

## **The Reader's perspective: An often neglected parameter in Scientific Writing**

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Authors have various motivations to publish which include dissemination of knowledge, promoting their professional career, improving their funding, satisfying their ego, and protection of patients besides others. Many key players are involved in scientific writing and there is much focus around the authors, editors and peer reviewers. However, one key parameter the reader's perspective is often neglected.

The readers have different priorities. They are interested in rapid delivery of the message; it should have ease of access with low cost or no cost at all. It should have a convenient format. The articles should have authoritative quality. The information these manuscripts provide should offer linking of information-clustering and above all should provide up-to-date information.

On the other hand the authors have two objectives. First to attract the reader to their paper and secondly convince both the reviewer and the reader of the worth of their scientific contribution. The first one is important to approve the paper and the second one to cite that particular manuscript in future publications. We are all readers before we become writers. Hence, as scientists we read more than the average reader. Scientific reading is far more complicated. Reading is just like an experience and if the experience is not pleasant or exciting, we rarely blame the author. We seldom search for the cause of this unpleasantness and blame ourselves for the lack of knowledge or short patience. In fact we usually insist that it is our failure to understand rather than the failure of the writer. Is this really true?

In general, the reviewer will give you several hours to evaluate any manuscript but the reader will give you few seconds to attract his/her attention and convince him/her to read that manuscript. The readers expect to find his/her keywords in the title of your manuscript. Hence, a number of titles may appear and the reader might spend just a few seconds on your title and then move on if he or she does not feel interested. Hence,

it is important that enough details should be provided in the title. In addition, readers appreciate a clear, concise, interesting and organized writing. Hence, it is essential that the authors avoid “reading accidents” whereby readers “mentally trip on acronyms, lose themselves in a labyrinth of disjointed ideas, get sucked into the quick sand of extra long sentences from which they will only be able to extract themselves after two to three successive readings”. If the reader is to grasp what the writer means, the writer must understand what the reader needs. The substance of science comprises more than the discovery and recording of the data. It extends crucially to include the act of interpretation.

The dichotomy is that most authors are journal-focused while the readers are article-focused. Many of them publish much more than they read. Another important issue is target audience. This issue also overlaps with the issue of the reader’s perspective. It is important that the authors have an understanding of the level of scientific background and regional distribution of their readers when planning to submit to a specific journal.

According to Jean-Luc Lebrun “having a paper in print means absolutely nothing, other than only one or two reviewers found some nugget of possible new knowledge in what you submitted. If readers do not go to your paper, you have accomplished nothing. If people read your paper but remain unconvinced to use or at the very least to verify its findings, you have accomplished nothing, you will not be cited which is a career perishing prospect”.

Lastly, most of the scientific writing courses run by various institutions and organizations are more often writer-centric rather than reader-centric. They mostly focus on sentence structure, grammar and rules but it is important that we pay attention to the expectations of the readers while writing.