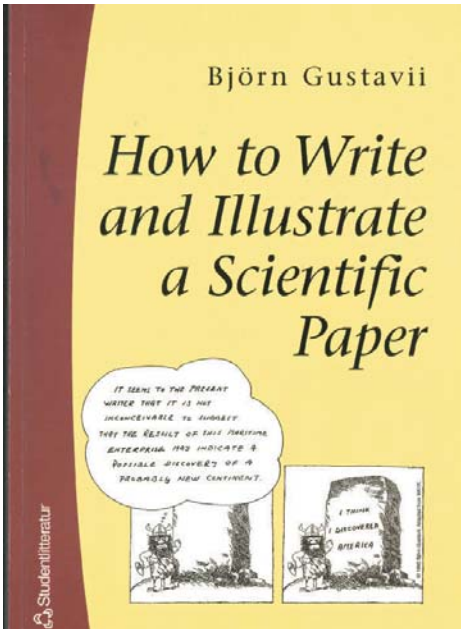

HOW TO WRITE AND ILLUSTRATE A SCIENTIFIC PAPER. BJÔRN GUSTAVII. LUND, SWEDEN: STUDENTLITTERATUR; 2000. 153 PAGES. SOFTCOVER APPROXIMATELY $24.50. ISBN 91-44-01588-7.

In her previous position as the manager of medical-editing services at the Cleveland Clinic, JESSICA ANCKER *developed and taught writing courses for residents, fellows, and staff physicians. Now a freelance editor and writer, she entered Columbia's Mailman School of Public Health in the fall of 2001.*

Writing teachers will enjoy the commonsense advice, examples, and anecdotes in the latest addition to the array of texts on scientific writing, Bjôrn Gustavii's *How to Write and Illustrate a Scientific Paper*. Novice writers will also find useful guidance here, but the book is a bit too quirky and incomplete to be my first choice as a text.

Gustavii, a professor of obstetrics and gynecology at Lund University in Sweden, has taught scientific writing for more than 20 years. He prepared his book for European physicians planning to publish in English.

He recommends an excellent approach to writing, which is to begin with the results tables and graphs and proceed with the title, a working abstract, and the remaining components of the paper in IMRD order (Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion). (But he also reminds his readers to develop their own rules because "the author's common sense should always take precedence over the principles of authorities.") In addition to chapters on writing the components of the paper, Gustavii provides good advice about corresponding with editors and reviewers and correcting page proofs.

One of the strengths of the book is its chapter on the discussion section, in which Gustavii analyzes a particularly well-organized discussion as a model. Also excellent are the chapters on graphs and common statistical errors and the full-page illustrations of formatted manuscript pages prepared for journal submission.

Gustavii has a pleasing sense of humor. Rather than merely presenting definitions of plagiarism and proper attribution, for example, he creates a clever demonstration using a cartoon Viking.

Gustavii's guidance on scientific language is far less helpful. He shortchanges many worthy issues in communication to emphasize topics more appropriate for copyeditors.

For example, more than 11 pages of this 153-page book are devoted to details of number style and abbreviations. If the author had instead referred interested readers to a stylebook, he would have had room to provide more detail about content issues, such as how to construct an introduction. Brevity is a virtue, but the 1.5-page chapter on the Introduction is too brief. It does not mention the need to explain the clinical importance of the research question or show how to select background information appropriate for different groups of readers.

Gustavii's guidance on constructing a logical argument is similarly sketchy. He states only, "What you want to say should be so arranged that the reader can follow your argumentation step by step." It would have been more helpful to give tips for creating such a logical arrangement, such as working from an outline or beginning each paragraph with an informative topic sentence that contains clues about the connection to the previous paragraph.

I was not surprised that language issues were the weakest component of a book by an author who uses English as a foreign language, but I had hoped that the advice for other Europeans writing in English would be particularly helpful. Unfortunately, it is somewhat scanty and disorganized. A discussion of verb tense in scientific papers appears as a one-sentence digression in, oddly, the chapter on writing titles. The "Language" chapter covers too many minor problems that could be fixed by journal copyeditors, such as whether to use the possessive in eponyms.

I was also disappointed by Gustavii's dismissal of the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) definition of authorship[1] as unrealistically restrictive. He is certainly not alone in his opinion, but he did his readers a disservice by omitting the ICMJE criteria from his book and failing to acknowledge that many journals use them.

In conclusion, Gustavii's book is insightful, particularly in its discussions of structuring the scientific paper and reporting quantitative data, but it is weakened by an overemphasis on copyediting and a failure to cover substantive communication issues. Writing instructors will find good teaching ideas in this book, but they should also consider drawing from other excellent texts on this topic.[2-8]

Jessica Ancker

References

1. International Committee of Medical Journal Editors. Uniform requirements for manuscripts submitted to biomedical journals. May 2000 [cited Apr 25 2001]. Available at: www.icmje.org.
2. Day RA. How to write and publish a scientific paper. fifth ed. Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group; 1998.
3. Gopen GD, Swan JA. The science of science writing. Am Sci 1990;78:550-8.
4. Huth EJ. Writing and publishing in medicine. Third ed. Baltimore: Williams & Wilkins; 1999.
5. Lang TA, Secic M. How to report statistics in medicine: annotated guidelines for authors, editors, and reviewers. Philadelphia: American College of Physicians; 1997.
6. Penrose AM, Katz SB. Writing in the sciences: exploring conventions of scientific discourse. Boston: Bedford-St Martin's; 1998.
7. Woodford FP. How to teach scientific communication. Reston, VA: Council of Biology Editors; 1999.
8. Zeiger M. Essentials of writing biomedical research articles. Second ed. New York: McGraw-Hill; 1999.

Book Notes

WHAT TO CHARGE: PRICING STRATEGIES FOR FREELANCERS AND CONSULTANTS. LAURIE LEWIS. PUTNAM VALLEY, NY: ALETHEIA PUBLICATIONS; 2000. VIII + 174 PAGES. SOFTCOVER $19.95. ISBN 1-929129-00-9.

Freelance medical writer and editor Laurie Lewis has produced a near-timeless guide to setting prices for freelance work. The reason for its probable longevity: Rather than listing rates, Lewis offers principles and procedures for determining how much to charge. Among the major steps addressed are deciding on methods of pricing (for example, by the hour or by the project), determining going rates, negotiating with clients, obtaining written agreements, increasing one's income—and, most central, using log sheets to determine how much to charge and to refine one's pricing strategies. Sidebars address various difficult issues, such as dealing with slow-paying clients, determining payment schedules for large projects, and changing a fee if a project differs from what was expected. Detailed examples—including a sample letter of agreement for a science-editing project—illustrate the approaches recommended, and anecdotes emphasize many points and enliven the text. The text is highly readable, with crisp wording, abundant subheads, and bulleted lists. Although intended mainly for full-time freelances, this book also can aid those who take on an occasional freelance project. Now when students and others seek advice on how much to charge for freelance work, I will have a fine resource to recommend.

Barbara Gastel

THE CLOCKWORK MUSE: A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO WRITING THESES, DISSERTATIONS, AND BOOKS. EVIATAR ZERUBAVEL. CAMBRIDGE, MA: HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS; 1999. 111 PAGES. HARDCOVER $22.95, SOFTCOVER $10.95. ISBN 0-674-13585-7 (HC), 0-674-13586-5 (SC).

This book, by a sociology professor at Rutgers University, offers advice on surmounting the task of writing a lengthy work. Emphasizing planning, the book deals mainly with establishing a weekly writing schedule, breaking writing projects into pieces that are psychologically and otherwise manageable, and setting a timetable for completing a writing project. In addition, the author presents as a model his own habits of writing and revising. The chapter probably most widely applicable is that on setting a writing schedule; helpful suggestions include crossing out on a weekly schedule all times one normally is unavailable to write and then deciding on regular writing times, after identifying periods of the day and week when one tends to write most effectively. The credibility of the author's guidance on the writing process is somewhat undermined by his prose, which tends to be long-winded—so much so that some passages could be used as editing exercises. Nevertheless, science editors who also are writers or who help coach or coax authors to finish writing projects may find this book worth consulting.

Barbara Gastel