

Meeting Reports

Understanding Scientific Publishing

Collaborative training event between the Biochemical Society's Education Department and Portland Press Limited, 19 March 2014, Charles Darwin House, London, UK

Dawn Lau (King's College London, UK)

On Wednesday 19 March, I attended the Understanding Scientific Publishing workshop hosted by the Biochemical Society. This one-day workshop was aimed at PhD students and early-career researchers who wanted to find out more about the scientific publishing process as a whole, with a focus on the *Biochemical Journal*.

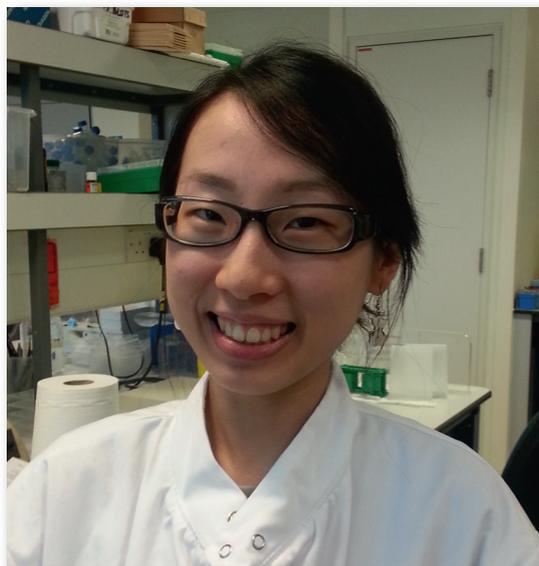
As a PhD student with little publishing experience, I thought it would be a great opportunity to learn more about the whole process of publishing, from structuring papers to submitting them, and the responsibilities that are required of you as a reviewer. Sometimes you sign up to workshops that sound really promising but don't deliver, but this event definitely lived up to my expectations.

Niamh O'Connor, Head of Publishing at the Biochemical Society, gave us a great introduction, starting with a fun fact of the day. Did you know that the first ever scientific journal was published in 1665? That was almost 350 years ago. Clearly, even back then, it was important that scientific work should be peer-reviewed and made available to share with other people in the community.

Robert Kiley from the Wellcome Trust then talked to us about the world of open-access publishing. The goal of open access is that anyone should be able to access and reuse scientific articles without any barriers. His talk sparked a lively debate about whether open access was improving the quality of research. It seems that many people associate open access with high-quality research, but, as Robert pointed out, there is no correlation between the two. There are unscrupulous journals that publish articles of dubious scientific content, but it's important to remember that this bad practice isn't limited to open-access journals.

One lesson that I took from Robert's talk was that you can't simply reuse content from an article that is not open access. That is, if you want to reuse a figure for your thesis, or if you want to quote figures and text from an article to write a blog, even if you want to reuse your own figure published in another journal, it is *always* a good idea to write to the journal and ask for permission.

We also heard from Guy Salvesen (Vice Chair The Americas and Review Editor, *Biochemical Journal*) and Irene Hames (Committee on Publication Ethics),



who talked us through the basics of structuring a paper, and the process and ethics of peer review, which will come in handy when the time comes to write our own papers.

Arguably the most fun part of the day was the workshop on reviewing a mock paper. Some mistakes were obvious, such as mislabelling of references, a title that didn't make sense or missing control experiments. But others slipped by, which were pointed out at the end of the session; for instance, some of the Western blots were really just a few lanes copied and pasted to masquerade as a full blot. This is something that is probably more easily detectable as you gain more experience.

The organization of this workshop, and the choice of speakers, was great. I had a fantastic time and my notebook is full of information that will be highly valuable for the rest of my career as a scientist. I've been a member of the Biochemical Society since starting my PhD and the annual fee is worth it for the attendance at this workshop alone. All the speakers were very friendly and receptive to questions, and I hope the Biochemical Society will organize more practical workshops like this in the future; they're definitely something I would keep an eye out for. ■