

EMWA and EU

Leen Ashton-Vanherle
President

The 1995 meeting will be held in Bruges in the Sofitel hotel from the 9th to the 10th of March. The beautiful Venice of the North, site of many historical and architectural milestones will, we hope, also provide a setting for many achievements for EMWA.

With the Pharmaceutical World in turmoil over cuts in National Health Services, we all feel new winds blowing and some of these have a certain arctic feel to them. We are all involved, irrespective of whether we are working in the pharmaceutical industry, reporting on the effects of the changes or experiencing them at first hand as a physician or as a patient. In Europe we are facing massive reorganisation within the European Community with its usual Babylonian clarity and ferocious neighbouring friendliness. With these harmonisation and reorganisation plans in mind, I thought it would be nice to try and create a little Jurassic Park with the mastodons of rules and regulations.

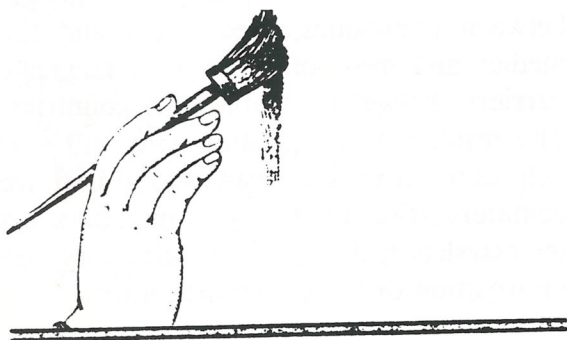
Debbie Taylor and I have already contacted experts who can throw some light on the matter. We are also thinking of offering our members a number of

different workshops (perhaps 3 or 4) so that you will be able to choose what suits you best. There will be one on Ethics Committees, one on Project Management and we are still negotiating over one or two more. On the second day, we will probably outline the changes and how they will affect the different stages of drug development, from pre-clinical, clinical, and marketing, to how the media handles drug discoveries. You will receive the official invitation with a full programme with the next newsletter. If you know anybody who is not yet a member of EMWA but might be interested, please pass on their address, and we will make sure that they receive an invitation.

That brings me to our members and their needs. Since we are a growing and diversifying organisation, we want to have an idea of what our members' interests are and how we can best meet their requirements. We have enclosed a small questionnaire which we would very much like you to fill in and send back to me. European Unification will necessitate more coordination and knowledge exchange, between companies, freelancers and the media; and most of all, across language barriers, between the different countries. The results of the questionnaire will also help us to set up a database and to improve communication towards our members via the newsletter, the freelance directory, job information or the conference news.

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So you want to write a book? Ten tips to help you get published

Jane Fraser

Having just delivered the manuscript of my first book to the publishers, I thought other EMWA members might be interested in what I've learned along the way. So, for aspiring authors, here are ten tips from a perspiring author!

1. Have a good idea

You will feel much more confident and motivated if you start with a very clear idea of what the book will be about, and who will want to read it - and you are more likely to be able to sell your idea to a publisher.

2. Be sure that you really want to do it
Writing a book will take many weeks of your valuable time, for very modest rewards (see Tip 9).

3. Find a publisher early

You can start looking seriously for a publisher once you have completed two or three sample chapters. There is no point in waiting until you have completed the entire manuscript - at worst, you could find yourself putting in months of work on an unsaleable idea.

4. Consider getting an agent

It's usual for authors of academic books to approach specialist publishers direct. But if your book is for a wider audience (e.g. a book for patients), and you would like to place it with a mainstream publisher, it's best to get an agent. Publishers pay attention to book proposals submitted by agents, whereas those submitted directly by authors tend to sink to the bottom of the pile. The agent will negotiate with the

publisher on your behalf, and may well be able to get you an advance against royalties. They will take a commission of about 10% - well worth it for the effort saved. You can find an agent through the Writers' and Artists' Yearbook (available from public libraries).

5. Write a 'book proposal'

This is a document designed to sell your idea to a publisher. It can also help to convince an agent to take you on. A typical proposal will contain:

- a one-page synopsis describing what the book is about and what kind of readers it can be expected to attract.

- a market analysis, briefly summarizing what other recently-published books are available on the topic, and why yours is different

- an expanded table of contents showing exactly what will be in each chapter

- two or three sample chapters, chosen to be as interesting as possible.

6. Give yourself enough time

If you are writing the book in your 'spare' time, think how long you will really need to complete it. For a typical book of 50 - 70,000 words, a year of spare-time writing is probably realistic.

7. Set yourself interim deadlines

You will avoid a last minute panic if you try to write a little every week, or even every day. Just think - an easy 200 words a day could result in a book in a year.

8. Get help where you can

You don't need to go it alone - colleagues and friends will usually be flattered to be asked to review specific chapters and suggest improvements. You might even want to co-opt them as co-authors (acknowledged and recompensed as appropriate).

AMWA Journal Europe

9. Don't expect to make a lot of money

Unless you're lucky enough to write a best-seller, your book is unlikely to make you rich. An advance of around £1000 is considered generous - and this will be deducted from any subsequent royalties. Royalties are 10-12% of the purchase price of the book, so you will have to sell a lot of copies before you start to make a return on your investment of time and energy. Nevertheless, having a book published can have non-financial benefits - for example, in enhancing your credibility as a scientist or as a freelance writer.

10. Help sales in any way you can

Your publishers will make their own efforts to maximize sales of your book - for example, by sending out review copies. However, you can help to increase sales yourself - for instance, you can write related articles for the popular or professional press, give talks, and get yourself interviewed by the newspapers or radio. Don't be shy - you wrote it, now it's time to promote it!

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Book review

How to write about biology.

Jan Pechenik & Bernard Lamb
Harper Collins, UK 1994

Tim Albert

Jan Pechenik and Bernard Lamb start their book thus: 'The clear and precise communication of ideas and facts through writing is among the most important skills that can be mastered by students'.

That many students fail to master these skills is shown by pieces of evidence that pile up throughout this book. I particularly liked this observation, from a biologist's secretary: 'We are the ones who try to knock their ungrammatical, misspelled and badly punctuated written work into shape, although we are often impeded by the arrogance of those who cannot accept advice from a non-graduate.'

At least *How to write about biology* will provide a court of higher appeal. Its 262 pages cover almost everything students need to know about writing, plus a wealth of related information on reading, taking notes, giving criticism, US and UK English, and application letters. Predictably, the authors emphasise the formal scientific article (68 pages against eight for writing an essay), but do not neglect the process of writing, from planning to revision: 'Good writers are not necessarily more intelligent than bad ones; they just revise more often'.

There is a strong section on punctuation, word-choice, spelling and grammar. I was delighted to see the authors exercise some of my own hobby horses, such as the pompous initial capitals and the passive

voice, both of which are spreading alarmingly.

Whether students will plough through, digest and apply the lessons in this book remains to be seen. Whether their teachers will then give them good marks for clarity is also doubtful. Let us hope that, at least, every biologist's secretary becomes familiar with its contents.

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Surrey, KT22 7PG

Tel: (0)372-361633

T*his is the sort of English
up with which I will not put.*

Winston Churchill

EMWA members training needs survey

Jacky Sayers,
Healthcare Education Services

Last winter, EMWA members were invited to complete a questionnaire about their views on therapeutic training. They were then offered a complimentary place on a course of their choice from the range offered by Healthcare Education Services Ltd (HES).

Those who attended a course were also asked to complete a second post-course questionnaire. Eight EMWA members took advantage of this offer and this article is a summary of the data from their questionnaires.

Of the eight EMWA members, seven were women, four were freelance and four were company employees, there were two translators and the rest were medical writers or editors. The members gave details of their jobs, showing that they were involved in writing (or translating) a wide variety of documents:

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| clinical trial reports | 8 |
| investigator's brochures | 6 |
| CTX,IND documents | 2 |
| symposia / journal papers | 4 |
| marketing material | 4 |
| financial prediction | 1 |
| toxicology reports | 1 |
| educational material | 1 |

All the freelancers had worked, or were willing to work, in any therapeutic areas. The company employees were generally involved with only about three areas.

Four of the members considered therapeutic training for writers to be essential, three thought it was important and one thought it provided a useful background. Company employees were generally encouraged to attend training courses, but freelancers found the costs were sometimes hard to justify.

The writers and translators felt that therapeutic area knowledge was particularly useful for putting clinical data in context and in reducing the amount of background reading necessary before preparing a document. They pointed out that writers and translators are often called upon to work on a wide variety of topics but generally only have detailed knowledge of one or two therapeutic areas.

The HES courses chosen by the EMWA members were on blood chemistry and haematology (2), preclinical safety evaluation in toxicology (2), asthma (1) and antiviral therapy (3). All but one expressed an interest in attending similar courses in other therapeutic areas and all felt that the course either matched (6) or exceeded (2) their expectations.

Although firm conclusions cannot be drawn from only eight questionnaires, they provide some useful information. For instance, one problem, especially for freelancers, is having to work in a wide variety of therapeutic areas. This makes it extremely difficult to decide which courses to attend. Even within large companies, financial constraints are becoming an issue for everyone and training budgets are often the first to be cut.

One option could be overview courses covering the basics of two or three therapeutic areas. These might be particularly appreciated by translators who require a general overview of the terminology but may not need as much in-depth knowledge as writers and editors who have to take raw material and make it understandable and digestible to the non-expert which requires detailed understanding.

There may be scope for new, more general courses providing overviews for translators -- if you would be interested in such courses, or would like to discuss other aspects of HES courses or the survey findings contact:

Dr Jacky Sayers
HES Ltd,
31 Albany Street,
Edinburgh, EH1 3QN

Tel: 031-557-2477
Fax: 031-557-6778

Board of Editors in the Life Sciences (BELS)

Val Moore, Zeneca Pharmaceuticals

BELS has just announced its schedule of examinations for the rest of 1994. The exams are often held in conjunction with meetings that scientific editors are likely to attend, eg one will be held on the first day of the AMWA meeting in Phoenix. For those of use not lucky enough to be spending a few days in the Arizona desert in November there will also be an exam in London on Wednesday, 2nd November. This is the first time the exam has been held in the UK.

You can find out more about certification from Karen Phillips' article on the next page. If you would like to talk to an EMWA member with fairly recent first-hand experience you could contact

Val Moore at Zeneca Pharmaceuticals

Tel: +44-625-515757

The registration deadline is 19th October, so you need to act quickly!

W*ithout knowing
the force of words,
it is impossible
to know men."*

Confucius



Why certification for editors?

Karen Philips

Chair, BELS Subcommittee on Public and Member Relations

Until recently, potential employers and clients of manuscript editors have had no way to assess the proficiency of the editors. Both employers and editors have often resorted to personal references or ad hoc tests, not always with satisfactory results. BELS has therefore developed a process for testing proficiency in editing in the life sciences according to internationally recognised standards to meet the need for an objective test of editorial skill. The examination provides science editors a way to demonstrate their editorial proficiency, to provide employers and clients a way to identify proficient editors and to establish a standard of proficiency for editing in the life sciences.

The certification examination is a 3-hour multiple-choice test of scientific editing in English. It resembles the standard tests used in many professions to certify practitioners. It tests such skills as:

- ensuring clarity and internal consistency in form, logic, usage and organization;
- editing tables and illustrations;
- using units of measure and scientific terms;
- detecting and correcting errors in punctuation, grammar, word choice, syntax, stylistic consistency, numeric content and data;

- adhering to publisher's instructions;
- understanding the principles and ethics of scientific inquiry, writing and publishing in the life sciences.

For the purposes of the program, a manuscript editor is defined as an editor who is concerned not only with the form but also with the intellectual content of a manuscript. A manuscript editor's responsibilities include not only such matters as grammar, punctuation and syntax but also logic, organization, consistency and persuasiveness of the message.

To apply for an examination, or for further information write to:

BELS,
PO Box 824, Highlands,
North Carolina 28741-0824,
USA

Future meetings

AMWA core curriculum workshop Delaware AMWA chapter

The Delaware chapter of AMWA is holding an AMWA core curriculum workshop in Collegeville, PA, USA on September 24th 1994. Topics will include investigational new drug applications, and expediting review and revision of documents.

For details contact:
Larry Liberti, PIA Ltd,
Tel +1-215-949-0490

Future meetings continued

Workshop for editors of journals BMJ/EASE

10-11 November 1994, Maastricht, the Netherlands

The annual British Medical Journal / European Association of Science Editors meeting is taking place in Maastricht this year in cooperation with the *Nederlands Tijdschrift voor Geneeskunde*. It will include workshops on problems of journals not publishing in English, copyright, and ethical problems in scientific publishing.

For further details contact
Dr John Overbeke,
Nederlands Tijdschrift voor Geneeskunde,
PO Box 75971, 1070 AZ Amsterdam,
The Netherlands

Tel +31-20-662-0150,
Fax +31-20-673-5481.

CBE 39th Annual Meeting Council of Biology Editors

6-9 May 1995, Kansas City, Missouri

For details contact
CBE,
11 South LaSalle Street,
Suite 1400,
Chicago, IL60603,
USA

Tel +1-312-201-0101
Fax +1-312-201-0214

8th International Conference of IFSE (International Federation of Science Editors)

**Science, Culture and Communication
for the 21st Century
July 9-13, 1995, Barcelona, Spain**

Barcelona will host the eighth meeting of the International Federation of Science Editors. In a series of seven sessions, leading scientists from academic institutions and the private sector, as well as major figures in science editing and journalism will explore the creative process in science, new communications technologies and their impact; the adequacy of professional training of journalists and editors, how to bring emerging regions into the communication network: major problems in physics, cosmology and biology; how different cultures view science, and remedies for the failure of educational systems to teach science.

Registration fees:
fees for the meeting will range from \$150 to \$285, and special hotel rates will be available.

For details contact:

IFSE Secretariat,
Mario Negri Sud Research Institute,
School for Scientific Communication,
66030 S. Maria Imbaro,
Italy,

Fax: 39 872 570 317, -578 240
Tel: 39 872 570 316, -303

Organisations of interest

European Association of Science Editors (EASE)

Membership is open to editors of science publications and those working in any branch of scientific communication. Members receive the bulletin *European Science Editing* and sections of the *Science Editors' Handbook* which are issued from time to time. EASE also organises meetings including an annual workshop for journal editors (see above) and a General Assembly which takes place every three years. Individual membership costs £30/\$60 for more details contact:

Maeve O'Connor, EASE secretariat,
49 Rossendale Way, London, NW1 0XB
Tel: +44-71-388-9668
Fax +44-71-383-3092

Institute of Scientific and Technical Communicators

Organises a professional development programme of seminars.

For details contact: Jeannett Hobart,
ISTC, King's Court, 2/16 Goodge Street,
London, W1P 1FF
Tel +44-71-436-4425
Fax +44-71-580-0747

Society of Freelance Editors and Proofreaders

Runs workshops in London and elsewhere in the UK on copy-editing, grammar and much else.

For details contact: Lesley Ward, 20
Howard Road, Wokingham, Berkshire,
RG11 2BX
Tel +44-734-792571

Job line

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They will be responsible for writing reports and scientific articles, based on clinical trial protocols, destined for internal and external use.

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Hoechst

Hoechst AG is one of the world's leading chemical companies with a very successful pharmaceutical division. The company specializes in research, development, production and marketing of a wide range of ethical pharmaceuticals, with major interests in anti-infective, diabetic, rheumatological and cardiovascular therapeutic areas.

The Medical Writing group within Corporate Clinical Development is seeking a full-time

Medical writer

to work at the company's headquarters in Frankfurt. This is a young, lively, English-speaking group (14 staff including eight medical writers) involved in all aspects of clinical documentation, closely interacting with other colleagues in Clinical Research and Drug Regulatory Affairs at all levels. Projects include editing and writing (in English) of clinical study reports, summaries, expert reports and manuscripts for publication.

Applicants must be native English speakers with the ability to express medical data accurately and concisely. They must have flawless English-language skills and will ideally have a background including research experience (preferably to a PhD level) and publications. Preference will be given to candidates with experience of medical writing within the pharmaceutical industry. A sound basis in German would be a considerable advantage, as would good word-processing skills.

The position offers a competitive salary and all the benefits associated with a major chemical and pharmaceutical company, including assistance with removal expenses.

If you are interested, please send your application with your curriculum vitae, writing samples, and addresses of two referees to:

Dr Stephen de Looze
Group Head Medical Writing
Corporate Clinical Development
Clinical Research Department
Hoechst AG
D-65926 Frankfurt a. M.
Germany

C M C

COMPLETE MEDICAL COMMUNICATIONS LTD

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Essential requirements are a proven track record in medical writing, excellent organisational skills, attention to detail, and an ability to communicate clearly and effectively.

An attractive remuneration package is on offer including profit sharing, contributory pension and private health care schemes.

Please send your CV and letter of application to:

Angela Poyser, Complete Medical Communications Ltd, CMC
House, Jordangate, Macclesfield, Cheshire SK10 1EW, England
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