Stewardship: Can an Author’s Editor Help Expedite Peer Review of the Manuscripts They Edit?

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May 1, 2014
The Global Publication Landscape

Science Research

Source: http://sasi.group.shef.ac.uk/worldmapper/display.php?selected=205 (April 15, 2013)
The Global Publication Landscape

Science Growth

Source: http://sasi.group.shef.ac.uk/worldmapper/display.php?selected=206 (April 15, 2013)
There Is a Tsunami Coming

Current and projected publication trends

There Is a Tsunami Coming

ANNUAL RESEARCH PUBLICATION OUTPUT OF THE FIVE BRICK COUNTRIES

FIGURE 5

CHINA'S OUTPUT EXCEEDED 150,000 PAPERS IN 2011

Source: Thomson Reuters Web of Knowledge. (See also Figure 7 on trajectories of patent output.)

Survival = Building Efficiency Upstream

Anything you do that makes the job of the Journal Editor or the Peer Reviewer easier, saves time, money, reduces reviewer fatigue, and makes the manuscript review process more efficient!

(i.e., Start with the author!)
Journal Editor and Reviewer Bias

- By-line bias
- Institutional bias
- Geographic bias
- Language bias
- Research integrity and ethics bias
- Methodology bias

- By the time the journal editor and/or the reviewer has read the title and the abstract, bias has set in!
- Bias is unfortunately a by-product of scientific scrutiny.
Bias Surrounding Research Integrity

Q: How do East-Asian submissions compare with those from other non-English speaking countries?

– In terms of compliance with ethical guidelines –

1.9% East Asian submissions better
18.5% East Asian submissions worse
44.4% Submissions from all non-English-speaking countries similar
35.2% I don't know

A survey of 54 journal editors of English-language US and European journals

Common Reviewer’s Criticisms

Importance of the Topic
- Rehash of established facts
- Insignificant research question
- Irrelevant or unimportant topic
- Low reader interest
- Little clinical relevance
- Not generalizable

Study Design
- Poor experimental design
- Vague/inadequate method description
- Methods lack sufficient rigor
- Failure to account for confounders
- No control or improper control
- No hypothesis
- Biased protocol
- Small sample size
- Inappropriate statistical methods, or statistics not applied properly

Adapted from: Byrne DW. Publishing your medical research paper. What they don’t teach in medical school. Baltimore: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins; 1998.
Common Reviewer’s Criticisms

Overall Presentation of Study and Findings
- Poor organization
- Too long and verbose
- Failure to communicate clearly
- Poor grammar, syntax, or spelling
- Excessively self-promotional
- Poorly written abstract

Interpretation of the Findings
- Erroneous or unsupported conclusions
- Conclusions disproportionate to results
- Study design does not support inferences made
- Inadequate link of findings to practice
- Uncritical acceptance of statistical results
- Failure to consider alternative explanations
- Unexplained inconsistencies
- Inflation of the importance of the findings
- Interpretation not concordant with the data
- Inadequate discussion

Adapted from: Byrne DW. Publishing your medical research paper. What they don’t teach in medical school. Baltimore: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins; 1998.
Why Use an Author’s Editor?

In the English language it doesn't matter in what order the letters are in a word. The only important thing is that the first and last letters are positioned in the right place. The rest of the letters can be jumbled and you can still read it without problem. This is because the human brain does not read every letter by itself, but looks for meaning and language patterns.
Looking for Solutions

• The pending impact of the publication tsunami, administrative challenges of manuscript triage, growing burden of peer review, and inefficiencies in journal production processes necessitate studies on how to make the process more efficient.

• While we can’t “fix” the tsunami – and we are probably only experiencing the first swell – we can look upstream to build efficiencies in pre-submission and pre-peer review processes.
What is the role of professional editing services (author’s editors) in helping non-native English-speaking authors get their work published?

Is there a place for manuscript screening services?

Should journals and professional Societies offer author services.

Is there a rationale for commercialization of peer review?

Where should efforts be placed?
Research by Editage

• First, we looked for weaknesses in how journals structure their “Instructions for Authors” in an attempt to identify how journals should communicate these instructions more effectively.
  - Best Poster at the Council for Science Editors meeting in Montreal, Canada in May 2013.

• More recently, we asked whether there were any specific errors peer reviewers most frequently point out in manuscripts of non-native English-speaking authors that an author’s editor could/should fix before manuscript submission; the premise being that if these could be fixed before submission, then the burden on the peer reviewer would be lessened, and the process expedited.
  - Best Poster at the Joint Meeting of the European Association of Science Editors and the International Society of Managing and Technical Editors, Belgium in September 2013.
Study Design

We analyzed 1035 peer reviewer comments in 72 manuscripts written by NNES authors.

**All sampled manuscripts**
- Were original research articles
- Were sent to Editage, Cactus Communications—a company that offers English editing and publication support services—after receiving peer reviewer comments from the journal.

**The following comments were excluded (n = 560):**
- Those pertaining to study design
- Those indicating basic oversights or typographical errors
- Those seeking clarification
- Those expressing the reviewer’s subjective opinion
- Those where the reviewer’s rationale was not clear

The remaining comments related to study reporting (n = 475) were classified according to the error category and manuscript section.

**Error categories**
- Inappropriate title
- Inadequate literature review
- Inaccurate reporting
- Incomplete reporting
- Inconsistent reporting
- Unclear reporting
- Redundancy and wordiness
- Structural organization
- Inadequate discussion
- Stylistic conventions
- Grammar and writing quality

**Manuscript sections**
- Title
- Abstract
- Introduction
- Methods
- Results
- Discussion
- Figures and tables
- References

The correlation between specific error categories and manuscript sections was analyzed using Spearman rank correlation analysis, with significance set at p < 0.05.
## Study Results

### Figure 3. Correlation between error categories and manuscript sections

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Error category</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Abstract</th>
<th>Introduction</th>
<th>Methods</th>
<th>Results</th>
<th>Discussion</th>
<th>Figures &amp; tables</th>
<th>References</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<td>10*</td>
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<td>7*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inadequate discussion</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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Note: Numbers indicate the number of comments; asterisks indicate significance at p < 0.05.
Key Learnings

• A peer reviewer spends a very high percentage of time pointing out “mechanical” aspects of a manuscript that need to be corrected.
  o Incomplete reporting
  o Unclear reporting
  o Redundancy and wordiness
  o Grammar and writing quality

• An author’s editor can be instrumental in supporting an author to correct these issues before submission.

• Pre-submission author services can support author needs, reduce peer reviewer strain, and provide a revenue source for the journal.
Supporting Author Editing Needs

At Editage, we are passionate about helping authors achieve their publication goals. We understand the publication pressures that authors face in the process—from writing an effective abstract or presenting data choosing an appropriate journal for submitting a manuscript or addressing reviewers’ comments. That is why our comprehensive range of editing services, plans, and levels is designed to help you meet your publication goals.

There is no substitute for subject-matter expertise. Our editorial team comprises 20 Centers of Excellence (specialized subject-area teams). Our expert editors are equipped with in-depth subject-area knowledge and an incisive understanding of scientific and academic editing conventions. They follow a streamlined, yet intuitive, editing process to ensure that you receive best-in-class editorial support. Our quality-focused five-step process ensures that your manuscript receives the best attention possible.

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1. You submit your manuscript
2. Manuscript sent to subject-area team
3. Senior Editor edits the manuscript
4. Managing Editor conducts 2nd check
5. You receive edited file

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- Customized to your needs
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Editing Centers of Excellence assure you of a technically competent, customer-oriented editor.
Empowering Authorship Attribution

Empowering Authorship Attribution

ICV BETA
Intelligent CV

Publication Details

2013

2012
- Smith P, A case study of quality of life measurement in oncology, The Journal of Clinical Oncology

2008

2005

Publications per Year

ORCID

Tweeted by 243
- On 1 Facebook Pages
- Mentioned in 22 Google+ posts
- Replied by 1
- Picked up by 1 news outlets
- Blogged by 9
- 0 readers on Mendeley
- 0 readers on Connevea
- 0 readers on CiteULike
Championing Good Publication Practices
Time’s Up!

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