

Background

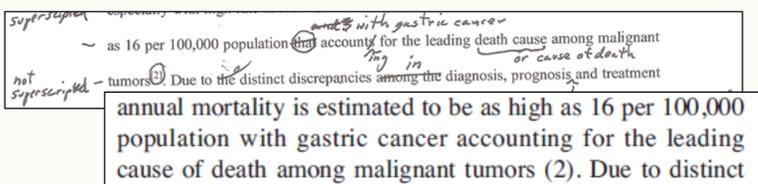
Providing quality, responsive service to National Institutes of Health (NIH) researchers is paramount to the mission of the NIH Library (NIHL). Recognizing the complex needs of researchers when communicating their findings, the Library created a Writing Center and Editing Service in 2008. Expanding on traditional library service, its purpose is to support NIH staff with their manuscripts from concept to publication, especially those for whom English is not their primary language.



Purpose

In order to learn whether the editing service had a positive effect on NIH authors' work, librarians conducted a pilot study comparing editing suggestions given for manuscript improvement with the published journal article. Librarians framed the research question as:

- Are editing suggestions made by NIHL Editing Service editors incorporated in NIH published journal articles?
- Put another way: Is the NIHL having an impact on the published science?



Methods

- Conducted a literature search: PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, LISTA, and Google Scholar
- Collated citations of all edited manuscripts as a Word document n=147
- Generated random numbers for selection of 5 edited/published research papers using Random.org / integers 1-147 (# of NIH manuscripts that received editing assistance between January 2008 and February 2012)

NIH Library Editing Service Research Assessment Rubric					
Researcher:		Research Paper Analyzed: # ___ pg 1			
Criteria		Number of Suggested Edits	Number of Suggested Edits Used in Published Paper	Number of Suggested Edits Not Used	Number of Suggested Edits/Section of Text Not Used
Journal Organizational Style Adherence (js)	Organization of material such as Running Head, title, author names and addresses, and abstract (including word limit); Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion (IMRAD); Acknowledgements; Funding; Conflict of Interest statement; overall word limit for type of article follows journal's guidelines/Instructions to Authors; use of italics, font or point size, bolding				
Spelling and Word Choice (sw)	Typographical errors; consistency in spelling/treatment of words including hyphenation; use of the correct word or synonym noted; word placement; spacing				
Capitalization (c)	Uppercase, lowercase				
Grammar (g)	Subject-verb agreement; use of past, present, and future tense; proper use of definite and indefinite articles and prepositions; lack of contractions indicative of professional writing				
Punctuation (p)	Proper use of commas and serial commas (restricted use in British English journals); colons, semi-colons, and dashes; quotation marks (double quotes in American English journals)				

- Created analysis rubric to categorize specific editing suggestions for quantitative evaluation. Criteria reviewed were:
 - adherence to journal style
 - spelling and word choice
 - capitalization
 - grammar
 - punctuation
 - clarity
 - treatment of numbers and International System of Units (SI) abbreviations
 - figures and tables
 - in-text citations and references
 - change of chosen journal
- Discussed analysis procedures before beginning analysis

Results

- Two of the five analyzed papers were ultimately published in a different journal than was planned or underwent significant revision after the authors submitted the manuscripts to the editing service
- Analysis of the three other journal articles showed that 243 of 289 editors' suggestions (84%) were accepted by NIH authors
- In addition, librarian editors were acknowledged for their editing assistance in 2 of the 5 published articles

Conclusions

- Editing can be a messy process
 - ✓ Authors change chosen journal for submission; edited style not appropriate
- Authors have some common challenges
 - ✓ Definite (the) and indefinite (a) articles
 - ✓ Formatting numbers/units (spacing, capitalization)
 - ✓ Plural and singular verbs (noun/verb agreement)
 - ✓ Clarity and conciseness
 - ✓ Conforming/formatting to journal style
- Authors have the option to accept or reject editing suggestions
- Does the NIH Library impact science?
 - ✓ Yes! 84% of editors' suggestions accepted for 3 NIH published papers submitted to journal edited for, without major revision
- NIHL editors' contributions acknowledged in published papers
- This study provides a process for future/ongoing evaluation



Quantification

For the purposes of this research project, we counted each instance of an editing suggestion separately. While it may appear, from the number of suggestions made, that the manuscripts required a lot of work to become publication ready, that was not the case. Most manuscripts that NIH librarian editors review benefit from added punctuation to improve readability, a correction of noun/verb agreement, or formatting to meet journal guidelines. An author may have a few writing challenges that are evident throughout their manuscript. Once these are identified, and the editor provides references to punctuation or grammar rules, the author becomes aware of how to improve current and future manuscripts.

Criteria for Analysis

We created a evaluation rubric for this research, based on the work of L. M. Daggett (2008) and others. We will be happy to share our version, upon request. In general, we looked for the following aspects within the manuscripts used for this research project:

Spelling errors (American or British English used consistently, word treatment consistent, etc.)

Term treatment (consistency in hyphenation, capitalization, sub- or super-script, etc.)

Grammar errors (a paper should not be published with these errors)

Format and sequencing issues (alignment, lists, etc.)

Revision of unclear sentences/phrases/paragraphs (for suggested editing)

Adherence to the journal's Instructions for Authors guidelines (title, abstract, section headings, article length, etc.)

References

Daggett, L. M. "A Rubric for Grading or Editing Student Papers." *Nurse Educator* 33 2 (2008): 55-56.

Frandsen, T. F. and P. Wouters. "Turning Working Papers into Journal Articles: An Exercise in Microbibliometrics." *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 60 4 (2009): 728-739.

Williams, J. "Tutoring and Revision: Second Language Writers in the Writing Center." *Journal of Second Language Writing* 13 3 (2004): 173-201.

Williams, J. and C. Severino. "The Writing Center and Second Language Writers." *Journal of Second Language Writing* 13 3 (2004): 165-172.

For more information about the NIH Library Writing Center and Editing Service, go to: <http://nihlibrary.campusguides.com/WritingCenter> .