

has led to simplification, over-dramatisation and sensationalism of stories. He has made it clear that he would welcome a more imaginative approach to mental health problems by producers; Evans hopes a production company will pick up the gauntlet.

Looking towards the future, "more resources for our work would be helpful. But above all, we need to build on contacts with people working in the

media encouraging them to rethink their attitudes in creating more positive images of mental health".

### Reference

PACKARD, V. (1960) *The Hidden Persuaders*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

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*Psychiatric Bulletin* (1990), 14, 381–382

## Style

### The nuts and bolts of writing papers

#### Number 6. The proof of the pudding

RALPH FOOTRING, Scientific Editor, *British Journal of Psychiatry*

This is the last article in the series, and I might have to be allowed a little licence, as it is not strictly about writing papers. However, proofs are an important part of the publishing process, and I suspect not many authors appreciate what has been behind producing them.

After a paper has been accepted, it might have to wait to be copy edited. This is another delay to be aware of and to beware of, but there is often a queue. Copy editing consists of two activities. The essential part is to mark up a paper for the typesetters, that is, to indicate what size text is required, what are main and what are subheadings, what is to be italic, and so on. The other part is to make changes to the author's text. This can involve correcting spellings and grammar, and raising queries with the author regarding missing references or numbers that don't add up.

To differing extents copy editors also involve themselves in the sometimes dubious activity of making the text 'read better'. This can be justified, for example, in making a paper more concise. However, it can also be just meddling and it can be just plain wrong. If you have reason to be anxious about your text, it is quite in order to be difficult. It is important to be difficult before the proof stage, when corrections have to be paid for, and perhaps the most effective way to do this is to request to see the copy-edited manuscript (at the expense of a short delay). To have your writing published, as opposed to your rewritten

writing published, should not be a hurdle to be overcome, and copy editing should be regarded as a service provided rather than an obstruction. Having said this much, I should add that publishers do have their house styles to keep to, and you have to accept this, as it gives consistency, identity, and perhaps even authority to publications.

After copy editing, the paper is sent to the typesetter, where the text (with codes for the text size and column width etc.) is typed into a computer. Sometimes a publisher (more likely a book publisher) will ask you for your word-processor disk with the text on it, so that the typesetter need only type in corrections and codes. The computer then guides a laser over a roll of photographic paper, and a page of text results. Many computers now produce a full page, but sometimes a single column ('galley') is produced, which is later cut up to fit the page.

One copy of the proof will be read at the publishers, and one will be sent to the author. The text on the proof differs from that in the original either because the copy editor changed it or because the typesetter made a typing error.

When marking the proof, remember that someone has to spot your corrections. Some of the cleverest researchers into the workings of the human brain would seem to be unable to appreciate that people are not all that good at picking up small pencil marks among columns of black text. Use red in preference and always make marks in the margins. There are in

fact standard symbols for various corrections to the proof, as illustrated in Fig. 1. Where long insertions are required it is best to code them using letters and to type them out separately.

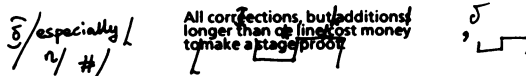


Fig. 1. An illustration of the more common proof-correction marks.

All your marks are amalgamated onto a top set of proofs which is then returned to the typesetter to make the corrections. This is one more stage at which errors can be made, and so the publisher sees a second set of proofs (revised or page proofs). This is usually the last time the text is seen before it is printed.

Printing is mostly by lithography. The images on the photographic paper produced by the typesetter are transferred to a printing plate. This is a specially treated flexible sheet of metal, which generally holds

8, 16 or 32 pages of text (which is why books sometimes have to have a few blank pages at the end). The plate is then wrapped around a cylinder on the printing machine. I digress: what better place to bring this series to its close?

### Practical advice

Your work is thus available for the public to peruse. I would like to leave you with a thought at this point. The readership of the *British Journal of Psychiatry* is about 12,000. If only 1% of these people read your article, any mistake would stand a chance of being spotted by some 120 people. If these people spent only 10 minutes trying to solve the mystery of an extra patient or in finding a reference you gave the wrong year for, this amounts to about 20 man-hours. These conservative figures should go to show the tenfold blessings and more that are yours if you spend a couple of hours checking through that last draft!

*Psychiatric Bulletin* (1990), 14, 382–383

## Miscellany

### Awards

#### *The McHarg Prize*

The Scottish Division of the Royal College of Psychiatrists offers a prize of £100 to a trainee who is working in Scotland and who is of senior registrar or registrar grade. Candidates for the prize are invited to submit essays or scientific papers based on their own studies or their original work. It is expected that submissions will range from essays based on literature review to descriptions of clinical work or research in the field. All entries will be considered by a panel set up by the Scottish Executive Committee and it is intended that the successful candidate will be invited to present his paper to a meeting of the Scottish Division. Submissions must be returned before 1 December 1990 to Dr R. G. McCreadie, Honorary Secretary, Scottish Division, Royal College of Psychiatrists, Crichton Royal Hospital, Dumfries DG1 4TG.

#### *Joan Bicknell Prize*

The Psychiatry of Disability Division at St George's Hospital Medical School, University of London, invites registrars and senior registrars to submit essays on an aspect of the Psychiatry of Disability for the

Joan Bicknell Prize. The winner will be required to deliver the essay in lecture form as part of the Psychiatry of Disability's Annual Conference entitled 'Holistic Approaches to Disability and Mental Health' to an audience of 250, comprising disabled people, carers and professionals. The essay will be published as part of the conference proceedings. More information is available from Philippa Weitz, The Conference Unit, Department of Mental Health Sciences, St George's Hospital Medical School, Cranmer Terrace, London SW17 0RE (telephone 081-672 9944 extension 55534).

#### *Peter Beckett Postgraduate Research Award*

The family and friends of the late Professor Peter Beckett, former Dean of the Medical Faculty and Professor of Psychiatry, Trinity College, University of Dublin, have funded a research award to be known as the Peter Beckett Postgraduate Research Award with the purpose of encouraging research in psychiatry.

The award will be made annually on the recommendation of a committee comprising the Dean of the Medical School, the University Professor of Psychiatry, the Clinical Professor of Psychiatry and the Professor of Clinical Medicine, to the candidate