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### ECONOMICS AND FUNDING

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

### EDITORIAL PROCESS

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

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

Wiley S. **Peer review isn't perfect ... but it's not a conspiracy designed to maintain the status quo.** *The Scientist* 2008;11:31.

When peer review is negative, it is counterproductive to consider it as a personal assault. The author, a Pacific Northwest National Laboratory Fellow and director of PNNL's Biomolecular Systems Initiative, recalls personal experiences and suggests waiting before reacting to a negative review, and then to pretend that it was written by his best friends. This helps him discover the truly useful comments contained in the review.



### ETHICAL ISSUES

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

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

*Nature* 2008;455:589.

(doi:10.1038/455589a)

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

Levi BG. **Bubble fusion scientist disciplined.** *Physics Today* 2008;61(11):28–30.

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

### INFORMATION RETRIEVAL

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

**journals.** *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 2008;59(11):1861–1865. (doi:10.1002/asi.20895)

The authors use a novel method - the Author Affiliation Index - to determine whether faculty at the top 10 North American library and information science programmes have a disproportionate presence in the premier journals of the field. The study finds that these programmes may be both too small and too interdisciplinary for this measure to provide reliable results.

Evans JA. **Electronic publication and the narrowing of science and scholarship.** *Science* 2008;321(5887):395–399. (doi:10.1126/science.1150473)

Electronically available journals may portend an ironic change for science. As more journal issues come online, the articles referenced tend to be more recent, fewer journals and articles are cited, and more of the citations are to fewer journals and articles. Searching online is more efficient and following hyperlinks quickly puts researchers in touch with prevailing opinion, but this may accelerate consensus and narrow the range of findings and ideas that are built upon.

Morgan P. **Open data: the elephant in the room?** *Journal of the European Association for Health Information and Libraries* 2008;4(4):4–6. ([http://www.eahil.net/journal/journal\\_2008\\_vol4\\_n4.pdf](http://www.eahil.net/journal/journal_2008_vol4_n4.pdf))

Scientific research is based on data and the open access movement now incorporates the need for open access to research data, or Open Data. Research funding bodies are mandating the release and reuse of data, but small-scale research projects may lack the resources to implement Open Data management procedures. Libraries and institutional repositories, which have focused efforts on managing text resources rather than data, can help by collaborating with the research community.

Norris M, Oppenheim C, Rowland F.

**Finding open access articles using Google, Google Scholar, OAster and OpenDOAR.** *Online Information Review* 2008;32(6):709–715. (doi:10.1108/14684520810923881)

Shows the relative effectiveness of a range of search tools in finding open access versions of peer reviewed academic articles on the world wide web. For the moment at least, to find open access articles it is better to use the general search engines Google and Google Scholar rather than OpenDOAR or OAster.

Pinto M. **Cyberabstracts: a portal on the subject of abstracting designed to improve information literacy skills.** *Journal of Information Science* 2008;34(5):667–679. (doi:10.1177/0165551507086262)

An academic portal specifically centered on abstracts and abstracting resources is proposed, with the aim of improving the information literacy skills of librarianship and information science students. The research to design it mainly consists of the selection, assessment, and web-display of the most relevant abstracts on knowledge management, information representation, natural language processing, abstract/abstracting, modeling the scientific document, information retrieval, and information evaluation.

Lisée C, Larivière V, Archambault É. **Conference proceedings as a source of scientific information: a bibliometric analysis.** *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 2008;59(11):1776–1784. (doi:10.1002/asi.20888)

Examines the scientific impact and aging of conference proceedings compared to those of scientific literature in general. The relative importance of proceedings is diminishing over time, and that the scientific impact of proceedings is losing ground to other types of scientific literature in nearly all fields. Thus proceedings have a relatively limited scientific impact, their relative importance is shrinking, and they become obsolete faster than the scientific literature in general.



## LANGUAGE AND WRITING

Fung I. **Beyond English: accessing the global epidemiological literature.** *Emerging Themes in Epidemiology* 2008;5:21. (doi:10.1186/1742-7622-5-21)

Highlights the wealth of epidemiological and public health literature in the major languages of the world, and the bibliographic databases through which it can be searched and accessed. All systematic reviews in epidemiology and public health should include literature published in the major languages of the world, and the use of regional and non-English bibliographic databases should become routine. Look at the site and download articles showing different realities in countries from China to Brazil, Latin American to the Caribbean, Russia to Eastern and Western Europe.

Hartley J, Betts L. **Revising and polishing a structured abstract: is it worth the time and effort?** *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 2008;59(12):1870–1877. (doi:10.1002/asi.20909)

Many writers of structured abstracts spend time revising and polishing their texts, but do readers notice the difference? In three studies of readers using rating scales to judge the clarity of an original and a revised abstract, the revised abstract as a whole, as well as some components, were significantly clearer than the original. Readers can and do perceive differences between original and revised texts and therefore the time and effort is worthwhile.

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

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



## PUBLISHING

Achten WMJ. **Science journals have been slow to make themselves audible.** *Nature* 2008;455:590. (doi:10.1038/455590a)

Podcasting holds huge potential for visually impaired people and others; listening to scientific articles read aloud could increase readers' concentration and absorption of information. Several newspapers and magazines are offered in podcast form, but the scientific press is lagging behind.

Cheung WL. **The economics of post-doc publishing.** *Ethics in Science and Environmental Politics* 2008;8:41–44. (doi:10.3354/ese0083)

This case in a series on the use and misuse of bibliometric indices in evaluating scholarly performance ruefully tells of how, to gain recognition and increase his job prospects, the author changed his name from Wai Lung to William, and adopted a policy of publishing short pieces on "hot" topics in high-impact journals with fast reviewing times.

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

Durrant S. **Results from a survey investigating preservation strategies amongst ALPSP publisher members.**

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

Inchoombe I. **Publishing should help research.** *Research Information* 2008;June/July. ([http://www.researchinformation.info/features/feature.php?feature\\_id=176](http://www.researchinformation.info/features/feature.php?feature_id=176))

The managing director of Nature Publishing Group expresses his views on STM publishing. In his opinion, there is an expectation that there will be more and more information out there and researchers want to be able to filter the information. There is an increasing demand for alerts of new, relevant information from publishers or aggregators. Peer review is so important to quality and accuracy that it must be treated with respect. Last year, an open-review trial had a very low response. Nature Publishing Group believes that open access will offer value and benefit to some parts of the market but they do not see the author-pays model as appropriate for the Nature-branded journals today. They have a free-to-access preprint server, Nature Precedings.

Kamler B. **Rethinking doctoral publication practices: writing from and beyond the thesis.** *Studies in Higher Education* 2008;33(3):283–294. (doi:10.1080/03075070802049236)

A case study of graduates in science and education shows how the different disciplinary and pedagogical practices of each discourse

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

Krauss LM. **A fifth force farce.** *Physics Today* 2008;61(10):53–55.

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

Montpetit É, Blais A, Foucault M. **What does it take for a Canadian political scientist to be cited?** *Social Science Quarterly* 2008;89(3):802–816.

(doi:10.1111/j.1540-6237.2008.00561.x)

In 1860 journal articles published between 1985 and 2005 by 758 Canadian political scientists, an article is more likely to be widely cited if it is published in a prestigious journal, is written by several authors, applies quantitative methods, compares countries, and deals with administration and public policy or elections and political

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

Young NS, Ioannidis JPA, Al-Ubaydli O. **Why current publication practices may distort science.** *PLoS Medicine* 2008;5(10):e201.

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



## RESEARCH EVALUATION

Anderson TR, Hankin RKS, Killworth PD. **Beyond the Durfee square: enhancing the h-index to score total**

**publication output.** *Scientometrics* 2008;76(3):577–578.

(<http://www.springerlink.com/content/k72504710u143222/fulltext.pdf>)

The authors propose a new bibliometric index that is the “tapered h-index”. The h-index of an individual scientist corresponds to the number h of his/her papers that each has at least h citations. The citation count of an article can exceed h, and for hundreds or thousands of citations that characterize the most highly cited papers, no additional credit is given. This new index positively scores all citations, and it shows smooth increases from year to year.

Ball P. **A longer paper gathers more citations.** *Nature* 2008;455:274–275.

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

Haslam N, Ban L, Kaufmann L, Loughnan S, Peters K, Whelan J, Wilson S. **What makes an article influential? Predicting impact in social and personality psychology.**

*Scientometrics* 2008;76(1):169–185.

(doi: 10.1007/s11192-007-1892-8)

Factors contributing to citation impact in social-personality psychology were examined in a bibliometric study of articles published in the field’s three major journals. Impact was operationalized

as citations accrued over 10 years by 308 articles published in 1996, and predictors were assessed using multiple databases and trained coders. Multivariate analyses demonstrated several strong predictors of impact, but many variables did not predict impact.



## SCIENCE

Leslie DM, Hamilton MJ. **A plea for a common citation format in scientific serials.** *Serials Review* 2007;33(1):1–3.

(doi:10.1016/j.serrev.2006.11.009)

Researchers spend an alarming amount of time correcting reference sections – time that could be better spent on science and syntax.

Schussler EE. **From flowers to fruits: how children’s books represent plant reproduction.**

*International Journal of Science Education* 2008;30(12):1677–1696.

A selection of children’s books about plants was analyzed to identify how plant reproduction was portrayed and whether the book could generate misconceptions about the topic. As the books contained inaccuracies, content experts should analyze children’s books in their area of specialty and provide teachers with recommendations about the use of the books in the classroom.

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*We send our apologies to Eleonora for previously misspelling her name.*

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