ISMTE
INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY OF MANAGING AND TECHNICAL EDITORS

EON
Editorial Office News

Society Update

One More Month . . .

Just one more month until we can gather at the North American ISMTE conference in Washington, DC to network and learn about key developments in journal publishing.

See the agenda and/or register at www.ismte.org and we'll see you there!

Glenn Collins leads a session at the annual ISMTE conference in 2009.

In this issue:

Hurdles Faced by Non-English-Speaking Authors and Ways Journals Can Help

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Publications are the currency of academia, and everything from completing a graduate degree, to getting a faculty position, to earning tenure hinges on a successful publication record. The highest impact journals are overwhelmingly written in English and carry the most weight, putting non-native English speaking (NNE) authors at a distinct disadvantage in the publication game. There are clear data supporting the fact that English ability (by country) correlates significantly with acceptance rates in English language journals. Indeed, it is often difficult for reviewers to separate the quality of the work from the quality of the writing. Managing editors also experience frustration with the growing number of submissions written in broken English, as these manuscripts tend to take more time to assess, edit, and format correctly. It is in the best interest of the journal, however, to attract the highest quality work, regardless of the researcher's country of origin. This article will discuss some of the hurdles faced by NNE authors as they navigate the publication process and will suggest a few simple ways for journals to accommodate this population of researchers.

As the academic community has become increasingly global, pressure to publish in English has grown significantly, and many researchers are encountering this process for the first time. With an absence of experienced mentors who have published in English language journals before, young faculty face the difficult process of manuscript preparation and submission, which includes writing the paper outside of their native language, choosing an appropriate journal, navigating that journal's website, figuring out how to format and submit their paper according to detailed English instructions, interpreting the reviewer's comments (if they are lucky enough to get a review), and responding to those comments in a diplomatic and savvy manner – an art for even the most seasoned veterans. Each of these steps presents its own set of challenges that can be easily taken for granted by English-speaking authors and editors.

In general, NNE authors have fewer resources than their English-speaking competitors. One of the biggest resources to consider is access to peer feedback on a manuscript before submission. In some countries, it is culturally taboo to share a manuscript with a colleague and ask for a critique. Furthermore, it is much less likely researchers working in non-English speaking countries have native English-speaking coworkers who can edit their writing. If funding levels are low, there is less opportunity to attend conferences and present work for peer feedback prior to submission, all of which lead NNE authors to enter the submission

Hurdles Faced by NNE Authors

continued

process with little insight into the strengths and weaknesses of the manuscript.

What Journals Can Do to Help

Journals can do a lot to make this process friendlier to the global community by designing the submission process with NNE authors in mind. Here are a few simple suggestions that go a long way toward easing the submission process:

(1) Evaluate the clarity of your journal's website. Overly wordy websites are confusing for everyone, so it is a good idea to step back and assess the simplicity of the text and the overall navigation. Icons can replace text as an effective way to direct the reader around the page, and important links to author instructions and submission pages should be placed in prominent locations.

(2) Have your website or key pieces of information translated into the most common languages of your NNE authors. If translation of the entire website is too large of a burden, consider translating just the submission pages or the author instructions. Faculty often ask secretaries or graduate students to format the paper for them, so translated PDF versions of the author instructions that can be easily shared by e-mail are very convenient.

(3) Make your reviewer guidelines easy to find and transparent to the authors. Authors who understand the metrics by which they will be judged should make better decisions about journal selection and have more realistic expectations about the review process. When reviews come back, NNE authors often have a more difficult time responding to criticism with the appropriate tone. Providing links to outside resources, such as professional review services, will give the author tools to help polish this important text.

(4) Create an author resources page with links to companies that offer language editing, formatting, and translation services. Journals do not need to assume the burden of polishing a paper and making it ready for submission, and authors are looking for direction in choosing a reputable service provider; suggesting companies that your organization has already vetted will greatly help researchers submit their best possible manuscript. In addition to including these links on an author resources page, they can be added to revision letters, giving authors a simple and concrete way to improve their work.

Submissions from NNE authors to English language journals are expected to rise, and a few thoughtful changes can go a long way toward bridging the communication barrier between these researchers and an editorial staff. Ideally, these changes will result in fewer technical questions about the submission and review processes, an increase in the number of manuscripts that are well written and properly formatted, and a higher quantity of submissions to the journal, allowing for greater selectivity and, ultimately, creating better journal quality.

Do you have a suggestion for helping non-native English speaking authors? Let us know through the discussion forum: www.ismte.org, click on the "Members Only" link, then the "Discussion Forum" link.

Clearer Formatting Instructions: Good for Journals and the Scientific Community

by Stacy Lavin, PhD
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In addition to furthering a researcher's career, high-impact publications connect the members of a geographically and disciplinarily expanding scientific community. For non-native English speaking (NNE) authors, linguistic and cultural barriers can artificially inhibit this expansion at several steps in the publication effort, not the least of which is the formatting step.

Journal-specific formatting in English-language journals entails particular obstacles for the NNE contributor. First, reformatting citations and references according to different journals' standards is a formidable task that most English-speaking authors obviate with reference management software that may be less accessible in developing countries. Second, NNE authors have a difficult time wading through the sometimes unwieldy pages of instructions describing how the sections of their manuscript should look. Finally, if NNE authors have questions about formatting instructions, they will be at a disadvantage compared with their English-speaking counterparts, who can rely on colleagues and advisors to help ensure they are complying with the complex sets of requirements that often populate the guidelines.

Increased compliance with journal-specific formatting requirements means a reduction in both the time journal staff spend making (or requesting) corrections and the likelihood that manuscripts by NNE authors will be rejected before the content is considered on its own merits. To save time and energy, and to help ensure science rather than layout determines the boundaries of the research community, a publisher or journal can adopt two main strategies to improve the presentation of formatting instructions:

1) encourage the use of **reference management software** (even if you don't want software code in the final product) and

2) make the instructions as **visual** as possible.

Why Encourage the Use of Software?

Reformatting references can be an arduous task. Imagine a manuscript that has been initially formatted to comply with an author-date citation style. Next, imagine altering it to comply with a numbered citation style. Now imagine doing it again but with additional citations the author accumulated in the process of revising the manuscript. Add all this to the time it takes to verify all the citation data manually, and you have quite a forbidding process on your hands. Use of reference management software is, in these cases, indispensable. But researchers in developing countries less frequently implement such software when composing manuscripts than do their counterparts in developed countries. Some departments may not offer their researchers free access to software like

Clearer Formatting Instructions

continued

EndNote®, which increases the convenience of checking citation content against PubMed databases and renders existing references easy to reformat for journals that require different citation styles. Indeed, good reference management software virtually eliminates the forbidding process described above. To encourage the use of such software, offer your authors an easily downloadable output style for some of the more popular software programs. If you already offer an output style, go one step further by telling authors to find out if reference software is (or can be made) accessible to them through their departments. Translate this section of the page into the most common languages of your NNE authors. The more that NNE authors demand departmental access to the software, the more likely it is to happen.

If You Don't Accept Manuscripts With Software Coding

Even if your journal wants submitted manuscripts to be free of reference software codes, push the use of such software by publishing and creating an output style for your journal. *Codes can be disabled easily before submission*. For instance, in EndNote®, once citations are properly formatted, all the author needs to do is click 'Convert to Plain Text' to remove any trace of the unwanted software. It saves time both for your authors and for your staff.

Make it Visual

Much of the text of journal formatting guidelines describes components of a manuscript's layout (i.e. visual components). It is a journal's prerogative not to consider a manuscript for review if it fails to meet formatting requirements. With so much at stake, screen shots of sample pages and complementary sample issues can help minimize the number of critical details that are liable to get lost in translation.

The key is to make the instructions as visual as possible. Along with your detailed description of the title page requirements, for instance, include a link to a screen shot of an annotated title page (check out Purdue University's APA guide at http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/ for a great example). You can also use screen shots to help explain requirements like 'how to convert EndNote® references to plain text before submission.'

The most useful visual resource, however, would be a free sample issue that contains examples of each type of article published by the journal. Like any guideline, this example needs to be revised in step with any changes in the journal's formatting policies.

Conclusion

Formatting guidelines that are sensitive to the cultural and linguistic obstacles facing NNE authors can help in a small but crucial way to keep high-impact, English-language journals in the business of disseminating the best research from the increasingly global scientific community. Encouraging the use of reference management software and adding a strong visual component to guidelines can increase the chances that manuscripts by NNE authors will reach the review step. The net result is a greater, more competitive pool of papers to choose from for your next issue.

COLUMN: *Ethical Questions To Ponder*

Are They Dishonest or Just Ignorant?

by Sirkka-Liisa Leinonen
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Whenever I read about cases of scientific fraud and misconduct they seem abstract, unrelated to my daily duties, and to fall neatly into manageable categories. But whenever I come across misconduct in real life, things seem muddled, brutally flesh-and-blood, and nothing falls into any neat categories.

This is a description of some encounters with rogues, victims, and fools during my six years as a managing editor. While the stories are not nice, they are true and, I hope, will provide insights into the badlands of scientific research tactfully termed 'misconduct'. I hope they will also serve as forewarning to those who have not, as of yet, had such encounters.

Intent to Deceive

My first experience of misconduct involved an expert in the field, and our paths crossed at a time when I was still very novice, very innocent, and very ignorant. Although my editor-in-chief [EIC] had more experience in the complexities of medical research, he too had probably not encountered such ruthless dishonesty.

It all started like a textbook case. We invited a reviewer, let's call him Dr. X, to evaluate a manuscript and received his timely and matter-of-fact comments on the article. In addition, the evaluation was accompanied by an offer that he would be happy to write an editorial on the topic. Way back then we did not get many such offers, and we gratefully accepted his proposal. Soon afterwards we received a nice and tidy editorial manuscript with the name of Dr. X and two co-authors on the title page. Before we had time to formally accept the editorial, we received an indignant e-mail from one of the 'co-authors'. He indicated that he had absolutely nothing to do with the editorial, had never seen the manuscript, and definitely did not want his name included as a co-author. There was no way to misinterpret the situation; we had something very foul in our hands.

As I said, both the EIC and I were new to our jobs and had never heard of the COPE guidelines. Although we normally accepted invited editorials, the EIC decided to reject this one. We received a resentful e-mail from Dr. X, but thought this would be the last we would hear from him and sighed with relief.

However, sometime later we received a letter to the editor from Dr. X in which he commented, in critical tones, on an article recently published in our journal. The criticism did not seem well-founded, but we forwarded the letter to the authors of the article and asked if they would like to submit a response. We received a well-formulated reply in which the authors easily discounted all criticisms.

Dishonest or Ignorant?

continued

The primary author noted in his cover letter that they had had marginal involvement with Dr. X through some colleagues. He went on to note Dr. X had a long-time track record of plagiarism and controversies that were 'difficult, time-consuming and unpleasant, and often associated with personal costs for lawyers'. We thanked the author for his explanation, and the editor-in-chief (EIC) decided not to publish either the letter or the response.

A quick check of Dr. X's background showed he had given as his affiliation several well-known Central European universities and one Scandinavian research institute. However, his numerous e-mail addresses were Hotmail, Yahoo!, or similar services. He also appeared to be the chief editor of a 'journal' based in New York. At some point I asked him to clarify his contact data for our records, but he responded curtly that he had already provided the requested information.

Two years later, we received a full-length article from Dr. X. He gave his affiliation as being a university in our country that did not exist. Our editor rejected the submission, quoting the various factual mistakes in the manuscript and citing the editorial published a few years previously in another journal in which the editor publicly apologized for publishing a plagiarized paper by Dr. X.

We have not heard from Dr. X since that decision, but when I checked PubMed, I found he is still busy publishing – mostly comments on other people's articles.

Victim of Fraud

Another case was a complaint by a victim. The head of a university department from southeastern Europe contacted us to say she had seen an article in our journal on which she was listed as a co-author. She said she had not contributed to the research and had never seen the manuscript prior to its submission. The other authors were junior researchers from her department, who had presumably included their professor's name to give credibility to their paper.

I e-mailed our production editor and asked her to check the signatures on the copyright form. She responded by providing a scanned document, which had the distinctive manual signature of the professor who had contacted us. There was no way for us to know whether the signature was genuine or forged. I informed the professor about the signature and said our jurisdiction unfortunately ended there. We advised her to contact her institution's ethics board or COPE for further investigation into the matter, but we never heard back from her and hence do not know if anything was done to settle the case.

Misguided Enterprise

Our most recent instance of suspected misconduct involved a 'review article', which one of the reviewers indicated should be accepted after revision. However, the other reviewer had been more thorough and pointed out the whole paper had been copy-pasted from various sources, but everything was appropriately referenced. I checked some of the sources and it was obvious the author had simply copied sections of the abstracts of articles freely available in PubMed and other public databases. The same author, let's call him Dr. Y, appeared to have already published half a dozen 'review articles' on various

Dishonest or Ignorant?

continued

subspecialties of medicine—such as oncology, cardiology, and neurology—but his affiliation was a department of obstetrics and gynecology in a North American university.

I alerted our EIC about this, and he e-mailed Dr. Y to question him about the reviewer's findings. Dr. Y responded extremely politely in fairly poor English saying he had done nothing wrong as he had appropriately referenced all his sources. He appeared to be almost upset and claimed he could not write a proper review article if he was not allowed to quote his sources. The EIC concluded we were probably dealing with a case of ignorance and lack of scientific guidance, so he contacted the head of the department Dr. Y had consistently given as his affiliation to request that Dr. Y be given appropriate tutoring. When the department head finally responded he indicated there was no such person on his staff but would investigate the matter. Unfortunately, we have not heard anything further from him.

While checking PubMed recently, I saw Dr. Y (or at least a person by that name) had published another review article on cancer therapy and, on this occasion, listed an affiliation with a department of botany. That article had gone online only a few days earlier, so it would seem Dr. Y has been keeping himself busy writing and publishing articles.

Summary

Although these cases may not have been handled with perfect competence, they have taught me a lot. First, I fully agree with the advice that warns against making assumptions without evidence. Editors should communicate their initial concerns in neutral language and aim for detached objectivity throughout the process. Second, I also agree with the advice to keep records of all communication in a case of misconduct. These investigations tend to take time, and you never know when you might need to refer back to an e-mail that was sent or received months ago. Third, we should truly value and appreciate our reviewers. They normally give the manuscript a more thorough reading than the busy editor ever has time for, and they are, hence, more likely to discover discrepancies that may be symptoms of something sinister.

To conclude, the world of scientific publishing is a not a jungle full of lurking dangers, but it pays to keep your head cool and your eyes open.

EON ***is seeking column editors for the Tips & Tricks and Publication Partners columns. The column editor is responsible for recruiting the column's articles. Interested? Contact the Editor, Kristen Overstreet, at kristen.overstreet@mac.com. We look forward to working with you!***

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SOCIETY UPDATE

ISMTE Annual Meetings - 2010

There's still time to register for the North American Conference !

Registration: Log in to register if you are a current member of ISMTE, have been a member in the past, or have attended past ISMTE Conferences. (Don't know your username or password? Use the 'Lost Password?' link to find your information. New to ISMTE? Create an account here.)

Click here to see the conference agendas.

Washington, DC

August 3-4, 2010 with an opening reception and registration the evening of August 2.

Oxford

October 19, 2010 at St. Hugh's College.

Keep on Changing

by Elizabeth B. Ferretti
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Vaudeville impresarios, circus acrobats, and senior managing editors in medical publishing…what could these roles possibly have in common? All require one essential skill: the ability to maintain balance while juggling multiple acts designed to meet the expectations of a varied audience.

As a senior managing editor for Wiley-Blackwell, I directly manage four controlled-circulation journals and mentor three additional journals, one of which is Society-owned. Circulations for the journals vary from a low of approximately 8,600 subscribers to a high of over 40,000; the journals include three monthlies, one bi-monthly, one quarterly, and one publishing nine times per year (Society-owned). The journals cover the specialty fields of cardiology, dialysis and transplantation, and hospital medicine. Two of the controlled-circulation journals are affiliated with societies; one celebrating its 25th year as an organization and one reorganized and rejuvenated within the last two years.

As briefly outlined above, there is a wide range of duties, specialty fields of knowledge, and relationships to be maintained—ergo, enter the professional juggler! To best illustrate this job prerequisite, let's walk through a typical day in the life of a senior managing editor.

E-mail reviews take up the first 30 minutes of every early morning, but by 9 a.m. the race is on—a 'quick' one-hour teleconference to discuss problems involving the contract renewal for the society-owned journal. An outside consultant is assisting with an in-depth analysis of the first five-year growth cycle of this journal and multiple statistical tables have been compiled by the managing editor for review during the meeting. Strategies involving the growth of Impact Factor scores—including analyses of content beloved by the editors and/or readers, but ignored by researchers—dominates this session. We jump from readership surveys to ISI Web of Science citations, analyze the past five years of departmental columns and article contents, and agree to meet again in one week with further statistical data.

Following the teleconference, I dive into the latest Dashboard Report, a capsule update on each journal provided monthly to my manager and publisher. This spreadsheet includes statistics, areas of concern, and project overviews—a mini 'State of the Journal' report designed to keep all informed on the health of each publication.

As I enter statistics for the first journal, the phone commences ringing… and continues to

Changing *continued*

ring throughout the rest of the morning with large and small issues to be addressed.

First crisis: One of the societies affiliated with a controlled-circulation title is rumored to be considering moving its affiliation to another publisher. A report on all articles with NIH (National Institutes of Health) grant funding published within the past five years is needed immediately to attest to the quality of our articles and the depth of our researcher/author base.

Second crisis: During the past year, one controlled-circulation journal was melded into another, publishing as a journal-within-a-journal; neither editor-in-chief is pleased with the resulting hybrid. Preliminary analyses are needed on the implications of renaming and redesigning the journal, including input from all Corporate Sales teams, circulation, and editorial. A draft report—including PERQ analyses, ad sales input, implications for indexing, and circulation concerns—is required for circulation prior to a major meeting of all corporate teams with a stake in the potential outcome.

Third crisis: An author of an invited article for a special focus issue now wishes to withdraw his manuscript rather than sign a copyright transferring the personal archival photographs used to illustrate it; the focus issue with his photos is now at the printer. The managing editor has never encountered this type of problem to date and needs my input as soon as possible. And so the morning slips away... and the workload of reports due for the coming week builds.

Early afternoon includes updates on late-breaking trials, invitations to authors for articles based on those results, and e-mails to corporate sales and grant application team members to alert them to these potential sources of project work. As the majority of my journals are proprietary, controlled-circulation journals, an important component of my job description involves active support of revenue-producing projects for publication within the journals. Typical projects include supplements sponsored by industry, expert panel discussions, sponsored clinical review papers, and commercial reprints. The projects may be directly funded by industry marketing divisions or may result from applications to industry for unrestricted educational grants.

A typical day ends with early evening proofing of author galleys, a review that not only ensures quality control of the copyediting and formatting of each issue but also identifies all accepted manuscripts with potential reprint value to industry. When such manuscripts are identified, I forward the galley proof to the reprints team; their outreach and follow-up with contacts in industry provide all-important sources of revenue support for the journals. In addition, galley proofing allows me to continually update my knowledge of current hot-button topics and therapies in the journal specialty fields, an essential element for maintaining credibility in discussions with physician editors, societies, and board members. A quick review of the schedule of commitments for the following day usually ends the day...just in time for the 7 p.m. broadcast of *Nightly Business Report,* my daily addictive dose of Wall Street!

Atypical daily schedules may include the following: brainstorming sessions with the grants application team members to identify potential topics/authors/sponsors; contract/affiliation proposal reviews; preparations for

Changing *continued*

scientific sessions and editorial board meetings; strategy sessions with editors-in-chief on future journal growth; and/or Wiley team meetings and analyses of various aspects of assigned journals.

Past is Prelude

Juggling daily commitments, questions, and potential crises makes for a fascinating mix of opportunity and personal growth as a senior managing editor, but no portrait of that role would be complete without a nod to the past.

While I spent some post-college days at *Forbes* magazine, my personal career pathway was never a straight publishing trajectory; it rambled through some fascinating terrain, building skills in a variety of roles. Early volunteer roles as a founder of community outreach programs, Great Book tutorials citywide, and scholarship fundraisers honed skills in writing, presentation, and corporate sales pitches.

Later experiences as a paralegal on Wall Street during its legendary 1990s bull market further developed my negotiating skills while working with corporate insiders and some of the most creative market rogues; late nights in the mortgage-backed derivative markets brought valuable skills in analyzing contracts. And finally, an unexpected divorce resulted in a total career change, beginning with temporary proofreading, progressing through copyediting, then production director, managing editor, and sales-assists roles, and ending with the current position of senior managing editor, following the acquisition of my prior employer by Blackwell Publishing in 2006.

The small, family-owned medical publishing company where I climbed the publishing ladder demanded each team member be multi-faceted, capable of covering different roles to keep issues flowing at all times. The sense of the clock ticking down each minute of every trading day on Wall Street demanded decisions be made or the monetary repercussions could be disastrous. Working with a multitude of personalities in every volunteer sector guaranteed that one could exchange ideas, explore possibilities, and emerge as colleagues and teammates, no matter how challenging the project. Past experiences contributed skills for the present.

Caught up in the stresses of daily living, striving to meet every deadline, we often fail to realize how many new skills we acquire, how far we broaden our horizons, or how deeply we strengthen our networks of family, friends, and colleagues each time we stretch ourselves to include one more task or meet one more goal. Only when we are arbitrarily challenged to contribute to *EON*, do we stop to take the time to assess where we have been, where we are, and what the ultimate goal and gain might be. In the end, it is great to realize the goal is really simple: keep on growing, keep on juggling, keep on changing. It enriches not only your career, but also your life!

Calendar of Events

Web 2.0 Online Communities & Social Media
5 July 2010
London, UK
www.alpsp.org

ISMTE US Conference
3-4 August 2010
Washington, DC, USA
www.ismte.org

International Academy of Nursing Editors
11-14 August 2010
Brisbane, Queensland, Australia
www.nursingeditors-inane.org/events.html

Reporting Your Randomised Trial
10 September 2010
Oxford, UK
www.equator-network.org/courses-events/courses-and-events/

Getting the Most from Journal Publicity
15 September 2010
London, UK
www.alpsp.org

Licensing Digital Content
22 September 2010
London, UK
www.alpsp.org

Commissioning Book and Journal Content
28 September 2010
London, UK
www.alpsp.org

Fundamentals of Journals Finance
30 September 2010
London, UK
www.alpsp.org

ISMTE European Conference
19 October 2010
Oxford, UK
www.ismte.org

Effective Journal Editorial Management
21 October 2010
London, UK
www.alpsp.org

Project Management for Publishing
3 November 2010
London, UK
www.alpsp.org

Fundamentals of eProduction
24 November 2010
London, UK
www.alpsp.org

Journal Development
29 November 2010
Oxford, UK
www.alpsp.org

Do you have something to add to the calendar?
Contact the Editor: kristen.overstreet@mac.com

ISMTE *EON*

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A note on English: ISMTE aims to be a truly international society. English will represent our lingua franca, but we would like to stress that in materials published in EON *or online that variations in idiomatic usage and spelling should reflect the origins of the author. No one version of English is preferred over the other.*

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