



Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> June 2006

# The Krakow Trumpeter

Issue 4

It's been a great few days in Krakow and we have all felt blessed with fine weather, in addition to good food, company, etc. This is especially surprising given that the Programme Committee learned only on arrival that June is the wettest month of the year in Krakow. (It was deliberate really to keep you all in the sessions rather than out sight-seeing. The best laid plans of mice and men...)

## The culture of science translation

Noah Hardy described his experiences as a translator, working on texts in French and English (or American). He has often become very involved in the paper and has been invited to be a co-author – which caused some controversy in the discussion.

Noah feels that most authors should now be encouraged to write directly in English, as this is the language of science, particularly in the life sciences. As he put it very graphically, “The file is opening in their brain in English..”

Hooman Momen is the Coordinatory of the WHO press, which works in six official languages and publishes a journal in four languages. He sees scientific knowledge as a universal good and believes that we need an international language of communication. In the past, this has been Greek, Arabic, French and German. Now it's English.

Hooman pointed out that the future will see a huge wave of manuscripts produced by scientists whose native language is not

English. Should we develop a ‘scientific English’ with a simplified grammar, phonetic spelling, etc?

Journal publishing is changing with the advent of open access so publishers will have to look to provide added value, such as fostering debate or commissioning commentaries. These activities would be culturally specific, so local languages will play an important role, particularly when it comes to applying scientific and medical knowledge. Studies have shown that even good speakers of English retain information more efficiently when it is presented in their native tongue.

The WHO has a list of over 20 languages each spoken by over 10 million people: how can information be transmitted to them? Machine translation can help, especially for well formulated texts such as structured abstracts. This was disputed in the discussion, with people pointing out that most translations are very poor. Also, information transmission is not a one-way process; we need to translate studies published in other languages into English.

*Jane Sykes*



## Science communication

In this lively session we looked at science communication from two very different sides. Firstly, a journal has to be visible in order to survive. So saying, Dario Sambunjak of the Croatian Medical Journal told us about an experiment conducted by the CMJ in increasing its visibility in the lay and medical press. Over a year, press releases and e-mails were sent to selected journalists in Croatia and to the editor of the BMJ. Seven e-mails resulted in six articles in the lay press and one item in BMJ's Minerva section – a clear gain on the previous year's tally of zero e-mails and one article. The downside was that some of the newspaper articles used inaccurate, sensationalist headlines. Nevertheless, Dario felt that the results were on balance positive.

Sadly, we all know that much research done in the developing world remains invisible because it never gets published. Anthony Robbins from Tufts University presented AuthorAID, a project that he and Phyllis Freeman, his co-editor at the Journal of Public Health Policy (and wife), are working on. (That makes two husband-and-wife co-editor teams that I have come across at this meeting – are there any more?) The AuthorAID concept is of a website/database which matches developing world authors who have promising manuscripts with scientists (possibly those near to retirement or having retired) and authors' editors who can help them produce a publishable manuscript and submit it to an appropriate journal. Anthony and Phyllis are working on a pilot project; many of the details remain to be decided. This is a great, innovative idea that deserves support. Would-be volunteers can contact AuthorAID at [jphp@umb.edu](mailto:jphp@umb.edu).

*Grace Townshend*

## Early Italian

A candidate for the oldest university in Europe has been proposed: Bologna. Date unfortunately not given.

## The programme

Many of you will have admired the beautifully printed programme and certificates of attendance. We are very grateful to Edward Towpik for arranging these and to the graphic designer, Jacek Walczak, and the printer, Mieczyslaw Pohl.

## Mind your fingers

Take care if the new EASE pin-up boy, Igor Vlahovic, shakes your hand. He's more used to holding a geological hammer than a pen.



Question: who was the last EASE pin up boy?

## When in Rome

Do as the Romans do. When in Krakow, ignore local drinking customs and teach them yours. Should any of us return to Krakow next year, we should not be surprised to find Spritzers being served in bars around the Rynek (everybody in the same glass).

## Absent friends

We regret that two EASE stalwarts have been unable to be with us this week, owing to illness. Marie-Louise Desbarats-Schönbaum and Elisabeth Heseltine always contribute to EASE conferences in multiple ways: we have missed both their input and company.

## Non-English journals: local success stories

'Przemysl Chemiczny' the Polish scientific and technical journal was first published in 1917. Since then it has been edited by six or seven editors, some of whom held office for almost 20 years. In the past it was financially dependent on state support with subscribers providing only 30% of income. To combat falling subscriptions, the journal was revamped in 2000. They made a conscious decision to continue publishing in Polish and now derive 63% of their income from advertisements and special issues funded by Polish companies. Abstracts (in English) are included in the Chemical Abstracts Service.

Mary Ellen Kerans described a project in which a translation team was formed to handle cover-to-cover translation of a medical journal—for simultaneous publication in both Spanish and English. Previous problems with such projects were analysed and corrected by careful negotiation of how publication and translation schedules should intersect for overall improvement of the journal. The project has been running for three years with no hitches, but Mary Ellen noted that the key was integration of processes and understanding others' working needs. Editors thinking about such a venture should expect a longer publication cycle from closure of an issue's contents to uploading to databases, but there's much to gain by publishing in both languages simultaneously.

From the audience, listeners expressed surprise that authors were not given final approval of fully translated articles, but it was explained that authors had been involved and consulted in a month-long translation process already and that no one had expressed dissatisfaction in three years.

Another point discussed afterwards was the inaccurate way language of publication is referred to on MEDLINE. Journals make an enormous effort to provide versions for English language readers, but those



versions are not reflected on the PubMed results output page. It was suggested that associations like EASE or the ICMJE could possibly study the anomalies in indexing and referencing in order to support these journals and also a standard of good practice in bilingual publication.

*Mary Ellen Kerans*

## Straightening the record

Yesterday, I incorrectly attributed the six serving men quote to David Sharp (no e). The original was coined by Rudyard Kipling: David was the one who set it in a medical editing context.



## Attendance

We have had 127 participants from 21 countries. We are especially pleased to have had 27 delegates from our host country, Poland.

## Western vs Eastern European editing: Editors as educators

Ana Marusic told us about the author-helpful policy of the Croatian Medical Journal. As editors of a small medical journal published in English in a non-English speaking country, Ana and Matko Marusic noticed that poor English is not the most important problem of articles submitted to their journal. They recognize that an article could be improved on four layers – the study quality, the narrative, the scientific reporting style and the language.

They introduced an author-helpful policy with the aim of providing articles of good quality for their journal, but they had another, more altruistic, vision to educate authors to report their work successfully.

Ana Marusic emphasised the importance of including science methodology as a mandatory course in graduate studies. She also stated that editors of scientific journals might be the right people to organize continuing medical education on planning and writing in research.

*Ana Ivanis*



## Natural history challenge 4

So, finally, we come to the question of where one may find parts of a mammoth, a rhino and a whale.

## Stop press – too late

My apologies to our two final speakers, Mike Clarke and Pawel Walewski, as we are unable to cover their talks in the Trumpeter.

## Twin towns of Krakow

Bordeaux, Bratislava, Curitiba, Cuzco, Edinburgh, Fez, Florence, Frankfurt, Gothenburg, Innsbruck, Kyiv, La Serena, Leipzig, Leuven, Lviv, Milan, Nuremberg, Orleans, Pecs, Rochester NY, Seville, Solothurn, Vilnius, Zagreb.

How many of these places were represented at the meeting?



## Thanks

The Krakow Trumpeter would like to thank all those who have contributed, especially those who chipped in at the last minute: also all the speakers for their excellent presentations.

I am particularly grateful to Dario Sambunjak for providing most of the photographs. We've had great fun in the Trumpeter office and look forward to doing all this again next time.