From the Editors’ Desks

The eleventh Annual General Meeting was held in Tallinn: the President’s full report is on the website. Several members of Council stepped down and we appreciate all their contributions to EASE. So, my thanks to my two Vice-Presidents, Alison Clayson, who has done an excellent job coordinating Membership recruitment and retention, and Reme Melero, who has organized many successful seminars and will continue to do so. I am also grateful to Petter Oscarsson for his work on the Handbook, Edward Towpik for hosting courses in Warsaw and, of course, Mare-Anne Laane for facilitating such a fantastic Conference at Tallinn University of Technology.

For the new Council, the Vice-Presidents, Ana Marušić and Eva Baranyiová, were elected unopposed, as were the five Ordinary Members of Council: Paola DeCastro, Shirin Heidari, Izet Masic, Chris Sterken and Sylwia Ufnalska. I was re-elected as President, which means that Arjan Polderman continues as Past-President. I am very pleased that Rod Hunt will continue as Treasurer (this is not an elected post) and am looking forward to working with this team for the next three years.

Some good news was the Treasurer’s report that for the first time in several years we made a small surplus in 2011. This was mainly due to rigorous cost control. Our membership, which is our main source of income, fell from 538 at the end of 2010 to 462 at the end of 2011, but seems to have stabilized. If you enjoy being a member of EASE, as we hope you do, please spread the word to colleagues and help to make us an even better organization.

It was a pleasure to announce the award of an Honorary Life Fellowship to Elisabeth Heseltine for her services to EASE and the scientific community in teaching science writing (see p70).

We also announced the launch of Regional Chapters of EASE to facilitate interaction among editors within countries or groups of countries. There is more information on the website and anyone interested in establishing a Regional chapter should contact Ana Marušić or Eva Baranyiová.

Finally, EASE has now launched a freely available online Author Toolkit and my thanks to Tom Babor and Kerstin Stenius for driving this. The first elements are on the website and more will be added.

Joan Marsh

EASE Council 2012-2015

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Editorial

Authorship and contributorship in scholarly journals

Currently science editing is a discipline which covers various issues in science writing, ethical editing, peer review, publishing and scientometrics. Authorship in scholarly journals is one of the key topics in this discipline and shapes its core values. The basic principles of authorship underlie the foundations of research, academic promotion and advancement in science. It’s hardly possible to create all the essential scientific products without following fair authorship criteria.

Though a universally acceptable definition of authorship does not exist, there are two main components of any definition which have gained wide recognition - credit and responsibility. Journal publications are the end result of creative work of individuals, or increasingly multi-expert research teams, who are aiming to gain credit from the scientific community and to contribute to knowledge creation. Traditional authorship models, largely based on the criteria of the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE), consider the authors’ byline in the papers as the key for attributing credit. Securing a place in the byline is itself a credit, whilst taking the first place is often the reward for contributing the most to the multi-authored work.1 However, credit brings with it responsibility, which is straightforward in solo work but complicated in multi-authored publications.

Goal: How should one work out the current situation? Authorship issues may find a solution if all individuals and professional bodies involved in scientific publishing stick to the rules of honest and transparent research reporting. Research institutions should accept policies that produce a good authorship by authorship. Authors should avoid misdeeds by familiarising themselves with the accepted rules and by adhering to their institutions’ strategies. Editors and reviewers are in a position to spot instances of inappropriate authorship in journal submissions and suggest corrections. The latter is particularly possible when small papers with unreasonably long authors’ lists enter the editorial process (e.g. case reports, editorials, narrative reviews and short communications). Publishers and editors may further improve authorship patterns by adopting available guidelines, publicising acceptable criteria and encouraging authorship policies. Editors and authors benefit from the paper by artificially boosting their impact factor, whilst the latter is particularly possible when small papers with unreasonably long authors’ lists enter the editorial process.

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Armen Yuni Gasparyan
Chief Editor, European Science Editing

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11 Ethics and values. APS guidelines for professional conduct. Available at http://www.aps.org/policy/statements/02_2_cfm [accessed 2 June 2012].
Original articles

Promising outcomes of an online course in research writing at a Rwandan university

Ravi Murugesan
AuthorAID Training Coordinator, International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP), 60 St Aldates, Oxford OX1 1ST, UK; ravi@inaasp.com

Abstract
Background: Researchers in developing countries often do not have access to training on research writing. The purpose of this study was to test whether researchers in Rwanda might complete and benefit from a pilot online course in research writing. Methods: The pilot course was set up on Moodle, an open-source online learning environment, and facilitated by the author. The lessons and assignment were spread over six weeks, followed by a two-week extension period. Twenty-eight faculty members of the National University of Rwanda enrolled themselves in the course. Results: Twenty-five of the 28 learners completed the course. After the course, these learners expressed high satisfaction; eg, 24 of them felt that they were ready to write a research paper for publication. Conclusion: The high completion rate (89%) is noteworthy for two reasons: e-learning courses tend to have lower completion rates than classroom courses, and 76% of the learners in the pilot course had not taken an e-learning course before. This result and the positive feedback indicate that online courses can benefit researchers in developing countries who may not have access to classroom courses on research writing.

Keywords: E-learning; online course; research writing; Moodle; high completion rate; Rwanda; AuthorAID; INASP

Introduction

Background

The under-representation of research publications from developing countries has caused concern. The reasons are many, and among them is the incomplete knowledge researchers in developing countries have regarding the reporting of research. Early-career researchers generally find it difficult to write research papers. In developed countries, such researchers may receive support from their advisors (who may have mastered the craft of research writing), peers with more experience, and institutional writing centres. In developing countries, these forms of support may be in short supply. Inadequate preparation in research writing can harm the careers of researchers by preventing them from publishing their work, which compounding with limited funding and time for doing research—may decrease their motivation to conduct further research. AuthorAID is a concept aimed at supporting developing-country researchers in publishing their work in peer-reviewed journals. AuthorAID@INASP is a project run by the International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP). AuthorAID is part of a larger INASP initiative called the Programme for the Enhancement of Research Information (PERi), which also addresses issues such as access to research information, library development, and evidence-informed policy making in developing countries.

The AuthorAID staff at INASP have organised many workshops on research writing in various developing countries since 2007. To expand AuthorAID’s training initiative, we considered creating e-learning courses. We started with a pilot phase in which we planned to run a web-based, e-learning course titled “Writing a Research Paper for Publication”. The National University of Rwanda (NUR) agreed to be a partner in the pilot phase. Teaching and research faculty at the NUR were encouraged to enrol. The course ran from 3 October to 27 November 2011, with 28 learners and one instructor (the author).

This paper explains the challenges faced, how the course was conducted, and the outcomes.

Challenges

E-learning offers the tempting combination of cost-effectiveness and scalability, but making e-learning work can be challenging. For us, the challenges were the following: 1. Low retention rate or high dropout rate, compared to classroom instruction, is a classic problem in e-learning and distance education: attrition or dropout rates are typically 10 to 20% higher (or more) in online courses compared to classroom courses.2-4 2. In developing countries, e-learning faces additional challenges.2-4 Barriers to learning online include low-bandwidth or unstable Internet connectivity; lack of computers; and electricity outages. However, National Research and Education Networks (NRENs) in developing countries are improving. Rwanda has such an NREN, and the NUR is part of it. 3. The pilot e-learning course was to be conducted in English, a language that only recently became the medium of educational instruction in Rwanda. 4. The pilot course would be free of cost and not carry any official credit. While the former is meant to be an advantage, combined with the latter it may not be so. Learners who lose interest in the course may drop out because of the lack of both personal investment and tangible benefits. The learners’ satisfaction with the online course could be the key to a high retention rate.5,6 The social presence of the instructor and learners within the online course could also be critical for its success.7

Objective of the pilot course

Completion rate and learner feedback were to be the indicators of the success of the pilot e-learning course. The objective was to see a completion rate similar to that in AuthorAID workshops (about 90%) and positive feedback from the learners.

Methods

Online learning environment

Moodle was chosen as the online learning environment for hosting the pilot course. Moodle is free, open-source software7 that has found acceptance in many universities around the world.

In July 2011, the latest version of Moodle (2.1) was downloaded and installed by AuthorAID’s technology partner, the Institute of Learning, Research and Technology (ELRT) in Bristol, UK. Moodle was made available at http://aamood-demo.ilrt.bris.ac.uk/ (this URL may not be permanent). The basic, “default” theme, which has minimal CSS and images, was used so that users on low-bandwidth connections would not face long download times for pages.

Content

The foundation for the content was the lectures given at AuthorAID workshops, most of which have been written by Prof Barbara Gastel based on her book on scientific writing.8

The course consisted of nine lessons: (1) approaching a writing project; (2) publishing a paper in a journal; (3) the title and authorship; (4) tables and figures; (5) citations and references; (6) the abstract and introduction; (7) the methods section; (8) the results section; and (9) the discussion section. The lessons were spread over five weeks, from 3 October to 6 November 2011. In the last week of the course (7 to 13 November 2011), the learners had to do the assignment. Because the learners were to take the course alongside their teaching and research work, two hours a week was the prescribed time for course work. A screenshot of the course page is shown in Figure 1.

Methods

The lessons were created using the “lesson” activity. They were set up such that a learner could view a lesson only after completing the previous lesson. Two considerations were used in creating the lessons: readability and sustaining learners’ interest. To aid readability, (1) each lesson page usually had not more than about 100 words, (2) short sentences, normally 10 to 20 words long, were used, and (3) difficult words were avoided. To sustain the learners’ interest, each lesson had a mix of content and thought-provoking questions. Of the 118 pages in all the lessons combined, 74 pages (over 60%) contained such questions. Most questions were multiple-choice, and some involved matching (eg Figure 2). If a question was answered incorrectly, the learner could try again multiple times. When the learner selected the correct answer, an explanation was given, which began with a smiley face. For incorrect answers, an explanation was also given.

Figure 1. Screenshot of the course page in Moodle

Figure 2. Screenshot of a page in a lesson

The lessons were designed to avoid having different learners’ views of the lessons, which might reduce their consistency and effectiveness. The lessons were designed so that if a learner viewed a lesson more times than prescribed, the lesson would show a counter next to the lesson title indicating the number of times the lesson had been viewed. If a learner completed the lesson, the counter would be reset to zero.

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sent by e-mail to all academic staff at the NUR.

At this time, only the preparatory course, not the pilot course, was available. On 23 September 2011, the author announced the course aimed to be an online form of the AuthorAID workshop, where there is no test, assessment was not a feature. However, there was an assignment at the end of the course: learners had to analyse published research papers in their field and enter some characteristics of the papers in a database that all learners could see.

Getting started

The success of an e-learning course may depend on making learners aware of the educational technology they are going to use, for example, with a “warm-up” period. Therefore, a preparatory course was set up for potential learners of the pilot course to become familiar with the Moodle environment and the course instructor. The main component of this course was a forum where learners introduced themselves. Then, at the start of the pilot course, a five-page lesson called “learning guidelines” was provided. This lesson was made in the same style as the actual lessons of the course (with a mix of content and questions). At the end of this lesson, learners were asked to make a post on the course forum (called “discussion space”) explaining their learning goals.

The purpose of the preparatory course and the lesson with learning guidelines was to make learners comfortable with the two key elements of the course: the content (lessons) and interaction (forum).

Collecting feedback

Feedback was collected twice during the course: near the middle and at the end. The purpose of the mid-course feedback form was to see how the learners were faring. The learners could fill out both the feedback forms anonymously.

Whenever a post was made on the discussion and news forums, all the learners in the course received an e-mail alert with a copy of the post. This ensured that everyone was up to date with all the posts, even if they were not checking the forums. They could not reply to the post by e-mail; they had to login to the system to do that.

The author used e-mail to motivate learners who were falling behind the course schedule. Once, he wrote an e-mail praising a learner who completed three lessons ahead of schedule.

Results

Enrolment

We wanted to attract as many learners as possible to test the pilot course, so the course was open to academic staff in all departments, not just scientific researchers. Because the content had more breadth than depth, researchers from other fields could also benefit from the course.

On 10 August 2011, an announcement about the course was sent by e-mail to all academic staff at the NUR. The announcement contained a link for registration on the Moodle site, the site was set up to allow self-registration. At this time, only the preparatory course, not the pilot course, was available. On 23 September 2011, the author announced, in the “news” forum of the preparatory course, that the pilot course was ready and learners could enrol in it. Learners were advised to go through the “learning guidelines” lesson first. On 26 September 2011, a week before the course start date, this announcement was again sent by e-mail to all academic staff at the NUR.

Twenty-five faculty members from NUR enrolled themselves in the preparatory course. Of these, 15 enrolled themselves in the pilot course. Thirteen faculty members joined the pilot course without taking the preparatory course, leading to a total of 28 learners in the pilot course (22 men and 6 women).
course), and that message was about the author being away. The low online presence of the author in that week could have had an impact on the learners’ progress in the course. As soon as the author returned and made a post about the two-week extension period, the remaining learners made steady progress. Eight of the nine learners who completed the course in this period did so in the first week itself.

Feedback from the learners (Tables 1 and 2) is positive and encouraging. Multiple-choice questions in the feedback forms, there were a number of short-answer questions, for example, “Please specify what you think you will do differently, including any specific plans on sharing of historical information.” The learners’ responses reveal that they found the course very useful. Based on the feedback, the main point that required further attention is enabling group work in the course. This was not possible for lack of time. AuthorAID workshops that have group activities in which participants work on their own research writing. Such activities can be part of e-learning courses in Moodle, for example, the “workshop” module is meant for peer assessment.

As for interaction, 42% of the learners (12 out of 28) asked questions during the course, while 68% made at least an introductory post. The level of interaction was not high, however, no learner marked “no” to question number 5 in Table 2, so at least the learners were not uncomfortable asking any questions they did have. Two of the three learners who asked mostly by e-mail represented a total of seven questions. In contrast, the nine learners who asked questions over the discussion forum usually asked one question each. This could indicate that learners prefer to e-mail the instructor directly when they have many questions.

Conclusion

The objectives of the pilot course were achieved: the completion rate was similar to that in AuthorAID classroom workshops, and the learners gave positive feedback. Therefore, e-learning is viable for AuthorAID training objectives, and it may be so for others involved in teaching research or scientific writing to researchers in developing countries.

The success of the course can be attributed to the following: (1) providing a preparatory course and learning guidelines before starting the course at a gentle pace, (2) presenting content that sustained the learners’ interest and was appropriate for their language level, and (3) keeping in touch with the learners throughout the course by answering questions promptly, writing about current and upcoming topics, and paying attention to those falling behind.

A training programme is successful if the learners accomplish something by applying their learning. Workshops (and in the future online courses) run by AuthorAID aim to present content that sustained the learners’ interest and paying attention to those falling behind.

Support and advice for running the course. Ms Julie Walker at INASP made strategic contributions. Prof Barbara Gastel reviewed the initial lessons in the course, and Ms Sara Gwynn critiqued this manuscript. The author is grateful to Penny Hubbard for her comments.

Essays

Webometrics and journal websites

Silvia Maina
Editor, SEEd Medical Publishers, Torino, Italy; s.maina@edizioniseed.it

Abstract

Webometrics has emerged as a discipline to assess the circulation of information on the Internet. One of the metrics employed by webometrics is the so-called Web Impact Factor (WIF). A website is highly visited if it contains information of interest to a large audience, provides high-quality services and is mentioned on more influential websites. A high Journal Impact Factor (JIF) itself may attract many links to a journal website. However, many other factors influence journal visibility and its research aims, website layout, speed and ease of finding information, structure of website and hyperlinks. Despite some positive applications of webometrics, it is still not clear whether web links can be used for scholarly purposes. Usage data change over time. Search engines cover only a small proportion of information. It is thus important to take into account both quantitative and qualitative aspects of webometrics.

Keywords Webometrics; periodicals as topic; link analysis; impact factor.

Current academic publishing is switching towards online format and distribution of information by means of electronic journals. Webometrics, informetrics, bibliometrics, blogometrics, scientometrics and cybermetrics are all related disciplines quantitatively assessing the use of the contents of the cyberspace. Webometrics is concerned with the circulation of information on the Internet and is quantitatively assessing the use of information, amongst many other bibliometric and informetric tasks. 1 This relatively new discipline measures usage and structure of the websites, its pages, keywords, links and citations.

Impact of websites

Despite its seemingly chaotic organisation, the web has regular features enabling mathematical characterisation of its functions. 2 This is why it is possible to assess the rank of websites, the number of visits and links to the sites. 3 Webometrics employs variables to investigate website usage, type of domain (e.g.,.com, edu, org), variation in the uniform resource locator (URL), daily visits (eg page visitor counts), number of inbound links (ie number of external web pages or sites pointing to the elements of a given site) and number of pages per website.

There are three main types of applications: search engine results analysis, link relationship mapping and link impact evaluation. 4 Search engine results analysis aims at assessing the comprehensiveness and consistency of commercial search engines results, 5 in particular for their importance as an information retrieval tool by web users. Link relationship mapping is the analysis of the relationship between similar websites (eg measuring the number of links between pairs of sites). It includes link-based maps of topic areas intended to reveal content similarities; this technique is primarily focused on website content. Link impact evaluation is important for websites, pages of academic institutions and electronic journals.

Ingersoll proposed the so-called Web Impact Factor (WIF). 6 To calculate WIF, the number of inbound links at least once to a page in site should be divided in the number of webpages in that site. The links are used for navigational purposes, and WIF can be viewed as a good measure of a website’s visibility. WIF takes into account the use of hypertext links measured by search engines. The highly popular Journal Impact Factor (JIF) measures citations over a certain timeframe (2 or 5 years). In contrast, WIF is a “snapshot” of the search engines at the time of measurement. 7 The number of inbound links to electronic journals correlates well with JIF: journals with high JIFs tend to attract more links to their websites. 8 There is a branch of webometrics specifically focusing on electronic journals. Webometric analyses may identify relevant articles, map a field of interest and evaluate research work. Hyperlinks can be used for citation analyses. A number of studies have investigated the use of hyperlinks or download links to e-articles to find out whether they can be used to predict citations. It was shown thatdownload counts relates to the number of future citations of these articles, and thus downloads can be used as surrogates for measuring impact of e-articles and journals. 9

Is there anything beyond a link?

Links to a website may indicate how useful was the website and which pages, or resources are the most popular. The number of inbound links and their annual increment can help predict the evolution of pages. 10 Though the number of links may reflect the quality of the web resource, 11 it still needs to be confirmed in large studies. A UK-based study on university websites showed that the proportion of website links relates to a university size and prestige rather than the quality of displayed information. 12 Website survival can be assessed by a set of quality criteria. 13 The quality criteria for a medical website were listed by the Health on the Net Foundation (HON), British Healthcare Internet Association (BHIA) and the American Medical Association (AMA). 14

Webometrics in practice

According to the Internet statistics, there were more than 2 billion users in 2011. However, millions of the users mostly visit a few selected websites. Webometrics can be useful in practice to rationalise your efforts. For example, Webometric Analyst or Yahoo! Site Explorer can help the users to search and find most useful information. 15 Webometric Analyst allows to obtain “Web Impact Report” of the number of times each set of words, phrases or documents have been mentioned online, a “Link
Impact Report1 of the number of web pages and sites that link to one or more web sites or pages using an URL citation, or a network diagram of the URL citation links between a collection of web sites. The results should then be tabulated. A link analysis should be conducted once a website is created and periodically thereafter.2

Hit counts should be analysed to judge the popularity of web pages. A page can be highly visited if it contains information of interest to a huge audience, provides high-quality services and is mentioned on more influential websites. A high JIF itself may attract many links to the journal website.3 There are, however, many other factors of visibility and webometric rank of a website, including format, output and ease in finding information, structure of website and hyperlinks. Journal websites may become more attractive by displaying information on journal subscriptions, editorial board members or information for authors. More can be achieved by providing access to abstracts and full texts of articles. The open-access model, even with a limited embargo period, can expand readership and citability of a journal. Journals with well-established and long-lived websites attract more visibility. Subject category may also influence visibility and the number of hyperlinks of a journal website. A comparative study on law and library and information science e-journals with the same values of JIFs demonstrated that the latter ones attracted more traffic due to a higher interest of professionals in library and information science.4

Some metrics and tools can be used to increase website visibility and links from other sites. Networking links to Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn are particularly useful for promoting a journal website by regularly distributing tables of content or even interesting articles. Blogs and forums can also play the same role.

Webometric analyses are used to record how often journal articles are accessed and downloaded. Some publishers display information on most viewed or downloaded articles to further attract attention to these articles and the websites. Having mentioned some positive aspects of webometrics, it is still not clear whether web links can be used for scholarly purposes for the long-term time. Search engines cover only a small proportion of information. Password-protected databases and websites are accessible by a limited number of people.5 It is thus important to take into account both quantitative and qualitative aspects of webometrics.

Acknowledgements

The author is grateful to Frank-Thorsten Krell for critical reading and comments.

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Abstract

The objectives of establishing a medical editing internship program are to offer education, training and practical experience to biomedical professionals aiming to pursue a career in medical editing. The essential components of such a program are described in this paper. Once established, the internship program can facilitate qualified education in biomedical editing and writing, as well as enhancing the reputation and academic standing of a training institution.

Keywords: Education; internship; biomedical editing.

Introduction

A medical editing internship program should provide a setting for training editors skilled to support authors in writing and publishing their manuscripts in high-quality scholarly publications. The implementation of such a program is possible in universities that have a medical communications centre or a relevant department capable of providing electronic editorial services. The ultimate aim of a well-structured program is to transfer essential knowledge and skills. It is thus necessary to pay attention to the planning, supervision and follow-up of the programme.1

Objectives and design - The main aim of an internship is to train qualified medical communication professionals to be capable of rendering a full range of editing services.2 Some of these services are basic abilities for publishing biomedical images (ie diagnostic images in clinical medicine and analytical images in basic science).3

Benefits - Interns acquire the experience necessary for science editing and editor-author communication. This experience is a milestone for professional orientation and an opportunity to build up their resume.

Duration - The editing activities can be carried out daily. However, the schedule can also be tailored to the participants needs, with at least 2-days attendance per week. A minimum of one year is recommended for a long-term program, with the first three months as a probation period.

Participants and qualifications - To fully benefit from the program, the intern should have at least a bachelor degree in any biomedical field, some writing and editing experience, knowledge of the structure of different types of scientific papers, basic computer proficiency, and good interpersonal skills.

Ethical issues - A clear understanding of ethical issues such as authorship, scientific misconduct, conflicts of interest, or confidentiality is instrumental for holistic science editing.3 Distinctions between medical writers and ghostwriters should be presented.4 Also, information on authorship criteria,5 detection and avoidance of plagiarism6 and ethics in medical writing (eg duplicate publication)7 must be imparted.

Online databases - Searching online databases such as...
Edited in Croatia: the case of Biochemia Medica

Ana-Maria Simundic
Editor in chief, Biochemia Medica; Clinical Institute of Chemistry, University Hospital Center "Sestre Milordznice", Zagreb, Croatia; am.simundic@gmail.com

Seven years ago, I joined the editorial board of Biochemia Medica, the English-language, peer-reviewed journal of the Croatian Society of Medical Biochemists (CSMB). Its 16th anniversary coincided with a major re-organisation when two co-editors in chief were appointed, and I was offered a post of an assistant editor.

Our editorial policy was to gain international recognition in the field of laboratory medicine. For a journal from a small scientific community, this recognition could be earned by adhering to internationally acceptable publishing standards and by satisfying the following main indexing criteria: clear and unique aims and scope; timely and regular publication; quality of the journal content; quality of the editorial work; technical quality of the journal; international editorial board; visibility for the international scientific community. Members of our editorial team invested a lot to meet these standards and indexing criteria.

Aims and scope of the journal

New journals are being continuously launched by either scientific societies or professional publishers. To get indexed by major online databases, a journal needs to find its niche and provide added value to the existing scientific literature. To achieve that, apart from covering common topics, we focused on some unique features, such as education, research methodology and quality management in clinical chemistry and laboratory medicine. Moreover, the journal launched a section on biostatistics to educate our readership on descriptive analysis, confidence interval, hypothesis testing, odds ratio, diagnostic accuracy, survival analysis, meta-analysis and many other related topics. The articles on biostatistics have actually become the most read, downloaded and cited items of the journal.

Updated EASE Guidelines for Authors and Translators of Scientific Articles

In June, EASE issued the 2012 edition of EASE Guidelines, available in 20 languages. The updated edition includes some new materials that are practical for junior researchers. Besides, it supports the global initiative Healthcare Information for All by 2015 (www.HIFA2015.org) by advising authors to make abstracts of their papers highly informative, reliable, and easily understandable.

If journal editors wish to help us spread the word about EASE Guidelines, they can mention them in Instructions to Authors, using a formula like:

Before submission, follow EASE Guidelines for Authors and Translators, freely available in many languages at www.ease.org.uk/publications/authors-guidelines. Adherence should increase the chances of acceptance of submitted manuscripts.

EASE launches a free online Author Toolkit

Building on the success and popularity of the Author Guidelines, EASE is developing a suite of resources for authors. As Editors, it is to our benefit if authors are well briefed and well prepared, so that we can focus on assessing and preparing for publication manuscripts that are basically in good shape. The first items are available on the EASE website and comprise chapters on Publishing in Addiction Science, by kind permission of the International Society of Addiction Journal Editors. We welcome additional materials from EASE members: we can host them on our site or simply provide links. Please contact Joan Marsh (jmarsh@wiley.com).
in accordance with the Statement on Conflict of Interest for Authors.4 Our authors are now obliged to declare any potential source of competing interests that might have affected their work. Finally, we switched to online manuscript submission and peer review along with launching a new website (www.biochemia-medica.com).

Technical quality of the journal

All accepted manuscripts undergo copyediting by one of our assistant editors, who checks for consistent use of terminology, units of measurement, abbreviations and nomenclature in laboratory medicine. PDFs of all copyedited articles are sent to the authors for proofreading before publication.

International editorial board and the journal’s visibility

Our editorial board members serve as reviewers and ambassadors of the journal. They are encouraged to promote the journal articles in their scientific communities globally. Half of the editorial and reviewer board members are international scholars. As a result of joint efforts, the journal receives an ever-increasing number of papers from Europe and elsewhere. The majority of our authors and the journal’s website visitors are from outside Croatia, mostly from the US.

Biochemia Medica was accepted for indexing in EMBASE/Excerpta Medica and Scopus in 2006. It got indexed by Science Citation Index Expanded two years later, got its first Impact Factor (IF) in 2009 and accepted by Medline/PubMed.

EASE 30th anniversary

Interviews with Honorary Life Members

ELISABETH HESELTINE Long-time EASE member Elisabeth Heseltine, perhaps best known for her training workshops on scientific communication, was elected an Honorary Lifetime Member at the conference in Tallinn.

Mini bio: Elisabeth Heseltine started travelling early, leaving England at the age of 6 to go to school, first in Ottawa, then in Upper State New York and then on Long Island, where she had brilliant teachers of both science and English, which may explain how she became a scientific editor. After 10 years at McGill University, she left with a BSc and an MSc in physiology for Cambridge (England), where she worked in the Pharmacology Department. One May morning, cycling to work, she realized that she had been at various educational institutes for 20 years, and decided to take a look outside. She worked as a researcher on ‘Horizon’, a science programme on BBC television. Finding herself with two small children, she worked at home for Leo Cooper Ltd, which published military history books. She then moved to France to live in various precarious structures, including an inflated dome (we are not going to describe how that worked). To pay for the brown rice and soya beans, she got work doing scientific editing with the World Health Organization and particularly with the International Agency for Research on Cancer. There, she was told about EASE, and she attended the meeting in Pau. This began a life-long enthusiasm for EASE, which culminated in being elected to the Council. By then, she had started running workshops in scientific communication (‘running’ being the operative word), and has travelled the world since, doing the workshops and also writing reports for meetings of United Nations agencies. A great life, but the garden suffers.

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

I became involved with EASE through Dr Walter Davis, who was my predecessor as head of the unit of publications at the International Agency for Research on Cancer. My earliest memories of EASE are at Pau, where I met the largest concentration of kindred souls that I had hitherto seen.

How do you have a favourite moment, memory, event, conference or entertaining encounter you’d like to share?

Fire! In 1970, the IF of the journal steadily increased from 0.660 in 2009, 1.085 in 2010 to 1.343 in 2011. Our next step forward is to join CrossRef and some of the learned associations for journal editors, particularly the COPE and the European Association of Science Editors (EASE). The latter will help us advance our editing skills by attending educational meetings, networking with colleagues, familiarising with updated guidelines and some other resources.

Acknowledgements

Comments and suggestions of Miguel Roig are greatly appreciated.

References

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JOHN GLEN Mini bio: I have been a University teacher – lecturer, then senior lecturer then reader – in the Department of Physics of the University of Birmingham. While I was still a research student at Cambridge I was recruited by Gerald Seligman, the founder and first editor of the Journal of Glaciology to assist him in that task and I eventually succeeded him as editor.

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

I think the most difficult time was when there seemed to be an attempt for the British to take over Editerra. I remember defending Arie Manen, as the person who had kept Editerra going in its early years. Another difficult time was when IFSEA attempted to recruit individual members in Europe contrary to its constitution, thus threatening EASE.

What was the most glaring typo or editorial ‘no-no’ you ever spotted?

An Italian glaciological journal whose English abstract said “cuore” the Italian for both heart and core – in his thread of a heart! On looking at the Italian it became clear that “trick” was a straight misprint for “thick”, “thread of a” described something that was cylindrical, and “heart” was of course “cuore” the Italian for both heart and core – in his theory a glacier had a thick cylindrical core!

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

I think the biggest change has been the much greater inclusion of editors from eastern Europe. From the beginning we tried to include them but politics was against us in those cold war days.

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

My advice would be to get to know all you can about all the technical translation from French into English, so that is yet another string to my bow. I was also lucky enough to have a teaching post at a French university for some years, so that teaching adults became something else that I enjoyed doing. All these things together have made for a very busy, fruitful career.

A longer article by John Glen on Editerra and its amalgamation with ELSE is available on the EASE website.

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

My favourite meeting was in Cambridge, where there were the most amazing convivial parties every night and extraordinary talks by knowledgeable people, including the editors of journals like the British Medical Journal and The Lancet.

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

The most nerve-wracking experience was certainly the first time I had to get up and say something. I wasn’t yet used to public speaking, and I remember turning red and finding my voice trembling.

What was the most glaring typo or editorial “no-no” you ever spotted?

Editorial ‘no-no’s happen to everyone. EASE publications have been mercifully free of them, as far I know and as befits the Association.

How do you have a favourite moment, memory, event, conference or entertaining encounter you’d like to share?

I think my most significant thing I did was as an Editerra representative on the committee which was formed to formulate statutes and bye-laws for what became EASE. There were quite a number of controversial matters - Anders Martinsson for example was adamant that the new Association should retain the name of Editerra!

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

The greatest changes in publishing are of course linked to computers, both from the point of view of editing and publication of online journals.

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

My advice to younger members is to be versatile. I was lucky enough to have both a solid science background and also a real love of literature and the English language. My first stroke of luck was to be offered a position at the international Agency for Research on Cancer; where I met many well-known scientists, who started me off on running workshops. Having lived in France for 40 years, I now do some technical translation from French into English, so that is yet another string to my bow. I was also lucky enough to have a teaching post at a French university for some years, so that teaching adults became something else that I enjoyed doing. All these things together have made for a very busy, fruitful career.

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This year’s conference took place at Tallinn University of Technology (TUT), who provided us with a wonderful lecture theatre and space to accommodate the informal networking and discussions around presentations and workshops.

Friday … the conference opens

The conference started with a welcome from the Vice Rector of TUT who gave us a quick overview of the university which was launched in 1918 and is the second oldest in the country, providing courses in three languages (English, Estonian and Russian). He reminded us that we were in the home of Skype, and with free WiFi everywhere it was certainly true that the whole country was Internet–mad – an ideal place to hold a conference looking at the digital world.

First plenary: national journals in an international context

The plenary lecture was given by Professor Jüri Engblagate from the Estonian Academy of Sciences. He quoted Armin Töffler, saying that western civilizations were good at dissecting problems, but not so good at putting them together again, and the smaller countries can contribute greatly to this type of problem solving. He stressed the link between society and science and the need for the two to complement each other. He identified the problems of language in scientific communication and that the emphasis on the English language is a help to researchers but can prevent complete understanding of principles and theories.

Following the formal opening of the conference we were treated to a reception to celebrate EASE’s 30th anniversary at the impressive Town Hall where we were served a birthday cake large enough to feed the entire EASE membership!

Saturday … the conference gets going

On Saturday the conference started in earnest with a plenary lecture on open access models from Deborah Kahn, BioMed Central. She stressed the importance of making research available not only to all researchers but also to the general public whose taxes have often made the research possible. She clarified some concerns about article publication fees, saying that they were often waived but also to the general public whose taxes have often made the international research environment impacted on them.

Madlen Juracích from Geologia Croatica stressed the need to learn from other journals in the region, and to balance local needs with international research. He provided a history of the journal which, over the past 100 years has grown, changed its name and evolved into a triannual journal in English with an international editorial board. He concluded by stressing the importance of the editors in promoting the quality and visibility of the journal, and that since there are few people speaking Croatian, and a smaller number of those who study geology, there was very little future for a local Croatian-language journal.

Sioux Cumming from the International Network for the Availability of Scientific Information (INASP) presented the findings of a study of Bangladeshi journals to investigate how access to international research publications was affecting the researchers information habits – ie whether it increased the number of recent international publications cited in local journals. He reported that huge amounts of online Bangladeshi journals through its Journals OnLine programme, and there are now 89 journals on the site. During 2011 it received around 70,000 visitors from around the world and provided approximately 1.5 million article downloads. Contrary to their expectations in the research, they found that in several cases there was a reduction in the number of recent international articles being cited – the reason for which requires further investigation.

Stephan Mertens from Deutsches Arztblatt, a medical journal run by the German Medical Council, described how the journal evolved from a German language journal into a split publisher with German-only print issues, and two separate websites – one for the German language- and one for the English-language journal. Since 2003 the journal has received increasing submissions leading to a greater number of rejections (from 25% to 50%) with the in quality resulting in acceptance by Medicine. The journal translates articles into English for the authors, who are very appreciative – particularly of the international visibility that this provides them.

Parallel session A: From national to international

The first parallel session looked at how national journals are coping with the internationalisation of science. The presentations discussed the impact of international publishers on the scientific output which is often transformed multiple times for publication. The original data is seldom published and can’t be reconstructed. Other problems are data loss (retirement, death, institutional reorganisation), falsification, clipping (selective reporting), calibration (conduct) and standardisation (reporting), and maintaining long-term time-based data. Sterken also emphasised the need for peer review of data to give a quality label.

Second plenary: Social media tools

After lunch we had the second plenary lecture from Alan Cann of the Annals of Botany. True to the topic of his talk, he was introduced with information from his social network profile and we found out that he liked marmite, but disliked celery! He gave an inspiring talk about the opportunities for journals from social networking tools. The journal’s experimentation started by recognising that one part of the journal (the editor’s choice) was very similar to a blog, so they wrote an experiment to compare more than one (www.aobblog.com). Then they built on this by developing a Facebook page. He stressed that the blog, in particular, provides a parallel content stream to the journal and reaches out to a different audience – they are looking to write a comprehensive more acceptance to promote the blog, and that they recognised that there is no supporting revenue stream for these types of activity which may not cost anything (or very little) but do take considerable time to maintain. He concluded that “anyone not using social media is bonkers!”.

Parallel session B: publishing data

However, the EASE from the UCL Centre for Publishing (London, UK) opened this session with a broad overview of the current debate about data publishing and curation. Publishers have traditionally not been interested in data simply connecting it to publications as “supplementary data”, so the academic community has taken the lead. However the real ‘article of the future’ will be linked with data. Most publishers have made arrangements for archiving and preservation, but have hardly any archiving plans for supplementary data. King finished by urging libraries to play a stronger role in maintaining data repositories and supporting campus-based publishing.

Sarah Callaghan from the NERC Data Citation and Peer review team explained how NERC funds six large data centres in the UK. She explained that people who create datasets don’t get the kudos or reward of a publication, which to those who use and analyse these data may be critical. They may be motivated for all sorts of reasons, but funders want good value from their input, and scientists want acclaim. Both want protection as well as sharing. Callaghan promoted the role of data centres which can be a crucial link. She explained how NERC, organised, standardised format, whether or not there is a mandate to publish. Data journals are emerging, the latest is Gioscience Data Journal, published by Wiley on behalf of the Royal Meteorological Society. A data journal has a more complex editorial workflow than a traditional journal, with careful separations of repository-controlled and journal-controlled processes, and there remains some debate about what constitutes peer review of data. A new project (PREPARE) has been set up to develop processes, policies and governance for data peer review. Callaghan closed with a quote from Jason Primm: “We share because we do science, not alchemy.”

Christiaan Sterken (Journal of Astronomical Data, Brussels, Belgium) spoke about the difficulties of organising data. He discussed the ‘centralisation’ model where a Depository of online journals publish huge amounts of data which is often translated multiple times for publication. The original data is seldom published and can’t be reconstructed. Other problems are data loss (retirement, death, institutional reorganisation), falsification, clipping (selective reporting), calibration (conduct) and standardisation (reporting), and maintaining long-term time-based data. Sterken also emphasised the need for peer review of data to give a quality label.

Parallel session C: science translation

John Bates (University of Tarragona, Spain) spoke of the relationship between reading difficulty and academic prestige. He raised the recurring question of why academic writing is written in a style that is not only rather clear, concise and accurate. He introduced the audience to ‘Dr Fox hypothesis’, referring to an experiment from the 1970s, where a professional actor, presented as a leading academic, delivered a scientific lecture that was littered with nonsense and irrelevance but nonetheless stimulate and convinced the audience. The conclusion was ‘if you can’t understand it, it must be good!’ Thereafter any incentives to create obscure, wordy, useless, science-like prose: greater academic reward; a desire to dignify your subject (clear simple text = clear simple topic?), increased chance of funding, and bad models.

Local vice-president Eva Machová (Czech University of Life Sciences, Prague) discussed the growth of translation agencies of variable quality, and gave numerous, sometimes amusing, examples of confused or careless writing or translation. Two particular aspects of note were the inability of some authors or translators to appreciate the spirit of the language and its syntax, and the use of field-specific knowledge and terminology. Eva proposed more direct engagement with authors and more sharing of examples between editors.

If you have a large team of copy editors working on documents of variable quality, how do you assess the level of work? Ana Marušić (Croatia) discussed the benefits and drawbacks of the Croatian language and its syntax, and the use of field-specific knowledge and terminology. Eva proposed more direct engagement with authors and more sharing of examples between editors.

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She concluded that it is the responsibility of journals to check for duplication and plagiarism so that readers can have trust in what they read.

The third presentation in this session came from Sun Huh who investigated the KORAL website to identify different types of duplicate publication. The reason for this was to provide categories that could be used to educate researchers and reduce instances in the future. His research showed that duplication was no longer being reduced, and this is linked to a lack of education and understanding of what is considered ethical. During his talk we also learnt the term IMALAS - reverse salami publication!

The session was closed by Liz Wager, whose report can be read on page 75.

Conference dinner
The conference dinner was held at the House of the Brotherhood of the Black Heads, where we were served delicious food in beautiful surroundings. As in all EASE events, there was no holding people back from entering lively and impassioned discussions and debates which continued late into the evening.

Sunday... the discussion continues

Parallel session G: Improving peer review management
This session was run by Elizabeth Blalock from the Journal of investigative Dermatology and Michael Willis from the International Society of Managing and Technical Editors (ISMTE). Unlike the other parallel sessions there were no invited speakers and the session was focussed on how to provide education and support.

Michael asked the audience to consider why reports are required and what can be done with the data – analysing, interpreting and responding to it. To demonstrate how to present data powerfully we were shown Charles of submissions within that same period. To conclude the demonstration of how to use graphic tools such as Google's easy-understandable reports.

Unlike the other parallel sessions there were no invited speakers and the session was focussed on how to present data powerfully we were shown Charles Skilled writers build manuscripts recursively (cyclical, unexpected turns, returns, excursions) not linearly (plan, draft, rewrite, polish), which enables further understanding of the storyline; (3) edit to correct English and improve the storyline; (4) polish, making sure that everything is reduced as far as possible.

What's the difference between skilled and non-skilled writers? Skilled writers have heuristics for deciding when to write, and accept their garbage serenely. That was the conclusion of Mary Ellen Kerans (Spain), who looked at research insights from cognitive psychology, anthropology, and studies of writers and writing educators, and gave some valuable tips for working with different sorts of authors. Skilled writers build manuscripts recursively (cyclical, unexpected turns, returns, excursions) not linearly (plan, draft, rewrite, polish), which enables further understanding of the storyline; (3) edit to correct English and improve the storyline; (4) polish, making sure that everything is reduced as far as possible.

The session was closed by Patricia Wolland-Nail (INRA, France) described MISTER, an educational programme for INRA PhD students in partnership with several French universities, where scientific writing and publishing are rarely taught. The programme is based on the concept of researcher as mentorship, and some examples of how the system has worked well. Mentors can be senior researchers or editors, and the audience were encouraged to join the scheme. Editors can help with content (choosing target journals, study design, publishing strategy, manuscript critique), publishing in general (publishing process, timelines, decisions and how to deal with them), authorship, and understanding language.

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Another way that medical journals can help to prevent publication bias is to require registration of clinical trials.

The final plenary talk was given by Linus Svensson from the O folos Editorial office. He described the structure of the organisation behind the journal, and used his talk to stress that media writers and editors are not the only barriers (thinking differently as well as language) in both academic writing and publishing. Their training now focuses on implementing policies and recommendations. The final plenary talk was given by Linus Svensson from the O folos Editorial office. He described the structure of the organisation behind the journal, and used his talk to stress that media writers and editors are not the only barriers (thinking differently as well as language) in both academic writing and publishing. Their training now focuses on implementing policies and recommendations.
A debate on open access

Ravi Murugesan
Author/AD Training Coordinator, International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP), Oxford, UK
rmurugesan@inasp.info

On 25 May 2012, I attended a debate on open access (OA) organised by the Structural Editors Group at Imperial College London. The large hall in which the event was held was nearly full, perhaps because of the provocative title: “Open Access: Is it open season on traditional scientific publishing?” There were five people on the panel: Chris Bird, Senior Lawyer at the Wellcome Trust; Stephen Curry, Professor of Structural Editors Group at Imperial College London; David Hoole, Marketing Director at Nature Publishing Group (NPG); Michael Jubb, Director of the Research Information Network (RIN); and Graham Taylor, Director of Educational, Academic and Professional Publishing at the Publishers Association.

Chris Bird, from the Wellcome Trust, said that although the trust encourages researchers who receive their funding to make work openly accessible, compliance is very low: around 5%. He claimed that OA and open science are good for the economy, and cited the Human Genome Project as an example, which has led to economic activity and job creation. “Researchers must believe that it is a good thing for research to be freely accessible,” he exhorted us, and I fully agreed.

Next, Prof. Curry of Imperial College said that he, like most academics, had stayed away from debates in scholarly publishing for a long time. But when Elsevier extended support to the Research Works Act, he joined the OA movement. He stated that the public shouldn’t have to check twice for research: the first time to make the research happen, and then to see the output. He also lamented that researchers focus too much on the impact factor, saying “Focusing on the impact factor is a lazy and easy thing to do.”

David Hoole from NPG took a balanced view. He explained that NPG has always been focused on communicating science to the general public. NPG’s first OA journal, Molecular Systems Biology, was started in 2005, and he said that NPG was the first publisher to encourage green OA, or self-archiving. But he explained that Natures journals in general cannot easily operate with an OA model: because of low acceptance rates (around 5%), much of the processing time and ensuing costs is in rejecting articles and not publishing them! Therefore, article-processing charges, which most OA journals levy on successful authors, would be necessary.

Michael Jubb from the RIN put things in context: there’s no doubt that OA is good for researchers, the public, and the economy, but how can OA happen on a large scale? UK research institutions produce about 6% of the approximately 1.9 million articles published every year in journals, so there’s not a lot the UK alone, or for that matter any one country, can do.

After the four speakers had their say, Graham Taylor from the Publishers Association began defending the traditional model. His stand was that publishers are the stewards of scientific information, and they do the things others don’t do, many of which are onerous tasks. They are pragmatists, and, in his words, they are neither rogues nor philanthropists. As he spoke, the tweets from the audience made it clear that he was not the most popular speaker.

With many differing and yet well-founded views on OA, perhaps the only conclusion that can be reached at this point is that the debate on OA will continue.

This book presents a collection of 10 chapters dealing with diverse aspects of technical editing (ie, editorial planning, and analysis and structural changes made to other people’s technological documents): research in technical editing, trends and teaching of technical editing, copyediting, and technical journal editing. The role and function of the modern journal and book editor is also dealt with in detail. Each chapter is written by an expert in the field: senior editors, university professors in technical communication, technical writers and linguists. The ever-evolving role of the editor is clearly elucidated in several historical reviews, and in the descriptions of the expectations for the future. A very striking aspect of this book is its extensive collection of bibliographic resources: each chapter lists dozens of very useful references, and the closing chapter, and annotated bibliography, contain many not so well known references, and are most useful. All in all, the book is a treasure trove listing more than 400 references, in addition to numerous webpage URLs embedded in the texts.

The book is designed to help readers to understand current practices and norms in technical editing, and to help them to take action in editing as well as in teaching and educating would-be editors. The audience for this book thus includes editors and teachers, but also writers, researchers and students. A deep reading of this book will result in a better understanding of the difference between full technical editing and its much narrower component so well known as copyediting, and will convince any prospective editor that editing should not be undertaken if the people involved do not master the art of precision and accuracy in technical (as well as in human) communication, do not possess the technical know how and computer skills, or do not have a very broad knowledge base.

The language忠诚度of every contributor makes this book a pleasure to read, and this particular volume of Baywood’s Technical Communications Series is very well edited. The subject index covers almost 8 two-column pages.

Christiaan Sterken
University of Brussels, Belgium; EASE Council member
estekens@vub.ac.be
You can join the forum by sending the one-line message "join-ease-forum" (without the quotation marks) to majordomo@easenet.org. 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.

EASE-Forum Digest: March to June 2012

One of the most interesting debates I have reported on the forum over the last 9 years began when Eric Lichtfouse asked for references to papers on elements that increase journal impact factors (IFs). He was also interested in papers on the increasing number of science journals.

Enri Meleiro cited a paper which focuses on Open Access journals but also refers to journal growth in general. Helle Goldmann suggested that anyone interested in how Open Access may influence citations should search Alma Swan or her unpublished paper “The open access citation advantage” (2010), which has a table listing numerous references on the topic. Judy Holoviak provided a link to a study by the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry. She noted that the report shows data from a number of fields and demonstrates mathematically difficulties with some of the indices that have been derived from the impact factor.

The debate gathered momentum when Will Hughes expressed his concern about the practice of cartel citation reported in the Scholarly Kitchen. Cartel citation was uncited. He also mentioned that the 2010 Nature paper on the “quality index” had appeared in their journal during the preceding 2 years. The editors could thereby at a low cost greatly influence their own journal’s IF. Davis further highlighted that the practice was facilitated by the board of editor having influence over the board of the same or a related journal of which a member was a part. He also pointed to institutional pressure from the board whereby IFs might act as a promotion or funding barrier. This argument arose from both parties and is a feature in the EASE forum. The misuse of the IF was blamed on the Publish-or-Perish (P-or-P) phenomena by which science is assessed for promotion or funding. It is usual to refer to editorial pressure on authors to publish high IF journals. This in turn leads to editors’ and publishers’ obsession with high IF citations for their journals. Tom Lang affirmed that it would be unethical not to publish research results. He thought the goal, however, should be to reduce the importance of P-or-P and the face of the IF and other citation metrics. If publication quantity were no longer an issue he thought the unremarkable studies papers write for promotion would go away. He suggested that promotion committees should read articles from candidates rather than just count them.

Calls initiated by Tom Lang were made for EASE to spearhead a campaign to stop P-or-P. The President of EASE, Joan Marsh, commented that EASE had started to address the topic with its statement on IFs. She thought that most of the concerns could be resolved by setting clear guidelines for editors adding the aside, “though many people think there are enough of those already”. The question she posed was who are we trying to influence, fellow editors or scientists on university promotion panels? Whilst it may be possible for EASE to influence its target audience of editors, university scientists would be harder to reach and influence. Sylvia Ufmaalu agreed that EASE is not strong enough to influence university policy. Enrico Mencarelli, a former member of the organisational science and jounals, for example from The Guardian, and campaigns targeting key universities might have a chance of success in banishing the P-or-P culture.

Eric Lichtfouse has been a long-time advocate of the idea that all sections of an article should be “almost” understandable without reading the other parts. He also thought that the handling and status of retractions is important in the EASE forum. The handling and status of retractions is important because the publisher does and does not allow authors to do. John Hilton thought that the handling and status of retractions is problematic when it’s due to misconduct or error without a new category of ‘disgruntled/economic’ political retractions.

Judy Holoviak provided a link to a study by the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry. She noted that the report shows data from a number of fields and demonstrates mathematically difficulties with some of the indices that have been derived from the impact factor. The discussion started with the observation that the editors of Cell Transportation were referring to the impact factor, which might act as a promotion or funding barrier. This idea appealed to Ravi Murugesan, who is an AuthorAID training coordinator and conducts workshops in developing countries, especially Africa. He thought a lot of the problems with IFs could be resolved by better understanding how their research can translate into real impact, which he said was particularly important in Africa where funding is scarce and the concept of research is still being established. He put forward the idea that the long-term goal would be to influence policy by working with science journalists and public administrators.

Elie Langdon-Neuner (compiler) a.a.neuner@gmail.com

Discussion initiators
Eric Lichtfouse: Eric.Lichtfouse@dijon.inra.fr
Karen Shashok: kshashok@kshashok.com

References
My Life as an Editor - Farrokh Habibzadeh

In the 1990s, when I was a medical intern, I used to go to the editorial office of the Iranian Journal of Medical Sciences (IJMS, formerly Pahlavi Medical Journal), an international quarterly journal, published by my Alma mater, Shiraz University of Medical Sciences. At that time, the journal suffered long delays, and I questioned why an editor could not publish it on time. After all, editorial work is not so difficult; it just needs a good command of the English language I thought, as did many other university professors back then. I understood that realizing that the editorial craft is not an easy task. Indeed, it is one of the most complicated jobs. For my broad research interests and strong skills in computer sciences and biostatistics, Dr Karim Vessal, founder of medical journalism in Iran and then the editor of IJMS, encouraged me to take the post of editorial assistant of the journal. Over the years, I greatly improved my editorial skills and was offered the post of deputy editor in 2002.

One of the turning points in my editing career was my attendance of the Fourth International Congress on Peer Review in Biomedical Publication held in Barcelona, Spain in 2001. It was mainly due to Professor Haghshenas, who strongly encouraged me to participate in the congress. Interestingly, before the congress, the only source of information about journalism was my mentor, Dr Karim Vessal, who, like many other editors in the region at that time, earned his editorial skills and knowledge through trial and error. I was fortunate to receive a scholarship to participate in the pre-congress short course for editors run by Tim Albert and Harvey Marcovitch, big names in our profession. After the first day of the workshop, I found I was totally ignorant about modern journalism! While I was asking about the ways our journal could be indexed, they were talking about the quality and level of indexing that indexing agencies offered. If I wanted to take a message from the course, I had to look at the subject from another angle. The congress was fruitful. I forged friendships with many science editors from around the world.

Medical journalism has changed dramatically over the past two decades. Manuscript handling is now carbon free, from any corner of the world through internet access. Thanks to digital technologies one can easily launch a good-looking journal, which is a perfect way to publish a quality journal. To have a good journal, an editor has to learn and adhere to a set of rules—noble prescriptions. Throughout my journey as an editor, I have learned that a good editor is not the one with an ambition. One should have a passion for the editorial office, which has its own rules, tips, and tricks. For example, editors should be aware of data manipulations by pharmaceutical companies favouring their products, ghost authors, or authors with fake affiliations. At first, the editors believed that importing journals from developed nations. I used what I learned to improve the IJMS and ran several workshops. Two years later, I took on the director of IJMS and continued collaborating with the world community of medical editors. Later on, I became vice president of WAME, and took this presidency this year.

During the past years, journalism has advanced in the Eastern Mediterranean region. The number of scientific journals has multiplied. The First Regional Conference on Medical Journals in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region was held in Cairo, Egypt, in 2003. Hundreds of biomedical science editors gathered there and decided to establish the Eastern Mediterranean Association of Medical Editors a journal changes name, publisher. I am interested in the chairmanship of the editorship committee and vice president. Supported by the WHO regional office, EMAME created a forum for regional editors to solve their problems through regular meetings and discuss about the financial hardships of biomedical journals.

One of the major problems was, and still is, the lack of skilled reviewers in the region. To change the situation, I arranged several workshops on peer review and shared my own experience gained at journals such as The Lancet and JAMA.

As deputy editor of the IJMS, in 2002, I was asked to arrange the Lancet workshop on science writing along with two editors of The Lancet, Stuart Spear and David Sharp. Successful collaboration with this journal and its editors allowed me to join the editorial board of The Lancet as a consultant. Last year, I was also assigned as the honorary editor of The Lancet Middle East edition. As an honorary editor, I write for and publish the editor’s page, a monthly column on medical science and health care in the Middle East.

Furthermore, driven by the differences in medical culture and practice, I decided to launch The International Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine (The IJOEM), a forum for sharing observations and experiences of researchers from the Middle East. The first issue was published in January 2010. Thanks to its enthusiastic staff, editorial board members, reviewers, authors, and support of the readership, we have made good progress. As a regional consultant, I help to bring new journals and improve the quality of old ones. I try to act as a liaison to fill the North-South knowledge gap and to inform local editors about the international standards of the quality journal.

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Some of these items are taken from the EASE Journal Blog (ese-journalblog.blogspot.com), where full URLs may be found.

News Notes

News Notes are compiled by John Milton (john.milton@gmail.com).

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The Finch report

The Working Group on Expanding Access to Published Research Findings, chaired by Dame Janet Finch, co-Chair of the UK Government’s Council for Science and Technology (www.bis.gov.uk/ctst), published its findings in June. The groups remit was to investigate how UK-funded research findings could be made more accessible. Its report (www.researchinfonet.org/public-finish/recommendation) recommended better, faster communication of research results through open access, with the aim of benefiting public services and economic growth, as well as improved efficiency for researchers, and more opportunities for public engagement with research. The report received a large amount of criticism from both mainstream and social media and was generally supported by publishers, who broadly acknowledged that some kind of open-access model was the way forward. Opening only a few months after the widespread criticism of some publishers for their support of open access mandates, this seemed like a shift in viewpoint. Indeed, a few days before the report was published, Nature editor-in-chief, Philip Campbell, acknowledged that open-access was ‘going to happen in the long run.’ However, the Finch report seems to think its strong support of ‘gold’ OA (publisher-led open-access) over ‘green’ OA (institutional repository-based access), among other concerns.

Journal naming standards

We've changed our journal's name! The US National Information Standards Organization (NISO) has published draft recommendations for the presentation and identification of e-journals. When writing a journal changes name, publisher. I am interested in the chairmanship of the editorship committee and vice president. Supported by the WHO regional office, EMAME created a forum for regional editors to solve their problems through regular meetings and discuss about the financial hardships of biomedical journals.

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Open citations

The publishers of the two biggest science journals, Nature and Science, announced that they have made available the reference lists of those journals’ articles for use in an Open Citations project (openaccess.ad分化nelisations.net) developed by JISC, the organisation that promotes digital technologies in British academic institutions. Nature Publishing Group had already launched its own linked data platform (data.nature.com) and developers have announced that they will make mining, persuading publishers to make mining, easier, and urging governments to promote and protect rights to mine. The declaration, published on the OKFN website in June (tinyurl.com/ease-news17), is based on three principles: right of legitimate national access to fast, reliable, lightweight processing tools, and conditions, and freedom to use mined information.

FundRef

FundRef is a project that builds on a collaboration between publishers and funding agencies. The project, supported by the UK’s Public Library of Science (plsoone.org) in making the reference lists from a number of journals available for the project. The CrossRef Cited-By Linking service (www.crossref.org/ cebid) will be used to integrate these publishers’ reference lists with the existing database.

Towards open content mining

The use of technology to extract data and meaning by ‘mining’ journal content opens up new areas of research and new ways of answering research questions. Researchers in this emerging field have pushed for more co-operation from publishers, especially those researchers whose institutions already subscribe to journals but who aren’t able to mine those journals’ contents due to uncertainties about copyright and licensing. The Open Knowledge Foundation (www.okfn.org) has published a draft content-mining declaration, with the three-pronged aim of educating researchers and librarians about open data, and mining, persuading publishers to make mining, easier, and urging governments to promote and protect rights to mine. The declaration, published on the OKFN website in June (tinyurl.com/ease-news17), is based on three principles: right of legitimate national access to fast, reliable, lightweight processing tools, and conditions, and freedom to use mined information.
EDITORIAL PROCESS
The new technology (such as ScholarOne) used for submitting papers to academic journals increases the possibilities for gathering, analysing and presenting summary data on stages in the refereeing process. The author suggests that refereeing should be “open” in this information age - ie correspondence between editors, referees and authors should be open and available, and not private. Some of the issues involved in achieving this are outlined and discussed.
doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8535.2011.01211.x
This article covers some techniques that authors should consider when submitting their manuscripts. In order to: choose a search engine-friendly title, write accurate abstracts and inviting introductions, make the article easy to use and connect to, use media and links imaginatively and disseminate the article after publication. These improvements are likely to be worthwhile in terms of maximizing an article’s chances for better visibility, increased downloads, and higher citations later.
ETHICAL ISSUES
Heidari S, Abdool Karim Q, Auerbach JD, et al. Women in biomedical and life sciences: The examination of a limited number of publisher’s Instructions for Authors, of guidelines from two scientific societies, and of the policy document of the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) provide the basis for articulating best practices in authorship in scientific research and for articulating about authorship and publication practices. They relate, in particular, to the following issues: definition of authorship, policies on dual authorship, conflict of interests disclosure, electronic access, data sharing, digital image integrity, and subject’s protection.
doi: 10.3839/fncom.2012.00008
Hinckop J, Khan J. Future publication success in science is better predicted by the publication success of researchers from post-publication success. This article investigated how the post-2000 publication success of 85 researchers in oncology could be predicted from their previous publication record.
Little is known about how future publication success can be predicted from past publication success. This systematic review evaluates evidence about authorship issues and practices and defines order of authorship across all scholarly disciplines. It reviewed 123 articles reporting results from 118 studies. Four general themes were identified: authorship perceptions, definitions and practices; defining order of authors on the byline; ethical and unethical authorship practices; and authorship issues related to student/ non-research-personnel-supervisor collaboration.
doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0023477
RESEARCH EVALUATION
To increase the reliability and accuracy of published articles, the authors propose tracking replications of published findings as a means of post-publication evaluation, both to help researchers identify reliable findings, and to incentivize the publication of global results. They laid out a proposal for how replications might be tracked via an online open access system, which core components are described, including mechanisms for compiling the information, ensuring data quality, and incentivizing the research community to participate.
doi: 10.3389/fncom.2012.00008
This article discusses social awareness tools developed by scientific research scientists that facilitate collaboration, help manage article references, and offer options for presenting findings in new ways. The following tools are described: VIVO and Profiles, Sciencelitfer, Mendeley, SAT and EXPAT, and SciVee.
The authors analyze the degree to which science librarians could play an important role to evaluate the many social awareness tools available, and to recommend them, and to help researchers use them effectively.
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Anna Maria Rossi
Publishing Unit
Istituto Superiore di Sanità, Rome
annamaria.rossi@iss.it

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 blog journal (see ease-bookshelf.blogspot.com) and see your postings published in the journal.
Correspondence

Scientific communication centres: few in number, narrow in specialty

Science editors and educators of scientific writing provide support in a variety of ways to researchers writing for publication. Much of this support is provided outside the formal structure of institutions. Within institutions, “scientific communication centres” are rare. The operational details and benefits of one such centre were explained in an essay in the previous issue of European Science Editing and in two related publications. Perhaps the most important benefit of such a centre is that the institution’s authors can be sure of receiving consultation that is personalised and of high quality, because the centre shares the research mission of the institution.

Some of the presentations at the recent conference of the European Association of Science Editors (EASE) in Tallinn, Estonia were on a related topic – how editors can help researchers with writing and publishing. At the conference Carol Norris explained how she teaches science writing in Helsinki by having students edit each other’s work, and Ed Hull from the Netherlands spoke about the three-step interactive editing approach, in which the language editing happens after the author has revised the paper by acting upon feedback on the flow and content. Training by editing can be coordinated by scientific communication centres, and researchers across departments may benefit as a result.

Unfortunately, these centres are few, and even when one is found, chances are it is within the premises of a medical institution. There are, of course, numerous research institutions that focus on many areas of science, and their research agendas and publication ambitions are similar to those of medical institutions. Why, then, are communication centres not common in research institutions? Budgetary constraints, no doubt, are a reason, but perhaps science editors should do more to convince administrators and researchers of the benefits. Editors at scientific communication centres can help authors by offering editorial services and training early-career researchers to draft “rough gems” of papers that need only language polishing to become publication-worthy.

Ravi Murugesan
AuthorAID Training Coordinator, International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP), Oxford, UK
ravi@uwalumni.com

The exemplary case of editing and indexing Biochemia Medica

Having published an article a couple of years ago in Biochemia Medica, I was pleased to read Ana-Maria Simundic’s paper. I was impressed by the fact that the editorial staff of this journal has had no formal training on science editing and that they work on a voluntary basis (unpaid). Although journal editors of major publishers (eg Nature Publishing Group) tend to be salaried and a few medical journal editors can make upwards of $100,000 per year, I have to wonder how many of Dr Simundic’s peers who run journals from small scientific communities might also work on a voluntary basis and without much formal training.

I was also pleased by the relatively recent and rapid ascent of the journal in terms of major indexing organisations that now include Biochemia Medica in their listings. Surely, these accomplishments stem from expertly persistent editorial oversight regarding issues of scholarship and research integrity, such as authors’ declaration of conflicts of interest and authors’ contributorship. I was glad to learn of Biochemia Medica’s achievements. My sense is that the editor has every reason to be proud of her journal and, in spite of the competing climate in science publishing, I have no doubts that Biochemia Medica will continue to rise in stature and respectability. I believe that the scientific community owes the editors of Biochemia Medica a debt of gratitude for their tireless efforts on behalf of good science.

Competing interests I published an article in Biochemia Medica and was reader of the doctoral dissertation for Dr Lidija Bilić-Zulle, an assistant editor of the journal.

Miguel Roig
Department of Psychology, St. John’s University, New York, USA
roigm@stjohns.edu

References


ISMTE EUROPEAN CONFERENCE

EASE members are eligible for discounted registration for this year’s ISMTE 5th Annual European conference, to take place in Oxford on 23rd October. (www.ismte.org for details)