

EAHIL Workshop

Implementation of quality systems and certification of biomedical libraries
Palermo, June 23-25, 2005

Instructions to authors as a tool to improve journals editorial quality

Paola De Castro, Sara Modigliani, Anna Maria Rossi, Sandra Salinetti
Publishing Activities, Istituto Superiore di Sanità, Rome (Italy)
e-mail: paola.decastro@iss.it

WHY INSTRUCTIONS TO AUTHORS?

Instructions to Authors (IA) contain detailed information on journal requirements, policies and standards and therefore represent a valuable starting point to measure editorial quality as a whole. The content of a publication does not depend on its formal presentation, a formally correct publication, however, will better convey a valuable content.

HOW DO THEY INFLUENCE QUALITY?

IA are the first guidelines that an author has to use to produce a publishable paper in a given journal. Authors following valuable instructions are guided to produce a formally correct publication and are obliged to adjust their texts to recommended standards.

WHICH IS THE OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY?

The study intends to provide general recommendations to guarantee editorial quality after a survey and comparison of the different items included in the IA of selected periodicals.

HOW WAS THE SURVEY CARRIED OUT?

A valuable sample of high rank journals (56) (Annex) was taken from the Social Science Citation Index (SSCI) in the subject category of "Information Science and Library Science". The SSCI is produced by the Institute of Scientific Information (ISI) which assigns an Impact Factor (IF) to a given set of journals. IF has always been generating the most challenging discussions in terms of quality assessment of articles produced in selected areas and by different countries; there is no doubt, however, that ISI figures alone do not guarantee an overall quality evaluation of a publication, even if journals included in ISI databases have overcome selection criteria assuring a recognized high status in the publication arena. The items included in the IA of these journals (56) were studied and compared.

WHICH RESULTS?

The results obtained permitted to produce recommendations concerning the basic items that IA should include to guarantee the best editorial quality.

First of all, IA should be available online and easily printed, as a whole document, since they represent a reference tool in the manuscript preparation and online hypertextual reading is not always appropriate for this purpose.

The following recommended items were drawn also after an analysis and comparison with the IA of the "big five" biomedical journals (*Annals of Internal Medicine*, *BMJ*, *JAMA*, *The Lancet*, *The New*

England Journal of Medicine). They apply "Vancouver style" for the best writing and editing of their publications. These uniform requirements are now shared by more than 500 biomedical journals guaranteeing a high quality editorial level. A similar agreement should be developed in the social science field according to the following recommendations.

RECOMMENDED ITEMS

The recommended items to be included in IA should consider:

- **Contribution types**
Each type (research article, review, short note, etc.) should be clearly described to allow the author selecting the best editorial product suitable to his/her work.
- **Title page**
It should include the title of the article (as concise and informative as possible), author(s) name and institutional affiliation. A brief autobiographical note should be supplied for each author. Mailing address, phone and fax number, and e-mail of the corresponding author should be preferably indicated on a separate sheet or file.
- **Structure of the article**
The main text should be organized according to a given structure starting with an Introduction going to separate sections dealing with the different items considered in the paper and ending with Conclusions or Recommendations. If appropriate, the text should be followed by acknowledgements or annexes. An average length of the text should be indicated being of help both to author and editor.
- **Abstract and keywords**
The abstract is usually of 150-200 words and should summarize the significant coverage and findings of the paper. A recommended structured abstract should include the following sub-headings: purpose, methodology/approach, findings, research limitations/implications (if applicable), practical implications (if applicable), originality/value of the paper. A non-structured abstract should highlight the scope, methodology and conclusions of the paper. Each paper should also have three to six relevant keywords.
- **Tables, figures**
Technical details should be clearly stated. Tables and figures should be kept to a minimum, be informative and relevant, and be presented on separate sheets or files. The place where they are inserted in the text should be indicated clearly.
- **Style of references**
Recommended uniform style should be given in IA such as APA, Chicago, Harvard style and should be shared by most journals in Library and Information Science, as Vancouver style is in most biomedical journals.
- **Peer review process**
The policy of peer review (blind/double-blind, timing, etc.) should be clearly stated to avoid any possible misconduct or misunderstanding by authors, reviewers or editors.
- **Manuscript submission**
Authors should be encouraged to submit their manuscript electronically as email attachment. The name and address of the person to whom the article should be sent for submission (editor in chief, member of the editorial board, etc.) as well as the managing and advertising editors should be clearly indicated to avoid any confusion and lack of time.

JOURNAL IDENTITY CARD

Information on the journal, referred to as “Journal Identity Card”, is also very important not only for authors but also for any person interested in the journal itself to be properly informed on its aims and position in the national and international editorial scenario.

The recommended items to be included in the journal identity card are:

- Aims, scope and readership
- Editorial Board
- Publisher
- Frequency
- Impact Factor
- Inclusion in databases
- ISSN, DOI
- Online availability
- Subscription price
- Copyright policy

INSTRUCTIONS TO AUTHORS AS A TOOL TO IMPROVE JOURNALS EDITORIAL QUALITY

Paola De Castro, Sara Modigliani, Anna Maria Rossi, Sandra Salinetti

Istituto Superiore di Sanità, Rome (Italy)
Contact: e-mail: 3487794251; paola.decastro@iss.it

WHY INSTRUCTIONS TO AUTHORS?
Instructions to Authors (IA) contain detailed information on journal requirements, policies and standards and therefore represent a valuable starting point to measure editorial quality as a whole. The content of a publication does not depend on its formal presentation, a formally correct publication, however, will better convey a valuable content.

HOW DO THEY INFLUENCE QUALITY?
IA are the first guidelines that an author has to use to produce a publishable paper in a given journal. Authors following valuable instructions are guided to produce a formally correct publication and are obliged to adjust their texts to recommended standards.

WHICH IS THE OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY?
Provide general recommendations to guarantee editorial quality after a survey and comparison of the different items included in the IA of selected periodicals.

HOW WAS THE SURVEY CARRIED OUT?
A valuable sample of high rank journals (56) was taken from the Social Science Citation Index (SSCI) in the subject category of "Information Science and Library Science". The SSCI is produced by the Institute of Scientific Information (ISI) which assigns an Impact Factor (IF) to a given set of journals. IF has always been generating the most challenging discussions in terms of quality assessment of articles produced in selected areas and by different countries; there is no doubt, however, that ISI figures alone do not guarantee an overall quality evaluation of publication, even if journals included in ISI databases have overcome selection criteria assuring a recognized high status in the publication arena. The items included in the IA of these journals (56) were studied and compared.

WHICH RESULTS?
The results obtained permitted to produce recommendations concerning the basic items that IA should include to guarantee the best editorial quality.

First of all, IA should be available online and easily printed, as a whole document, since they represent a reference tool in the manuscript preparation and online hypertextual reading is not always appropriate for this purpose. The following recommended items were drawn also after an analysis and comparison with the IA of the "big five" biomedical journals (*Annals of Internal Medicine*, *BMJ*, *JAMA*, *The Lancet*, *The New England Journal of Medicine*). They apply "manuscript style" for the best writing and editing of their publications. These uniform requirements are now shared by more than 500 biomedical journals guaranteeing a high quality editorial level. A similar agreement should be developed in the social science field according to the following recommendations.

Instructions to authors
RECOMMENDED ITEMS should consider...

- contribution types (research article, review, short note, etc.)
- title page (title, authors' name and institutional affiliation, corresponding author, etc.)
- structure of the article (length, sections)
- abstract (length, sections) and keywords
- tables, figures (technical details)
- style of references (APA, Chicago, Harvard, Vancouver)
- peer review process (blind/double-blind, timing, etc.)
- manuscript submission (online, e-mail, paper copy)

As regards JOURNAL INFORMATION, this Identity Card is proposed.

JOURNAL IDENTITY CARD

- Aims, scope and readership
- Editorial Board
- Publisher
- Frequency
- Impact Factor
- Inclusion in databases
- ISSN, DOI
- Online availability
- Subscription price
- Copyright policy

EAHIL Workshop
Implementation of quality systems
and certification of biomedical libraries
Palermo, June 23-25, 2005

(Graphics by Alessandro Spurio)

Poster presented at the EAHIL Workshop in Palermo (2005). Einstein's pocket contains copies of the poster in small size

Annex.
JOURNAL LIST from the *Social Sciences Citation Index*
“INFORMATION SCIENCE & LIBRARY SCIENCE”

1. Annual Review of Information Science and Technology
2. Asist Monograph Series
3. Aslib Proceedings
4. Canadian Journal of Information and Library Science-*Revue Canadienne Des Sciences De L Information Et De Bibliotheconomie*
5. College & Research Libraries
6. Econtent
7. Electronic Library
8. Government Information Quarterly
9. Information & Management
10. Information Processing & Management
11. Information Research-An International Electronic Journal
12. Information Society
13. Information Systems Journal
14. Information Systems Research
15. Information Technology and Libraries
16. Interlending & Document Supply
17. International Journal of Geographical Information Science
18. International Journal of Information Management
19. Journal of Academic Librarianship
20. Journal of Documentation
21. Journal of Government Information
22. Journal of Health Communication
23. Journal of Information Ethics
24. Journal of Information Science
25. Journal of Information Technology
26. Journal of Librarianship and Information Science
27. Journal of Management Information Systems
28. Journal of Scholarly Publishing
29. Journal of the American Medical Informatics Association
30. Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology
31. Journal of the Medical Library Association
32. Knowledge Organization
33. Law Library Journal
34. Library & Information Science Research
35. Library and Information Science
36. Library Collections Acquisitions & Technical Services
37. Library Journal
38. Library Quarterly
39. Library Resources & Technical Services
40. Library Trends
41. Libri
42. Mis Quarterly
43. Online
44. Online Information Review
45. Portal-Libraries and the Academy
46. Proceedings of the Asist Annual Meeting
47. Program-Electronic Library and Information Systems
48. Reference & User Services Quarterly
49. Research Evaluation
50. Restaurator-International Journal for the Preservation of Library and Archival Material
51. Scientist
52. Scientometrics
53. Social Science Computer Review
54. Social Science Information sur les Sciences Sociales
55. Telecommunications Policy
56. Zeitschrift für Bibliothekswesen und Bibliographie