Book Review


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The Scientific Style and Format: The CSE Manual for Authors, Editors, and Publishers published by the Council of Science Editors (CSE) is an invaluable resource for authors, editors, and publishers alike in the scientific community. The CSE, formerly called the Council of Biology Editors until January 1, 2000, was established in 1957 through the collaborative work of the National Science Foundation and the American Institute of Biological Sciences [1]. The Council of Biology Editors issued its first formal style manual in 1960. The first 5 editions successively built upon preceding guidelines on writing and submitting papers for journal publication. Their range of scope was limited to the microbial, plant, zoological, and medical sciences. Later, this scope was expanded to include recommendations on other experimental and observational sciences by the sixth edition in 1995 and then to all the physical and life sciences by the seventh edition in 2006 [2]. Now in its 8th edition, the manual guide has been improved to cover the electronic and online aspects of scientific manuscript preparation and journal publication.

As with previous editions, the 8th edition is composed of 4 main parts. Part 1 on Publishing Fundamentals contains 3 chapters that cover the elements, policies, and practices of scientific publication and of copyright. In this edition, in line with current trends, a greater emphasis was placed on the importance of following copyright laws by addressing topics such as Creative Commons and other developments in copyright law. Especially, they emphasized the responsi-
bilities of not only authors, editors, and reviewers, but also of publishers, journal owners, and sponsoring societies to adhere to regulations. Part 2 on General Style Conventions is composed of 9 chapters that cover the fundamentals of English writing such as punctuation, spelling, capitalization, and abbreviation. A new addition to this section debates the usage and merits of the active voice and the passive voice and promotes greater use of the active voice in scientific writing. Part 3 on General Style Conventions is made up of 12 chapters covering matters concerning physics, chemistry, genetics, biological sciences, and astronomy, aimed at those who specialize in these fields. Lastly, part 4 on Technical Elements of Publications includes the following 6 chapters: journal style and format, published media, references, accessories to text (tables, figures, and indexed), typography and manuscript preparation, and proof correction. These sections focus on the technical sides of actually editing a journal and preparing it for publication, and thereby would prove useful to currently working publishers, editors, manuscript editors, and copy editors in the sciences.

As well as the aforementioned changes in each section, prominent alterations in this edition are changes that promote compatibility of users’ platform, both authors and editors, to an online platform. In terms of referencing for example, citing sources from the Internet (such as online images and information graphics, podcasts and webcasts, online videos, blogs, social networking sites, and e-books) has been made easier by giving examples of citations from diverse sources in the style guide. The style guide also mentions the use of extensible markup language for online journal publishing or for electronic monographs. Further, taking into consideration that proof corrections are increasingly exchanged through e-mails as PDF proofs in recent years, an in-depth section on how to mark corrections on a PDF was added.

However, of the alterations that were made, the most prominent change made in the 8th edition is the adoption of a different citation system, from a citation-name to a citation-sequence-based referencing style. CSE’s rationale for employing a different system in this manual is as follows:

Having references in standard format is particularly important because the information for many references is now downloaded from online systems. The name-year advantage of author recognition within the text is not as important in this manual, because sources cover a wide range of scientific disciplines. Using citation-sequence also makes it easier for readers to find the appropriate end reference as they read along, unlike the citation-name system, where end references are arranged alphabetically by author. Thus, the citation-sequence system combines the best advantages of both the other systems and does not have their major disadvantages. (p. 557)

As such, the citation-sequence reference style may best accommodate current readers for a smooth read and ease the work of authors and editors. This change in referencing style adopted by the CSE is anticipated to influence many journals in the scientific fields to change their reference styles from a name-year or a citation-name referencing style to a sequence one.

CSE members have made a noticeable transition to make the publication and editing process an online-friendly one. Although the style guide is a hefty read of 780 pages, it is sure to be useful table-side tool for authors wanting to write concise scientific articles, and for editors and publishers wishing to publish scientific journals of the highest quality. Importantly, as of the 8th edition, the Scientific Style and Format is accessible to users online as well as print. Further, useful materials such as a citation quick guide, a sample correspondence to an editorial office, and one regarding editorial office practices, and an online forum are open to users at no additional cost.

Conflict of Interest

No potential conflict of interest relevant to this article was reported.

References