

SCIENCE EDITOR

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In this issue

- *More Reports from the 2011 CSE Annual Meeting*
- *Board of Editors in the Life Sciences*
- *AuthorAID*



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ANNUAL MEETING REPORTS

- e3 Word Tips for Editors
- e3 Use Equator as a Guide
- e4 Seeking and Using Reader Feedback to Improve Your Journal

FEATURES

- e5 Canadian Medical-Student Journals: An Overview. PAMELA VERMA, DAVID TSO, DAVID YOUSSEF, DIANE WU
- e10 EASE Guidelines. SYLWIA B UFNALSKA
- e11 Conducting a Job Search: An Interview with the American Cancer Society's Esmeralda Buchanan. TERESA M MELCHER
- e12 Founding the Board of Editors in the Life Sciences: An Interview with the National Academies' Norman Grossblatt. TERESA M MELCHER
- e13 The Board of Editors in the Life Sciences (BELS) Certification: An Interview with BELS President Susan E Aiello. TERESA M MELCHER

DEPARTMENTS

- e14 Reviews. SUSAN M SHIRLEY
- e27 Between Author and Editor. STEPHANIE DEMING
- e29 The Ethical Editor. KRISTI A OVERGAARD
- e31 Who's New in CSE
- e32 Index to Volume 34 (2011)
- e37 Calendar
- e37 Information for Contributors

Cover image: Frosted flowers #2 by Rachel Chang.



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Neurology

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Inera Inc

Belmont, MA

Elizabeth Blake

Director of Business Development

Inera Inc

Belmont, MA

Reporter:

Teresa M Melcher

Editor

Self-Publishing Press

York, PA

For most of us—whether experienced Word user or beginner—Microsoft Word is the workhorse of writing. CSE members heard tips on using Word as an editorial tool rather than an authoring tool at the CSE annual meeting in Baltimore, MD, this May.

“Word actually does have a lot of good tools for copyediting, but they can be challenging to find”, said Elizabeth Blake, noting that the 2007 upgrade of Word has

“a pretty radical change in the interface, partially done to make Word’s features more discoverable”.


Word was overhauled again in 2010, although Blake noted that the changes were less drastic than in the transition from Word 2003 to Word 2007. “Once they get used to the new interface, most people seem to like the upgrades”, said Blake. “However, a lot of what we talk about during tips sessions are default behaviors you don’t like and want to turn off.”

Among the pluses she has noted in the Word upgrades are

- Spelling and grammar functions. “I think it probably has become more sophisticated than it was years ago”, she said. For instance, the contextual spelling feature distinguishes between *ensure* and *insure* and between *vary* and *very*.
- Improvements in the “paste special” button. “Word now allows you to specify your default formatting settings when pasting content from a different document or a different program”, Blake said. The ability to save your preferences instead of having to specify them on a case-by-case basis via multiple clicks “was for me probably the most exciting new feature in Word 2007”.

Other useful editorial tools highlighted include

- The Auto-Correct feature. Blake noted that the default settings—for example, change “(c)” to the copyright symbol—can be dangerous, but auto-corrections can be deleted, modified, and added by the editor. Auto-Correct can, for instance, be used to insert boilerplate queries quickly or to automate the expansion of commonly used abbreviations (such as “NIH”).
- The format painter. The paintbrush icon allows the editor to copy complex visual formatting or underlying paragraph or character styles and “paint” them onto other text selections in one step.
- Navigational tools. The “splitter” allows an editor to view and scroll through two sections of a single file and is particularly useful for comparing in-text citations with references or data in the abstract with data in the results section.
- Keyboard shortcuts. Control + y allows users to repeat their last action and is helpful for actions for which there is no simple keyboard command, such as adding rows to tables. Control + space “normalizes” selected text, removing extraneous font settings or face markup in one step.

“As with everything in Word”, Blake said, “explore”. And remember, she told attendees, “A shortcut is only as good as it is memorable”. 

Use EQUATOR as a Guide

We all need someone or something to guide us. The EQUATOR Network is trying to do just that for health research. Launched in 2008, EQUATOR is an international initiative that seeks to enhance reliability and value of medical research literature by promoting transparent and accurate reporting of research studies. Attendees at the 2011 CSE annual meeting in Baltimore, MD, were updated on EQUATOR. Ana Marusic, co-editor-in-chief of the *Croatian Medical Journal*, served as moderator and speaker in the session. Attendees were asked to share their journals’ current or planned use of reporting guidelines.

One of EQUATOR’s major goals was to develop a comprehensive online research center. Journal officials can use the EQUATOR Web site, www.equator-network.org, to keep current versions of the many guidelines available. All too often, a journal’s “Information for Authors” refers to an old version of a particular guideline, Marusic said, and many journals do not date it—something that would help to eliminate some confusion.

EQUATOR’S Web site has information for authors, editors, peer reviewers, and researchers that can be shared. It also has information about current and completed research projects related to health research reporting and upcoming EQUATOR courses and events. The network, Marusic said, can help editors with their job, and she urged those attending to share the Web site with members of their staffs.

—MARY BETH SCHAEFFER is managing editor of *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

Seeking and Using Reader Feedback to Improve Your Journal

Moderator:

Ingrid Philibert

Managing Editor

Journal of Graduate Medical Education
Chicago, IL

Speaker:

Arlene Weissman

Director, Research Center
American College of Physicians
Philadelphia, PA

Reporter:

Teresa M Melcher

Editor
Self-Publishing Press
York, PA

“We want to know who our readers are”, Arlene Weissman told attendees at the CSE 2011 annual meeting in Baltimore, MD. She said that knowing who reads the journal can be a boon to advertisers and the editorial staff and can promote reader engagement. It helps identify “unique strengths of our journals compared to our

competitors”, she said. “Who are we trying to attain and attract to our journal? First, we have to narrow it down.”


A survey and reader feedback can help determine what readers value. “Who is our competition, and what are they doing well?” she asked, adding that those are also important questions to include in a reader survey. “Give feedback after the survey”, she continued. “Your readers want to know they’ve been heard.”

Some may struggle with what questions to ask, Weissman said, but “the reality is your editor is going to know what questions to ask”. And most—whether the editorial staff, the advertising department, or the marketing team—will know how to use the information once it’s gathered.

Weissman said that one of the first questions is, “What effect will the survey have on the direction of the journal?” She continued, “What type of changes are we prepared to make as the result of this survey?” And, “Don’t ask for feedback in an area where you know you can’t make a change”.

How the survey is presented may affect the results. Will it be mailed, done by telephone, or sent on Facebook or Twitter? The choice may reflect a bias, Weissman said. She suggested that a focus group can help you to decide what to ask on a survey.

She continued, “Now we get to the fun part, designing those surveys”. That’s not easy. “The bottom line is no one has time to do surveys”, she said. One of the challenges is to make a survey interesting. Surveys should take 10 minutes or less to complete; “the longer the survey, the harder it will be to get information from respondents”. And “the more open ends you have in a survey, the less likely you are to get results”.

Some organizations offer incentives for filling out surveys, for instance, an iPad or a raffle for a gift certificate to Harry & David. Some surveys work better when they are anonymous, whereas others should be confidential. It depends, she explained, on whether you need to go back to investigate the responses. But all respondents “want to know, when they offer advice, that they were listened to”, Weissman said. 

Canadian Medical-Student Journals: An Overview

Pamela Verma, David Tso, David Youssef, and Diane Wu

Abstract

Introduction: We offer an overview of the major Canadian student-run medical publications: their format, structure, and productivity. Canada has eight active medical-student journals, which publish more than 200 articles each year.

Methods: Editors of medical-student publications in Canada were interviewed by telephone or online survey to obtain information about demographics and other characteristics of the publications. Topics included editorial autonomy and faculty involvement, editorial scope and content, organizational mandate, organizational staffing and structure, years in operation, funding sources, and distribution and indexing.

Results: The publications varied widely in each characteristic reviewed. Some journals are new, some have a long history. Authorship eligibility ranges from being exclusive to medical students to being open to practicing clinicians and allied health students. The mandates of the schools

vary; some opt for a special focus, such as the humanities. Staffing ranges from eight to 60, and staff are local or international. Funding ranges from combinations of private and public to exclusively public.

Conclusions: Student medical journals publish articles from and for a broad audience and provide students with an opportunity to develop their medical literacy and publishing skills. We propose a consortium of student-journal editors to bridge knowledge gaps with respect to their function and to strengthen the positions of the institutions in the student and medical-education communities.

Key Words: medical students, publishing

Introduction

Formal training opportunities for clinicians to learn medical-editing skills are few, and editors of the most prestigious journals in the world have recognized that. Their own accounts of how they became influential leaders in our profession are admittedly surprising. Richard Horton, of *The Lancet*, admits that “there is no career structure”¹, and Fiona Godlee, of the *BMJ*, described her entry into the position as “by accident”.² Journals themselves lament in writing about the challenges in finding suitable candidates to lead their publications.³ One formal training program, based at the Georgetown University School of Medicine, in Washington, DC, offers an elective for fourth-year medical students to work at *American Family Physician*.⁴ In Canada, the *Canadian Medical Association Journal (CMAJ)* used to offer a fellowship program for those who had completed their medical training.⁵ After the program was discontinued, the CMAJ, in collaboration with the Canadian Federation of Medical Students, opened a position for a single medical student on the Editorial Advisory

Board in 2010.⁶ However, the position has a proposed 3-year term, and Canadian medical students generally graduate in 4 years, which restricts the opportunity for student participation.

Major medical publications in the United Kingdom have a strong history of training opportunities for medical students and medical graduates alike. Both *The Lancet* and the *BMJ* offer a year-long elective, taken away from clinical medicine, in which a student is provided the opportunity to serve as editor-in-chief of the student publication (*The Lancet Student* and *Student BMJ*). In contrast, Canadian medical-student journals tend to be associated with medical universities.

A former editor of the *McGill Journal of Medicine* wrote about the role of student publications in stimulating and reinvigorating an interest in academic medicine and research in the current climate of declining numbers of students in clinician-scientist investigator programs.⁷ Although some training programs exist, they are currently insufficient to meet the demand for the rapidly growing numbers of biomedical journals and to accommodate the quantity of articles being submitted to them.⁸

Publishing is an invaluable opportunity for a medical trainee for learning: what the submission and review process is like, how to formulate and defend hypotheses, and about being accountable for research findings and study recommendations. Beyond being directly involved in the publication of research results, students must learn to access and apply research results effectively in clinical practice to become successful modern practitioners.

In Canada, there are eight active medical-student journals, which together publish more than 200 articles per year (Table 1). The purpose of our study was to develop a basic understanding of the scope and practice of medical-student publications

¹Faculty of Medicine, University of British Columbia; ²Correspondence: Pamela Verma, Faculty of Medicine, University of British Columbia, c/o Office of Student Affairs, Vancouver General Hospital, Diamond Health Care Centre 11th Floor, 2775 Laurel Street, Vancouver, BC V5Z 1M9, pamverma@interchange.ubc.ca

Potential conflicts of interest: All four authors were previously involved with the University of British Columbia Medical Journal from 2007 to 2010: DT and DY as managing editors and PV and DW as editors-in-chief.

continued

Table 1. Summary of Canadian Student Medical Journals

Journal	Years in Operation (Cumulative)	Who Can Submit?	No. Staff	Funding Source	Approximate No. Articles per Year
<i>Dalhousie Medical Journal</i>	53	Any local allied-health student	10	Private, university	16
<i>McGill Journal of Medicine</i>	16	Undergraduates, medical students, graduate students located internationally	124	Private, advertising	40
<i>McMaster University Medical Journal</i>	6	Any medical or allied-health students, residents, physicians, nurses, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, graduate students, researchers at any institution	13	University	19
<i>Queen's Health Science Journal</i>	13	Open	8	Private, university	10
<i>University of Alberta Health Sciences Journal</i>	6	Local medical students, residents, physicians, researchers, graduate students	11	Private, university	26
<i>University of British Columbia Medical Journal</i>	9	Students at any institution	40	Private, university	20
<i>University of Toronto Medical Journal</i>	87	Universities, institutes, organizations, medical professionals around the world	36	Private, advertising	48
<i>University of Western Ontario Medical Journal</i>	80	Local medical students	26	Private, advertising	38

in Canada. By reviewing their publishing trends and mandates, we hope to stimulate an academic exploration of the effects of working on such publications on student trainees both inside and outside the medical profession.

Methods

We identified medical schools across Canada by using a snowball sampling technique. Initial contacts were made with student journals identified by our current staff and with those whose contact information was publicly accessible on the Internet through August 2011. A survey tool was developed to assess several journal characteristics: scope and size of the journal's staff and finances, editorial scope and audience, relationship of the student publication

with faculty or other mentors, and policies on funding and distribution. Data were collected using a variety of methods, including telephone interviews, distribution of an online form, and finding information available on publications' Web sites. We developed a tool to tabulate data for analysis that evaluates each journal according to the characteristics listed above.

Eight Canadian medical-student journals were invited to participate (Table 1): the *Dalhousie Medical Journal* (Dalhousie), the *McGill Journal of Medicine* (McGill), the *McMaster University Journal of Medicine* (McMaster), the *Queen's Health Science Journal* (Queen's), the *University of Alberta Health Sciences Journal* (Alberta), the *University of British Columbia Medical Journal* (British Columbia), the *University*

of Toronto Medical Journal (Toronto), and the *University of Western Ontario Medical Journal* (Western). Data were collected by interviewing participants by telephone or providing them with an online survey that contained the same question series; staffers at McGill and Toronto were unable to participate directly, so we used relevant information from their public Web sites. Clarification and opportunities to modify the information electronically were available to all participants. Survey questions were organized according to the following domains: editorial autonomy and faculty involvement, editorial scope and content, organizational mandate, organizational staffing and structure, years in operation, funding sources, and distribution and indexing.

One criterion for inclusion in the study was that interviewees had to be medical students serving in a senior executive role in the publication (typically called the editor-in-chief, although the role might have been divided among several students). Criteria for exclusion were non-student and/or non-executive members of the journal staff and non-Canadian medical-student publications.

Results

Editorial Autonomy and Faculty Involvement

A vast range of faculty involvement is represented among the publications: from an active participating role in policy making through a consultancy role that involves advising on an as-needed basis to full commitment to reviewing and editing every article. *Alberta* has the smallest amount of faculty involvement: support is provided only when needed. In contrast, *British Columbia* and *Dalhousie* call on faculty members as reviewers of submitted articles. Another common role of faculty members is that of an advisory board that the journal staff can refer to for guidance. *Alberta* and *Dalhousie* do not use an advisory board composed of faculty, but *British Columbia*, *McMaster*, and *Western* all have such committees in place. *British Columbia* also includes senior faculty members in the selection of writing-award winners for each issue.

Overall, there is little in terms of formal, publicly available information about the autonomy that student editors have in the operations of the journals. Providing more cohesive documentation of this on their Web sites may encourage students to submit their work. Similarly, formal recognition of faculty contributions could enhance the credibility of the publications, which might help in recruiting top research articles and attracting organizational funding.

Editorial Scope and Content

The journals vary widely in author eligibility criteria. Some accept articles only from local medical students, others accept work from internationally established students

and practicing physicians, and still others from allied-health and basic-science research fields. By limiting articles to those written by local students, student publications may be limiting their ability to develop a more national or even international profile.

Organizational Mandate

An important goal of some journals is to focus explicitly on student training in research and academic writing (for example, *Alberta* and *British Columbia*). Accordingly, some extended their integration within the medical school by cosponsoring student research conferences. Journals often participate by publishing conference abstracts in a dedicated online issue (*British Columbia*) or incorporated into their regular issues (*Toronto*). In contrast, Dalhousie Medical School has devoted extensive time to the humanities, establishing a strong relationship with the school's Humanities in Medicine Program.

Organizational Staffing and Structure

Journal structure varies widely among the medical schools. Staff size ranges from eight (*Queen's*) to more than 60 (*McGill*), and staff were recruited from all years of medical school. "Top executive positions" refers to the position of editor-in-chief or the equivalent highest-ranked authority in the publication. The number of top executive positions ranged from one (*Western*) to three (*Dalhousie*). Most journals are staffed solely by local medical students. However, the marketing strategy of *McGill* includes internationally based students and clinicians who advise on editorial content ($n = 20$) and partake in public relations ($n = 24$). In all journals, designated section editors select articles and coordinate peer review. Several journals opt for a clear division of labor among editorial sections (*British Columbia* and *Toronto*) whereby editors are responsible for a single submission format—research, case reports, or news. Others provide a less specific division (*Dalhousie*, *McGill*, and *McMaster*) whereby editors are responsible for overseeing a broad array of types of articles. In most journals, first-year

students enter positions as section editors and are promoted to higher executive positions in their second or a higher year; this facilitates mentorship and capacity building among staff.

Most journals use some form of a peer-review process for article acceptance. Articles submitted to *Alberta* undergo initial review by student editors, and final acceptance depends on peer review by volunteers from the student body, who might not have content expertise. In contrast, *Dalhousie* asks only faculty to complete external review. *British Columbia* and *Toronto* request reviews from a combination of faculty and student reviewers, who typically have content knowledge, and weigh the returning comments in making final decisions to accept or reject articles.

Years in Operation

Sustainability is a critical issue for student journals, especially in light of the necessarily high staff turnover. Evidence of student-driven medical publications has existed for nearly a century. Some of the oldest known medical-student journals are *Toronto* (1923), *Western* (1930),⁹ and *Dalhousie* (1957). Others were relaunched from journals that ceased publication in the middle of the 20th century. (*McGill* was previously in print from 1947 to 1951 and *British Columbia* was previously in print from 1962 to 1968.¹⁰)

Funding Sources

All journals receive funds from their home institutions through support from either the faculty or the student governing body. Notably, *Dalhousie* receives funding from outside medicine—from the university's "Medical Humanities" department. Many journals (*Dalhousie*, *McGill*, *Toronto*, and *Western*) have contracts with private advertising agencies, whose collection rates (the fees the agencies take for providing the advertising services) are reportedly up to 50% of total advertising revenue.^{11,12} Private sponsors of *Alberta* include medical-equipment and pharmaceutical companies, notably Pfizer Canada. Few of the

schools have formal policies about accepting pharmaceutical or medical-equipment funding or about how editorial integrity must remain in the hands of students. This situation suggests an opportunity for other professional medical editors to mentor and educate student editors in developing their own policies regarding the role and influence of advertisers in their publications.

The total annual operating cost of the journals ranges from \$5,000 to \$10,000; printing accounts for most of the expenses. *British Columbia* and *Western* also reserve a portion of funding for writing awards.

Distribution and Indexing

All the journals have an online presence, and print distribution tends to be limited to local students and physicians. *Dalhousie* distributes its print version to all medical students and physicians in Nova Scotia, whereas *Western* circulates only to all students and faculty members. No journal is distributed to all students in Canada, nor is there a central repository of student publications.

There is inconsistency among the student publications with regard to indexing, a vital means of accessing student work. At the highest level, *McGill* is the only publication indexed on MEDLINE. *Alberta* is indexed by the National Archives in Ottawa but has no plans to apply for indexing on MEDLINE. *British Columbia* is indexed in Google Scholar, the National Archives, and the World Health Organization's HINARI, which makes it possible for developing nations to have free or low-cost access to biomedical publications.

Discussion

Despite the long existence of Canadian student journals, to our knowledge this is the first formal attempt to describe their scope and content. The Canadian Medical Education Directives for Specialists (CanMEDS) is the framework of core competencies required of all medical graduates in Canada.¹³ CanMEDS explicitly states that Canadian medical graduates must meet standards for “communicator”

and “medical expert” roles. We posit that medical-student journals play an important part in building that capacity by providing students with practical training in academic writing and editing.

International Comparators

Student publishing has a rich history internationally, particularly in the UK. The integrated *Student BMJ*, operated by a single student editor, uses the resources of the host *BMJ* for mentorship and training and for print and distribution. Through a relationship with its medical society, the *Student BMJ* is delivered in print to all medical students in the UK and this makes students much more aware of student publishing than does the limited print circulation of Canadian student journals. The *McGill* model of using promotional representatives from around the world is, however, an effective strategy for increasing its exposure as one of Canada's few MEDLINE-indexed student publications. A host-journal-based strategy has been used by *The Lancet Student* and the now out-of-print *Medical Student JAMA*.

Beyond North America and Europe, medical-student journals are flourishing and should be the focus of new research. Most recently launched is the *International Medical Journal of Students' Research* (<http://www.imjsr.com>), which is based in India but includes staff and publishes articles from around the world. We are populating a list of all international student journals (<http://lib-drupal2.lib.sfu.ca/studenteditors>).

Future Directions

An important next step is to explore the effects of formalized training in scientific publication on new graduates' research output and career outcomes. Student journals could serve as a platform for exchanging knowledge, resources, and ideas. In light of the multitude of benefits that medical-student publications are providing, it is interesting to note how different they are in their methods. There is no consistent way for the editors of these publications to receive mentorship. We propose that a society of editorial members of student

journals could have a substantial effect on the journals' ability to raise their profiles as a collective, as has been done in other domains of medical publishing.¹⁴ It would also provide a forum for editors to discuss emerging issues, exchange contacts and resources, and give each other new and creative suggestions for promoting their success.

Knowledge Gaps

Medical-student journals provide many opportunities for budding clinicians, but this has yet to be documented formally. It is not known how student engagement influences career outcomes. Are medical-student editors more likely to become medical editors or researchers? What is the effect of medical-student journals on their student readers? Do they make the students more comfortable about participating in research projects later in their careers or about embracing evidence-based practice? In light of the scope of the journals, those questions are worthy of investigation.

Conclusion

Student medical journals in Canada have diverse scope, structure, and policies. They operate in a dynamic setting with rapid staff turnover, yet also constitute an important training and mentoring facility for students. We hope that this paper will initiate a formal discussion on the role of student journals in medical education and help to develop a national network to promote high standards of excellence akin to the standards of the World Association of Medical Editors and the Canadian University Press, a journalism student union. Investing in student journals will be an effective means of engaging students in academic discussion and enhancing their capacities as future medical practitioners. 📖

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EASE Guidelines Help Editors and Scientists Save Time

Sylwia B Ufnalska

Whenever I edit a poorly written manuscript, I wish that the authors were aware of the importance of writing concisely and clearly and of the proper structuring of a research report. That knowledge would save both their time and my time, and scientists who are not proficient in English could also save the money they may have to pay translators or author's editors for substantial corrections of their manuscripts.

We can alleviate the problem by providing instructions for scientists and science translators. However, to be effective, the instructions must be concise and clear. That is why in 2010 the European Association of Science Editors (EASE) published its practical *EASE Guidelines for Authors and Translators of Scientific Articles*. The document is a result of long discussions on the EASE Forum and during the 2009 conference in Pisa that were followed by consultations within the EASE Council.¹

In the 2011 edition, we have paid special attention to ethical issues to promote research integrity worldwide. More precise guidance is given on authorship, acceptable secondary publication, avoidance of plagiarism, and so on.² A new appendix about ethics is a pioneering one-page compilation of authors' ethical declarations. It reminds authors about the basic principles of ethical experimentation and scientific writing.

EASE Guidelines have already been translated by volunteers into 17 languages: Arabic, Bangla (Bengali), Chinese, Czech, Estonian, French, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Persian (Farsi), Polish, Portuguese (Brazilian), Romanian, Russian, Spanish, and Turkish. Some other

SYLWIA BUFNALSKA has worked as a freelance translator and editor of biological texts for nearly 20 years. She is an EASE Council member and editor of *EASE Guidelines*, in Poznań, Poland. e-mail: sylwia.ufnalska@gmail.com.

translations are in progress. The English original and the translations are freely available as PDFs on the EASE Web site (www.ease.org.uk). Individual sections of the document, including several appendixes on selected issues (in English only), can be read directly on the Web site, which has hyperlinks to online references.


The guidelines are addressed not only to scientists but also to translators because of culture-related differences in scientific style. In some cultures, sophisticated vocabulary, complicated sentence structure, haziness, and excessive referencing are perfectly acceptable in scientific texts.^{3,4} In such cases, translators must suggest some corrections to the style of the original so that the resulting manuscript will meet the standards of scientific writing in English.

It is noteworthy that *EASE Guidelines* are a valuable tool for popularization of recommended solutions to many problems. For example, commas in numbers may be misinterpreted because decimal commas are used in many languages instead of the decimal point used in English. That is why the latest edition of *Scientific Style and Format* recommends that in numbers exceeding four digits, thin spaces (not commas) be used to separate groups of three digits in either direction from the decimal point.⁵ Another problem is that many databases (such as PubMed) include article titles and abstracts but not the list of keywords; hence, authors are advised to include all the relevant keywords in the title or abstract.

We hope that use of the guidelines will increase the efficiency of scientific communication all over the world. To aid in their popularization, we allow noncommercial printing of the PDFs. Thus, whole documents or individual appendixes may be used as handouts for postgraduate students. Courses in scientific writing and ethics can also be developed on the basis of the list of references and further reading.

CSE members are welcome to review the guidelines for themselves and to

advise their authors to use them when it is appropriate. We invite journal editors to post the abovementioned link on their Web sites so that novice authors can check for guidance before submitting their manuscripts. Researchers will then understand editors better and will be able to spend less time revising their manuscripts after submission. Translators will be able to improve their scientific translations into English. All that should facilitate the publication process and enable science editors to focus on the scientific validity and accuracy of submitted papers.⁶ Finally, readers will benefit from more understandable and reliable scientific publications.

You can help us to achieve these goals for the common good. 

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Conducting a Job Search: An Interview with the American Cancer Society's Esmeralda Buchanan

Teresa M Melcher

Scanning the job bank on CSE's Web site, you spot the American Cancer Society (ACS) job opening. With the click of a mouse, your standard cover letter and résumé are sent. You pack your bags and wait for the call for an interview.

Right?

Not so fast, says Esmeralda Buchanan, ACS journals director. In fact, you probably won't make it past the first screening.

She's recently seen a dizzying array of résumés and cover letters for ACS positions. One common theme, Buchanan said, is that applicants don't always care what they are applying for; they just apply. "We are starting to want to speak to them a few times before we bring them in", she said, even local candidates. "You're trying to decide if they definitely want that specific job".

What's more disturbing to Buchanan is the applicants' lack of research about the journal for which they presumably want to work. The ACS journals are mentioned in the job advertisements, and all are available online with their goals, mission statements, and lists of board members, she added, but applicants, "especially the younger people, they don't do enough specific research on [our] journals". Some would-be applicants haven't even read the job descriptions. "They think they're going to write for us

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and they're not", Buchanan said, noting that most peer-reviewed journals do not require their managing editors and editorial assistants to write articles.


But it isn't only poor researching of jobs that concerns Buchanan. She also receives cover letters and résumés that have grammatical and spelling mistakes. "At a minimum, the cover letter should not have any errors in it and the résumé should not either", Buchanan said.

"We've actually been having our HR (human resources personnel) do an initial phone screening", she said. A 30-minute telephone call touches on the candidate's work ethic and why the candidate is leaving his or her current job. If that discussion is successful, they may move on to a phone interview, and the applicant may be invited to Atlanta for an in-person interview with ACS journal team members. Buchanan said that involving potential co-workers in the interview can provide insight into how the candidate will relate to others. "I have eliminated candidates based on how they treated or talked to other staff members", she said, adding that applicants should remember that they are "on" the moment they arrive at the place of potential employment.

"We are going to be making a big decision about bringing someone in", Buchanan said. She likened the interview to being on a "reality TV show" for employment. The interview is a chance for applicants to shine. "Try to distinguish yourself from the

multiple faces that are just like you", she said. It's a chance for candidates to show that they are different, more mature, and more engaged, she continued.

For some, changing employers isn't always the answer. Instead, a promotion or new position in the same company may be the key. "If there's a gap and there's a need ... show you can do the job and do an excellent job at it", Buchanan said. Other strategies include asking your supervisor what else needs to be done or suggesting that you handle some specific aspects of the workload. "You've got to make it happen for yourself. Write a job description", she said, and show your manager how you can fulfill the needs. "Build your case." That was the route that Buchanan took. "I recognized I was already doing that job", she said. "I got exactly what I wanted."

"You have to take these sorts of things into your own hands", she continued, adding that it may take time, especially if there are budget constraints. "Continue to ask", Buchanan said, adding that managers will recognize that if they do not fulfill your requests they eventually will lose you. The more valuable you are, she said, the more likely you are to get what you want. However, Buchanan noted, if you "hit a wall" in your organization, you may have to look elsewhere. That is when the connections you make in a group like CSE are invaluable. "As you climb the ladder...it's going to be the connections that help you", she said. 

Founding the Board of Editors in the Life Sciences (BELS): An Interview with the National Academies' Norman Grossblatt

Teresa M Melcher

You sit at conferences, complaining about the declining quality in your chosen profession. After several years, someone says, "Why don't we do something about it?" Norman Grossblatt, a senior editor with the National Academies, experienced that. He and about a dozen colleagues kept complaining, but then they did something. Twenty years later, that "something", the Board of Editors in the Life Sciences (BELS), has examined and certified about 1,000 manuscript editors.

The impetus for the BELS examination began during the social gatherings at conferences and seminars when a loose-knit group of editors talked about their profession. Everyone, Grossblatt said, knew someone who wasn't working up to (undefined) professional standards and was "making the rest of us look bad and cheating the people they were working for". In the early 1980s, the group got its chance. At an annual meeting of the Council of Biology Editors (CBE, now the Council of Science Editors), the word was put out that various editing-related subjects would be discussed at a 1-hour evening gathering of author's editors in a room in the annual-meeting hotel. Certification of editors turned out to be by far the most popular subject. Those casual conversations led to the development of a task force under the aegis of the Author's Editors Committee.

CBE funded the group's exploration of methods of certifying editors, its travel to

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meetings, and its engagement of lawyers and a testing expert. "At the time, we didn't know exactly what we were going to do with an examination—or whether we could even produce one", Grossblatt said. By the 1990 annual meeting, however, the group had created an examination, had tested it on about 100 volunteer editors, and was ready to offer it to editors for certification. And then the CBE Board of Directors decided to discontinue its support of the project.

Ten of the 13 who had developed the certification program were present at that annual meeting and gathered around the pool in Orlando, Grossblatt said. "We decided that we would do it ourselves". That meant rewriting the examination and testing it on themselves. Later, in a day-and-a-half meeting, seven members of the group went over the examination, which covered grammar, copyright, author rights, usage, logic, consistency, and much more. If they were not unanimous in supporting a question—the wording of the question, the optional answers, the explanation of the choice of correct answer and the rejection of incorrect answers, the relevance of the question, and so on—they discarded the question. In the end, 105 questions remained. (Today, the examination is continually reviewed and refreshed.)

To launch the BELS program, each of the 10 founders contributed \$300, the amount that would eventually be charged to take both the basic certification examination and the examination for diplomate status.


The whole endeavor was a gamble—creating the test, forming the organization, and awarding certification and the right to

use initials after one's name. It involved a lot of guesswork. "To begin with, we had no idea how many people were in the manuscript-editing profession", Grossblatt said.

The importance of the BELS certification "really came home to me when I was proctoring an examination in the early days of BELS", Grossblatt said. "A couple came in—a young woman who was taking the test and her husband. He stopped at the door and kissed her and said, 'Good luck!'. "Something clicked", he continued; it suddenly became clear that what the group had created was important in people's lives. "This was real."

Today, the BELS program also engages in activities other than examining editors for certification. It offers two \$500 grants per year for certified editors to attend relevant meetings, it holds a breakfast get-together during the American Medical Writers Association annual conference, and its annual meeting convenes during the CSE annual meeting.

This year, at its 20th-anniversary dinner meeting, BELS for the fifth time conferred "honored editor" status on a long-time editor for a life's work in the field. John C Bailar III, MD, PhD, has worked in a number of editorial capacities, including being a former editor-in-chief of the *Journal of the National Cancer Institute*, member of the editorial board of *Cancer Research*, and statistical consultant for the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

Grossblatt acknowledged that for some the credentials are all that editors seek. They passed a difficult examination and earned a credential, which is all they wanted. "I can't argue with that", he said. 

The Board of Editors in the Life Sciences Certification: An Interview with BELS President Susan E Aiello

Teresa M Melcher

Two decades. Almost 1,000 certifications.

That's pretty good for an all-volunteer organization. The Board of Editors in the Life Sciences (BELS) was created 2 decades ago. The group hopes to certify its 1,000th editor this year through its comprehensive multiple-choice test. Susan E Aiello, a veterinarian who became BELS certified after taking one of the first examinations in 1991, is the current president and has great respect for what the founders created. "We're carrying the mission forward", she said. "We're maturing. We're coming of age as we continue to rely on the groundwork laid by the BELS founders."

At the heart of BELS is the test. Aiello knows that it can be stressful. "When I took the exam, I remember thinking that it was a very difficult test", she said. That, she added, is "as it should be".

BELS requires that those taking the test have a minimum of 2 years of relevant experience. Aiello said that she might even

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suggest as many as 3 or 4 years, depending on the person and his or her situation. However, too many years away from taking tests can be stressful for someone sitting for the BELS exam; test anxiety might play a role in a candidate's score even if he or she knows the answers. It's all a balance, she added.

"If they know their stuff, they should pass the test", Aiello said, noting that the test does not have "trick" questions and is not designed to mislead a candidate into selecting incorrect answers.

What kind of experience is best? "Candidates with many different backgrounds in liberal arts and the sciences have taken and passed the exam. Each candidate is the best judge of his or her own background and experience", she said.

The test format is entirely multiple choice. For many years, Aiello served on the committee to develop new examination questions, and she's confident that a candidate's knowledge can be effectively judged with multiple-choice questions. "The examination has always been all multiple choice", she said, explaining that the format allows the tests to be graded objectively and anonymously. She went

on to say that the questions themselves are weighted because some are tougher than others. An applicant could probably get all the "easy" questions correct but still not pass the examination. "The examination is of editorial skills, not technical skills", she continued. "It tests not technical, medical, or scientific knowledge but rather the ability to edit technical language intelligently".

With the continued growth of BELS, certification is becoming more widely known and accepted. "It is looked for by more and more employers", she said, adding, "but there's still a lot of work to be done in educating both editors and those who hire them".

BELS is centralizing some administrative processes and obtaining administrative support. And Aiello wants to see more involvement by BELS-certified editors in conferences and seminars. "We'd like to see a greater membership role in BELS", she explained. The 20th-anniversary gathering in Baltimore, MD, at CSE's annual meeting was its largest yet, she said, and that was a good sign.

"We've evolved", Aiello said. "I'm excited about the future of BELS." 

The Examination

- The BELS examination covers the principles and practices of scientific editing in English. Also questioned are the broad topics of language use, grammar, sentence construction and syntax, word choice, consistency, spelling, and punctuation. Other subjects covered include units, basic concepts of statistics, use of tables and graphs, paragraph organization and development, comprehension, and logic. Questions are also intended to assess knowledge of publishing practices and conventions, such as authorship and copyright.
- Think you're ready? Do you know the difference between affect and effect (usage, spelling, and so on)? Are you familiar with the correct use of various punctuation marks, including the hyphen, parentheses, and semicolon?
- Try these questions: Can you identify active and passive voice? Do you know how to revise sentences to correct misplaced or dangling modifiers? Can you determine whether data are best displayed in a table or in a graph? Are you familiar with what generally constitutes authorship of a scientific paper (versus an acknowledgment)?

Reviews

edited by Susan M Shirley



WOODSWOMAN: LIVING ALONE IN THE ADIRONDACK WILDERNESS. ANNE LABASTILLE. NEW YORK: PENGUIN BOOKS; 1978. 277 PAGES. ISBN-13: 978-0-14-015334-7.

This first of four books by noted author and wildlife ecologist Anne LaBastille is an autobiographical account of life in a “Thoreau-style cabin in the woods”. It is steeped in independence and solitude and in the peace and beauty of the Adirondack Mountains.

The book begins with LaBastille building her own log cabin on Black Bear Lake in Adirondack Park (circa 1965). Descriptions of cabin construction and of the practicalities of a rustic life—gathering dead birch for firewood, sourcing an indoor water supply, and securing oneself against frostbite and trespassers—are educational and engaging and underline the author’s self-reliance and resilience.

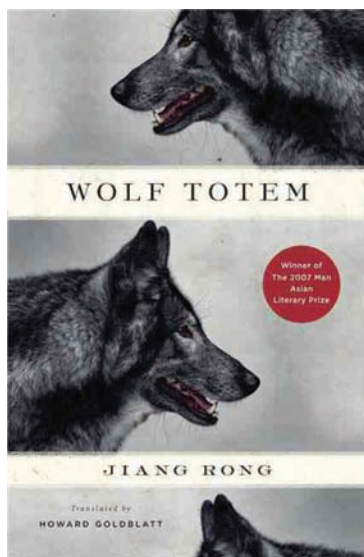
In addition to anecdotes about her work as an ecology consultant, writer, and photographer, LaBastille provides interesting facts on the history and geography of the

Adirondack region—its geology, river systems, and lakes, and the creation of the “forever wild” Adirondack Forest Preserve.

The strength of the book lies undoubtedly in LaBastille’s ability to transport readers to the Adirondack wilderness through vivid, magical descriptions: the fluid swaying of towering white pines, the dazzle of sunlight on frozen lakes, the chorus of Canada geese flying south for the winter. The narrative is peppered with such imagery, reflecting LaBastille’s deep affection for nature, which forms the foundation for her remarkable life in the wild.

—Roma Subramanian

ROMA SUBRAMANIAN is a science and technology journalism graduate student at Texas A&M University.



WOLF TOTEM: A NOVEL. JIANG RONG. TRANSLATED BY HOWARD GOLDBLATT. NEW YORK: PENGUIN PRESS; 2008. 544 PAGES. ISBN-13: 978-1-59420-156-1.

During the Cultural Revolution in China, the government sends Chen Zhen, a student from Beijing, to live as a shepherd in the Olonbulag plain in Inner Mongolia.

At first, Chen finds life away from civilization hard to bear—the long days of exhausting work, the loneliness, the heat and mosquitoes in the summer, and the cold and starvation in the winter.

But even worse than all that is his fear of the Mongolian wolf, the animal considered by the locals to be a blood-thirsty enemy but also a divine protector of the natural balance on the grassland. Chen soon develops a fascination for the locals’ way of life and their struggle to live in harmony with nature, regardless of the hardships. However, to become a real Mongolian, he has to overcome his fear of the wolf. That is why he steals

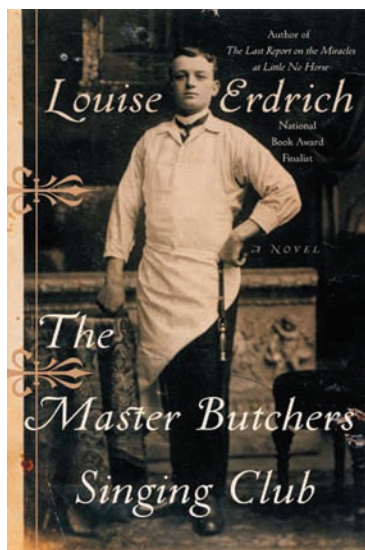
a wolf cub and tries to domesticate it despite the strong disapproval of the local elders.

In the meantime, progress arrives on the plain with vehicles, machines, and guns and makes everyone aware there are more frightening things than wolves.

This beautiful story about struggle and friendship between man and nature makes us wonder how much of the natural balance we ourselves have sacrificed for the sake of our comfort and luxury and whether that comfort and luxury have brought us real purpose in life.

—Antonija Paić

ANTONIJA PAIĆ is a manuscript editor at the Croatian Medical Journal in Zagreb, Croatia.

continued

THE MASTER BUTCHERS SINGING CLUB. LOUISE ERDRICH. NEW YORK: HARPERCOLLINS PUBLISHERS; 2003. 388 PAGES. ISBN-13: 978-0066209777.

The hardback edition of this novel is covered with a black-and-white, 1912 photograph of a proud young butcher, the author's German-born grandfather.

His name is given as Ludwig Erdrich in the acknowledgments but as Louis Erdrich on the back flap. In any case, Ludwig/Louis is masterfully transformed into a fictional protagonist named Fidelis Waldvogel (literally, Faithful Forestbird) who immigrates to North Dakota after serving as a sniper in the German army in World War I. Of his four sons (three born in America), two will end up fighting against and two for the Nazis in World War II.

The novel conveys the multilayered horrors and legacies of war, no matter which one, no matter which side. Waldvogel's saga intersects with that of native North Dakotan Delphine Watzka, whose small-town life also is limned in big-time pain. Motherless, she labors to prop up her alcoholic father amid the loss of her best woman friend, her male partner, and her childhood soul mate. Murders, the Depression, depression, and suffering

in many forms shadow her struggle to thrive.

Erdrich's metaphors borrow from the biomedical lexicon, as when she invokes "peristalsis" to describe a man's movements through a collapsed tunnel to rescue a trapped child. The town doctor, a mortician's assistant, and a county visiting nurse all figure in intense scenes.

Despite its dark themes, the novel is full of light and life and love, vaudeville balancing acts, a men's choir, and cherished little boys. Her reach is universal: into the lives of her diverse characters, from Europe to the interior of the United States and Canada, back in time to the old ways of Indians and Old World settlers, and out to the intrusion of global madness.

—Mary E Knatterud

MARY E KNATTERUD (based in St. Paul, MN) is a research associate professor at the University of Arizona, Tucson, and the founding editor of the "Peer-Renewed" poetry column in *Science Editor*.



NEVER LET ME GO. KAZUO ISHIGURO. NEW YORK: KNOPF DOUBLEDAY PUBLISHING GROUP; 2005. 304 PAGES. ISBN-13: 978-1-4000-4483-2.

In 2010, *Never Let Me Go* was released as a major motion picture starring Keira Knightley and Carey Mulligan.

I have not seen the movie, but its release prompted me to seek out the book. A young woman, Kathy, narrates the story, and she intertwines memories of her childhood with descriptions of her present. As orphans, Kathy and her friends Ruth and Tommy were raised at a school called Hailsham in the English countryside. Because contact with the outside world is strictly verboten at Hailsham, their world is entirely shaped by their interactions with each other and with their guardians.

The plot follows the three friends as they grow up and eventually enter the out-

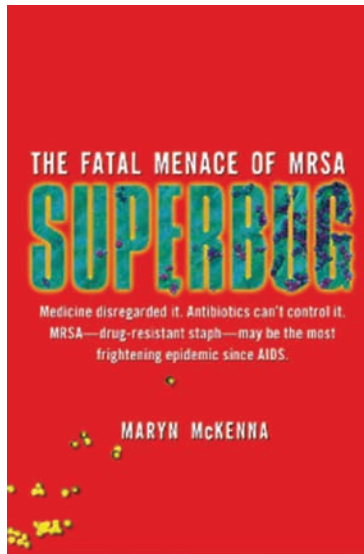
side world. Their relationship, situation, and status are complicated, and Kathy's reflections touch on themes of love, jealousy, loss, and self-discovery.

This emotional narrative transpires alongside a feeling of unease and foreboding about the fate of the three friends. Their world is not ours, but the possibilities that it presents tinge the novel with an element of horror.

—Rebecca S Benner

REBECCA S BENNER is the director and managing editor of *Obstetrics & Gynecology* in Washington, DC, and a former editor of *Science Editor*.

continued



SUPERBUG: THE FATAL MENACE OF MRSA. MARYN MCKENNA. NEW YORK: FREE PRESS; 2010. HARDCOVER. \$26.00. 271 PAGES. ISBN-13: 978-1416557272.

Reading the title of Maryn McKenna's book, *Superbug: The Fatal Menace of MRSA*, makes me want to wash my hands. Reading the book makes me want to wash my hands, wash your hands, wash my body, put my imaginary dog up for adoption, and never, ever go back to prison. This was probably one of the scariest books I've ever read. Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) is terrible, and the book chronicles the lives of people victimized by this ubiquitous killer. The book also traces the evolution of MRSA—a superkiller unrivaled in the natural world. You almost have to force yourself to take comfort in the fact that MRSA plagues only a small minority of us.

McKenna makes it clear that the most terrible thing about MRSA is that there is no night-light—no light to protect us from the bogeyman. MRSA is a highly adaptable evolutionary supervillain. It has a sixth sense when it comes to antibiotics and can quickly change to resist them. In the process, MRSA confers antibiotic resistance on existing strains of MRSA. Whatever we do falls short—hand washing, “search and destroy” systems in health-care centers, and the work of pharmaceutical masterminds cannot outpace this monster. The only real hope may be a vaccine, and, unfortunately, initial studies have not been reassuring.

The book ends with a mortifying prospect: the convergence of community-associated and hospital-acquired MRSA. Hospital-acquired MRSA preys on the weak and sick; consequently, it does not need the virulence that community-associated MRSA has. According to McKenna, community-associated MRSA has “the power to liquefy lung tissue, create toxic-shock like syndromes, and start fast-expanding infections on unbroken skin” (p. 205). Apparently, it is possible that the community-associated strains may confer virulence on hospital-acquired strains.

There is a lot of great information in *Superbug*; it dispelled my ignorance and misunderstanding of MRSA. For example, household pets can harbor MRSA and reinfect their owners. Hospital-acquired MRSA and community-associated MRSA

evolved independently. And prisons are the perfect breeding ground for MRSA.

I like the book's historical perspective. McKenna writes about “cloud babies” and “bacterial interference”. Both concepts are timeless and relevant in how we view MRSA today. “Cloud babies” are newborns who shed resistant *S. aureus*. (It is interesting that Charles Schulz poked fun at the finding in a 1960 *Peanuts* strip.) “Bacterial interference” involves inoculating a host with a harmless strain of *S. aureus* and thus “dislodging” MRSA.

One of McKenna's writing gifts is her ability to spin engaging narrative. Unfortunately, the fabric that she weaves often depicts sad images: unwitting people succumbing to the ravages of MRSA. After reading the book in its entirety, I visualize a stereotypical adorable child absorbed in daily childlike activities until MRSA strikes. The child gets a scratch, MRSA invades, and in no time the child's in septic shock and in the intensive-care unit. If fortunate, the child will survive only to go through several surgical operations—an unendurable marathon of poking and prodding for pus pockets. Life with permanent disability is often the best fate for most MRSA victims and their families.

Although there was much that I liked about the book, I didn't like everything. The book nearly crumbles under its own onerous weight. It's complicated—it took me almost a week to read! (Before starting, I expected to finish the 288-page book in 2 days.) McKenna spent nearly 4 years of her life crafting this epic work. It seems as though she wants to expose us to all that knowledge; but however altruistic, it is overpowering. (Think of the man who wears too much fine-smelling cologne.)

For example, McKenna artfully describes vancomycin resistance replete with a great description of vancomycin-intermediate *S. aureus* (VISA). A little while later, she adeptly explains why antibiotics are overprescribed. Throughout, there is information that spans the spectrum of infectious-disease knowledge. This scattershot approach leaves the reader with countless

generalities and details that make the book hard to follow.

Furthermore, McKenna's book is so fact filled that it is difficult to tease out the bigger themes. I found that frustrating. It is difficult to read *Superbug* in a fluid fashion. I kept looking back at earlier pages to refresh my memory. Maybe subheadings and chapter summaries would have helped.

Another criticism is that *Superbug's* passages do not transition well. It's disconcerting . . . I'd cuddle up with an enthralling narrative only to be shuffled abruptly to an intriguing (but heavy) scientific passage. Ultimately, I couldn't help wishing that the narratives were longer and the scientific passages more focused.

Alternatively, what is currently one book could have probably worked best as two:

a book presenting narratives of patients affected by MRSA and a separate medical monograph. McKenna is a skilled feature writer, but what seems to work in features—generous and mixed helpings of narrative and exposition—seems to have found its limit.

Although my review of *Superbug* is mixed, it is a substantive work. I recommend the book to health-care professionals or anyone interested in a good scare. Ultimately, the text imparts an intimate appreciation of MRSA and has the ability to affect public perception of this pathogen.

—Naveed Saleh

NAVEED SALEH is a physician-journalist and freelance editor in San Diego, CA.



THE DISAPPEARING SPOON AND OTHER TRUE TALES OF MADNESS, LOVE, AND THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD FROM THE PERIODIC TABLE OF ELEMENTS. SAM KEAN. NEW YORK: LITTLE, BROWN AND COMPANY; 2010. 391 PAGES. HARDCOVER \$24.99. ISBN-13: 978-0-316-05164-4.

The author himself described *The Disappearing Spoon* as “a book full of quirky stories about elements”. It is that, and more. Kean's engaging style provides non-stop entertainment as he regales the reader with stories about the periodic table of the elements, the relationships among elements, their discoverers, and the discovery processes through genius and luck, success and failure, comradeship and betrayal, at war, and during peace. The elements themselves are the stars (some are literally star stuff) of the book; their properties provide the basis of many of the fascinating stories.

Kean, a writer for *Science*, begins with a quick review of the basic blueprint of the periodic table—its arrangement of rows and columns and those oddly floating rows of metals that hover below the rest of the table (Kean calls them “the Galápagos” of the periodic table). That and a refresher on electron behavior (remember p -, s -, and f -shells and the excited electrons jumping to higher levels?) and the nuclear shell model were helpful reminders about that room-sized paper chart that covered the wall of chemistry lecture halls everywhere. Also covered in this part are the arrangement of elements in the table, element names,

and the invention of the spectroscope (by Bunsen of burner fame), which enabled study of elemental spectra and rapid development of the periodic table.

What I enjoyed most in the book was the human side of element stories: the discoverers (such as Moseley, Seaborg, and Ghiorso), the competition among scientists and between such disciplines as chemistry and physics, uses of elements to improve human health (for example, lithium for treatment of depression, radium, and sulfa drugs) but also their devastating effects as weaponry in times of war (for example bromine gas, plutonium, and uranium). The book also chronicles the hardships that some scientists endured in times of social and political turmoil. For example, two Nobel medalists in Germany, Max von Laue and James Franck, sent their gold medals to Niels Bohr in Copenhagen for safekeeping in fear that the Nazis would seize them and punish the prize-winning scientists (one a Jew and the other a Jewish sympathizer). When the storm troopers raided Bohr's laboratory, they ignored a beaker of orange liquid on the shelf. It contained the Nobel medals that had been dissolved in a mixture of nitric and

continued

hydrochloric acids. After the war, the gold was recovered from the solution and recast by the Nobel committee into the treasured medals for the German scientists. The race to find the right combination of plutonium and uranium in the Manhattan Project in Los Alamos was characterized by intrigue, rumors of spies, and a room full of people manually calculating potential ratios of the two elements.

Less serious tales focus on humorous aspects of some elements. The title refers to a practical joke popular among chemists. Because gallium melts at 84°F, a

spoon cast of gallium would appear to be eaten away by a cup of hot tea. And why did the Japanese use cadmium to kill off Godzilla? Those and other fascinating bits of elemental history and trivia are presented with enough detail for scientists to appreciate but at a level that people who are not scientists can also understand and enjoy. This is one of the best popular science books I have read.

—Susan M Shirley

SUSAN M SHIRLEY is a freelance science editor in Corpus Christi, TX.



FREELANCING EXPERTISE: CONTRACT PROFESSIONALS IN THE NEW ECONOMY. DEBRA OSNOWITZ. ITHACA, NY: CORNELL UNIVERSITY PRESS; 2010. 260 PAGES. HARDCOVER \$59.95. ISBN-13: 978-0-8014-4936-9.

Freelancer, contractor, independent consultant, contingent worker, temporary (“temp”), itinerant professional, mobile professional, flexible staff, self-employed, 1099ers—these are some of the titles given to people who work for an organization but are not its employees. The author interviewed about 65 freelance practitioners in two professional fields (programming–engineering and writing–editing) to find out who they are, what they do, how and where they do it, and how they are paid. The practitioners represent a wide range of age and experience.

In our era of downsizing, restructuring, mergers, re-engineering, and frequent corporate change, standard employment does not necessarily ensure job security. For freelancers, security is not based on working for an employer but rather on having multiple clients and projects and being willing to change fairly often. Even if corporate structures change, they can move to other clients and other projects. Most of the freelancers interviewed are happy with that and are making a decent living.

Successful freelancers have marketable expertise and the ability to establish professional credibility, which often comes through professional associations. Most interviewees believed themselves to be highly capable. Winning new clients and

new projects relies on the freelancers’ reputation for high-quality work, an easy-to-work-with manner, and cost effectiveness. Educational credentials are not as important as reputation, experience, and professional connections. There were few examples of freelancers who were not successful; however, this could be self-regulating in that people who are not successful may be less motivated, not skilled in the fields that clients need, or lacking in professional networks. Or maybe they “just aren’t good enough”, as one interviewee suggested.

Freelance work is characterized by intense, individual mental effort with close attention to detail. Freelancers need to have the personality to win clients and to work collaboratively, yet be able to spend substantial time in solitary concentration. Freelancers often work on multiple projects simultaneously and often with more than one client. So they learn to manage their own time to meet deadlines and delivery dates. Sometimes, that means working long hours; at other times, there’s not enough work. This “feast or famine” environment is a risk assumed by freelancers.

Employers do not pay for freelancers to learn their trade, so freelancers must be willing to acquire tools and skills on their own time and be prepared for new projects that entail using new technologies.

Employers are willing to pay a premium for special expertise.

Telecommuting, especially working at home, is common, and geographic mobility is sometimes required, in which case the freelancer may need to work in a different city for some period. Financial arrangements may or may not include reimbursement for travel and living expenses. Some projects require freelancers to work at a client's site; the client then provides the workspace and equipment but not benefits, such as health insurance and training. On the one hand, although they are working daily with employees, on-site freelancers may find that they are excluded from social opportunities that the client provides to employees; on the other hand, they are usually able to remain aloof from the pressures of company politics and maneuvering.

Freelancers may find work directly through networking and advertising and set their own rates, maintain their own accounting system, pay their own taxes and benefits, and in general operate as small businesses. They may also find work through a staffing agency—a company that places freelancers in temporary situations with clients. In those cases, the freelancer reports hours worked to the agency, and the agency bills the client and pays the freelancer; the staffing agency is paid by the employer and of course takes a cut. In some cases, the agency provides health and retirement benefits and thus acts as an employer for the freelancer. Only in rare cases do the staffing agencies get involved in the work itself or act in a supervising capacity.

Freelancers must track billable hours; this enforces efficiency on the part of both the freelancer and the client. Freelancers

seem to be unanimous about their honest timekeeping. They are always protective of their reputations for producing results, meeting deadlines, and containing costs. At the same time, clients are not willing to pay for downtime and so are hesitant about scheduling unnecessary meetings, for example, or allowing a freelancer to sit and wait for work while “on the clock”.

Many freelancers had no choice but to become independent when their jobs evaporated and no other likely prospects presented themselves. Older workers are more likely to become freelancers than their younger counterparts because companies tend to lay off older workers. Older workers recognize that their freelance skills are marketable. Workers may move back into an employment situation if an interesting opportunity arises and return to freelancing later; thus, freelancing might occur several times in a career.

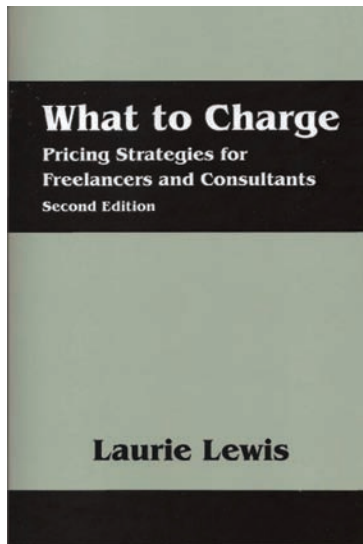
This book is valuable for people who are freelancing or who are considering freelancing because it clarifies expectations for contingent work. It is valuable for researchers because it defines and details contingent work in two previously unstudied groups and fills a gap in knowledge about the general workforce.

As a long-time freelancer, I was gratified to discover that the research and analyses in this book align closely with my observations about clients, opportunities, methods, risks, and rewards.

—Janis Ramey

JANIS RAMEY is a freelance technical writer working in Pittsburgh, PA (Web site: www.technical-writing.net). She is a Fellow of the Society for Technical Communication.

continued



WHAT TO CHARGE: PRICING STRATEGIES FOR FREELANCERS AND CONSULTANTS, 2ND ED. LAURIE LEWIS. DENVER, CO: OUTSKIRTS PRESS; 2011. 177 PAGES. PAPERBACK \$23.95. ISBN-13: 978-1-4327-6764-8.

I am a relatively new, full-time, freelance scientific editor, so much of the content of this book was quite useful to me. I was reassured to find that some of the advice in it was related to things that I was already doing, such as sending a letter of agreement (or better yet, a contract) for each job. However, I also found a wealth of other information in the book that I had not yet put into practice. I believe that there is much in this book to recommend it to more experienced freelancers as well.

Laurie Lewis is a freelance medical writer and editor who produced the first edition of this book about 10 years ago. Since then, the rise of the Internet and social-media marketing have revolutionized freelancing and have opened global markets to anyone who has the drive to search for work in new ways. The basic tenets of Lewis's work, however, have not changed in that time. The need to find work and to figure out how to charge for it remains. Lewis's advice about structuring fees and being flexible in how you do so is solid and has not changed much since the first edition of the book.

The first advice that Lewis provides is the suggestion to keep project logs for everything you do. A detailed log of tasks and time spent on them allows you to understand what tasks take the most time for you, and analysis of these logs over the course of a year or so gives you a good basis for setting your rates. When you know the average time that a particular task takes and the range of time that the task has required for very easy and very difficult assignments, you can be much more accurate in forecasting the amount of effort that you will expend on a particular project.

Once you know how much effort a particular task requires from you, you should understand what the market will bear. Lewis provides some insight into how to determine the going rate for a particular task. It requires research and perhaps a little sleuthing. There are good sources for this kind of information, such as networking with other freelancers (whom Lewis advises you to think of as colleagues rather than competitors) and various professional

organizations. For instance, the Editorial Freelancers Association keeps a list of suggested hourly rates for many editorial tasks, but the information is restricted to members. Joining a professional organization in your field is a good investment for many reasons, not just because of the access to pricing information.

The next valuable advice found in the book is to use a variety of methods for pricing. Lewis describes the pros and cons of hourly, project, per diem, and unit rates; retainers; unit pricing; percentage or head-count fees; per-page or per-word rates; and mix-and-match pricing methods. Some methods of pricing work better in some fields than in others. I began my own business thinking that I would use per-word rates exclusively for any paper that I edited, but it didn't take long for me to accept some hourly rates and project fees. Even if you are an experienced freelancer, you may find some of the pricing methods new to you. The detailed breakdown of each method will help you decide whether it could work in your business.

Lewis puts forth two rules of pricing. For each, she provides case studies to help you to see the benefits of sticking to the rules. The first rule of pricing is never to quote a price on the spot. The second rule is to know your bottom line. With regard to the first rule, the book makes clear that if you take the time to investigate the job and to estimate the cost of your efforts, you can make a more informed pricing decision. And with regard to the second rule, if you understand what you need to earn in a given period, you have another important piece of information to use in your pricing decision.

The most interesting chapter in *What to Charge*, in my opinion, is the one on negotiating. I'm not exactly an introvert, but I am new to freelancing and even though I've been an editor for more than 20 years, I have been known to second-guess my pricing decisions. The chapter on negotiation will be useful to all freelancers, not just beginners. There are three points around which you can negotiate for any particular job. First, and most obvious, is the dollar amount. The two other points

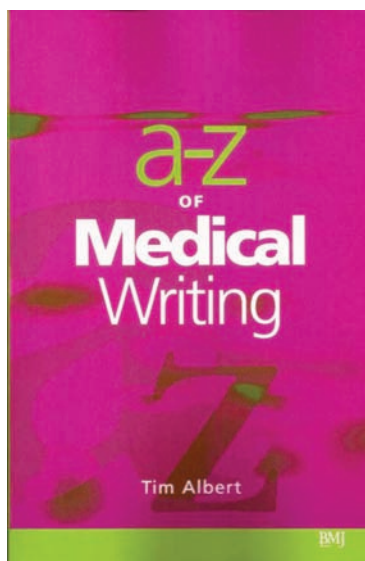
of negotiation are the job description and nonmonetary compensation. If your client won't budge on price, those are two elements on which you can ask for concessions. Lewis provides good information about how to approach a client with these kinds of requests.

Reading this book has made me a better businessperson, and this is an essential part

of being a successful freelancer. I recommend it for anyone who wants to improve his or her professional practice.

—Rebecca Stewart

REBECCA STEWART is the owner of a scientific editing business, *White Clay Editorial*. She lives in Newark, DE.



THE A-Z OF MEDICAL WRITING. TIM ALBERT. LONDON: BMJ BOOKS; 2000. 145 PAGES. PAPERBACK \$42.95. ISBN-13: 978-0-7279-1487-3.

While I was reading *The A-Z of Medical Writing* by Tim Albert, a postcard labeled the *A to Z Disposal Guide for Residents* arrived from my county's recycling hotline. Albert's paperback covers Abbreviations to Zzzzz; the county's postcard touts Appliances to Zinc batteries. The blurb on the book's back cover barks this incoherent question: "Are you filled with horror at the thought of writing coherent sentences, to make coherent paragraphs to convey coherent messages?" Both sides of the postcard burble with come-ons like "Clean out your clutter!" and "it's easy. it's fast. and it's free!" Yet at least the postcard took only a second to read, unlike the several hours consumed by the book.

Albert's application of the A-Z format to a monograph about medical writing doesn't quite work: it feels contrived, scattershot, and annoyingly ad like. He has to stretch to make it to the last letter of the alphabet, as his final entry makes clear: "**Zzzzz**. Sleep: a precious commodity. Once you have written what you have set out to write, you can hope to have a little more of it. Enjoy: tomorrow could be another writing day" (p. 145).

Granted, as his foreword admits, "This book has not been written to be read—at least in the usual sense of starting at the beginning, ploughing on to the end, and then remembering (at best) one or two points" (p. vii). As a reviewer, I did indeed start at the beginning, plowing on to the end. But for a typical reader who wants to dip into the text here and there for some substantive advice, most entries

are too cheeky or idiosyncratic to be of any use. Who would pause, in the midst of laboring over an academic manuscript, to intentionally hunt down entries like **Action lists** or **Antipathy**, **Balanced feedback** or **Boredom**, **Coughing** or **Crap**, and on through the Zs?

I found that the book certainly has its charms and nuggets. Albert's credentials are solid: formerly executive editor of *World Medicine*, he now runs his own training firm, organizes the BMJ's annual short course for journal editors, and is a visiting fellow in medical writing at Southampton University. As a lifelong US resident, I enjoyed his Britishisms—from spellings like "favourable", "learnt", and "programme", to new-to-me terms like "A4 sheet", "covering letter", "fish and chip wrappers", and "noun salads", to phrases like "law of late literals", "premature expostulation", and "putting on the posh overcoat". As a long-time wordsmith, I admired his pithy advice under these entries, in particular: **Bad writing**, **Brief setting**, **Evidence-based writing**, **Process of writing**, **Rejection**, **Research into writing**, **Scientific papers**, **Time management**, and **Writing goals**.

Sometimes Albert's attempts at comedy are condescendingly unhelpful, as under **Semicolons**: "If you are having to look this up, don't use them" (p. 120). Still, his wry humor often shines, as in this riff under **Books, writing of**: "There are many good reasons why you should under no circumstances write a book. It eats time. . . . It is difficult to find a publisher. It is a painful activity, during which writers become

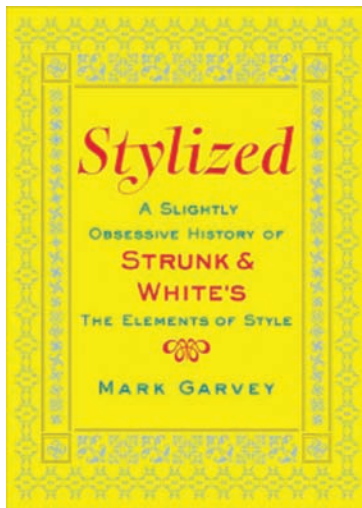
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deeply antisocial” (p. 12). Of note to all us editors, he dryly ends the **Editor** entry with “It may even allow you to do a little bit of good in the world, but don’t count on it” (p. 41).

Fittingly, Albert includes an entry for **Strunk**, furnishing an apt segue to the book note that follows. Despite a later warning against turning nouns into verbs, it is a fun tribute: “**Strunk**. Co-author

with EB White of an excellent book on style (see **style booklist**). His name was adopted by the staff of the late lamented magazine *World Medicine* to describe the process by which a piece of incomprehensible pomposity was elevated into crisp prose by the skilful editorial staff: “That was most sensitively strunked” (p. 123).

—Mary E Knatterud



STYLIZED: A SLIGHTLY OBSESSIVE HISTORY OF STRUNK & WHITE’S THE ELEMENTS OF STYLE. MARK GARVEY. NEW YORK: TOUCHSTONE; 2009. 208 PAGES. HARDCOVER \$22.99. ISBN-13: 978-1-4165-9092-7.

Stylized: A Slightly Obsessive History of Strunk & White’s The Elements of Style is a fun—and long, topping 200 pages—tribute to the venerable, very American guidebook half its size known simply as Strunk & White. Writer–editor Mark Garvey pays loving, well-crafted homage to William Strunk Jr, the Cornell professor whose one-time student, Elwyn Brooks (E B) White, went on to fame as a *New Yorker* fixture, as the author of the children’s classics *Stuart Little* and *Charlotte’s Web*, and as the reviver, first in 1959 and then again in 1972 and 1979, of Strunk’s 1918 self-published original.

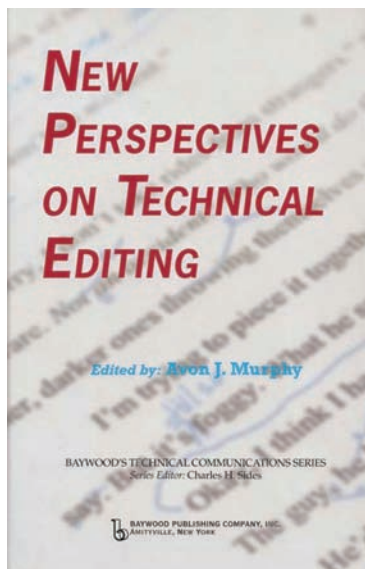
I was mesmerized by *Stylized*, lapping it up in a couple of sittings. It helps that I am a diehard fan of Strunk & White, with dog-eared, much-annotated personal copies of the successive editions, culminating in the fourth in 1999 (which added a foreword by Roger Angell, White’s stepson) and a 50th-anniversary reissue in 2009. I haven’t always agreed with every scrap of Strunk and White’s advice (in the margins of my third edition, I years ago scrawled “wordy!” next to their directive “Do not *contact* anybody” and “ha! naive & sexist” alongside their infuriatingly male-dominated view that the “use of *he* as pronoun for nouns embracing both genders . . . has lost all suggestion of maleness”) but I nonetheless have long respected their spirit of conciseness, clarity, and reader-oriented empathy.

And so has Garvey. His introduction begins with this litany: “*Cards on the table*:

I love *The Elements of Style*. I love the idea of it; I love its execution. I love the book’s history, and I love its attitude. I love the fact that it makes some people nuts. I love its trim size . . .” (p. xi). In turn, I love the entertaining arrangement and erudite tone of *Stylized*. Each of Garvey’s eight chapters sports an allusive title (from the first chapter’s “English 8”, the class that White took from Strunk, to the final chapter’s “An Audience of One”, key words from the penultimate paragraph of *The Elements of Style*), followed by an epigrammatic quotation, usually by White. The text interweaves generous excerpts from letters (most by White) and from extensive interviews Garvey conducted with a stable of contemporary authors (among them Dave Barry, Frank McCourt, and Sharon Olds) regarding the effect of Strunk & White on their lives.

Part biography, part publishing history, and part literary discussion, Garvey’s book delves into the “charge created by these two distinct voices sparking off each other as they approach writing’s basic questions” (p. xviii). *Stylized* is a tour de force, pleasantly driving home Strunk & White’s overriding point that “creativity is empowered, rather than hampered, by working from a sensible set of rules” (p. 46) but that, as White stressed in a letter, “guidelines can, and should be, chucked out of the window whenever they get in your way or in your hair” (p. 178).

—Mary E Knatterud



NEW PERSPECTIVES ON TECHNICAL EDITING. AVON J MURPHY, EDITOR. AMITYVILLE, NY: BAYWOOD PUBLISHING COMPANY; 2010. 210 PAGES. HARDCOVER \$47.95. ISBN-13: 978-0-89-503-394-9.

Editing can be a bit of a stealth profession. Readers (or viewers) appreciate the finished product without ever knowing how much it may have changed since its first iteration. Those who work in the field of technical editing know, however, that editing can range from the quick correction of errors to a wholesale revamping of structure, organization, and presentation.

New Perspectives on Technical Editing, edited by Avon J Murphy, describes the breadth of activities and issues that editors face in their professional lives. The book's target audience includes educators and students in high-level editing courses and practicing editors.

The authors of the book's 10 chapters have diverse—and extensive—experience and knowledge in technical editing. Chapter 1, the introduction, includes the definition of technical editing used in this book. This definition is helpful because, as discussed in Chapter 3, “History and Trends in Technical Editing”, the editor's role has changed over the years, and “editing” can mean different things to different audiences. Chapter 3 author Thomas L Warren reviews how editors centuries ago typically were hired by printers or copyists to correct errors and to ensure that the printed product matched the original manuscript. Now, of course, most major editing occurs well before the printing (or online publishing) of the finished product. At least one similarity between those early editors and modern practitioners persists. In 16th-century Europe, printers and copyists often had to handle texts in a language, Latin, that was not their own; modern-day editors also may handle information originally written in another language or by someone whose fluency in the finished product's language is inadequate.

Former editor of *Science Editor* Barbara Gastel addresses international aspects of science editing in Chapter 8, “Editing Within the Pure Sciences”. This chapter defines pure sciences as encompassing natural, social, and health sciences. The visibility of publishing in English-language journals in those fields appeals to authors in many non-English-speaking countries.

The Internet has also made it easier to submit papers to foreign-based journals for consideration. Editors working in the international realm should keep at least two goals in mind—the cultural and linguistic differences encountered in working with authors and the need to make the finished product accessible to a diverse readership, including readers whose English may be poor. The chapter includes references to other works that people working in this field may find helpful.

Chapter 8 also includes a gem of a list of pointers for science editors' interactions with others. They may be helpful to editors in other fields; with only a little tweaking, the suggestions could help nonediting professionals whose work relies on collaboration with others to create a finished product. The tips include not changing something that is acceptable as is solely because you would do it differently; when it is appropriate, ask questions rather than make corrections (the questions may prompt authors to make their own improvements); and try to be a teacher or a coach to the people whose work you are reviewing, particularly if you expect to continue the working relationship. Also, harking back to the editor's stealth role, let the author take credit, Gastel advises, even if it took an editor's intervention to turn a garbled early draft into a polished final product.

Chapters 2 and 4 will be of particular interest to those in academe because they cover “Conducting Research in Technical Editing” and “The Teaching of Technical Editing”, respectively. Chapter 2 author Angela Eaton reviews different research methods, such as case studies and meta-reviews; the chapter provides examples and discusses strengths and weaknesses of various study methods. Readers who work in other research fields may be interested to learn that the study methods they use in their own work can be useful in technical-editing research. The chapter also provides recommendations for graduate students and practitioners who are doing their own research and points out which study types are well suited to beginning researchers.

Chapter 4 author Carolyn D Rude is also the author of *Technical Editing*, a well-known textbook now in its fourth edition. The chapter covers the emergence of technical editing as a field of study. A few decades ago, few educational resources on editing were available to teachers and students, but that has changed dramatically as the field has expanded. Technological advances have altered the field; editors now have “to look up from their pages and even beyond their screens,” Rude writes, and this has led to changes in the teaching of technical editing. Technology has also changed how information is disseminated, accessed, and retrieved. The printed page may have been the focus of editors’ work in the past, but now electronic presentation and database storage also must be considered.

Those wishing to learn about editors’ work in a nonacademic context will find Chapter 5, “The Editor Within the Modern Organization”, helpful. Author Michelle Corbin recaps her personal professional path in industry and discusses the role of editors and editing in organizations. She includes discussion of the perceptions of editing and editors’ roles and trends in professional editing in modern organizations. In Chapter 7, “The Editor and the

Electronic Word: Onscreen Editing as a Tool for Efficiency and Communication with Authors”, Geoffrey J S Hart talks about technology that only a few decades ago editors did not have to contend with. Because of its inherent efficiency, editing on a computer screen may speed up the editing process or even allow the addition of editing in work processes that now do not include it, Hart writes. But the field will have to do some catching up before onscreen editing realizes its potential fully.

In case *New Perspectives on Technical Editing* does not present enough information on a particular topic, Chapter 10 is a bibliography of additional sources. This book is part of the publisher’s technical-editing series that includes dozens of other titles. To have these experienced authors’ knowledge combined into a single manageable volume, complete with suggestions for additional reading, is a treat indeed.

—Edith Paal

EDITH PAAL is a former journalist and former scientific writer and editor who now works in human-subjects research oversight at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences in Little Rock.

Book Alert

A SCIENTIFIC APPROACH TO SCIENTIFIC WRITING. JOHN BLACKWELL AND JAN MARTIN. NEW YORK: SPRINGER; 2011. 114 PAGES. SOFTCOVER \$49.95. ISBN-13: 978-1-4419-9787-6.

In this guide for writing papers for peer-reviewed journals, the authors present a framework approach to constructing papers that begins with brief statements of rationale and ends with a full draft. They use four case studies of increasing complexity to illustrate various components of writing a paper. Also included are sections on narrative flow and coherent argument, voice and tense, plagiarism, and responding to referees' objections.

ASSESSMENT IN TECHNICAL AND PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION. MARGARET HUNDBLEY AND JO ALLEN, EDITORS. AMITYVILLE, NY: BAYWOOD; 2010. 258 PAGES. CLOTH \$56.95. ISBN-13: 978-0-89503-379-6.

This book addresses the demands and expectations for assessment of learning in technical communication. Essays by teachers and scholars explore assessment in the teaching and practice of technical communication, the activities involved in assessment, and the implications of using assessment in technical communication and writing programs.

COMPLEX WORLDS: DIGITAL CULTURE, RHETORIC, AND PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION. ADRIENNE P LAMBERTI AND ANNE R RICHARDS, EDITORS. AMITYVILLE, NY: BAYWOOD PUBLISHING; 2011. 256 PAGES. CLOTH \$51.95. ISBN-13: 978-0-89503-399-4.

This collection of essays is intended for scholars, teachers, and graduate students in professional and technical communication and other fields. The authors offer theoretical and practical content on open-source journalism, XML, digital résumés, tech-

nological literacy and authorship, intercultural communication, and other topics relevant to communication through digital media.

CULTURE, COMMUNICATION AND CYBERSPACE: RETHINKING TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION FOR INTERNATIONAL ONLINE ENVIRONMENTS. KIRK ST. AMANT AND FILIPP SAPIENZA, EDITORS. AMITYVILLE, NY: BAYWOOD PUBLISHING; 2011. 264 PAGES. CLOTH \$54.95. ISBN-13: 978-0-89503-398-7.

This second new offering from Baywood Publishing explores cross-cultural communication via the World Wide Web. The contributing authors explore topics of content design, the technical and linguistic challenges of collaborating online with an international audience, and effective online teaching and training materials and practices.

EXPLAINING RESEARCH: HOW TO REACH KEY AUDIENCES TO ADVANCE YOUR WORK. DENNIS MEREDITH. NEW YORK: OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS; 2010. 376 PAGES. PAPERBACK \$35.00. ISBN-13: 978-0-19-973205-0.

Meredith's guidebook provides tools and techniques for disseminating the research findings of scientists, engineers, and physicians. He discusses how to give compelling talks; build professional Web sites; create effective posters, videos, blogs, e-newsletters, podcasts, and Webinars; write popular articles; produce news releases; and give interviews. The author incorporates advice from leading science-communication experts on these subjects.

FUTURE PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION IN ASTRONOMY II. ALBERTO ACCOMAZZI, EDITOR. NEW YORK: SPRINGER; 2011. 162 PAGES. HARDCOVER \$199.00. ISBN-13: 978-1-4419-3868-8.

This book is a compilation of papers presented at the colloquium "Future Professional Communication II" that was held in 2010. Publishers, editors, archive managers, scientific-society representatives, and scientists discuss the changing world of publishing in astronomy and astrophysics. The volume treats the importance of libraries and data archives, links between the literature and data, and the changes in astronomy and astrophysics brought about by digital and open-access publishing.

PRESENTING SCIENCE: A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO GIVING A GOOD TALK. CIGDEM ISSEVER AND KEN PEACH. NEW YORK: OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS; 2010. 136 PAGES. PAPERBACK. \$35.00. ISBN-13: 978-0-199549092.

The authors expound on techniques for communicating science clearly and effectively to an audience through a "talk", which can range from a progress report to a small group to the keynote address at a large, international conference. They stress the speaker's responsibility for the content of each slide and the importance of the structure and appearance of the presentation. Their pragmatic approach stems from years of teaching scientific-presentation methods to graduate students.

SCIENTIFIC WRITING 2.0: A READER AND WRITER'S GUIDE. JEAN-LUC LEBRUN. HACKENSACK, NJ: WORLD SCIENTIFIC PUBLISHING; 2011. 280 PAGES. HARDCOVER \$75.00. ISBN-13: 978-981-4350-59-4.

The focus of this book is on self-assessment and reader-assisted assessment of the scientific journal article. It enables writers of papers for scientific journals to assess how well their papers are written from a reader's perspective by offering them practical metrics in the form of six checklists and a Java

Reviews

continued

application to assist in the evaluation. The authors also reveal and address the physiological causes of substantial reading difficulties: deficiencies of reader memory, attention span, and patience.

SCIENTIFIC WRITING AND COMMUNICATION: PAPERS, PROPOSALS, AND PRESENTATIONS. ANGELIKA H HOFMANN. NEW YORK: OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS; 2009. 704 PAGES. PAPERBACK \$35.95. ISBN-13: 978-0-19-539005-6.

The principles of scientific writing style and composition are applied to writing research papers, review articles, grant proposals (eight chapters), research statements, résumés, and academic presentations and posters. Hofmann uses examples from successful proposals and papers from medicine, biochemistry, biology, chemistry, engineering, and physics. Writing guidelines, checklists, and end-of-chapter exercises are included with successful techniques for revising a paper and reviewing an article or proposal. This handbook is aimed at upper-level undergraduates to faculty-level and professional researchers in the life sciences, medicine, psychology, chemistry, and engineering.

THE GLAMOUR OF GRAMMAR: A GUIDE TO THE MAGIC AND MYSTERY OF PRACTICAL ENGLISH. ROY PETER CLARK. NEW YORK: LITTLE, BROWN & COMPANY; 2010. 320 PAGES. PAPERBACK \$14.99. ISBN-13: 978-0316027908.

Clark's new guide to grammar is intended to have a practical and engaging approach to helping writers to learn and use proper grammar, to perfect their use of English, and to instill meaning in their writing. He aims to reunite grammar and glamour to captivate readers.

THE GREAT TYPO HUNT: TWO FRIENDS CHANGING THE WORLD, ONE CORREC-

TION AT A TIME. JEFF DECK AND BENJAMIN D HERSON. NEW YORK: BROADWAY BOOKS; 2011. 288 PAGES. PAPERBACK \$14.00. ISBN-13: 978-0-307-59108-1.

Join the "grammar vigilantes" in this light-hearted romp as they canvass America armed with markers, chalk, and correction fluid to correct typographic errors on display in public places. Their story emphasizes the power of language and literacy but presents more serious concerns about education, race, history, and how we communicate.

TORONTO EDITS (CONFERENCE ON EDITORIAL PROBLEMS). GILLIAN FENWICK, EDITOR. TORONTO, ON: UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO PRESS; 2012. 200 PAGES. HARDCOVER \$50.00. ISBN-13: 978-0-8020-8929-8.

Although editors do fundamentally the same things that they did a half-century ago, accessible international travel and electronic resources have influenced the handling and preparation of texts, and computers often introduce their own editorial problems. Based on papers presented at the 34th Conference on Editorial Problems at the University of Toronto, Fenwick's book explores the challenges of editing in modern times.

WRITING HEALTH COMMUNICATION: AN EVIDENCE-BASED GUIDE FOR PROFESSIONALS. CHARLES ABRAHAM AND MARIEKE KOOLS, EDITORS. THOUSAND OAKS, CA: SAGE PUBLICATIONS; 2011. 240 PAGES. PAPERBACK \$39.95 ISBN-13: 978-1-84787-186-2.

This practical guide to designing health information demonstrates how evidence-based strategies can be used to engage, inform, and persuade different audiences. It provides strategies for health professionals to ensure that information is selected, designed, and presented appropriately for

the target audience. The book outlines the steps that a writer needs to go through to create successful materials.

WRITING IN THE LIFE SCIENCES: A CRITICAL THINKING APPROACH. LAURENCE GREENE. NEW YORK: OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS; 2010. 512 PAGES. PAPERBACK \$29.95. ISBN-13: 978-0-19517-046-7.

Greene's premise in this book is that the most important skill for generating and communicating scientific information is critical thinking. He uses that idea in teaching scientific writers to communicate effectively. His process-based approach is used throughout the chapters, each of which addresses a specific writing task rather than a specific type of document.

NEW EDITION

CITE RIGHT, SECOND EDITION: A QUICK GUIDE TO CITATION STYLES—MLA, APA, CHICAGO, THE SCIENCES, PROFESSIONS, AND MORE. CHARLES LIPSON. CHICAGO: UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS; 2011. 224 PAGES. HARDCOVER \$27.00. ISBN-13: 978-02264-8463-1.

The updated edition of this guide to proper citation of sources contains the current citation styles of the University of Chicago Press, the Medical Library Association, the American Psychological Association, the American Anthropological Association (anthropology and ethnography), the Council of Science Editors, the American Medical Association, and the American Chemical Society and of the disciplines of physics, astronomy, astrophysics, mathematics, computer science, and engineering. A discussion of citation software (the pros and cons) and new examples of citation styles for video blogs, instant messaging, and social-networking sites have been added.

Stephanie Deming

The previous installment of "Between Author and Editor" was an overview of the mentoring component of AuthorAID, a program of the International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications that pairs developing-country researchers with mentors who help them to write and publish their research. Here are thoughts on the program from an AuthorAID mentoree and mentor. Rhoune Ochako is a demographer in Nairobi, Kenya, and Jackie Goodrich is a doctoral student at the University of Michigan. I spoke with them by telephone in early 2011, when they had been working together for almost a year. Following are excerpts from our conversations.

Rhoune Ochako

I went to the [AuthorAID] Web site and then did my search. I was trying to look for mentors who had similar interests as mine. I identified quite a number, about four, then I sent e-mails to them. Two of them responded—Jackie and somebody else. After that, we started communicating. I sent them my research paper after I introduced myself and they gave me their e-mail addresses. I told them that I'm a researcher in Africa, based in Nairobi, Kenya, and I was interested in having my work published.

I had done some analyses and a write-up, but I needed guidance to improve what I was doing. Jackie and I agreed that she'd look at my paper and give me feedback. That's how we started doing the communication.

I was doing a paper on comprehensive HIV and AIDS knowledge. [The other mentor] said he was not quite conversant with issues of HIV. So he looked for somebody who knew a lot about HIV and then gave the paper to that person for review. So I received comments from two mentors. And I was able to revise and improve my paper. But after some time, I lost one mentor. I think he got busy with work. I don't blame him, because he was doing it on top of his work, and again, as he mentioned, this was not quite his area of specialty.

When I met Jackie, I was happy. She told me that her interest is slightly different from mine; she does biological sciences research, and a lot of her research is done in the lab. But I was quite happy because she's still knowledgeable and she knows a lot about research in general. And so far, she has provided me with a lot of guidance in the process. Jackie provided guidance on how to write my introduction and even do the analyses. At times when I'm stuck and I'm not sure how to interpret my results, she guides me through the process. When I submitted [the HIV/AIDS] paper for publication, the reviewers told me to review the English to improve the quality of the paper, and Jackie helped in the process.

[Our communication] has worked out quite well. We haven't used Skype calls or telephone calls—we just work with e-mail, and it's never been a problem. The only problem is with the time difference. There are times when I send an e-mail during the day and I get the response the following morning. But at least we are consistent. When I send her an e-mail she responds, and [our communication] has been good.

I think AuthorAID is a very great idea. Maybe what needs to be done is to make many more junior researchers in the developing world know about AuthorAID. I learned that even in my office, where we have access to AuthorAID, not too many people know about it.

What I like so much about AuthorAID is that I can always receive help on improving the quality of my research work. I've been able to get a very good mentor. I really wanted to get my work published. And I'm so happy because two papers have now been accepted and published in online peer-reviewed journals. I'm working on the third one. AuthorAID is very good. The mentors give free guidance on how to improve our research work, while at the same time they are doing their normal jobs. This is a sacrifice they are making. The collaboration which is possible through AuthorAID should be encouraged, because

it can take us to a higher level by ensuring we publish quality research findings that will influence policy.

Jackie Goodrich

I heard about [AuthorAID] when I was at a Society of Toxicology meeting. I attended this small workshop on scientific writing, and the lady who was leading it told us about AuthorAID. I'm a PhD student, so I'm not even that experienced yet myself, and she was saying how, even so, there are probably people we can help in other countries with editing—that it is a good way to get more experience in that type of thing. And I also like interacting with other scientists and students, so I thought it would be interesting to check out and see if I could actually help anybody.

I signed up on the Web site as a potential mentor in March 2010. At the end of the month, Rhoune contacted me; there is a way that you can send messages on [the AuthorAID Web site] to people who you are interested in working with or talking to. She sent me a message through the Web site and asked if I would want to work with her on helping her edit some papers she was writing. And from then on we have e-mailed back and forth using our regular e-mail when she wanted to discuss her papers.

It has been nice to see how we've both improved. Her papers have been improving a lot as we've been working on them, and it has been really satisfying to see her submit them. Hopefully, they will be accepted, too, which we're both really excited about. And it has also helped my writing, too, because looking at someone else's papers helps me to see what is important when reading a paper. When you are writing about your own work, you know everything about the information, so sometimes you don't realize that other people don't understand something. It is easier for me to pick that out by looking at Rhoune's papers since I'm not an expert in her field. Sometimes I have to say, 'This could use a little more explanation because everyone might not

Between Author and Editor

continued

understand that', and I think that helps in my own writing, too.

Her grammar is pretty good and her word choices. I have helped her with word choice and transitioning between paragraphs and making the writing sound a bit more formal. As far as the information content goes, I usually suggested more information here or less there depending on whether I thought things needed more explanation or not.

I definitely would say that you don't have to be a really experienced professional to be a mentor. If you're a student, you might be able to help other researchers who are just starting out, like Rhouné. I

probably could not help a more advanced researcher. Really, anyone can be a mentor and can help with something, even though the extent of that help probably depends on your expertise. You just need to be open to trying new things and going a little bit outside of your exact field to offer any advice that you can. I think that it is very rewarding. And it is not extremely time-consuming either. I probably spend something like 4 hours per paper. And I suppose if you use one of the AuthorAID contracts (available through the Web site), then you could set an amount of time to be working together if you don't want it to go on forever.

I'm really glad that I did join the program. It helps to get another perspective and it's exciting to work with someone who is a budding scientist in another country. It's interesting to see how science is done in different countries and how things are progressing. That has been a really good experience. It is nice to be involved with someone like Rhouné and to help a little bit and get to know other scientists better. ☺

Visit https://www.authoraid.info/join_form if you are interested in signing up to be an AuthorAID mentor or mentoree.

Editors' Ethical Decision Making

Wim D'Haese

Peer review of manuscripts by external experts before publication is one fundamental mechanism that is used to ensure high-quality publications.

Aside from publishing high-quality and accurate information and correcting published literature as required, scientific journal editors are charged with maintaining the highest ethical standards during the entire manuscript-peer-review process. Editors' responsibilities toward authors, reviewers, and readers are outlined in CSE's *White Paper on Promoting Integrity in Scientific Journals, 2009 Update*¹ and other references.²

The goal of this column is to provoke thought on five stages of the peer review of manuscripts, each of which requires decision making involving substantial ethical issues but is usually not considered in detail from a process perspective:

- Conducting editorial review before peer review.
- Assigning appropriate peer reviewers.
- Establishing and maintaining an ethical peer-review process.
- Making an editorial decision.
- Reconsidering editorial decisions.

To manage high submission rates and avoid overloading peer reviewers, in-house editorial staff should review incoming manuscripts before forwarding them to external peer reviewers. This "prereview" streamlines the peer-review process and encourages efficient use of the external peer reviewers' time. A staff decision not to move forward with peer review of a manuscript "should be made in a fair and unbiased way"³ and should be based on commonly applied criteria, such as whether a manuscript is outside the journal's scope or lacks originality.^{1,2} In cases of early rejection, editors and their in-house editorial staff should explain to authors why a manuscript was rejected and how it could be strength-

ened. When applicable, they should also suggest journals that may be a better fit for the manuscript.

If a manuscript is selected to be sent to external peer reviewers, it is the responsibility of the journal editor to assign "appropriate" reviewers, that is, experts within the field addressed by the manuscript who have no disqualifying conflicts of interest.² Identifying the right peer reviewers for a given manuscript while taking into consideration well-supported requests from authors to exclude specific reviewers is a crucial editorial decision. It may happen that peer reviewers, although declaring that they have no disqualifying conflicts of interest, are competitors of a manuscript's authors; this could lead to biased critiques. Editors should take such peer-reviewer misconduct seriously.³ Peer reviewers should "express their views clearly with supporting arguments and references as necessary",⁴ but a number of factors, including simple lack of time, may lead to poorly written and documented reviews. In such circumstances, editors should critically consider the reports of all the reviewers of a given manuscript³ and balance their recommendations against each other or even solicit another reviewer for an added opinion, if necessary. Editors should ask peer reviewers who provide poorly written reports for additional comments or clarification and, when possible, avoid using them in the future.²

When peer reviewers are selected, they should be asked directly to disclose possible conflicts of interest; this allows the editor to assess the likelihood of bias. Because peer reviewers are often experts in the field covered by a manuscript, they may favor rejection of a competitor's manuscript for nonscientific reasons. Of course, that is ethically unacceptable. The responsibility of the editor to identify the "appropriate" peer reviewers for a manuscript includes foreseeing such potential conflicts and also critically evaluating peer-reviewers' reports with this potential misconduct in mind.

In addition, journals should instruct peer reviewers on the confidential nature of their assignment. The question remains as to which tools and processes editors have at hand to control confidentiality during peer review and to ensure that reviewers "do not make any use of the work described in the manuscript or take advantage of the knowledge they gained by reviewing it before publication".¹

Editors will assign a number of peer reviewers per manuscript and make an editorial decision that is based on the advice of the reviewers combined with in-house editorial views. Editorial decisions should be communicated in a "clear and constructive" manner.¹ From an ethical standpoint, it is important for an editor to provide a rationale to the authors that explains the editorial decision. Consider the following scenarios. First, if all peer reviewers recommend publication, does this necessarily mean that the manuscript should be published? Given the number of retractions of published manuscripts,⁵ which in most cases were recommended for publication by peer reviewers and editors, it appears that answer is no. However, how can the peer-review process be modified to allow accurate detection of falsified data and observations? Second, if all peer reviewers recommend rejection, does this necessarily mean that the manuscript should be rejected? Sometimes, a manuscript is accepted by another journal that has a similar impact factor and scope as the journal by which it was rejected after review by another set of peer reviewers. Third, peer-reviewers' opinions may conflict. How do editors reach an editorial decision in such cases? Particularly in the latter situation, it may be helpful to share reviewers' comments among all the reviewers of a given manuscript before an editorial decision has been reached. Reviewers would then have a chance to compare their own views with those of the other reviewers and together provide a more informed opinion to the editor. In some cases, editors may also want

The Ethical Editor


continued

to assign another reviewer to gain additional thoughts. If a reviewed manuscript is to be rejected after due consideration, the journal should express clearly the reasons for the manuscript's rejection and what changes, if any, could be made to render the manuscript potentially acceptable for publication.

Authors whose manuscripts are rejected, before or after peer review, may want to offer a rebuttal to the editorial decision. Authors' rebuttals to editorial decisions should be handled by the editor seriously and discreetly. In some cases, a manuscript's rejection results in a well-documented and well-reasoned rebuttal by the authors. The original peer reviewers may be reluctant or unable to reconsider the manuscript fairly in light of such a rebuttal. To resolve such a case, a journal may opt to assign an ombudsperson² to evaluate the manuscript, its reviews, and the rebuttal to reach an appropriate editorial decision.

The section "Roles and Responsibilities in Publishing" in the CSE's *White Paper*

WIM D'HAENZE is a manager of technical writing at Arena Pharmaceuticals, Inc, San Diego, CA.

(pages 2–38)¹ offers many useful guidelines on key responsibilities of authors, reviewers, editors, and readers and cross-references to sample correspondence and workflows that can be used to address and resolve some of the issues related to peer review discussed here. The above discussion warrants additional changes in the peer-review process used to evaluate scientific manuscripts. To improve ethics in scientific publishing, it may be necessary to make such changes as encouraging editors to document the rationale for their decision regarding a given manuscript; sharing peer reviewers' comments among reviewers before an editorial decision is reached; supplementing initial reviews with additional reviews as needed; not accepting poorly written and poorly documented peer reviewers' reports; carefully monitoring for conflicts of interest in the peer-review process; and setting up independent ombudsperson committees that have authority to review authors' rebuttals. This may not, however, be an overnight task, inasmuch as it puts even more pressure and workload on the shoulders of editors who are already greatly stressed for various other reasons.⁶ 

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Who's New in CSE

Elsa Bumstead

Sandia Staffing Alliance
PO Box 672887
Albuquerque NM 87193
(505) 284-8862
nmquetzal@comcast.net

Gundega Korsts

555 S Midvale Blvd
Unit 327
Madison WI 53711-1419
(608) 240-9725
gk@korsts.com

Jennifer Maybin

Maybin Healthcare Communications
131 Station Road
Branchburg NJ 08876
(908) 526-0096
(908) 360-0312 fax
jennifer@jmaybin.com

Anna Jester

eJournalPress
6011 Executive Blvd
Suite 203
Rockville MD 20852
(301) 230-7601
(301) 230-7603 fax
ajester@ejpress.com

Science Editor, Volume 34 (2011)

-A-

- academic writing, 4:e7
 international students, 2:55[book alert]
- Adie, Euan, 2:61
- Aiello, Susan E, interview, 4:e13
- Alberts, Bruce M, 2:51
- Alexander, Kathey, 3:79–80
- American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), annual meeting, 2:49–52
- American Cancer Society (ACS), job interview, 4:e11
- Annual Meeting (2011), 1:30–31
 Program Committee, 1:31
- Annual Meeting (2012), 3:95
- app, 2:61
- Aribisala, Wura, 1:13–15, 2:49, 3:99
- Arreola-Triana, Alejandra, 2:50, 2:52
- audiences, 3:90–91
 reaching new ones, 2:51
- author–industry–journal relationships, 3:81–82
- AuthorAID, mentoring, 3:84–85
 mentoree and mentor perspective, 4:e27–e28
- authors, English-as-a-second-language (ESL), 2:57–58
- authorship
 Annual Meeting, 1:30
 defining, 3:78
- awards, Meritorious Achievement, 3:76
- Blake, Elizabeth, 4:e3
- blogs, 1:7–8
- Board of Editors in the Life Sciences (BELS)
 certification, 4:e13
 examination, 4:e13
 founding, 4:e12
- book reviews
Academic Writing: A Handbook for International Students, 3rd ed [Bailey], 2:55
The Accidents of Style: Good Advice on How Not to Write Badly [Elster], 1:29
Assessment in Technical and Professional Communication [Hundleby & Allen], 4:e25
The A–Z of Medical Writing [Albert], 4:e21–e22
The Best American Science Writing 2010 [Groopman], 2:53
Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life [Lamott], 3:99
The Changing Face of Medicine: Women Doctors and the Evolution of Health Care in America [Boulis & Jacobs], 2:55
Chicago Manual of Style, 16th ed, 1:27–28
Cite Right: A Quick Guide to Citation Styles, 2nd ed [Lipson], 4:e26
Complex Worlds: Digital Culture, Rhetoric, and Professional Communication [Lamberti & Richards], 4:e25
Culture, Communication and Cyberspace: Rethinking Technical Communication for International Online Environments [St. Amant & Sapienza], 4:e25
Cutting for Stone [Verghese], 3:100
The Disappearing Spoon and Other True Tales of Madness, Love, and the History of the World from the Periodic Table of Elements [Kean], 2:55, e17–e18
Elements of Latin Pronunciation: For the Use of Students in Language, Law, Medicine, Zoology, Botany, and the Sciences Generally in which Latin Words Are Used (1851) [Haldeman], 1:29
Encyclopedia of Science and Technology Communication [Priest], 2:29
Explaining Research: How to Reach Key Audiences to Advance Your Work [Meredith], 4:25
Freelancing Expertise: Contract Professionals in the New Economy [Osnowitz], 2:55, 4:e18–e19
Future Professional Communication in Astronomy II [Accomazzi], 4:e25
Ghost Train to the Eastern Star [Theroux], 3:100
The Glamour of Grammar: A Guide to the Magic and Mystery of Practical English [Clark], 4:e26
The Great Typo Hunt: Two Friends Changing the World, One Correction at a Time [Deck & Herson], 4:e26
The Gun Seller [Laurie], 3:101
Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet: A Novel [Ford], 3:101
I Curse the River of Time [Petterson], 3:102
The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks [Skloot], 3:102
It Was the Best of Sentences, It Was the Worst of Sentences: A Writer's Guide to Crafting Killer Sentences [Casagrande], 1:29
The Master Butchers Singing Club [Erdrich], 123
The McGraw-Hill Dictionary of Scientific and Technical Terms, 7th ed, 2:55
Motherhood, the Elephant in the Laboratory: Women Scientists Speak Out [Monosson], 2:54
Never Let Me Go [Ishiguro], 4:e15
New Perspectives on Technical Editing [Murphy], 4:e23–e24
New York Times Reader: Science & Technology [Stocking & the Writers of The New York Times], 4:26–27
Oxford Modern English Grammar [Aarts], 2:55
Presenting Science: A Practical Guide to Giving a Good Talk [Issever & Peach], 4:e25

-B-

- Baggerly, Keith A, 3:94
- Barbour, Virginia, 1:9–11
- Baskin, Denis G, 1:30, 1:31, 3:78–79
- Baskin, Patricia, 1:30, 1:31, 1:32, 3:78–79, 4:e3
- Beele, Angela M, 2:39
- Benner, Rebecca S, 1:7–8, 2:43–5, 3:102, 3:123
 Updates in e-Publishing, 2:61–62
 Viewpoint, 1:2, 2:38
- Bennett, David, 2:49
- Bilder, Geoffrey, 1:17
- bioinformatics, forensic, 3:94
- Black, Caroline, 1:17

-C-

- Research Writing in Dentistry [von Fraunhofer], 1:29
- Risk Communication: A Handbook for Communicating Environmental, Safety, and Health Risks, 4th ed [Lundgren & McMakin], 1:55
- Science Research Writing: A Guide for Non-Native Speakers of English [Glasman-Deal], 1:29
- A Scientific Approach to Scientific Writing [Blackwell & Martin], 4:e25
- Scientific Writing 2.0: A Reader and Writer's Guide [Lebrun], 4:e25–e26
- Scientific Writing and Communication: Papers, Proposals, and Presentations [Hofmann], 4:e26
- The Secret Life of Words: How English Became English [Hitchings], 1:29
- Stylized: A Slightly Obsessive History of Strunk & White's *The Elements of Style* [Garvey], 4:e22
- Superbug: The Fatal Menace of MRSA [McKenna], 4:e16–e17
- Taking Science to the People: A Communication Primer for Scientists and Engineers [Johnsen], 2:55
- Toronto Edits (Conference on Editorial Problems) [Fenwick], 4:e26
- What to Charge: Pricing Strategies for Freelancers and Consultants, 2nd ed [Lewis], 4:e20–e21
- Wolf Totem: A Novel [Jiang], 4:e14
- Woodswoman: Living Alone in the Adirondack Wilderness [LaBastille], 4:e14
- Writing Health Communication: An Evidence-based Guide for Professionals [Abraham & Kools], 4:e26
- Writing in the Life Sciences: A Critical Thinking Approach [Greene], 4:e26
- Writing Scientific Research Articles: Strategy and Steps [Cargill & O'Connor], 1:29
- Borenstein, Seth, 2:50
- breakthroughs, communicating, 1:30
Short Courses, 1:30–32
- Buchanan, Esmeralda Galan, 3:79–80
interview, 4:e11
- Buscher, Lindsey, 2:81–82
- Caelleigh, Addeane S, 2:40
- calendar, 2:72
- Canada, medical-student journals, overview, 113–7
- Carr, Fern GZ, 3:96
- Cavalier, Darlene, 3:93
- cell culture, 3:102[book review]
- Chirdan, Lohfa Bali, 2:66
- Christiansen, Stacy, 1:33
- citation styles, 4:e26[book alert]
- citizen–scientists, 3:93
- Clarke, Michael, 2:68
- climate-change denial, 2:50–51
- clinical research
conducting versus reporting, 3:81
errors, 3:94
- Clough, G Wayne, 2:50
- Cochran, Angela, 2:61
- Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), 1:9–11
retraction guidelines, 1:7
- communication
outside the box, 2:49
skills, 2:55[book alert]
- concern, expressions of, 1:18
- conflicts of interest, 2:39, 3:81, 3:82
- content, 2:44
- contributorship, 3:83, 3:85
- corrections. See errata
- Cowart, Katie, 2:50
- Cross, Tim, 1:24–25, 2:68, 3:75
Updates in e-Publishing, 1:20–21
- CrossCheck, 2:59–60
- CrossRef, 2:59
- crossword puzzle, 2:64–65, 2:71
- CSE
Board of Directors, 2:68
International Scholarship recipients, 2:66–67
new members, 1:35, 2:70–71, 3:103–107, 4:e31
officers, 2011, 2:75
- CSE Research Committee, 2:43–45
journal metrics regularly produced, 2:45
survey questions, 2:45
- Custead, Savita, 2:51

-D-

- D'Haese, Wim, 4:e29–30
- Dames, Jonina, 4:e3
- data sharing, ethics, 1:31, 3:77
- Deja vu, 2:59
- Deming, Stephanie, Between Author and Editor, 1:22–23, 2:57–58, 3:84–85, 4:e27–28
- dentistry, research writing, 1:29[book alert]
- Desai, Sapan S, 2:41
- dictionaries, 2:55[book alert]
English, non–native-English-speaking editor, 1:14
- digital publishing, 2:44
- diversity, communicating, 2:50–51
- doctors, women, 2:55[book alert]
- dual-use research, ethics, 3:97–98
- Dunbar, Cynthia E, 3:81–82

-E-

- editing, non-English first language, 2:39–40
- editor-in-chief search, conducting, 3:79–80
- editorial office management and systems, 2:40
- editorial research, survey (2010), 2:43–45
- electronic versions, versus print, 3:74
- e-mail, Solution Corner, 1:24–25
- employer–employee relationships, 2:55 [book alert]
- encyclopedias, 1:29[book alert]
English, 1:29[book alert]
- English manuscripts, non–native-English-speaking editor, 1:2, 1:13–15
- e-publishing, 1:2
journal apps, 2:61–62
- EQUATOR Network, 4:e3
- Erickson, Pamela, 2:68, 3:75, 3:83, 3:85
- errata, 1:2, 1:3–5, 1:18–19
ahead of print, 1:4–5
retractions, 1:7–8
- errors, clinical research, 3:94
- The Ethical Editor, 1:2
- ethics, 2:44
Annual Meeting, 1:30–31
clinical research, 3:81
conflicts of interest, 2:39, 3:81, 3:82
data sharing, 3:77

Index

Index continued

dual-use research, 3:97–98
peer review, 4:e29–30
plagiarism, 2:59–60
Short Course, 1:30–31, 1:32
Europe, conferences, ISMTE, 1:17
European Association of Science Editors
(EASE), EASE Guidelines for scientists
and science translators, 4:e10
expressions of concern, 1:18

-F-

Family Science Days, 2:52
Faruqui, Naser, 2:51–52
Filler, Jill, 3:83, 3:85
finances, 2:44
Fischer, Lauren, 1:3–5
Fisher, Carol, 2:41
forensic bioinformatics, 3:94
fraud, 1:7
 identifying, 2:41
freelancing, 2:55[book alert], 4:e18–19[book
review]
 pricing, 4:e20–21[book review]
Friedman, Michael A, 1:25

-G-

Garfinkel, Susan, 2:86–87
Gastel, Barbara, 1:24, 2:47–48, 2:49–50,
2:51, 2:53, 3:100
Gerrity, Kelly, 3:86–87
Gilman, Carissa A, 3:79–80
globalization, clinical research, 3:81
Goodell, Heather, 1:18–19, 2:68, 3:75
Goodrich, Jackie, 4:e27–e28
grammar, 2:55[book alert], 4:e26[book alert]
Grossblatt, Norman, interview, 4:e12
Gwynn, Sara, 2:51

-H-

Hadsell, Kelly A, 79–80
Hale, George, 2:50–51, 3:101
Hames, Irene, 1:17
Hariharan, Parvathy, 2:51–52
health communications, 4:e25[book alert]
Heideman, Kenneth F, 2:68, 3:78, 3:82
 Solution Corner, 1:24–25, 2:56
Hepp, Michael, 2:61
humor, 2:50

-I-

images
 digital data, 2:40
 integrity, 1:31
industry–journal–author relationships,
3:81–82
instructions, for scientists and science
translators, EASE, 4:e10
International Society of Managing and
Technical Editors (ISMTE), 1:17
international students, academic writing,
2:55[book alert]
Internet, non–native-English-speaking
editor, 1:14

-J-

Jackson, Jill, 2:40–41
Jimoh, Akin, 2:52
job interview, conducting, 4:e11
journal editors
 search, 3:79–80
 Short Course, 2:31, 2:32
Journal of Surgical Radiology, 2:41
journalism, changing, 2:50
journals
 apps, 2:61–62
 author–industry relationships, 3:81–82
 history of, as an entity, 3:82
 metrics, 2:44, 2:45
metrics, Short Course, 1:31, 1:32
publication issues and barriers, 2:44

-K-

Kjaergaard, Rikke Schmidt, 2:49
Kleinert, Sabine, 1:9–11
Knatterud, Mary E, 3:102, 4:e15, 4:e21–22
 Peer-Renewed, 2:63, 3:96
Kroll, James T, 3:86–87

-L-

Laine, Christine, 2:68, 3:75, 3:77
Landis, Glenn, 2:30–31
Lang, Diane, 3:75
Latin, 1:29[book alert]
legal proceedings, retractions, 1:11
Lessl, Thomas, 2:51
Lincicome, David Richard, obituary, 3:88
Long, John, 3:83, 3:85

-M-

Magar, Angel, 2:66
Mahar, Jennifer, 3:77
Makama, Jerry Godfrey, 2:66–67
Malhador, Alice, 1:17
Malow, Brian, 2:50
manuscript editors
 keeping motivated, 2:48
 satisfactions, 2:47–48
 Short Course, 1:31, 1:32
Marcus, Adam, 1:7–8
Marusic, Ana, 3:83, 3:85
Mbarga, Gervais, 2:52
Meddings, Kirsty, 1:17
medical journals, student-run, Canada,
4:e5–9
medical writing, 4:e25–26[book review]
medicine, women doctors, 2:55[book alert]
MEDLINE, errata, 1:3–4
Mehta, Parsh, 2:40–41
Melcher, Teresa M, 2:69, 3:74, 3:75, 3:76,
3:90–91, 3:93, 3:94, 4:e11, 4:e12, 4:e13
Mendoza, Barbara, 1:26–27
mentoring, 2:51–52, 3:84–85
 sign up, 3:85
Meritorious Achievement Award, John
Sack, 3:76
Meyers Ford, Barbara, 3:82
Miles, Kirsten D, 2:40
misconduct, research, dealing with, 3:86–87
Mossman, Blaire, obituary, 3:88
motherhood, women scientists, 2:54[book
review]

-N-

Naron, Sharon, award, 2:76
National Library of Medicine, 1:3–5
New York Times, errata, 1:5
Ninger, Laura J, crossword puzzle, 2:64–65,
2:71
non–native-English-speaking editor, 1:2,
1:13–15
 editing dos and don'ts, 1:15
 tools, 1:14–15

-O-

obituaries
 David Richard Lincicome, 3:88
 Blaire Mossman, 3:88

Ochako, Rhoune, 4:e27–28
 O'Hara, Kathryn, 2:52
 O'Moore-Klopf, Katharine, 2:57–58
 Oransky, Ivan, 1:7–8
 Oreskes, Naomi, 2:51
 Osseweijer, Patricia, 2:49
 Overgaard, Kristi A, 2:68, 3:75
 award, 3:76
 The Ethical Editor, 1:18–19, 2:59–2:60,
 3:97–98, 4:e29–30

-P-

Paal, Edith, 4:e23–24
 Paić, Antonija, 1:33, 4:e14
 Parrish, Debra M, 3:86–87
 Partain, Deborah L, 2:51
 Patterson, Mark, 1:17
 peer review, 2:44
 ethics and, 4:e29–30
 process and timeline, 2:40–41
 periodic table of the elements, 2:55,
 4:e17–18[book reviews]
 pharmaceutical companies, perception, 3:82
 Philibert, Ingrid, 4:e4
 Piotrowski, May B, 3:78
 Pirkey, Kevin E, 2:68, 3:75
 plagiarism, detection software, 2:59–60
 poetry, 2:63, 3:96
 preposition list, non-native-English-
 speaking editor, 1:15
 presentations, 2:50, 4:e25[book alert]
 professional communication, 4:e25[book
 alerts]
 publication
 barriers to, 2:44
 research visibility and, 2:51
 researchers publishing in journals they
 edit, 2:39
 Publication Ethics, Short Course, 1:30–31,
 1:32
 Publication Management, Short Course,
 31, 32

-Q-R-

Quarterman, Davina, 1:17
 Ramey, Janis, 4:e18–19
 reader feedback, seeking and using, 4:e4
 reproducibility, forensic bioinformatics,
 3:94

research
 barriers to, 2:44
 dual-use, ethics, 3:97–98
 misconduct, dealing with, 3:86–87
 visibility, global, 2:51
 research writing
 dentistry, 1:29[book alert]
 non-native speakers of English,
 1:29[book alert]
 retractions
 guidance, 1:9–11
 legal proceedings, 1:11
 notices of, 1:9
 Retraction Watch, blog, 1:7–8
 Revkin, Andrew, 2:51
 risk, communicating information,
 2:55[book alert]
 Rosario, Daniel, 2:39–40
 Rosenstiel, Tom, 2:50

-S-

Sack, John, award, 3:76
 Saleh, Naveed, 4:e15–16
 Salisbury, Daniel, 3:97–98
 Sauer, R Michele, 2:39
 Schaeffer, Mary Beth, 2:30–1, 4:e3
 Scheetz, Mary, 3:83, 3:85
 Schmidt, Gavin, 2:51
 science cheerleaders, 3:93
Science Editor
 editor, 69
 Editorial Board members, 1:33
 information for contributors,
 2:72
 quarterly publication, 2:33
 scientific literacy, 2:50
 scientific misconduct, detection and
 deterrence, 1:31, 1:41
 scientific papers, writing in English,
 2:49–50
 tips and Web sites, 2:49
 scientific writing and communication,
 4:e25–26[book alerts]
 best of 2010, 2:53[book review]
 scientists, meeting, 2:52
 Sen, Banalata, 2:51
 sentences, crafting, 1:29[book alert]
 Shah, Abroo, 2:61–62
 Shirley, Susan M, 1:27–28, 2:54,
 4:e17–18, 4

Reviews, 1:26–29, 2:53–55, 3:99–102,
 4:e14–26
 Shogren, Elizabeth, 2:50
 Short Courses
 Journal Editors, 1:31, 1:32
 Journal Metrics, 1:31, 1:32
 Manuscript Editors, 1:31, 1:32
 Publication Ethics, 1:30–31, 1:32
 Publication Management, 1:31,
 1:32
 Shortell, Cynthia, 2:41
 Smith, Chris, 2:49
 software, plagiarism-detection, 2:59–60
 Solution Corner, dilemmas and issues
 sought, 2:56
 speech-giving, guide, 4:e25–26[book alert]
 standards
 biomedical journals, 2:40
 fraud prevention, 2:41
Staphylococcus aureus, MRSA,
 4:e16–17[book review]
 Stewart, Rebecca, 4:e20–21
 style, 1:29[book alert]
 elements of, 4:e22[book review]
 manuals, 1:27–28[book review]
 non-native-English-speaking editor,
 1:14, 1:15
 Subramanian, Roma, 4:e14
 Sullenberger, Diane, 2:68, 3:75,
 3:79–80
 Sumners, Christina, 2:50, 2:51

-T-

tags, 2D, 1:20–21
 technical communication, 4:e25[book
 alerts]
 technical editing, 4:e25–26[book review]
 Theory of Constraints, 1:40–41
 Thompson, Loren, 2:51
 Tilton, Donna, 2:59–60
 time management, 1:22–23
 e-mail, 1:24–25
 Trudgett, Anna, 2:68, 3:75, 3:77
 Tso, David, 4:e5–9

-U-V-

Ufnalska, Sylvia B, 4:e10
 Updates in e-Publishing, 1:2
 Verma, Pamela, 4:e5–9

Index

Index continued

-W-

Wager, Elizabeth, 1:9–11, 3:86–87
Walker, Julie, 3:84–85
Warner, Mary, 2:43–45
Warshaw, Peter, 2:63
Web sites, resources for writing scientific papers, 2:49–50
Weigel, Alfred, 3:81–82
Weissman, Arlene, 4:e4
White Paper on Promoting Integrity in Scientific Journals, 2009 Update, 1:18–19

Whyte, John, 3:90–91
withdrawal policy, 1:15
women
 doctors, 2:55[book alert]
 scientists, 2:54[book alert]
Word, tips for editors, 4:e3
writing
 advice, 3:99[book review]
 research articles, 1:29[book alert]
Wu, Diane, 4:e5–9

-Y-Z-

Yentis, Steven, 1:9–11
Youssef, David, 4:e5–9
Zecevic, Maja, 3:81–82
Zoog, Holly, 3:81–82

Calendar

2012

- 16–20 February **American Association for the Advancement of Science annual meeting.** Vancouver BC. www.aaas.org.
- 14–17 April **Association of Clinical Research Professionals annual conference.** Houston TX. www.acrpnet.org.
- 15 April **BELS (Board of Editors in the Life Sciences) examination.** Houston TX. Registration deadline is 25 March. Contact: Leslie E Neistadt, BELS Registrar, The Hughston Foundation, 6262 Veterans Pkwy, Columbus GA 31909; (706) 494-3322; fax (706) 494-3348; lneistadt@hughston.com; www.bels.org.
- 19–21 April **American Society for Indexing annual conference.** San Diego CA. www.asindexing.org.
- 17 May **BELS (Board of Editors in the Life Sciences) examination.** Seattle WA. Registration deadline is 26 April. See preceding BELS listing for registration information.
- 18–21 May **Council of Science Editors annual meeting.** Seattle Sheraton Hotel, Seattle WA. Contact: CSE: 10200 W 44th Ave, Ste 304, Wheat Ridge CO 80033; (720)881-6046; www.CouncilScienceEditors.org.
- 30 May–1 June **Society for Scholarly Publishing annual meeting.** Arlington VA. www.sspnet.org.
- 24–28 June **Drug Information Association annual meeting.** Philadelphia PA. www.diahome.org.
- 3 October **BELS (Board of Editors in the Life Sciences) examination.** Sacramento CA. Registration deadline is 12 September. See preceding BELS listing for registration information.
- 4–6 October **American Medical Writers Association annual meeting.** Sacramento CA. www.amwa.org.
- 2–7 November **Association of American Medical Colleges annual meeting.** San Francisco CA. www.aamc.org.

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