

The Editor-Author Team

AS THE SOCIETY HAS GROWN, its Journal has kept pace, reflecting not only the expanding interests of the members but also the steadily increasing scope of fats and oils research. In the early years the journal was primarily a trade publication for use in the United States. Today a single issue may contain papers on such diverse topics as a method for determining fat stability, the nutritive value of meal, the spectra of fatty acids, and the mechanism of polymerization. Now the readers are not only in industry but also in government and university laboratories throughout the world.



Dorothy M. Rathmann

With this change in the character of the Journal and the diversification of its readers' interests have come increased responsibilities for the editor and his staff. Although the author, in a hurry to report his findings, may be excused for occasionally forgetting readers half-a-world away, the editor must always remember. Poorly written, repetitive, inaccurate, and misleading papers are damaging to the reputations of both author and Journal, and an inexcusable waste of time for the readers.

A manuscript is first read critically by at least one reviewer who is a specialist in the particular field under consideration. He attempts to answer the question: is this paper a contribution to knowledge, is the approach logical, were the experimental procedures adequate, are the data clearly presented, and are the conclusions justified? In brief, is this investigation a real contribution to the literature on fats and oils? Occasionally a worthwhile report appears to be outside the scope of the Journal, and the author is encouraged to submit the manuscript to another publication. Regrettably some manuscripts must be rejected.

The manuscript is then edited. Editorial policies are flexible; there are few strict rules. The aim is to achieve maximum readability and conciseness with minimum alteration in the author's text. Today, when the technical literature is so voluminous, readers are likely to skim through papers, perhaps reading only the titles and conclusions. Even a pertinent article may be laid aside to be read "later" if it seems unnecessarily difficult or too long. Both reader and author lose thereby. The editor is the go-between who strives to prevent such loss. Under ideal circumstances his questions, comments, and suggestions aid an author in removing possible barriers to effective communication with the readers.

ONE COMMON BARRIER is the author's understandable desire to present *all* of his experimental data and to discuss *all* possible conclusions. Impartiality and objectivity are rightly the marks of a scientist but can be overdone. Certainly not all bits of evidence garnered during a research program have a direct bearing on the conclusions discussed in a single paper. Thus the tables and figures are among the first items in a manuscript to be scrutinized. Suggestions are made for deletion of irrelevant and repetitious data so that the significant findings may be considered more easily.

In the text rambling sentences and repetitious phrases are pointed out. Numerous examples could be given, but a single brief one must suffice: the phrase "in view of the fact that" is a space-waster, which frequently may be replaced by the single word "because" or "since."

Although brevity and conciseness are highly desirable, they can, like all virtues, be carried to extreme. Incomplete descriptions of experimental methods, laboratory jargon, unfamiliar abbreviations, clichés, sketchy discussions, and incomplete literature reviews may add up to a short manuscript. It is also practically useless. In these instances the editor requests further information.

Finally the edited manuscript and questions are returned to the author who makes the desired revisions. At this stage papers from outside the United States may be handled in a special fashion since the editor may offer to have portions or all of the manuscript rewritten before returning it to the author for final revision. In all cases however the author is responsible for the accuracy of data and conclusions, and the editor retains the privilege of adapting the paper to the standards of the Journal.

Authors frequently say that they submit papers to this Journal because of the friendly, cooperative editorial attitude. May this continue to be so!

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