

# The Science Editor's Bookshelf: Some Favorite Resources of CSE Members

## Compiled by Stephanie Deming

A few years ago, a friend who had just been hired as a medical editor asked me for advice. We chatted in my office for a few minutes, and I offered her tips for interacting with clients and suggested that she join the American Medical Writers Association and CSE. The bulk of my advice, however, consisted of handing her books from my bookshelf and saying, "Here. Read these." Books can be a valuable tool for learning, and I thought it would be useful to compile and publish a list of CSE members' favorite volumes. What books do CSE members have in their collections? Which do they consider most valuable? Refer to most often? Recommend to newcomers hoping to get up to speed on a particular topic? Last fall, I invited members with expertise in various subjects to submit brief annotations on their favorite books and Web sites. The responses follow. I hope that CSE members just beginning their careers, as well as members with more experience, will find a few gems here to add to their collections.—Stephanie Deming

## Scientific Writing and the Teaching of Scientific Writing

**Successful Scientific Writing: A Step-by-Step Guide for the Biological and Medical Sciences.** 2nd edition. (Janice R Matthews, John M Bowen, and Robert W Matthews. New York: Cambridge University Press; 2000. 230 pages. ISBN 0-521-78962-1.)

### EXTEND THE BOOKSHELF!

Do you have favorites to consider adding to The Science Editor's Bookshelf? If so, please write to Stephanie Deming at [sdeming@mdanderson.org](mailto:sdeming@mdanderson.org). *Science Editor* may publish an extension of the bookshelf.

This well-organized and readable book offers exactly what its subtitle suggests—a step-by-step guide, from conducting a literature search to constructing tables and graphs to systematically revising the first draft. Chock full of good advice, the book also contains short exercises (with answers in the back) and delightful cartoons that lighten and reinforce the message about good scientific writing. One of the best of the group of books on scientific writing that have appeared in recent years.—*Martha Tacker*

**Essentials of Writing Biomedical Research Papers.** 2nd edition. (Mimi Zeiger. New York: McGraw-Hill; 2000. 440 pages. ISBN 0-07-134544-2.) This book, equally valuable for authors and editors, provides a complete course in the art of writing clear, understandable biomedical papers. From word choice to sentence and paragraph structure through each section of the research paper, Zeiger offers discussion, examples, and exercises that will improve anyone's writing. The chapter on writing abstracts is particularly good. Anyone who systematically works through the book or reads even one chapter will come away with a better understanding of the process of writing biomedical research papers.—*Flo Witte*

**A Researcher's Guide to Scientific and Medical Illustrations.** (Mary Helen Briscoe. New York: Springer-Verlag; 1990. 209 pages. ISBN 0-387-97199-8.) Some authors think of preparing illustrations as "extra", not integral, in an article or presentation. Anyone who wanted to refute that point could use this guide as a script. Almost every possibility of scientific illustration is included. "Best practices" of labeling, font choice, use of color, and layout are described in detail. For example, Briscoe compares two figures to show how a line graph becomes easier to read when it

has consistent units of measure. Another example compares a table used in a journal article and the same data used in table form for an oral presentation. The guide's treatment of basics makes it a perfect starting point for authors, educators, and students. One shortfall: in the last 12 years, computers have become essential in preparing illustrations, but this guide describes only the fundamentals of preparing illustrations electronically, such as the need to change some default settings and the continued usefulness of scissors and tape. However, it is those kinds of fundamental guidelines that make Briscoe's book a valuable primer on the craft of effectively illustrating technical materials in the sciences.—*Lee Griner*

**Glossary of Geology.** (Julia A. Jackson, editor. Alexandria, VA: American Geological Institute; 1997. 769 pages. ISBN 0-922152-34-9.) This glossary of geologic terms is an invaluable resource. It provides not only definitions and chemical formulas but also standard capitalization for commonly used terms (it can be a bit difficult sometimes to determine the standard used by professionals in the field). Used in conjunction with the *Encyclopedia Dictionary of Exploration Geophysics*, the *Glossary* will provide editors with a firm grasp of the nuances of subject matter and the best way to present the information provided in any article related to geology and geophysics.—*Mary Chapman*

**Encyclopedia Dictionary of Exploration Geophysics.** 3rd edition. (Robert E Sheriff. Tulsa, OK: Society of Exploration Geophysicists; 1991. 376 pages. ISBN 1-56080-018-6.) This book contains a wealth of information regarding exploration geophysics. Besides providing definitions of terms, it includes rules for proper combination of adjectives peculiar to the discipline, an appendix related to SI units, common

symbols in use, constants, a geologic timescale, and general submission instructions for authors. The highly specific nature of this volume gives editors guidelines and information on the more esoteric questions they may come across.—*Mary Chapman*

## Statistics

The Epidemiology Series in *The Lancet*. These 11 articles were published each week in *The Lancet* from 5 January 2002 to 16 March 2002. The articles are by David Grimes and Ken Schulz, who describe the strengths, weaknesses, and common problems in research designs and activities. The articles are well written, comprehensive, and suitable for medical writers and editors with little or no background in research methods.—*Tom Lang* [Editor's note: A few of the articles are available free from *The Lancet's* Web site; others can be purchased through the Web site on a pay-per-article basis.]

**How to Report Statistics in Medicine: Annotated Guidelines for Authors, Editors, and Reviewers.** (Thomas A Lang and Michelle Secic. Philadelphia: American College of Physicians; 1997. 376 pages. ISBN 0-943126-44-4.) A complete set of guidelines for reporting, evaluating, and interpreting biostatistical analyses in the medical literature. Intended for non-statisticians, the book requires no knowledge of statistics and explains the meaning and importance of each guideline. Includes a comprehensive glossary and reference list for each guideline. Well written, with good examples.—*Tom Lang* [Editor's note: Also see the note about this book in the Science Journalism section later in this article.]

**Medical Uses of Statistics.** 2nd edition. (John C Bailar and Frederick Mosteller, editors. Waltham, MA: Massachusetts Medical Society; 1992. 449 pages. ISBN 0-910133-36-0.) This book focuses on the ideas behind statistical analysis. It uses no formulas or computations beyond grade-school arithmetic. That is not to suggest that it is simplistic. The critical ideas are presented with full rigor, but in a language

and form that someone with no statistical training could follow with minimal effort. The text is based largely on a series of original articles published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* over a 2-year period and designed to meet the needs of medical readers, although the lessons are much wider and require no special medical knowledge.—*John Bailar*

**A Manual for Assessing Health Practices & Designing Practice Policies: The Explicit Approach.** (David M Eddy. Philadelphia: American College of Physicians; 1992. 126 pages. ISBN 0-943126-18-5.) The best introduction to evidence-based medicine and clinical-practice guidelines, this book is superbly comprehensive, detailed, and well written. It describes how to assess health practices; collect, interpret, and combine evidence; compare outcomes and costs; and write and implement clinical-practice guidelines.—*Tom Lang*

**News & Numbers: A Guide to Reporting Statistical Claims and Controversies in Health and Other Fields.** 2nd edition. (Victor Cohn and Lewis Cope. Ames: Iowa State University Press; 2001. 211 pages. ISBN 0-8138-1424-3.) Not so much a reference as a readable introduction to some basic statistical concepts.—*Tom Lang* [Editor's note: A review of this book appeared in the July-August 2002 issue of *Science Editor*. Also see the note about this book in the Science Journalism section later in this article.]

**Tainted Truth: The Manipulation of Fact in America.** (Cynthia Crossen. New York: Touchstone Books; 1996. 276 pages. ISBN 0-684815-56-7.) Not a reference but a readable introduction to some basic statistical concepts.—*Tom Lang*

**Studying a Study and Testing a Test: How to Read the Medical Literature.** 4th edition. (Richard K Riegelman. Boston: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins; 2000. 356 pages. ISBN 0-7817-1860-0.) A readable book with flaw-catching exercises for many of the most important concepts.—*Tom Lang*

## Manuscript Editing and the Teaching of Manuscript Editing

**Scientific Style and Format: The CBE Manual for Authors, Editors, and Publishers.** 6th edition. (Edward Huth, Marianne Brogan, Bruce P Dancik, Thor Kommedahl, David E Nadziejka, Peggy Robinson, and Winfield Swanson. New York: Cambridge University Press; 1994. ISBN 0-521-47154-0.) *Scientific Style and Format* includes sections on general style conventions and the publishing process, but what makes this manual uniquely valuable are the 14 chapters on special scientific conventions, which cover the life sciences, the physical sciences, and mathematics. Just a few of the many topics discussed are the electromagnetic spectrum; chemical names and formulas; drugs and pharmacokinetics; cells, chromosomes, and genes; human history and society; and astronomical objects and time systems.—*Stephanie Deming*

**American Medical Association Manual of Style: A Guide for Authors and Editors.** 9th edition. (Cheryl Iverson, Annette Flanagan, Phil B Fontanarosa, Richard M Glass, Paula Glitman, Jane C Lantz, Harriet S Meyer, Jeanette M Smith, Margaret A Winker, and Roxanne K Young. Baltimore: Williams & Wilkins; 1998. xi + 660 pages. ISBN 0-683-40206-4.) This manual is an excellent guide to the preparation and publication of medical-journal articles. The chapters on ethical and legal considerations and on editorial assessment and processing provide a helpful overview of proper procedures for medical-journal editorial offices. Other sections that are especially valuable are those on formatting of figures and tables, correct and preferred medical usage, and nomenclature. No medical editor should be without this guide.—*Stephanie Deming*

**The Copyeditor's Handbook: A Guide for Book Publishing and Corporate Communications.** (Amy Einsohn. Berkeley: University of California Press; 2000. xii + 560 pages. ISBN 0-520-21834-5.) This useful and richly detailed

*Bookshelf continued*

book has three parts. Part 1, “The ABCs of Copyediting”, succinctly describes the general tasks of copyediting and offers guidance for specific tasks. Anyone who is considering copyediting, editing, or proofreading would benefit from the distinctions drawn among these jobs. Part 2, “Editorial Style”, augments publication and printing manuals by offering guidance on punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and other such goodies. There’s probably little new here for the experienced copyeditor, and some might think Einsohn oversteps in her prescriptive rules for editorial style. Einsohn demonstrates one difficulty in constructing a handbook in Part 3, “Language Editing”. If readers come from varied disciplines, they will find that Part 3 is the least objective part of the book. The glossary is adequate and the exercises offer examples that are usually clear in purpose. *The Copyeditor’s Handbook* deserves a place next to your other style guides. But don’t become complacent. Even the rules etched in stone here, in the hardback edition, may have changed for the new paperback edition (coauthors, Amy and Marc Einsohn).—*Lee Griner* [Editor’s note: A review of this book appeared in the January-February 2001 issue of *Science Editor*.]

**The Gregg Reference Manual.** 9th edition. (William A. Sabin. New York: Glencoe McGraw-Hill; 2001. 610 pages. ISBN 0-02-804046-5.) Although this book does not focus strictly on scientific or medical usage, it is a comprehensive manual containing a discussion of grammar, style, and usage in standard English; a guide for formatting business documents, such as letters, memos, and reports; a glossary of grammatical and computer terms; and a section on pronunciation problems. The book’s thorough index makes finding entries easy, and the text contains sample sentences that clearly illustrate each point. This book is an invaluable source for the information that is not found in standard medical style guides.—*Flo Witte*

**Rhetorical Grammar: Grammatical**

**Choices, Rhetorical Effects.** 4th edition. (Martha Kolln. New York: Longman; 2003. 324 pages. ISBN 0-321-10338-6.) Designed as a classroom text, this book presents grammar in an interesting manner—by looking at the grammatical choices we can make when we write and the effects of those choices on our readers. The book demonstrates that grammar is more than a collection of rules: It is an important tool that, when used deliberately and with awareness, can make sentences and paragraphs clearer and more effective. Kolln increases our confidence in our inherent understanding of our native language by focusing on such topics as sentence rhythm, coordination, subordination, and cohesion, all with an emphasis on reader-centered prose. Careful study of this book can be an eye-opening experience for writers and editors of all types of material, including medical and scientific prose.—*Flo Witte*

**Technical Editing: The Practical Guide for Editors and Writers.** (Judith A. Tarutz. Cambridge, MA: Perseus Publishing; 1992. 480 pages. ISBN 0-201-56356-8.) This book is a great source to use when explaining levels of editing. Tarutz defines the levels and then lists in detail (with examples) what should be edited at each. I’ve found that novice editors, especially, benefit from the checklists of what should be edited at each level, from mechanical editing through developmental editing.—*Diane Berneath Lang*

**The Careful Writer: A Modern Guide to English Usage.** (Theodore M. Bernstein. New York: Atheneum; 1977. 487 pages. ISBN 0-689-70555-7.) Bernstein explains the finer points of the English language in a way that anyone can understand. As opposed to typical grammar books, this book is organized as a glossary of “problem” words presented in alphabetical order. Entries include everything from *based on* to words and their correct prepositions to the correct use of *via*. I love this book: It’s still current, it’s comprehensive, and it’s not pretentious.—*Diane Berneath Lang*

**The BBI Dictionary of English Word Combinations.** Revised edition. (Morton Benson, Evelyn Benson, and Robert Ilson, compilers. Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company; 1997. 386 pages. ISBN 1-55619-521-4.) If you have ever wondered whether the correct usage is “at risk *for*” or “at risk *of*”, this book is for you. Common word arrangements are grouped around principal words (nouns, verbs, or adjectives) and include the prepositions that complete the groupings. For example, entries associated with the word *follow* explain the difference between *follow-up* and *follow up* and give sentence examples using the arrangements *follow-up on*, *follow-up to*, *follow up on*, and *follow up with*. The book’s careful distinction between American usage and British usage (*in the future* or *in future*) is also helpful. This dictionary is a must for writers whose first language is not English, but it is also valuable *for* (or *to!*) native speakers who want to ensure that they are using standard English.—*Flo Witte*

**The Chicago Manual of Style: The Essential Guide for Writers, Editors, and Publishers.** 14th edition. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press; 1993. ix + 921 pages. ISBN 0-226-10389-7.) Perhaps the most highly respected reference work in the field of scholarly publishing in the United States, *The Chicago Manual of Style* is packed with information useful for manuscript editors. Especially helpful for new editors are the chapters “Manuscript Preparation and Copyediting” and “Proofs”, which include a discussion of the types of errors and “infelicities” editors are expected to identify, suggestions for creating style sheets, and instructions (including helpful illustrations) for marking changes in manuscript copy and proofs. The 604-page section on style, which forms the bulk of the book, is a superb guide to punctuation, spelling and distinctive treatment of words, capitalization and punctuation of names and terms, treatment of foreign languages in print, and much more. Look for the 15th edition in the latter half of 2003.—*Stephanie Deming*

## Peer Review

**A Difficult Balance: Editorial Peer Review in Medicine.** (Stephen Lock. Philadelphia: ISI Press; 1985. ISBN 0894950789.) (Editor's note: Please see the note about this book in the Ethical Issues in Research and Publication section later in this article.)

**Peer Review in Health Sciences.** (Fiona Godlee and Tom Jefferson, editors. London: BMJ Books; 1999. 286 pages. ISBN 0-7279-1181-3.) *Peer Review in the Health Sciences* is a first-rate examination of all aspects of peer review, written by 28 experienced editors and specialists from around the world and incorporating the latest research. Godlee, then at the *British Medical Journal*, and Jefferson, of the Oxford (UK) Cochrane Centre, have created a valuable reference tool. Part 1 covers concepts and issues—such as development of peer review, effectiveness, and misconduct—and peer review in non-English and small journals and peer review for grant applications and the pharmaceutical industry. Part 2 is a “how to” section, with such topics as setting up a peer-review system, how to review, and statistical review. Part 3 is about the future of peer review. The book's tone is unflaggingly scholarly, except for a delightfully lighthearted chapter that presents a conversation between Socrates and a journal editor who asks the great man for advice about peer review.—*Addeane Caelleigh* [Editor's note: A review of this book appeared in the July-August 2001 issue of *Science Editor*.]

**Editorial Peer Review: Its Strengths and Weaknesses.** (ASIST Monograph Series. Ann C Weller. Medford, NJ: Information Today, Inc; 2001. 342 pages. ISBN 1-57387-100-1.) At the very heart of quality scholarly-journal publishing is peer review. It is the linchpin for ensuring properly vetted knowledge development and the dissemination of that knowledge to the appropriate group of scholars and practitioners. Weller's coverage of peer review is a tour de force. It is so comprehensive in its coverage that even listing

each chapter's title gives the potential reader only a glimmer of what value lies within. The chapters are 1, “Introduction to the Editorial Peer Review Process”; 2, “The Rejected Manuscript”; 3, “Editors and Editorial Boards: Who They Are and What They Do”; 4, “The Authorship Problem”; 5, “The Role of Reviewers”; 6, “Reviewer Agreement”; 7, “Reviewers and Their Biases”; 8, “Peer Review and Statistical Review”; 9, “Peer Review in an Electronic Environment”; and 10, “Conclusions about Studies of Editorial Peer Review”. If you have time or interest to read only a few books about journal publishing, *Editorial Peer Review* must be one of them.—*Barbara Meyers* [Editor's note: A review of this book appeared in the March-April 2003 issue of *Science Editor*.]

**International Congress on Peer Review in Biomedical Publication.** ([www.jama-peer.org](http://www.jama-peer.org).) This Web site contains the program and abstracts from the fourth (most recent) International Congress on Peer Review in Biomedical Publication, held in September 2001; the program and abstracts from the third congress; and the complete contents of the three special issues of the *Journal of the American Medical Association* containing abstracts and articles from the second, third, and fourth congresses.—*Stephanie Deming*

**Directory of Graduate Research 2001.** (The American Chemical Society. [www.chemistry.org/portal/Chemistry?PID=acsdisplay.html&DOC=education\dgr\index.html](http://www.chemistry.org/portal/Chemistry?PID=acsdisplay.html&DOC=education\dgr\index.html).) This electronic version of the publication, which is prepared and distributed by the American Chemical Society every 2 years, is extremely useful for determining whether a suggested reviewer is best suited for the article at hand or for finding a contributor's address. It provides information about graduate programs in the United States in 12 disciplines: chemistry, chemical engineering, biochemistry, medicinal-pharmaceutical chemistry, clinical chemistry, polymer science, food science, toxicology, marine science, forensic science, materials science, and environmental science. It provides a wealth

of information, including degrees offered, fields of specialization, faculty members, titles of all papers published within the last 2 years, and links to e-mail addresses and graduate Web sites.—*Mary Chapman*

## Publishing

**Guidelines for Scientific Publishing.** 3rd edition. (Anthony Watkinson. ICSU Press Committee on Dissemination of Scientific Information. Paris: International Council for Science; 1999. 96 pages. ISBN 0-930357-44-2.) An electronic version is accessible online at [users.ox.ac.uk/~icsuinfo/guidelines.pdf](http://users.ox.ac.uk/~icsuinfo/guidelines.pdf). Written primarily for the learned or scientific society as either publisher or partner in a contract publishing arrangement, the *Guidelines* are practical in their approach and coverage of the functions in both journal and book publishing—but with a distinct bent toward journals. The sections are deliberately brief but serve as an excellent introduction to and overview of process and procedure, with practical advice regarding a publisher's relationships with authors and suppliers (typesetters, printers, and so on) and some financial tips as well. The first appendix offers copyright and general advice to the journal or book author. The next two present a sample contract between a journal editor and journal publisher and a sample copyright-transfer agreement for journal articles. Worth taking the time to download and print the 96 inside pages, but skip the front and back covers, which are merely reverse-outs of the title, and save that much of your ink cartridge.—*Barbara Meyers*

**Journal Publishing.** (Gillian Page, Robert Campbell, and Jack Meadows. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press; 1997. 419 pages. ISBN 0-521-44137-4.) This is the only book I'm aware of that's devoted solely to the process of publishing scholarly journals. It is an essential addition to the personal library of any student or professional involved in the development, production, promotion, and distribution of what is known as the primary—archival—literature of the pro-

*Bookshelf continued*

fessions, scholarship, science, technology, and medicine. The authors' stated aim is "to cover all major aspects of the subject, discussing commonly occurring problems, and . . . answer[ing] the most frequently asked questions". The table of contents bears this out as Page, Campbell, and Meadows pack the 11 chapters with much pertinent and useful information. They start with 1, "Introduction to Journals"; 2, "Editing"; 3, "Production"; 4, "Marketing"; 5, "Subscription Management and Distribution"; and 6, "Non-subscription Revenue". Having covered the mechanics, they move on to 7, "Legal and Ethical Aspects"; 8, "Financial Aspects"; and 9, "Bibliographic Aspects". They finish with the practical: 10, "Managing a List of Journals and the Future"; and 11, "Electronic Publishing". Both appendixes are useful, as are the glossary, bibliography, and index.—*Barbara Meyers*

**Professional and Scholarly Publishing in the Digital Age.** (Czeslaw Jan Grycz, editor. Developed and written by the members of the Association of American Publishers Professional and Scholarly Publishing Division's Electronic Information Committee. New York: Association of American Publishers, Inc; 1997. 144 pages. ISBN 0-933-63634-2.) In the preface, Grycz presents two critical questions: "For whom was this paper written?" "What does this paper intend to address/accomplish?" His answer to the first is "professional and scholarly publishers . . . grappling with the real issues of Internet expansion and forming strategies by which to take advantage of its possibilities without eroding the revenue streams on which print publishers depend to perform their functions." And in his answer to the second, he notes the desire to assist "readers in organizing their own opinions, evaluating the positions of their own publishing houses, and thinking about publishing concerns from the perspective of their own constituencies". This white paper covers all that and more. And it is worthy of careful reading not just by those working in publishing but by our colleagues in other communities—academics, archivists, librarians, authors, researchers,

and university administrators. *Professional and Scholarly Publishing in the Digital Age* accomplishes a most important task: it gives full voice to the publishers' position in this world of constant technologic change.—*Barbara Meyers*

**Ethical Issues in Research and Publication**

**Stealing into Print: Fraud, Plagiarism, and Misconduct in Scientific Publishing.** (Marcel C LaFollette. Berkeley: University of California Press; 1992. 293 pages. ISBN 0-520-20513-8.) This monograph addresses the role of publishing in the scientific community by examining the history of the publishing profession and how the scientific and political cultures have shaped its current state.—*Mary Scheetz*

**A Difficult Balance: Editorial Peer Review in Medicine.** (Stephen Lock. Philadelphia: ISI Press; 1985. ISBN 0894950789.) This is considered the classic resource for understanding publishing and research-integrity issues, particularly as they pertain to peer review in biomedical research. Lock reviews the integrity and problems associated with peer review and other information-dissemination issues.—*Mary Scheetz*

**Ethical Issues in Biomedical Publication.** (Anne Hudson Jones and Faith McLellan, editors. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press; 2000. 376 pages. ISBN 0-8018-6315-5.) This monograph identifies critical issues in biomedical publication, traces their history, and reviews standards and current debates. Topics include authorship, peer review, duplicate publishing, conflict of interest, and electronic publishing. The contributors to the monograph represent a wide array of disciplines and include editors, administrators, scholars, scientists, and lawyers, thereby presenting an eclectic mix of professional insights.—*Mary Scheetz* [Editor's note: A review of this book appeared in the May-June 2001 issue of *Science Editor*.]

**COPE: Committee on Publication**

**Ethics.** ([www.publicationethics.org.uk](http://www.publicationethics.org.uk)) COPE: Committee on Publication Ethics is an excellent, although unusual, resource. In the middle 1990s, a small group of editors in the United Kingdom began to meet informally to discuss confidentially the ethics cases at their journals. In 1997, an expanded group organized formally as COPE, which has wide influence and authority among UK editors. It has drawn up "Guidelines on Good Publication Practice", which lays down specific standards for all parties (author, reviewer, and editor) and covers topics from study design to conflict of interest and media relations. The papers from annual meetings are often thought-provoking. The unusual resource, however, is the cases submitted for COPE's consideration. Each case is described briefly with a bulleted list of points considered most pertinent and the final decision. The decision can range from "no action required" to direct action. The cases are reported each year in the annual report (available at [www.bmjbookshop.com](http://www.bmjbookshop.com)), but everything is available at and may be downloaded from the COPE Web site.—*Addeane Caelleigh*

**Science Journalism**

**A Field Guide for Science Writers.** (Deborah Blum and Mary Knudson, editors. New York: Oxford University Press; 1997. 287 pages. ISBN 0-19-510068-9.) This book, a project of the National Association of Science Writers (NASW), explains what science writers do and how to do it. Consisting of 31 chapters, all by science writers, the book includes material on writing for various media, science-writing techniques, covering specific fields of science, and opportunities outside the media (for example, in public information). Although slightly dated, this book remains an excellent source of guidance. And NASW reports that a new edition is in the works.—*Barbara Gastel*

**Health Writer's Handbook.** (Barbara Gastel. Ames: Iowa State University Press; 1998. 238 pages. ISBN 0-8138-2113-4.) It is difficult to find a topic related to health

writing that this book does not cover. The *Health Writer's Handbook* proved helpful when I was a student (Chapter 13, "Career Options", was of interest), an intern at a government agency (Chapter 7, "Health-Writing Technique", came in handy when I wrote my first press release), and a medical reporter (Chapter 6, "Evaluating Information", was helpful for an amateur medical-journal reader), and I continue to use the book now that I am an editor (just last week I reread Chapter 9, "Sensitivity and Style") and an occasional mentor. I recommend the book to anyone thinking about going into medical writing.—*Katherine Arnold*

**Medical Journalism: Exposing Fact, Fiction, Fraud.** (Ragnar Levi. Ames: Iowa State University Press; 2001. 212 pages. ISBN 0-8138-0303-9.) This book takes a critical look at media coverage of medical research, and it gives reporters some basic tools for evaluating research themselves. It stresses the importance of evidence-based medicine and identifies common pitfalls in the evaluation of research. Although the book is perhaps best suited as a text for discussion in a classroom, its lessons are important and should be revisited often.—*Katherine Arnold* [Editor's note: A review of this book appeared in the March-April 2002 issue of *Science Editor*.]

**National Association of Science Writers.** [www.nasw.org](http://www.nasw.org). Seekers of reading material on science writing can do well to access the Web site of the National Association of Science Writers (NASW). Items posted for public use include the 30-plus-page NASW publication *Communicating Science News: A Guide for Public Information Officers, Scientists and Physicians*, records of selected discussions from NASW e-mail lists, and pieces of science writing that won recent NASW Science-in-Society Journalism Awards. Also, the members-only part of the site, accessible by password, includes issues, dating back to fall 1995, of NASW's highly substantive quarterly newsletter, *ScienceWriters*.—*Barbara Gastel*

**News & Numbers: A Guide to Reporting Statistical Claims and Controversies in Health and Other Fields.** 2nd edition. (Victor Cohn and Lewis Cope. Ames: Iowa State University Press; 2001. 211 pages. ISBN 0-8138-1424-3.) Despite its title, this book contains relatively few numbers and hardly any calculations. Rather, it is largely a reporter's guide to evaluating study design, understanding statistical concepts, and interpreting findings. Particular strengths include lists of questions to ask about studies. Although most relevant to reporters covering medical research or environmental controversies, the book, which includes a chapter on polls, can aid nearly any journalist wanting to report more scientifically.—*Barbara Gastel* [Editor's note: A review of this book appeared in the July-August 2002 issue of *Science Editor*. Also see the note about this book in the Statistics section earlier in this article.]

**How to Report Statistics in Medicine: Annotated Guidelines for Authors, Editors, and Reviewers.** (Thomas A Lang and Michelle Secic. Philadelphia: American College of Physicians; 1997. 367 pages. ISBN 0-943126-44-4.) All the content editors in my office have a copy of this book. Although Lang and Secic did not consider journalists as their primary audience, the information presented is clear and accessible to people who, when they encounter statistical information, don't cower and instead want to know more. What is the difference between an odds ratio and a hazard ratio? Sensitivity and specificity? Positive predictive value and negative predictive value? This book's thorough glossary, complete with references to the relevant sections in the main text, can tell you.—*Katherine Arnold* [Editor's note: Also see the note about this book in the Statistics section earlier in this article.]

### For New Scientists

**At the Bench: A Laboratory Navigator.** (Kathy Barker. Woodbury, NY: Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press; 1998. 460

pages. ISBN 0-87-969523-4.) A book full of advice and "recipes" to help the young graduate student in science get off to a good start and become a "good citizen" in the laboratory. As the blurb on the back of the book says, this book is "much more than a simple primer or lab manual, . . . Wise, light-hearted, but thoroughly practical, Dr. Barker offers advice, moral support, social etiquette, and professional reassurance along with assume-nothing, step-by-step instructions for those basic but vital laboratory procedures that experienced investigators know—but may not realize novices don't." This book is a great graduation gift for someone headed to graduate school in science. Wish I had had something like this back when . . . —*Martha Tacker*

### Freelancing

A beauty of working independently is that you grow to know your personal work style, the things that make the job you do good, fast, efficient. I've learned that I need three things to make my work successful: quick and accurate reference material, up-to-the-minute science information, and good music for background listening.—*Elaine A Richman*

**NCBI's Citation Matcher for Single Articles.** ([www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/entrez/query/static/citmatch.html](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/entrez/query/static/citmatch.html).) This is a trusted favorite among my reference materials. NCBI is the National Center for Biotechnology Information of the National Library of Medicine. Are you working on a list of citations in which a page number is missing? Does your document list three authors before "et al." when your style manual calls for five? Do you want to know the proper abbreviation for a scientific journal? At NCBI's *Citation Matcher*, you plug in as much information as you have about a citation, and it provides the rest. Even the author's last name and a page number can be enough to go on. Clicking on the citation brings up the article abstract. From there, you can follow links to related articles and books and often to the complete article.—*Elaine A Richman*

## Bookshelf continued

Another good reference source is **Merriam-Webster** online ([www.m-w.com/dictionary.htm](http://www.m-w.com/dictionary.htm)), when Microsoft Word's thesaurus and spell check are just not enough.—*Elaine A Richman*

**The Scientist.** (Philadelphia: *The Scientist*; [www.the-scientist.com](http://www.the-scientist.com)) and **Science** (Washington, DC: American Association for the Advancement of Science; [www.sciencemag.org](http://www.sciencemag.org).) For science information, I trust hard-copy versions of *The Scientist* and *Science*. Both publications cover a variety of topics, from the physical sciences to the social sciences. Perfect for a generalist. Headline writing is rich and revealing. Captions are excellent. If time is short, at the least I scan issues to see what's hot. Reading letters to the editor and editorials reveals the current controversies.—*Elaine A Richman*

**moontaxi.** ([www.moontaxi.com](http://www.moontaxi.com).) Finally, for music, I've been using an impressive site called moontaxi. It carries continuous music. You can choose from jazz, blues, "Just Mozart", classic rock, Motown, Caribbean, piano masters, and so on and so forth. You can listen to hosted shows that explore classical music or jazz or pop. Soon, they say, listeners will be able to search from thousands of titles to hear exactly what they want. I just want a resource that provides excellent music while I work away. Moontaxi succeeds.—*Elaine A Richman*

### Web-Site Design

**Web Style Guide: Basic Design Principles for Creating Web Sites.** 2nd edition. (Patrick J Lynch and Sarah Horton. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press; 2001. 223 pages. ISBN 0-300-09682-8.) This book may be too technical for some writers, but it is a must for those who need to create their own Web site with little or no professional in-house technical support. I like the idea of being a knowledgeable consumer even when I do have professional support, and this book gives me the overview needed.—*Sally Edwards* [Editor's note: The

full text of this book is also available online at [www.webstyleguide.com](http://www.webstyleguide.com). A review of this book appeared in the January-February 2003 issue of *Science Editor*.]

**Writing for the Web (Writer's Edition).** (Crawford Kilian. Bellingham, WA: Self-Counsel Press; 2000. 160 pages. ISBN 1-55180-207-4.) The Kilian book is one of the few resources (and probably the best) that focus on writing and editing for the Web.—*Sally Edwards*

In addition, good information about writing and editing for the Web is available on the Web itself, especially at [www.netmechanic.com](http://www.netmechanic.com) and [www.useit.com](http://www.useit.com) (Jakob Nielsen's Web site). Anything by Jakob Nielsen is helpful.—*Sally Edwards*

### Contributors

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