

# In the Bookstores

## Section Editors:

Alison McIntosh  
aagmedicalwriting@btinternet.com

Stephen Gilliver  
scgilliver@yahoo.co.uk



*Scientific Style and Format: The CSE Manual for Authors, Editors, and Publishers*

by the Council of Science Editors;  
Council of Science Editors, 2006 (7th edition).

ISBN: 978-0-977-96650-9.

35.00 GBP. 658 pages.

## Comprehensive guidance on scientific style and format from a truly authoritative source

This book is regarded by many as the holy grail of reference manuals. For those not familiar with the great tome it contains a massive amount of information regarding 'publication style and format for scientific papers, journal articles, books, and other forms of publication'. Many of our day-to-day working style guides and information contained within them have their basis in the rules and information contained in the 658 pages of this great book. First issued by the Council of Science Editors in 1960, the current 7th edition was published in 2006. In the latest edition, style is defined as 'publication style: the conventions related to punctuation, abbreviation, capitalization, symbolization and referencing'. Clearly with the amount of information covered there is a requirement for it to be well organised and to this end the book has a four-part structure.

Part 1 is 35 pages long and entitled 'Publishing Fundamentals'. This first section of the book includes information on publication policies and practices as well as copyright and types of publications. The section cross-references other relevant sources of guidance like the American Medical Association Manual of Style and the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors. However, this is a fast moving subject area with much new guidance and information being issued, re-issued, and revised. Although the information in this section is useful, it should be considered that this edition was published 7 years ago and readers would be well advised to consult other sources on the web for more up-to-date information.

Part 2 of the book is around 160 pages and entitled 'General Style Conventions'. The 11 chapters making up this section provide guidance on many topics including alphabets, symbols and signs, punctuation and related marks, spelling, capitalisation, and abbreviations. Chapter 7 is dedicated to prose style and word choice, with a helpful list concerning 'imprecisely applied words'. This list presents pairs or groups of scientific and science-related words that can be misused. For example, assess, determine, evaluate, examine, and measure are often used interchangeably but each has a precise meaning and should be used only when the situation being described merits the use of the word. Covering about 10 pages, useful examples of many imprecisely applied words, together with illustrations of their correct usage, are provided. Another practical chapter (Chapter 12) concerns numbers, units, and statistics. This chapter gives guidance and advice on when to use numerals rather than words when expressing whole or decimal numbers; it also provides detailed recommendations for writing using the International System of Units (also called SI units), including those to use when presenting statistics.

Part 3 of the book is the longest at approximately 235 pages and relates to 'Special Scientific Conventions'. Although some of the chapters in this part cover topics that medical writers rarely deal with, like 'Astronomical Objects and Time Systems' and 'The Earth', there are many relevant chapters. Important chapters provide guidance on 'Chemical Formulas and Names' (Chapter 17), 'Drugs and Pharmacokinetics' (Chapter 20), 'Taxonomy and Nomenclature' (Chapter 22), and 'Structure and Function' (Chapter 23). 'Genes, Chromosomes and Related Molecules' (Chapter 21) illustrates gene family nomenclature using the cytochrome P450 gene family as an example and provides useful summaries for 'the major conventions' required for human gene nomenclature.

Part 4 is 177 pages in length and consists of six chapters. These chapters are concerned with the 'Technical Elements of Publications' and the information covers styles and formats required in books and manuscripts. As an example, one

chapter (Chapter 29) deals with ‘References’ and the correct method of citing references, both in the text and at the end of the text in the reference list. Another hugely important chapter (Chapter 30) describes the style and formatting of tables, figures, and indexes, providing guidance on when presenting data in a table is appropriate and how to construct the table in a clear and precise way. Similarly, general considerations relating to the use of figures are also presented in this chapter.

A list of cited references in support of the recommendations and additional evidence to reinforce the guidance is provided at the end of each chapter. For those with the responsibility of writing and maintaining style sheets or guides, this book and the supporting material are an invaluable resource. If, on the other hand, you do not have a style guide and you use at least some of the recommendations contained in the book you know you are following a recognised and authoritative source.

The book consists of information-dense chapters and I have only scratched the surface in this review, but much of the information contained

within each chapter is extremely important when writing regulatory documents as well as journal manuscripts or book chapters. As a freelance medical writer, I work mainly with the different style guides supplied by clients and it is of great interest to understand the basis of many of their requirements.

You may already be working in an environment where style sheets are readily available, and may never therefore need to check on any point covered in the book, but I recommend that you familiarise yourself with at least some of the fascinating content.

However, a note of warning: reading this book has parallels with social media. You begin by flicking through the pages and are distracted by little gems of fascinating information and before long, more time than you realise has passed....

You can also follow the Council of Science Editors on Twitter (@CscienceEditors), where they offer additional advice.

Reviewed by Alison McIntosh  
alison@aagmedicalwriting.co.uk



*Supporting Research Writing: Roles and challenges in multilingual settings* edited by Valerie Matarese; Chandos Information Professional Series, 2013.

ISBN: 978-1-84334-666-1 (paperback).

52.50 GBP. 285 pages.

## **A MUST for anyone who supports research writing through editing, translation, or teaching**

*A collection of 15 papers aimed at illustrating and leveraging how language professionals (editors, translators, and teachers) can help authors who use English as an additional language to write and improve their research articles.*

This comprehensive and useful book was developed from a panel discussion that took place during a MET (Mediterranean Editors and Translators) meeting in 2009. The original discussion was aimed at clarifying and defining the full spectrum of roles and responsibilities involved in research writing support services and in making such services more visible at a European level. The former translator, reviser, translation manager,

and editor, Emma Wagner, at the European Commission (retired), states the following in one of the three forewords in the book:

*For many authors it comes as a surprise that complexity is not an essential prerequisite of a convincing document – that in fact the reverse can be true: clear, simple texts have more credibility. This message comes across loud and clear in many of the papers in this collection, showing how authors, editors and translators can best work together to produce effective texts that will get published and will ultimately attract and interest readers.*

As a medical writer who translates and edits, but also ‘takes an author’s ideas and helps to craft them into an appropriately presented text’ (to use the words of Greg Morley, who wrote a chapter in the book), I often feel that it would have been quicker and easier to start from scratch.

The book has four parts: the first three reflect the main areas of writing support – education, translation, and editing – while the fourth part explores means of combining these activities. According to the editor, Valerie Matarese (biomedical scientist-turned-editor), hybrid services are needed when

manuscripts are far from publishable. The authors suggest that especially in the research and academic settings, use of a unifying label for those who provide writing support could help to raise their profile. The term 'language professional' is inspired by 'IT professional' and is the chosen term for providers of the three main activities (editing, translation, and teaching) covered by the authors of this book. The typical medical writer role is presented as different from that of a language professional. Some authors use the term 'non-native English speakers' while others use the more positive term 'authors who use English as an additional language'; for this review I have chosen the latter (apart from in direct citations).

Part I, 'Teaching non-native English speakers how to write in English', opens with an overview of how academic writing is taught in European universities. Implications of teaching approaches based on different perspectives are discussed, i.e. focusing on the text and its linguistic forms and patterns, the writers and their cognitive processes, reader expectations (the discourse community), and the writer's first language and language culture. Writing process research is nicely summarised, techniques of genre analysis and corpus linguistics are introduced, and interesting advice is given on how these techniques can be used together to help writers produce texts that more closely match reader expectations.

Studies of effective writers show that they are more aware of the fact that changes in details affect the whole and that a circular approach to writing is needed rather than a linear one. They are also more focused on reader expectations than on words and sentences; in short, they have a more holistic approach. The editor, Matarese, describes a course she gives to doctoral candidates on strategic critical reading of scientific literature, which benefits both research and writing. The main didactic methods in that course – small-group learning and moderated critical discussion with peers – represent the current best practice in science education. Matarese also presents the useful concept 'the reading-research-writing continuum'. It serves to remind us of the effective writers' holistic approach to manuscript writing – the circular rather than linear way of writing.

Part 2 is about helping authors who use English as an additional language to publish through translation. It was a pleasure to read in-depth articles that cover so many of the processes and dilemmas involved in translation, all written by highly competent authors. The challenges of

translation – cultural mediation and knowledge creation – are underestimated. I believe that these chapters can contribute to increased understanding of the processes involved and perhaps even elevate translation's status. One chapter in Part 2 concerns bilingual publication of academic journals. Little has been written about this area, and I must say that I would have been thrilled to find this overview when I was involved in discussions about bilingual publication of a Norwegian journal.

Part 3 is about facilitating publication through editing and writing support. It provides us with a useful overview of many definitions of editing, which clearly means different things to different professionals. It is not difficult to agree with the advice from author Joy Burrough-Boenisch that

*... one should not give an author the impression that copy-editing and substantive editing can be done simultaneously, because the two activities require a different approach and entail different sorts of concentration on the task.*

The fifteenth and last chapter presents details of a successful mentoring programme for authors who use English as an additional language, in which the key contributors were a journal editor, a language professional, and a researcher on writing for publication in a global context. The term 'anglophone centre journals', i.e. academic journals published in the medium of English in the UK and the USA, is introduced. Having publications accepted in these anglophone centre journals tends to be associated with the highest status, but also with considerable competition. The programme arose from the need to address inequalities in academic publishing, and has so far included 55 authors and lasted for over 4 years.

In my opinion, the authors of this book have succeeded in meeting their goal to clarify and define the full spectrum of roles and responsibilities involved in research writing support services and in making such services more visible at a European level.

Reviewed by Kari Skinningsrud  
kari@limwric.no

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