

BOOK REVIEW

SCIENTIFIC WRITING FOR IMPACT FACTOR JOURNALS. By E. Lichtfouse. 87 pp. Published by Nova Science Publishers, Inc., New York, U.S.A., 2013. Price \$52.00. ISBN: 978-1-62618-943-0.

I must admit that when this book came my way I was far from sure that it was appropriate for review in this journal. Ardent ichthyophiles will be delighted to find their fish-fix in Fig. 2 of page 77, but unless I missed it there is no mention at all of fish biology in the text itself. Remaining intrigued, I decided not to send the book out to a colleague but to review it myself. I am so glad that I did. This is not some ‘how-to-get-published-quick’ piece of lightweight, management-speak ephemera, but a beautifully concise and authoritative treatment from an author well experienced in scientific research, writing and editing on two continents. We should not hold his apparent lack of interest in fish against him.

The book is relatively short at only 87 pages, with a correspondingly simple structure. A foreword, preface and acknowledgments are followed by just two chapters, before the book closes with a series of appendices and a simple index. I am not usually one for reading too much into forewords, but with section headings of ‘Good writing is hard work!’ and ‘Writing is not as it used to be’ this one was too enticing to ignore. These headings also highlight the dual value of this book for both young researchers taking their first steps towards publishing and for older researchers who may think that they know it all. Having started my writing life with pen and paper, I am certainly in the older category and agree with the author that the world of scientific publishing is now very different from the paper and envelope-based operation of a couple of decades ago.

Chapter 1 is entitled ‘General advice’ and after an introduction covering topics such as scientific communication and society, it goes on to consider specific problems and solutions, when writing should be started and introduces the novel tool of the micro-article (defined by the author as the thinking equivalent of chemical distillation). The importance of novelty, communication, education and dissemination, themes, instructions for authors (yes, they are important and are ignored at the would-be author’s peril), and the potential reformulation of hypotheses are also covered. The chapter ends with a detailed and excellent account of the editorial process and a plea for the sparing use of abbreviations. Chapter 2 then revisits a number of these issues in the form of specific tips covering the article’s skeleton, title, body text, abstract, introduction, method, figures, results and discussion, conclusion and references. Finally, the three appendices make their own valuable contributions to the book. Appendix 1 covers the 10 commandments of writing a research article, with the author rightly warning that failure to observe them risks wasting the time of the 10 or so people inevitably involved in the publishing chain. Appendix 2 presents a useful nine

steps for writing a research article. Finally, Appendix 3 adds a touch of dry humour by reproducing Sand-Jensen's (2007) classic guide to writing boring scientific literature (Sand-Jensen, K. (2007). How to write consistently boring scientific literature. *Oikos* **116**, 723–727.).

In my view, scientific writers both new and old can read this book with great benefit. It does not take very long to read from cover to cover and will repay the investment of such time many times over. For the new writer, it gives some excellent guidance on efficient writing and also provides a detailed insight into the post-submission, and even post-acceptance, component of the publication process. Editors and publishers are human too and understanding their concerns and constraints can only help the aspiring scientific writer. This book deserves a place wherever young researchers are struggling with that difficult first manuscript and wherever older researchers think that they know it all.

IAN J. WINFIELD

Centre for Ecology & Hydrology, Lancaster, U.K.