
The Editor's Bookshelf

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EDITORIAL PROCESS

Banks M. **Peer review gets the thumbs up.** *Physics World* 2008;21(3):8. (www.publishingresearch.org.uk/PeerReview.htm)

Review of a new survey of 3000 academics around the world in the sciences and arts commissioned by the Public Research Consortium; 93% of the respondents agreed that peer review is necessary. Other questions involved "single-blind" and "double-blind" reviewing and whether reviewers should be paid. Mark Ware, the independent consultant who carried out the survey, says, "We hope editors will at least look into the possibility of double-blind peer review, as bias is certainly present when knowing the author's identity in single-blind review."

Luey B. **Different kind of Profession: the Council of Editors of Learned Journals (CELJ).** *Journal of Scholarly Publishing* 2008;39(2):94–108. (http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_scholarly_publishing/toc/scp39.2.html)

The keynote address at the 2006 meeting of the Council of Editors of Learned Journals discusses the ways professions are or are not appropriate to journal editing, and some possibilities for increasing professionalism. For one of the starting questions, "is journal editing a profession?" the proposed answer is that it should not be. Rather, it should be a profession open to innovation and talent and transparent to those who interact with it as authors, subscribers, and readers.

Macdonald S, Kam J. Aardvark et al. **Quality journals and gamesmanship in management studies.** *Journal of Information Science* 2007;33(6):702–717. (doi: 10.1177/0165551507077419)

Analyses the notion of a "quality journal", as publication in such journals has become a major indicator of research performance in UK universities. The indicator, as often happens, has become the target, so the challenge is to publish in quality journals, and the challenge rewards gamesmanship. In the rush to win the game, publication as a means of communicating research findings for the public benefit remains all but forgotten. This analysis of the situation in management studies underlines a much more widespread problem; it concludes that laughter, on top of being the appropriate reaction to such farce, could also be a stimulus to reform.

ETHICAL ISSUES

De Angelis CD, Fontanarosa B. **Impugning the integrity of medical science: the adverse effects of industry influence.** *JAMA* 2008;299(15):1833–1835. (<http://jama.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/full/299/15/1833>)

This editorial illustrates studies documenting the manipulation of study results, authors, editors, and reviewers by pharmaceutical and medical device industries. If this manipulation has occurred it is because physicians have allowed it to happen, and it is time to stop it. Journal editors also bear some of the responsibility for enabling companies to manipulate publications. Drastic action is essential, and cooperation of everyone involved in medical research, medical editing, medical education, and clinical practice is required for meaningful change to occur.

Kulathuramaiyer NMH. **Fighting plagiarism and IPR violation: why is it so important?** *Learned Publishing* 2007;20:252–258.

The revolutionary development of the web presents numerous opportunities for the spread of plagiarism and infringements of intellectual property rights (IPR). This situation creates the risk of introducing a "culture of mediocrity". Tools to detect plagiarism are available.

Ross JS, Hill KP, Egilman DS, Krumholz HM. **Guest authorship and ghostwriting in publications related to rofecoxib: a case study of industry documents from rofecoxib litigation.** *JAMA* 2008;299(15):1800–1812. (<http://jama.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/full/299/15/1800>)

Starting from recent litigation related to rofecoxib, the article examines guest authorship and ghostwriting, both practices that have been suspected in biomedical publication but for which there is little documentation. The objective was to determine the different types and the extent of guest authorship and ghostwriting in a case study. Using court documents and articles related to the topic, the authors showed that clinical trial manuscripts related to rofecoxib were authored by sponsors' employees but first authorship was often attributed to academically affiliated investigators who did not always disclose financial support from the industry, and that review manuscripts were prepared by unacknowledged authors and authorship was subsequently attributed to academically affiliated investigators who often did not disclose industry financial support.

Young JR. **Elsevier agrees to let MIT use bits of journal articles online.** *The Chronicle of Higher Education* 2008;March 10. (<http://chronicle.com/wiredcampus/article/2805/elsevier-agrees-to-let-mit-use-bits-of-journal-articles-online>)

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology announced that it has

reached a deal with Elsevier to allow a limited amount of material from its journals to be used in MIT's OpenCourseWare project, winning a major challenge for colleges that want to post lecture materials on the web. The vice president and general counsel at Elsevier declared that the company has also agreed to a new policy on copyright, set up by the International Association of Scientific, Technical, & Medical Publishers, allowing any college to post small bits of journal material online, even if the policy doesn't allow quite as much as the deal with MIT does.

INFORMATION RETRIEVAL

Giustini D. **Web 3.0 and medicine.** *BMJ* 2007;335:1273–1274. (doi:10.1136/bmj.39428.494236.BE)

Medical librarians believe that it is necessary to build better mechanisms for information retrieval, due to the current bulk of unorganised information that is “searchable” but not easily “findable” in web 2.0. That is why we need web 3.0 – the semantic web. Information retrieval in web 3.0 should be based less on keywords than on intelligent ontological frameworks, such as Medline's trusted MeSH vocabulary. Web 3.0 should help find information more effectively and cut through the information glut, creating new knowledge through semantic technologies. It should bring order to the 21st century web in the same way that Dr John Shaw Billings's Index Medicus brought order to medical research back in the 19th century.

Clinical knowledge: from access to action [editorial].

The Lancet 2008;371(9615):785. (doi:10.1016/S0140-6736(08)60351-7)

Harvard is making an institutional commitment to open-access publishing, and several leading universities are now preparing to follow its example. Traditional publishers responded to the research community's interest in wider access to medical science with a strategy that is unlikely to send a positive signal to the medical research community, such as cost-cutting and

job losses. Confronting a future in which the next 20 years may change more than the past 200, editors and publishers should instead join doctors in working to achieve the highest standards of health for the community.

Esposito JJ. **The nautilus: where – and how – OA will actually work.** *The Scientist* 2007;21(11):52. (<http://www.the-scientist.com/article/home/53781/>)

Discusses the new phase of the debate over open access to the scientific literature, listing pros and cons of open access within the landscape of scientific publishers. It presents scholarly communication as a the spiral of a nautilus, with the inner spiral representing the researcher's intimate colleagues; the next spirals scientists in general, highly educated individuals, universities, policy-makers; on to the outer spirals, which represent the consumer media, whose task is to inform the general public. The article concludes by identifying a fundamental tension in scholarly communications today, between the innermost spiral of the nautilus, where peers communicate directly with peers, and the outer spirals. In this landscape OA advocates sit at the centre and attempt to take their model beyond the peers, and at the outer spirals traditional publishers attempt to extend their reach into the inner spirals.

Johnson JM, Cano V. **Electronic publishing in librarianship and information science in Latin America – a step towards development?** *Information Research* 2008;13:1. (<http://informationr.net/ir/13-1/paper331.html>)

Draws on the results of studies carried out between 2004 and 2007 as part of Project REVISTAS, supported by the European Commission's ALFA Programme. Through a variety of methods and results, it points out the weaknesses of the printed scholarly publication process for library and information science. The emergence of electronic publication is identified and the potential it presents is

discussed. If scholarly publication in this discipline within Latin America is to achieve its potential in the dissemination of research and in the education of students, the opportunities presented by electronic publication and archiving must be grasped, but the full benefits cannot be achieved without attention to the need for peer review and other quality control methods. This article also points out the major information networks of Latin America.

Stringer MJ, Sales-Pardo M, Nunes Amaral LA. **Effectiveness of journal ranking schemes as a tool for locating information.** *PLoS ONE* 2008;3(2):e1683. (doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0001683)

Electronic publishing, preprint archives, blogs, and wikis raise concerns among all stakeholders in the editorial chain about the relevance of traditional peer reviewed journals. These concerns are increased by the ability of search engines to identify and sort information. This article points out that the distribution of the number of citations to a paper published in a given journal in a specific year converges to a steady state after a journal-specific transient time, and demonstrates that in the steady state the logarithm of the number of citations has a journal-specific typical value. A model was developed to enable quantification of both the typical impact and the range of impacts of papers published in a journal. A journal-ranking scheme is proposed to maximize the efficiency of locating high impact research.

LANGUAGE AND WRITING

Bell HK. **Editors and copy editors in fiction: taking a carpet-sweeper to the jungle.** *Journal of Scholarly Publishing* 2008;39(2):156–167. (doi:10.3138/jsp.39.2.156)

How the various types of editors and copy editors presented in fiction: the conscientious, the compulsive, the stereotypical, the Cinderellas, the ruthless, the arrogant, and the power-abusers.

PUBLISHING

Hahn C. **Research library publishing services: new options for university publishing.** Association of Research Libraries, March 2008. (<http://www.arl.org/bm~doc/research-library-publishing-services.pdf>)

This study is based on a survey carried out in 2007 by the Association of Research Libraries to gather data on the publishing services they were providing. The results showed that research libraries are rapidly developing publishing services (44% reported they were delivering publishing services). Libraries publish many kinds of works, even if the main focus is journals (88% of publishing libraries reported publishing journals). Peer reviewed works dominate library publishing programmes. Libraries are increasingly inclined to provide at least basic hosting services (open source software). Advice and consulting regarding a variety of publishing practices and decisions are perhaps even more popular services.

Schwitzer G. **How do US journalists cover treatments, tests, products, and procedures? An evaluation of 500 stories.** *PLoS Med* 2008;5(5):e95 (doi:10.1371/journal.pmed.0050095)

Starting from the premise that the daily delivery of news stories about new treatments, tests, products, and procedures may have a profound, and perhaps harmful, impact on health care consumers, a new US website project, HealthNewsReview.org (<http://HealthNewsReview.org/>), modeled on similar efforts in Australia and Canada, has been created to evaluate and grade health news coverage, notifying journalists of their grades. This article reports on the project's findings after its first 22 months and after evaluation of 500 health news stories. It hopes that the evaluation of health news that is proposed will lead news organizations and all who engage in the dissemination of health news and information to re-evaluate their practices to better serve a more informed health care consumer population.

Wiley S. **No to negative data. Why I believe findings that disprove a hypothesis are largely not worth publishing.** *The Scientist* 2008;22(4):39. (<http://www.the-scientist.com/article/display/54459/>)

Why are journals disinclined to publish negative data? The problem with negative results is that they are seen as not actually advancing science. As science is based on a set of ideas supported by observations, a negative result is considered as not supporting any specific idea. Certainly some of the positive data that have been published are wrong, and they eventually suffer the fate of all scientific errors and are abandoned. The solution to that bias is seen in treating published results more skeptically.

RESEARCH EVALUATION

Bar-Ilan J. **Informetrics at the beginning of the 21st century – a review.** *Journal of Informetrics* 2008;2(1):1–52. (<http://scienceserver.cilea.it/pdflinks/08032416200104511.pdf>)

Several issues concerning informetrics, bibliometrics, scientometrics and webometrics at the beginning of the 21st century are covered: the development of Open Access, the growth in webometrics, the comparison between two new citation databases (Scopus and Google Scholar), the use of new indicators (h-index) in science evaluation, among others. Traditional topics are also reported: history of bibliometrics, citation analysis, impact factor debate, university rankings, and so on.

Habibzadeh F, Yadollahie M. **Journal weighted impact factor: a proposal.** *Journal of Informetrics* 2008;2(2):164–172. (http://scienceserver.cilea.it/cgi-bin/sciserv.pl?collection=journals&journal=17511577&issue=v02i0002&article=164_jwifap&form=fulltext)

The authors consider the sole impact factor not adequate enough to measure journal quality. Therefore they propose to improve the calculation of the journal impact factor by taking into account both

the number of citations and a factor concerning the prestige of the citing journals relative to the cited journal. This “weighted impact factor” could be a better scientometrics measure of journal quality.

Brenner S, Roberts RJ. **Save your notes, drafts and printouts: today's work is tomorrow's history.** *Nature* 2007;446:725. (<http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v446/n7137/full/446725a.html>)

Increasing knowledge in science is making it imperative that we document the history of all discoveries. Historians need all forms of data so as to document the development of today's innovations and inspire future generations. Fortunately, interest is growing among historians of science and institutional archives in preserving this history. Several institutions in the United States are establishing archival collections related to the history of molecular biology and chemistry. The purpose is to encourage all researchers to preserve their papers and donate them to institutions that are committed to making them freely accessible to scholars.

SCIENCE

Cartwright J. **Mind the hack.** *Physics World* 2008;21(5):14–15. (<http://physicsworld.com/cws/article/print/33959>)

Two of the world's biggest science journals (*Nature* and *Science*) control their news coverage by giving sneak previews of research under embargo while limiting how scientists can interact with journalists. The author looks at whether the system benefits, or hinders, science communication. A related editorial is entitled “Embargoed science: embargoes may have their faults but they mask wider problems in science communication”.

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