BOOK REVIEW


Most books about scientific writing are on writing as such and are very general. Day, in contrast, concentrates on preparing articles for primary, refereed journals, and how to get articles published. The first edition was highly successful, which was particularly gratifying to me since Day's book is the first I've seen whose approach to teaching scientific writing and whose emphases are the same as in my course on the subject. Such instruction could be subtitled "103 tricks of the trade for slipping a manuscript past an editor".

I wish Day did not say "... the goal of research is publication", however much I agree that research must be published and that the scientist "... becomes known by publications". Philosophical differences aside, Day presents a "how to" book that can be used as a reference text: How to Prepare the Title, How to list the Authors, How to list the Addresses, How to Write the Introduction, and on through 10 more to How to Deal with Editors and How to Deal with Printers.

He does not start at the beginning. Our goal is to help young scientists convert notebooks of raw data into a publishable manuscript. The first step is to organize the data, and some courses on "writing" cover virtually nothing else. One might conclude from reading Day that the article can be written first and then the tables and graphs prepared. But that is only a matter of the order in which chapters are arranged. The reason I would not require my students to buy the first edition as the course textbook is the many errors of omission. The 2nd edition is no improvement. Like many books about writing, Day's repeatedly identifies problems in scientific writing for which no solutions are offered. He does not explain why the errors arise and how to recognize and repair them or how to avoid them. There is about a page of examples of wildly dangling gerunds and participles with no explanation of how to avoid or correct them. There are 5 examples of titles with syntactical errors with only 1 example of how to correct such a title. Lists are offered (The Ten Commandments of Good Writing, The Ten Commandments of Good Speaking) that are wholly cast sarcastically in the form of bad examples. Day thinks this is humorous. It most certainly is not constructive. This attitude seems to assume the readers are already erudite and practiced writers and that Day can write for their amusement, not their instruction.

This is a shame because when he sets himself to be wholly instructive a superb job is done. His exposition on Tense in Scientific Writing is surely the best I have seen, and fine discussions are presented on the Review Process, and Ethics, Rights, and Permissions, among others. Day's experience as an editor shows to excellent advantage in these sections.

After the section on writing and publishing primary articles (1st 17 chapters) several chapters cover specific topics such as How to Present a Paper Orally, How to Write a Thesis, How to Write a Book Review, and the like. These are brief chapters with considerable rumination and philosophizing and a handful of useful suggestions. Overall, they are weak. The new
chapter on The Electronic Manuscript says only that word processors are the coming thing, and they have advantages. Its inclusion gives no improvement over the 1st edition.

In brief, Day is too brief. Nevertheless, his book is the most useful of its genre. Get it and use it. It will help you grease your MS so it will slide past the crustiest old editor.—S. H. Kerr, Dept. of Entomology and Nematology, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611 USA.


Dr. Flint has prepared a systematic analysis of the caddisflies of the Area Platense, Argentina, including keys and descriptions of the thirty-one species occurring in the area. The paper has keys to the 6 families and the 11 genera as well as brief descriptions of the habitats, comments on distribution, and methods for collecting and preserving the immature and adult stages.

The booklet comprises the second issue of the journal “Biología Acuática”. Those persons wanting to learn more about the journal or to order Dr. Flint’s paper should write to Analía C. Paggi, Instituto de Limnología, Casilla de Correo 55, 1923 Rosisso, Argentina.—Lewis Berner, Department of Zoology, University of Florida, Gainesville 32611 USA.