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BOOK REVIEW

SCIENTIFIC COMMUNICATION FOR NATURAL RESOURCE PROFESSIONALS. Edited by C. A. Jennings, T. E. Lauer and B. Vondracek. 180 pp. American Fisheries Society, Bethesda, U.S.A., 2012. Price \$35.00. ISBN-13: 978-1-934874-28-8.

We live in an information-rich age in which scientists, and others, are presented with an increasingly diverse multitude of opportunities for communicating their findings at seemingly ever-increasing speeds. Long gone are the days when a research fish biologist might aim to publish by himself or herself (or perhaps in co-authorship with one or two immediate colleagues) three or so journal papers a year, perhaps supplemented by the occasional book chapter. While still aiming for such traditional outputs, today's researcher is also likely to be producing reports of various kinds for various audiences, speaking to diverse groups of his or her peers and stakeholders, and possibly venturing into blogs, podcasts and other web-based means of communication. Throw into this mix the fact that many of us now routinely co-author with colleagues from around the world working in disciplines somewhat removed from fish biology and today's communicator is left to swim in a pretty complex sea. The stated aim of this book is to help not only the inexperienced but also the experienced researcher to overcome the challenges posed by this modern complexity of communication. Although published by the American Fisheries Society and including many fish biologists amongst its authorship, the editors rightly realise that the principles covered would benefit not only professionals engaged in fishery science but also those employed within other natural resource professions. It is clear to me that the work also offers valuable advice to fish biologists outside the fishery field.

The book comprises 14 chapters written by a total of 26 authors, many of whom will be well known to the readers of this journal as researchers of international standing although all of them are based in the U.S.A. The specific subjects cover far more than the usual 'how to write well' topics that routinely appear in such books and they fully address the complexity of communication in the modern world. After beginning with a partly historical consideration of scientific communication, subsequent chapters tackle topics including authorship (an increasingly important subject given current appraisal systems), manuscript preparation and submission, style, searching the Internet (younger readers may be disconcerted to find it explained so clearly and unarguably why search engines do not deliver everything!), presenting statistics, designing tables and figures, converting components of a thesis into journal manuscripts (we have all experienced the result as reviewers), deciding where to submit, responding to comments, preparing poster and oral presentations, the special art of writing review papers, reviewing and finishing with that plethora of communication types which pepper most of our working days including impromptu comments, telephone calls (my pet hate is individuals who do

not identify themselves but assume instant voice recognition even though they are in contact only a few times a year), e-mails and memos. There is no index, although there is a list of symbols and abbreviations.

I found this book a pleasure to read and it caused me to reflect on some of my own communication patterns, both good and bad. I must confess to being old enough (just!) to have handwritten my first manuscript draft before passing it to co-authors for comments and revision, postponing approaching the typewriter until we had an essentially finished (from our perspective) product. Writing in this manner certainly makes one think before committing to paper, although I do recall with horror just how long it could take to draw a graph by hand. I found much food for thought in the 'within-manuscript' chapters, but it was also extremely interesting and beneficial to read the 'submission mechanics' chapters to see the approaches and advice of others. Other than a few style recommendations, some of which I think stray into what can be considered 'personal preferences', I found nothing of substance with which I would disagree. I suspect that almost all of us have been on both sides of the author–reviewer interaction at some time or other and many of us have also performed some form of editing. The publication process would I am sure be more efficient and less painful for all concerned if authors routinely followed the practices described in this book. Our other scientific communications would also be much the better for adopting them.

This book has much to offer anyone involved in scientific communication and as fish biologists we are fortunate that it has been written by our peers and so is presented in an idiom with which we will be readily familiar. Although produced largely from the perspective of fishery scientists working in the U.S.A., it is equally applicable to fish biologists working and communicating anywhere in the world. This is one of those rare books which should find a home in any research or management laboratory or office. Given its relatively low cost, I also strongly recommend personal purchase by anyone starting out on the road of scientific communication. This is money very wisely spent.

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