Improving journal quality 1: what is quality?

ACSE conference
Dubai, August 2016

Pippa Smart, consultant
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Welcome

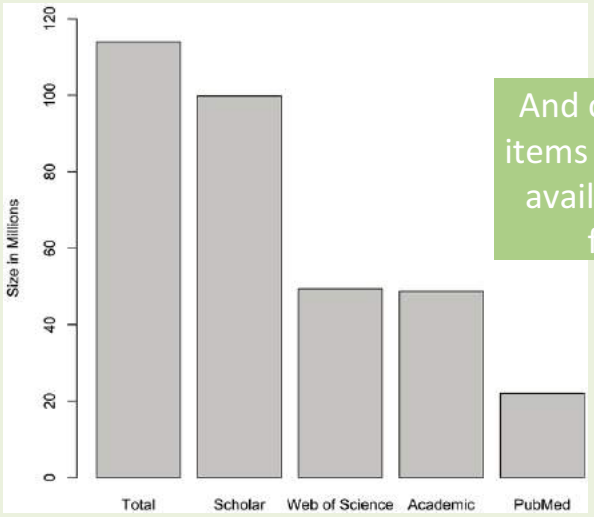
- Who am I?
  - In academic/scholarly publishing since 1986
    - Blackwell-Science (Wiley), CABI, CUP, INASP
  - Independent consultant since 2007
    - Editorial strategies, copyright
  - Other activities include:
    - Training courses on journal development, editorial matters, copyright, Crossref, etc.
    - Write a monthly newsletter: *ALPSP Alert*
    - Vice President of the European Association of Science Editors (EASE)
    - Editor-in-Chief of *Learned Publishing*

WHY QUALITY MATTERS

baloney piffle
drivel
taradiddle
waste
Rubbish
moonshine
blarney
flapdoodle
blathers
tripe
claptrap
gobbledegook
hogwash
cack
bunk
rubbish
bull
hot
applesauce
eyewash
tommyrot
cobblers
blah
guff
cock
air
hooey
rot
codswallop
cats
tosh
wack
malarkey
bushwa
gammon
stuff
dribble
blether
nonsense
garbage
porn
poppycock
balderdash
gibberish
SERIOUSLY-GOOD-STUFF

How many articles … ?

GS & total are estimates



And c.25% of items in GS are available for free

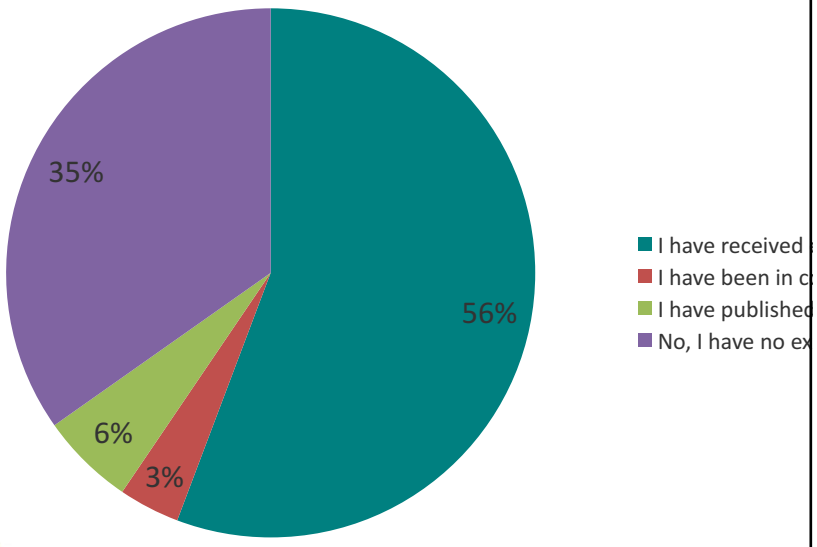
Khabsa M, Giles CL (2014) The Number of Scholarly Documents on the Public Web. PLoS ONE 9(5): e93949. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0093949
http://www.plosone.org/article/info:doi/10.1371/journal.pone.0093949

"Predatory" journals

- Journals that don't conform to international standards
  - What are international standards?
- People using the pay-to-publish model without scruples
  - Fraudulent journals (plagiarised content)

Putting research knowledge at the heart of development inasp

Have you had experiences of encountering so-called 'predatory' publisher



CC BY

Discussion

- What makes a journal successful?
- What makes **your** journal successful?
- Who judges?

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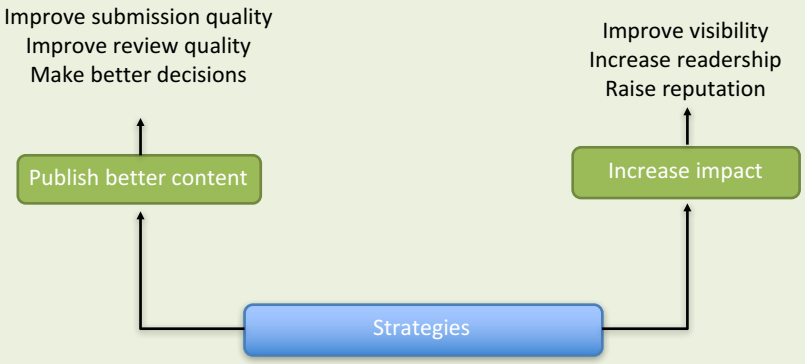
Success indicators

- Financial stability
- Reputation
  - Among your peers
    - Ease of getting submissions
    - High readership
    - High citation
  - Within institutions
    - Reward for publishing with you
- “Impact”

Gatekeeper or access enabler?

Strategies for improving “success”



Question

- Why are you publishing a journal?

Differentiating the vision

- What makes your journal different?
- What makes you unique?
- What is the rationale for your journal?

What is your USP*?

- *Unique selling point

Not all journals are the same

- The environment which journals inhabit is not uniform
- Different communities want different things from journals:
  - Professional advice and guidance
  - High level research findings
  - News and alerts to new guidelines
  - Examples and case studies
  - And what else … ?

What about your journal?

- Who are your community?
  - What do they want from the journal?
- What does the journal want to supply to them?

Different content / formats

- Original research articles
  - Themed sections
  - Themed issues
  - Lead articles
- Review articles
- Short articles
- Editorial
- Guest editorial
- Editor's selection
- Book reviews
- Case studies
- Case notes
- A day in the life of…
- Perspectives
- Personal view
- Quizzes (CME, etc.)
- News, events
- Letters to the editor
- Obituaries
- And … ?

Writing and communicating the vision

- Goal
  - Why are you publishing?
- Aims and objectives
  - What you are publishing?
  - Who are you publishing it for?

Good and bad aims

- Journal X aims to improve healthcare in Antarctica

Good and bad aims

- Journal X aims to improve healthcare in Antarctica
- Journal Y aims to improve healthcare in Antarctica through the provision of high quality research

Good and bad aims

- Journal X aims to improve healthcare in Antarctica
- Journal Y aims to improve healthcare in Antarctica through the provision of high quality research
- Journal Z aims to improve healthcare in Antarctica through the provision of quality research for penguin conservationists

Example

- Vision
  - Our vision is that the journal will contribute to improved quality and effectiveness in scholarly publishing by providing a source of relevant and authoritative research and opinion.
- Aims and scope
  - Learned Publishing publishes peer reviewed research, reviews, industry updates and opinions on all aspects of scholarly communication and publishing. Written by and published for everyone involved with scholarly communication and publishing, our readership includes publishers, vendors, librarians, academics and researchers from around the world.

DOAJ essential criteria

- DOAJ Principles of Transparency and Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing
  - https://doaj.org/bestpractice
  - Developed in collaboration with COPE, OASPA and WAME

Governing Body / ownership

- Journals shall have editorial boards or other governing bodies whose members are recognized experts in the subject areas included within the journal's scope. The full names and affiliations of the journal's editors shall be provided on the journal's Web site.
- Information about the ownership and/or management of a journal shall be clearly indicated on the journal's Web site. Publishers shall not use organizational or journal names that would mislead potential authors and editors ´ about the nature of the journal's owner.

DOAJ DIRECTORY OF OPEN ACCESS JOURNALS

Editorial team/contact information

- Journals shall provide the full names and affiliations of the journal's editors on the journal's Web site as well as contact information for the editorial office.

DOAJ DIRECTORY OF OPEN ACCESS JOURNALS

Peer review process

- Journal content must be clearly marked as whether peer reviewed or not. Peer review is defined as obtaining advice on individual manuscripts from reviewers expert in the field who are not part of the journal's editorial staff. This process, as well as any policies related to the journal's peer review procedures, shall be clearly described on the journal's Web site.

DOAJ DIRECTORY OF OPEN ACCESS JOURNALS

Process for identification of and dealing with allegations of research misconduct

- Publishers and editors shall take reasonable steps to identify and prevent the publication of papers where research misconduct has occurred, including plagiarism, citation manipulation, and data falsification/fabrication, among others. In no case shall a journal or its editors encourage such misconduct, or knowingly allow such misconduct to take place. In the event that a journal's publisher or editors are made aware of any allegation of research misconduct relating to a published article in their journal - the publisher or editor shall follow COPE's guidelines (or equivalent) in dealing with allegations.

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Conflicts of interest

- A journal shall have clear policies on handling potential conflicts of interest of editors, authors, and reviewers and the policies should be clearly stated.

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Revenue sources

- Business models or revenue sources (eg, author fees, subscriptions, advertising, reprints, institutional support, and organizational support) shall be clearly stated or otherwise evident on the journal's Web site.
- Journals shall state their advertising policy if relevant, including what types of ads will be considered, who makes decisions regarding accepting ads and whether they are linked to content or reader behavior (online only) or are displayed at random.

DOAJ DIRECTORY OF OPEN ACCESS JOURNALS

Author fees

- Any fees or charges that are required for manuscript processing and/or publishing materials in the journal shall be clearly stated in a place that is easy for potential authors to find prior to submitting their manuscripts for review or explained to authors before they begin preparing their manuscript for submission.

DOAJ DIRECTORY OF OPEN ACCESS JOURNALS

Copyright

- Copyright and licensing information shall be clearly described on the journal's Web site, and licensing terms shall be indicated on all published articles, both HTML and PDFs

DOAJ DIRECTORY OF OPEN ACCESS JOURNALS

Web site / access

- A journal's Web site, including the text that it contains, shall demonstrate that care has been taken to ensure high ethical and professional standards. It must not contain misleading information, including any attempt to mimic another journal/publisher's site.
- The way(s) in which the journal and individual articles are available to readers and whether there are associated subscription or pay per view fees shall be stated.

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Name of journal / schedule

- The Journal name shall be unique and not be one that is easily confused with another journal or that might mislead potential authors and readers about the Journal's origin or association with other journals.
- The periodicity at which a journal publishes shall be clearly indicated.

DOAJ DIRECTORY OF OPEN ACCESS JOURNALS

Archiving

- A journal's plan for electronic backup and preservation of access to the journal content (for example, access to main articles via CLOCKSS or PubMedCentral) in the event a journal is no longer published shall be clearly indicated.

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Direct marketing

- Any direct marketing activities, including solicitation of manuscripts that are conducted on behalf of the journal, shall be appropriate, well targeted, and unobtrusive.

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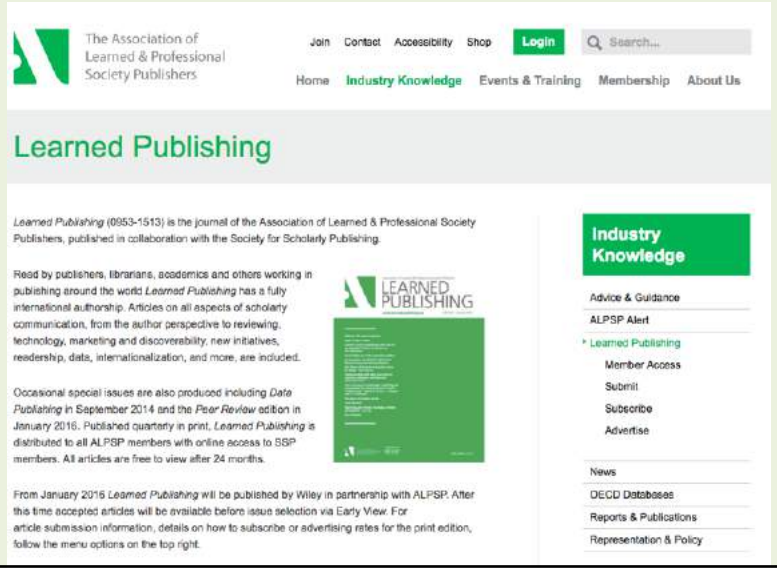

EMAME

http://www.emro.who.int/entity/emame

EASE publications & resources
www.ease.org.uk

- *European Science Editing* (quarterly journal)
- ***Science Editors' Handbook*, 2nd ed.**
  - **56 chapters: editing, terminology, policies, peer review, ethics, publishing, promotion**
- EASE Toolkit for Authors and for Journal Editors
  - Web links to resources
- EASE Guidelines for Authors and Translators
  - In >20 languages

EASE

Thank you

… Questions …

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Improving journal quality 2: working with authors

ACSE conference
Dubai, August 2016

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Why we publish

- *Registration*
  - establishing the author's precedence and ownership of an idea
- *Dissemination*
  - communicating the findings to its intended audience
- *Certification*
  - ensuring quality control through peer review
- *Archival record*
  - preserving a fixed version of the paper for future reference and citation

Source:
Henry Oldenburg
Editor/Publisher of Philosophical Transactions
c.1670

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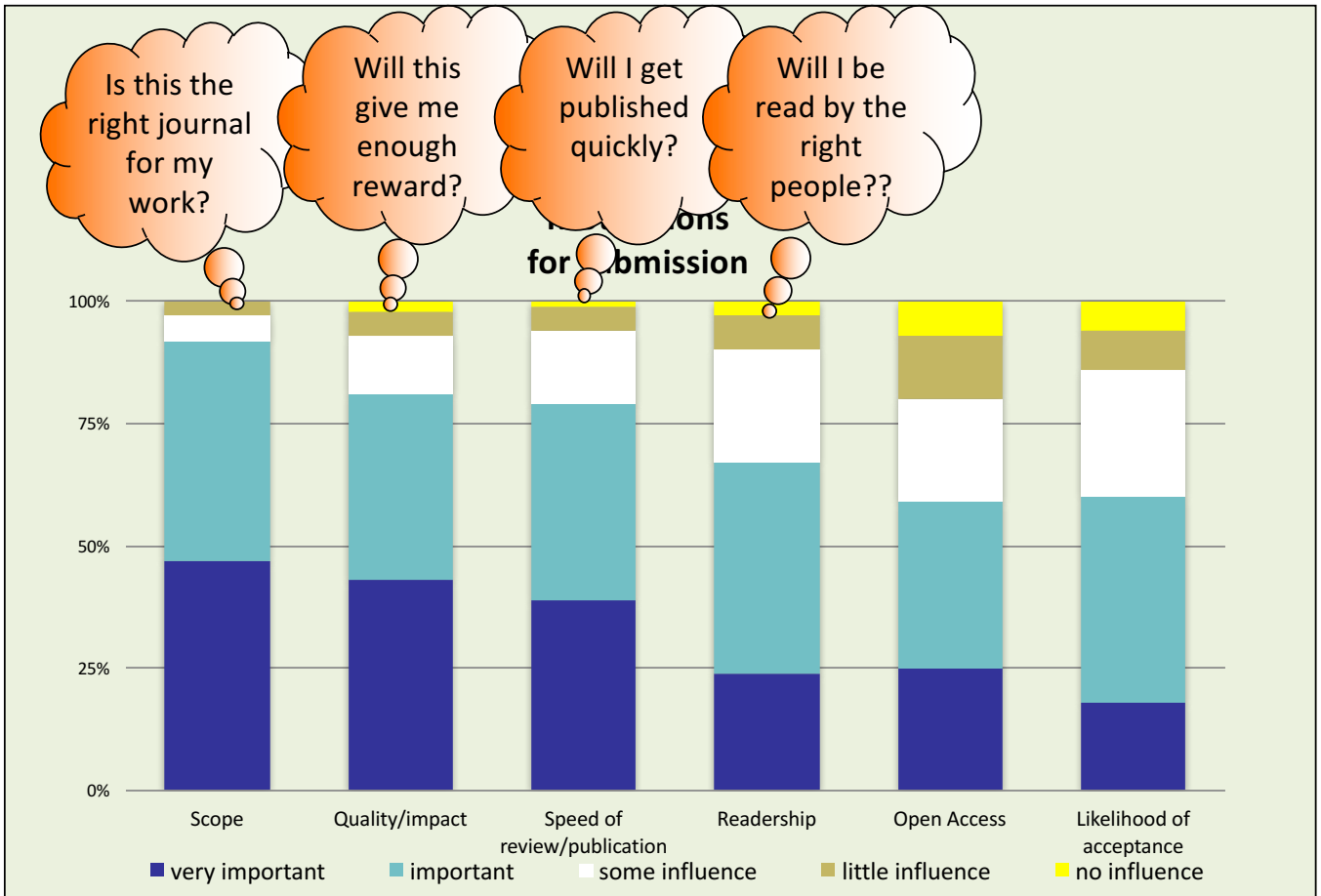
What we know about authors …

- What do authors want …
- Stamp of authority
- Journal pecking order
- Perceived quality
- Visibility and readership
- Peer recognition
- Citation
- Speed
- Access
- Archive
- Positive publishing experience
- Want to publish more



(Some) reasons for submitting

- The quality of the journal
- The impact factor of the journal
- Journal Web site
- Reputation of the publisher
- The Journal's audience
- Having a broad scope
- The speed of the review and publication process
- The review criteria of the journal
- Amount of the article processing charge
- The fact the journal was Open Access
- Recommendation of a colleague

Solomon (2014) A survey of authors publishing in four megajournals. *PeerJ* 2:e365 http://dx.doi.org/10.7717/peerj.365

Why attract more authors?

- More submissions = more selectivity
- Higher quality = more attractive to authors

- Low submissions = lower quality acceptance = less attractive to “good” authors

Do you deliver … encouragement?

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Outreach

- Networking, networking, networking …
- Commissioning
  - Who, why, when, how?

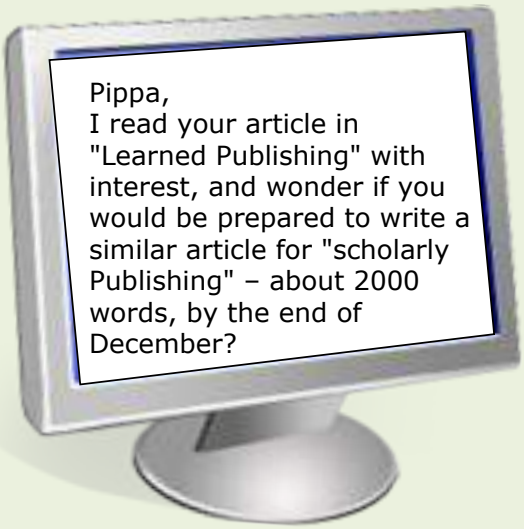
Where do authors come from

- Your department
- Your school
- Your university / institution
- Your country
- Your region
- Your profession (meetings, colleagues)
- Your readers
- Your reviewers

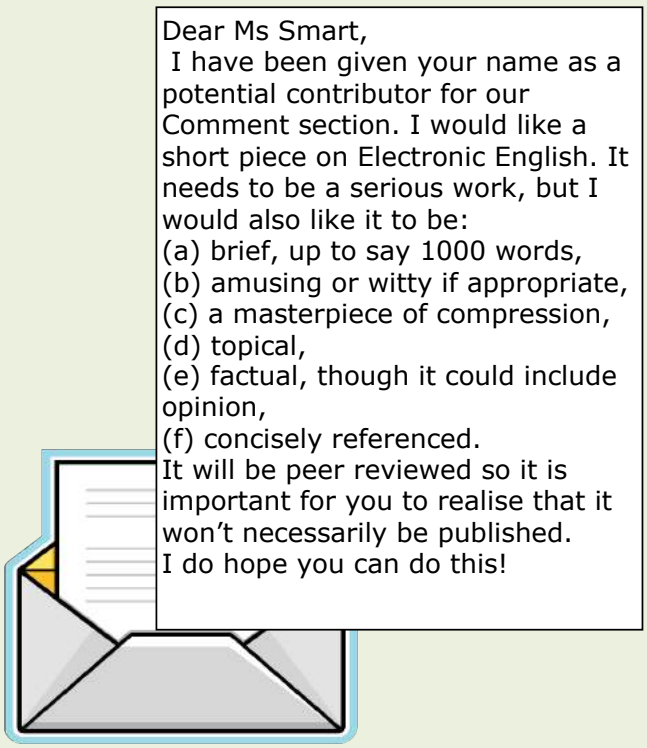
Commissioning letters

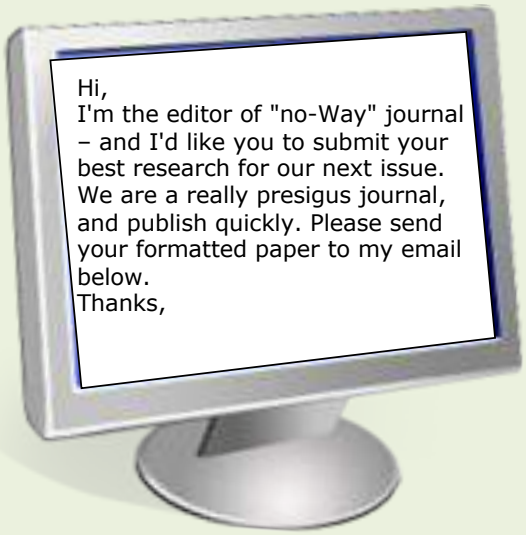
- What should be included in a commissioning email:
  - Why the author was chosen
  - Why they should consider submitting to you
    - Motivation, reward
  - What they are being asked to submit
    - Topic, article type, length of article, style
  - When they are being asked to submit
  - Will it be peer reviewed
  - Do you guarantee publication
  - When it is likely to be published

How would you respond to these requests?



… or these requests?





A good article …

- Is attractive to the editors
  - Makes them want to read it all
- Communicates its message clearly
  - Clearly written
  - Clearly structured
- Encourages citation
  - Through its content

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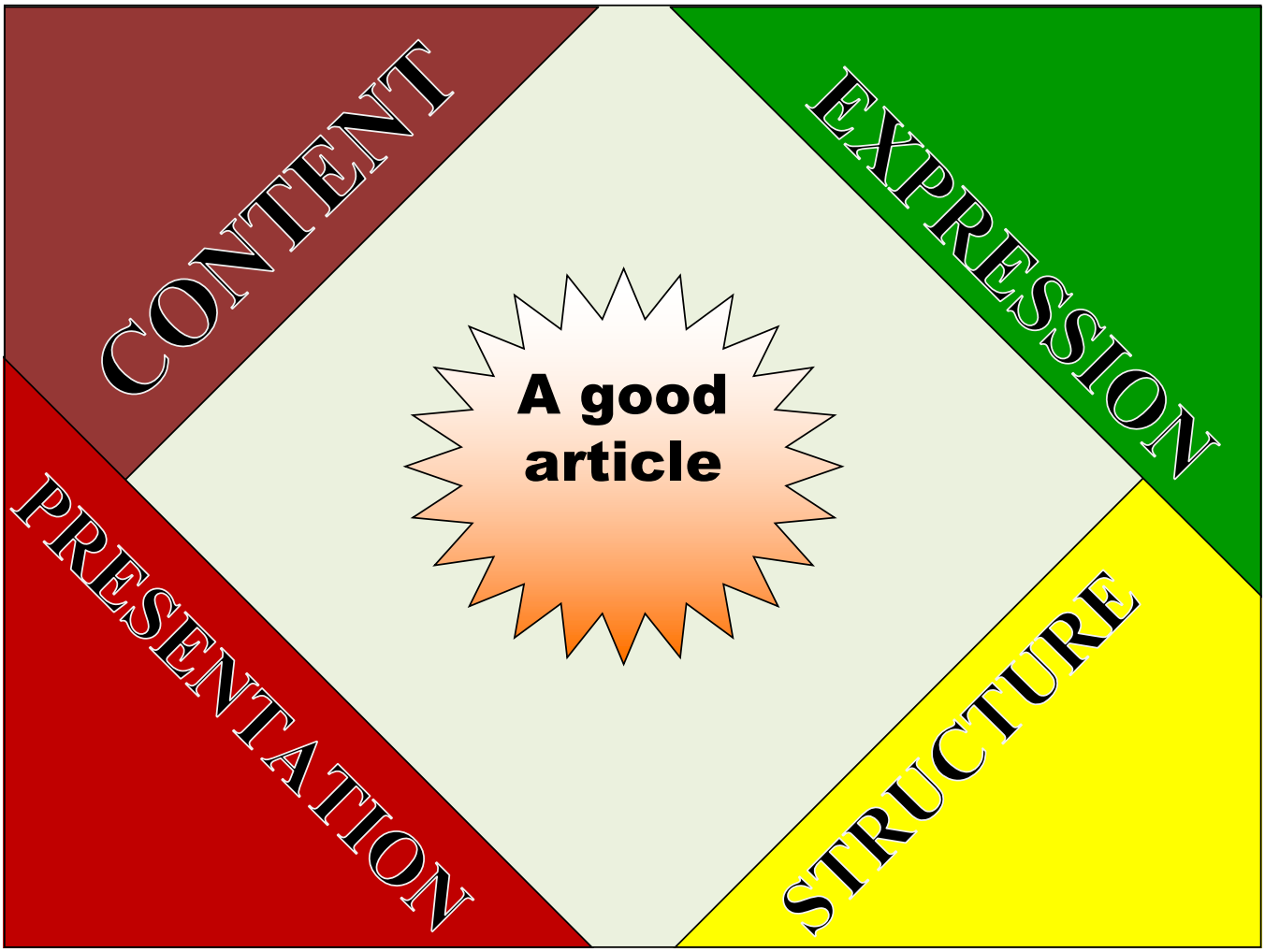

CONTENT

Research …

- Make it worth publishing
  - Research the literature
  - Ask the right question
  - Plan the right experiment and use the right methods
  - Analyse your results correctly
  - Draw sensible conclusions

    - (Thanks to Diabetogoia, “What does an Editor look for?”)

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CONTENT

Have a clear message

- What is the point of the article?
- Can you clearly express the “key message”?
  - If you cannot, then how can the reader?

- Note: the key message and the title are not (always) the same

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CONTENT

The key message

- Can be a statement of fact/finding
  - We found a difference in cognitive development between prschool singletons and twins
- … a challenge
  - We must anticipate a difference in cognitive development …
- … a question
  - Why is there a difference in cognitive development…

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CONTENT

An article without a message is not worth publishing

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EXPRESSION

Ensure the content can be understood

- Use simple words
  - Peruse/read, exceedingly/often, implement/use
- Avoid redundant words
  - Entirely absent, join together, past history
- Use short sentences

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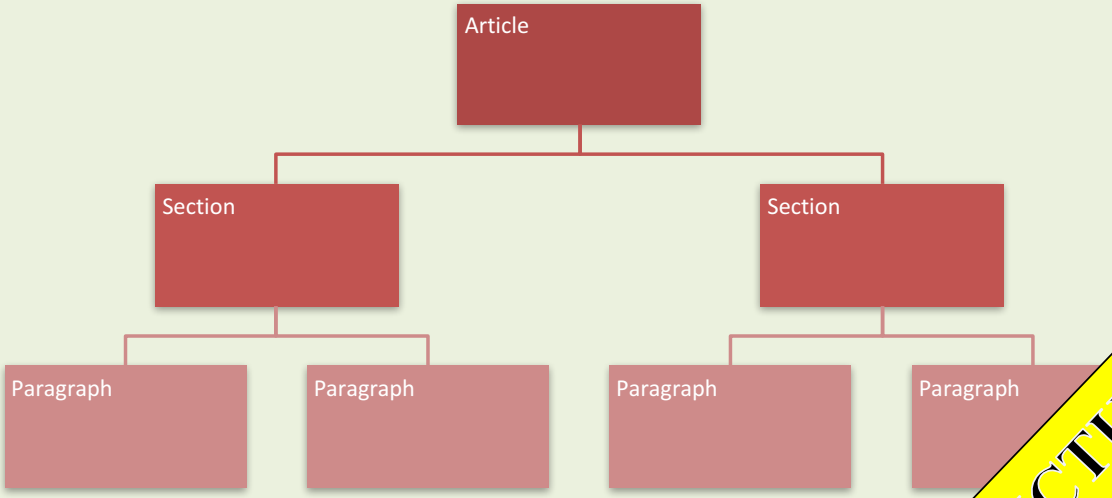
Putting structure into an article



STRUCTURE

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Article structure

IMRAD

- Introduction:
  - What was the point of the research?
- Method:
  - How was the research undertaken?
- Results:
  - What were the findings?
- And …
- Discussion:
  - What do the findings mean, what is the next step, where does the answer lead us?

STRUCTURE

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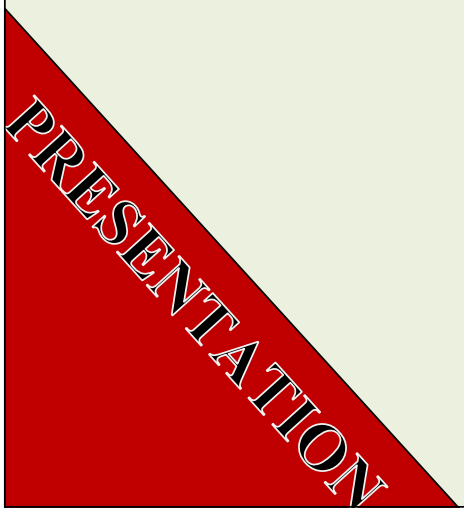
Presentation: look professional

- Avoid spelling mistakes
- Clear layout of your document
- High resolution images



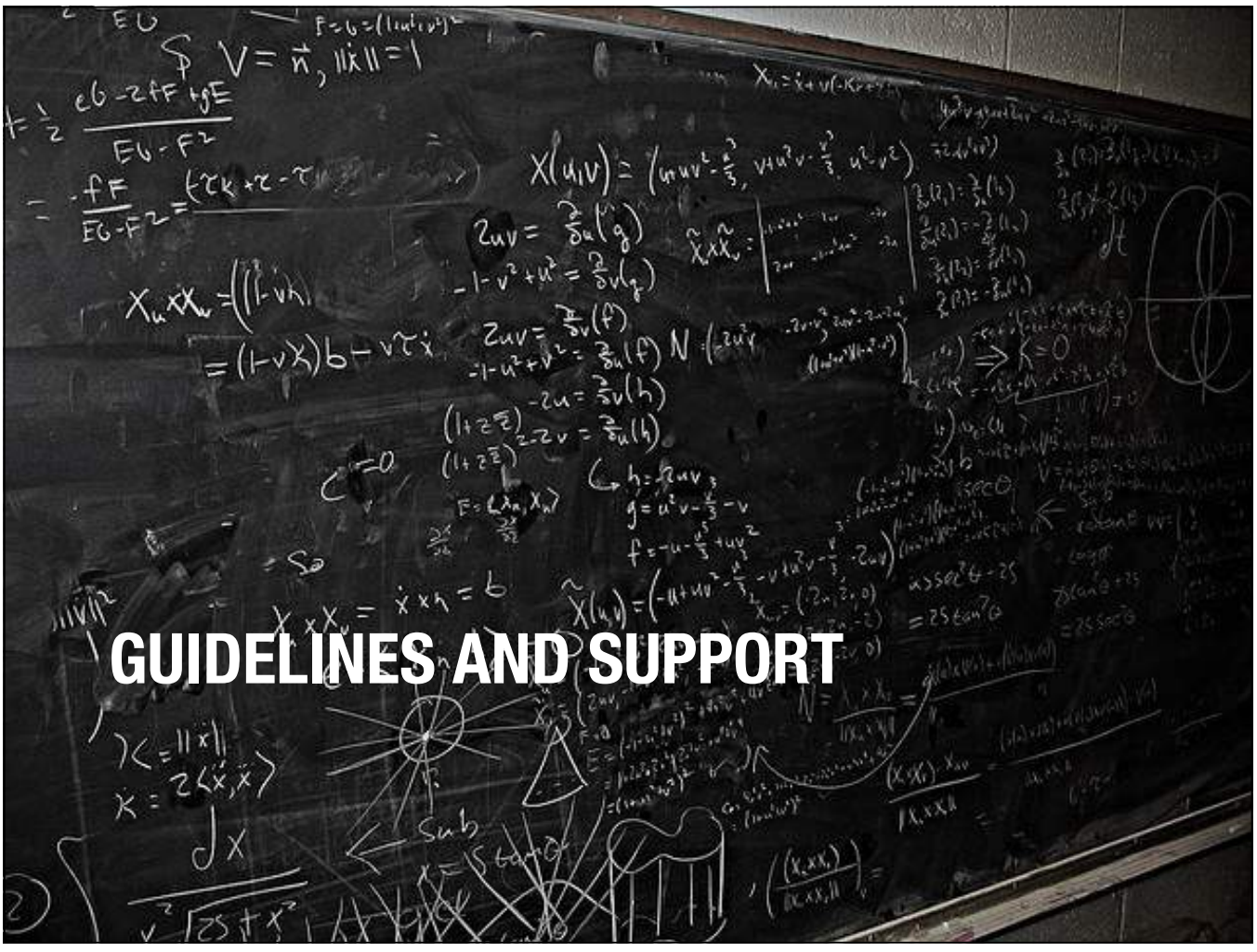
Tips for authors

"Editors cannot be experts in every area that their journal covers."

"The author's job is to intrigue the editor and later on the reviewers, and convince them of the relevance of their work"

What Editors Want: Philippa Benson and Susan Silver

Tell
authors
what you
want

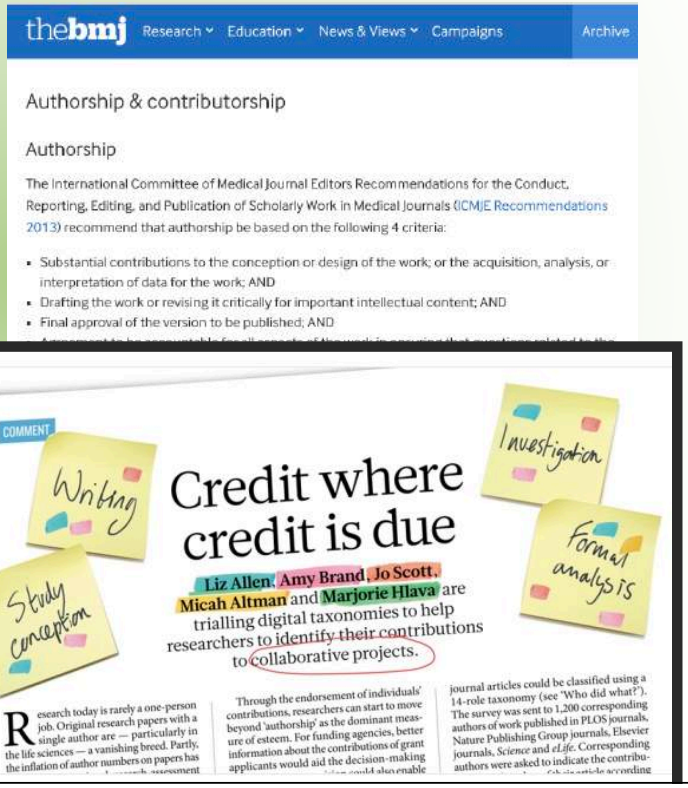

GUIDELINES AND SUPPORT

What is an "author"?

- ICMJE definition
  - "An "author" is generally considered to be someone who has made substantive intellectual contributions to a published study"
  - i.e. contributed to the idea AND execution AND writing of the study
  - "All contributors who do not meet the criteria for authorship should be listed in an acknowledgments section."
- COPE discussion document "each journal set its own definitions"

Contributorship or authorship?

- "Who did what"
- Authors listed at start of paper
- Contributors listed at the end, with their contribution
- Taxonomy for contribution?


thebmj Research Education News & Views Campaigns Archive

Authorship & contributorship

Authorship

The International Committee of Medical Journal Editors Recommendations for the Conduct, Reporting, Editing, and Publication of Scholarly Work in Medical Journals (ICMJE Recommendations 2013) recommend that authorship be based on the following 4 criteria:

- Substantial contributions to the conception or design of the work; or the acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data for the work; AND
- Drafting the work or revising it critically for important intellectual content; AND
- Final approval of the version to be published; AND

COMMENT

Writing

Study conception

Investigation

Formal analysis

Credit where credit is due

Liz Allen, Amy Brand, Jo Scott, Micah Altman and Marjorie Hlava are trialling digital taxonomies to help researchers to identify their contributions to collaborative projects.

Research today is rarely a one-person job. Original research papers with a single author are — particularly in the life sciences — a vanishing breed. Partly, the inflation of author numbers on papers has

Through the endorsement of individuals' contributions, researchers can start to move beyond 'authorship' as the dominant measure of esteem. For funding agencies, better information about the contributions of grant applicants would aid the decision-making

journal articles could be classified using a 14-role taxonomy (see 'Who did what?'). The survey was sent to 1,200 corresponding authors of work published in PLOS journals, Nature Publishing Group journals, Elsevier journals, *Science* and *eLife*. Corresponding authors were asked to indicate the contribu-

Contributorship

- CASRAI CRediT
- http://ref.casrai.org/CRediT

Author guidelines

- What the journal wants to publish
- How to submit a paper
- What to expect from the publication process
  - How many reviewers, what is the timing, etc.

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Do you provide good guidelines?

- Detail (Too much? Too little?)
- Easy to read?
- Quick answers?

- Content
  - Article types, areas of research
- Style
  - Examples of prefered style
- Presentation
  - How to submit, what happens after submission

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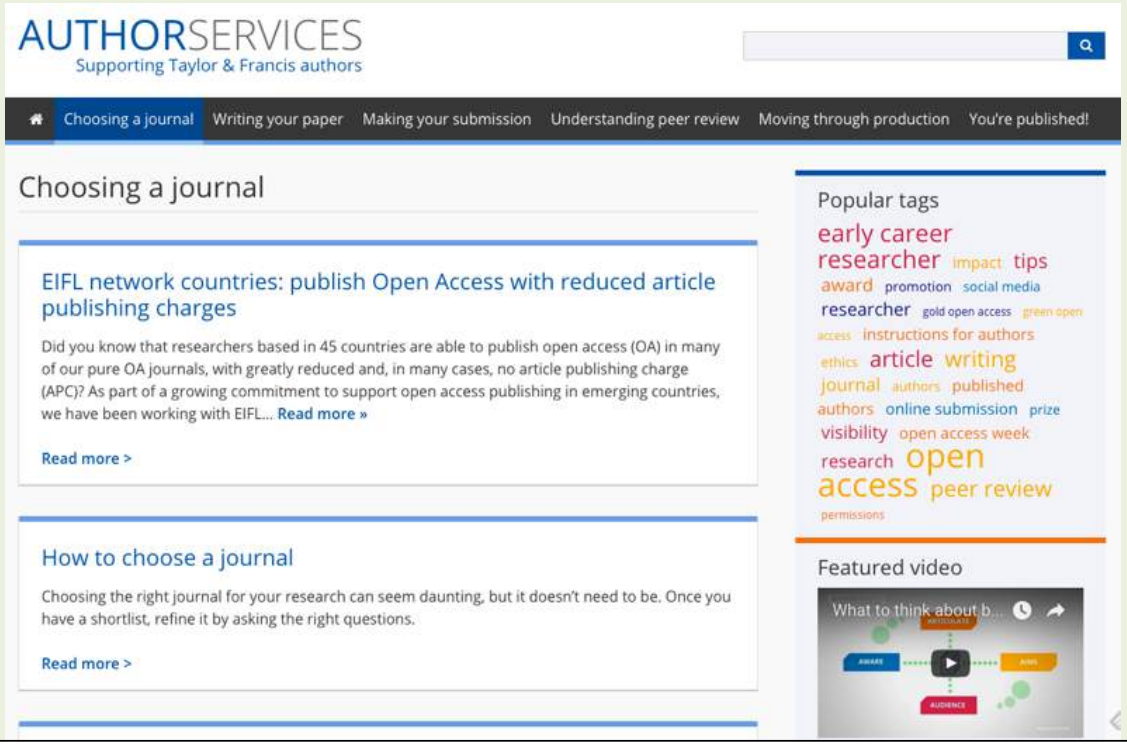
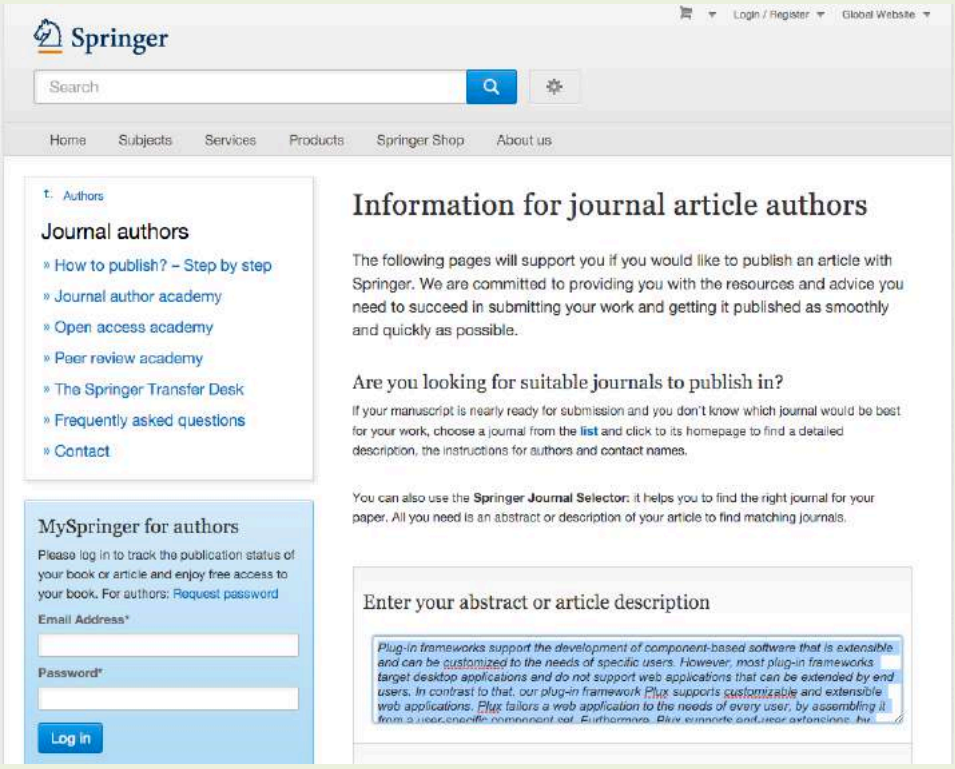
Useful author resources:
Taylor & Francis:

http://authorservices.taylorandfrancis.com/category/choosing-a-journal



Useful author resources:
Springer:

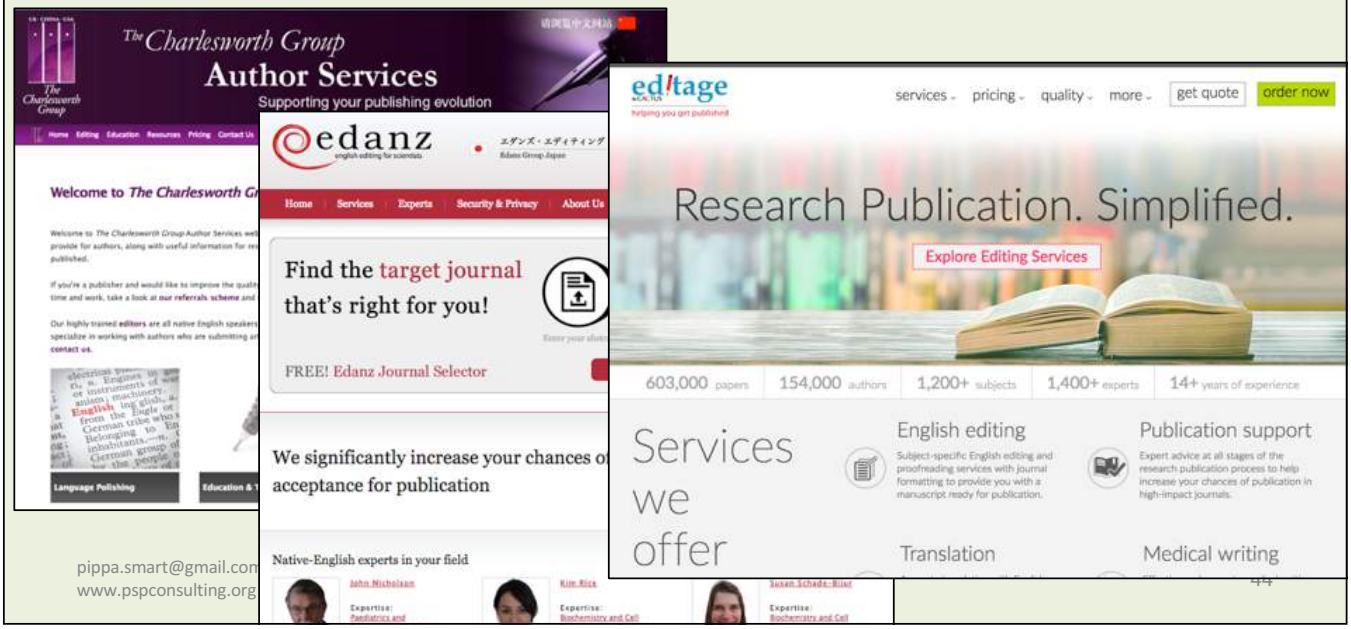
https://www.springer.com/gp/authors-editors/journal-authorcategory/choosing-a-journal/



Useful author resources:
OUP: http://www.oxfordjournals.org/en/authors/index.html

Do you help with author resources?

- Private, commercial services
  - Edanz, Editage, Charlesworth … others?



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Communication

- Is it easy to communicate with the journal?
  - Email / post / telephone / online
- How well does the journal communicate what it wants
  - Author guidelines
  - Responses (and responsiveness)

The advisory role of the journal

- Clear guidance for authors
- Constructive reviewer comments
  - Timeliness (speed of feedback)
  - Feedback (positive and negative)
- Post-decision assistance
  - Clear rationale for decision to reject article
- Author assistance
  - Editing / Rewriting
  - Advice / criticism

When rejecting

- Be clear – be kind

Reasons for rejection

- Wrong paper, wrong journal
  - Read the guidelines
- Mismatch of quality
  - Don't aim too high
- Journal backlog increasing rejection
  - Just unlucky
- Too many articles on the same topic
  - Check before submitting – or just unlucky
- Badly written
  - Explain yourself more clearly
- Flawed science
  - Be honest with yourself

What Editors Want: Phlippa Benson and Susan Silver

MOTIVATING AUTHORS

Motivating them to come to you…

- Be visible
  - Will you help raise awareness of their article?
- Be credible
  - Good reputation, good quality
- Give good service
  - Submission systems, responsive, feedback
- Be indexed
  - PubMed, Web of Science, Scopus
  - Impact Factor …
- What is your USP?
  - What “extra” can you offer?

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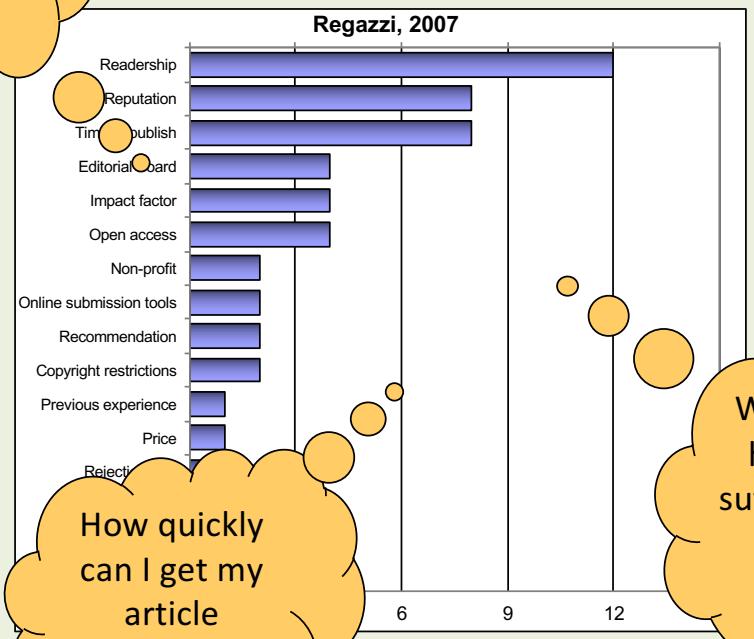
Do you deliver …

Will my peers read this?



How quickly can I get my article published?

Will publishing here give me sufficient credit?

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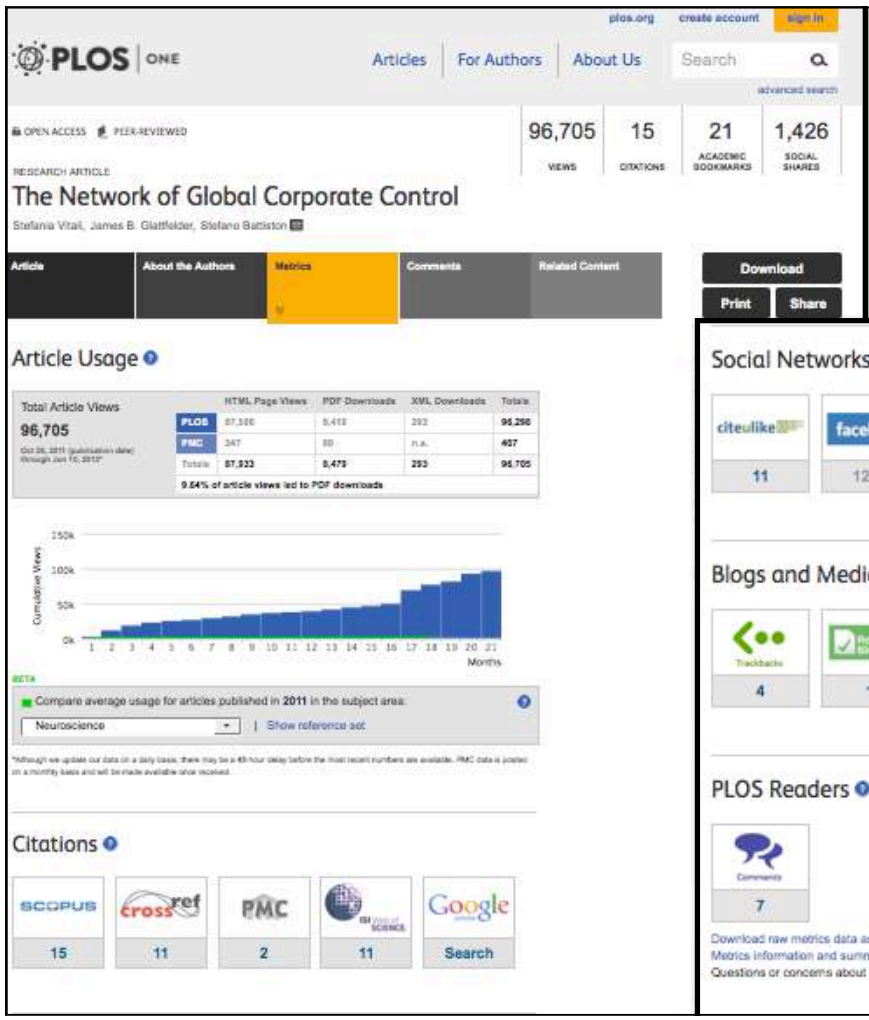

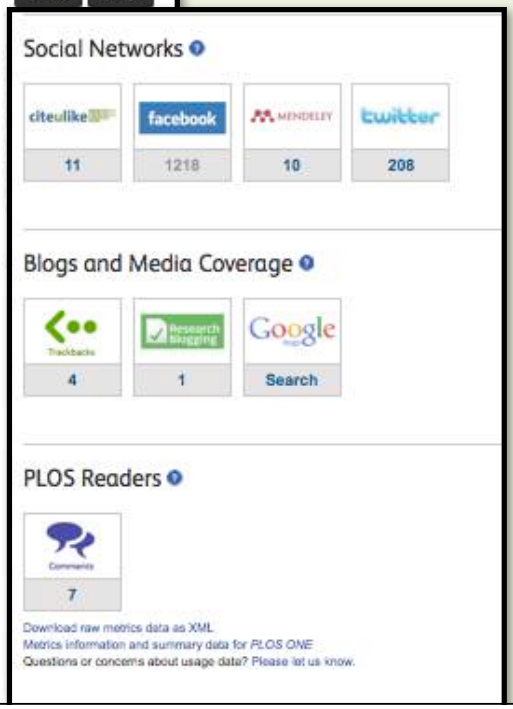

Do you deliver "after-sales" service?

Journals of Zhejiang University Press, Hangzhou, China

Using authors … ?

- Can you motivate authors to "sell" their own articles?
  - Social networking
  - Blogs
  - Alerts
  - Grow Kudos (NB, not GetKudos!) www.growkudos.com/

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- Philippa Benson and Susan Silver (2012) What Editors Want: An author's guide to scientific journal publishing. University of Chicago Press http://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/W/bo13948168.html

- Tim Albert (2016) Winning the Publications Game. CRC Press.

EASE publications & resources
www.ease.org.uk

- *Science Editors' Handbook*, 2nd ed.
  - 56 chapters: editing, terminology, policies, peer review, ethics, publishing, promotion
- EASE Toolkit for Authors and for Journal Editors
  - Web links to resources
- EASE Guidelines for Authors and Translators
  - In >20 languages

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Thank you

… Questions …

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