

Improving Scientific Writing – the BCSE Experience

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CSE: Background

The Chemical Society of Ethiopia (CSE)

- founded in **1983**
- a leading scientific society in Ethiopia
- development and promotion of chemistry in
 - education
 - industry
 - agriculture
 - environment
 - research
- major activities: publication of the **Bulletin of the Chemical Society of Ethiopia (BCSE)** ²

Bulletin of the Chemical Society of Ethiopia (BCSE)

The BCSE was established in **1987**

Aim

- to provide a national and international platform for exchange of information through scientific publication

Frequency

- Biannual (June and December, 1987-2006)
- Triannual (April, August, December, from 2007)
- **Quarterly** (March, June, September, December, from **2011 ?**)

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Bulletin of the Chemical Society of Ethiopia (BCSE)

Field

- all fields of basic and applied chemistry

Types of contribution

- Full papers
- Short communications
- Reviews
- Feature articles

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Bulletin of the Chemical Society of Ethiopia (BCSE)

Reputability

- Gained wide national and international recognition
- Indexed and abstracted by international institutions
 - Chemical Abstracts
 - Chemical Citation Index
 - Environmental Abstracts
- Renowned ISI index (only science journal in Africa, excluding South Africa ??)

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BCSE: Review of manuscripts

Review of original manuscripts

- preliminary assessment
- scope, relevance and scientific quality
- Editor-in-Chief or Editor or EB Member
- if found not worthy, manuscript rejected
- if meets journal's criteria, sent for peer review
- at least two qualified reviewers
- identified by Editor-in-Chief or Editor
- anywhere in the world
(Ethiopia, Africa, Europe, USA, Asia)

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BCSE: Review of manuscripts

- review conducted against established criteria to determine scientific and technical quality
- if both referees recommend rejection, manuscript rejected
- if both referees recommend acceptance, manuscript accepted
- if one referee recommends acceptance with modification and other recommends rejection
 - Editor-in-Chief/Editorial Board Member may review
 - or manuscript will be sent to a third referee

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BCSE: Review of manuscripts

Review of revised manuscripts

- Editor-in-Chief or Editor or Editorial Board Member
- if necessary (major modification), sent to one or both referees
- if referee(s) recommend acceptance, manuscript accepted
- if referee(s) recommend rejection, manuscript rejected

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BCSE: Review of manuscripts

Accepted manuscripts

- Acceptance letter sent to author
- Galley proof sent to author
- Galley proof corrections made
- Manuscript published
- Reprints sent to author

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BCSE: Manuscripts received 1987-2007

Year/Region	Ethiopia	Africa	Others	Total	ms/year
1987-1991	15	141	12	168	34
1992-1996	21	134	9	164	33
1997-2001	37	161	22	220	44
2002-2006	39	325	128	492	98
Total	112	761	171	1044	--
% of total	11	73	16	100	--
2007	9	64	70	143	143
% of total	6	45	49	100	--

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BCSE: Manuscripts published 1987-2007

Year/Region	Ethiopia	Africa	Others	Total	ms/issue
1987-1991	21	51	17	89	9
1992-1996	12	56	12	80	8
1997-2001	31	62	11	104	10-11
2002-2006	17	108	26	151	15
Total	81	277	66	424	--
% of total	19	65	16	100	--
2007	9	29	21	53	18
% of total	5	55	40	100	--

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BCSE: Online availability

- Abstracts on African Journals OnLine website: www.ajol.info (1997 onwards)
- Full text: www.ingentaconnect.com (subscribers) (2001 -2007)
- Full text: www.ajol.info (subscribers) (2008 onwards)

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BCSE: Quality of original manuscripts

Writing quality of original manuscripts

- 20% very poor
- 40% poor
- 30% good
- 10% very good

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BCSE: Quality of original manuscripts

Scientific quality of original manuscripts

- 10% trivial (rejected by initial screening)
- 20% very poor ((rejected by internal review)
- 70% good and sent to external (peer) reviewers
- 25% rejected after peer review
- 45% accepted after peer review and published

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BCSE: Experience with authors

Original manuscripts

- A few authors were found to be plagiarized. (copied others' published work and submitted it under their own names as original work).
- A few authors submitted the published work as new study presumably because of inadequate literature survey.
- Some authors submitted manuscripts with very old literature (dating back to 1930s, 1940s, 1950s, ...).
- Some authors submitted manuscripts about studies that have no relevance at present.
- Some authors submitted 2, 3, or 4 manuscripts (one author submitted 7 manuscripts) at the same time.

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BCSE: Experience with authors

Original manuscripts

- Some authors submitted manuscripts that have been rejected by other journal (with the name and address of the editor of that journal and specific format of that journal).
- Some authors submitted manuscripts which are based only on the results collected by technician (without any discussion) and have no scientific value.
- Some authors submitted manuscripts that lack originality and novelty in any aspect of the study.
- Some authors submitted manuscripts with very poor quality of text, drawing, illustrations and figures.
- Some authors submitted manuscripts with the results presented simultaneously both as figures and tables (i.e., repetition of the results).

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BCSE: Experience with authors

Original manuscripts

- Many authors submitted manuscripts without following the format of the journal (the BCSE).
- Many authors submitted manuscripts without consulting their co-authors (mainly from Europe and America).
- Some authors submitted manuscripts to get the reviewers' comments, revised the manuscripts and submitted to other journals (better ones on their own rating).
- Some authors submitted manuscripts of fragmented nature (divided the manuscript into two or three parts) to get multiple publications.
- Some authors submitted manuscripts written in French (including the covering letter).

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BCSE: Experience with authors

Revised manuscripts

- Some authors do not submit the revised manuscripts (they revise and submit to other journals).
- Some authors do not submit the revised manuscripts on time. They submit the revised manuscripts after 4-6 months (sometimes after one year).
- Some authors do not revise the manuscript according to the reviewers' comments (correct only typos and language) they think that it is sufficient for an African journal.
- Some authors do not correct the figures, illustrations and drawings. They think that this is the job of the Editor or the journal has all the software to improve the quality of that figures.

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BCSE: Experience with authors

Revised manuscripts

- Some authors includes figures with large dimensions but with smaller font size of letters in the units and labels or vice versa, which are not possible to edit or correct.
- Also very frequently they group the figure captions with the figures, precluding editing or correction.
- Some authors include large tables with large numbers of columns and rows that can not fit with the size and format of the journal.
- Some authors do not correct the references despite being clearly asked by the Editor, presumably because they do not have the original references. They cited the references from another article.

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BCSE: Experience with authors

Galley proof of manuscripts

- One author asked us to withdraw the manuscript when he received the galley proof, presumably he had simultaneously submitted the revised manuscript to another journal and got a positive response.
- Some authors do not answer the queries raised with the galley proof. They think that once the manuscript has been accepted we do not need to answer any questions.
- Some authors do not reply to galley proof. They think that either there is no need to read it again or there is not any correction.
- Some authors do not reply to galley proof because they do not receive it due to change of e-mail address. They do not inform the journal of their new e-mail address.

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BCSE: Experience with authors

After publication of manuscripts

- Some authors ask for reprints after six months or one year because they did not receive the reprints because of not updating their e-mail address and/or not giving the full air mail address.
- Some authors ask for reprints after 3-5 years. They think that the journal (BCSE) is obliged to send reprints whenever the authors need them.

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Improving Scientific Writing

- Identify the problem and set the objectives of the study.
- Carry out thorough literature survey and identify what problems persist with existing or reported study.
- How these problems could be solved and re-set the objectives of the scientific study.
- The scientific study should be original and have to have novelty at least in some aspect of the study.
- Identify suitable journal to publish the results of study.
- Find the guidelines of that journal and write the manuscript according to its format.

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Improving Scientific Writing

The general format of articles in chemistry journals

- Abstract
- Key words
- Introduction
- Experimental
- Results and Discussion
- Conclusion
- Acknowledgements
- References
- The text includes figures, tables, structures, formulas, equations, etc.

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Improving Scientific Writing

- The authors should do an adequate literature search before writing their manuscript to check whether the same study has been published.
- Manuscript should be written in simple scientific language (English).
- The non-English speaking authors should consult someone with better English to improve the manuscript
- The authors should write and submit only one manuscript at one time to a particular journal.

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Improving Scientific Writing

- Do not submit the same manuscript to another journal simultaneously.
- Revise and re-write the manuscripts that have been rejected by other journal before submitting to a new journal according to its guidelines.
- Consult all the co-authors before submitting the manuscript to a particular journal.
- Never copy others' published work and write a manuscript on your own name and submit it as original study for publication in a journal published from other part of the world.

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Improving Scientific Writing

- **The manuscripts should be written with best possible quality of drawing, illustrations and figures, structures, formulas, and equations.**
- **The authors should not present the results simultaneously both as figures and tables (i.e., repetition of the results).**
- **The authors should use standard units (SI units).**

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Improving Scientific Writing

- Do not write and submit manuscripts to any journal if the study has no relevance at present.
- Do not write and submit manuscripts to any journal that are based only on the results collected by technician (without any discussion) and have no scientific value.
- Write a complete manuscript, i.e. do not divide the manuscript into two or three parts to get multiple publications.
- Do not submit manuscripts, just to get the reviewers comments, revise them and submit them to other journals.

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Improving Scientific Writing

- Revise the manuscripts on time. Do not submit the revised manuscripts to other journals without formerly withdrawing the manuscripts with valid reasons.
- Revise the manuscript according to the reviewers' comments (correcting not only typos and language but also revising the manuscript for its scientific contents).
- Do not submit the revised manuscript to any other journal unless the manuscript is rejected by the journal to which the original manuscript was submitted.

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Improving Scientific Writing

- Correct the figures, illustrations and drawings whenever asked by the reviewers or the editors of the journal. The preparation of the whole manuscript is your own responsibility.
- Do not includes figures with large dimensions with relatively smaller font size of letters in the units and labels or vice versa,
- Do not group the figure captions with the figures. List the captions separately.
- Always check and correct the references whenever asked by the reviewer or Editor.

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Improving Scientific Writing

- Never cite references which are not available to you.
- Never cite references from another article (cross reference) without having access to them.
- Do not include large sized tables with large numbers of columns and rows, which can not fit with the size of the journal.
- The large tables can be divided into two tables if necessary.

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Improving Scientific Writing

Galley proof of manuscripts

- Do not ask the journal to withdraw the manuscript after receiving the galley proof.
- Answer all the queries raised with the galley proof.
- Read the galley proof carefully and reply to the journal even if there is not any correction.
- If your e-mail address or air mail address changes, tell the journal (and the publisher), so that the galley proof and reprints reach you.

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