

The Desserts and the Deserts of Authorship

These articles, which are not listed in the CSE Authorship Task Force list of selected references (www.cbe.org/AuthorshipReferences.html), provide different perspectives on the subject.

Franck G. Scientific communication—a vanity fair? *Science* 1999;286:53-5.

This professor of computer-aided planning and architecture at the Vienna University of Technology, who wrote the 1998 book *Economy of Attention*, sets out to assess the efficiency of science and comes to a surprising conclusion.

He begins by modeling science as a knowledge industry in which the mode of payment is attention and the career of scientists can depend heavily on citation “accounts”. These accounts can be enhanced in ways other than productivity—for example, by abusing one’s position as an editor or peer reviewer. The built-in control against such problems is competition: In perfect competition, “the external rule of competition becomes indistinguishable from the internal rule of commitment (sense of duty)”.

There are two conditions of perfect competition: (1) the numbers of persons supplying and demanding attention are equally numerous, which prevents information monopolies; and (2) those on the demand side are fully informed about the supply. Condition 2 cannot be met in science because of a constant information oversupply. This problem is corrected, however, because scientists cannot waste attention on useless information. “Being highly competitive, the exchange of information for attention is effective in self-organizing control”, but this requires that the economy of attention (science) be a closed system. “As soon as attention by those capable of understanding one’s work becomes the most highly valued income, the chase after attention turns into an endeavor to earn reputation.”

Conclusion: In science, there is a collective management of efficiency in the use of attention; this efficiency is intel-

ligence, and “a theory of science incapable of accounting for this intelligence is [incomplete].”

MacRoberts MH, MacRoberts BR. Quantitative measures of communication in science: a study of the formal level. *Soc Stud Sci* 1986;16:151-72.

How do I cite thee? These authors count the ways. This article is very likely the definitive description of all the things that can go wrong in citation: misciting (making errors in citation information); leaving basic assumptions and background knowledge or superficial influence uncited; citing in text without including in reference list; parsimonious citing, that is, self-citing, citing reviews, or citing an article to refer to several articles cited in it; ignoring the literature, that is, failing to cite previous work addressing the same issues; citing an article without having read it; citing an irrelevant work or a secondary source; not citing works from which a cited work was learned about; citing for reasons unrelated to intellectual content; persuasive citing, that is, citing persons “because they have become symbolically linked to an idea or concept”; and much, much more!

Kronick DA. Anonymity and identity: editorial policy in the early scientific journal. *Libr Q* 1988;58:221-37.

Kronick describes how early scientists and scientific societies transformed science from an anonymous process to one in which authorship is key. The practice of anonymity in early modern science was based on the Baconian ideal of collective research: Truth is UNcovered, not DIScovered. Anonymity was also used when authors served as surrogates of a scientific society or wanted to be modest. On a more practical level, anonymity was used to avoid controversy or charges of heresy or even to be dishonest or malicious. In the end, authors revolted

against anonymity, and science grew into a means of evaluating the work of persons who were outside the established society.

Anonymity can affect the cogency of an argument, but identity contributes to credibility. Today, the philosophy of “uncovering truth” is retained in the passive voice, which conveys the impression of a passive observer, and also is reflected in the hereditary link between science and journalism.

Morowitz HJ. Legacy. Hosp Pract 1980;15(1):139-40.

Harold J Morowitz, currently a biophysicist and Robinson Professor in Biology and Natural Philosophy at George Mason University, wrote a series of excellent essays for *Hospital Practice*. This particular, very moving essay illustrates the personal side of authorship. He describes the painful irony of a student's plagiarism of work by a close friend of Morowitz's who had a tragic end.

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