

# Committee Update: Style Manual Subcommittee

**Peggy Robinson, Chair**

Summer 2004 was the season of the CSE Style Manual Subcommittee's final push to complete the manuscript for the seventh edition of *Scientific Style and Format*, affectionately known as *SSF7*. The contract with Rockefeller University Press for printing and production services was signed in spring 2004, and the committee is looking forward to working with Rockefeller staff. The CSE Publications Committee is lending its support in several ways. Members of that committee are considering a variety of options for eventual electronic publication of the manual, developing plans to ensure appropriately targeted marketing, and providing a final content review (the latter in addition to the scrutiny of individual chapters by expert external reviewers).

Users of the new manual will see several changes. First and foremost, if standard-setting bodies have updated their recommendations since publication of the previous edition, the new edition will reflect the changes. For example, the nomenclature codes for viruses, plants, and animals have all been revised in recent years.<sup>1</sup> In addition, taxonomy and nomenclature information has been consolidated into a single chapter because many of the principles of taxonomy are the same across kingdoms. Some chapters have been expanded to cover additional aspects of a scientific discipline. For

example, the chapter on the earth now includes style and format conventions for oceanography, limnology, and meteorology. Other chapters have been newly created or modified in response to users' input. For example, two new chapters (on editorial policy and on copyright) have been added in response to requests for guidance on ethical aspects of publication. The references chapter covers the citation of electronic resources<sup>2</sup> in detail, reflecting the numerous inquiries that our references expert has received on this topic. Similarly, *SSF7* references will include URLs for authoritative standards and recommendations that are available on the Internet so that users can access the most recent versions of such documents.

Now that the creation of *SSF7* is nearing fruition, a bit of reflection on the work of the Style Manual Subcommittee seems in order. In addition to the predictable challenges associated with long-distance volunteer committee work, we have become acutely aware of the difficulties posed by variant standards set by different authoritative bodies. Organizations that set such standards typically consist of experts in various fields who address the needs and priorities of their own disciplines. The result of that process may be different recommendations for the same thing. One striking example with which many *Science Editor* readers are already familiar is the variation in rules of genetic

nomenclature set by the groups that study different organisms.<sup>3</sup> In such cases, we feel that CSE cannot independently choose among the various recommendations. It would be unrealistic to expect *Drosophila* (fruit fly) geneticists to change their nomenclature practices if the CSE style manual recommended that everyone follow the rules set for *Mus* (mice). However, we do hope that juxtaposition of such variants in *SSF* will highlight such disparities and that the experts will start to consider not just standardizing but also harmonizing terminology, style, and format across disciplines and subdisciplines.

Although *SSF* does not cover the "field" of astrology, the stars are aligning favorably for publication of the new CSE style manual next spring. Watch the CSE Web site and this publication for further information in the coming months.

## References

1. Kommedahl T, Robinson P, on behalf of the Style Manual Subcommittee. Updates on nomenclature of viruses, plants, and animals. *Sci Ed* 2001;24(3):86-7.
2. Patrias K, for the CSE Style Manual Subcommittee. Citations to the Internet. *Sci Ed* 2002;25(3):90-2.
3. Edwards J, on behalf of the CSE Style Manual Subcommittee. *SSF7*, Chapter 21: Genes, chromosomes, and related genetic materials: a preview. *Sci Ed* 2002;25(1):15-6.