

Editorial

Like, I would imagine, many colleagues I have fallen for the convenience of the electronic world in my access to the scientific literature. Email alerts, internet search engines and the ubiquitous PDF reprint have all reduced my visits to the library to somewhat infrequent and always fleeting encounters. While I do not doubt that the various advances in electronic information flow have left me better informed in my own possibly obscure sub-discipline (the gut microbiology of ruminants and horses), I do miss the sometimes inspirational randomness that weekly visits to the library gave rise to, when I might browse a journal for no better reason than I thought the cover looked pretty. I particularly remember a number of years ago becoming engrossed in a series of articles on the economics of backyard rabbit production to the extent that I found myself actively searching for articles and books on the subject. While I do not propose that my own private, and admittedly temporary and limited, fascination with *Oryctolagus cuniculus* has benefitted either my previous or current employers, I would suggest that in both research and teaching we all benefit from a wider understanding and scientific context in which to place our own work.

I am thus delighted to be given the opportunity to take over from Dr Gail Goldberg the role of Honorary Editor of the *Proceedings of the Nutrition Society (PNS)*. Like many members, I value the Society's meetings for the range and scope of subjects covered. A single insightful talk can introduce and condense the essence of an often highly complex subject so that it can be understood by a non-specialist such as myself. However, I am aware that as the Honorary Editor I am in an unusually privileged position of being able to attend the great majority of the Society's meetings, something that unfortunately not all members can do. Thus, I believe the original purpose of *PNS* as 'reaching a wider audience than that which actually participated in its meetings' remains as valid and important in 2007 as when it was formulated in 1944 (Nutrition Society, 1944). However, if the proceedings of our meetings are to remain a valuable source of information concerning the nutritional sciences, accessible and understandable by both specialists and non-specialists alike, then I believe that the editorial team and indeed the *PNS* authors face a very real challenge in being able to report truly cutting-edge science in a way that is widely understandable. I would suggest that writing a paper for *PNS* is a different task from writing for a publication within one's own sub-discipline. The current guide for potential authors' of both the occasional communications and full papers, states: 'authors are reminded that their papers will be read by a wide cross-section of the Society's members, many of whom were neither at the meeting nor are they specialists in the

subject area. Authors should thus seek to provide an introduction and context to the subject and are encouraged to provide extensive references to allow the reader to further explore the subject, in addition to summarizing the more recent findings, conclusions and hypotheses of their own and other research groups.' Truly effective papers within *PNS* manage to both provide a wide nutritional context to the concepts being described and also to provide an authoritative overview of the 'state of the art' within the subject. In addition, the application of 'omic' and other 'state of the art' technologies is providing very real insights into the interaction of genes, nutrition and the environment, but also unfortunately tends to result in an almost unending, and for the non-specialists impenetrable, range of abbreviations and specialist terms. Again, our instruction to authors states: 'authors should avoid unnecessary use of 'jargon' and acronyms and ensure that as far as possible acronyms and abbreviations are defined and explained in the text'. Whilst I understand it might seem trivial and even condescending to explain acronyms and define abbreviations, it is of enormous help to those of us not trained in the 'black arts' in understanding the underlying science. However, perhaps my most heartfelt plea would be to ask potential authors to be patient with myself and my editorial colleagues, both at the editorial desk at the meeting and in subsequent written communication, as we strive to understand your science and help present it to a wider audience.

Lastly, and certainly most importantly, I would like express my thanks and gratitude to our outgoing Honorary Editor Dr Gail Goldberg. Over the last 4 years I have enjoyed immensely working with her as a Deputy Editor. Under her gentle tutelage I have been introduced to and instructed on the role of the Honorary Editor and, although I have to admit to a certain dread that it is now I and not Gail who has to produce the page budgets and running orders for the year, I can reassure the Society that in the spirit of my previous interests I will certainly 'hop' to it with great enthusiasm.

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References

Nutrition Society (1944) Foundation of the Nutrition Society. *Proceedings of the Nutrition Society* 1, 1–6.