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From the Editors' Desks

We continue to restructure the organisation of EASE in small ways, to increase efficiency. One change that will take effect at the start of 2013 is the renaming of the Publications Committee as the Editorial Board. Long-term members will recognise this as a return to the situation of about a decade ago. The last change of name was to reflect the fact that the Committee was also responsible for the website and the Forum. In the interim, we have also launched the Blog – an online version of the Bookshelf which appears in the Journal – and more recently our social media accounts. The relaunch of the website last year allows some of these to be integrated more closely and John Hilton is preparing to transfer the blog to a new platform that will link much more easily with the website. We need to use these media outlets more effectively and celebrate our activities. For some time, we have made the content of *European Science Editing* freely available about six months after publication, but we haven't been promoting this. Hopefully, at least some of you received notification about the release of the February issue

in some way. Once the November issue has been distributed, we will make the May issue open access and again circulate short highlights of key papers, kindly written by John Hilton. Please pass these on to colleagues who are not members of EASE so that the excellent articles that are being published in the journal can reach a wider audience.

I hope you have all appreciated the new EASE website during 2012: we will continue to make greater use of this, so please check at least once a month for new developments. We are now going to redevelop the EASE database, making it easier and faster to use, allowing it to be integrated with the member profiles on the website and enabling us to retrieve information about our members that we cannot at present, for example, how many chemists are there in EASE, or how many members are Chief Editors of a journal. Membership renewals will be sent out once the new system is in place and we will be asking you to provide more information about yourself so that EASE in turn can serve you better.

Joan Marsh

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Editorial

Bibliographic databases: some critical points

Current flow of information necessitates a systematic approach to what authors, reviewers and editors read and use as references. The objectivity of communication is increasingly dependent on a comprehensive literature search through online databases.¹ Academic institutions wishing to succeed in the global competition secure access to the prestigious databases and archives.² Journal editors strive to improve the indexing potential of their journals by adhering to the selection criteria of bibliographic databases and by getting access to networking sites.³



Though most authors and editors are aware of the existence of databases and communication platforms, not all of them are skilled at retrieving essential information and distinguishing 'indexed' journals.⁴ This leads to manipulations aimed at attracting quality articles to substandard journals. Another example, potentially distorting research reporting, relates to 'systematic' and 'comprehensive' searches, when authors supplement references from Medline, Web of Science and Scopus with items from databases with 'soft' selection criteria, hardly visible for the global audience. Less harmful is the practice of substituting distribution of information through indexing services by increasingly fashionable journal coverage in uncontrolled social networking media such as Facebook®, LinkedIn® and Twitter®, where academic credit is still lacking.^{5,6} Obviously, the way out of these distortions is to educate all stakeholders of scholarly publishing about the issues of ranking and the advantages and limitations of bibliographic databases, which were elegantly explored in a few recent reviews.⁷⁻⁹

Herein it is necessary to highlight some critical points. Perhaps one of the most popular, rapidly updated, free and easy-to-use databases is Medline® (Medical Literature Analysis and Retrieval System Online) accessible through PubMed, EBSCO and Thomson Reuters Web of Knowledge® platforms. Over the past few decades, it has gained utmost importance for biomedical and allied researchers and

practitioners, who perform searches through this database on a daily basis. Editors also rely on Medline/PubMed as a source of information on actively researching and publishing authors qualified as potential peer reviewers.¹⁰ Most biomedical editors consider the indexing of their journals by Medline as the main achievement of their work and a critical factor of their impact.⁸ Medline indexes abstracts from more than 5,500 evidence-based journals and online books covering numerous biomedical disciplines. It also selectively covers journals from sociology, science communication, scientometrics, chemistry and physics with relevance to life science, health care and biology. Journals publishing original items with a high level of evidence (ie original papers, systematic reviews and meta-analyses), a specific scope of interest and a relevance to a certain geographic region have good chances of being indexed by Medline. Though language is not an indexing criterion, and many non-English journals are now represented in Medline/PubMed, the quality and readability of the main texts, and especially abstracts, are critical for indexing. One of the main advantages of Medline is its reliance on the MeSH (Medical Subject Headings) thesaurus, which facilitates retrieval of articles through PubMed and Entrez search engines of the US National Library of Medicine. This is why most journals visible on PubMed and PubMed Central still require Medline indexing as the next step towards better citability and impact. The main limitation of Medline is that it covers abstracts only. Abstract coverage is regularly updated, but mainly within the period of 'big science' (since the 1950s). However, a large proportion of Medline/PubMed-indexed journals have recently been linked to publishers' and PubMed Central full-text sites, or to the citation tracking through PubMed Central and specifically designed evaluation platforms (eg Faculty 1000®). Some historical papers have also appeared on Medline and PubMed Central recently.

Thomson Reuters' Web of Knowledge® (WoK) platform includes the Web of Science® (WoS), the highly prestigious and selective multidisciplinary citation index of more than 12,000 influential journals, with coverage from the 1970s. More than 5,600 academic institutions worldwide now subscribe to WoS and encourage publications in WoS-indexed journals, bearing a quantifiable credit to the individual and institutional research work.¹¹ In 2005, Thomson Reuters launched the WoS Century of Science project which substantially expanded coverage of historical papers back to 1900. The initiative positioned WoS at the top of most comprehensive databases that are of particular interest to science sociologists.¹²

Cover-to-cover indexing is available through the following databases of WoS: Science Citation Index Expanded® (also known as SciSearch®), Social Sciences Citation Index®, Conference Proceedings Citation Index - Science®, and Conference Proceedings Citation Index - Social Science

and Humanities®. Given the recent proliferation of online books and the need to track their citations, the Book Citation Index® database was also launched recently.

Citation analysis through the WoS database is reported annually by Journal Citation Reports® (JCR), which delivers information on a variety of citation metrics, including the Journal Impact Factor (JIF), and ranks journals based on the quantity and 'prestige' of citations. Importantly, to get listed by and remain in JCR, a journal should attract citations from WoS-indexed journals. Indexed publications with declining and low citation rates are subject to elimination from the JCR list. On the other extreme, journals with citation manipulations and excessive autocitations (more than 80%) are also subject to exclusion from the JCR list (since 2008).

Currently most editors and reviewers rely on information from the WoK platform in their routine practice. Publishers set goals for expanded indexing and distribution of information, which is possible through the WoK Current Contents® (CC) databases. These databases provide rapidly updated access to tables of contents, bibliographic and related data from a wide range of subject categories: life sciences, clinical medicine, arts and humanities, agriculture, biology and environmental sciences, social and behavioural sciences, engineering, physical, chemical and earth sciences.

The largest subscription-based database of citations and abstracts is SciVerse Scopus®. It is a product of Elsevier, indexing more than 19,500 journals, conference proceedings, and patents from life, health, physical and social sciences, and humanities, with coverage exceeding that of WoS by 20%.¹³ All Medline-indexed journals are automatically indexed by Scopus. Access to full-texts of the indexed journals is available through the links to publishers' websites or through the ScienceDirect® interface for Elsevier journals. Citations recorded in Scopus are used for calculation of the journal h index, SCImago Journal Rank (SJR) and some other metrics gaining popularity as alternatives to JIF, particularly for journals not listed in JCR.¹⁴

Perhaps the main advantage of Scopus is the coverage of a large number of non-English sources across most subject categories, which makes it especially attractive for publishers from non-mainstream science countries. The limitations of Scopus are that it is relatively new to the publishing market (launched in 2004), most of its references are from 1996 onwards and rapidly updated information is predominantly available for top-rank and Elsevier journals.

Undoubtedly, advancing skills in information retrieval from the databases is a driver for improved individual and institutional research performance. Performing simultaneous searches through the above mentioned large databases may allow us to overcome the inherent limitations of each one and add to the quality of writing, reviewing and editing. In fact, leading publishers support their reviewers by offering access to multiple databases, which is particularly important for avoiding duplicate or plagiarised publications and for processing information from relevant references more comprehensively. For science editors, knowledge of indexing criteria, of the advantages and limitations of databases as well as continuous efforts to

expand and maintain the visibility of their journals in the highly prestigious databases can secure a good standing and an opportunity to publish articles which contribute to the advancement of global science.¹⁵

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Original articles

Assessing the bibliometric performance of a 'Special Issue': a citation analysis using the Web of Science® database

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Abstract Questions have often been raised by journal readers, authors and editors regarding the intrinsic value of 'Special Issues'. We examine the bibliometric performance and relative impact of a special issue published in the Japanese journal, *Industrial Health*, in 2007. Citations tracked by the Web of Science® database between 2007 and 2011 were analysed by type, frequency and impact. Overall, our results suggest that the special issue had a considerable influence on the bibliometric profile of the journal in which it appeared. The study revealed that special issues can attract more immediate citations and more overall citations than regular issues as well as having a positive effect on its impact factor in the years immediately following publication. Further bibliometric analyses are now warranted to evaluate the long-term performance of special issues and to investigate their overall impact on the scientific community.

Keywords Bibliometrics; citation analysis; the immediacy index; the journal impact factor; periodicals as topic; journal editors.

Background

In recent years it has become increasingly apparent that not all scientific discoveries have substantial implications, and not all journal articles are equally attractive to the scientific community. Widely-used journal citation analyses can provide evidence which allows scholars to assess the relative impact of each item as well as the bibliometric performance of an entire publication. Citations are now viewed as the 'currency' of modern science,¹ and their analysis has become increasingly important for journal editors, authors and readers.² Citation counting has been used as a bibliometric tool in various forms since the late 19th century. However, it was not until the mid 1950s that a more systematic approach to the tracking and assessment of citations was proposed by the founder of the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI), Eugene Garfield. His concept of an 'impact factor' was proposed to rank scientific periodicals and to help distinguish the core journals that were influencing science.³ The widely used Journal Impact Factor (JIF) scores are now published annually by Thomson Reuters in their Journal Citation Reports® (JCR). Calculation of the JIF is based on the number of citations received in a given year by a journal from other Web of Science® (WoS) indexed journals, divided

by the number of substantive items published by the same journal in the two preceding years. A watershed occurs when a JIF value exceeds one, indicating that, on average, more articles are being cited than are being published.⁴

In October 2007, the Japanese journal *Industrial Health* published a special issue entitled 'Emerging occupational hazards among health care workers in the new millennium'. This issue, edited by us, contained one editorial, five reviews, six original papers, one short communication and one field report.⁵ Although the journal has published 25 special issues since 1996, the citation-based performance of these publications has never been fully explored, and many editorial questions have often been raised regarding the role and value of special issues.⁶ As such, the aim of the current study was to examine the bibliometric performance of a special issue published in *Industrial Health* journal by examining citations tracked in the WoS database.

Methods

For the most part, the methods we used in the current study were based on previous research and publications in the field of bibliometrics.⁷⁻¹² We analysed citations to all 14 articles in the special issue as tracked by the WoS database between 2007 and 2011. Citations to articles in the special issue were examined by year and category, with additional analysis being undertaken to estimate the overall effect of a special issue on various performance indicators such as the JIF. The first step is to establish the numerator to be used – in this case, the number of citations received by each article of the special issue on an annual basis. The second step is to establish the denominator, and this can be estimated using Garfield's original formula.⁷ The third step is to determine the timeframe for counting citations. Garfield originally chose a two-year citation 'window' as his investigations had found that the majority of article citations are received in the first few years after publication.⁸ An examination of Garfield's original explanation of the criteria,⁷ as well as a more recent publication on how citable items are classified by Thomson Reuters,⁹ suggests that all 14 articles in the special issue would be deemed 'citable'.

An additional strategy for assessing the bibliometric performance of a special issue is to estimate its contribution to official JIF scores and JCR citation rates. This can be achieved by comparing the official scores from 2007 onwards with trends that were occurring at the journal

prior to the special issue appearing. Regression towards the mean almost always occurs in real life,¹³ and as such, this represents a novel but reasonable method for considering bibliometric data, both with and without the special issue. Owing to the aforementioned two-year citation counting 'window' of the JIF, an article published in a given year will influence the JIF scores of two subsequent years. Citations to articles in the 2007 special issue would therefore have influenced both the 2008 and 2009 JIF scores, so additional analysis was undertaken for these two years. As the journal did not receive an official JIF score between 1995 and 1997, trend analysis in the current study was performed for the longest possible time period, 1998 to 2006.

Results and discussion

Citations by year and category of article are presented in Fig. 1. Overall, review articles attracted the largest proportion of total citations (52%), followed by original articles (32%), the editorial (7%), the field report (5%) and the short communication (4%). The citation ratio of review articles was 1.8 in the first year following publication (2008), it then peaked at 4.2 in 2009 and has remained above 4.0 since (Fig. 2). This higher than average 'citability' of review articles compared to other article categories is consistent with previous research conducted elsewhere.¹⁰ Importantly, 57% of articles in the special issue were cited at least once within the first year after publication, and all articles had been cited at least once within two years of publication. This is a much better result than that reported in some other bibliometric studies conducted on the same journal. In one earlier study of *Industrial Health*, for example, it was shown that one-third of all articles published in the journal between 1987 and 2006 did not attract any citations at all.¹¹ On the other hand, the overall citation ratio for the special issue has been around 3.0 since 2009. The official JIF scores for *Industrial Health* were 0.792 in 2007 and 0.745 in

2008. If we assume that the JIF reflects an average citation frequency,¹² then the special issue was at least three times more effective at attracting citations than a regular issue was over the same period.

Aside from citations occurring over time, it is also worth considering how rapidly the special issue's citations were received and this can be measured by estimating their 'immediacy'. Official JCR immediacy index scores are calculated by dividing the number of articles published in a given year by the number of times they are cited in the same year. The official immediacy index score for *Industrial Health* was 0.231 in 2007, meaning that, on average, each article was cited 0.231 times. An estimate of the special issue's 'immediacy index' can be calculated by dividing the number of citations it received in 2007 by the number of articles it published in the same year. This calculation gives a score of 0.428, which is almost double that of the journal's official JCR immediacy index of the same year.

An examination of linear citation and JIF trends from 2007 onwards, both with and without the special issue, provides some additional, interesting findings. It is worth considering what the official JIF 2008 and 2009 scores might have been without the special issue. These figures can be estimated by removing the special issue's 2008 and 2009 citations from the numerator and its citable items from the denominator of the official calculation. Little difference was evident in the first year post-publication, suggesting that the JIF might have been less than 5% lower in 2008 without the special issue. However, the difference was more pronounced for the 2009 JIF, as every article from the special issue was cited at least once in that year. In fact, one-quarter of all citations received by the journal in 2009 were to articles published in the 2007 special issue. As a result, the 2009 JIF was approximately 30% greater than it might have been had the special issue not been published.

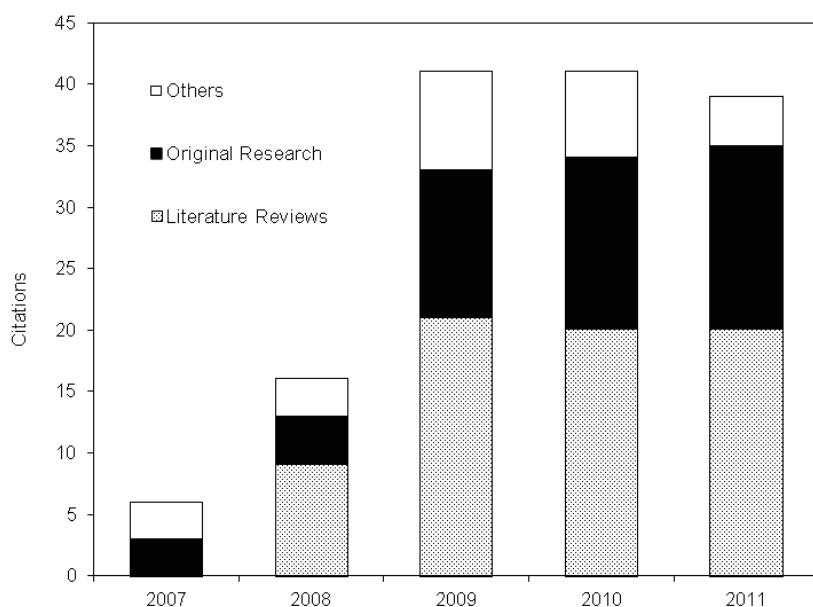


Figure 1. Citations by article category and year, 2007-2011 (based on Web of Science® data)

Conclusion

Overall, our analysis suggests that the 2007 special issue from *Industrial Health* had a considerable impact on the bibliometric profile of the journal in which it appeared. The current study revealed that special issues can attract more immediate citations and more overall citations than regular issues, a result which is in accordance with other research.¹⁴ Editors should, therefore, be mindful of the role that special issues can play in boosting the profile of a journal and attracting the interest of authors and readers.¹⁵ Aside from potential bibliometric advantages, special issues may also appeal to readers by providing convenient and highly educational material on a specific topic.¹⁶ Further bibliometric studies are now warranted to establish the long-term performance and the overall impact of special issues on the scientific community.

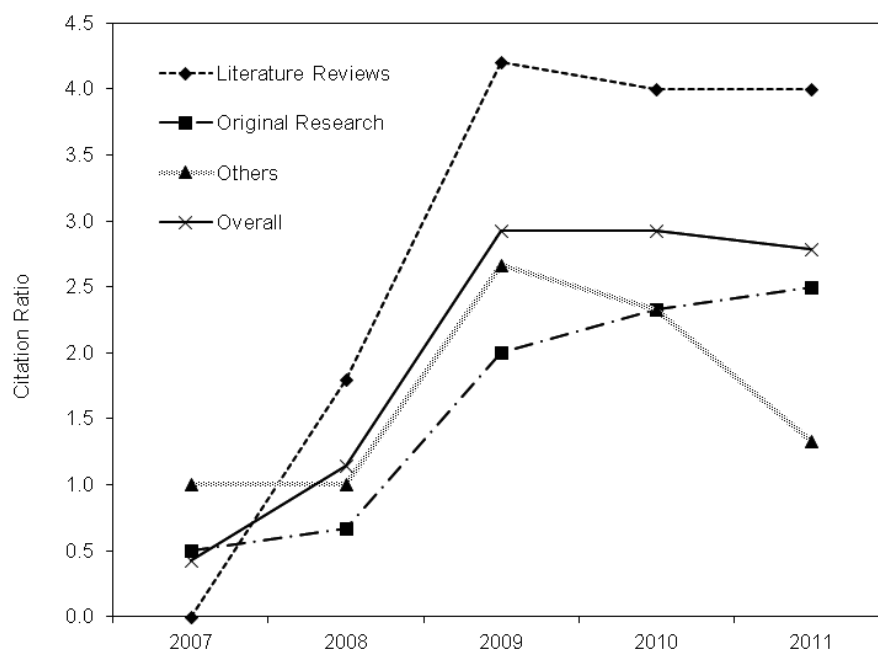


Figure 2. Citation ratios by article category and year, 2007-2011 (based on Web of Science® data)

Competing interests

DRS, PAL and SA are on the Editorial Board of *Industrial Health*.

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Essays

Open access for European science journals

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Abstract The open access model provides an alternative to the subscription model of journal publishing, which fairly reimburses publishers for the services they provide. Open access journal publishing has been growing rapidly since 2000, and has been proved to be sustainable, and to produce quality journals using a different business model. The model has proved to be a good choice for regional society journals wishing to increase their impact and reach.

Keywords Open access; STM publishing; Society publishing; BioMed Central

Introduction

Until recently academic journals were available only in printed form, *via* subscription. Unless you had a personal subscription, reading an article in the journal involved making a trip to the library, finding the article you wanted amongst the bound volumes, reading it there and then or making a photocopy to read at leisure. Alternatively you could order the article through your library's document delivery service. Whichever route you took, it meant that there was a wait involved, and if you found an interesting reference to follow, you had to do the same thing all over again.

Less than two decades later, almost all journals are available online, accessible from your computer or mobile device, wherever you are. You can link out to references and supporting data, play videos, comment on an article or blog about it, and a variety of other related activities which are enabled by digital communication. But even in this connected world, if you come from an institution with limited library funds, or a small company, or are a patient researching the latest treatment for your disease, or are just not authorised to access the journal from the particular computer you are using, when you want to access a paper from a journal published under the subscription model, you come up against a barrier which requires payment before you go any further. So you either have to pay or find a library which will give you access and take the tortuous route described above. The

subscription model, which made sense in the print world, now acts as a barrier for many of those who need access to the information in scientific and medical journals.

The Open Access Model

New frameworks, not based on historical print models, are needed to cater for these new opportunities. These frameworks need to fairly reimburse publishers for the services they provide. The open access model, which has been growing rapidly over the last decade, seeks to provide this framework. Open access journals allow universal free access to their content, which is openly licensed to allow reuse. To cover the costs of the services provided, the publisher charges an Article Processing Charge (APC) on publication of the article, which is generally paid for from the author's institution or research grant, or sometimes by a sponsoring body such as a society. Many funding bodies (eg Max Planck Institute, Wellcome Trust and the UK Research Funding Councils) now mandate that research papers which arise from research they fund should be made available in open access form. The funding bodies allocate money for the APCs. Many universities have established central funds for researchers to cover open access costs.¹ Recent research shows that fewer than 20% of authors in OA journals pay the fees themselves, and this number is less than 10% in biological sciences, earth sciences and physics (Fig. 1).² For authors who are not funded or come from low income countries, the major open access publishers offer waivers.³

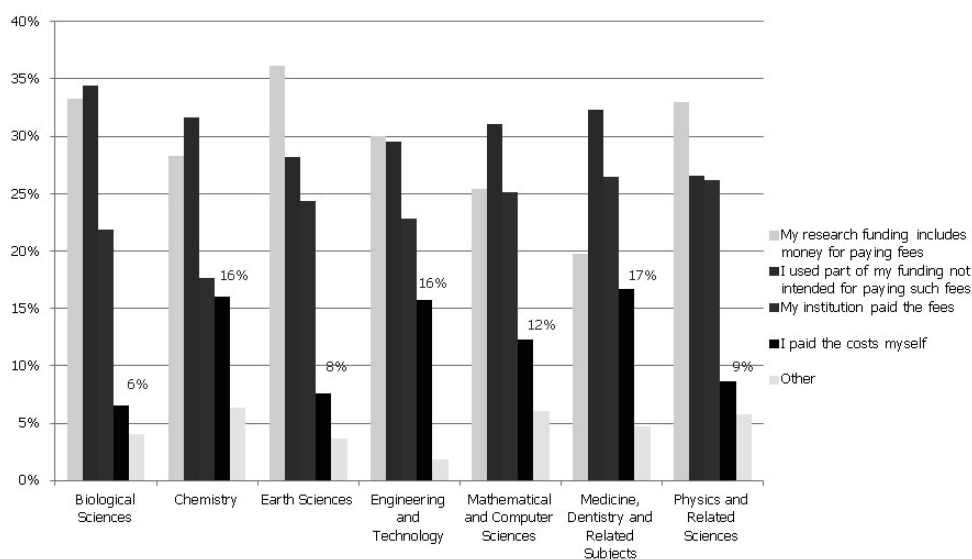


Figure 1. Payment of open access fees.¹

Benefits of this model to some of the constituencies who previously had no access are clearly articulated by two quotes:

“These days, more than ever, efficient access to scientific information is a must, for all kinds of research and innovation. In particular, researchers, engineers, and small businesses need to access scientific results quickly and easily. If they can’t, it’s bad for business: for small businesses, for example, it can mean two years’ extra delay before getting new products to market. So if we want to compete globally, that kind of access cannot be a luxury for Europe — it’s a must-have.” Neelie Kroes, Vice-President of the European Commission responsible for the Digital Agenda, *“Making Open Access a reality for Science”*, 29 May 2012.

“The timing of these publications worked out perfectly for me. In June, I will be seeing a doctor who is new to me. Among others, I have a lesion in my shoulder that is behaving badly and causing a lot of pain. I read and copied both the publications on surgical and pain management. They are precise and informative. I believe these articles will prove to be invaluable for all of us as we seek proper care for this disease.” Letter from a reader of a supplement published in *Orphanet Journal of Rare Diseases* (an open access journal), 24 May 2012.

Since the first open access journals were published by BioMed Central in 2000, the sustainability of the open access model has been proven, with BioMed Central and PLOS, amongst others, running profitable open access publishing programmes. Open access journals are in most ways exactly the same as those published under a subscription model, with chief editors, editorial boards, peer review systems, and indexed by the major bibliographic databases. The difference is mainly in the funding mechanism that they use.

The quality that OA journals can achieve is shown by the fact that over 1,100 open-access journals are indexed by Thomson Reuters Web of Science®, and many of those lead their respective categories (eg top two open-access journals in tropical medicine). According to the Registry of Open Access Repositories Mandatory Archiving Policies, open

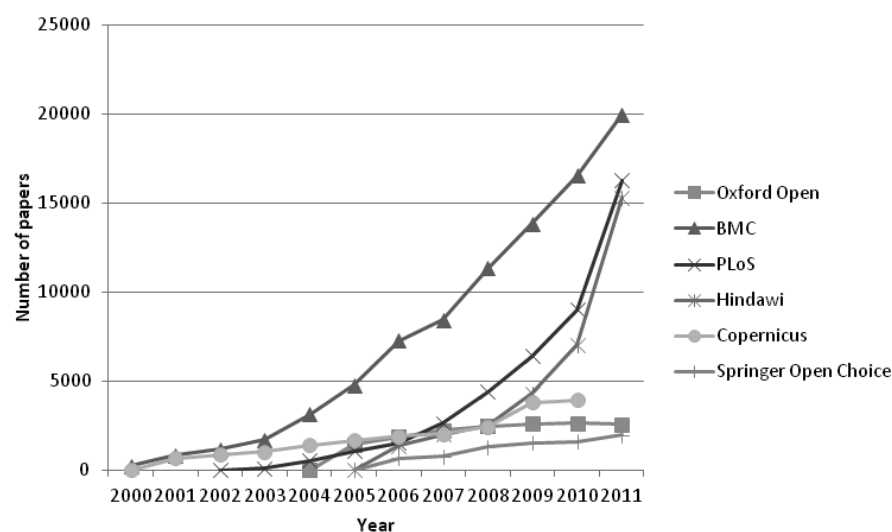


Figure 2. Papers published by major OA publishers in 2000 – 2011.

access to research is now mandated by over 150 institutions and over 50 funders.⁴ Because of this, submissions to OA publishers have increased rapidly (Fig. 2, information supplied by the publishers).

The benefits to authors of publishing their papers using the open access model include high visibility of their papers which leads to high citation rates.⁵ Authors also become direct customers of the publisher (rather than solely the librarian) which means that publishers concentrate more on author satisfaction and work to improve their service to authors. Many authors also report that it is less expensive to publish in an open-access journal than to pay the page and colour charges in some subscription journals.

*“Scientific authors when choosing where to submit their manuscripts are making choices... they evaluate the costs and benefits for a particular journal compared with other options... With APC-funded OA journals, authors will be forced to consider even closer [sic] the value they get from a particular journal... OA journals need to be able to offer additional advantages such as accessibility, rapid publication, better topical fit, and/or the likelihood of more citations to offset and exceed the negative cost of the APC.”*⁶

Journal editors report that having no page budget allows them to choose to accept or reject submitted papers in line with the editorial objectives, and that the wider visibility of their journal means that they receive more submissions from researchers who may not have considered the journal previously.

The example of *Acta Veterinaria Scandinavica*

Acta Veterinaria Scandinavica was founded in 1959, and is the publication of the Veterinary Association of the Nordic Countries. Until 2005, it was published as a subscription journal, but was struggling to increase its low subscription rates, to attract quality submissions and to improve its journal impact factor (JIF). In 2006, it transferred to BioMed Central to be published under the open-access model. Since then, its submissions have steadily increased, allowing the editors to be more selective about what they publish, which, in turn, led to a threefold increase of JIF (Fig. 3).

Conclusion

For the reasons described above, increasing numbers of journals are transferring to open access publication. In a world where gaining additional subscriptions and visibility for content amongst the ever increasing mass of information on the internet is becoming increasingly difficult, open access has proved to be a good choice for regional society journals wishing to increase their impact and reach.

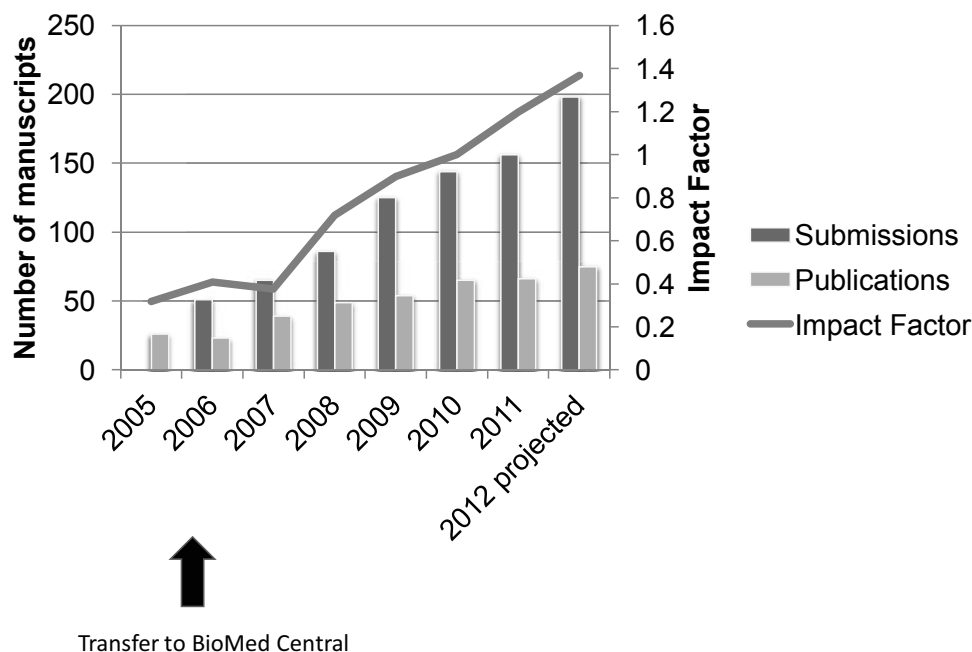


Figure 3. Effect of move to Open Access publishing on *Acta Veterinaria Scandinavica*

Acknowledgements

The essay is based on the presentation delivered at the EASE conference in Tallinn, Estonia on 9 June 2012.

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Development of open access medical journals in Russia: encountered problems and the example of the *Saratov Journal of Medical Scientific Research*

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Abstract The article highlights the main problems and perspectives of launching open access medical journals in Russia, using *The Saratov Journal of Medical Scientific Research* as an example. Launching the journal's open access website is viewed as a major achievement, enabling smooth communication and coordination of the editorial work. Insufficient English language skills among authors and editors are the main problem hampering international recognition of Russian scholarly journals.

Keywords Periodicals as topic; biomedicine; Russia; science editing.

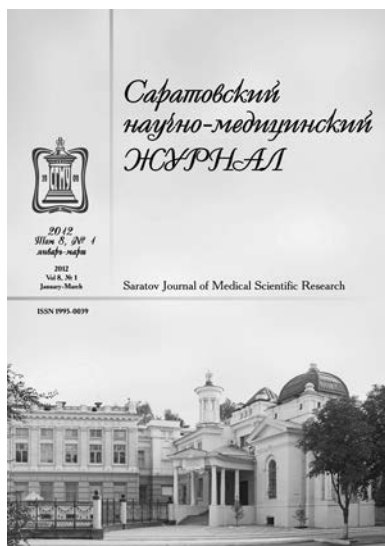
Most Russian scholarly journals remain largely unknown to the global scientific community, causing isolation of information flows in Russia. Despite the wide availability of digital translators, the language barrier and insufficient

English language skills among Russian authors and editors are still the main reasons limiting the global influence of their scientific articles. They also prevent the publication of these articles in the most prestigious English-language journals. To address this, some Russian journals have launched English-language versions supported by international publishing companies such as Springer. However, bilingual journals cover only a small part of medical research in Russia.

Several problems are common to most Russian biomedical journals: i) lack of electronic full-texts of articles, ii) poor quality of journal websites, iii) inefficient peer review, iv) lack of open access, v) lack of funds to run the journals (mainly due to the so-called economic self-sufficiency policy) and vi) incorrect English language editing.

Importantly, to obtain a scientific degree and academic position, Russian authors have to publish articles in the

journals approved by the Higher Attestation Commission of Russia (VAK). Once local journals achieve listing by the Commission, their further development is often abandoned, with no further attempts to improve international visibility and indexing and archiving prospects.



Saratov Journal of Medical Scientific Research (SJMSR) was launched in 2002. For a long while, the journal was produced only in print, with a circulation of only 500 copies, and thus remained largely unknown to the medical community. In 2009, a new set of editorial aims was adopted: i) to create an open access electronic version of the journal, ii) to print limited copies of the journal primarily for Russian academic libraries, the Saratov State Medical University and individual subscribers, iii) to prioritise publication of articles by distinguished foreign authors, eminent Russian scientists and young specialists.

It was also decided to benefit manuscripts with high reviewer scores by publishing them free of charge. To cover some costs of the editorial work, the journal started to charge publication fees for accepted manuscripts, funded by the authors' institutions or research funds. The share of these articles is about 30%.

At the same time, the editors of the journal modernised its format, launched a website (www.ssmj.ru) and improved the editorial workflow. All published articles are now posted on the website for open access. Particular attention was paid to the quality of the website's English page. As a result, the journal was accepted for indexing by Ulrich's International Periodicals Directory, Index Copernicus, Directory of Open Access Journals, Open J-Gate, Google Scholar, Chemical Abstracts Service, EBSCO, and more than 50 international scientific and medical websites provide links to the journal's website. In 2010, online processing of submissions in both Russian and English languages started.

These changes in the editorial policy resulted in an increase in the citation rate in the Russian Science Citation Index, from just 4 in December 2008 to 143 in March 2012. The journal reached the level of 4.87 score by Index Copernicus.

These improved scientific rankings have led to increased submissions (from 131 in 2008 to 349 in 2011) and a higher acceptance rate (now around 35%). More than 100,000

visitors from 155 countries have visited the journal's website since 2009: mostly from Russia, but also from Ukraine, the US and elsewhere.

In 2009, the editorial office implemented electronic document management, as well as starting to use Twitter, Facebook, ResearchGate and SciPeople networking resources for the distribution of information to the readership.

Figure 1 depicts the current editorial workflow. The main medium for communication between the authors, editorial staff and readers is now the journal's website. Regular in-person meetings are required only to address strategic issues.

The editorial web team works on indexing the journal's website in search engines. The main focus is on Google and Yandex. Search engines are the source of 66% of all visitors.

Saratov Journal of Medical Scientific Research is one of the fastest growing open access medical journals in Russia. Over the past three years the journal has attracted many new readers from Russia and abroad. The main problem to overcome remains the language barrier. It is planned to create a fully English version of our journal, to increase funding and to improve the quality of the peer review and accepted articles.

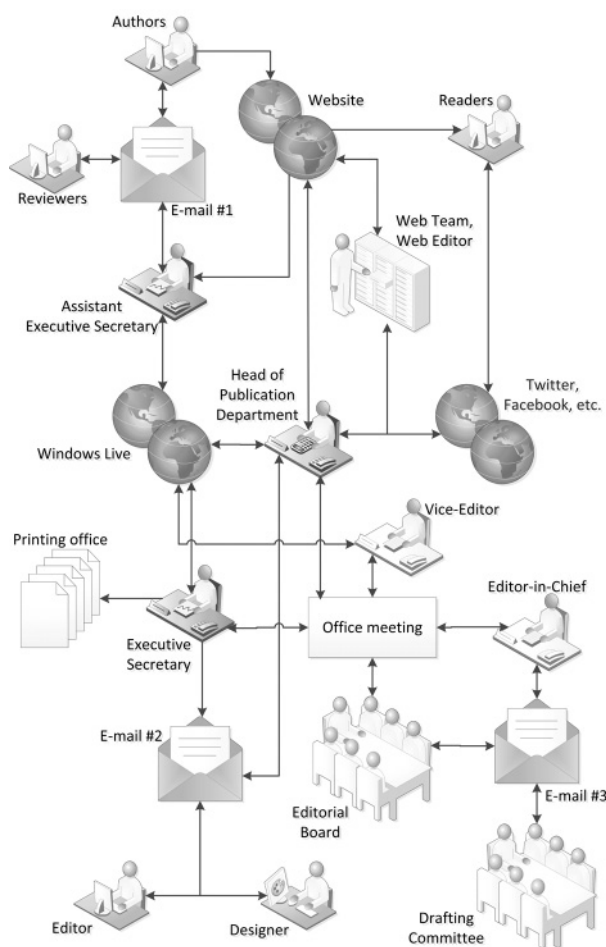


Figure 1. Editorial work of the publication department of *Saratov Journal of Medical Scientific Research*.

Acknowledgement

Comments of Valentina Markusova and Renat Karamourzov are gratefully acknowledged.

Korean Association of Medical Journal Editors at the forefront of improving the quality and indexing chances of its member journals

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Abstract The article overviews some achievements and problems of Korean medical journals published in the highly competitive journal environment. Activities of the Korean Association of Medical Journal Editors (KAMJE) are viewed as instrumental for improving the quality of Korean articles, indexing a large number of local journals in prestigious bibliographic databases and launching new abstract and citation tracking databases or platforms (eg KoreaMed, KoreaMed Synapse, the Western Pacific Regional Index Medicus [WPRIM]). KAMJE encourages its member journals to upgrade science editing standards and to legitimately increase citation rates, primarily by publishing more great articles with global influence. Experience gained by KAMJE and problems faced by Korean editors may have global implications.

Keywords Periodicals as topic; medicine; learned associations; journal indexing; science communication; Korea.

Medicine is one of the major scholarly fields all over the world. Its scientific scope covers a wide range of topics from basic and clinical research, and partly from humanities and social sciences. Over the past two decades, Korean medicine has greatly expanded its scope, advanced basic and clinical research, accumulated cutting-edge information on clinical practice and moved towards highly specialised medical technologies. Along with that, numerous Korean learned societies and related scholarly journals have been launched.

Korean Association of Medical Journal Editors

To meet the growing need of coordinating journal publishing and advancing science writing and editing skills, in February 1996 it was decided to launch the Korean Association of Medical Journal Editors (KAMJE). Initially 51 medical journals and 7 individual members participated in the foundation meeting of KAMJE. At that time there were 224 Korean medical journals, with only five indexed on PubMed/Medline and none on Web of Science. Most journals were oriented towards the local readership. However, some scientists began to publish articles in international prestigious journals and the Korean government officially decided to encourage the international publication during the same period.

Currently there are 213 journals – regular members of

KAMJE.¹ The journals are mostly published by professional societies. KAMJE is now responsible for editors' training on writing, editing, scientific integrity and ethics. The Association also runs three databases, namely KoreaMed, KoreaMed Synapse and Korean Medical Citation Index (KoMCI), tracking member journals.

KoreaMed

The main aim of KAMJE is to improve the quality of local medical publications and to educate Korean editors, similar to that of many related learned associations.² It also aims to improve the visibility of Korean articles. Accordingly, one of the initial activities of KAMJE was to survey the status of local medical journals, to evaluate their quality and to arrange training in science writing and peer review. Subsequently, an important decision was made to establish an English-abstract database covering local medical journals - KoreaMed.

KoreaMed was launched in September 2001 in its present form with about 20,000 English abstracts from Medline.³ The number of abstracts has grown considerably to 184,731, accompanied by figures and tables from 187 journals as of April 2012. The current scope of KoreaMed abstracts ranges from medical sciences to dentistry, nursing, eubiotics, veterinary science and dietetics.

The functionality of KoreaMed is similar to PubMed, a database of abstracts, figures and tables operated by the US National Center for Biotechnology Information.

The journals listed in KoreaMed are reviewed and selected by a review committee in accordance with the KAMJE policies. Indexing in KoreaMed is subjected to the membership of a journal in KAMJE by its score from initial and repeated evaluations (7 years after indexing). By 2011, 28 initial evaluations for 220 journals and 10 re-evaluations for 100 journals had been arranged. The evaluation is based on the quality of editorial board management, timeliness of publications, citation rates and journal indexing in international bibliographic databases such as PubMed. The evaluation is divided into three sections, each scored separately. The highest score is five. An average score of 2.5 was required for indexing before 2012 and higher than 3 after 2012.

The abstract retrieval in KoreaMed is facilitated by Naver, a local web portal, and Google (from 2006). Over the past

years, many journals have established links to the KoreaMed website. The number of visitors to KoreaMed has increased from 120,000 in 2006 to 587,000 in 2007 and 720,000 in 2008. As a result of improved visibility, eleven Korean medical journals were indexed by Science Citation Index (SCI) in 2008 and seven in 2009. Currently, 25 KAMJE-member journals are listed in SCI-Expanded (SciSearch®).

KoreaMed Synapse

KAMJE joined CrossRef in 2007 and started to tag with digital object identifiers (DOIs) individual articles of its member journals. Using the DOI links, a full-text platform named KoreaMed Synapse was launched.⁴ KoreaMed Synapse linked 117 local journals to cited references from all over the world. The platform helped to raise global awareness of Korean journals and their citation chances. The number of visitors to KoreaMed Synapse has exceeded that of the KoreaMed. Hits to KoreaMed Synapse reached the level of over one million in 2010.

Korean Medical Citation Index

In 2001, the Korean Academy of Medical Sciences initiated a project of Korean Medical Citation Index (KoMCI) in collaboration with KAMJE.⁵ The KoMCI publishes annual citation analysis and generates impact factors of KoreaMed journals. In 2012, the KoMCI project has been transferred to KAMJE and will be managed together with the KoreaMed and the KoreaMed Synapse.

Continuous activities of KAMJE

KAMJE activities, supported by the Korean Academy of Medical Sciences and other professional associations, have improved the quality and indexing chances of Korean medical journals (Table 1). Editors of the leading Korean medical journals now take responsibility for educating novice editors on editorial policies, standards of editing, scientific integrity, publication ethics, copyright issues and other topics of great interest to Korean authors, reviewers and editors. KAMJE members are now considering legitimate ways of increasing the citation rate of Korean journals to make them more influential globally.

The experience of KAMJE in editing and indexing scholarly journals was instrumental in building up the Western Pacific Region Index Medicus (WPRIM), a project of the WHO Western Pacific Regional Office, aimed at global accessibility of research publications from the region.⁶ In addition, the expansion of KAMJE activities led to the foundation of the Asian Pacific Association of Medical Journal Editors (APAME) in May 2008.

Problems and prospects of Korean medical journals

KAMJE experts officially encourage open access publishing as the driving force for better visibility and continuous improvement of the quality of its member journals. Opening access to full texts and making them freely available to the global readership is an advantage in the highly competitive journal publishing environment. In this regard, the current trend of archiving local journals in PubMed Central should be appreciated (Table 1).

Database/Platform	1996	2006	2009	2010	2012
PubMed/Medline	5	13	14	15	15
SciSearch	0	5	22	24	25
Scopus	-	-	30	41	64
PubMed Central	-	-	18	38	56
KoreaMed	-	119	156	168	187
KoreaMed Synapse	-	-	64	81	117

Table 1. Visibility of Korean medical journals in major international and local bibliographic databases and literature search platforms in 1996-2012

More effort is needed to maintain focus on Korean issues and widen the scope of the journals to reach a global audience. The Korean government currently encourages and supports the publication of global journals. This strategy stimulates Korean journals for their survival.

Paradoxically, in spite of the boost in Korean scholarly publishing, several problems have emerged. Thanks to the developments in various Korean disciplines, there is an unprecedented growth of the number of specialised associations. These associations are required to publish at least one journal for official registration. Nonetheless, the growing number of the newly launched medical journals, published by numerous speciality and subspeciality professional associations, is not accompanied by growth of high-quality articles. Most great submissions are still attracted by a handful of top global or Korean journals, which creates shortages of articles for most local journals and dampens their influence.

An option to overcome this problem could be to co-publish journals by professional associations with closely related scopes of interest. However, co-publication may also be problematic given the issues of sharing publishing costs, organising joint editorial boards, etc.

Another big issue for Korean journals is that governmental organisations do not sufficiently prioritise publications in local journals when reviewing research grant applications or hiring specialists for academic institutions. This issue should be overcome by upgrading local journals to global journals.

Acknowledgements

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On the current presentation of scientific papers: 1. Editing out redundancy

Denys Wheatley

Editor in Chief, Cell Biology International; Cell Biology International Reports; Cancer Cell International; Oncology News; Chairman and Director, BioMedES (www.biomedes.co.uk); Leggat, Keithhall, Inverurie, Aberdeen AB51 0LX, UK wheatley@abdn.ac.uk

In days of old, editors wielded their red pens with considerable authority in editing copies of accepted papers in preparation for printing. A manuscript could be covered in red ink to an extent that made most printers wince. The compositor set up lead type back-to-front to be inked and printed on paper to make the “hard-copy”. It is little wonder that the shorter a paper, the easier it was for both the editor and compositor, with the advantage that more papers could be published per issue where the page-budget per issue was low.

That’s all gone by the board; “track changes” has replaced the editor’s red pen, and we can now publish as many pages as we like in online journals. Page budgets and word limits are not so often a concern, except perhaps in Abstracts. But lengthiness does not make for a good scientific publication; indeed, the one person not mentioned so far is the reader. He or she would surely prefer to read a short paper that is to the point than a rambling diatribe. A submission that is succinct is a joy to editors, reviewers and readers.

My main concern in this commentary is redundancy. We editors have a duty to cut out unnecessary words and phrases, as well as repetitions, to ensure that the text flows easily and is as succinct as possible. Many papers I have sifted through recently clearly show that redundancy is rife and does not get removed prior to publication.

We can to some extent blame the entire practice of scientific communication. A paper has now become so stereotyped that it makes it nearly impossible to be brief and to the point. Over 50 years ago, the Nobel Laureate Peter Medawar considered this stereotyping tended to make the scientific paper something of a fraud. The format has changed little in the interim, most papers being quite frankly boring. How many of us have seen even the slightest hint of humour in a scientific paper? Any attempt at it seems to get the reviewer’s disapproval and the editor’s red pen! Perhaps it is time for a complete overhaul of how scientific communications are presented. Many bad habits that have crept in over the years are being perpetuated. Something can and should be done to remedy a worsening situation. Why, you ask, is it worsening?

Papers from authors throughout the world who do not have English as their native tongue are copying the format and presentation of average communications from many different sources. Personal style is rare. A lot of “petty” plagiarism is done because it is easier to use the words that someone else already published. From the use of less than acceptable English in international journals, common expressions become adopted and also distorted, which gets worse as the quantity of publications submitted and published each year escalates. It may be too late to take a stand against these problems. However, if some “body” can and should be doing something about it, it is us editors of international journals. We should once again be wielding

our “red pens”. The stronger our protestations, the sooner authors might comply with the edict that “short and simple is beautiful”.

Much of the redundancy in papers is due to unnecessary verbosity. Before boring you, as I get on my hobby-horse, a few examples should suffice to show you how we can strip out many irrelevant words and phrases. Take a look at the frequently used phrases set out below, each with a succinct alternative.

...cells were plated at a density of 1 x 10⁶ cells per ml

cells were plated at 1 x 10⁶/ml

Recent studies have shown that X is proportional to Y (Smith and Jones, 2001).

Smith and Jones (2001) found X proportional to Y. [Is 2001 “recent”? Check for yourself how often this type of nonsense is missed.]

..., but this needs to be further elucidated in future investigations.

...; further investigation is required. Alternatively:- delete the whole phrase – a scientific paper is “state of the art”; invariably (further) research goes on!

10%, 20%, 40%, 60% and 80%

10, 20, 40, 60 and 80%

...the presence of compound X caused the level of the activity of the enzyme to be elevated.

...X increased enzyme activity.

...the resuspended cells were spun in an ultracentrifuge at 100,000g.

...the resuspended cells were spun at 100,000g.[inference helps cut words where it is obvious – what can possibly be used other than an ultracentrifuge to spin at this intensity?!]

In addition, we also suggest that X might be proportional to Y.

X might be proportional to Y.

X has been found to be important in...

X is important in...

With little effort, many papers can be 20-30% shorter simply by removing redundant words and phrases, without losing any of the sense. We achieve greater succinctness and clarity. Need I go on? Editors, take note; we have a job to do. But we must also educate authors to follow suit, which would make our task easier in future. In my next commentary I will be dealing with the use of clichés.

People are dying for lack of knowledge. Can EASE help to prevent this?

Paola De Castro

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More research on health care is being conducted and published than ever before, yet people are still dying for lack of knowledge. Tens of thousands of people die needlessly every day and the lack of healthcare information is a major cause. People die because they or the people caring for them do not have access to the information and knowledge they need, when they need it, to make appropriate decisions regarding both prevention and treatment. Improving the availability and use of information could prevent millions of children dying of pneumonia or diarrhea or malaria, or prevent women dying of haemorrhage after labour.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) established by the United Nations in the year 2000 include an important set of challenges for global health to be fulfilled by the year 2015 such as reducing child mortality rates, improving maternal health, combating HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases, as well as eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality and empowering women, ensuring environmental sustainability, and developing a global partnership for development¹.

Universal access to information for health professionals is a prerequisite for meeting the MDGs. Yet, despite the Internet revolution and the number of successful initiatives worldwide to increase the availability of free online resources, there are still major barriers to knowledge-based health care in less economically developed countries². *The Lancet* recently published a themed issue on Universal Health Coverage³ providing an updated global discussion on MDGs under different perspectives; most articles in the issue stress the concept that services should be available when needed without causing financial hardship to the user. Alongside economic considerations, progress towards the MDGs can be accelerated through improved communication, understanding and advocacy among those involved in the production, exchange and use of knowledge.

In this regard, EASE members, a community of people sharing an interest in science communication and editing, may wish to know more about the MDGs and the relevant initiatives in progress at global level to support their achievements.

HIFA2015, Healthcare Information For All by 2015, is one of the many initiatives in support of the MDGs. It is a global campaign and knowledge network which has the goal that "by 2015 every person worldwide will have access to an informed healthcare provider". It is administered by the Global Healthcare Information Network, a non-profit organisation working to improve the quality of health care in less economically developed countries. One-third of HIFA2015 members are based in Africa, one-third in Europe, and one-third in the rest of the world. Together they are working for a future where people are no longer dying for lack of basic healthcare knowledge. HIFA2015 represents more than 5,000 health workers, librarians, publishers, researchers and policymakers in more than 2000 organisations across 167 countries worldwide.

To date over 160 organisations worldwide have declared their commitment to the HIFA2015 goal.

Members interact mainly by two email discussion forums: HIFA2015 and CHILD2015. Membership is free and open to all stakeholders to exchange experiences, expertise and ideas on how to improve access to healthcare information. Discussions are very informal and provide information at different levels on health-related issues from around the world.

Requests and advice circulating in the forum should help develop the HIFA2015 Knowledge Base⁴, a searchable, multilingual database, using the so called HIFA-Lumps (extracts from HIFA forum, properly selected and ordered according to a metadata scheme allowing for searching and coupling of key elements). This Knowledge Base, predicted to be released in 2013, will contribute to the planning and implementation of current and future healthcare information activities, build a shared analysis of issues and priorities, collate evidence to persuade governments and funding agencies to invest in cost-effective solutions, etc.

EASE recognises the value of HIFA2015 and the role that its members can play to support the campaign and improve communication of health related information. That is why EASE applied to join HIFA as a supporting organisation in June 2012 and we are glad to communicate that the application received HIFA2015 approval.

EASE members can provide assistance and advice to authors and editors where it is most needed and eventually be involved in training activities in collaboration of local institutions; at the same time they can learn from this extraordinary global network of people striving for global health.

I joined HIFA some months ago and learned a lot by listening to the voice of people who share ideas, experiences, information and links through a solution-focused email forum connecting health care workers, publishers, editors, librarians, information specialists from health districts in rural villages, local hospitals, as well as academic and research institutions and associations, spread all over the world.

To know more please visit the website www.hifa2015.org and subscribe to HIFA forums.

Special thanks to Neil Pakenham-Walsh, Coordinator of HIFA2015 and CHILD2015; Co-director, Global Healthcare Information Network

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Book review

Writing Readable Research: a guide for students of social science by Beverly A Lewin. Equinox Publishing Ltd, 2010. Circa £12.74. ISBN-13: 978-1-904768-56-2 (Paperback)

There are so many books on research writing that the question is not ‘is this a good book?’ but ‘is it better than the rest?’ Is there something special that makes it stand out from, for example, the 34 titles in my institute’s library? Now, this book is certainly a good one, the author’s 25 years’ experience of teaching scientific writing, and her research, have provided numerous insights useful to her intended audience of novice writers, particularly those in social sciences and particularly those who are not native speakers of English. And I’m comforted to note that these insights are largely the same as those I’ve accumulated in teaching the same subject over a similar period. However, for me, the book doesn’t have that something special that would make it more recommendable than the others. Something special such as being written by a journal editor (as is Lichtfouse, 2009), being specifically for the social sciences, or specifically for writers whose native language is not English. Much of the book is devoted to general writing problems (as the author says in her preface) whereas the title led me to expect a detailed treatment of what social science journals in all their variety require. Likewise, only the special material on grammar (Chapters 2 & 3) is specifically directed to non-native speakers of English. The rest of the chapters are, again, general.

Three other things worried me. One of these was the main title, because research has to be published before it can be read. Researchers must first write to be published before they can write to be readable. These aims can conflict. Appreciating and solving these conflicts is a skill novice writers need to acquire and which needs to be included in any scientific writing guide. Another of my worries was that there was no consideration of who the research should be made readable for. In particular, that it should be made readable for non-native readers of English. These scientists are a very large portion of the audience in any scientific discipline and, from my experience in Europe and Asia, grossly neglected. My third worry was the lack of reference to the ICMJE “Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts” (URM). The URM are the distilled experience of dozens of scientists and publishers and so contain useful pointers to good science writing and manuscript preparation. Yes, it’s true that few social sciences journals are on the ICMJE list. Nevertheless, the URM informs the policies and guidelines of all the major international science publishers and those of other bodies (including EASE itself). All scientists therefore need to be aware of the URM when they write.

In addition to these general concerns, I wonder if the book’s general emphasis on “special words” might encourage unnecessary wordiness. Why, for example, recommend ‘conduct an analysis’ when using the verb ‘analyse’ is clearer and shorter? Of dubious worth, too, I believe is the great emphasis on “toning down” (eg p131ff). This tends to hide the message in verbiage and weakens messages to such an

extent that they evaporate completely. Most manuscripts I see need ‘toning up’, not weakening. If scientists are confident enough to publish then they should be confident enough to do so without such extensive hedging.

Beverly Lewin’s book of course contains many good points. Introducing the varied origins of constraints in the first chapter usefully illustrates the space in which science writing takes place. Stressing that elements are best kept parallel (p57) and events and causes in their natural order (p59) should help prevent these common sins. Also, encouraging writers to construct their text in ‘moves’ (p85) (what I call ‘modules’ in my courses) should help produce well-structured manuscripts, something that is all too uncommon. The list of prepositions appropriate to particular statements (p123) is definitely useful and something that will help my German-speaking students avoid ‘cancer is a consequence from smoking’ and similar errors. Particularly useful in this book are the tasks or exercises. Practical exercises like these help enormously in developing writing skills but few courses include them. Scientists should practise writing, it would help. They practise most other tasks in their profession so why not practise writing? If these exercises prompt even some scientists to practise, they will have done their bit to improve scientific writing.

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EASE 30th Anniversary

Interviews with Honorary Life Members



STEPHEN LOCK

Mini bio: After qualifying at Cambridge and Barts Hospital, Stephen Lock became a clinical haematologist for 10 years, entering full-time journalism at the *BMJ* in 1965 and becoming editor in 1975. He served on the EASE Council 1982-99 and as its President 1982-85.

How did you become involved in EASE and what are your earliest memories?

I think I started my connection with ELSE in 1977, but my predecessor at the *BMJ* had been to the initial planning meeting. My earliest memories are of the warmth of its council and general members and of the splendid assemblies and Council meetings. A small hotel next to the Luxembourg Gardens in Paris was a favourite spot for the latter, always with time for trips to the Palace Garnier and the art galleries as well as Henri Oertli's favourite cheap restaurants, followed inevitably by the duty-free party in somebody's room.

But progress was static: the membership wasn't increasing and anyway was mainly British and medical. People weren't so well off in those days, there were no cheap flights, English hadn't become the lingua franca and, crucially, ELSE had few activities outside the assemblies. So in 1977 we started joint *BMJ*/ELSE autumn weekend workshops for editors (scientific and technical, or whatever they are called these days), first at Winchester and, after others, settling on Tunbridge Wells for its accessibility to Gatwick and the South. First of all we attracted non-medics from the UK and then newly joined members from the Nordic countries came, followed by others. It was enormous fun.

Do you have a favorite moment, memory event, conference or entertaining encounter you'd like to share?

My favourite conference must be that at Pau, organised by Henri, with an ideal mix of meetings, events and trips. The views from the town centre are spectacular and one can understand why the Victorian rich went there to mitigate the agonies of their tuberculosis. What a nice place to die.

What was your most difficult/embarrassing or nerve-wracking experience?

My wife and I were in Prague on our way to Hungary for ELSE's 4th General Assembly when we had a phone call from a friend in Bratislava saying that the Czech authorities

had refused her a visa for the conference in Budapest, where she was due to give a presentation. Asking why, she was told that no Russians had been invited to balance the speakers (this was at the height of the Cold War). Despite being told that we had twice sent invitations to Moscow and received no reply, the ukase remained: this was, after all, the country and the city of Kafka. (Needless to say, Communism did nothing to sap the ebullience of the Hungarians.)

An embarrassing possibility was averted when, organising the Cambridge meeting, we followed Henri Oertli's advice and tried out every trip with a stopwatch. The latter wasn't necessary, but at Grime's Graves going down the step ladder I found myself looking up the skirt of the person above me; fortunately this was my wife's, but the episode did enable us to advise all the party that they might prefer trousers.

What was the most glaring typo or editorial "no-no" you ever spotted in an EASE publication?

Editors see typos everywhere, but I have seen "disinterested" (meaning uninterested) in a *European Science Editing* article. But far worse are the declaratory titles, which occur in too many journals. Science is never black or white, or permanent, so why the arrogance of a conclusion that may well be superseded in a few months? And a whole page of book reviews, where every account starts 'This book . . .' shows that some editors either nod, or don't care.

What are the biggest changes in publishing and EASE you have witnessed over the years?

At a macro level, apart from the continuing proliferation of journals (which has gone on legitimately since publishing started), self-evidently the use of the internet, for all aspects of publishing. I suspect very soon subscribers will receive their journals from their computers, or have to pay a lot more for a printed copy.

At a micro level I am delighted that the 'Anglo-Saxon' pattern of writing has prevailed. No two have done more to bring this about with their books than Maeve O'Connor and Hervé Maisonneuve. I shouted with joy reading the latter's *La Redaction Medicale*, where he states 'En redaction scientifique il n'y a pas plus de place pour la modestie que pour les autres sentiments.'

Do you have any advice or lessons learned that you'd like to share with younger members of EASE?

All the elderly say this, but you would think that thirty years ago or more nobody had ever thought about many of the problems discussed today as if they were new – whether peer review, the language of science, duplicate publication, research misconduct and so on. Why is all the 'literature' over 30 years old ignored (and I don't mean my own)?



PAUL FOGELBERG

Mini bio: Born in Helsinki in 1935. MSc 1962, PhD 1970, University of Helsinki. Associate Professor, University of Oulu 1981-82, Professor in Geography, University of Helsinki 1982-98. Vice Rector, University of Helsinki 1982-98. Editor or managing editor of several periodicals in the fields of geography and geosciences. Finnish Association of Science

Editors and Journalists (Suomen tiedetoimittajain liitto), founder and first President, 1985-88, board member 1989-92; European Association of Science Editors (EASE), council member or vice President 1982-91, President 1991-94, past President 1994-97, Lifetime Honorary Member 2003.

How did you become involved with EASE and what are your earliest memories?

During the middle 1970s I became a member of the European Association of Geoscience Editors (EDITERRA) and participated actively in their conferences. Towards the end of the 1970s it was suggested to start a cooperation between EDITERRA and ELSE, the corresponding association for life science editors. Negotiations between the two organisations resulted in a project to amalgamate them, and this was planned to take place at a joint ELSE – EDITERRA conference at Pau, France, in 1982. According to the plans, the President of ELSE would be proposed as the President of the new organisation to be founded, and correspondingly the President of EDITERRA proposed as Vice President. The day before the constitutive meeting, EDITERRA held its last General Assembly, at which I was elected President. At the constitutive meeting, then, the president of ELSE, Stephen Lock was elected President of the new association later to be called EASE, and I was elected Vice President. My presidency of EDITERRA thus lasted only one day, during which I felt myself as a king for one day. My active involvement in EASE then lasted until 1997.

Do you have a favorite moment, memory, event, conference or entertaining encounter you'd like to share?

I have taken part in all EASE triennial conferences with the exception of those in 2006 and 2009. They were all well organised, and most of them were unforgettable in one way or another. One conference I remember particularly well was the one held in Helsinki in 1997. I chaired the local organising committee, in which the Finnish Association of Science Editors and Journalists (FASEJ) was also represented. The Opening Session of the conference was held in the main hall of the University of Helsinki, where I had a double role: as a musician in the Louhi Wind Orchestra, and as the last speaker of the session. The band played music by Fredrik Pacius (a 19th century Finnish composer of German origin) and by Jean Sibelius. It also performed at the conference banquet playing light music after the dinner during the

coffee and dance music after that. I got the impression that the musical performances were highly appreciated and contributed to the success of the conference.

A sad moment

When the Helsinki conference was over, the local organising committee met the following day to have lunch together and to discuss the outcome. It was a very happy occasion, we were pleased that everything had worked well, and I directed my thanks particularly to the secretary of the group, Päivi Helminen, the secretary of FASEJ. We all strongly appreciated the work she had done. However, there was no happy end. The following morning I got a telephone call from one of her colleagues who told me that Päivi had passed away the preceding evening. She was crossing a street on her way to a concert, when she was hit by a car driven by a drunk driver, which abruptly ended her life.

What are the biggest changes in publishing and EASE you have witnessed over the years?

Probably few generations have experienced such drastic changes in publishing as mine. The changes have been mainly technical, but also sociological. When I started my career as an editor in 1970, there was no Internet, no computers, no mobile telephones, no faxes, and just a few slow and impractical copying machines. Manuscripts were written using traditional typewriters; books and journals were printed in letterpress according to the method developed by Johann Gutenberg in the 15th century, albeit in a much more sophisticated way. Also the relationship between authors and editors was more autocratic than today: many authors had the attitude of a king, expecting the editor to be an obedient servant.

I would summarize some of the changes during the past 40 years as follows:

- The printing process: a transformation from letterpress first to phototypesetting and offset, then to computerised text production followed by either offset or electronic printing.
- The author's role: formerly delivering a typewritten manuscript to be processed by the editor, possibly mailed back for revisions, finally to be typeset by the printers. Now: the author produces a manuscript in digital form, and thus takes over some of the former duties of the printer: typesetting by printers has become obsolete.
- The editor's role: nowadays the editor is an interactive cooperative partner of the author in creating the final version of the manuscript to be printed.
- The consumer's role: the importance of printed paperbound information is declining with more and more information becoming available online.
- The ways of communicating between author and editor: formerly it was ordinary mail, now e-mail is used for sending manuscripts and for the interactive editorial processing of them. No more the sending to and fro of figure and photograph originals. Data sticks or compact discs are also often used, particularly for greater amounts of information.

EASE-Forum Digest: June to September 2012

You can join the forum by sending the one-line message "subscribe ease-forum" (without the quotation marks) to majordomo@helsinki.fi. Be sure to send messages in plain text format; the forum software does not recognize HTML-formatted messages. More information can be found on the EASE web site (www.ease.org.uk). When you first subscribe, you will be able to receive messages, but you won't be able to post messages until your address has been added manually to the file. This prevents spam being sent by outsiders, so please be patient.

Citing from the repository version of a paper

A colleague asked Reme Melero if there was any guidance for editors on how to deal with citations to the repository version of a paper. No one on the forum knew of any but the consensus was that it was preferable to cite the version of record. Angela Turner had seen repository versions of papers that differ in several respects from the final published version, when citing an earlier version would be misleading. However, in Tom Lang's experience authors usually posted the published pdf in a repository, often after an embargo so if it was openly accessible it could just as easily be cited as it would be identical to the final published version. Except, Liz Wager highlighted the final published version will be linked up, at least in theory, with any subsequent correction or retraction, whereas repositories may not have this linking facility. She also alerted the forum to CrossMark (<http://www.crossref.org/crossmark/>) which indicates the 'publisher-maintained' version of the paper.

In any event without a doi, Karen Shashok could see no way of being sure if a paper in a repository was identical to the published version, except to ask the author. Some corresponding authors she had asked provided the accepted manuscript rather than the final published version. Some had told her they had not been given the final pdf version by the publisher. She had noticed that some self-archived versions gave citation details of the final published version (including final page numbers and doi), which was helpful.

Mary Ellen Kerans pointed out that some publishers do not allow posting of final pdfs and no "best practice" advice for dealing with these circumstances has emerged but she advised authors who post a manuscript version to mark where page numbers had changed on the final journal-published version. That will aid authors who quote from the text when they cite (because quoting requires use of a page number).

Measuring the quality of written English

All Gina Vega wanted and asked the forum for was a method for evaluating the quality of written English. This request elicited 27 postings, indicating that while there would be great interest in the context, eg of managing and paying copyeditors, many factors need to be considered and no

practical index that could be used for such a purpose exists. The following is a summary of the quality factors discussed, with side discussions on the use of "this" and "that" at the beginning of sentences and cultural perceptions of short vs long sentences.

First Tom Lang established that quality (comprehension, recall, referenceability, and usability) in readability research is defined by the reader not by the text and, as Mary Ellen Kerans added, the target readership is a major variable (with differences in age, discipline, familiarity with research structure etc.). Both Tom and Mary Ellen considered readability formulas worthless; writing to the formula actually reduces comprehension.

Mary Ellen thought the only effective way to test text quality would be to ask a sample of readers for their holistic impression of whether a text was well written according to a scale like pain: 0 = no pain on reading, lovely experience; 10 = worst possible reading experience imaginable. A linguist would then need to analyse the worst-graded texts to identify their features. Iconic example texts of several readability levels could be created and validated to guide anyone who needs to assess readability. This approach is known as benchmarking. Mary Ellen suggested Gina might investigate the benchmark texts used by TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language, www.ets.org/toefl/). But TOEFL is a writing test, not a readability index.

Joy Burrough listed some basics that could be used to measure text quality and their problems.

- No grammatical errors: but a succession of correct sentences does not make good writing and views differ on correct grammar.
- Appropriate sentence length: but this depends on cultural expectations and changes over time.
- Appropriate register (not too pompous, but not too informal): but a comparison of the style of articles of today with ones written 20 years ago shows that this changes too.
- Conciseness of language and precision of word choice: but applying a formula to this is particularly tricky.
- Text coherence (appropriate use of linking words, allusions to preceding or succeeding text, optimal positioning of key information in the sentence).
- No idioms or metaphors that are so culture-specific that they will confuse international readers. As a problem she gave the example of a Japanese reader who was confused by the biblical reference to Daniel in a *New Scientist* article.

Yet another challenge she saw for a writing quality test was the need to take account of non-native English problems. Words that are similar to English words but have different meanings in another language (eg "eventual" being used to mean "possible", "preservative" to mean "condom") have been identified as a major problem by on-going research which is seeking to automatically identify non-native-English errors (see eg <http://aclweb.org/anthology-new/W/>)

W12/W12-2028.pdf). Another problem is the absence or misuse of “a/an” and “the” by writers whose native language doesn’t have indefinite or definite articles, which is further complicated because indefinite and definite articles tend to be used less frequently in scientific than in normal English (I agree. I constantly edit them in). Non-native English speakers also misuse verb tenses, which an editor can only rectify by looking at the particular context in which the verb is being used.

Ed Hull proposed that poor quality of text frustrated readers and quality could be tested by analysing the causes of frustration. These causes include:

- Poor focus on the main messages: a feeling of “so what?”
- Lack of a “storyline”: the storyline ties the main messages together.
- Poor linking: every sentence should be linked to its previous sentence by either using a linking word or by repeating words in the previous sentence.
- Sentence construction including: subject/verb distance, parenthetical phrases, lack of end focus, etc.
- Wordiness: redundancy, repeating, wordy phrases etc.

David FitzSimmons particularly endorsed poor linking (Joy’s “text coherence”) as an indicator of poor quality and criticised the common use of “this” and “that” as demonstrative pronouns to link sentences without a substantive noun being referred to. The result is unclear and poor quality text. The number of demonstrative pronouns that are orphaned in this way might therefore be used as a text quality marker.

The ensuing debate on the forum centred on translators. It was prompted by Mary Ellen’s observation that non-native English speakers and “genre-naive” or “developing” translators use more demonstrative pronouns than scientific articles usually contain. These authors and translators may not know, for example, that “This includes the ...” (where “This” is a demonstrative pronoun) can be edited to “This process includes ...” (where “This” is a demonstrative adjective describing the noun “process”, ie the noun being referred to is clear). Kersti Wagstaff commented that the two are linked. Developing translators are unable to interpret what the authors have written and reproduce their lack of explicitness. Mary Ellen on the other hand said translation instructors have noted that inexperienced translators have a slight tendency to make the text explicit, ie, say more than the target reader needs them to.

Karen Shashok thought that before orphaned demonstrative pronouns are used as a quality marker we need to understand why they appear in translated text. Experienced translators may also perpetuate these orphans if they believe the source text needs to be followed or they have been instructed that the translated text must be “identical” to the source text. She agreed with Kersti that an inexperienced translator may not know enough about the subject to decide what the orphaned pronoun refers to, adding that the translator might not be allowed to work together with the author to ask for an explanation and improve clarity because of time or cost restrictions. Alternatively she suggested that because demonstrative pronouns are common (commonly

misused) in research articles authors might believe that they should begin sentences with such a pronoun. Translators might assume that the authors’ peers will understand the text without problems and directly translate it retaining the pronoun’s orphan status. Indeed, Mary Ellen pointed out that each text has to be assessed individually for whether an explanation of what “this” or “that” refers to, is or isn’t necessary. In any event Karen and Kersti agreed that a combination of poor original writing and poor translating results in miserable text.

David broached “translatability” as a potential criterion for evaluating quality of text. By this he meant the ease with which text could be translated into other languages. His idea was inspired by one of his colleagues at the WHO. She tested the quality of the original English text by using machine-assisted translation software to translate it into Spanish. She then recorded the time needed to revise the output into acceptable text in Spanish. Well-written text took 50% less time to revise than poorly written text.

Mary Ellen warned that using “translatability” as a quality marker could be problematic, because if the prose seems well written to a reader it could be because it’s actually a calque from that reader’s native language (see the “eventual” and “preservative” examples in the last paragraph of Joy’s list of basics).

According to Sylwia Ufnalska, David’s anecdote illustrated the common problems of a lack of cohesion and long and complicated sentences encountered when translating poorly written text. She explained that this was why the *EASE Guidelines to Authors and Translators* emphasise the need for logical ordering of information and using short and simple sentences.

But how short is short? Joy asked, referring to linguistic research which has shown that there is a cultural difference between perceptions of normal sentence length: Americans write shorter sentences than the British, and other nationals, eg the French, write even longer sentences. Also, like has to be compared with like. Sentence length in a French novel and in an American children’s book should not be compared. This is where “Winnie the Pooh” entered the fray. Joy noted that sentences in the first paragraph of this British children’s classic book written by a vicar in 1926, have an average length of over 15 words. Authors have individual as well as cultural preferences. She had also noticed that sometimes authors writing in a foreign language overcompensated by deliberately trying not to write in a “childish” style and ended up writing complicated sentences which fail to communicate effectively. Furthermore, Mary Ellen joined, sentence length can vary within one discipline, eg sentences in results sections tend to be longer than elsewhere in research articles but present no burden for the target readers, who often skim over them rather than read them like a story. The point she was making is that disciplinary expectations dictate what’s easy or not easy rather than length and if the grammar, punctuation and parallel structure are well done, very long sentences might be easy to read, especially if they are common in the particular literature.

Along the same lines, Tom thought sentence complexity rather than length affected comprehension. Shorter

sentences just have less chance of being complex. Mary Ellen concluded that a short sentence can sometimes be hard to understand and a long sentence can sometimes be easy to understand. This prompted Anna Sharman to post a reference to an article in *American Scientist* that has some wise things to say about sentence structure and length: <http://www.americanscientist.org/issues/pub/the-science-of-scientific-writing/>.

Tom gave an example of a 198-word sentence written by R. Buckminster Fuller which he thought could be well understood. Joy did not agree and quoted another example from *Winnie the Pooh*, this time of a 194-word sentence which she used to demonstrate understandable long sentences to her students. But Karen highlighted that Milne is telling a story reporting individual events in a chronological order and stories are easier to understand than the relationships between ideas and concepts which Buckminster Fuller was proposing when shorter sentences would be easier to understand. Within a research article the methods and results section report sequences of events. Sentences therefore do not have to be short to be comprehensible but sentences in the discussion which analyse, interpret and explain should be written more like narratives.

Quite right, agreed Ed Hull, a narrative (a story) is easier for readers to understand so why not write research articles as a story? He saw the structure of the standard fairy tale (Once upon a time...) as similar to that of the standard (IMRAD) article. He asks his students to write a storyline of 800 words containing 10 main messages which should be in every research article. The main messages must link together to form a "story" that is readable by the non-specialist. They form the "skeleton" which the author should then support by filling in the technical details of background, methods, results, discussion and conclusion. The resulting article

is readable at two levels: the non-specialist can skim over topic sentences of paragraphs for the main messages; and the specialist can read the details within the paragraphs to judge if they credibly support those main messages.

Katharine Timberlake felt that accuracy of thought was an important precursor for good quality English. She gave the example "AA did not contain X, similar to BB", in fact meaning "AA did not contain X, in contrast to BB [which did]". These examples show that the author was not aware of the difference between the two options. Sylwia regretted the paucity of thought diligence and clear thinking. During her session in Tallinn (<http://www.ease.org.uk/ease-events/triennial-conference/editing-digital-world-tallinn/tallinn-programme/parallel-session-c>), a delegate commented that she spends 70% of time on thinking and only 30% on actual writing of an article. This, Sylwia thought, should be a rule among scientists, but it isn't.

Katharine stressed that authors should however make sure that whatever they have written is accurate before it goes to a journal to avoid reviewers and copy editors being "faced with the massive challenge of spotting crazy infelicities wherever they may lurk." In the same vein, Mary Ellen felt that despite the difficulties of assessing the quality of English there needs to be some means of doing so before review, especially in modest journals that are nonetheless SCI indexed. In particular, the person reviewing the English needs to understand the science.

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Aquatic Biosystems 2012, **8**:24

Insight into bone therapy failure
Bone morphogenic proteins (BMPs), used to aid fracture healing, do not work on some patients due to an increase in histone deacetylase (HDAC) activity, so inhibiting HDAC activity in combination with BMP therapy may aid healing.
BMC Medicine 2012, **10**:101

Novel software improves identification of peer reviewers
A new web tool which uses author disambiguation and usage based keywords is shown to enhance the automated search of peer reviewers, particularly those who operate in narrow areas of research.
BioData Mining 2012, **5**:14

New model improves thyroid cancer diagnosis
A molecular computational model based on the expression of 8 genes can preoperatively distinguish benign from malignant thyroid lesions and could help identify patients with thyroid nodules who do not require radical surgery.
BMC Cancer 2012, **12**:396

Integration of cancer diagnostics
Pathology and radiology are central to cancer diagnosis, but the two disciplines are often separated; James Sorace and colleagues suggest development of an integrated diagnostic system combining the two specialties to improve quality of patient care.
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Competing interests

Both the authors work for BioMed Central.

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My Life as an Editor - Mohammad Abdollahi



I am an editorial board member of more than 30 international scholarly journals. Over the past decades, I have served as a referee for more than 100 journals. I receive at least one reviewer invitation daily, and try my best to respond to most invitations (approximately 70%). As a researcher and supervisor of numerous students, I write, edit and revise 3-5

papers monthly. My writing and editing skills have greatly improved by publishing more than 450 papers in peer-reviewed journals. As an author, I treasure my experience of communication with reviewers and editors, who have guided me and helped me to become a science editor. All these achievements stem from my academic career in Tehran University of Medical Sciences (TUMS), the most highly ranked medical school in Iran, where I was offered a post back in the 1990s.

A turning point in my editing career was an invitation to take up the chief editor post of TUMS's two most influential journals, *DARU Journal of Pharmaceutical Sciences* (www.darujps.com/), and *Journal of Medical Hypotheses and Ideas* (<http://ees.elsevier.com/jmhi>), now published by BioMed Central and Elsevier, respectively. Back in 2001, I joined the DARU journal as an associate editor and helped in its conversion from a Persian to an English language journal and in indexing for online databases. Indexing was not an easy task back then, but I managed to get the journal indexed in most relevant databases by 2003. I am very proud of that achievement, which made DARU the most widely visible medium of communication for Eastern Mediterranean pharmacists and pharmacologists.

The *Journal of Medical Hypotheses and Ideas* was

launched as an Iranian journal in 2007, and I was asked to edit it. Over the past five years, the journal has gradually become an international medium by widening its scope of interests and by diversifying its geography, authorship, reviewers' pool and editorial board membership. It is now an updated source of biomedical information for the whole Eastern Mediterranean region.

In 2004, I was offered the post of the Dean of TUMS Central Library, which I took for 3 years and helped to widen the visibility of more than 20 journals published by TUMS at that time. My previous experience with DARU proved to be instrumental for the library and information management job. I managed to set up online submission and editorial management for all TUMS journals, which allowed the journals to be published on time. My editorial colleagues were offered educational workshops on science editing and biomedical journalism. The strong foundation of biomedical science editing in TUMS eventually was transformed into a highly prestigious editing job and the publication of more than 40 fully peer-reviewed, open-access journals, most archived by PubMed Central and indexed by Web of Science databases.

Since 2010, I've been also working as an associate editor of the *Encyclopedia of Toxicology*, one of the major textbooks published by Elsevier. As a book editor, I have been cooperating with leading authors in the field, who generously shared their scientific knowledge and experience from various parts of the world.

With the experience I have gained in editing, I am committed to pursuing new scientific goals and continuing



to cooperate with scientists from diverse professional and linguistic backgrounds, a prerequisite of intellectually enriching and successful editorial work.

My strong belief is that an editor should act as a judge. Honesty and wisdom have to be the main characteristics of such an editor. Chief editors have to rely on teamwork. They should always be considerate in their responses to the letters and requests from authors, reviewers, and editors. No need to rush to quick conclusions. Sometimes it takes time to make a correct decision, satisfying all players involved in publishing. Based on my experience, reviewers are not always correct in their comments and recommendations. Some may even produce erroneous comments, disorienting the authors. Some expert reviewers are reluctant to accept fresh ideas and to pave the way for new directions in research. They may also reject rational ideas and delay publication of their rival's papers. A responsible editor should be well aware of the abuses of peer review and take fair decisions, favouring science and not the interests of certain experts or research groups. Publishers in turn should regularly evaluate the activities of their editors and reviewers.

As a researcher and author, I have also witnessed mistakes and biases of peer review. Biases stem from the unfairness of some reviewers and editors. Even worse, some editors are unaware of what is going on in their journals. They tend to cause major delays by unduly lengthening the peer review process, wasting the authors' precious time.

As a research supervisor, I always encourage students to report and properly comment both positive and negative results. I have learned that references in the first draft of a paper should be cited in the text in the Harvard style to let the first reader (ie supervisor) properly validate each sentence linked to a certain reference. Students may incorrectly cite sources, write incomprehensible sentences and paragraphs, or even commit plagiarism by copy-paste writing and ignoring quotation rules when large chunks of the published texts are cited without proper paraphrasing. I always read my students' initial writings and edit their papers.

Throughout my editing career, I have not had someone supervising my work or educating me on how to properly edit a scientific work. The most inspiring experience was with my first publication. When I submitted my first paper to a journal in 1989, the editor thoroughly reviewed it, gave a positive response and remarked that someday I would become a great author. Since then, I've been exposed to many reviewers and editors, submitted and managed to publish hundreds of good papers. Through trial and error I have eventually got to a level viewed by most as expert.

I did not volunteer to take up my current editorial posts. I was invited to work as an editor. However, I still consider my main achievements as being related to my roles as an author. A good editor first and foremost must be a good author with a good publication record, have experience in writing different types of articles and communicating with authors, reviewers and editors from diverse backgrounds.

The editorial work boosts my confidence as an educator of students with different levels of knowledge and helps me to be a fair judge in different circumstances in my life and academic work.

Regular journal club meetings with critical reading of journal articles are essential for postgraduate education. In my capacity as the dean of our department I set up a journal club for postgraduate students, and suggested the use of publications from many local journals as educational tools. Most students broadened their biomedical thinking and proposed new research ideas and rational solutions.

My experience suggests that some chief editors of journals are senior scientists who are not appropriately skilled in computer programs and science editing. They lack full knowledge of online databases, literature search engines, and the vast opportunities of the Internet. There are still biomedical experts relying on PubMed searches only, ignoring information stored in SciVerse/Scopus, Thomson Reuters, and many other indexing and abstracting services. The launch of Google in 2004 revolutionised the literature search, and I benefited from that a lot. By searching through some local or regional databases, editors and reviewers can identify duplicate or plagiarised papers not visible in PubMed and Scopus. Also, editors have to be skilled to perform comprehensive literature searches and to find the best reviewers. Publishers should digitalise editorial management and help the editors to use PubMed along with Scopus, Scirus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar databases.

I joined the Committee of Publication Ethics (COPE) and the World Association of Medical Editors (WAME) many years ago. WAME offers an e-discussion forum, useful to many editors. COPE has many flowcharts which I use on occasions of inappropriately handled papers. I joined the European Association of Science Editors (EASE) in 2011 to contribute to and further benefit from its journal, triennial congress, and guidelines for authors. I would like to see the EASE website more functional and e-discussion distributed by emails. I find the European Science Editing journal useful for me and other members of EASE. It has many interesting sections, of which I would like to mention *My Life as an Editor*, presenting life-time experience of distinguished editors!

I believe the quality of the journals could be further improved by publishing more critical editorial commentaries and letters. Editorial board members, particularly big names in their field, should be encouraged and incentivised to contribute more actively to the journal's quality by writing editorials and submitting their best papers. The post of the chief editor should be a scientific and regularly paid position.

I would advise editors to be more active, honest with colleagues, wise, and on-time in their decisions. Do not rush into decisions, unless you are sure these are well-thought out and contribute to the quality of your journals. Be polite towards authors. Identify your best authors and reviewers. Try your best to upgrade your language and digital communication skills, and regularly attend workshops on journalism, science editing and ethical publishing.



News Notes

News Notes are compiled by John Hilton (hilton.john@gmail.com)

Some of these items are taken from the EASE Journal Blog (<http://esebookshelf.blogspot.com>) where full URLs may be found

Romanian anti-plagiarism initiative

Following some prominent plagiarism cases implicating government ministers and leading academics, a group of Romanian scientists has decided to respond to what they see as a culture of plagiarism. Their aim is simple: “to help reform and restore confidence in the Romanian research and education system”. The researchers have launched an online service called Integru (www.integru.org), which catalogues and publicises cases of plagiarism and other misconduct in Romania, alongside commentaries from independent reviewers. Contributions and support are sought from scientists worldwide. The project’s editorial team will remain anonymous, due to political tension surrounding this issue. A news story in *Nature* (15 August 2012) explains how Romania’s National Ethics Council, tasked with raising standards in universities, was dismissed on 8 June, and reconstituted with government-appointed members, who apparently overturned or suppressed a number of ongoing cases.

ImpactStory

Formally known as Total-impact, ImpactStory (impactstory.org) is an altmetric aggregator that traces the ‘engagement’ (cited, saved, recommended, ‘liked’) of research, using information from a range of open repositories, databases, social media, link aggregators and other sources. The change in name reflected a desire to move away from data gathering to story telling. As well as looking at non-traditional metrics and audiences, the site also allows you

to assess the impact of non-traditional research output, such as datasets, blog posts and software. You can search by article or researcher, and it’s free for all. A not-for-profit project funded by the Open Society Foundation (www.soros.org) and the Alfred P Sloan Foundation (sloan.org), ImpactStory is in early development, and its developers urge caution in interpreting the data. And as they say on the site: “Metrics are only one part of the story. Look at the research artifact for yourself and talk about it with informed colleagues.”

National Punctuation Day

Did you know that 24 September was National Punctuation Day in the United States? This day was created to “celebrate the lowly comma, correctly used quotations marks, and other proper uses of periods, semicolons, and the ever-mysterious ellipsis”. In celebration of this, you may like to ‘enjoy’ these blogs that focus on particular punctuation marks: www.apostrophecatastrophe.com, www.unnecessaryquotes.com and excessiveexclamation.blogspot.com.

Data Citation Index

In October, Thomson Reuters launched the Data Citation Index (tinyurl.com/ease-news24) as part of the Web of Knowledge platform. The index includes datasets and data studies from over 80 curated data repositories, across all disciplines. As well as helping researchers find data, the index will provide another view of scholarly output and could help funders track the use and impact of data.

SCOAP3

The Sponsoring Consortium for Open Access Publishing in Particle Physics, SCOAP3 (www.scoap3.org) has negotiated a deal with journal publishers in an attempt to make an entire field of science open access. The consortium, representing funding agencies, laboratories and libraries, invited journals to bid for three-year open-access contracts from

2014. They selected 12 journals, six of which will become entirely open access as a result. Most papers in the field are already openly available as preprints on arXiv.org, but this new deal ensures the final, peer-reviewed versions will also be free for all. The initiative will be supported by funds from libraries. A key part of the deal is that publishers reduce subscription prices to offset income from SCOAP3.

Funding for UK OA

The UK Government has allocated £10 million (€12.5 million) to support institutions who need to pay publication fees to meet the requirements of Research Councils UK Policy on Access to Research Outputs (tinyurl.com/ease-news22), which requires related publications to be available as open access within 6 months of publication, starting from 1 April 2013. The UK Royal Society of Chemistry has also agreed to help researchers publish their articles in its journals, offering £1 million (€1.25 million) worth of publishing support. Meanwhile, a major funder, the Wellcome Trust, has decided to enforce its existing OA policy more rigorously after observing that 50% of funded publications are not open access.

How open are you?

Three open access advocacy organisations, PLOS (www.plos.org), SPARC (www.arl.org/sparc) and OASPA (www.oaspa.org), have joined forces to move the debate on open access in a different direction. They have developed a resource called *How Open Is It?* that aims to illustrate how six elements of access (reader rights, reuse rights, copyright, author posting rights, automatic posting, machine readability) can range from fully open to fully closed, with many points between. The draft guide is available at tinyurl.com/ease-news14. Following consultation, a final version was due to be published during Open Access Week (October 22 -28, 2012; www.openaccessweek.org).

Retractions watched

A recent study of retractions in biomedicine showed that about 67% of retractions are due to misconduct, including fraud, duplicate publication and plagiarism, with only 21% attributable to error. The remaining 12% are of unknown cause. The study (*Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 1 October 2012) looked at 2000 retractions from PubMed and then searched external sources for information on the retractions, unearthing explanations not included in the retraction notices. The proportion of articles retracted because of fraud has increased dramatically in the last decade, mostly in higher impact factor journals from the US, Germany and Japan, whereas other sorts of misconduct-related retractions were from lower impact factor journals.

A retraction by the journal *PLOS Pathogens* has provoked plenty of debate because it was *not* linked to misconduct or error. The retracted article (*PLOS Pathogens* 2006;3:e25), was a highly cited research article on the link between a gammaretrovirus, XMRV, and prostate cancer. Many subsequent studies failed to confirm this finding, culminating in a recent paper in another PLOS journal, *PLOS ONE* (2012;7:e44954), demonstrating that the XMRV detected was a contaminant. While the methods used in the original study were sound and there was no suggestion of misconduct, the conclusions were demonstrably wrong, and *PLOS Pathogens'* Editor-in-Chief, Kasturi Haldar, decided to retract the paper. *ScienceInsider* (<http://tinyurl.com/ease-news20>) described how this decision sparked some heated debate, not least from one of the authors of both the original paper and the new *PLOS ONE* paper, who had not been made aware of the retraction and felt that a correction would have been sufficient.

ALPSP prize winners

The Association for Learned and Professional Society Publishers (ALPSP) has announced the winners of its annual awards. *Methods in Ecology and Evolution* (www.methodsinecologyandevolution.org),

published by the British Ecological Society, was highly commended in the best new journal category. In the publishing innovation category, awards went to Peerage of Science (www.peerageofscience.org), a Finnish peer-review and manuscript-submission system, and CABI's Plantwise Knowledge Bank (www.plantwise.org/knowledgebank), a database of plant health information. A Contribution to Scholarly Publishing award went to CrossRef (www.crossref.org), described by ALPSP chief executive Audrey McCulloch as "a shining example of just what this industry can achieve when we set our minds to it".

Text mining deal

An agreement between P-D-R (an association of pharmaceutical company information departments), ALPSP, and the International Association of Scientific, Technical and Medical Publishers (www.stm-assoc.org) seeks to help pharmaceutical companies use text and data mining of content to which it subscribes. It is hoped the licence will be used as a model to negotiate individual subscription agreements with publishers and other content suppliers.

Journal transparency index

In a recent article in *The Scientist* magazine (1 August 2012), the two journalists behind the Retraction Watch blog (retractionwatch.wordpress.com) proposed a new metric for journals: the transparency index. As long-time observers of how, why and when retractions occur, Adam Marcus and Ivan Oransky believe that "lack of transparency serves only to reinforce a sense of incompetence." They propose developing a numerical measure of a journal's transparency based on factors such as: peer review process and performance; editorial board details, contact information, costs, data availability, plagiarism detection, disclosure of conflicts of interest, processes for dealing with errors or misconduct, whether corrections and retraction notices are clear and conform to COPE or ICMJE guidance. You can read more

(and comment) at retractionwatch.wordpress.com/transparencyindex.

Authorship pinned down

The journal *Science* has called for an end to honorary authorship, with an editorial (2012;337:1019) that states: "Credit for scientific research contributions must be clearly and appropriately assigned at the time of publication". This move follows a fascinating report by the International Workshop on Contributorship and Scholarly Attribution (projects.iq.harvard.edu/attribution_workshop). The editorial describes how this kind of authorship is common and can be 'coercive' (a senior academic insists on being assigned authorship despite minimal contribution), 'guest', or 'gift' (usually when a junior author hopes that a senior researcher's name will boost a paper's prospects), but is always misconduct. Journals could require authors to state: "I acknowledge that I take credit for the content of the published work. I also acknowledge that I will take responsibility for the work if questions arise in the future as to its authenticity and credibility." Institutions should instigate clear ethical standards. Meanwhile, an article in *Nature* (27 September 2012) proposes better use of online databases to more fully disclose authors' contributions, as well as the contributions of funding-obtainers, data-collectors, and other key non-author roles.

ORCID blooms

The ORCID (about.orcid.org) system of author and contributor identifiers was launched in October, enabling member publishers and institutions to start assigning identifiers. An ORCID ID is a random 16-digit number associated with a web location (eg <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-3843-3472>).

eLife open house

eLife, the much anticipated new journal set up by major research funders is due to launch later in 2012. In anticipation of its launch the journal has made available some already accepted (but not yet

'published') papers on PMC. The journal's website (www.elifesciences.org) features a preview of its PDF layout and an 'open house' tour around the journal.

PMC name changes

UK PubMed Central (ukpmc.ac.uk), launched in 2007 as the first regional mirror site to PubMed Central (www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc), has been supported by 18 funding bodies. With the arrival of a 19th, the European Research Council, the service will be renamed Europe PubMed Central (Europe PMC) from 1 November. All funders will continue to require any funded publications to be made freely available in Europe PMC. The US organisation has also changed its name. To avoid confusion with PubMed, PubMed Central has now been rebranded as PMC.

Paleontology editorial standards

The journal *PLOS ONE* has published a new set of ethical and editorial standards for paleontology research, driven by the need for long-term accessibility and security of fossils (and therefore the reproducibility of research)

and protection against illegal or unethical practices. The standards, available at www.plosone.org/static/editorial.action#paleontology require deposition of new species in a suitable repository, reporting to a level that permits reproducibility, and assurances about the ethical provenance of specimens.

Embargo manipulation

The European Union of Science Journalists' Associations (www.eusja.org) has reacted strongly following an embargo that came with strings attached. A recent controversial paper on food safety was delivered to journalists in advance, but only in exchange for "signing a non-disclosure agreement barring them from contacting any independent expert before publication". The paper (Seragini GE et al, *Food Chem Toxicol* 2012;50:4221-4231) was subsequently assessed by the European Food Safety Authority, who noted that "the design, reporting and analysis of the study, as outlined in the paper, are inadequate" and have contacted the author for clarification (tinyurl.com/ease-news21). The EUSJA condemned the manipulation of the media as

"unacceptable and unethical for journalists and for scientists."

This cat is good for you

Did you look at the cute picture of the cat before reading News Notes? If so, you probably learnt more than those who only found the picture after wading through the text. That's according to a recent investigation into an unexpected benefit of cute images (*PLOS ONE* 2012;7:e46362): "narrowed attentional focus induced by the cuteness-triggered positive emotion that is associated with approach motivation and the tendency toward systematic processing".



Image credit: Artemisphoto/FreeDigitalPhotos.net

European Science Editing improves its ranking

We are very pleased that the latest Scopus-based journal ranking indicators (for 2011) show that *European Science Editing* (ESE) is being cited more often and in higher ranking journals. Its SCImago Journal Rank rose substantially from 0.027 to 0.218. Its *h* index increased to 3 from 2 for 2010.

We continue to promote ESE more widely, through collaboration with organisations such as COPE and WAME and through our own website and social media accounts. We urge all readers to share articles they enjoy with colleagues and to consider submitting articles to ESE.

To reflect the higher status of ESE, the Publications Committee will be re-named as the Editorial Board from 2013.

Introducing Tina Wheeler



Hello everyone!
I joined the EASE Secretariat back in April and am a friend of Mary Hodgson's. I have kept my horse, Little Echo, at Mary's yard for the past three years. The photo shows Echo and me taking part in the mini-Greenwich weekend organised by Mary, inspired by the Olympics. Echo is the reason I am working

for EASE – horses are very expensive (ask my husband)! My background is in antiques, particularly antique glass, and I spent years organising antique fairs in New York and London. My husband, David and I left London and came home to Cornwall four years ago and Echo came too. I feel very lucky to have found a part-time job working with such a nice group of people and where I can look out of the window and see my horse happily grazing.

The Editor's Bookshelf

Please write to annamaria.rossi@iss.it if you wish to send new items or become a member of the EASE journal blog (<http://ese-bookshelf.blogspot.com>) and see your postings published in the journal.

ECONOMICS AND FUNDING

Björk B-C, Solomon D. **Open access versus subscription journals: a comparison of scientific impact.**

BMC Medicine 2012;10:73

The aim of this study was to compare the scientific impact of open access (OA) journals with subscription journals, controlling for journal age, the country of the publisher, discipline and (for OA publishers) their business model. Results showed that OA indexed journals in Web of Science and/or Scopus were approaching the same scientific impact and quality as subscription journals, particularly in biomedicine and for journals funded by article processing charges.

doi: 10.1186/1741-7015-10-73

Sellwood S. **Editorial processing: to outsource or not?**

Learned Publishing 2012;25(3):225-230

This article examines the reasons why outsourcing the editorial assistant function might be of benefit to a journal, either as a temporary or permanent solution. It also examines the practical considerations of entering into such an arrangement - what should be looked for in a partner company and what can be expected from such a relationship. Finally, it offers a case study: the experience of the *Journal of Pathology*, which has outsourced its editorial assistant role for more than four years.

doi: 10.1087/20120310

Van Noorden R. **Journal offers flat fee for "all you can publish".**

Nature 14 June 2012;486(166)

An open access venture called *PeerJ* announced its launch on June 12, 2012. It aims to drive down the

costs of research publishing. *PeerJ* asks its authors for only a one-off fee to secure a lifetime membership that will allow them to publish free, peer reviewed research papers. Despite the low publication cost, its founders assure that articles will be peer reviewed for scientific validity.

doi: 10.1038/486166a

EDITORIAL PROCESS

Gasparyan AY, Kitas GD. **Best peer reviewers and the quality of peer review in biomedical journals.**

Croatian Medical Journal 2012;53(4):386-389

Evidence supporting peer review as a guarantor of the quality of biomedical publications is currently lacking. Its outcomes are largely dependent on the credentials of the reviewers. Some experts are in favor of formal education and courses on peer review for all those who will be involved in science writing and reviewing. Universities and learned associations as well may take the lead in organising educational activities.

doi: 10.3325/cmj.2012.53.386

ETHICAL ISSUES

Beall J. **Predatory publishers are corrupting open access.**

Nature 2012;489:179

Predatory publishers are those publishing counterfeit journals to exploit the author-pays open access model. They set websites that closely resemble those of legitimate online publishers, and publish journals of very low quality. Only after the paper is accepted and published, and copyright assigned, are the authors invoiced for the fees. The research community should use social networks such as Connotea and Mendeley to identify and share information on those publishers.

Kovacs J. **Honorary authorship epidemic in scholarly publications? How the current use of citation-based evaluative metrics make (pseudo)honorary authors from**

honest contributors of every multi-author article?

Journal of Medical Ethics 2012 August 3 (Epub)

In this paper attention is drawn to the unfair and discriminatory current use of citation-based metrics, that is similarly applied to authors of single-author papers and to contributors of multi-author papers. The author's proposal is that in case of multi-author articles, authors should be required to assign a numeric value to their degree of contribution. In this way, a contribution-specific index of each contributor for each citation metric could be created.

doi: 10.1136/medethics-2012-100568

Masic I. **Ethical aspects and dilemmas of preparing, writing and publishing of the scientific papers in the biomedical journals.**

Acta Informatica Medica 2012;20(3):141-148

In this paper the author discusses about preparing and submitting manuscripts - scientific, research, professional papers, reviews, and case reports. Issues are described from his perspective as an editor-in-chief of several biomedical journals, covering ethical aspects of authorship, conflict of interest, copyright, plagiarism, and duplicate publication. He also discusses important ethical dilemmas.

doi: 10.5455/aim.2012.20.141.148

Wager E, Kleinert S. **Cooperation between research institutions and journals on research integrity cases: guidance from the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).**

Acta Informatica Medica 2012;20(3):136-140

Recognising the important role that institutions have in investigating cases of suspected misconduct, but also the difficulties that sometimes arise when journals and institutions try to work together and share information on such cases, the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) has developed guidelines for cooperation between research institutions and journals on research integrity cases, also available at the COPE website.

doi: 10.5455/aim.2012.20.136-140

INFORMATION RETRIEVAL

Radicchi F, Castellano C. **Testing the fairness of citation indicators for comparison across scientific domains: the case of fractional citation counts.** *Journal of Informetrics* 2012;6(1): 121-130

The use of raw citation counts is generally misleading, especially when applied to cross-disciplinary comparisons, since the average number of citations is strongly dependent on the scientific discipline of reference of the article. The authors present a statistical method aimed at estimating the effectiveness of numerical indicators in eliminating citation biases. The method is simple to implement and can be easily generalised for various scenarios. doi: 10.1016/j.joi.2011.09.002

LANGUAGE AND WRITING

Quirk T. **Writers should not fear jargon.** *Nature* 2012;487:407

Specialised terms capture the complexity and specificity of scientific concepts. The truth tends to be complicated, and jargon offers its most obvious peek: compression. Researchers use complex language for a specific purpose, and science writers should be clear about what those reasons are. The author, a science writer, offers examples of what can be lost when jargon is not used. He believes that people seem to resent not just specialised language, but any language that requires a large degree of labour to understand, appreciate and use.

PUBLISHING

Larson EL, Cortazal M. **Publication guidelines need widespread adoption.** *Journal of Clinical Epidemiology* 2012;65(3):239-246

This study aims to describe the development and adoption of general publication guidelines for various study designs; to provide an example of guidelines adapted for specific topics, and to recommend next steps. These include: increasing the use of available guidelines and their adoption among journals, educating

peer reviewers on their use, and incorporating guideline use into the curriculum of medical, nursing, and public health sectors.

Van Der Weyden MB. **On being the Editor of the Medical Journal of Australia: Living dangerously.** *Mens Sana Monographs* 2012;10(1):150-157

Editorial independence is crucial for the viability of a journal and editors have many masters - the public, the readers, the authors, and the owners. Editors are exposed to a wide range of opinions as to what should and should not be published. Their decision making is sometimes exposed to undue pressure by clinical groups. In addition, social media facilitates this manipulation. doi: 10.4103/0973-1229.91295

Lewis DW. **The inevitability of open access.** *College & Research Libraries* 2012;73(5):493-506

Using methods described by business theorist Clayton Christensen, this study suggests that gold open access, where all the articles of a journal are available at the time of publication, could account for 50% of the scholarly journal articles between 2017 and 2022, and 90% of articles as soon as 2020 and more conservatively by 2025.

Morgan C, Campbell B, Teleen T. **The role of the academic journal publisher and open access publishing models.** *International Studies Perspectives* 2012;13(3):228-234

This article explores the role and value of the academic journal publisher as paradigms of open access gain momentum and challenge the standards of paid subscription models. The two main versions of open access publishing currently at large - gold and green - pose a challenge to the user-pays models that have served as a foundation of the business since its inception. doi: 10.1111/insp.2012.13.issue-3/issuetoc

RESEARCH EVALUATION

Butler D. **Scientists: your number is up.** *Nature* 31 May 2012;485:564

The Open Researcher and Contributor ID (ORCID) has been launched this year. It is an identifier system that will distinguish between authors who share the same name. It aims at reliably attributing research outputs to their true author by assigning every scientist in the world a machine-readable, 16-digit unique digital identifier. If ORCID takes off, it could increase the precision and breadth of scientific metrics and help in developing new analyses of social networks. doi:10.1038/485564a

Eysenbach G. **Can tweets predict citations? Metrics of social impact based on Twitter and correlation with traditional metrics of scientific impact.** *Journal of Medical Internet Research* 2011;13(4):e123

Tweets can predict highly cited articles within the first three days of article publication. Social impact measures as the so-called twimpact factor, based on tweets, are proposed to complement traditional citation metrics. Tweetations should be primarily seen as a metric to measure public interest in a specific topic, while citations are primarily a metric for scholarly impact. doi: 10.2196/jimr.2012

SCIENCE

Akritis L, Katsaros D, Bozani P. **Identifying attractive research fields for new scientists.** *Scientometrics* 2012;91(3):869-894

The authors attempted to identify the research fields that could be attractive to a scientist prior to the beginning of his/her scientific career by combining the characteristics of attractive research areas and the new scholars. Conclusions showed that not all trendy research areas were suitable for new scientists but that they were also interested in not emerging scientific fields. doi: 10.1007/s11192-012-0646-4

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