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## From the Editors' Desks

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The copy date for the next issue of *ESE* (May 2008) is **15 March**. Please send contributions to the appropriate member of the publications committee (see list on left) by then.

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## Guest Editorial

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### Who are you, Editor?

Are you an editor in a scientific journal? What is your position there and what do you do? Are you an Editor-in-Chief? Are you a Managing Editor or, maybe, an Executive Editor? What does being an editor mean, by the way?

There are so many journals around the world, and so many of them have their own terminology for their editors. It is not rare that knowing the term “defining” an editor does not help one to understand what the editor actually does for the journal. Of course this is not helpful to the journal’s audience.

An Editor-in-Chief is simply one who is the chief, and this is clear as day. Usually. Sometimes there may be two or three Editors-in-Chief (for example, in *Environmental Sciences*, *Field Crops Research*, *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity*, *Journal of Micromechatronics*, *Pharmaceutical Statistics*), or even more (*Cryosphere*, *Journal of Universal Computer Science*, *Journal of Algebraic Combinatorics*, *Plasma Processes and Polymers*, *World Journal of Agricultural Sciences*), in which case there is no one chief to lead the team. But there are also Co-Editors-in-Chief and Co-Editors and Editors, all of who may have the same duties as the Editors-in-Chief, and Chief Editors (one, as for *Journal of Glaciology*, or more, as for *European Journal of Mineralogy*).

There are Managing Editors, Executive Editors, Assistant Editors—they all can do the same job: manage and organize a journal’s work. But the Executive Editor, and maybe the Managing Editor, may also be a more important person than one who manages the journal’s work—this person may have duties equal to those of the Editor-in-Chief.

Technical Editors are normally understood as those who edit accepted papers.<sup>1</sup> Surprisingly, in some journals the Technical Editors’ tasks are different from and much more important than the editing of accepted papers: they are the most important persons after the chief (as in *Crop Science*, *Agronomy Journal*, or e-journals of petroleum engineering). They seem to have the same power as Senior Editors in other journals (as for *Annals of Applied Biology*), although there are journals in which a Senior Editor is one who leads the journal (as for *Journal of Crop Improvement*). Note, however, that in *Asian Journal of Plant Sciences* there are more than 150 Technical Editors . . .

Other types of editors form a large group and include Editors, Assistant Editors (yes, these two have been mentioned above, a fact that should not surprise a reader at this stage of reading this editorial), Associate Editors,

Advisory Editors, Consultant Editors, and the like. All of them may handle papers (that is, manage external reviews and send editorial decisions directly to the authors, or to anyone who is above them in the editorial structure) or may simply act as internal reviewers.

One additional group of important persons in a journal is sometimes an Advisory (or Consultation) Editorial Board. It usually comprises very experienced and known scientists, the duties of whom most of the time are simply to *be*. But sometimes they may be asked for opinion in some controversial situation, a fact that makes their existence in the journal not a burden but of high importance. In some journals, though, the role of the Advisory Editorial Board can be different, perhaps similar to that of other types of editors mentioned above.

Of course there are many other types of editors, but we need not to list them: at this stage it is clear that there is a mess in terminology for editors in science journals. Upon finding a new journal, one may deduce some hints about it from the set-up of the editorial board; however, the truth is that apart from these hints one can never actually know the rules that control the journal’s management system. The best way to learn this is to cooperate with this journal, as either an author or a member of its team, unless one can ask someone who is familiar with the journal. Of course, one can also inquire of the journal’s secretary, but I do not believe there are many who do that.

For authors this whole situation should be a warning that a person who comes to them with an acknowledgment or decision letter may be someone very important or not that important, even though the signature says “Managing Editor” or “Executive Editor” or something else of this kind. It is better to assume this person is important, and even if this is not the case, is it not better to be polite to other people?

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## Articles

### Relationship between publication cycle and impact factor in Chinese medical journals

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#### Abstract

Of the 380 Chinese medical journals cited in the Chinese Journal Citation Report, 50 published quarterly, 200 bimonthly, 118 monthly, and 12 semi-monthly. The mean ( $\pm$ SD) impact factors of quarterly, bimonthly, monthly and semi-monthly journals were  $0.337 \pm 0.234$ ,  $0.386 \pm 0.256$ ,  $0.569 \pm 0.405$ , and  $0.517 \pm 0.339$ , respectively. Impact factors of monthly and semi-monthly journals were higher than those of bimonthly and quarterly journals ( $u$  test,  $P < 0.01$ ). 26 journals had an impact factor  $> 1.0$ , including one quarterly, seven bimonthly, 17 monthly and one semi-monthly. Among the 20 journals with the highest impact factors, 16 were published monthly and the remainder were published bimonthly. Of the total 380 journals, 21 journals had shortened their publication cycle in 2002, 40 in 2003, and 29 in 2004. Impact factors were significantly higher after the publication cycle was shortened (matched  $t$  test,  $P < 0.05$  for all years). Therefore, we consider that shortening the publication cycle may improve the impact factor of Chinese medical journals.

#### Introduction

Doctor Eugene Garfield, the founder of the Institute of Science Information, was the first to state, in 1955, that the frequency of citation of articles within a journal can be used as an indication of the effect, or "impact", of that journal. The term "impact factor" was first used formally in the *Science Citation Index* in 1963.<sup>1,2</sup> Nowadays, the impact factor is popularly used to evaluate the effect of journals worldwide, and has become an important index with which to evaluate the quality of journals, including those in China.<sup>3</sup>

In spite of the opinion held by some that there are many limitations to evaluating the science and technology journals by the impact factor,<sup>4-6</sup> it is still the most commonly used, and perhaps the most important, standard by which to judge the influence and the academic level of a journal, so much so that many editors invest a great deal of energy into investigating ways in which to improve the impact factor of their journal.<sup>7,8</sup> It is possible that shortening the publication cycle of a journal can result in a higher citation frequency,<sup>9,10</sup> but any detailed investigation has yet to be reported. This article investigates the relationship between publication cycle (frequency of publication) of Chinese medical journals and their impact factor, and provides evidence that controlling the publication cycle of journal does indeed have an influence on impact factor.

#### Methods

A total of 380 medical journals cited in the *Chinese Scientific and Technical Papers and Citations Database* and in the retrieval database of *Chinese Periodicals Network* were selected; these two databases contained most of the biomedical journals. All of the journals selected for analysis are Chinese journals with an ISSN and a CN (Chinese standard serial number). The publication cycle and impact factor of these journals were retrieved from the *Chinese Periodicals Network* and *Chinese Journal Citation Reports* that are published each year by the Institute of Scientific and Technical Information of China. The journals were classified as quarterly, bimonthly, monthly, or semi-monthly. Most of the journals are published bimonthly or monthly.

For all of the journals, the impact factor in 2004 was obtained from the *Chinese Journal Citation Report* published in 2005. Any changes in the publication cycle since 2002 were determined from the *Chinese Periodicals*

**Table 1** Chinese medical journals with an impact factor greater than 1.0 in 2004

Publication cycle	Number	Impact factor	
		Mean $\pm$ SD	Range
Quarterly (n=50)	1	$0.337 \pm 0.234$	1.076 - 0.012
Bimonthly (n=200)	7	$0.386 \pm 0.256$	1.250 - 0.008
Monthly (n=118)	17	$0.569 \pm 0.405$	2.134 - 0.052
Semi-monthly (n=12)	1	$0.517 \pm 0.339$	1.147 - 0.071

Comparison between quarterly and bimonthly  $u=1.296$ ,  $P > 0.05$ .

Comparison between quarterly and monthly:  $u=4.659$ ,  $P < 0.01$ .

Comparison between bimonthly and monthly:  $u=4.410$ ,  $P < 0.01$ .

**Table 2** Chinese medical journals with the highest impact factors

Journal	Impact factor	Publication cycle
Chinese Journal of Tuberculosis and Respiratory Diseases	2.134	Monthly
International Chinese Journal of Digestology	1.769	Monthly
Chinese Journal of Orthopaedics Trauma	1.563	Monthly
Chinese Journal of Nursing	1.499	Monthly
Chinese Journal of Nosocomiology	1.410	Monthly
Chinese Journal of Digestion	1.315	Monthly
Chinese Journal of Pediatrics	1.310	Monthly
Chinese Journal of Hepatology	1.301	Monthly
Chinese Journal of Internal Medicine	1.298	Monthly
Chinese Journal of Radiology	1.290	Monthly
Chinese Journal of Hospital Administration	1.289	Monthly
Chinese Journal of Burns	1.250	Bimonthly
Chinese Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology	1.237	Monthly
Chinese Journal of Laboratory Medicine	1.215	Monthly
Chinese Journal of Infectious Diseases	1.190	Bimonthly
Chinese Journal of Orthopaedics	1.165	Monthly
Chinese Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine	1.160	Bimonthly
Chinese Journal of Neurology	1.152	Bimonthly
Chinese Journal of Practical Nursing	1.147	Monthly
Chinese Journal of Cardiology	1.126	Monthly

Network database. The impact factors of every journal before and after any changes in the publication cycle were obtained from *Chinese Journal Citation Reports*, and any effects of publication cycle changes on impact factor were determined.

We controlled for the effects of academic quality on impact factor by selecting only journals endorsed by the Chinese Medical Association (these are perceived to be

of higher academic quality than other journals in their corresponding fields). Data were analysed statistically by the *u* test and matched *t* test.

## Results

The mean impact factor for the 380 medical journals in the 2004 was 0.440. Impact factors and the numbers of journals with an impact factor of >1.000 according to publication cycle are given in table 1. It shows that there were 26 medical journals with an impact factor >1.0 in China, and that most of these were monthly and bimonthly journals; fewer were published quarterly and semi-monthly.

Also, the standard deviation of the impact factor for quarterly and bimonthly journals was smaller than that of monthly and semi-monthly journals, reflecting the larger range of impact factors in those journal publishing more frequently.

The 20 journals having the highest impact factors are shown in table 2. Of these, 16 (80%) were published monthly and the remainder bimonthly; there were no quarterly or semi-monthly journals in this group.

There was a statistically significant difference between the mean of the impact factors of journals with quarterly and bimonthly publication cycles compared with those with monthly publishing cycles ( $P < 0.01$  for each comparison), but there was no significant difference between journals with quarterly and bimonthly, or monthly and semi-monthly publication cycles. Between 2002 and 2004 the publication cycle of some journals was shortened. Changes in the impact factor over this period are shown in table 3; interestingly, these results are similar to those shown in table 1. Impact factor appeared to increase when journals changed from quarterly to monthly publication, but the impact factor of journals published semi-monthly was a little lower than those published monthly; however, there was no statistically significant difference.

Impact factors for journals associated with the Chinese Medical Association are shown in table 4. The impact factor of most of the journals that changed their publication cycle during the three years examined increased after the publication cycle was shortened ( $P < 0.05$ ,  $P < 0.002$ , and  $P < 0.005$  in 2002, 2003, and 2004, respectively),

## Discussion

A shorter publication cycle appears to be associated with a higher impact factor for journals with quarterly, bi-monthly

**Table 3** Changes of impact factor after shortening of publication cycle

Year of shortening of publication cycle	Number (%) of journals with increase in impact factor	Significance*		
		Mean $\pm$ SD	t	P value
2002 (n=21)	14 (67)	0.099 $\pm$ 0.194	2.143	<0.05
2003 (n=40)	31 (78)	0.110 $\pm$ 0.201	3.469	<0.002
2004 (n=29)	26 (90)	0.149 $\pm$ 0.256	3.170	<0.005

\*Matched *t* test, significance test on changes of impact factor before and after the change in publication cycle.

**Table 4** Impact factors of journals attached to Chinese Medical Association

Publication cycle	Impact factor (mean $\pm$ SD)
Quarterly (n=4)	0.741 $\pm$ 0.162
Bimonthly (n=23)	0.756 $\pm$ 0.303
Monthly (n=32)	0.989 $\pm$ 0.408
Semi-monthly (n=2)	0.956 $\pm$ 0.006

Difference between bimonthly and monthly journals (matched *t* test),  $P < 0.05$ . Difference between quarterly and bimonthly, monthly, semi-monthly journals, not significant.

and monthly publication cycles. Journals with a monthly publication cycle have the highest impact factor. Journals that published semi-monthly, had a mean impact factor similar to the quarterly and bi-monthly journals. The results suggest that journals with shorter publication cycles could achieve a higher impact factor more easily than those publishing less frequently.

The larger range of impact factors in journals publishing more frequently could suggest an "exhaustion" of publishable articles in some journals with shorter publication cycles, which in turn might lead to acceptance of more articles of lower quality, with a consequent decrease in impact factor. The mean impact factor for journals published semi-monthly was lower than that of journals published monthly, suggesting that a more serious exhaustion of articles.

All 11 journals with the highest impact factor (table 2) were monthly, and 17 of the 20 are attached to the Chinese Medical Association.

Taken together these things suggest that publishing monthly is the most effective way of improving the impact factor in the present conditions in China, and that it is not judicious to use a longer publication cycle or to change to semi-monthly publication blindly. The journals attached to the Chinese Medical Association had much higher authority among Chinese medical journals. The increase in impact factor after the publication cycle was shortened (table 4) strongly suggests that shortening the publication cycle could, under general conditions, improve the impact factor.

### Conclusions

From the above analysis we can draw the following conclusions: (i) shortening the publication cycle correctly can improve the impact factor of a journal; (ii) shortening

the publication cycle blindly or excessively can lead to a decrease in impact factor; (iii) shortening the publication cycle excessively may improve the impact factor, but can lead to a decrease in impact factor due to the decline in overall academic quality of articles available for publication Liu XL has published on scientific and feasible measures with which to control the publication cycle.<sup>11</sup>

We suggest that under the conditions of having a sufficient number of articles of high quality, the impact factor can be improved by shortening the publication cycle. But if these conditions are not met, then it is unwise to shorten the publication cycle as this may result in a decrease in the impact factor due to the necessity of publishing articles of lower academic quality.

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## Viewpoints

### OJS and OCS: upgrading journals, conferences, and scholarly communications to Open Access

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Open-access (OA) literature is digital, online, free of charge, and mostly free of copyright and licensing restrictions.<sup>1</sup>

To publish e-journals on the world wide web, editorial workflow needs to be managed through some automation. OJS (Open Journal Systems) is the most used tool for the creation of e-journals.<sup>2</sup>

#### Using OJS

OJS is a web-based, open source software application for journal management and publishing. It improves visibility and accessibility on the web, by search engines and OAI-PMH service providers. OJS was designed and developed by the Public Knowledge Project (PKP) to reduce the time and energy spent on the editorial and publishing process. OJS allows the definition of different access roles: user, subscriber, author, reviewer, editor, or publisher, for access to published items, the editing workflow, and the site's back-office.

The software is compliant with the open access protocol (OAI-PMH)<sup>3</sup> and the LOCKSS<sup>4</sup> initiative, assuring the largest diffusion and easiest preservation of digital copies. Also, OJS manages descriptive journal pages (such as organization, scientific committee, editorial board, editors, policies, sections) with a multi-lingual interface. Authors can submit their proposals using an automatized peer-review process. The system can handle various file formats, manage subscriptions, and report usage statistics.

As announced by John Willinsky at the first International PKP Scholarly Publishing Conference (Vancouver, 11–13 July 2007), as of July 2007, 1000 journals around the world were using OJS.<sup>5</sup>

Among OJS users, 99% are academic journals, of which 49% are fully open access, 40% have delayed open access, and 11% are waiting for their first issue.<sup>6</sup> None of the journals using OJS was found to be entirely subscription-bound. The distribution of OJS journals by discipline is shown in the table.

OJS management systems are structured around the traditional journal workflow required to move a submission through reviewing, and if it is accepted, through editing and publishing, with records maintained of who is doing what and when (figure). It uses roles to organize activities and spaces within the journal's management and publishing website. The users of the software can have more than one role at the same time (Journal Manager and Editor, for example), while different users can share the same roles (a team of six Editors, for example).

#### Roles in the publishing workflow:

- The journal manager sets up the journal by filling in templates and checking options; manages users, assigns roles; manages reading tools, indexing, preparing emails templates.
- Editors can assign one or more editors or a section editors to submissions; oversee editorial process and decisions; assemble and publish issues.
- Section editors manage the peer review process and make editorial decision for submissions, in consultation with the Editor.
- The subscription manager sets up different types of subscriptions and manages the subscription process.

OJS allows for the establishment of additional roles, based on traditional journal editing processes, with Layout Editor, for example, laying out PDF and/or HTML of published version of articles.<sup>7,8</sup>

#### Open Conference Systems

Conference papers and presentations often disappear without being published in any form. Open Conference Systems (OCS), developed by the PKP,<sup>2</sup> is an open source web publishing tool that creates a complete web presence for a scholarly conference, allowing conference organizers to compose and send a call for papers, electronically accept submitted papers and abstracts, register participants, and manage the whole conference.

Version 2.0, recently released, also makes it easy to manage conferences that recur (annual conferences, for example), and it allows credit card payment for registrations. In this version the code was fully re-engineered to make it more customizable, scalable, and secure.

OCS was also designed for building multi-lingual sites and enhancing the impact of conference proceedings in a searchable format by the use of OAI-PMH.

Since 2003, CILEA (a non-profit consortium of Italian universities) has managed the AePIC service, providing innovative solutions for electronic publishing and digital

**Table** Journals using Open Journal Systems, by discipline

Discipline	Percentage
Sciences	50
Social sciences	23
Humanities	14
Interdisciplinary	12
Non-academic	1

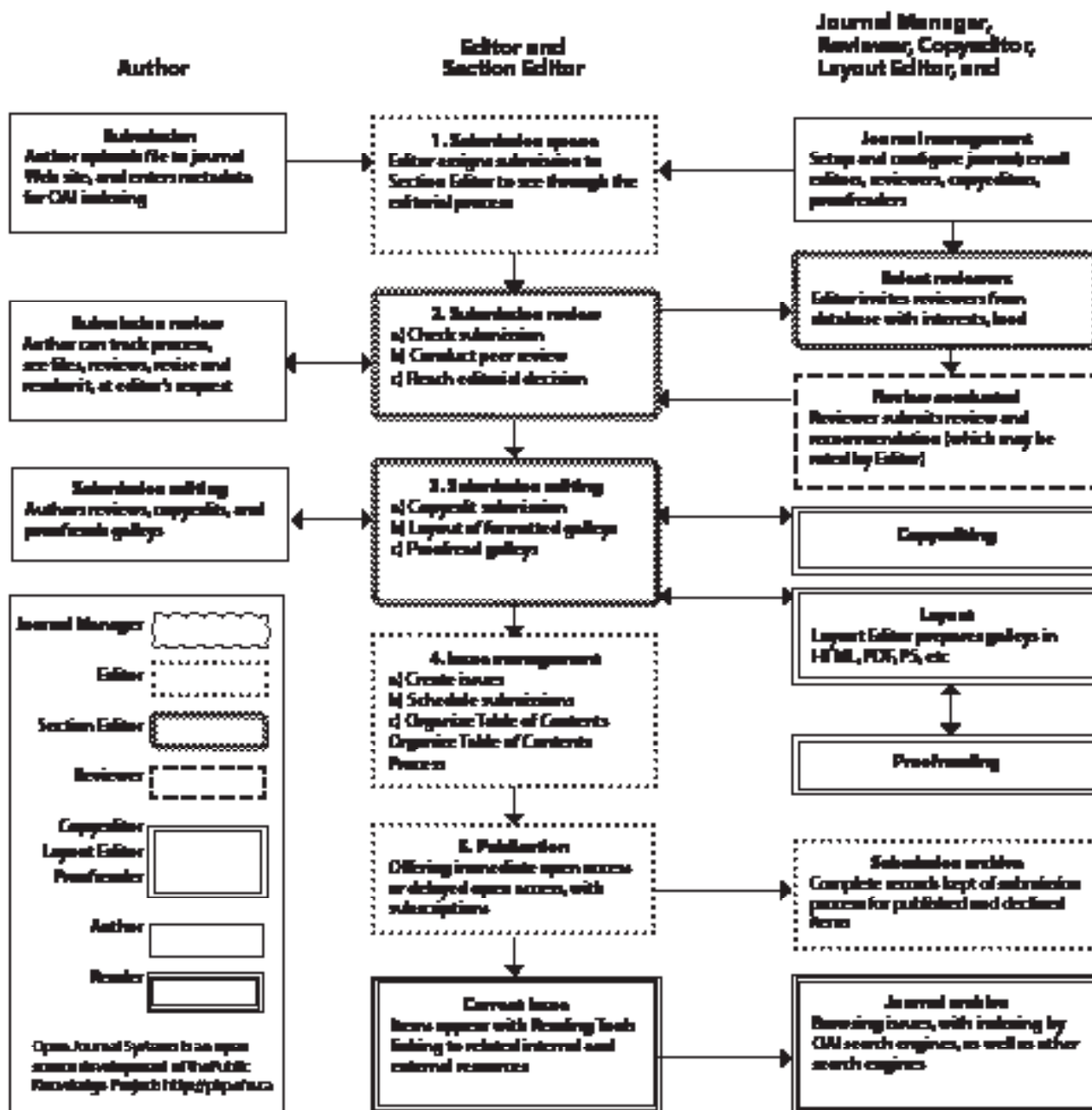


Figure Open Journal Systems workflow

libraries, employing open-source and OAI-PMH-compliant software. AePIC<sup>9</sup> is involved in both OCS and OJS communities, developing significant parts of code, translating user and administrative interfaces into Italian, and fixing software bugs.

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## Our culture is changing rapidly, and so is the culture of science editing

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### ICT developments: breaking the terms of an order

In almost every sector of contemporary life, impressive developments in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) are generating a subtle and dangerous imbalance between the concrete opportunity they offer and people's capacity for keeping pace with such high speed changes.

By "people" we mean the great part of the general population, who are daily confronted with technological devices which offer an increasingly widening variety of high-tech features that are often so complicated to learn that they end up being totally disregarded. Just think of the new mobile phones providing a number of multimedia features not actually used by many owners; of computers, videocameras, gadgets, and systems that are more and more complex and accompanied by manuals of several hundred pages. It is not difficult to understand why technology is generally blamed for adding complexity to our simple everyday life.

This imbalance also occurs in science editing, where all the actors of the scientific publication process (authors, editors, indexers, and readers) are dealing—and sometimes struggling—with innovative, appealing facilities; new perspectives; and possibilities never dreamt of before, which need to be thoughtfully and carefully understood and managed in order to be used properly.

### New rules, new roles

What is undeniable is that ICT developments have caused an important change in the culture of editing, which is reflected in each of its areas and in each step of the publication process. Authors are becoming desktop wizards; editors are taking advantage of all sorts of computerised systems and *ad hoc* software to ease their tasks; readers are provided with electronic publishing, powerful online information retrieval systems, free full texts, open repositories, multimedia features (podcasts, tutorials, etc); librarians are adjusting to the user's needs and are becoming information specialists; and so on.

This overlapping of roles not specifically claimed by anyone, which at the beginning passed almost unnoticed, became in a short time a *de facto* standard for managing the publication process also. Multitasking skills and capabilities are useful to everyone in today's society, but they are mandatory for science authors.

Before writing their paper, authors need to check the existing literature and to retrieve information from bibliographic databases with complex extended searching functions, which implies they have to know how to use the many services and functionalities they provide (authors *vs* information specialists).

To produce illustrations (graphs, diagrams, charts, figures, photographic images), they should be able to use

software applications to save files, export files in vector digital format, scan digitally enhanced images, and most of all to understand the sections of the Instructions to Authors concerning illustrative material that should better be addressed to Computer Graphics Professionals (authors *vs* IT professionals).

To insert their published article in open access institutional repositories, science authors are often required to use standards for the interchange of metadata such as the Extensible Markup Language (XML), which are not so user-friendly (authors *vs* librarians).

The new technologies, as highly complex as they may be, can indeed help to simplify the life and work of those who use them wisely, and to produce radical changes of attitudes and behaviour. Just think of "googling", the international phenomenon that now seems to dominate our lives, both at work and at home. We use search engines to ask any sort of question and we are never really disappointed, because we always receive a prompt and generally satisfying reply to our information needs, together with hints for further research. Using the internet and its different network tools (blogs, repositories, personal pages, discussion lists, etc) we are unconsciously creating new "folksonomies", which are defined in Wikipedia (another revolutionary example of web democracy) as "user generated taxonomy used to categorise and retrieve web content" and which upset the traditional concept of taxonomy leading most research in the past centuries.

### Beyond traditional boundaries

Could technological innovations be held solely responsible for the changes occurring in the culture of science editing, or are there any other influential factors?

The culture of science editing is improving due to a combination of social, behavioural, ethical, and historical factors characterizing these last decades and which should be thoroughly considered in evaluating the scenario as a whole. We mention just a few of them here.

Health has been recognised by the World Health Organization as having a fundamental social dimension. It has become "a state of complete physical, mental and *social* well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity". The strong demand of the general population for adequate health services and information is leading to the development of dynamic, proactive health systems, user-friendly databases, and other integrated, internet-based facilities. Fighting inequalities is no longer applicable to socio-economic dynamics but to the treatment of diseases and allocation of health funds.

The new generations are developing impressive multitasking capacities, especially in retrieving information, which has been considered as an essential tool for the mastery of everyday life. Information retrieval is evolving

rapidly, thanks both to the opportunities offered by new powerful database systems, and to theoretical, behavioural, and cognitive studies which are modelling them according to models of natural information seeking behaviour (Everyday Life Information Seeking behaviour; ELIS) such as the “Berry-Picking Model”.<sup>1</sup> If to acquire information in every day life we follow a path which is not static, hierarchical, linear (like the command-language interfaces of old databases) but inherently interactive, flexible, associative, reticular, non-sequential, and net-like, then we are then likely to meet our information needs by following the same patterns when searching the internet.<sup>2</sup>

Growing attention to common values and responsibilities is making ethics one of the most popular disciplines, with its many branches: bio-ethics, gene-ethics, environmental ethics, professional ethics, business ethics, and of course ethics in science editing. The International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICJME) in its latest revision of the *Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals* dedicated a detailed section to “Ethical Considerations in the Conduct and Reporting of Research”.<sup>3</sup> It provides recommendations and guidelines (a code of conduct) for each topic and character involved in the publication process: Authorship and Contributorship, Editorship, Peer Review, Conflicts of Interest, Privacy and Confidentiality, Protection of Human Subjects, and Animals in Research.

With regard to the language of science, researchers today are required to write, read, and fluently speak English to obtain international recognition and participate in the global debate.<sup>4</sup> In fact, the use of a language other than English allows only a partial or fragmented communication in the so called “global village”. Much valuable research that is published in languages other than English cannot be properly spread to the international community, and in scientific conferences those who do not master English will have major difficulties in expressing and sustaining their ideas and taking part in discussions. This predominance of the English language in science editing is but a reflection of what is generally happening in the world of global communication and on the internet as well, where English is unofficially becoming the universal language.

In addition, an ever-increasing (and exasperated) competitiveness in every field of science publishing is

making it shift towards models and behaviours of marketing dynamics: another important change in the culture of science editing. The impact of globalization, however, is to lead to a progressive integration of aspects, factors, policies, cultures, and disciplines, which could ease the flows of information and communication and promote progress and peace and a stronger international cooperation of science and research.

In conclusion, we cannot say what will remain of all these cultural changes in the near future, or how they will affect the future trends of scientific progress, as happens during any revolution. What is certain is that we ourselves are the main actors of this Copernican revolution which is placing each one of us in the center of the system. You can see yourself mirrored in the cover of the issue dedicated by *Time* to the Person of the Year 2007. “It’s a story about community and collaboration on a scale never seen before. It’s about the cosmic compendium of knowledge . . . It’s about the many wresting power from the few and helping one another for nothing and how that will not only change the world, but also change the way the world changes.”<sup>5</sup>

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## Editing around the World

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### Biomedical scientific publishing – the modern conquest of Scandinavian Vikings

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If the phrase “publish or perish” accurately describes how to succeed in science, then the prospects of success for Scandinavian scientists should be excellent. They have a wide choice of esteemed publications to submit their studies to. The number of scientific journals in relation to the number of active scientists is probably one of the highest in the world.

This article examines whether three small countries - Sweden, Norway, and Denmark - can continue to support this large number of science journals, which have to compete with prestigious international publications and open-access databases. The analysis will be limited to traditional biomedical publications, with a focus on clinical medicine. Scientific publishing represents a wide field of topics and complex problems; biomedical journals represent a more homogenous group with regard to their aims audiences, authors, and owners.

#### To be on the list

A representative, although not complete list of Scandinavian scientific biomedical publications is presented in the table. With the exception of the medical association journals, these publications are directed towards an international audience. These journals fulfill the common criteria for being “scientific” as they are peer reviewed, adhere (in varying degrees) to ICMJE guidelines, and are listed by Medline. The target readers/subscribers of these journals are practicing physicians, preferably those working in academic or university settings. The readers of the journal are also its potential contributors.

The need for medical doctors to keep up with medical progress is a longstanding rationale for starting a journal, and it is therefore not surprising that the first scientific publications for physicians were started by medical associations in order to promote continuous medical education of their members. The first was the Danish *Ugeskrift for Læge* (Physicians’ Weekly), founded in 1839. The Norwegian *Tidsskrift for den Norske lægeforening* (Journal of the Norwegian Medical Association) started in 1881, and the Swedish *Läkartidningen* (Physicians’ Journal) began to publish regularly in 1903. These association-owned journals were not strictly scientific journals, as they had the dual purpose of informing the members and publishing medical news and science, but their editors were active in developing international medical publishing and establishing international guidelines for scientific publishing.

Poul Riis, the former editor-in-chief of the Danish *Ugeskrift*, took the initiative in 1978 to create a working group of editors that would propose uniform requirement for

manuscripts submitted to biomedical journals. The group, which established the first common rules, met in Vancouver, hence the “Vancouver group”, a name that has become synonymous with the uniform guidelines for manuscripts and the international group that developed these rules. The original Vancouver guidelines dealt mainly with issues such as formatting of manuscripts and references,<sup>1</sup> but the focus today has shifted to authorship issues. The Vancouver group has evolved into ICMJE (International Council of Medical Journal Editors) and the requirements for manuscripts have become even more detailed and more focused on authorship issues and measures to secure independence from commercial influences.<sup>2</sup>

#### What’s in a name?

The typical Scandinavian biomedical publication is a specialty journal, owned by a learned society and distributed to its members. In contrast with the medical association journals, which publish in the native language only, these journals publish exclusively in English, which has become the lingua franca of scientific publishing in the field of medicine. Scientific journals that do publish in the national language are rare exceptions.

Typical names of Scandinavian journals are “Acta (specialty name) Scandinavica”, or “Scandinavian journal of (specialty name)”. Although independently owned, almost all are published by large international publishers (table). The collaboration with large international publishers has probably facilitated the transition of these journals from Scandinavian to European and international. The transformation has been underlined by the name changes: many journals have dropped the word Scandinavian or Scandinavica. Typical examples are the former *Acta Paediatrica Scandinavica*, now *Acta Paediatrica* and *Scandinavian Journal of Internal Medicine*, which is now *Journal of Internal Medicine*.

But a name change alone may not be sufficient to transform a regional journal to an international journal, and the name change has been followed by collaboration with equivalent academic societies outside of Scandinavia or by incorporating these societies into the original Scandinavian ones. These collaborative efforts have increased the number of subscribers and widened the group of contributors.

An even closer collaboration – a merger with successful international competitors – has been taken by some journals, such as the former *Scandinavian Surgical Journal* which has merged with the *British Journal of Surgery*. This publication now encompasses a number of previously national surgical journals. *International Journal of Audiology* is also the result of several mergers.

**Table** Who's who in Scandinavian publishing: journals and publishers

<b>Publisher and journal</b>	<b>ISSN (print)</b>	<b>ISSN (online)</b>
<b>Taylor &amp; Francis:</b>		
Acta Borealia	0800-3831	1503-111X
Acta Obstetrica et Gynecologica Scandinavica	0001-6349	1600-0412
Acta Odontologica Scandinavica	0001-6357	1502-3850
Acta Oncologica	0284-186X	1651-226X
Acta Oto-Laryngologica	0001-6489	1651-2553
Acta Radiologica	0284-1851	1600-0455
International Journal of Audiology	1499-2027	
Scandinavian Cardiovascular Journal	1401-7431	1651-2006
Scandinavian Journal of Clinical & Laboratory Investigation	0036-5513	1502-7686
Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research	1501-7419	
Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research	0031-3831	
Scandinavian Journal of Food and Nutrition	1748-2976	1748-2984
Scandinavian Journal of Gastroenterology	0036-5521	1502-7708
Scandinavian Journal of Infectious Diseases	0036-5548	
Scandinavian Journal of Occupational Therapy	1103-8128	1651-2014
Scandinavian Journal of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery and Hand Surgery	0284-4311	
Scandinavian Journal of Primary Health Care	0281-3432	1502-7724
Scandinavian Journal of Public Health	1403-4948	1651-1905
Scandinavian Journal of Rheumatology	0300-9742	1502-7732
Scandinavian Journal of Urology and Nephrology	0036-5599	1651-2065
<b>Blackwell:</b>		
Acta Anaesthesiologica Scandinavica	0001-5172	1399-6576
Acta Neurologica Scandinavica	0001-6314	1600-0404
Acta Ophthalmologica Scandinavica	1395-3907	1600-0420
Acta Pædiatrica	0803-5253	1651-2227
Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica	0001-690X	1600-0447
Scandinavian Journal of Immunology	0300-9475	1365-3083
Scandinavian Journal of Medicine & Science in Sports	0905-7188	1600-0838
Journal of Internal Medicine	0954-6820	1365-2796
<b>John Wiley &amp; Son:</b>		
British Journal of Surgery	0007-1323	1365-2168
Genes, Chromosomes and Cancer	1045-2257	1098-2264
<b>Oxford University Press:</b>		
European Journal of Public Health	1101-1262	1464-360X
<b>Independently published:</b>		
Acta Dermato-Venereologica	0001-5555	
Acta Orthopaedica	1745-3674	1745-3682
Journal of Rehabilitation Medicine	1650-1977	
<b>Independently published medical association journals:</b>		
Ugeskrift for læger	0041-5782	
Tidsskrift for den Norske lægeforening	0029-2001	
Läkartidningen	0023-7205	

**A bright future?**

Can collaboration and mergers secure the future of the many Scandinavian journals?

Rising costs of publication and competition from open access databases increases subscription fees and decreases the number of individual subscribers. In addition, the low impact factors of small journals make authors submit their best manuscripts elsewhere, which tends to create a vicious spiral of declining number of manuscripts, and particularly of high-quality submissions.

A survey sent to 12 Scandinavian specialty journals in April 2007 asked their editors to rank their editorial priorities and concerns from a list of topics. The list included economy, the number and quality of submissions, impact factors, and future plans such as mergers with other journals and switch to open access electronic editions. One commonly mentioned concern was a declining number of individual subscribers, a problem that most journals tried to tackle by cooperation and alliances with academic societies outside of Scandinavia and Europe. Another concern was insufficient number of high quality

submissions, a problem that most editors felt could be met by a switch to open access and the consequent increase in readership and citations.

To introduce open access online editions was by far the most common editorial plan. Editors thought this was the best way to increase the impact factor and attract more high quality manuscripts. The plans about open access were not shared by the publishers, who felt that free online editions were undermining the economy and hurting subscriptions, which for many journals are the main source of income.

The name changes and mergers that have taken place in recent years have made it increasingly difficult to define what is really a Scandinavian scientific journal. Should "Scandinavian" be based on the location of the editorial office, the country where the majority of subscribers or readers reside, or where learned society that owns the journal is located? *Journal of Internal Medicine*, which has its editorial office in Stockholm and most of its subscribers in Scandinavia, could still be counted as a Scandinavian

journal. *Genes, Chromosomes and Cancer*, founded and edited by a Scandinavian scientist but published by Wiley and with an international readership and international editorial board, is more difficult to assign. Historical reasons may sometimes be important for classifying a journal.

What is the outlook for Scandinavian scientific publishing? The surveyed editors are optimistic about the rising impact factors of their journals, largely content with the number of submissions, and feel that their economy is sound at least in the short term. At least in the field of biomedicine, the prospects look good.

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## EASE and ESOF2008

The EuroScience Open Forum (ESOF) is an open platform for debate and communication for the science community of Europe and the world promoted by Euroscience. It presents and profiles Europe's leading research trends in the sciences, humanities, and social sciences. By bringing together researchers across disciplines and from all around Europe, Euroscience has created ESOF to promote the European Research Area (ERA). ESOF also encourages the young people of Europe to consider and develop careers in science, technology, and the humanities (see [www.esof2008.org](http://www.esof2008.org)).

The EuroScience Open Forum (ESOF2008) this year is being held in Barcelona from 18-22 July. Council decided that it would be good if EASE could take part and a proposal was submitted last year.

The proposed activity comes into the Outreach Activity of ESOF's categories. It is divided into three sessions: a scientific seminar; a practical session (Hands on Writing); and an Open Doors careers session with experienced editors.

The objectives are:

1. Open the doors of the editing process to young scientists
2. Provide some useful tips on how to prepare a scientific article for publication
3. Explore new trends in science publishing
4. Suggest career alternatives for graduates
5. Engage the active participation of young researchers
6. Create a forum for discussion of questions dealing with scientific outputs and communication

We are delighted to say that our proposal has been accepted and we look forward to an exciting day which we hope many of you will be able to attend.

... and EASE's next Annual General Meeting

During ESOF2008, EASE will be holding its Annual General Meeting, the date of which will be fixed when we have been given the date for our proposed activities. Final details will appear in the May issue of ESE. Another incentive to come to ESOF2008!



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## Reports of Meetings

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### Research integrity and the role of journals

*First World Conference on Research Integrity, Lisbon (Portugal), 16–19 September 2007*

Plagiarism, fraud, fabrication, and data omission were the subjects of the First World Congress on Research Integrity. The European Science Foundation (ESF) and the US Office of Research Integrity (ORI), in collaboration with several other institutions, organized this conference. Although ORI's Nick Steneck reported that peer review conferences triggered interest in misconduct, this first congress is still at the leading edge, with one of the aims being to find out where we should go from here. The direction of the congress was indicated by an Unofficial Report on Best Practices for Ensuring Scientific Integrity and Preventing Misconduct, submitted to this First World Congress by the OECD Global Science Forum ([www.oecd.org/dataoecd/1/26/14116226.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/1/26/14116226.pdf)).

Right at the conference opening, ESF's Tony Mayer stressed the importance of publications when he stated that publication is the common currency of research. Or, in the words of Michael Farthing (one of the founders of the Committee On Publication Ethics, COPE): publication is an integral part of the research process. In the final discussion, peer review was yet again a major topic, when it was argued that young peer reviewers provide better quality than the "old boys". But these young reviewers are not rewarded, because their contribution is not acknowledged. Sometimes established reviewers outsource their review to young colleagues, without giving them the credit for it. The peer review system has also come under scrutiny as more cases are reported of reviewers using ideas and information from reviewed papers without acknowledging their origin. The US National Science Foundation (to give but one example) is extremely keen on identifying plagiarism in the grant review process.

Misconduct might cover both the more limited view that focuses on plagiarism, fraud, and fabrication, and the broader view that includes questionable research practices. The common view is that misconduct in all its varieties is rather rare. That certainly seems to be true for conspicuous cases of misconduct. But there are indications that at a more mundane level, plagiarism, fraud, and fabrication are more common than is generally assumed. The number of cases investigated at the German Research Council (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft; 300 inquiries per year) and the US National Institutes of Health (some 200 allegations per year) is relatively small, but in absolute numbers this is not at all insignificant. Research on research integrity provides evidence that the frequency of misconduct is 0.1–1.0% (with 20 cases per year in the USA and 10 in the EU), but most misconduct goes undetected. Questionable research practices may occur at a rate of 10–50%. An important research question is the motivation for deviant behaviour.

#### Why do we misbehave?

Is fraud an exception to the rule of honesty? Alex Quintanilha (Institute for Molecular and Cell Biology, Porto, Portugal) revealed that about one third of American college students cheat at examinations. His solution lies in providing codes of good practice.

Brian Martinson (HealthPartners Research Foundation, Minneapolis, USA) reported that in a self-report questionnaire, 10–15% of scientists admitted that they cut corners. And when you see everyone in your profession cutting corners, how long can you maintain your own integrity? Such questions are in the fields of psychology and sociology, but social sciences were underrepresented at this conference and ethicists were absent.

Gün Semin (Free University of Amsterdam, Netherlands) noted that behavioural sciences suffer from a lack of open access to research data. He pleaded for an interagency data centre. But even among researchers who agree to submit their data to an open access repository, only 27% actually do so, and only 11% make data available to other researchers on first request.

Several speakers mentioned the risks of cooperation between universities and private companies, especially the pharmaceutical industry. Clinical trials represent an example of a diffuse boundary between infringements on ethical rules and research misconduct when reporting results may range from selective representation to withholding information and outright data manipulation. Tim Hunt (Cancer Research UK and European Molecular Biology Organization) put it boldly: public funds go in, but what comes out is not cure but patents (without the *i*, indeed). Joao Lobo Antunes (Hospital de Santa Maria, Lisbon, Portugal) later added that industrial support for US biomedical research rose from 30% in 1980 to 62% in 2000. Guitelle Baghdadi-Sabeti (World Health Organization, Geneva, Switzerland) showed how all stages of the development and marketing of medicines may be subject to unethical practices, irrespective of the development status of the countries involved. Ayse Erzan (Istanbul Technical University, Turkey) identified secret research pertaining to state security as a major risk to research integrity.

In assessing the seriousness of this situation, one has to admit that pathological cases will always occur, also in science. Scientists are human beings, subject to the same temptations and pressures that many people in all walks of life are prone to use as an excuse for being slightly easygoing with the truth. But is the huge pressure really an excuse? And are cultural differences sometimes invoked to explain cases of less serious misconduct, to smooth over such behaviour?

### Misconduct in publications

In the session on “Integrity in publication”, Anthony Komaroff (Harvard Medical School, Boston, USA) pointed out that public support requires public understanding, but the public is confused by contradictory information. However, contradictory results are inevitable and essential for scientific progress. Limitations of research should be reported more extensively, in his view.

Philip Campbell (Nature, London, UK) expected a change of landscape when electronic lab notebooks will be deposited for scrutiny. *Nature* at least will occasionally ask a co-author to check the raw data. Campbell encourages that co-authors increasingly specify their individual contributions and responsibilities for a research report.

Retracted papers, even the widely publicized fraudulent publications, keep being quoted, according to Antunes. For the years 2000–2002 PubMed mentions 78 retracted papers, which is 0.02% of the total number. In the discussion following this session there was a broad feeling that databases should clearly label retracted papers.

Sabine Kleinert (The Lancet, London, UK, and COPE) mentioned 67 retractions in PubMed in 2005 and 97 in 2006, not all of them for unethical matters. COPE grades types of misconduct from serious to minor. A total of 285 cases have been brought to COPE’s attention since 1996, 60% pre-publication and 33% post-publication. In 2005 COPE issued a Code of Conduct for Editors, followed in 2006–2007 by the COPE flowcharts (see *ESE* 2007;33(2):18).

### Roles of editors and journals

In a consecutive parallel session on the role of editors and journals, Liz Wager (COPE, UK) elaborated on what editors can do: detect research and publication misconduct, prevent publication misconduct, educate authors, promote best practices, and inform authorities and employees. But journals and editors cannot prevent research misconduct, investigate it, or settle disputes. Active organizations in this field are COPE, ICMJE, WAME, and CSE. In the discussion it became clear that the STM group of publishers is also working on a code of practice. WHO has a code for publication practice in the pharmaceutical industry. PubMed has a standard format for the publication of a retraction or an expression of concern by editors. In at least one case, an expression of concern was later retracted.

Katrina Kelner (Science, Washington, USA) reported that the weekly agenda of her journal comprises one or two pages on problem papers. After the Hwang fraud, *Science* has adapted its procedures: certain raw data must now be deposited in a public database (but these suffer from lack of money) or in an online supplement to the paper. Kelner warned that the principal investigator often does not know what research is really going on in the laboratory or the clinic.

Mike Rossner (Rockefeller University Press, New York, USA) then demonstrated how data in images can be manipulated. Such manipulation is done in most cases without any unethical intent, but this still affects integrity. The key question is: does the presentation of data accurately

reflect the observations? In about 25% of manuscripts accepted by the *Journal of Cell Biology*, the images do not meet the journal’s criteria. Such image manipulation may be detected by changing the contrast or brightness of submitted images. There are now guidelines for handling digital images. Rossner feels that while editors should apply standards, they should not be the ones to develop them. Guidelines for editors should be (or should be made) simple, practical, and enforceable.

### Roles of publishers, funders, and research institutions

The second parallel session on publication started with a contribution by COPE founder Michael Farthing (University of London, UK). Key institutional responsibilities are a code of conduct; education and training (who is an author; the pharmaceutical industry is very relaxed in this matter); a policy for breach of conduct (in both research and reporting); a policy for inter-institutional relationships; and monitoring and audit.

Chris Graf (Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford, UK) presented the Blackwell guidelines that were recently introduced (and which also incorporate the COPE flowcharts) (see *ESE* 2007;33(2):60). Some of these guidelines are included in templates for online submission to Wiley-Blackwell journals. Elsevier and Taylor & Francis also have guidelines for dealing with questionable practices.

Peer review (both for manuscripts and for grant applications) can sometimes detect misconduct, but this is not its primary role, stressed Peteris Zilgavis (European Commission, Brussels, Belgium).

In the discussion in this session, it was stated that open review does not necessarily produce better reviews than masked review, but from the viewpoint of ethics and transparency open review is a step forward. Guidance for reviewers must point out the ethical issues reviewers might face. Some publishers audit what editors do; Wiley-Blackwell will ask when they last updated their instructions to authors. Instructions to authors should include guidelines on image manipulation and on retraction. However, many editors fear that department heads will not respond when suspected cases of misconduct are brought to their attention. The magic phrase to get officials moving is that “we have sought advice from” a third party (such as COPE).

### Challenges faced by smaller journals

The third parallel session on publication had its emphasis on smaller journals and models for cooperation. Editorial sisters Annette Flanagan (JAMA, Chicago, USA) and Muza Gondwe (Malawi Medical Journal, Blantyre, Malawi) presented the African Journal Partnership Project, which links four African journals to British and American journals. Herbert Stegemann (Asociación de Editores de Revistas Biomédicas Venezolanas, Caracas, Venezuela) described the cooperation of 60 (!) Venezuelan biomedical journals. But interesting as these contributions were, they had little to say about research integrity.

Ana Marusic (Croatian Medical Journal, Zagreb, Croatia, and Council of Science Editors, USA) talked about education for responsible publication. Essentially, small journals with low visibility, untrained editors, and a lack of competent researchers and reviewers tend to be locked in a vicious circle where ethical standards are also low. Still, editors do have some strengths: authority in the scientific community, editorial independence, expertise in research integrity issues, responsibility for the integrity of the published record, and the power to formulate and implement editorial policies. The way forward for editors is to learn, to be informed, and to educate their authors and reviewers.

### What journals and editors can do

Several actions pertain to scientific journals. Clearer rules and statements on co-authorship responsibility are needed. One option is to explicitly state a principal investigator's responsibility for a paper's entire veracity, or to identify a core group among the authors to bear such responsibility (see also the editorial in *Nature* 2007;450:1). Technical tools to detect and combat plagiarism and image manipulation are becoming increasingly available and should be used widely as their user-friendliness grows. An important development will be the establishment of public digital repositories for primary research data with links to the published articles. In the USA, an Inter Agency Working Group on Digital Data has been set up to propose such a repository system. In Europe, an Alliance for Permanent Access to the Digital Records of Science has been created by major stakeholders in science and science information to help establish a European Digital Information Infrastructure.

While the suggestion was made to create an independent authority to which journals could report suspicious cases, it was strongly felt that journals should inform institutions, and the latter should act in the first instance.

### What others can do

Funding agencies, governments, universities, and research institutes are well advised to review some of their rules for funding research and for academic careers. Currently, there is much pressure especially on young scientists to produce papers or to meet other quantitative targets. It would seem possible to maintain an emphasis on quality and at the same time relax some of the quantitative requirements. Relating to this, it is interesting to mention that Quintanilha's Institute for Molecular and Cell Biology circumvents impact factors and salami publishing by judging people on the basis of the best five publications in their whole career. This is also fair to women who temporarily quit research to care for their children.

In handling allegations of misconduct in research, universities and research institutes have a key primary role.

It is crucial that universities and research institutes handle misconduct cases more seriously and openly. A balance must be found between a value-based and a compliance-based approach. A value-based perspective is characterized by helping students and researchers to internalize integrity through training, by adopting integrity as a key value in devising rules and procedures for self-regulation, but also by stressing and conveying the positive values of scientific research such as reliability, objectivity, honesty and impartiality. Training in responsible conduct of research is being offered in some institutions.

Salley Rockey (National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, USA) gave the example of Pöhlman, the first scientist who was sentenced to jail because of persistent misconduct, because he "just couldn't figure out a way to stop".

Melissa Anderson (University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, USA) argued that responsible conduct of research is associated with attitude: a collaborative attitude fosters responsible conduct of research, while a competitive attitude is unfavourable. Training programmes should be evaluated and validated for their effect on responsible conduct of research.

It is necessary to complement this value-based approach with a perspective that puts compliance with rules centre stage. In many countries nowadays, bodies have been explicitly sanctioned by governments, funding agencies, or universities to apply definitions, rules, and procedures to deal with allegations of misconduct. The goal is to protect society and to ensure that public money is spent correctly. Several speakers and participants expressed their concern that unjust allegations and too much regulation may hamper research progress, while on the other hand a researcher can still cheat when applying regulations. The right attitude should be developed during apprenticeships.

### Where do we go from here?

The initiative will be taken forward, with a Second World Conference on Research Integrity to take place in Asia before 2010. Integrity in science communication will also be the theme of the next EASE Conference in 2009.

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Extensive parts of this report were plagiarized from the action-oriented summary written by Peter Tindemans, with contributions from Pieter Drenth, Stefan Michalowski, Frederic Sgard, and Ovid Tzeng. The full text of this summary is available from [www.esf.org/fileadmin/be\\_user/activities/research\\_conferences/Docs\\_NEW/2007/2007-242\\_Final\\_Report.pdf](http://www.esf.org/fileadmin/be_user/activities/research_conferences/Docs_NEW/2007/2007-242_Final_Report.pdf).

Liz Wager is gratefully acknowledged for her improvement of a draft of this report.

## Building bridges, constructing networks: METM 2007

*Mediterranean Editors and Translators' Meeting, Madrid, 25–27 October 2007*

The Mediterranean Editors and Translators (MET) held their third annual meeting and general assembly in an attractive venue in Madrid: the Royal Botanic Garden. The meeting was attended by some 80 participants, all of them language consultants working with English, from 14 different countries.

### Prelude

The optional part of the programme started on Thursday, 25 October with a five-hour workshop on corpus-guided editing and translation. The facilitators demonstrated free or inexpensive computer tools for mining field-specific text collections (corpora), explaining the difference between a clean corpus and a “quick-and-dirty” one and showing participants how to build both. The workshop was held in a computer lab to allow hands-on practice with the various tools. The next day was filled with six shorter training workshops on a genre analysis approach to editing research articles in different fields, use of punctuation and information ordering to improve text flow, a systematic approach to communicating with clients, statistics for editors and translators, and principles and strategies for correct citation practices.

The general assembly was itself like a panel discussion, going beyond the usual brief to include progress reports on some ongoing projects within MET: the consolidation of the existing workshop programme with new additions; a pilot study of a model revision-and-review protocol (reflecting European translation standard EN 15083); and a client education document in the form of guidelines that describe the different types of language services offered, the characteristics of a professional language consultant, and what to expect of their services.

### Sessions

On Saturday 27 October, the actual Mediterranean Editors and Translators Meeting took place. This year's theme—Building Bridges, Constructing Networks—can be read as an effort to maintain a stable network of English language consultants offering quality support services in the Mediterranean space, thereby bridging the divide between science and language. The full programme of METM 07 can be found at [www.metmeetings.org/?section=metm07](http://www.metmeetings.org/?section=metm07).

### Computer aid

The first panel session, on computer-aided translation (CAT) and its benefits to freelancers, was especially interesting to translators. Presenting their favourite CAT tools, the four speakers made it clear how much more these tools have to offer than just recycling old translations. Potential advantages included consistency in terminology, quality control features, the possibility of exchanging translation memories with other translators, and working in a team on very big projects.

The second panel discussed a number of useful internet and computer tools for editors and translators. Examples were a tool for using a series of search engines simultaneously; a means to create one's own, field-specific search engine; specialist spell checkers; and much more.

### Language brokers

Ana Moreno, researcher at Madrid's Centre for Information and Scientific Documentation, gave the keynote talk: “Cross-cultural differences and similarities: What do we really know about cultural differences in written communication?”. This is a key topic for “bicultural language brokers”, as the MET audience was referred to by one of the earlier speakers. Ana's research is based on a large, genre-specific corpus of texts by proficient English language writers and a comparable one by writers in another language, a design departure from older studies comparing student work or the work of non-native English speakers writing in English. Her most recent study on critical language in book reviews brought out differences in the respective cultures. Her talk set the stage for a discussion of the implications of these findings for editing and translating texts for an international readership.

### Working the market

The third panel, “Working the market”, was divided into two parts: “Adding scope, breadth and depth to your work” and “Managing your clients: focus on communication”. While editing and translating are the primary language support categories clients request, English language professionals are often asked to add to their basic skills by becoming writing instructors, oral presentation coaches, peer reviewers, desktop publishers, mediators, and more. On the basis of their own experience, the four panel members showed how translating and editing scientific texts can become similar to a peer review process; how you can drive your career as an English language facilitator by the way you structure your website; how a translators' team can grow to become a journal production facility; and where to draw the line between what you should do in addition to your basic skills and when you should stop.

The second part of this session, with a different four-member panel, focused on the relation with the client from a communication and negotiation point of view. The relationship between an in-house language service at a university science department and its freelance translators on the one hand and its internal clients on the other were discussed. Another speaker illustrated the importance of active communication with clients and of requests for feedback from them. Then, the English language consultant working in the Mediterranean area was described as a skilled person working in a seller's market in real need for services. The talk included a number of very useful tips for negotiation—and many colourful illustrations of



Mediterranean market scenes, a few with scribes and their clients.

### **Additionally**

Some of the topics addressed by the poster session were efficient author querying by means of a “problem-solution” structure; a case-control study between Italy and the UK on editorial leadership in biomedical publishing; academic publishing in a global context; and a method of “text-based ethnography” for studying author-editor interaction.

All participants were invited to the closing dinner on Saturday evening in the atrium of the newly refurbished cast iron Atocha railway station: good wine and good food provided an excellent context for consolidating new

contacts. The social programme on Sunday consisted of an excursion to Toledo, once a multilingual, cosmopolitan city and a centre of translation of texts in Arabic to Latin and Spanish that made the 12th-century “Renaissance of the Middle Ages” possible. The MET tour aptly focused on this historic aspect of the city.

Next year’s meeting, METM 08, will be held 11–13 September 2008 at the Medical School of the University of Split, Croatia. The main theme will be Communication Across Disciplines.

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## **From the Literature**

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### **CONSORT for abstracts**

The CONSORT statement, which covers the reporting of randomized clinical trials, has recently been extended to provide guidance about journal and conference abstracts.<sup>1,2</sup> The original CONSORT statement (an updated version of which is due to be published in 2008) gives little guidance about the content of abstracts, but focuses on the body of the paper. However, it is clear that abstracts are often the only text available to doctors working outside academic centres or in resource-poor areas. While, ideally, clinicians should base decisions on reading full papers, we know that abstracts (available on databases such as Medline) may be used to inform clinical decisions and it is therefore important that they contain as much relevant information as possible to enable readers to assess the research. In some cases, studies are never written up in full, so a conference abstract may be the only publicly available record of a trial. CONSORT for abstracts has therefore developed a minimum list of essential items that should be included in an abstract reporting a randomized trial. The list may also be applicable to abstracts reporting other types of research.

The new CONSORT for abstracts was developed after consultation with researchers, editors, and methodologists. Like the main CONSORT statement its recommendations are, as far as possible, based on published evidence about the factors that contribute to high quality reporting. However, the guidelines also recognize that abstracts must be short, so a Delphi panel was used to determine the essential elements for reporting.

CONSORT for abstracts recommends that abstracts should use a structured format, but leaves the choice of

headings to journal editors. Items that should be included are shown in the table. The items have been selected to give readers sufficient information about the design and conduct of studies to enable them to evaluate the results and, in particular, to judge the validity of a clinical trial and the applicability of the results to other clinical settings.

There is considerable evidence that structured abstracts are superior to unstructured ones and that the structured format enables readers to obtain information more easily. Further guidance about the contents of the abstract should optimize the information provided within the space constraints of the abstract format. It should be possible to include all the information recommended in CONSORT for abstracts within an abstract of 300 words. Worked examples of applying the checklist are available on the CONSORT website ([www.consort-statement.org](http://www.consort-statement.org)).

The CONSORT group hopes that editors of biomedical journals will endorse the new guidelines about abstracts in the same way that many have endorsed the original CONSORT statement. We also hope that editors will educate potential authors about the new requirements by adding a reference in their instructions to authors and will perhaps also draw readers’ attention to the checklist via an editorial or commentary.

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## EASE-Forum Digest: October-December 2007

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

### Usefulness of DOIs for journals

Paola De Castro had a question for the forum about the usefulness of the Digital Object Identifier (DOI) system for journals. She had noticed that most journals now use DOIs to identify single articles. By this system a name is allocated to an object, which can be any form of intellectual property expressed in any digital environment. These names have been called "the bar code for intellectual property". They identify a specific object in the digital environment rather than simply the place (URL) where the object is located (<http://www.doi.org/index.html>). Paola wanted to know whether it would be worthwhile paying for DOIs if all journal metadata are archived in open access resources. Ian Russell of the Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers (ALPSP) recommended that journals become members of CrossRef (a registration agency that provides citation-linking services for the scientific publishing sector). The advantage of the DOI system, he explained, was that it allows references to be linked and forward linked.

Paola had also queried the search procedure for a DOI. Colin Bachelor advised that googling with either a PubMed ID (eg 7892223) or a DOI name (eg 10.1039/b411977k) would bring you to a list of URLs, but not directly to the article. But as Sally Morris, also from ALPSP, explained that searching for a DOI name through the DOI resolver (<http://dx.doi.org/>) will bring you straight to the article.

### Mortality or mortality rate?

Richard Hurley is one of the copyeditors on the *BMJ*, which has a hallowed house style. He related the story of a brave epidemiologist who had challenged the *BMJ*'s use (going back at least 20 years and one week), of "mortality" rather than "mortality rate". Richard mused that the reason for the *BMJ*'s use of "mortality" might be that mortality means "death rate" and adding another "rate" would be tautology. The epidemiologist thought that using mortality alone could be ambiguous because it can be confused with the absolute number of deaths. Richard pointed out that many common and medical dictionaries (and Wikipedia) use "mortality rate" (eg *Chambers, The Dictionary of Epidemiology* by James Last, and *Dorlands*, which is the *BMJ*'s preferred medical dictionary). He speculated that "mortality rate" is a double rate because there is a per population part and a per time part.

The gauntlet was taken up by Roderick Hunt who started from first principles:

1. The suffix "-ity" is used to create a noun out of an adjective (source: [www.uefap.com/vocab/build/building.htm](http://www.uefap.com/vocab/build/building.htm)).
2. So, mortal = subject to death and mortality = the state of being subject to death.
3. For a death rate with time, therefore, "mortality rate"

is correct.

4. Any subject area may declare its own illogical shortcuts, but it is polite to recognize them as such and not consider them as new standards.

5. Sometimes common usage creates not shortcuts but "longcuts", eg a "knot" is defined as nautical miles per hour, so the oft-used "rate of knots" is not a speed at all, it is an acceleration.

Hunt's principles 1-4 were acceptable to Hugh de Glanville, but he had a nit to pick on number 5. His understanding of the phrase "at a rate of knots" was that it meant "at a good speed", or even "flat out". There was no implication of acceleration, and when proceeding flat out no further acceleration would, in principle, be possible. (See *New Oxford Dictionary of English* (1998): "Brit informal very fast".)

Further thoughts were added by Norman Grossblatt, with the caveat that it is often not justified to be so precise in a matter of etymology. He went on to argue that if mortality = the state of being subject to death, then mortality rate = the rate of being subject to death, which is meaningless. In reality, one of the common meanings of "mortality" for well over 100 years has been death rate, the ratio of the number of deaths to the number of something else, such as general population. In practice, "mortality" (or "mortality rate") should be defined as it will be used in a given text to specify the denominator. So, the choice of phrase need not cause a problem in any event. He concluded that if statements of mortality (in the sense of a rate) are always accompanied by a "per" qualifier, as they should be, "mortality" is most unlikely to be confused with "absolute number of deaths".

The debate was closed with a message from Judith Baggett's guru Carlo La Vecchia that there's also mortality ratio, or cumulative mortality, so rate is not superfluous.

### Peer reviews of book reviews

Do journals peer review book reviews? Chris Morfey, who edits the *Journal of Sound & Vibration*, was interested to know this as his journal entrusts the commissioning of book reviews to a book reviews editor, whose sole instructions are to avoid publishing anything that is defamatory or gratuitously rude to the author. Chris wondered if other editors solicit independent expert advice on a review before accepting it for publication.

None of the journal editors who responded had book reviews peer reviewed. Editors usually checked reviews for anything untoward and raised any concerns with the author of the review. Nigel Peake, the book editor of *Journal of Fluid Mechanics*, commented that as reviews can be rather dull his journal encouraged reviewers to be more discursive and (possibly) controversial.

Irene Hames found the discussion interesting in the light

of *Nature's* publication of a review of Steven Pinker's book *The Stuff of Thought* in its 1 November 2007 issue, followed by a complaining letter from Pinker in the 6 December issue. The reviewer had failed to mention the book's content and had got two of its main themes backwards. Another correspondent in the issue agreed that the reviewer had given little information about the book, and that what he did give was incorrect. Irene concluded that as book reviews are subjective, opinions will differ, but they ought to be factually correct and comprehensive, and not places for reviewers to expound their own views. Book review editors should spot such problems before publication and as a review in a very high-profile publication will carry a lot of weight, the onus is on publications to get things right. For Pinker, however, she thought the publicity the *Nature* correspondence had generated might mean more people will now buy and read his book.

I put Chris Morfey's question to Ajai Singh, editor of *Mens Sana Monographs*, who had raised a related point on the World Association of Medical Editors (WAME) list-serve. Echoing Will Hughes, who had raised the point that a book review was surely already a peer review in its own right, he felt a book review need not be reviewed unless it was hugely critical, in which case a legal opinion should also be obtained. He suggested that book reviewers should be required to declare conflicts of interest. Most important was that the review should not be a forum for the reviewer's views, unless the reviewer was an expert in the field, when his comments on the issues raised in the book could be valuable for the reader. Ajai advised that the book review editor's decision on whether to accept a review should be based on the principles of accuracy, balance, clarity, how the book forwards future work, and how it gives due credit to the author.

### No, non, none

Non is not a word – or is it? This was the question I asked on the forum. I had seen it written as a stand-alone word (non life-threatening disease) in the *BMJ* (16 June 2007, p 1251). Margaret Cooter immediately replied, expressing embarrassment on behalf of her journal, the *BMJ*. Even in the bad old days when the *BMJ* had a blanket ban on hyphens, the exception was non-words, she said. The consensus from the forum was that “non” is not a stand alone word. The next question then was whether this prefix should be joined to the word it qualifies by a hyphen (non-word) or whether it should be directly attached (nonword). It seems editors spend a lot of time either adding (Marge Berer) or removing (Stuart Handsides) hyphens from text. Sylwia Ufnalska pointed out that the new *Scientific Style and Format* manual (7th edition) from the Council of Science Editors prefers closed up forms (eg cooperation) to hyphenated forms (eg co-operation). But this manual is American and some respondents thought the Americans did not like using hyphens (Margaret and Marge) while another (Stuart) believed US English was more wedded to the hyphen.

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### Discussion initiators

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## Jenny Gretton - honorary member and consultant to Council



Jenny joined EASE in 1984. She realised that steering an international journal safely through the unknown territory of “new technology” she would need contacts with others in the same position, and that the pool of knowledge represented by the members of EASE was too valuable to ignore. Jenny was one of the first to introduce in-house typesetting in “her” journal, the *Journal of Bone & Joint Surgery*, along with computerised manuscript tracking, and the creation of a database of cited references in orthopaedics. Jenny's first talk for EASE, at the EASE/BMJ workshop in 1986, was on coding text for in-house typesetting

Over the years Jenny has been involved in EASE activities in many ways: as a member of Council from 1997 to 2006, as a member of the editorial board of *European Science Editing*, and as a contributor to both the journal and the *Science Editor's Handbook*. As Secretary/Treasurer from 1997 to 2003 she was closely involved with the conferences at Tours and Bath, and as Vice-president, with the conference at Krakow. Even though Jenny is no longer actively involved in Council matters, she still values her contacts and the expert advice available through EASE and ESE. Since retiring she has developed a new interest; she spent her 70th birthday having her first flying lesson. She regards her honorary membership as, indeed, a great honour.

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## Book Reviews

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**By Hook or by Crook: A Journey in Search of English. David Crystal. HarperPress, London, 2007 (ISBN 978-0-07235-58-5). 336p. £16.99.**

David Crystal is well known for his scholarly works, from the research paper to the encyclopaedia, but this book is something rather different. It could be described, with no disrespect, as a trivia trove, a treasury of tasty titbits from the far-flung folk who speak English, in some form or other. It's a journey along a rolling English road that starts with a Scot in Wales, cuts a broad swathe across the English Midlands, with day trips to Barcelona, Amsterdam, and places further afield.

You will search in vain for a mention of the Viking influence in Cumbria, or the Danish influence in Yorkshire, or the differences in usage between nationalist and loyalist in Northern Ireland. Crystal goes where his road takes him, and large areas of England itself are left unvisited and unremarked. As a rather reluctant Brummie, I welcomed his long stay in the Midlands, home to those masters of language Shakespeare and Tolkien. One of his encounters (though not, so to speak, in the flesh) is with that well-known Coventry lass, Geodgifu. No? Maybe you're more familiar with the latinized version, Godiva. Her unclad ride through the town is the stuff of legend – but did you know she's the only woman listed in Domesday Book as a landholder? She has also given her name, unwittingly, to awards, events, an asteroid, and a brand of chocolate. Not bad for a tax protester!

And not bad for Crystal the wordsmith to progress from there through place-names, riddles, spelling, dialects – almost anything that touches on our use of language. Collective nouns (a rash of dermatologists?) and improvised words get an outing. Word games, beloved of the Victorians, including a verse in which the only vowel is *a*, and a novel without words containing *e*. Strange words such as Bovril (based on a made-up word, *vril*, that first appeared in a science fiction novel as a mystical source of energy). The influence of internet communication on our language. American English, Indian English, and the growing use of “European English” as – what? *A lingua franca*?

It is impossible to summarize this book because, really, it's about nothing in particular and everything in general. Everything English, that is. If I had a coffee table, it would live there; you can open it at random and be assured of an interesting find on every page. Crystal leaves to other books the story of how English developed – the great trek from obscure Germanic dialect to global pre-eminence – but along the way he plunders the wagon train and delights us with the spoil. Crystal has the knack of digging beneath the surface and revealing the richness of a language we take for granted.

*Julian Philpot*

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**Scholarly Publishing Practice. Academic journal publishers' policies and practices in online publishing. Second survey, 2005. John & Laura Cox. ALPSP, Worthing, UK, 2006 (ISBN 978-0-907341-32-1). 64 pp. £55 (ALPSP members); £95 (non-members).**

The Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers (ALPSP) surveyed 400 publishers (including all the major academic journal publishers) in 2005 about their online activities. The 174 respondents ranged from organizations publishing 10 or fewer titles (66%) to those publishing over 50 titles (11%). Publishers from the UK and USA predominated (with around 40% of the respondents from each of these countries), with just 10% based in mainland Europe and 11% elsewhere. The majority (75%) were commercial publishers. Just over half (52%) specialized in science, technology and medicine (STM), while 28% focused on the humanities and social sciences.

Over half the publishers (59%) used online submission systems, but the proportion ranged from 55% of the small and medium sized publishers to 91% of the large, commercial publishers. Of those using online submission systems, 40% used their own system, 27% used Manuscript Central, 18% used Editorial Manager, and 13% used Bench>Press.

Almost 90% of the publishers' journals are available online, and this figure has increased from 75% in 2003. However, publishers have adopted a wide range of strategies to fund online access, leading the survey's authors to conclude that “publishers are still experimenting” in this respect. Nearly three-quarters of publishers (73%) offer pay-per-view (for individual articles to non-subscribers), and this proportion had risen from 65% in 2003. Nearly all publishers (91%) make back volumes of their journals available online. Since 2003, when the survey was first performed, there has been a considerable increase in the number of journals that have digitized their entire archive. Eleven publishers offer back volumes starting in the 19th century, and one online archive goes back to 1665.

Worryingly, only 42% of the respondents reported having made formal provision for long-term preservation of their files, although around 80% of the larger organizations (representing the majority of journals) had done so. Of

those publishers with provisions for secure preservation, 33% had made their own arrangements for this, 17% were cooperating with libraries, 20% used JSTOR (the scholarly journal archive), and 9% used open archives or repositories.

Electronic publishing and the open access movement have influenced authors' and research funders' attitudes to copyright ownership. It was therefore interesting to note that the proportion of publishers requiring authors to transfer copyright has fallen from 83% in 2003 to 61% in 2005, with a further 21% requesting copyright transfer but prepared to grant a licence to publish if the author prefers. Remarkably, 3% of the respondents (made up of six small publishers) did not require any written publishing agreement from authors.

There was considerable variation among publishers as to whether they permitted authors to post pre-prints (non-peer-reviewed versions of submitted articles), with 92% of large publishers but only 31% of small publishers allowing this. Commercial publishers were more likely than not-for-profit publishers to allow authors to post pre-prints on non-journal websites (the proportions being 60% and 38%

respectively). Similarly, small publishers and not-for-profit publishers were less likely than large publishers or commercial publishers to permit authors to post accepted or published articles on their own (or institutional) websites or in repositories.

This report highlights some fascinating trends in online journal publishing. Although most scholarly publishers have embraced electronic media and nearly all academic journals have some sort of online presence, this report makes it clear that the rate of adopting many aspects of electronic publishing varies considerably between different publishers. Small publishers, or those considering developments to their online practices, may find this report of interest if they want to find out what other publishers are doing. Journal editors wanting to compare their publisher's performance against the industry as a whole may also find useful ammunition in this book.

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## Correspondence

### IATE: sharing European Union specific terminology in 23 languages

Translation and terminology issues often represent a major obstacle for editors and authors in different fields. IATE, the European database of specific terminology (<http://iate.europa.eu>), can help you solve some of these problems. Its objective is to ensure the quality of written communication in European Union institutions and bodies.

IATE – Inter-Active Terminology for Europe – has been used by EU institutions and agencies since summer 2005 for the collection, dissemination, and shared management of EU-specific terminology. The project was launched in 1999 with the objective of providing a web-based infrastructure for all EU terminology resources, enhancing the availability and standardisation of the information.

IATE incorporates all of the existing terminology databases of the EU's translation services into a single, new, highly interactive and accessible inter-institutional database containing 8.7 million terms, 500,000 abbreviations, and 100,000 phrases. It covers all 23 official EU languages, although the number of terms per language varies according to the length of time each language has been an official EU language.

The figure shows that you can select the source and target languages; choose the domain associated with your query; search by term, abbreviation, or phrase; and select a saved query.

According to the EU press release of 28 June 2007m, "any translator in an EU institution can add and update information in the database. To ensure the quality of the individual contributions, a change in the database automatically launches a validation cycle, whereby terminologists in the translation departments validate new

and modified information."

The main domains covered by IATE are: politics; international relations; European communities; law; economics; trade; finance; social questions (including among others health and medical sciences); education and communication; science; business and competition; employment and working conditions; transport; agriculture, forestry, and fishery; agri-foodstuffs; production; energy; industry; geography; international organizations. Other terminologies currently used in the specific research areas may be added.

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## 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 May issue should be sent to [ese.webwatch@gmail.com](mailto:ese.webwatch@gmail.com). We are also using the Editor's Bookshelf blog at <http://ese-bookshelf.blogspot.com> to collect entries. You can join the blog posters by contacting [paola.decastro@iss.it](mailto:paola.decastro@iss.it). We look forward to your contributions.*

### Check your citations here

<http://www.crossref.org/SimpleTextQuery/>

<http://www.crossref.org/guestquery/>  
CrossRef (all of us who are publishers are members of CrossRef, aren't we?) has a pair of pages for looking up its database of journal articles.

The simple text query web page lets you paste in a reference from a manuscript and fetch the DOI, but the guestquery page is possibly more reliable and lets you specify data like journal title, author names or article title from an otherwise vague citation.

### "Vancouver style" updated

<http://www.icmje.org/index.html>

The "Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals: Writing and Editing for Biomedical Publication" of the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors were updated in October 2007, with new considerations on publication ethics.

### Reporting guidelines for medical research

<http://www.consort-statement.org/index.aspx?o=1011>

<http://www.strobe-statement.org/Checklist.html>

<http://www.consort-statement.org/Initiatives/MOOSE/moose.pdf>

<http://www.equator-network.org/>

The new "Vancouver" standards document mentions some domain-specific initiatives for reporting guidelines: CONSORT is for randomized controlled trials; STROBE is for Strengthening the Reporting of Observational studies in Epidemiology; and MOOSE is for Meta-analyses Of Observational Studies in Epidemiology.

Emerging from all of this work is the EQUATOR network, which is based at the Centre for Statistics

in Medicine in Oxford, which is intended to promote transparent and accurate reporting of health research, mainly by raising awareness.

### Reporting guidelines for biological research

<http://mibbi.sourceforge.net/>

Outside clinical medicine, reporting guidelines are catching on. To make sure that they're not being duplicated, the Minimum Information for Biological and Biomedical Investigations (MIBBI) project has been set up.

My favourite acronym for a set of guidelines is the not-at-all-contrived MISFISHIE, which stands for Minimum Information Specification For In-Situ Hybridization and Immunohistochemistry Experiments.

### Integrity of chemical data

<http://www.rsc.org/Publishing/ReSource/AuthorGuidelines/AuthoringTools/ExperimentalDataChecker/index.asp>

<http://sourceforge.net/projects/checkcml/>

Formal guidelines for reporting data are less common in the physical sciences: the perception among researchers is that a well-conducted experiment or computation will speak for itself. Nevertheless, specific fields have their own conventions for reporting data, and one of the most formulaic is chemical synthesis.

The idea of the Experimental Data Checker, developed at the University of Cambridge and sponsored by the Royal Society of Chemistry, is that you can paste in the data sections from an organic or inorganic chemistry paper and it will look through them for errors. Referees find this particularly useful. If you're feeling brave enough to look at the source code to see how it's done, or indeed to use it for something else, it's on [sourceforge.net](http://sourceforge.net).

### From data integrity to research integrity

<http://ori.hhs.gov/education/products/syracuse/index.shtml>

The United States Office of Research Integrity, which is part of the Department of Health and Human Services has made available a set of 10 short videos from Syracuse University (funded by the ORI). Says the blurb: "When is it appropriate to share data? Are you allowed to share the research protocol with other universities? Under what circumstances is it appropriate to remove lab books from the lab? After viewing each 10 second video, the learners are presented with a question to see what action they would take in response to the situation. Consequences for each action are given to allow users immediate feedback about their decision making process."

### Short URLs you can keep an eye on

<http://qurl.com/>

In the November issue we mentioned [tinyurl](http://tinyurl.com) as a way of shortening long URLs. There's also [qurl.com](http://qurl.com), which allows you to track who's clicking on the short URLs you've created.

### Nature: 138 years of science publication

<http://www.nature.com/nature/history/index.html>

*Nature* has published a web feature about its own history. The interactive part, where people can vote for their favourite or most outrageous article (the infamous "memory of water" paper is listed here) is something of a damp squib – the leading paper had just eight votes as of 14 December.

*Colin Batchelor (compiler)*

Thanks to Paola De Castro, Penny Hubbard, Eleonora Lacorte, Margaret Cooter.



## News Notes

### Science gets new editor

Bruce Alberts, author of the seminal textbook *Molecular Biology of the Cell*, will become editor of the top journal *Science* from March 2008. Alberts is professor of biochemistry and biophysics at the University of California at San Francisco. He is an advocate of international scientific cooperation, and said, "I view *Science* magazine as a critical venue for maintaining the standards of science, as well as for spreading an understanding and appreciation for science around the world." Alberts replaces Donald Kennedy, a biologist and former president of Stanford University in California, who has edited the journal since 2000. The publishers Taylor and Francis have announced the launch of the fifth edition of the 25-year-old *Molecular Biology of the Cell*. (*Nature* 2007;450:1140; doi: 10.1038/4501140e)



### Finland top for school science

Finland has the most able school pupils when it comes to science, followed by Hong Kong and Canada, according to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. Japan, New Zealand, Chinese Taipei, and Estonia also scored highly for science teaching. The United Kingdom dropped to 14th in the world for science in schools, from fourth in 2000. The organisation's three-yearly study – the Programme for International Student Assessment ([www.pisa.oecd.org](http://www.pisa.oecd.org)) – tests the abilities of a sample of 15 year old school pupils in the principal industrialised countries. (*Guardian* 2007 Nov 30; <http://education.guardian.co.uk/newschools/story/0,,2219643,00.html>)

### Medical writers get ethics code

The International Society for Medical Publication Professionals has adopted a code of ethics for medical communicators, publication planners, and other professions. A committee composed of representatives from medical publishing, medical communications agencies, and the drug industry collaborated for more than a year to develop the code. The guidance, at [www.ismpp.org](http://www.ismpp.org), is intended to help members to understand their professional responsibilities, to advance their profession, and to promote quality practices in publishing clinical research. The society is a non-profit-making, voluntary professional membership association that supports medical publishing professionals.

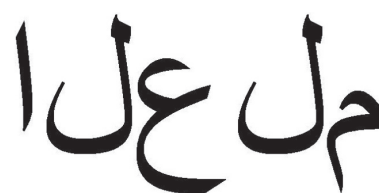
### Spam in decline, Google says

The number of attempts by spammers to send junk messages has become constant and may even be declining for the first time in years. This could be a sign that spammers have been discouraged by Google's spam filters. Other experts disagree with Google, pointing out that overall attempts are rising. Tens of billions of spam messages are estimated to be sent each day – but for most users the amount of spam arriving in their inboxes has not increased, thanks to better filtering. Bill Gates said in 2004 that the problem of spam would be solved by 2006. ([www.wired.com/techbiz/it/news/2007/11/google\\_spam?dm\\_i=183597260](http://www.wired.com/techbiz/it/news/2007/11/google_spam?dm_i=183597260))

### Words of 2007

The *New Oxford American Dictionary* chose the word "locavore" as its "word of 2007." Locavores keep their carbon footprint small by eating locally produced food. Other contenders included "upcycling" – transforming waste into something more useful – and "to tase" – to stun with a Taser. Readers were invited to submit their own suggestions to the blog (*Guardian* 2007 Nov 19; [http://commentisfree.guardian.co.uk/open\\_thread/2007/11/a\\_word\\_for\\_our\\_](http://commentisfree.guardian.co.uk/open_thread/2007/11/a_word_for_our_)

[times.html](http://times.html)). The *BMJ*'s Christmas issue includes an explanation of some current medical slang, including "testiculation" (a concatenation of testicle and the expressive hand gestures by a consultant on a subject on which he or she has little knowledge) and "404 moment" – when despite all efforts a particular result cannot be located, from the internet error message "404 document not found." (*BMJ* 2007;335:1295; doi: 10.1136/bmj.39414.699005.94).



### Classic science now in Arabic

Hundreds of science books, including classics by Isaac Newton, Stephen Hawking, Niels Bohr, and Richard Feynman, will be translated into Arabic for the first time. The ambitious plan by a non-profit group in Abu Dhabi has the backing of the crown prince and funding from the Abu Dhabi Authority for Culture and Heritage. The Kalima (meaning "word" in Arabic) project aims to revive the art of translation throughout the Arab world and reverse the long decline in Arabic readers' access to important works of global literature, philosophy, science, and history. (*Independent* 2007 Nov 22; [http://news.independent.co.uk/world/middle\\_east/article3182335.ece](http://news.independent.co.uk/world/middle_east/article3182335.ece))

### Cochrane free to poor countries

More than 60 countries with a gross national product below \$1000 (£500; €700) per capita, from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe, can access the Cochrane Library for free and with a single click. Another 40 countries with GNP between \$1000 and \$3000 are eligible for cheap access. Readers in the countries eligible for free or cheap access are automatically detected via [www.thecochranelibrary.com](http://www.thecochranelibrary.com). Access to the Cochrane Library

remains available through the Health InterNetwork Access to Research Initiative (HINARI) website, and from 1 January 2008 through the International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP) at no cost for the poorest countries. Lists of eligible countries are at [www.who.int/hinari/eligibility/en](http://www.who.int/hinari/eligibility/en). ([http://news.cochrane.org/view/item/review\\_one.jsp?j=1070](http://news.cochrane.org/view/item/review_one.jsp?j=1070))

### Amazon predicts end for books

Amazon has launched a £200 portable reader for electronic books. “Kindle” weighs just under 300 grams and is about the size of a slim paperback. It has a flicker-free screen that renders words to look like they are printed in ink on paper. Text can be made bigger or smaller, and the display is clear in all light conditions. Books are downloaded using mobile phone technology, unlike rival electronic readers, taking just 30 seconds, and 90,000 titles are already available, including bestsellers for as little as £5 each. “Why are books the last bastion of analogue?” asked Amazon’s founder, Jeffrey Bezos. (*Independent* 2007 Nov 20; [http://news.independent.co.uk/sci\\_tech/article3176995.ece](http://news.independent.co.uk/sci_tech/article3176995.ece))

### Open access set back

In November the US president, George Bush, vetoed a bill that had been passed in the Senate in October. The bill aimed to increase funding for the National Institutes of Health from \$28.6bn in 2007 to \$30bn in 2008 to pay for open access for all research funded by the institutes. Meanwhile, an international committee of the World Health Organization that met in November has redrafted guidelines to “strongly encourage” open access to government-funded research. Supporters of open access had previously drafted a clause in the guidelines of the Intergovernmental Working Group on Public Health, Innovation, and Intellectual Property to make open access mandatory. ([www.knowledgespeak.com](http://www.knowledgespeak.com))

### Ig Nobel won for “the” problem

Research into the problems of indexing terms that start with the

definite article won the 2007 Ig Nobel prize in literature ([www.improb.com/ig](http://www.improb.com/ig)). “The Definite Article: Acknowledging ‘the’ in Index Entries” by Glenda Browne considers the rules and practice surrounding indexing such terms. She found various inconsistencies and concludes, “We can ensure that users find what they are looking for . . . by making sure that we double entries at ‘the’ and at the second word in the entry.” Ig Nobel prizes are awarded for “research that makes people laugh and then think.” (*Indexer* 2001;22:119–122; [www.theindexer.org/files/22-3/22-3\\_119.pdf](http://www.theindexer.org/files/22-3/22-3_119.pdf))



### 2005 saw most multiauthored papers

Papers with 500 or more authors increased from 40 in 2003 to 131 in 2005; papers with more than 100 authors grew from just over 300 in 2003 to 475 in 2005; and compared with a few over 500 in the previous year, more than 750 papers with 50 or more authors were published in 2005. These are some of the findings published by Thomson Scientific in the November–December 2007 issue of its *Science Watch* publication. Thomson evaluated the number of papers with more than 50, 100, 200, and 500 authors between the years 1993 to 2006. (<http://scientific.thomson.com/press/2007/8423263/>)

### Open access grows in physical sciences...

Many new open access journals for the physical sciences have been announced, and existing journals are moving to the open access model. For example, the UK Institute of Physics has launched *IOP Conference Proceedings: Earth and Environmental Sciences*, and the World Scientific Publishing Company has announced the launch of *Optics and Photonics Letters*. The *European Physical*

*Journal C: Particles and Fields*, jointly published by Springer, EDP Sciences, and Società Italiana di Fisica, has become fully open access from a hybrid model. And the European Geosciences Union has announced a new international open access journal – *The Cryosphere* – which will have a two stage publication process using online public discussion. ([www.knowledgespeak.com](http://www.knowledgespeak.com))

### ...and biomedical sciences

The biosciences are seeing new open access journals too. BioMed Central has launched *BMC Medical Genomics*, which will operate open peer review of papers that consider population genetics at the genome scale, genome structure, and pharmacogenomics in relation to human health and disease. BioMed Central is also to launch *BMC Research Notes*, *BMC Proceedings*, *Journal of Trauma Management and Outcomes*, *Patient Safety in Surgery*, *Journal of Cardiovascular Magnetic Resonance*, and *Journal of Biological Engineering*. The Scandinavian open access publisher Co-Action Publishing has announced an agreement with the Swedish Nutrition Foundation to publish *Food and Nutrition Research* (formerly *Scandinavian Journal of Food & Nutrition*) from 2008. ([www.knowledgespeak.com](http://www.knowledgespeak.com))

### Advice on electronic-only journals

A report on moving to electronic-only journals recommends that publishers explore new business models; seek to understand users expectations; and consider how content will be preserved and versions managed. *The E-only Tipping Point for Journals: What's Ahead in the Print-to-Electronic Transition Zone* ([www.arl.org/bm~doc/Electronic\\_Transition.pdf](http://www.arl.org/bm~doc/Electronic_Transition.pdf)) by Richard K. Johnson and Judy Luther, from the US Association of Research Libraries, analyses the views of librarians and publishers on format migration, considering the drivers toward electronic-only publishing and barriers that are slowing change. The report is based on interviews in 2007 with two dozen academic librarians and journal publishers. ([www.knowledgespeak.com](http://www.knowledgespeak.com) 2007 Dec 11)

### Common words change slowly

Words that are most often used are less likely to change over time, two studies have found. One study analysed the evolution of 177 irregular verbs from Old English through Middle English to the English spoken today (*Nature* 2007;449:713–716; doi: 10.1038/nature06137). Irregular verbs with unpredictable endings, such as “to be,” evolve 10 times more slowly than a verb that is used 100 times less often. Almost all irregular verbs used today rely on long-abandoned rules of conjugation; modern verbs, such as “to google,” are regular. Another study of four Indo-European languages – English, Spanish, Russian, and Greek – found that the commonest words in each language, such as the word for water, are still similar. (*Nature* 2007;449:717–720, doi: 10.1038/nature06176; *Independent* 2007 Oct 11, [http://news.independent.co.uk/sci\\_tech/article3047630.ece](http://news.independent.co.uk/sci_tech/article3047630.ece))

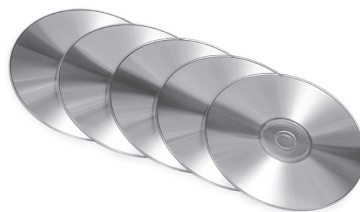
### Open access and “junk science”

The US Association of American Publishers has set up the controversial Partnership for Research Integrity in Science and Medicine (PRISM; [www.prismcoalition.org](http://www.prismcoalition.org)) to warn the public about the risks of government interference in scientific publishing. PRISM has denounced open access publishing as “junk science” that threatens the foundations of peer review. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press has registered its discontent with PRISM, as have Rockefeller, Columbia, and Cambridge University presses. “This initiative is an undisguised coalition to discredit open access publishing and its launch has generated dismay and anger in many quarters,” said the scientist Peter Murray-Rust. (*Information World Review* 2007(October):3)

### Publishers detect plagiarism together

CrossRef ([www.crossref.org](http://www.crossref.org)) will help prevent plagiarism, with its service CrossCheck, which will allow scholarly and professional publishers to check the originality of submitted and published work.

CrossRef is ideally placed because of its broad membership. It has joined with iParadigms ([www.iparadigms.com](http://www.iparadigms.com)) to develop a system that allows scholarly publishers to check the originality of submitted and published work. The publishers the Association for Computing Machinery, BMJ Group, the *New England Journal of Medicine*, the International Union of Crystallography, Elsevier, the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, Taylor and Francis, and Wiley-Blackwell will allow their content to be indexed for a pilot. ([www.crossref.org/crosscheck.html](http://www.crossref.org/crosscheck.html))



### UK loses private data

High profile losses of data in the United Kingdom have drawn attention to the need for care when managing personal information – for example, data pertaining to authors. Key aspects of best practice include not storing personal information on portable devices and taking care with hard copies (see [www.ico.gov.uk](http://www.ico.gov.uk)). HM Revenue and Customs lost the names, addresses, and bank details of seven million families; a Driving Standards Agency subcontractor lost three million applicants’ records; and nine health trusts have admitted losing hundreds of thousands of patients’ private data. (*Guardian* 2007 Nov 20, [www.guardian.co.uk/uk\\_news/story/0,,2214110,00.html](http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk_news/story/0,,2214110,00.html); *Guardian* 2007 Dec 18, [www.guardian.co.uk/guardianpolitics/story/0,,2229061,00.html](http://www.guardian.co.uk/guardianpolitics/story/0,,2229061,00.html); *Times* 2007 Dec 23, [www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/health/article3089052.ece](http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/health/article3089052.ece))

### Journals in global theme issue

The Council of Science Editors organised a global theme issue on poverty and human development last October. Science and medicine journals throughout the world simultaneously published articles

on this topic to stimulate interest and research and to disseminate the results of this research as widely as possible. An international collaboration of 235 journals from 37 rich and poor countries, including the *BMJ*, *The Lancet*, *JAMA*, *Nature*, and *Science*, published more than 750 articles. The journals and the articles represent all regions of the world. The theme issue was launched at the US National Institutes of Health, and a webcast of the event has been archived at <http://videocast.nih.gov/summary.asp?live=6239> ([www.councilscienceeditors.org/globalthemeissue.cfm](http://www.councilscienceeditors.org/globalthemeissue.cfm))

### Editors must check authorship

Journal editors need to check for duplicate publication, and research institutions need to play a greater role in resolving disputes over authorship of papers, says Glenn McGee, writing in September’s issue of *The Scientist*. “Authorship disputes are a fairly regular occurrence in science,” he says, referring to an unresolved case of accusations of plagiarism in early 2007 surrounding a paper published in 2005 in *Fertility and Sterility*. In January 2007, a study found that two thirds of industry initiated randomised trials contained evidence of ghost authorship (*PLoS Medicine* 2007;4:e19; doi: 10.1371/journal.pmed.0040019). Another found that more than two thirds of corresponding authors disagreed with their coauthors over contributions to the paper (*CMAJ* 2007;176:41; doi: 10.1503/cmaj.060687).

### Network to improve health reporting

EQUATOR (Enhancing the Quality and Transparency of Health Research; [www.equator-network.org](http://www.equator-network.org)) plans to become a global centre to provide resources and training related to the reporting of health research and to help in the development, dissemination, and implementation of reporting guidelines, such as CONSORT (for clinical trials), MOOSE (for meta-analyses of observational studies), and STARLITE (for literature searches). In future the network will also offer



training for journal editors, peer reviewers, and authors. The initiative is being led by an international steering group with input from other reporting guideline development teams, journal editors, information specialists, and research funders. ([http://news.cochrane.org/view/item/review\\_one.jsp?j=1037](http://news.cochrane.org/view/item/review_one.jsp?j=1037))

### **Nature suggests guarantors for papers**

“Principal investigators traditionally bask in the glory of a well-received paper . . . they [should also] willingly open themselves to sanctions . . . should the paper turn out to have . . . problems,” says an editorial in *Nature* (2007;450:1; doi: 10.1038/450001a). At least one author per research group should vouch for the paper’s standards by signing a statement with reference to *Nature’s* policies (see [www.nature.com/authors/editorial\\_](http://www.nature.com/authors/editorial_)

[policies/index.html](#)). Despite the fraud involving the stem cell biologist Woo Suk Hwang and the physicist Jan Hendrik Schön, *Nature* says that the responsibilities of coauthors are still not clearly understood.



### **By any other name**

“Why are English speakers almost uniquely subject to inverted nominal imperialism?” asked Ian Williams, blogging for the *Guardian*. “To me [it is] Bombay, Canton, or Burma – not Mumbai, Guangzhou, or Myanmar.”

Williams says that Russians do not worry that Moskva is Moscow, let alone that Americans call it “Moscow” and the British “Mos-coe.” “I don’t mind if the speakers of Indian English want to say Mumbai, as long as they extend the same democratic linguistic privileges to others to keep on calling it Bombay. Non-English speakers can be as nationalist as they like – in their own languages,” he says. ([http://commentisfree.guardian.co.uk/ian\\_williams/2007/10/whats\\_in\\_name.html](http://commentisfree.guardian.co.uk/ian_williams/2007/10/whats_in_name.html))

**Richard Hurley (compiler)**

Thanks to Joan Marsh, Sheila Evered, and Margaret Cooter.

Please send items for inclusion to Richard Hurley ([rhurley@bmj.com](mailto:rhurley@bmj.com)), with “News Notes” as the subject.

## **SfEP/EASE reciprocal membership arrangement**

In the last issue of ESE, I invited members of EASE who are also members of SfEP – or indeed would like to become a member – to get in touch with me if they want to pay a reduced SfEP membership fee in 2008 (£57 Associates, £64 Ordinary Members, and £67 Advanced Members).

Just to recap – EASE has a group membership scheme for members of other editorial societies: so long as the group maintains a minimum number of 10 members, each individual pays a reduced membership fee (for 2008 this is £47 instead of £70). For a trial period, SfEP is offering a reciprocal arrangement for EASE members.

So, if you are already an SfEP member or are thinking of joining, please get in touch with me as soon as possible. There are already enough of you to form the group. Just send me an email and I will pass your name on to Sarah Patey, SfEP’s membership secretary, thereby confirming your membership of EASE. She will then invoice you at the reduced rate when SfEP fees become due in March. Any subsequent members joining during the year will also pay the reduced fee.

The scheme has been successful so far – it has produced at least 30 new members for EASE and I have received many encouraging comments, such as this from Kersti Wagstaff:

“I’m very pleased about this EASE/SfEP initiative – I’ve thought on and off for years about whether it would be worth having both memberships, but considering that my business is treading water at the moment while I finish a part-time PhD, it was hard to justify two full subscriptions. This gives me a good chance to try out and see whether I ought to stay with both in future. I have to admit that the EASE Science Editors’ Handbook was also a major incentive – I’ve been eyeing it up for years!

This is an opportunity not to be missed! Email, write, or phone me now!

**Sheila Evered**, [secretary@ease.org.uk](mailto:secretary@ease.org.uk);  
EASE Secretariat, PO Box 6159, Reading RG19 9DE; +44 (0)118 970 0322

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## The Editor's Bookshelf

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We are using the Editors' Bookshelf blog at <http://ese-bookshelf.blogspot.com/> to collect entries. You can join the blog by contacting [paola.decastro@iss.it](mailto:paola.decastro@iss.it). We look forward to your contributions.

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### EDITORIAL PROCESS

#### Brown D, Leith D. **Integration of the research library service into the editorial process. "Embedding" the librarian into the media.**

*New Information Perspectives* 2007;59(6):539–549.

The purpose of the study is to outline changes in information management and decentralise library services according to the paradigms of modern media organisation. The methodology was to review best practice in newsroom library. The "embedded" structure resulted in an increase in length and complexity of researchers' inquiries and in librarians playing a more active role in the editorial process.

#### Hauser M, Fehr E. **An incentive solution to the peer review problem.**

*PLoS Biology* 2007;5(4):e107. (doi: 10.1371/journal.pbio.0050107)

Despite internet facilities, peer review generally continues to be a long process. These authors propose a system of incentives and punishments for reviewers according to time of response to the editorial deadlines. Time for review will be maintained in the referees database and the future articles submitted by reviewers will be processed immediately or with delay according to the circumstance. All positive and negative aspects of the suggested procedure are discussed. [Editors' Note: The problems with the peer review process are endlessly discussed within the scientific community. This solution to delayed reviews seems innovative, if not necessarily practical. Editors of *PLoS Biology* encourage comments online through the Reader Response facility, rather than via formal submission.]

### ETHICAL ISSUES

#### Shashok K, Jacobs A. **Who's watching whose ethics? Slanted reporting**

#### of the medical writer's role in the Neuropsychopharmacology – Cyberonics case 1. *The Write Stuff* 2007;16:1–3.

A recent case of blame on a medical writer and subsequent attempts to make things clear to the public is reported in this article. This offers many hints to reflect on ethical considerations regarding authors, editors, and medical writers. There are also very useful references. The case reported here involved an article published in the journal *Neuropsychopharmacology* and the suggested unethical behaviour of the medical writer. This was debated in *Science*. A group of medical writers reacted to these unfair appraisals and wrote a letter to *Science* to clarify their positions, but it was never considered for publication. *The Write Stuff*, the journal of the European Medical Writers Association, published this correspondence, after taking into account all ethical implications regarding the publication of such correspondence.

#### Rich MW. **Plagiarism in an article: Is there any evidence?** *Medical Hypotheses* 2007; 69:1154–1162. (doi: 10.1016/m.mehy.2007.05.039)

The authors of a published paper "relied heavily" on one of the author's earlier publications, thereby violating the other authors' copyright. In an apologetic reply, published without editing (pp 1155-6; doi 10.1016/j.mehy.2007.06.024), the Chinese authors say: "The full understanding of citation model as well as language problem (English is not native language) for us may also be principle reasons for those mistakes."

#### Godlee F. **Plagiarism and punishment.** *BMJ* 2007;335 (doi: 10.1136/bmj.39392.602523.47)

Plagiarism is listed, in the US Office for Research Integrity's definition of research misconduct,

as one of the three high crimes of research fraud. The Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) lists 18 cases of plagiarism from 1998 to 2005, but it is likely that there has been a higher number. COPE has also a series of flow charts that outline what journals should do if editors suspect plagiarism. Even if in the end everyone still relies on academic institutions, that too often still fails, as in the case of an eminent Croatian clinician and academic, which cast a cloud on the Croatian research community.

### INFORMATION RETRIEVAL

#### Chen Y-L, Cheng L-C, Cheng Y-L. **Using position, fonts and cited references to retrieve scientific documents.** *Journal of Information Science* 2007;33:492–508.

As more and more documents become available on the internet, finding documents that fit users' needs is becoming increasingly important. A scientific document is a structured text and has some features that can be used to improve retrieval. This work first investigates the relationships among fonts, position, and cited references, and then uses them to design a novel retrieval method based on the discovered relationships. Empirical results show that using the location factor alone achieves the same performance as considering location and font factors simultaneously. Citation similarity is useful only when the similarity is high.

#### Mayr P, Walter AK. **An exploratory study of Google Scholar.** *Online Information Review* 2007;31(6):814–830. (doi: 10.1108/14684520710841784)

The purpose of the paper is to discuss the new scientific search service Google Scholar, born to search exclusively scholarly documents,



and to test its functionality. The study, based on queries against different journal lists, showed some deficiencies in coverage and up-to-datedness of Google Scholar's index and pointed out the most important sources of this kind of service, such as the commercial academic publishers, currently the main data providers. Through the analysis of a huge amount of data from this search engine, the study concludes that Google Scholar has some interesting pros but is not a substitute for specialized databases and catalogues.

Nielsen FA. **Scientific citations in Wikipedia.** *First Monday* 2007;12(8)

Wikipedia, the internet-based encyclopædia, is steadily growing in popularity within scientific research, but some critics have questioned the quality of entries. Citing Wikipedia as an authoritative source may be questionable: biased coverage and lack of sources are among the most common "Wikipedia risks." This study examines outbound links from Wikipedia articles to articles in scientific journals and compares them against journal statistics from Journal Citation Reports, such as impact factors. The results show an increasing use of structured citation markup and good agreement with citation patterns seen in the scientific literature, though with a slight tendency to cite articles in high-impact journals such as *Nature* and *Science*. These results increase confidence in Wikipedia as a reliable information resource for science in general.

De Moya-Anegón F, Chinchilla-Rodríguez Z, Vargas-Quesada B, Corera-Álvarez E, Muñoz-Fernández FJ, González-Molina A, Herrero-Solana V. **Coverage analysis of Scopus: a journal metric approach.** *Scientometrics* 2007;73(1):53–78. (doi: 10.1007/s11192-007-1681-4)

The coverage of the Scopus database is compared with Ulrich's Directory. The variables taken into account were subject distribution, geographical distribution, distribution by publishers, and the language of publication. The analysis of the coverage of a product of this

nature should be done in relation to an accepted model, the optimal choice being Ulrich's, considered the international point of reference for the most comprehensive information on journals published throughout the world. The results allow us to draw a profile of Scopus in terms of its coverage by areas – geographic and thematic – and the significance of peer review in its publications.

Banks M. **Access all theses.** *Physics World* 2007;20(11):18–19.

The time is ripe for a complete online database of PhD theses, and physicists should take a lead.

## LANGUAGE AND WRITING

Hartley J. **Planning that title: practices and preferences for titles with colons in academic articles.**

*Library & Information Science Research* 2007;29:553–568. (doi: 10.1016/j.lisr.2007.05.002)

There is a large debate on effective titles that influence the reading of an article and its citations. Colons play an important role in titles for academic articles. This article considers the use of "colonic" titles in different disciplines, analyzing some current practices in using colons and students' and academics' preferences for titles with and without colons. Colons are used more in the arts than in the sciences, and single authors use more colons than multiple authors. Titles of conference papers and journal articles differ. However, the use of colons did not influence citation rates.

Smith B, Ashburner M, Rosse C, Bard J, Bug W, Ceusters W, Goldberg LJ, Eilbeck K, Ireland A, Mungall CJ, the OBI Consortium, Leontis N, Rocca-Serra P, Ruttenberg A, Sansone SA, Scheuermann RH, Shah N, Whetzel PL, Lewis S. **The OBO Foundry: coordinated evolution of ontologies to support biomedical data integration.** *Nature Biotechnology* 2007;25(11):1251–1255.

As the value of data is enhanced by their being in a form that allows them to be integrated with other data, a wide number of "ontologies", common

controlled vocabularies, were created to approach this integration. Unfortunately the proliferation of these "ontologies" became an obstacle itself to integration. The Open Biomedical Ontologies (OBO) consortium, pursuing a strategy to overcome this problem, is undergoing a coordinated reform. The result is a new family of ontologies designed to be interoperable and logically well formed and to incorporate accurate representations of biological reality.

## PUBLISHING

Charlton BG. **Medical Hypotheses 2006 impact factor rises to 1.3 – a vindication of the "editorial review" system for revolutionary science.**

*Medical Hypotheses* 2007;36:967–969. (doi: 10.1016/j.mehy.2007.07.107)

The journal's impact factor has doubled since 2004, and it has now entered the mainstream level of "respectable" medical journals in terms of its usage by other scientists, says its editor. The journal aims to publish radical and speculative ideas; a healthy impact factor is important because the journal uses a system of editorial review rather than peer review. As editorial review relies on hard-to-quantify and non-transparent individual judgments, it is important for its outcomes to be open to objective evaluations, such as impact factors and downloads, to show the journal's usefulness in the dynamic process of science.

Gorman GE. **The Delorean or the Mini? Digital imperatives for publishers, digital dilemmas for repositories.** *Online Information Review* 2007;3(6):741–743.

Examines the development of digital publishing and the managing of data preservation. As publishers, writers, and readers are becoming increasingly digital, a greater burden seems to be placed also on libraries and repositories, responsible of finding new and more effective ways of preserving digital artifacts. That is why a symbiotic relationship seems to exist between publishers and institutions charged with maintaining digital artifacts from these publishers.

Guinnessy P. **Stakeholders weigh costs of open-access publishing.** *Physics Today* 2007;60(8):29–30. (doi: 10.1063/1.2774090)

As open access moves mainstream, publishers are concerned about who is going to fund their journals.

Hemmings BC, Rushbrook P, Smith E. **Academics' views on publishing refereed works: a content analysis.** *Higher Education* 2007;54(2):307–332. (doi: 10.1007/s10734-005-8608-x)

A researcher from an Australian university explores academics' views about publishing (or not) in refereed sources and the perceived worth of this activity. The survey includes many questions to extract information on the factors that either encourage or discourage academics from publishing in peer review journals. The responses are analysed in detail and comparisons are made also on the responses of male and female academics.

Von Elm E, Altman DG, Egger M, Pocock SJ, Gotsche PC, Vandenbroucke JP. **Strengthening the reporting of observational studies in epidemiology (STROBE) statement: guidelines for reporting observational studies.** *BMJ* 2007;335:806–880. (doi: 10.1136/bmj.39335.541782.AD)

The reporting of observational research in biomedicine is often inadequate, which hampers the assessment of its strengths and weaknesses and of a study's generalisability. The Strengthening the Reporting of Observational Studies in Epidemiology (STROBE) initiative developed recommendations on what should be included in an accurate and complete report of an observational study. The revised checklist contains 22 items that relate to the title, abstract, introduction, methods, results, and discussion sections of

articles. 18 items are common to all three study designs and four are specific for cohort, case-control, or cross-sectional studies. Details are freely available on the websites of *PLoS Medicine*, *Epidemiology*, and *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

## RESEARCH EVALUATION

Barendse W. **The strike rate index: a new index for journal quality based on journal size and the h-index of citations** *Biomedical Digital Libraries* 2007;4:3. (doi: 10.1186/1742-5581-4-3)

Measuring quality in science is difficult and controversial; a uniform method that can be applied across all fields is needed. The quantification is generally summed up with the impact factor of the journal in which the work is published, which shows differences between fields. Here the h-index, a way to summarise an individual's highly-cited work, was calculated for journals over a 20-year time span and compared to the size of the journal in four fields: agriculture, condensed matter physics, genetics and heredity, and mathematical physics. The larger the journal, the more likely it is to have a high h-index. A strike rate index, based on the log relationship of the h-index and the size of the journal, shows a similar distribution in the four fields, with similar thresholds for quality, allowing journals across diverse fields to be compared to each other.

Vinkler P. **Eminence of scientists in the light of the h-index and other scientometric indicators.** *Journal of Information Science* 2007;33:481–491. (doi: 10.1177/0165551506072165)

Scientometrics cannot offer a simple consistent method for measuring the scientific eminence of individuals. The h-index method introduced by Hirsch was found

applicable for evaluating publications of senior scientists with similar publishing features, only. When scientometric indexes for individuals are calculated, self-citations should be excluded and the effect of the different bibliometric features of the field should be taken into account.

## SCIENCE

Marris E. **Monuments and instruments.** *Nature* 2007;450:592–593. (doi: 10.1038/450592a)

Architecture has always been used to make statements about what science is and how it should be done, and consequently the architecture of buildings influences the fruit of researchers' work. From the concept of the "dry" or "wet" lab to the openness of spaces and the use of glass, the article offers a landscape of architectural studies, obsessions, and fashions in the construction and restructuring of the field laboratory and research buildings.

Perera R, Heneghan C, Yudkin P. **A graphical method for depicting randomised trials of complex interventions.** *BMJ* 2007; 334:127–129. (doi: 10.1136/bmj.39045.396817.68)

Making the what, when, and who of non-drug treatments easier to understand would benefit researchers and readers. Using a single graphical representation could clarify descriptions and would prompt researchers to focus on the structure and timing and ensure appropriate comparisons. Readers would be able to see the differences between comparison groups immediately.

*Paola De Castro (compiler)*

Thanks to Penny Hubbard, Eleonora Lacorte, John Glen, and Margaret Cooter.

## Forthcoming Meetings, Courses, and BELS Examinations

**American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS)**  
14–18 February 2008; Boston, USA  
www.aaas.org/meetings

**EMWA and Institute of Clinical Research**  
“Publishing Clinical Trials: Ethics and the Pharmaceutical Industry”  
27 February 2008; London, UK  
www.emwa.org; www.icr-global.org

**International Association of Scientific, Technical and Medical Publishers**  
“STM Book 2.02 Seminar”  
17 April 2008; London, UK  
and  
**STM Annual Spring Conference**  
22–24 April 2008; Cambridge, MA, USA  
www.stm-assoc.org/stm-conference

**European Medical Writers' Association (EMWA)**  
**17th Annual Spring Conference 2008: Medical translations**  
29 April to 3 May 2008; Barcelona, Spain  
www.emwa.org

**Council of Science Editors (CSE) Annual Meeting**  
May 16–20, 2008; Vancouver, Canada  
www.councilscienceeditors.org

**Society for Technical Communication**  
**55th Annual Conference**  
1–4 June 2008; Philadelphia, PA, USA  
www.stc.org/55thConf/

**European Association for Health Information and Libraries**  
**11th European Conference of Medical and Health Libraries**  
23–28 June 2008; Helsinki, Finland  
https://eventnordic-fi.directo.fi/congreszon/eahil\_2008/

**Public Communication of Science & Technology**  
25–27 June 2008; Copenhagen, Denmark  
www.vr.se/pcst

**3rd EuroScience Open Forum (ESOF08)**  
18–22 July 2008; Barcelona, Spain  
www.esof2008.org

**5th Science Centre World Congress**  
15–20 June 2008; Toronto, Canada  
www.5scwc.org

### COURSES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

30 March 2008, Pacific Grove, CA, Asilomar Conference Center, (AMWA Northern California Chapter Conference); register by 9 March 2008

17 May 2008, Vancouver, BC, Hyatt Regency Vancouver, (CSE, May 16–20); register by 27 April 2008

22 October 2008, Louisville, KY, TBA, (AMWA meeting); register by 1 October 2008

## EASE Business

### President's Report, 2006-2007

*This is an update of the report submitted at the 2007 AGM.*

In 2006, the Council of the European Association of Science Editors met on 15 June in Kraków (Poland), on 18 June also in Kraków, and on 29 October in Barcelona (Spain).

The Fifth Annual General Meeting was held in Kraków as well on 15 June 2006. At this meeting, Council officers and members Jennifer Gretton (UK), Roderick Hunt (UK), Magne Nylenna (Norway), and Georgianna Oja (Finland) stepped down and the following officers and members of Council were elected for the term 2006-2009:

President: Arjan Polderman (Netherlands)  
 Vice-President 1: Linus Svensson (Sweden)  
 Vice-President 2: Joan Marsh (UK)  
 Ordinary Members:

Eva Baranyiova (Czech Republic)  
 Alison Clayson (France/USA)  
 Ricardo Guerrero (Spain)  
 Mare-Anne Laane (Estonia)  
 Volodymyr Lysenko (Ukraine)  
 Remedios Melero (Spain)  
 Mercè Piqueras (Spain)  
 Witold Zuchiewicz (Poland)

Elisabeth Kessler (Sweden) is on Council as Past President.

The following people were co-opted:

Sheila Evered (UK) as Secretary to Council  
 Jennifer Gretton (UK) as Consultant to Council  
 Roderick Hunt (UK) as Company Secretary and Treasurer  
 Moira Johnson-Vekony (UK) as Chairman of the Publications Committee

The main event of EASE in this period was the Ninth General Assembly and Conference, "The culture of science editing", held in Kraków from 15 to 18 June 2006, which was attended by 143 participants. In conjunction with this Conference, two successful courses were given, on statistics for journal editors and on open access.

Since then, Council has directed its main efforts towards improving membership management and securing the financial position of EASE. A new membership database has been developed. As of 31 December 2007, 520 people were paid-up members. The sponsorship scheme was also revived, and at present 14 members are sponsored by other members. Securing EASE's financial position included the closing of some bank accounts and opening a new capital reserve account with higher interest rates and more flexibility.

Payment of membership subscriptions through the EASE website was used by many members and greatly facilitated membership and financial management. The website also proved a valuable means to sell the *Science Editor's Handbook*. In 2006, 18 copies were sold to non-members and a further 11 have been sold in 2007. Five chapters were

added to the Handbook in 2006 and another in 2007.

As announced at the Fifth Annual General meeting, EASE is exploring the possibility of a large conference in 2009. A steering committee led by Professor Roderick Hunt was formed to submit a proposal for EU funding of this 2009 Conference, which includes the establishment of a register of European science editors to identify as many as possible of the science editors currently active in Europe. The target group includes managers of scientific databases who also face editorial issues of quality control and dissemination of data but who have little interaction with the editorial community. This proposal was submitted, unsuccessfully, to the European Commission in May 2007; see *ESE* 2007;33(4):100.

In the course of its meetings in 2006/7, Council also made the following decisions and proposals:

- To form the following standing committees: Membership Recruitment and Promotion Committee, Nominations Committee, Publications Committee, Seminar Committee, Training Committee
- To explore the possibility of modular training courses for authors and editors
- To continue publishing the journal, *European Science Editing*, four times a year
- To develop a standpoint on the inappropriate use of impact factors [see *ESE* 2007;33(4):99-100] and to seek support from sister societies and other professional organisations
- To digest the survey questionnaires of the Ninth General Assembly and Conference and to consider several useful proposals in preparing the next Conference
- To continue the annual seminars in Barcelona, in conjunction with the Annual General Meetings; in 2007 the seminar held on 14 May was on "Alternative ways of measuring impact factors"
- To implement the new house style developed in 2005, now appearing on EASE stationery, the EASE journal, and the EASE website
- To extend the EASE website to include a list of freelance members and a section for (paid) job advertisements
- To support the AuthorAID organization by creating a link from the EASE website
- To allow local meetings to be billed as EASE meetings if the local organiser is a member of EASE
- To offer a reduced group membership fee of £45 per individual to members of other editorial societies for a minimum group size of 10
- To award honorary membership to Marie-Louise Desbarats-Schönbaum (Netherlands) and to Jennifer Gretton (UK) for many years of tireless efforts to the benefit of EASE.



## Membership changes

**For more information about the aims of EASE and for an application form, visit [www.ease.org.uk](http://www.ease.org.uk)**

### New members

#### Individual

#### Mr Robert Ashton

Emphasis  
Brighton, UK  
[rob.ashton@writing-skills.com](mailto:rob.ashton@writing-skills.com)

#### Mr Andrew Bacon

Reading, UK  
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#### Mr Paul Beverley

Archive Publications  
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*Freelance editor*  
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#### Dr Sarah Binns

Dunfermline, UK  
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#### Mr Lionel J I Browne

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#### Ms Heidi Cormode

Bicester, UK  
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#### Ms Christine M Graham

Pinner, UK

#### Miss Katherine Hatton

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#### Ms Colette Holden

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#### Dr Peter Hovenkamp

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#### Ms Emma Hoyle

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#### Ms Caroline Landon

Macclesfield, UK  
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#### Mr Lawrence H Osborn

Glasgow, UK

#### Dr Malcolm Richardson

University of Helsinki  
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#### Mr Christopher J Thomas

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#### Ms Kersti Wagstaff

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### Corporate

#### Professor Andy Dainty

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#### Professor Frank Schultmann

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*Editor, Construction Management & Economics*

#### Professor Tim Colmer

University of Western Australia  
Crawley, Australia  
*Regional Editor, Annals of Botany*

#### Professor Hideyuki Takahashi

Tohoku University  
Sendai, Japan  
*Regional Editor, Annals of Botany*

#### Professor Margaret Sauter

Christian-Albrechts-Universität  
Kiel, Germany  
*Regional Editor, Annals of Botany*

#### Professor Bill Shipley

Université de Sherbrooke  
Quebec, Canada  
*Regional Editor, Annals of Botany*

#### Professor Shao Jian Zheng

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### Changes in membership details

#### Ms Rita Lazar

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#### Dr Paul Salkovskis

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#### Dr Anne Szarewski

[journal@fsrh.org](mailto:journal@fsrh.org)