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## The Editor's Bookshelf

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We are using the Editor's 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.



### EDITORIAL PROCESS

Calow D, Egan R. **Is the answer still in the machine: do publishers need digital rights management?** *Learned Publishing* 2008;21:167–175.

(doi:10.1087/095315108X323857)

The implementation of digital rights management technology in other media sectors provides valuable lessons to publishers. In electronic publishing, digital rights management must form part of a flexible solution to the problem of unauthorized digital reproduction and distribution of copyright works – rather than relying on an academic culture of trust.

Creaser C, Whate S. **Trends in journal prices: an analysis of selected journals, 2000–2006.**

*Learned Publishing* 2008;21:214–224. (<http://www.lboro.ac.uk/departments/dis/lisu/downloads/op37.pdf>)

Examines overall price, price per page, and price per point of impact factor for institutional subscriptions for biomedical and social science journals for 11 publishers. Prices, and rates of increase, vary considerably. There is some evidence that not-for-profit publishers may, on average, offer better value for money in terms of price per page and price per point of impact factor.

Dray T. **Pat on back is premature.** *APS News* 2008;17(8):4.

(<http://tinyurl.com/3uwymd>)

Comments on letter by WG Unruh and the response of APS to it (*APS News* 17(6):8), in which the editors rebut criticisms that do not appear to have been levelled at the APS, while

completely ignoring the one that was; and calls for public discussion of the conditions that APS still imposes through its copyright practice.

Freese MH. **Copyright decision a matter of principle.** *APS News* 2008;17(8):4. (<http://tinyurl.com/3uwymd>)

Letter commenting on that of WG Unruh (*APS News* 17(6):8), saying some changes in APS copyright language are clearly appropriate; the best principle should be based on the contribution of the author and the journal: the ideas and data should clearly belong to the authors, and the reviewed, edited, laid out, and delivered copy should belong to the community through the journal.

Glasziou P, Meats E, Heneghan C, Shepperd S. **What is missing from descriptions of treatment in trials and reviews?** *BMJ*

2008;336:1472–1474.

(doi:10.1136/bmj.39590.732037.47)

Replicating non-pharmacological treatments depends on how well they have been described in research studies. Current trials and reviews often omit crucial details of treatments, and clinicians need details of how to use treatments tested in trials. Providing some additional details could improve the uptake of trial results in clinical practice.

Landis GA. **Copyright causes conflict of interest.** *APS News* 2008;17(8):4.

([http://www.phy.syr.edu/WhatsNew\\_files/APS%20Aug08%20Matt%20West.pdf](http://www.phy.syr.edu/WhatsNew_files/APS%20Aug08%20Matt%20West.pdf))

Letter commenting on that of WG Unruh (*APS News* 17(6):8), pointing out that the APS, the organization that usually would be defending the rights of physicists, ought to be outspoken in organizing physicists to keep their rights. But in this case, the

organization is the very organization that is taking the copyright – even though there is no legal requirement for them to do so.

Matarese V. **Relationship between quality and editorial leadership of biomedical research journals: a comparative study of Italian and UK journals.** *PLoS ONE* 2008;3(7):e2512. (doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0002512)

Several organizations draw up statements guiding the quality of biomedical reporting, but not all journals adhere to these guidelines. Those that follow them demonstrate “editorial leadership” in their author community. In this study, research journals from two European countries were studied and compared to identify a relationship between editorial leadership and journal quality. The data underlying this paper were first presented at the METM07 in Madrid in 2007.

Morris S. **The tiger in the corner.**

*Learned Publishing* 2008;21:163–165. (doi:10.1087/095315108X323901)

The continuum from research through discussion and preprints to publication is changing: the informal stages are becoming more important and the final, formal stage is being eroded – and the formal role of the journal may become less important. A few publishers have developed new features and tools to fit into researchers' new working patterns, but most journals may not have the resources for radical development and experimentation, and they may be held back by the innate conservatism of their organizations.

Myers RA. **Fair use protects authors' rights.** *APS News* 2008;17(8):4.

(<http://tinyurl.com/3uwymd>)

Letter commenting on that of W G Unruh (*APS News* 17(6):8), saying that US copyright law explicitly defines the

fair use limitations on the exclusive rights conferred by the law. Unruh responds that “fair use” is so limited that it would not cover many things authors might expect to be able to do with their own data – indeed it gives the author no more right than any person off the street to use the work.



## ETHICAL ISSUES

Achten WMJ. **Science journals have been slow to make themselves audible.** *Nature* 2008;455:590.

(<http://tinyurl.com/4c9nj2>)

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.

Frank DN. **Don't release other people's data without their consent.** *Nature* 2008;455:589.

(<http://tinyurl.com/4o4t62>)

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?

Gorman GE. **The plague of plagiarism in an online world.** *Online Information Review* 2008;32(3):297–301.

(<http://tinyurl.com/48w9pn>)

Plagiarism is a long standing, but increasingly problematic, occurrence

in academic writing and publishing and is now easier thanks to the internet technologies. The paper suggests the creation of clearly and fully articulated protocols regarding the nature, context, and penalty for plagiarism.

Gwynne P. **Scientist to appeal misconduct charge.** *Physics World* 2008;21(8):11.

(<http://physicsworld.com/cws/article/news/35112>)

Reports that lawyers for Rusi Taleyarkhan are preparing to appeal the findings of a panel set up by Purdue University that found him guilty of two charges of scientific misconduct: citing a paper by researchers in his own lab as if it were an independent confirmation of his alleged discovery of bubble fusion in 2002, and adding a student who had not contributed to that paper as an author.

Modi P, Hassan A, Teng CJ, Chitwood WRJ. **How many cardiac surgeons does it take to write a research article? Seventy years of authorship proliferation and internationalization in the cardiothoracic surgical literature.** *Journal of Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgery* 2008;136:4–6. (doi:10.1016/j.jtcvs.2007.12.057)

In a sample of 3669 articles published between 1936 and 2006, the mean number of authors per article increased in the three journals surveyed and overall is now about six. Less than 5% of articles have one or two authors; 74% have six or more. Multinational articles made up 12%, having been 0% as recently as 1976. These trends are similar to those in plastic surgery and neurosurgery. In four prestigious American medical journals, mean number of authors increased from 4.5 in 1980 to 6.9 in 2000; in radiology it increased from 2.2 in 1966 to 4.4 in 1991. “Various support personnel, might now be awarded authorship, whereas once they might have been simply acknowledged [and] ‘guest’ or ‘gift’ authorship might be an important contributory factor. Authorship criteria must be respected to maintain ethical standards.”

Noonan BM, Parrish D. **Expressions of concern and their uses.** *Learned Publishing* 2008;21:209–213.

(doi:10.1087/095315108X 288857)

How should editors communicate with their readers after an allegation of research misconduct has been made about a published article? Some use an “expression of concern” to inform readers of a potential problem. This is a tool for ensuring the integrity of the research record during what may be a long misconduct investigation; policies regarding its use are needed.

Schwitzer G. **How do US journalists cover treatments, tests, products, and procedures? An evaluation of 500 stories.** *PLoS Medicine* 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 project, HealthNewsReview.org (<http://HealthNewsReview.org>), modeled after similar efforts in Australia and Canada, has been created to evaluate and grade health news coverage, notifying journalists of their grades. After its first 22 months and 500 health news stories, the project hopes that the evaluation of health news will lead news organizations and all who engage in the dissemination of health news and information to reevaluate their practices to better serve a more informed health care consumer population.

Unruh WG. **Physicists and copyright: how to give away your birthright for what?** *APS News* 2008;17(6):8.

Some journals' copyright transfer agreements mean that “derivative works” which “depend on” the original need the permission of the copyright holders. This article urges authors to scrutinize such agreements before signing and not to sign those that do not specifically allow the authors to make derivative works, in any context, commercial or non-commercial. Representatives of the American Physical Society reply, setting out the society's position and saying why the current policy is defensible. They also

refer to a list of “frequently answered questions” on their website: <http://forms.aps.org/author/copyfaq.html>.



## INFORMATION RETRIEVAL

**To share or not to share: Publication and quality assurance of research data outputs report commissioned by the Research Information Network (RIN), June 2008.** *Research Information Network* 2008 June.

(<http://www.rin.ac.uk/files/Data%20publication%20report,%20main%20-%20final.pdf>)

The digital age has offered the research community new ways to use research findings. Research data are a valuable long-term resource and making data publicly available is essential to realize their full potential value. But until now we have lacked a clear picture of how researchers are responding to these challenges. Based on the results of more than 100 detailed interviews with researchers across eight subject and cross-disciplinary areas, the RIN report points out that realizing the full potential of data requires further progress in data management policies and practice.

Couzin J. **Survey finds citations growing narrower as journals move online.** *Science* 2008;321(5887):329. (doi:10.1126/science.321.5887.329a) The migration online of millions of scholarly articles in recent years has affected research: a smaller number of articles than in the past are pulling ahead of the pack in citations, even though more articles than ever before are available. The average age of citations has dropped. The shifting of researchers to a central set of publications may lead to easier

consensus and less active debate in academia, notes the author.

Evans JA. **Electronic publication and the narrowing of science and scholarship.** *Science* 2008;321(5887):395-399.

(doi:10.1126/science.1150473)

Using a database of 34 million articles, their citations (1945-2005), and online availability (1998-2005), the author shows that as more journal issues came online, the articles referenced tended to be more recent; fewer journals and articles were cited; and more of those citations were 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 built upon.

Hopewell S, Eisinga A, Clarke M. **Better reporting of randomized trials in biomedical journal and conference abstracts.** *Journal of Information Science* 2008;34(2):1-12. (doi: 10.1177/0165551507080415)

Well reported research published in conference and journal abstracts is important: individuals often base their initial assessment of a study on the information reported in abstracts. This article refers specifically to abstracts reporting randomized trials and seeks to identify current initiatives aimed at improving their reporting, like CONSORT for Abstracts, an extension of the CONSORT statement.

Macdonald A. **Institute plans a group for physics communicators.** *Interactions* 2008 July 4.

(not available online)

The Institute of Physics is setting up a new Physics Communicators Group to enable experienced and novice communicators to come together to share good ideas and offer mutual support and advice. Possibilities include a database of ideas that members have found to work, and training in communication techniques for different age groups or in how to target different sections of the public with activities they will be

keen to participate in. An inaugural meeting took place on 11 July.

Rowlands I, Nicholas D, Williams P, Huntington P, Fieldhouse M, Gunter B, Withey R, Jamali HR, Dobrowolski T, Tenopir C. **The Google generation: the information behaviour of the researcher of the future.** *Aslib Proceedings* 2008;60(4):290-310.

(doi:10.1108/00012530810887953)

How will the specialist researchers of the future (those born after 1993) access and interact with digital resources in five to ten years' time? The impact of digital transition on the information behaviour of the Google Generation is investigated and results show that the effect of ICTs on the young are generally overestimated. The study claims that although young people demonstrate an apparent ease and familiarity with computers, they rely heavily on search engines, view rather than read, and do not possess the critical and analytical skills to assess the information that they find on the web.

Simera I, Altman DG, Moher D, Schulz KF, Hoey J. **Guidelines for reporting health research: The EQUATOR network's survey of guideline authors.** *PLoS Medicine* 2008 June 24.

(doi:10.1371/journal.pmed.0050139)

The survey carried out by the EQUATOR Network, a new initiative funded by the UK National Health Service, was aimed at coordinating the efforts of those developing good reporting guidelines across many areas of medical research, and at providing resources for training and for the promotion of guidelines. The poor reporting of a medical study's methodology and findings can in fact lead to ineffective treatments, the waste of valuable health care resources, and harm to patients. The survey found that financial support is needed to help promote guidelines once they have been developed. It also showed a need to harmonize the development of these different guidelines – that is, they should all have a robust methodology to be widely accepted.

## LANGUAGE AND WRITING

Aghassi WJ. **Roadblocks deter today's Einstein.** *Physics Today* 2007;60(10):12.

(<http://tinyurl.com/4or374>)

Letter supporting the letter by William Aghassi *ibid.* 60(10)12 but going further, saying "Actually credentials also mean little today, unless your research is in a trendy topic like string theory and you write from a famous university like MIT, Cambridge University, Imperial College or Caltech. Gatekeepers and editors shun originality."

Maher A, Waller S, Kerans ME. **Acquiring or enhancing a translation specialism: the monolingual corpus-guided approach.** *Journal of Specialized Translation* 2008;10:56–75.

([http://www.jostrans.org/issue10/art\\_maher.pdf](http://www.jostrans.org/issue10/art_maher.pdf))

An account of how to go about setting up and using a corpus of model texts to guide editing or translation decision-making. It describes tools and proposes approaches that provide practical solutions for the working translators and editors who work in specialized fields. The article complements a poster that was first presented at the ninth EASE conference in Krakow in 2006.

Vasconcelos SMR, Sorenson MM, Leta J, Sant'Ana MC, Batista PD. **Researchers' writing competence: a bottleneck in the publication of Latin American science?** *EMBO Reports* 2008;9(8):700–602.

(doi:10.1038/embor.2008.143)

Writing for publication in an English language international journal is a linguistic burden for non-English speaking countries. In Brazilian research output, poor English language knowledge and poor writing skills are often a barrier to publishing in high rank journals and to reaching high scientific productivity.

## PUBLISHING

Schmoch U, Schubert T. **Are international co-publications an indicator for quality of scientific research?** *Scientometrics* 2008;74(3):361–377.

(doi:10.1007/s11192-007-1818-5)

The article deals with the role of internationally co-authored papers, or co-publications. The authors compare, within a dataset of German research units, citation and co-publication indicators as proxies for scientific research quality assessment. They also address the relationship between citations and co-publications. Their results suggest that, although there is a strong partial correlation between

citations and co-publications, co-publication indicators cannot be used as a proxy for research quality assessment.



## RESEARCH EVALUATION

Regazzi JJ, Aytac S. **Author perceptions of journal quality.** *Learned Publishing* 2008;21:225–235.

(doi:10.1087/095315108X288938)

Investigates author-perceived quality of science, technology, and medicine journals, using questionnaire survey, focus groups, and semi-structured face-to-face interviews. The three most important attributes were the reputation of the journal, the estimated length of time to article publication, and the readership of the journal.

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*Thanks to Eleonora Della Corte, Margaret Cooter, John Glen, Andrew Herxheimer, Joan Marsh, and Elise Langdon-Neuner*

## Promoting EASE

You'll have noticed that EASE membership is growing satisfactorily, thanks to sterling efforts by Sheila Evered in contacting lapsed members and by various people in encouraging new ones. We wish to build on this and 2009 is a great time to do so, as we have the attraction of our triennial conference in the beautiful city of Pisa. Members will receive a €50 discount on the registration fee, so we hope that most of those attending will join up.

We would like all our members to help promote both EASE and the conference as much as possible, particularly by distributing the second circular regarding Pisa (a pdf may be obtained from Sheila or the website) and distributing fliers and copies of *ESE* at any conferences they attend (contact Sheila at [secretary@ease.org.uk](mailto:secretary@ease.org.uk)).

Do you have ideas for strengthening our relationships with our sister societies? We would like to accumulate a complete list of these! If you belong to an organization that complements some of our activities, please let us

know. Examples of successful collaborations this year are the discount membership deal with the Society for Editors and Proofreaders, whereby members of both get a discount (our own Editors' Big Deal of bundled subscriptions!) and teaming up with Mediterranean Editors and Translators at EuroScience Open Forum (see p 108). Contact Joan Marsh ([jmarsh@wiley.com](mailto:jmarsh@wiley.com)) or Alison Clayson ([alison@clayson.org](mailto:alison@clayson.org)) and let us know your ideas.

## Publicity Officer

Following on from the above, is anyone interested in becoming the EASE Publicity Officer? It's an unpaid post, but think of the glory of putting this on your CV! You would liaise with Council and the other Committees to obtain news of EASE activities, then send press releases to relevant newsletters. Assembling a list of relevant newsletters would be a first task – all those free e-bulletins to which people subscribe so that they can fill up their inbox. Candidates should contact Joan Marsh ([jmarsh@wiley.com](mailto:jmarsh@wiley.com)).