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## Editorial

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### Looking back: looking ahead

In 2012, we celebrated the 30th anniversary of the European Association of Science Editors. This journal, *European Science Editing*, featured interviews with distinguished past members, extensive histories of the Association were published on our website, and delegates to the Congress in Tallinn enjoyed a magnificent birthday cake. Looking back, it is easy to see many changes in science publishing and the ways that science editors work, but these mainly reflect technological advances. The pen was replaced by the word processor and then the computer. Paper is slowly giving way to electronic editions. However, in 2012, most journals still looked like traditional journals, with volumes and issues and page numbers, references at the end of the articles, colour replacing black and white illustrations but little use of audio or video (and what there was generally relegated to supplementary information). Most research articles underwent peer review, although rigorous copy editing seems to be becoming a rare luxury. Books still look like books, despite being increasingly read on an electronic device.

Looking ahead, are we on the cusp of truly transformative changes in science publishing? Many changes have been promised for years: has their time really come? One prediction was that the Internet would facilitate self-publishing: publishers and journals would become irrelevant as authors simply posted their material digitally and waited for the world to come and read their words of wisdom. Blogs fulfil an element of this but scientific research still follows a traditional route through recognized journals. 'Availability to all' may become a reality in the next five years as the impact of funding mandates drives

journals to offer open access options. At what point will the libraries cease to pay for subscriptions? What then will happen to academic libraries and to librarians – some already re-casting themselves as information specialists? As the author-pays model comes to dominate, will there still be a role for authors' editors – if the author is paying the journal, will the author assume that the fee covers all editing requirements?

Peer review has many critics, but up until now no one had identified a better solution. Experiments with mass peer review after publication attracted little interest from busy researchers. The 'new' peer review process expounded by the Public Library of Science (PLOS), where the focus is on scientific accuracy with no regard for relevance or interest to a particular branch of science, appears successful: PLOS journals are attracting strong submissions and citations. Was all that work of editors and peer reviewers to select the 'best', 'most relevant' research for their journal's readership in vain?

What will the scientific world look like in five years and in 10 years? What will be the roles of science editors in that world, and what part will be played by editors' associations such as EASE? How best to share our experience and expertise? In March 2011, the Royal Society predicted that China could overtake the United States as the world's dominant publisher of scientific research by 2013. EASE has always welcomed members from outside Europe, and the Regional Chapters initiative that we launched in 2012 provides a way to formalize our relations with editors further afield. Russian and Indian chapters are being established, and we hope that more will follow.

One thing seems certain, which is that communication will continue to be important. Scientists will need to communicate their findings to colleagues and to a wider world: the medium may be unimportant but the message should be clear. In a time when there is more information than anyone can absorb, clarity should be essential. We are bound to see more changes in roles and processes, but editors will still be needed: it's not yet time to put away that red pen or close Track Changes on your computer.

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