results had been subsequently confirmed, citing the previously mentioned paper. Taleyarkhan appealed the findings but the university's appeal committee concluded that due process had been followed and the conclusions were based on evidence.

INFORMATION RETRIEVAL

Cronin B, Meho Lokman I. **Applying the author affiliation index to library and information science**

journals. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 2008;59(11):1861–1865. (doi:10.1002/asi.20895)
The authors use a novel method - the Author Affiliation Index - to determine whether faculty at the top 10 North American library and information science programmes have a disproportionate presence in the premier journals of the field. The study finds that these programmes may be both too small and too interdisciplinary for this measure to provide reliable results.

Evans JA. **Electronic publication and the narrowing of science and scholarship**. *Science* 2008;321(5887):395–399. (doi:10.1126/science.1150473)
Electronically available journals may portend an ironic change for science. As more journal issues come online, the articles referenced tend to be more recent, fewer journals and articles are cited, and more of the citations are to fewer journals and articles. Searching online is more efficient and following hyperlinks quickly puts researchers in touch with prevailing opinion, but this may accelerate consensus and narrow the range of findings and ideas that are built upon.

Morgan P. **Open data: the elephant in the room?** *Journal of the European Association for Health Information and Libraries* 2008;4(4):4–6. (http://www.eahil.net/journal/journal_2008_vol4_n4.pdf)
Scientific research is based on data and the open access movement now incorporates the need for open access to research data, or Open Data. Research funding bodies are mandating the release and reuse of data, but small-scale research projects may lack the resources to implement Open Data management procedures. Libraries and institutional repositories, which have focused efforts on managing text resources rather than data, can help by collaborating with the research community.

Norris M, Oppenheim C, Rowland F.

Finding open access articles using Google, Google Scholar, OAIster and OpenDOAR. *Online Information Review* 2008;32(6):709–715. (doi:10.1108/14684520810923881)
Shows the relative effectiveness of a range of search tools in finding open access versions of peer reviewed academic articles on the world wide web. For the moment at least, to find open access articles it is better to use the general search engines Google and Google Scholar rather than OpenDOAR or OAIster.

Pinto M. **Cyberabstracts: a portal on the subject of abstracting designed to improve information literacy skills**. *Journal of Information Science* 2008;34(5):667–679. (doi:10.1177/0165551507086262)
An academic portal specifically centered on abstracts and abstracting resources is proposed, with the aim of improving the information literacy skills of librarianship and information science students. The research to design it mainly consists of the selection, assessment, and web-display of the most relevant abstracts on knowledge management, information representation, natural language processing, abstract/abstracting, modeling the scientific document, information retrieval, and information evaluation.

Lisée C, Larivière V, Archambault É. **Conference proceedings as a source of scientific information: a bibliometric analysis**. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 2008;59(11):1776–1784. (doi:10.1002/asi.20888)
Examines the scientific impact and aging of conference proceedings compared to those of scientific literature in general. The relative importance of proceedings is diminishing over time, and that the scientific impact of proceedings is losing ground to other types of scientific literature in nearly all fields. Thus proceedings have a relatively limited scientific impact, their relative importance is shrinking, and they become obsolete faster than the scientific literature in general.

LANGUAGE AND WRITING

Fung I. **Beyond English: accessing the global epidemiological literature**. *Emerging Themes in Epidemiology* 2008;5:21. (doi:10.1186/1742-7622-5-21)
Highlights the wealth of epidemiological and public health literature in the major languages of the world, and the bibliographic databases through which it can be searched and accessed. All systematic reviews in epidemiology and public health should include literature published in the major languages of the world, and the use of regional and non-English bibliographic databases should become routine. Look at the site and download articles showing different realities in countries from China to Brazil, Latin American to the Caribbean, Russia to Eastern and Western Europe.

Hartley J, Betts L. **Revising and polishing a structured abstract: is it worth the time and effort?** *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 2008;59(12):1870–1877. (doi:10.1002/asi.20909)
Many writers of structured abstracts spend time revising and polishing their texts, but do readers notice the difference? In three studies of readers using rating scales to judge the clarity of an original and a revised abstract, the revised abstract as a whole, as well as some components, were significantly clearer than the original. Readers can and do perceive differences between original and revised texts and therefore the time and effect is worthwhile.

Sagi I. Amusing titles in scientific **journals and article citation**. *Journal of Information Science* 2008;34(5):680–687.

(doi:10.1177/0165551507086261)
Examines whether the use of humor in scientific article titles is associated with the number of citations an article receives. The association between the levels of amusement and pleasantness and the article's monthly citation average has been assessed in articles published over 10 years in two of the most prestigious journals in psychology, *Psychological Bulletin* and *Psychological Review*. The pleasantness rating was weakly associated with the number of citations, while articles with highly amusing titles received fewer citations.

PUBLISHING

Achten WMJ. **Science journals have been slow to make themselves audible**. *Nature* 2008;455:590. (doi:10.1038/455590a)
Podcasting holds huge potential for visually impaired people and others; listening to scientific articles read aloud could increase readers' concentration and absorption of information. Several newspapers and magazines are offered in podcast form, but the scientific press is lagging behind.

Cheung WL. **The economics of post-doc publishing**. *Ethics in Science and Environmental Politics* 2008;8:41–44. (doi:10.3354/esep0083)
This case in a series on the use and misuse of bibliometric indices in evaluating scholarly performance ruefully tells of how, to gain recognition and increase his job prospects, the author changed his name from Wai Lung to William, and adopted a policy of publishing short pieces on "hot" topics in high-impact journals with fast reviewing times.

This article is part of a series of 14 showing a range of views on the value or otherwise of impact factors and similar measures.

Durrant S. ***Results from a survey investigating preservation strategies amongst ALPSP publisher members***. 2008. Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers (ISBN 978-0-907341-41-3)
ALPSP has undertaken a survey of its members to enhance awareness of long-term digital preservation issues and to establish the nature and extent of strategies that they have planned. 90% of ALPSP publisher members believe long-term preservation to be a critical issue, but some confusion surrounds the nature and extent of publishers' participation in long-term preservation schemes.

Inchoombe I. **Publishing should help research**. *Research Information* 2008;June/July. (http://www.researchinformation.info/features/feature.php?feature_id=176)
The managing director of Nature Publishing Group expresses his views on STM publishing. In his opinion, there is an expectation that there will be more and more information out there and researchers want to be able to filter the information. There is an increasing demand for alerts of new, relevant information from publishers or aggregators. Peer review is so important to quality and accuracy that it must be treated with respect. Last year, an open-review trial had a very low response. Nature Publishing Group believes that open access will offer value and benefit to some parts of the market but they do not see the author-pays model as appropriate for the Nature-branded journals today. They have a free-to-access preprint server, Nature Precedings.

Kamler B. **Rethinking doctoral publication practices: writing from and beyond the thesis**. *Studies in Higher Education* 2008;33(3):283–294. (doi:10.1080/03075070802049236)
A case study of graduates in science and education shows how the different disciplinary and pedagogical practices of each discourse

community affect students' publications. Co-authorship with supervisors can enhance the know-how of emergent scholars as well as their publication output. However, rethinking co-authorship more explicitly as a pedagogic practice is needed.

Krauss LM. **A fifth force farce**. *Physics Today* 2008;61(10):53–55.
Reports how the author, after worrying that *Physical Review Letters* (1986;56:3) had published a paper based on reanalysis of data published nearly a century before by Eýtvýs, had himself submitted a spoof paper entitled "On evidence for a third force in the two new sciences: a reanalysis of experiments by Galilei and Salviati" and how the editors had responded to him by sending six devastating referee reports which nevertheless all eventually recommended publication, which were "clearly done in-house but typed on different typewriters and [which] were a brilliant and self-effacing parody on PRL's reputation for using its three requirements to make it difficult for reasonable papers to get published there and also on the common experience of getting referees' reports that are inconsistent with each other but nevertheless come to the same conclusions", and with a covering letter saying that the editors "in their usual arbitrary and capricious manner, do not come to this conclusion".

Montpetit É, Blais A, Foucault M. **What does it take for a Canadian political scientist to be cited?** *Social Science Quarterly* 2008;89(3):802–816. (doi:10.1111/j.1540-6237.2008.00561.x)
In 1860 journal articles published between 1985 and 2005 by 758 Canadian political scientists, an article is more likely to be widely cited if it is published in a prestigious journal, is written by several authors, applies quantitative methods, compares countries, and deals with administration and public policy or elections and political

parties. Faculty members who belong to larger departments and those who are women are also more frequently cited.

Young NS, Ioannidis JPA, Al-Ubaydli O. **Why current publication practices may distort science**. *PLoS Medicine* 2008;5(10):e201. (doi:10.1371/journal.pmed.0050201)
Economic modeling of science may yield important insights. The current system of publication in biomedical research provides a distorted view of the reality of scientific data that are generated in the laboratory and clinic. This system can be studied by applying principles from the field of economics. This exchange system differs from a conventional market in many senses but shares the goal of transferring the commodity (knowledge) from its producers (scientists) to its consumers (other scientists, administrators, physicians, patients, and funding agencies). Idealists may be offended that research is compared to widgets, but realists will acknowledge that journals generate revenue; publications are critical in drug development and marketing and to attract venture capital; and publishing defines successful scientific careers.

RESEARCH EVALUATION

Anderson TR, Hankin RKS, Killworth PD. **Beyond the Durfee square: enhancing the h-index to score total publication output**. *Scientometrics* 2008;76(3):577–578. (http://www.springerlink.com/content/k725047l0u143222/fulltext.pdf)
The authors propose a new bibliometric index that is the "tapered h-index". The h-index of an individual scientist corresponds to the number h of his/her papers that each has at least h citations. The citation count of an article can exceed h, and for hundreds or thousands of citations that characterize the most highly cited papers, no additional credit is given. This new index positively scores all citations, and it shows smooth increases from year to year.

Ball P. **A longer paper gathers more citations**. *Nature* 2008;455:274–275. (doi:10.1038/455274a)
In an analysis of 30,027 peer-reviewed papers published between 2000 and 2004 in top astronomy journals, the median number of citations increased with the length of the paper, starting to tail off when papers reach lengths of 80 pages or so. The study highlights some important questions: in the face of new dissemination channels, is it realistic to regard citations as an accurate measure of achievement, and how long should a paper be, if length really does matter.

Haslam N, Ban L, Kaufmann L, Loughnan S, Peters K, Whelan J, Wilson S. **What makes an article influential? Predicting impact in social and personality psychology**. *Scientometrics* 2008;76(1):169–185. (doi: 10.1007/s11192-007-1892-8)
Factors contributing to citation impact in social-personality psychology were examined in a bibliometric study of articles published in the field's three major journals. Impact was operationalized as citations accrued over 10 years by 308 articles published in 1996, and predictors were assessed using multiple databases and trained coders. Multivariate analyses demonstrated several strong predictors of impact, but many variables did not predict impact.

SCIENCE

Leslie DM, Hamilton MJ. **A plea for a common citation format in scientific serials.** *Serials Review* 2007;33(1):1–3. (doi:10.1016/j.serrev.2006.11.009)
Researchers spend an alarming amount of time correcting reference sections – time that could be betters spent on science and syntax.

Schussler EE. **From flowers to fruits: how children's books represent plant reproduction**. *International Journal of Science Education* 2008;30(12):1677–1696.
A selection of children's books about plants was analyzed to identify how plant reproduction was portrayed and whether the book could generate misconceptions about the topic. As the books contained inaccuracies, content experts should analyze children's books in their area of specialty and provide teachers with recommendations about the use of the books in the classroom.

Take a look!

EASE and ESE now have Wikipedia entries! Please take a look and add information, links, etc to make these truly dynamic and representative entries. It's your association and your journal - get involved!

Forthcoming Meetings, Courses, and BELS Examinations

African Science Communication Conference
18–21 February; Gauteng, SA
http://www.saasta.ac.za/2ndascc/

Transformations in Cultural and Scientific Communication
5–6 March; Melbourne, Australia
http://nlablog.wordpress.com/conference-2009/

British Society for Literature and Science
27–29 March; Reading, UK
http://www.bsls.ac.uk/

Knowledge Globalization Conference 2009
17–19 April; Boston, MA, USA
http://www.kglobal.org

Show Me the Data – The Science of Editing and Publishing (CSE)
1–5 May; Pittsburgh, PA, USA
http://www.councilscienceeditors.org/events/annualmeeting09/

2009 ORI Research on Research Integrity Conference
15-17 May; Niagara Falls, NY, USA
www.roswellpark.org/ORI2009

28th EMWA Conference
26–30 May; Ljubljana, Slovenia
www.emwa.org/

International Conference on Health and Science Communication
17–20 June; St Louis, MO, USA
http://www.hesca.org/stlouis/

American Association of University Presses
18–21 June; Philadephia, PA, USA
http://aaupnet.org/programs/annualmeeting/index.html

6th World Conference of Science Journalists
30 June–3 July; London, UK
http://www.wcsj2009.org/

International PKP Scholarly Publishing Conference
8–10 July; Vancouver, Canada
http://pkp.sfu.ca/ocs/pkp/

10th EASE Conference: "Integrity in Science Communication"

16–19 September 2009
Pisa, Italy

International Professional Communication Conference
19–22 July; Honolulu, USA
http://ewh.ieee.org/soc/pcs

6th International Congress on Peer Review and Biomedical Publication
10–12 September; Vancouver, Canada
http://www.ama-assn.org/

Eastern Mediterranean Medical Journalism conference
2010, Pakistan
http://www.emro.who.int/EMAME/

COURSES

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

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

Society for Editors and Proofreaders
SfEP runs one-day workshops in London and occasionally elsewhere in the UK on copy-editing, proofreading, grammar, and much else.
Training enquiries: tel: +44 (0)20 7736 0901; trainingenquiries@sfep.org.uk

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

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

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

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

BELS - Board of Editors in the Life Sciences examination schedule
www.bels.org/becomeeditor/exam-schedule.htm

May 2009 (CSE meeting); registration date TBA

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

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

EASE Business

Integrity in Science Communication   *16-19 September 2009   Pisa, Italy*

As you will see from the enclosed second circular, the programme for Pisa is looking most promising.

The keynote lecture will be given by Professor Ele Ferrannini from the University of Pisa's School of Medicine, who is also Clinical Professor of Medicine, University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, Texas. Professor Ferrannini is one of the world's leading diabetologists. He is the immediate Past-President of the European Association for the Study of Diabetes and was the Editor-in-Chief of their journal, *Diabetologia*. He currently serves on the editorial boards of two journals and edits *The International Textbook of Diabetes Mellitus*, now entering its fourth edition. Professor Ferrannini's lecture will be followed by a welcome reception at the Hotel Santa Croce in Fossabanda. This is a beautiful 14th century monastery, tastefully converted, just outside the city walls and only a five-minute walk from the conference venue. Drinks will be served in the courtyard, with the option to retreat under the cloisters should the weather let us down.

Thursday starts with a plenary session on Physical Integrity followed by a session exploring the role of journals in publishing full datasets – be they chemical structural data, ecological observations, or climate recordings. For those who may find this too technical, there will be a parallel session discussing cultural issues that affect journals published in languages other than English. This theme will be continued on Friday in a session devoted to the translation of journal guidelines, particularly those issued by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors. Paola De Castro will describe the Italian experience: what problems have arisen and how these have been addressed. Sylwia Ufnalska will describe the Polish experience, then comments will be welcomed from anyone who has undertaken a similar activity or is considering doing so. This session may also consider whether EASE should play a role in such activities.

Friday features a plenary session on Moral Integrity, complemented by a parallel session discussing aspects of misconduct in scientific publication and how editors can manage these. This leads to the topic of the final day, Editorial Independence and Responsibility, when the plenary session will be followed by a session led by Ana Marusic on the role of editors and journals in fostering responsible conduct of research. This will include an update on the preceding Peer Review Congress, so those of us who can't make the trip to Vancouver can hear all the news in Pisa. Friday will also see an interesting session on the role of University Presses in modern academic publishing, organized by Claudia Napolitano and Zanetta Pistelli from Pisa University Press, covering aspects such as education, digitization and electronic publication, and defence of intellectual property .

Our final parallel session will look at communicating science to the public: how to write attractive text that will catch the attention of a general audience while maintaining the integrity of the scientific message, with expert advice from John Joyce, Communications Manager of the Marine Institute in Ireland.

Although the deadline for abstracts on novel topics has passed, we will still consider contributions to our planned sessions. We believe that we have created an outstanding programme, but EASE has always prided itself on the involvement of all participants in its conferences. We therefore encourage anyone who has research or practical experience pertinent to the parallel sessions to contact us by the end of February: contributions will be accepted subject to quality of the content, relevance, and time constraints.

We have allowed a free afternoon for exploring Pisa or the nearby town of Lucca, and a day trip to Florence will be offered for Sunday 20th September. Everything is in place for a fantastic few days, so register now and join us in Pisa!

Programme Committee

EASE members' news

Grete Mouret has retired from her job as Editorial Manager of *Basic & Clinical Pharmacology & Toxicology* in Copenhagen. She writes: "Before retiring I celebrated my 40 year jubilee with the University of Copenhagen and *Basic & Clinical Pharmacology & Toxicology* and was awarded a medal by the Queen of Denmark. Very proud I am!" **Henrik Horneberg** has taken over from her.

Miklos Kazmer (Department of Palaeontology, Eotvos University, Budapest, Hungary; mkazmer@ gmail.com) writes: "The annual issue of our *Geologica Pannonica* has left the printer last month, while another journal I am responsible for, Hantkeniana, is with the printer, while having promised to deliver it just before Christmas, missed this crucial date. While we shall be able to mail them to our exchange partners worldwide, this will be at a higher price than in 2008.

The financial contribution of the authors covers the printing costs. I work for free and mailing costs are provided by our university. This has been the system for many years, and it will maintain our printed journals - essential for palaeontology - at least as long as I am active ... but I don't plan to retire for quite a while.

European Science Editing is a window for me on modern editorial processes, an enlighting read in evenings after dull days. I learn new ideas on how to deal with various problems arising, when reading the issues from cover to cover. Occasionally I am delighted that I don't have to deal with problems others encounter. It is a window for me on the centre of a world, whose margin I am living at ... and symbol of being member of a respected community."

EASE Register of Training Courses in Science Writing and Editing

There must be more!

As written in the November issue of *ESE* (p 122), the EASE Council acknowledges that training should be an important part of the Association's remit, and we are therefore creating a register of all courses or workshops on science writing or editing offered by members of EASE. So far, only seven people have submitted details of their courses, whereas there are 22 people who list themselves as Trainers on the EASE membership database. So where are the rest of you? Shy? Too inundated with work to need more promotion?

A summary of the courses about which we have been notified appears below. Full details of the courses, as submitted by their organizers, will be published on the EASE website, and reports of courses may be published periodically.

The register does not imply any endorsement by EASE. We would like to move towards a system of validation and are forming a Training Committee to look at this: anyone interested in joining should contact Joan Marsh (jmarsh@wiley.com).

Organizer	Email	Title of course	Target audience
Pippa Smart	pippa.smart@gmail.com	How to be a successful journal editor	Editors-in-chief, editorial board members and managing editors
Paola De Castro	paola.decastro@iss.it	Scientific writing: strategies and techniques (in Italian)	National health systems staff at different levels
Linus Svensson	oikos@ekol.lu.se	Scientific writing in English	PhD students or postdoctoral fellows
Tom Lang	tomlangcom@aol.com	Various: see www.tomlangcommunications.com	Editorial boards, pharmaceutical writing groups, physicians, researchers, university students, residents and fellows, allied health providers, and professional medical writers
Valerie Matarese	vmatarese@uptoit.org	Effective biomedical reading and writing	Graduate students and young researchers in biomedical or clinical science
Elisabeth Heseltine	heseltin@club-internet.fr	Workshop in scientific communication	Biomedical researchers, health personnel
Liz Wager	liz@sideview.demon.co.uk	Various, including publication ethics, how to survive peer review, getting research published, and writing successful biomedical papers	Students, doctors, vets, nurses, professional medical writers, drug company employees, journal editors, and technical editors

Website visitor report

Have you ever wondered how many people look at the EASE website (www.ease.org.uk)? In August 2008 we started collecting visitor statistics, so now you can find out.

How many visitors?
From early August to early December there were 3831 visits from 2976 individuals. The average number of pages viewed per visit was 3.3, resulting in a total of 12,642 page views. The average time spent on the website was 2 minutes 33 seconds.

Most visited pages
The most popular pages on the EASE website were the home page (2941 visits), jobs (781), the EASE Conference (638), and the journal , *European Science Editing* (534).

Where do the visitors come from?
A total of 1131 visitors were located in the United Kingdom, 365 in the United States, 302 in Italy, 180 in China, 130 in Canada, 128 in Spain, 122 in Germany, 109 in France, 91 in the Netherlands, and 89 in India, as well as smaller numbers in 101 other countries.

Most visitors (55%) were referred to the EASE website from search engines; 23% came directly to the website (by typing the web address into their web browser); and 22% followed links from other websites, mainly from the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (126 visitors), Kent University's careers pages (83), Society for Editors and Proofreaders (54), with smaller numbers arriving via the World Federation of Science Journalists, the EQUATOR network, Versita (a science publisher in central and eastern Europe), the EASE journal blog, ScientificEditing.com, Council of Science Editors, and the World Association of Medical Editors.

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