

The editor's bookshelf

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EDITORIAL PROCESS

Perkel JM. **The trouble with reference rot.** *Nature* 2015;521(7550):111-112
Computer scientists are trying to shore up broken links in the scholarly literature. Herbert Van de Sompel and Martin Klein were interviewed by the author of this article on the work of the Hiberlink project. They have investigated the extent of reference rot on scholarly domains and their results show an alarming link rot ratio. They have also explored ways to mitigate it through more systematic web archiving practices and link decoration techniques.
doi:10.1038/521111a

ETHICAL ISSUES

Catalá-López F, Peiró S, Hutton B, *et al.* **Declaration of transparency: promoting a more complete, honest and adequate publication of scientific articles.** *Revista Española de Salud Pública* 2014;88(2):181-186
To prevent and detect inappropriate conduct in scientific research, the authors of this article suggest to include a "transparency declaration" from the correspondent author when submitting papers to a journal. It should report that the manuscript submitted is a complete, honest, accurate and transparent manner of the study being reported, that no important aspects have been omitted and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been in the manuscript.
doi: 10.4321/S1135-57272014000200001

Ecklund E, Howard J, David R, *et al.* **Study highlights ethical ambiguity in physics.** *Physics Today* 2015;68(6):8-10.
Interviews of 170 physicists at US and

UK universities suggest that ethical issues in physics are not as black and white as many physicists may think. Some narrowly defined unethical conduct as fabrication, falsification and plagiarism while others also included such things as accepting funding for military research, misusing research funds, abusing the peer-review system, misallocating credit and authorship, practicing cronyism, overhyping research results and exploiting subordinates. They suggest that more needs to be done to teach ethics to students and reaffirm ethical practices for research scientists.

White SE. **A review of big data in health care: challenges and opportunities.** *Open Access Bioinformatics* 2014;6:13-18
Health care is a high-data volume industry. A literature review was conducted to identify recent articles about the use of big data in health care. These data has the potential to revamp the process of health care delivery in the US and inform providers about the most efficient and effective treatment pathways. The biggest challenge is determining the proper balance between protecting the patient's information and maintaining the integrity and usability of data.
doi: 10.2147/OAB.S50519

LANGUAGE AND WRITING

Reeves A. **Time to make it shorter: plain English in our context.** *Medical Writing* 2015;24(1):4-8
This article explores the relevance of George Orwell's six rules for clear writing, that he published in 1946, to medical writing. It makes recommendations how to apply them, and adds further rules to contribute to plain English
doi: 10.1179/2047480614Z.000000000268

von Bruchhausen T, Prechtel K. **Pharmacovigilance medical writing: an evolving profession.** *Medical Writing* 2015;24(2):66-71
The pharmacovigilance medical

writer has a key position in the preparation of documents, leading the whole document creation process. This process includes drafting the document, coordinating the input of the involved functions, providing valuable expertise on the required format and contents and detailed guideline knowledge, and coordinating the review and consolidation of comments.
doi: 10.1179/2047480615Z.000000000287

PUBLISHING

Aleixandre-Benavent R, Vidal-Infer A, Alonso Arroyo A, *et al.* **Public availability of published research data in substance abuse journals.** *International Journal of Drug Policy* 2014;25(6):1143-1146
The aim of this study is to analyze the open-data policies concerning the availability of papers and raw data of the scientific research journals listed in the substance abuse area of the Journal Citation Reports (JCR). It also analyzes the relationship between the journal's impact factor and the storage and reuse policies. Results show that most journals support the possibility of data storage in thematic or institutional repositories. Journals accept additional material and reuse of data, but most of them have no specific instructions for authors to follow and present uncertainty as to the possibility of publishing the data on a website.
doi: 10.1016/j.drugpo.2014.07.007

Ennas G, Di Guardo MC. **Features of top-rated gold open access journals: an analysis of the scopus database.** *Journal of Informetrics* 2015;9(1):79-89
This study aimed to identify the features of top-rated gold open access (OA) journals by testing seven main variables: languages, countries, years of activity and years in the DOAJ repository, publication fee, the field of study, whether the journal has been launched as OA or converted, and the type of publisher. Significant results

have been found for all variables, except for the types of publishers, and for born or converted journals. doi: 10.1016/j.joi.2014.11.007

Golub RM, Fontanarosa PB. **Researchers, readers, and reporting guidelines. Writing between the lines.** *JAMA* 2015; 313(16):1625-26
Recognizing the potential value of reporting guidelines for the peer review and scientific publication processes, *JAMA* published several of the initial guidelines, including CONSORT and MOOSE. A guideline checklist assists editors in their assessment of submitted manuscripts; makes it more likely that a published article will include the information to allow a researcher to potentially reproduce a study; helps ensure that the article will include all of the key elements necessary for a reader to conduct a thorough critical appraisal; and helps improve the quality of research and advance patient care. doi: 10.1001/jama.2015.3837

Hill T. **Identifying legitimate open access journals: some suggestions from a publisher.** *Learned Publishing* 2015;28(1):59-62
The author provides a set of criteria by which authors and readers can distinguish legitimate open access journals from illegitimate ones. The list is short, but at the same time applicable to a wide range of journals. The criteria refer to the following issues: readers should be considered as customers and should be offered services; journals should be included in databases and indexes (indexing indicates compliance with technical and publishing standards); publishers should be aware of ethical and legal issues and of open access conventions; and integrity of the peer review process and editorial process should be guaranteed. doi: 10.1087/20150109

Singh Chawla D. **“Living figures” make their debut.** *Nature* 2015;521(7550):112.
The living figure concept fits within a central tenet of F1000’s publishing philosophy, that papers can be continually updated. The online-only

open-access site publishes articles immediately with the status ‘Awaiting Peer Review’, then invites scientists to review them and post their data. Authors can then update their articles with new versions. Living figures may allow systematic reviews to be updated rather than published afresh each time. New contributors’ names do appear in the legend of updated figures, and the updated data set and paper get their own DOIs. doi: 10.1038/nature.2015.17382

RESEARCH EVALUATION

Fazel S, Lamsma J. **Beyond the impact factor?** *Evidence Based Mental Health* 2015;18:33-35
To investigate the possible differences between the Journal Impact Factor (JIF) and new journal metrics, the authors ranked the top 30 journals in the clinical neurosciences based on their JIF and compared their JIF ranking with one that was a composite score of their JIF, h5-index, Impact per Publication (IPP), Source Normalised Impact per Paper (SNIP) and SCImago Journal Rank (SJR) rankings. They recommend researchers and funders should support those journals that aim to increase value and reduce waste and consider a range of impacts, including different journal impact factors, when deciding on journal choice. doi: 10.1136/eb-2015-102087

SCIENCE

Announcement: Time to tackle cells’ mistaken identity. *Nature* 16 April 2015;520:264
This Editorial sets out new ways to tackle the problem of misidentified cell lines. Changes apply to all *Nature* journals from 1st May 2015. Authors of papers involving cell lines are asked to check their cell lines against publicly available lists of known misidentified cell lines. If the authors use a known problematic cell line, they are asked to provide a scientific justification for its use, and clearly state its identity in the Methods section. Authors must report on a cell line’s source, authentication testing, and Mycoplasma testing status. For

authentication testing, authors are asked to state the test method, test result, and when testing was last performed.

Baker M. **Reproducibility crisis: Blame it on the antibodies.** *Nature* 21 May 2015;521:274-276
Antibodies are among the most commonly used tools in biological experiments, but they are littering the field with false findings. A few scientists are pushing for change and are calling for the creation of standards by which antibodies should be made, used and described. Several journals (including *Nature*) ask authors to make clear that antibodies used in their papers have been profiled for that particular application.

Bohannon J. **Hoax-detecting software spots fake papers.** *Science* 3 April 2015;348(6230):18-19
Springer announced the creation of SciDetect, a freely available programme to automatically detect automatically generated papers. The tool uses a statistical technique similar to those used by email spam filters to automatically detect papers created with SCIGen and similar programmes.

SCIENCE COMMUNICATION

Jubb M. **Communication or competition: what motivates researchers to write articles for journals?** *Learned Publishing* 2014;27(4): 251-252
The author presents insights on whether competition or communication motivates researchers to write and publish articles in scholarly journals. He discusses the challenges being experienced by these researchers, the importance of informal communication, the use of social media by researchers and the interest of research institutes and other organizations to promote their works. doi: 10.1087/20140403

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