

## CAREER CHOICES

## Opportunities in editing

Staff editors at manuscript-editing companies tend to be part-time, and are often doctoral students or postdoctoral researchers. Some companies do pay attention to the reputation of the school from which they recruit editors. Here are tips for scientists interested in working for a manuscript-editing company.

- Take a scientific editing course. The certificate may help you to get hired.
- Learn the Chicago Manual of Style and other scientific editing styles. Different journals use different styles.
- Become a journal peer reviewer to get a feel for what to look for and correct as an editor for a manuscript-editing service.
- Learn the finer details of formatting in Microsoft Word. Manuscript-editing

services are often called on to format data, tables, graphs, figures and references for a specific journal.

- Develop excellent communication and customer-relation skills. You will be working closely with the company's clients on projects that are hugely important to them and you will have to be tactful and patient, especially if a paper contains many problems or the client doesn't speak English well. In many companies you will also be working closely with other editors.
- Learn business principles. Many manuscript-editing services are start-ups and it will help them — and you — if you can market, price and advertise services, for example. **K.K.**

American Journal Experts, which has started offering what it calls 'content review' to address scientific and design flaws likely to be targets of peer review, maintain that the work they do doesn't create an ethical dilemma. Carter says she has "very strict rules" and requires that she be listed in the acknowledgements if she significantly rewrites a paper. American Journal Experts says that its content reviewers only make recommendations and identify potential problems; they are not designing the experiment or writing the paper.

"I don't believe the recommendations I make would warrant authorship status," says Anuj Kapadia, a radiologist at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina, who also acts as a content reviewer for American Journal Experts and as a peer reviewer. Journals for which he conducts peer review include *Physics in Medicine and Biology*, *IEEE Transactions on Nuclear Science*, *Analytical Chemistry* and the *Journal of Digital Imaging*.

"I'm not telling authors how to conduct the study, I'm not telling them the methods they have to follow to reach their goal," Kapadia says. "I'm telling them they said such-and-such but didn't demonstrate it — I'm not telling them how to demonstrate it."

The *New England Journal of Medicine* addresses the authorship issue by requiring authors to disclose all writing and editing assistance and to acknowledge such assistance in their paper. "Lending one's name to an article written by another party is strictly forbidden," says the journal's spokeswoman, Karen Buckley. Although Buckley would not discuss editorial policies, the journal may still

be sensitive about allegations last year, some since refuted or retracted, of ghostwriting in several top medical journals. Ghostwriting — the unacknowledged contributions of medical or other writers, often sponsored by drug companies or other corporate entities, to scientific manuscripts published under the names of academic authors — has been a thorn in the side of the medical publishing industry for a number of years.

Such touchy issues mean that authors should be careful to determine a journal's policies before submitting a manuscript. Journals in other subjects, such as physics, are unlikely to receive the scrutiny that biological and medical-science journals undergo, says Reinhardt Schuhmann, editor of *Physical Review Letters*.

Ultimately, it is impossible to police authors' use of manuscript-editing services — they have to maintain their own ethical boundaries, says Schuhmann. "We often suggest that authors whose papers are not well written consult a colleague," he says. "If the colleague were someone they paid, how would we know? We don't keep track of whether they send it to an editing service."

In general, a scientist's budget, needs and time will dictate whether to hire an editing service. But authors might also keep in mind a point on which journal editors agree — a well written paper with no glaring flaws is almost certain at least to get in the door and undergo peer review, a major step towards acceptance. "We need to be confident that we're giving the scientific community high quality at all levels," says Viccaro. "The author can help us a lot if he or she submits a manuscript that's readable." ■

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## CANADA

## Postdoc unions

Issues such as low pay, long working hours and no holiday or sick pay have prompted postdocs at the University of Toronto and Queens University in Kingston, both in Ontario, and the University of Quebec in Montreal (UQAM) to seek union representation. Some 800 postdocs in Toronto want to affiliate with the Canadian Union of Public Employees; around 200 at Queens and 150 at UQAM want to join the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC). University of Toronto administrators maintain that postdocs are not university employees and so have no right to unionize. The Ontario Labour Relations Board will decide on that right in hearings for Queens this month and Toronto in 2011. The board is reviewing an application from UQAM postdocs.

## GRANTS

## Awards for biomedicine

The Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI) in Chevy Chase, Maryland, is to make awards to 35 early-career biomedical researchers from 18 non-US countries. The International Early Career Scientist competition will support biomedical researchers who have done a postdoc, have a research post in one of the 18 nations and trained at the doctoral, medical or postdoc level in the United States. Unlike past such HHMI competitions, it will not focus on one discipline or region. Seeking to foster collaboration and seed labs, the HHMI will give each recipient US\$650,000 over 5 years. Programme directors say that the 18 nations are small enough to benefit from the grants, but have the infrastructure to continue supporting the researchers. The competition closes on 23 February 2011.

## SCOTLAND

## Academic jobs safe

Despite a proposed 4% government budget cut for 2011–12, Scotland's 14,500 faculty researchers have job security this year, say officials. The £28-billion (US\$44.3-billion) Scottish draft budget for 2011–12 was announced on 17 November. It would keep the £213-million Research Excellence Grant, which supports research nationwide by paying academic salaries and grants, at the same cash level. The Scottish Funding Council hopes to keep funding to universities stable. Universities Scotland, an association that represents the country's 20 higher-education institutions, says that more cuts after 2012 might lead to layoffs.