

Tabula Rasa: Call for Guest Columnists

Effects produced by printing have aroused little controversy, not because views on the topic coincide, but because almost none have been set forth in an explicit and systematic form. Indeed those who seem to agree that momentous changes were entailed always seem to stop short of telling us just what they were. (page 6)

When ideas are detached from the media used to transmit them, they are also cut off from the historical circumstances that shape them. (page 24)

The Printing Press as an Agent of Change,
Volume 1, 1979
Elizabeth L Eisenstein

The scientific literature is a mother lode of information on the power of print as well as the power of science. The lode is so rich and deep that after 25 years of mining I recognize that one person alone could not possibly find everything it contains that would interest science editors. Therefore, I am calling on each member of the Council of Science Editors to aid in the task.

My searching through the scientific literature for works on science communication began in 1978, when I became an author's editor in an academic department. I continued the search as a master's student studying science journals and now, for the last 4 years, as a columnist for Views Afield. During this 25-year search, I have discovered that widely varied works on science communication are widely scattered, occurring in every discipline and probably every journal. Because communication is an essential element of science, this scattering of works on the subject across time and disciplines is not surprising. It is, however, unfortunate in that it effectively buries work that not only constitutes a considerable body of information on science communication but also, even if very old, continues to be relevant.

Even after the publication of Stephen Lock's classic *A Difficult Balance: Editorial Peer Review in Medicine* (Philadelphia:

ISI Press; 1986) and Bruce W Speck's *Publication Peer Review: An Annotated Bibliography* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press; 1993), it is difficult to find much work on a central topic in science communication—peer review—in part because 10 years have passed since the latter volume appeared. And science editing encompasses many topics, few of which have been subjects of extensive bibliographies or literature reviews.

Of the 18 columns I have done so far, each has focused on a relatively distinct subject. Topics have included literacy, the quality of writing about science, the history of scientific journals, authorship, the structure of scientific papers, the experience of science, legal issues, conflict of interest, visual communication, public responsibility of scientists, science studies, editorial reference guides, and effects of computers on science communication. The articles featured have been mined from 42 journals.

CSE members are well situated to identify writings on science communication that should be more widely known in the science-editing community, and Views Afield is a fine means to inform those who will appreciate them most. Thus, I am now seeking guest columnists for Views Afield. Guest columnists could follow the current format of providing several annotated bibliographic entries on a given theme. Or they could, for example, highlight pieces on science communication that have appeared in a given journal, including very old articles that in previous Views have been called "classic works" or "buried treasures". (Alert: I will be approaching some CSE members at journals about submitting such columns.) If you might like to contribute a guest column to Views Afield, please write to me at lynn.dirk@med.va.gov.

Twenty years after Eisenstein's comments, they still apply. Science editors are uniquely qualified to connect scientific ideas with the medium through which they are transmitted. Contributing to Views Afield is one way to do that.