

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

On a different tack, Carol had read that verbs in titles

should be in the past tense to reflect the reporting of results. Neither Nancy nor Vivienne saw any sense in prescribing that verbs in titles should be in the past tense.

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## My Life as an Editor: John Glen



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

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

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

**ESE:** How did you become a journal editor?

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

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

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

**ESE:** What were your main duties?

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

**ESE:** How did the job compare with your expectations?

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

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

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

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

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

**ESE:** Would you have done anything differently?

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

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

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

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

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

**ESE:** Do you have any advice for young editors?

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

**ESE:** Will you ever retire from being an editor?

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