



The Editor's Red Pencil

By Barry Drees

Greetings fellow members,

Well, here we are already, the second issue with the new format, and I'd like to start things off by thanking all those members who helped me put together the first issue (some of whom I was able to subsequently press into service on the editorial board) and all of you who've written or called me with comments or support for the first issue. Especially noteworthy in this regard were the extensive comments and suggestions on publishing from Karen Shashok in far away Granada. I was hoping for the new format to make a big splash and, judging by the feedback I got, it succeeded.

It was not, however, without problems. Let's be honest, using chaos theory as a guiding principle for proof reading and copy editing was not a good idea. Each article was sent to the publisher separately, by different people, and a final copy edit was not possible for all sections. The result was that the entire issue was merrily sprinkled with typos (Can you find them all?). Many people wrote to me mentioning a few and it was interesting to see that almost everyone noticed something different (although, true to the spirit of Edgar Allan Poe's The Purloined Letter, no one seemed to notice that the page numbers in the table of contents were wrong!). The most obvious and straightforward thing, therefore, is that each issue from now on will be compiled in its entirety at one place where it can be proofread before it is sent to the publisher. We will also demand a copy of the final journal for a last, comprehensive copyedit. This should eliminate inconsistencies in format and reduce those irritating typos.

Let's be honest, using chaos theory as a guiding principle for proof reading and copy editing was not a good idea.

My main concern with the first issue was content, but it now looks like that won't be the problem it was in the past, so now we're looking to jazz up the format and presentation a bit. Thus, you'll probably be noticing further changes and refinements in the next few issues. As always, any input you'd like to offer on the new format would be more than welcome; after all, the journal belongs to all the members, and it should reflect your needs and interests.

I'd now like to introduce everyone to the first members of our new editorial board. I'm thrilled to have the pleasure of working with such highly qualified and enthusiastic colleagues (they must be enthusiastic if they volunteered for this). Please remember that they are all helping me produce a first-class journal when you get their call in the middle of the night asking you to submit a piece.

Julia Forjanic-Klapproth consulted with me extensively on the initial design of the new format and will be joining *The Write Stuff* as our Artistic Director. She hails originally from Vancouver, Canada, did her doctoral work on the molecular genetics of neurogenesis in *Drosophila melanogaster* in Germany, and has a minor degree in Fine Arts from Simon Fraser University in Vancouver. She is a published poet as well as a medical writer and has had a lifelong interest in art and graphic design, as well as a fascination with exotic papers.

Sarah Heritage joins us from Sanofi in the UK where she is currently a senior medical writer after having done her doctorate at St. Georges Hospital Medical School in London on the effects of various vasoactive agents on the human placenta. She has volunteered to take over the "Meetings of Interest" section which was easily the section in the new format which generated the biggest response. If this were a newspaper, Sarah would be our sports editor as she lists windsurfing, badminton, cycling, and snowboarding as her hobbies.

Believe me, no one felt worse about the typographical errors in the last issue than me, so in an attempt to insure that this doesn't happen again, I've been extremely fortunate to obtain the inestimable skills of my colleague Chris Priestley, who has an eye for detail second to none, and who will be our copy editor. Chris studied languages at the Universities of Bath (England) and Innsbruck (Austria) and worked as a translator at HMR for 5 years before becoming a medical writer.

I am particularly pleased that I was able to add some (as they say in the sports pages) veteran experience to the board by coaxing Liz Wager out of EMWA journal editorial retirement (she was the editor in 1993-1994) to take over the "From the Literature" section. Liz also brings to the job her extremely varied professional experience. She has a degree in zoology from Oxford, was an editor with Blackwell Scientific Publications, was National Chairperson of the UK section of Amnesty International, and last but not least, is currently a medical writer at Janssen. She's a member of EASE and CBE as well as EMWA, gives courses on medical publications throughout Europe, and enjoys choral singing, B&W photography and opera in her spare time (goodness, what spare time?).

You'll notice that we are continuing to evolve with our journal in that we're adding author photos and a more standardized format. We're also attempting to give each issue a unifying theme, so it may be that what is promised in the "Next issue" segment doesn't appear right away, but don't worry, you'll see it eventually. Finally, I've been thrilled with the positive response in terms of members sending articles, but let's not get complacent. There's lots of you out there I haven't heard from yet and after all, this is your journal too!

Dr. Barry Drees
Hoechst Marion Roussel
Bldg. H-840
D-65926 Frankfurt am Main, Germany
barry.drees@hmrag.com
Tel: (49) 69 305 3834 Fax: (49) 69 305 80070