Soria Moria Dagbok

One Christmas Eve I went to a midnight service at the Church of Scotland. At the end of the service the congregation was invited to take the hymn sheets home - so that when we woke up on Christmas morning we would know where we had been the night before, and even which carols we had sung. Well, although no one would dare suggest that members of EASE could, in any way, be likened to a congregation of drunken Scotsmen, Ole thought that you might like a record of where you have been, what you have heard, and even, perhaps, what you might have missed. The SORIA MORIA DAGBOK hopes to achieve these ends, but its vast staff of one, untrained, illiterate First World editor, who has been known to miss quite a lot, would be most grateful for any contributions. The editorial office (usually unstaffed) is in room C opposite the entrance to the main hall and any literary gems may be left there.

Norsk Data

The Dagbok is being produced for us on the Norsk Data “user-friendly” typesetting system. We are extremely grateful to Norsk Data, particularly this “user”, who is “system-tarried” and spends most of the time pressing the HELP button. I do hope that they do not become too disillusioned - until now they thought the system was idiot proof.

Editing in a different world

For patients and primary health care workers in the Third World health information needed preparing in non-conventional ways, which included posters, drama, and radio. Vincent Orinda said. The North could help the South by establishing a centre for the dissemination of health information, including its collection, processing, delivery, coordination, and evaluation.

Istvan Takacs-Nagy, discussing the difficulties of publishing and editing scientific journals in Hungary, pointed to the familiar drawbacks of the “paper drain” to the major publications in the West, long publishing delays in the medical journals through the shortage of funds and skilled printers, and the difficulties of peer review in a small country. Nevertheless, their country’s journals performed well in circulation analysis of articles in subjects such as physics, chemistry, mathematics, and medicine.

Helen van Houten described an attempt at reviving publications in East Africa which had ceased when the Federation had broken up six years ago. Courses for scientific and technical editors under the auspices of IDRC and IFSEA had included instruction in subediting, layout, and the economic aspects as well as trips to printing houses.

Contributed papers

Paul Stapleton described the work he is doing in Indonesia for CSIRO, Australia. This contract calls for him to start a new international journal, the Indonesian Journal of Crop Science, train his successor and educate scientists in communication of all kinds. Indonesians have a very different way of thinking from that of people from developed countries. This produces difficulties in communication and it was six months before Paul felt he could make an impact. But some things don’t change - the editorial board members caused the first issue of the new journal to be reprinted when they changed their minds on a question of design.

The three main problems for Paul are the poor English of Indonesian scientists, the cost of publications and publishing and the threat of electronic publishing. Editors in developed countries could help by acting as resource persons - teaching communication techniques realizing and responding to the problems of the Third World authors and going to train people in such countries. EASE editors could help by encouraging the establishment of courses and training centers for authors and editors. Then a swift change of subject:

Tom van Loon listed the drawbacks of conference proceedings and made a proposal for their future treatment. The drawbacks are that databases rarely cover proceedings well, publication takes a long time, and authors often submit the same papers to journals. Tom therefore proposed that “proceedings” - camera ready
Hopefully disinterested bread always falls buttsidedown.

The Workshop Teaching authors to write covered quite a lot of ground; not surprising really with the mix of nationalities present. The first topic addressed was the drinking habits of the Finns, which lead on to whether to drink during, after or before a sauna. (Incidentally, saunas run at 80 deg.C in Denmark and 110 deg.C in Finland.)

Peter Hjorth then went on to tell us about the time the sauna door slammed, leaving him and his friends stuck outside stark naked in -20 deg.C temperatures, with empty glasses in their hands. Other snippets were that nurses write articles upsidedown and doctors write papers when they want a new job. Preliminaries over with, we discussed the problems of newwriting and scientific writing in terms of educating authors: are copywriting, advertising, writing and journalism all the same thing? (not really!) and that any type of writing has a basic structure that can be taught.

Papers written well in any language can be translated easily; the importance of writing should be stressed at university level; bad translation can lead to doubled distortion of the meaning. Then we found out how horrible it was to be edited yourself; that Polish is more subtle than English and that Hungarian has 14 vowel forms. Also that US/UK crochet and dredging terminologies differ radically.

Quite a busy afternoon, really.

PAUL STAPLETON.

Our president and his lady.

Soria Moria

Soria Moria is wonderful, the only problem is that it is almost perfect. Did you ever know a little man called Mazlow (or was it Maslow)? He was, I believe, a sociologist and his great contribution to mankind was a theory of behavioural drives "Mazlow's hierarchy of needs". He told us that we have various levels of needs starting off with the most basic requirements - shelter, food, warmth - and that having met these we move on to higher and, ultimately, more esoteric planes. What, you may ask, has Fred Mazlow to do with Soria Moria? Not a lot, but he does help to fill the page and to clafy my understanding of why I am so distressed by the perfection of Soria Moria. What he did not explain was that once all one's needs are met one simply longs for a slice of deprivation. Not too much, just the odd bone in the smoked salmon, a sliver of shell left on a prawn, perhaps a dish from the kitchens of Trinity College, Cambridge (say spotted dick) hidden among the delights on the cold table at lunchtime.

If only the tranquility could be broken for a few seconds by the raucous tones of a few drunken CBE members; if only the efficient and charming waitress would tip soup over someone; if only we had a few rooms without showers; if only... I could be really happy here.

Cont from P1

synopses or abstracts should be the only kind of conference proceedings published. Authors should prepare papers for regular journals, or for one issue of a regular (refered) journal, giving these papers slightly different titles. Two other drawbacks of proceedings are that abstracts are often written before the work has been done, and that proceedings may include papers that were not presented at all, as Stephen Lock pointed out.

MAEVE O'CONNOR

Weather

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Temperature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paris</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copenhagen</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berlin</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oslo</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vienna</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athens</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stockholm</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madrid</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helsinki</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budapest</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moscow</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tel Aviv</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basel</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Partly sunny, some scattered showers, south easterly winds, changing to north in the afternoon. Temperatures High: 26 Low: 14
Jennifer's Diary

I felt rather subdued on the flight to Oslo - something to do with the half carafe of vodka I had consumed in a Russian restaurant the previous evening (I had been told that rowanberry vodka came cheaper by the carafe and being a true Scot could not resist a bargain). From my vantage point at the back of the plane I was, however, able to observe unnoticed a few members of EASE winging their way to the meeting - Stephen Lock sitting at the front of the economy class (he would, he assured me later, have travelled club class, "but they are allowed to smoke up front"); Brian Williams living vicariously through the pages of a Barbara Cartland novelette (did you know that she wanted to become a community physician, but her father would not allow it as he did not feel that it was job suitable for a woman); and Maeva O'Connor trying to wrest a few drops out of her Tesco's wine box (she claimed on arrival that it had been leaking: I ask you!).

We were whisked from the airport in a most splendid bus and after a 10-minute journey through the Oslo forrests arrived at Soria Moria, which might best be described as a cross between the Hilton Hotel and Alcatraz - the former referring to its physical attributes, the latter its emotional ones. In the evening Maeva managed to squeeze a few more drops out of her wine box, but as we all had to wash our hair for the reception the following evening the party broke up very early.

Sunday morning saw us cruising the Oslo Fjord as guests on board the royal yacht 'Haakon XV' and the afternoon was spent touring Oslo, and, in particular, visiting the Kon Tiki Museum and the Vigeland Park. Ole had assured us that our museum guide would be Thor Heyerdahl, but unfortunately he had been summoned to Easter Island. We were, however, looked after by the lovely Helga who kept the more frivolous members of the party in order with a selection of pleated rhino whips. A number of people admired these, and Helga has asked me to tell them that a boutique called Norsvolkskrattshoppen has a wonderful selection.

I spent a large part of the evening as the honoured guest of Norsk Data who gave me a private viewing of their fascinating equipment. Because of this I was unable to attend the preprandial reception. Everyone I spoke to later at Maeva's' party (I do believe that Maeva is the substusc, West British equivalent of Arly Allen - such a dear man) enjoyed it thoroughly, even the wonderfully sophisticated editor of the Irish Medical Journal, who, incidentally, has promised to tell us about the works and writings of St Augustin this evening. I understand that the few fitness fanatics seen trying to break into the swimming pool at 2 am had a particularly good time. Tonight should be fun. Maeva still has half a litre of wine in her box and 16 bottles of gin in her cupboard.

Clinical journals

Do printed journals have a future in face of the developments in the electronic storage and retrieval of data?

Well you can't take your terminal on to a train and VDT's are not conducive to browsing. So while these advances will help you update your knowledge of specified topics, they won't put you in touch with broad developments in medicine like the printed journal in your hand.

Specialized journals with highly specific articles read only by a few experts are another matter however. These do lend themselves to computerisation of text. Journal functions cannot be fulfilled adequately by audocassettes. Individual articles and discussion of them may usefully be taped for doctors to listen to them in their cars, but this medium is less flexible as also is the videotape.

Journals may change in appearance of course. Today's youth is educated with sophisticated visual aids and may demand illustrative innovation, looking on our two-dimensional graphics as cave drawings. Why worry if it helps the understanding?

How do you balance the need to keep your journal abreast of the scientifically complex while also maintaining your readers interest?

Do you talk of mice or men? Some readers are just looking for help to do their jobs today and are not interested in futures and so some journals prefer to avoid articles describing works done at the the cellular or molecular level.

On the other hand today's original article on a technical development - genetic engineering for instance may shape tomorrow's clinical practice.

How can you encourage junior doctors to develop by publishing their articles despite enormous demands on your space? Not by lowering your standard of acceptability, but by offering guidance on improving the article to the author whose product is just about acceptable (a facility not deserved by established researchers with good publishing pedigrees incidentally).

Case reports are particularly suitable articles. It helps avoid bias for or against the "first-timers" if the authors identity is masked from the reviewers, a fashion which will surely grow.

BRIAN WILLIAMS

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:
Norma Cosgrave, EASE
Kai Rosenberg, Norsk Data
English as a foreign language

Who should correct the English and at what level was the opening question of the discussion. While English journal editors were generally prepared to give extensive help, provided the authors learnt from their mistakes, it was felt that the English presentation should begin either as part of the first draft, since only by so doing would the author improve his English, or it should follow on as a translation of the proposed text in the authors' mother language, as this would help him clarify and order his thoughts.

More help will be appreciated by authors and editors for whom English was not their mother tongue. Some assistance could be obtained by using referees who were proficient in English and who would be willing to amend texts where they saw a need for improvement. However, reports prepared by referees must themselves be clearly and simply written if they are to be understood by an author, and to this end, they may need to be rewritten in the editorial office.

In any editing, the style of the editor should be retained; any changes made being for the sole purposes of clarity and simplicity; literary elegance was not essential.

As there were no recognised standards for authors' editors and translators, and many lacked the skills to interpret the scientific details and finer points of discussions, it was suggested that some form of organisation could be set up which would help authors achieve the required standard of English presentation via guidance from 'approved' authors' editors and translators. EASE might act as the source of approval.

There was a need to make research councils aware of the shortage of funds available for publication in English and the effect the lack of money could have on the progress of a research program. There was merit in persuading young scientists to visit English-speaking countries for a period sufficient to become proficient in the language.