

From the Editor

Authorship is the keystone of scholarly scientific publishing. Without authors preparing and taking responsibility for their reports of scientific studies, journals would have no primary reports to publish and readers would have no studies on which to build further research. Whatever we can do to retain the integrity of the keystone will strengthen the arch from research to application.

Today, however, the arch and particularly the keystone are subject to pressures old and new. In this issue of *CBE Views* we focus on an aspect of authorship that is under pressure—the criteria for authorship of scientific research papers. What are the criteria? How do they differ among various scientific disciplines? Has the business of scientific research changed sufficiently in recent years that the criteria—understood or written down—no longer apply? Are there core values to be retained no matter the scientific discipline or the dramatic changes in how science is conducted and reported?

The “Dialogue” section sets the stage with the question, Should the criteria for authorship as defined by the “Uniform Requirements” be changed? Richard Smith says yes; Roy Pitkin and Robert Utiger say no. In the “Articles” section, Ed Huth gives us some background about the “Uniform Requirements” criteria and criteria set by others. Mary Scheetz describes some of the thorny questions about authorship that come to the Office of Research Integrity. An exciting new aspect to the authorship question is in the article by Bryan Vernon and colleagues, who describe the critical aspects of conducting research on scientific authorship. To add to the discussion from the author’s point of view, the “Features” section contains responses to the “Dialogue” question by authors from several scientific disciplines.

Pitkin and Utiger call authorship the “coin of the realm”. It is in everybody’s interest to stabilize that currency and maintain its integrity. The meaning of having one’s name at the top of a research report must be clear to those whose names are there and to readers. Authorship, and in particular the criteria for authorship, is a topic worthy of our attention and energy. The breadth of science represented within CBE gives us the forum for defining the core values of authorship, identifying the necessary and accepted variations in criteria among the various disciplines, and developing ways to educate scientists about the criteria. We offer this issue of *CBE Views* as a catalyst for further research and discussion aimed at strengthening scientific authorship. ①

Martha Tacker

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