

How To Write and Publish a Scientific Paper, by Robert A. Day. ISI Press, 3501 Market Street, University City Science Center, Philadelphia, PA 19104. xi + 160 pages. \$8.95 (paper), \$15.00 (cloth).

This small volume is a product of the author's many years of experience in teaching a graduate seminar in scientific writing at Rutgers University and his 25 years as a managing editor. By Day's admission, this is a "how to" cook book. His stated objective is "to help scientists and students of the sciences in all disciplines (but with emphasis on biology) to prepare manuscripts that will have a high probability of being accepted for publication and of being completely understood when they are published." Of course, having significant information to share is perhaps the most important criterion for eventual acceptance of a manuscript.

The 160 pages are divided into 26 chapters of 2–12 pages, 6 appendices, references, and an index. Seventeen chapters begin with "how to" and include how to list the authors, list the addresses, prepare the abstract, and write the introduction, materials and methods, results, discussion, and literature cited. Other chapters include how to design effective tables and prepare effective illustrations, where and how to submit the manuscript, how to deal with editors, and ethics, rights, and permissions. Day admits the book "is in no sense a substitute for a course in English grammar," but 3 chapters cover use and misuse of English, avoiding jargon, and how and when to use abbreviations. The appendices give a list of journal title word abbreviations, abbreviations that may be used without definition in table headings, common errors in style and in spelling, words and expressions to avoid, prefixes and abbreviations for SI [Système International d'Unités], and accepted abbreviations and symbols.

One of the delights of this book is the light, simple style in which it is written. When I first examined the book 3 years ago, I felt some of the writing was trite and not essential. I haven't completely abandoned this view, but obviously Day's purpose in choosing this writing style is to get the reader's attention while making a point. I believe Day succeeds well. For example, in discussing syntax, he tells of stumbling upon a title, "Preliminary Canine and Clinical Evaluation of a New Antitumor Agent, Streptovitacin." Day commented, "When that dog gets through evaluating streptovitacin, I've got some work I'd like to have him look over."

In discussing letters from editors requesting manuscript changes, Day says, "If the requested changes are relatively few and slight, you should go ahead and make them. As King Arthur used to say, 'Don't get on your high horse unless you have a deep moat to cross.'" Day pokes fun at that chronic grammatical problem, the dangling modifier, by saying, "Those of you who use chromatographic procedures may be interested in a new technique reported in a manuscript recently submitted to the *Journal of Bacteriology*: 'By filtering through Whatman no. 1 filter paper, Smith separated the components.'" Day generously provides many such examples to the reader.

The substance of this book is serious, however, and Day effectively makes his points. Importantly, the material covered is that needed by any author, but by the novice author in particular. The reader is led through the writing process in an orderly progression, from "How To Prepare the Title" to "How To Order and Use Reprints." Day's style is a very personal one, casual, as if he were talking to a friend. It is this casual style that sets this book apart from many others that have been written about technical writing.

Should you purchase the book? I highly recommend it if your objectives are im-

proving writing skills and knowledge of the manuscript publication process. I am reluctant to require that students purchase books not essential to the courses I teach, but one criterion I use is: What book(s) should a student take with him/her when leaving school? Which are the really important ones? I now require this book for my course in scientific writing because it is

significant to my instruction, and it will be a useful addition to the student's personal library.

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Editor's Note

The Editor highly recommends this book and urges each author to read it before submitting a manuscript to *The Ohio Journal of Science*.