
EDITORIALS

The Cost of Scientific Communication

The Scientist as Ad-Man

THE COST of publishing a journal devoted to papers describing the results of basic studies is such that many scientific journals, including *Circulation Research*, ask the authors of published articles to pay "page charges." These charges in no way result in a profit; they merely offset a part of the cost of publication. In fact the total cost of publishing the Journal is far in excess of total income from subscriptions, advertising, and page charges. Both governmental and other granting agencies have recognized that such charges are a reasonable part of the cost of research and allow funds for this purpose in grant budgets. This action is based on the belief that it is essential for the results of scientific investigation to be published and the realization that many journals could not survive without such support.

This realistic approach to the dissemination of new information now is threatened by the United States Postal Service. Specifically, the Postal Service has informed the editors and publishers of two scientific journals that, because the authors of the published articles have paid page charges, the scientific papers are to be classified as advertising and must be identified as such if the journals are to be mailed to subscribers at the usual postal rate. This ruling is derived from the Post Office Manual and is based on two Public Laws:

39 USC 4367. *Marking of advertising matter*

Editorial or other reading matter contained in publications entered as second class mail and for the publication of which a valuable consideration is paid, accepted or promised, shall be marked plainly "advertisement" by the publisher. (Public Law 86-682, September 2, 1960, 74 Stat. 671.)

18 USC 1734. *Editorial and other matters as "advertisements"*

Whoever, being an editor or publisher, prints in a publication entered as second class mail, editorial or other reading matter for which he has been paid or promised a valuable consideration, without plainly marking the same "advertisement" shall be fined not more than \$500. (Added Public Law 86-682, Section 7, September 2, 1960, 74 Stat. 706.)

A number of questions arise as a result of this almost unbelievable action by the Postal Service. One might start off by considering just what "advertising" is. In the strictest sense an "advertisement" is nothing more than a public notice. As such, any scientific manuscript could be classified as an advertisement. However, considering the wording of the laws quoted above, the definition of "advertising" really is "to call public attention to, especially by emphasizing desirable qualities, in order to arouse a desire to purchase or invest" (Webster's). Indeed, it is this definition that we usually think of with respect to the advertising of a product in a journal or magazine and it is this definition that the Postal Service is, in a very real sense, attempting to apply to scientific research. However, nothing could be more ridiculous than to classify the published descriptions of research conducted by reputable investigators as advertising and neither the Journal nor the authors of papers published in it should acquiesce to a rule that requires a description and interpretation of the results of scientific investigation to be labeled as advertising. On the practical side, the Postal Service seems to be unaware of the fact that physicians are not permitted to advertise; under the current interpretation of the laws, investigators with an M.D. degree could not publish in our journals even if they were willing to have a label "advertising matter" placed at the top of their article.

As we are not going to designate papers published in the Journal as advertisements, we may have to mail the publication at a higher postal rate. This would increase the cost of subscriptions and probably decrease the number of subscribers. An alternative would be to increase the page charges. This would lead to the ridiculous situation in which the National Institutes of Health and other granting agencies would be asked to increase the allocations for page charges so that Postal Service revenues would increase. It hardly seems reasonable to divert an additional fraction of the funds made available to support research into the apparently bottomless pit that is the Postal Service budget. The wastefulness of this procedure, as well as the foolishness of the entire situation, are obvious.

As this is the law, there are three alternatives: One is to ignore it; this no longer is possible in view of the position taken by the Postal Service. The second is to accept the law and the Postal Service position and go along with it;

this is totally unacceptable. The third is to get the law changed—and to stay the hand of the Postal Service until this can be done. We believe that the third alternative is the only one acceptable—on both moral and practical grounds—to the scientific community and to the publishers of scientific information. Such an action requires the mo-

bilization of this community in terms of lobbying, letter writing, and the legal measures available to it. Failure to act in this situation will impose ethical and practical limitations that are both distasteful and unacceptable.

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Brian F. Hoffman

And More about Money

The current question concerning the payment of page charges and its relation to the cost of mailing the Journal is only one aspect of the general problem of the ever rising cost of publishing and distributing a journal like *Circulation Research*. Ideally, revenue from subscriptions should be sufficient to defray all costs. However, if the subscription price were to be increased for this purpose, the number of subscribers would decrease. As a result, not only might there be no increase in total income from subscriptions, there even might be a loss of advertising revenues. More important, if there were fewer subscribers, the contents of the Journal almost certainly would reach fewer readers. This would defeat the purpose of the Journal, which is to make available to the widest possible audience the results of recent significant studies on the heart and circulatory system.

We can make use of other means either to obtain additional revenue or to serve as a substitute for income from page charges. It would be possible, for example, to charge for the review of all the manuscripts we receive or to make an initial charge for review and an additional charge for editorial services. Under such a system, however, authors whose papers were not accepted for publication would be required to contribute to the Journal and this seems unfair. The “obvious” solution of increasing the number of pages of advertising in the Journal is more difficult than it might seem because (1) our total distribution is limited—an unattractive proposition to advertisers—and (2) many advertisers believe that, for the most part, our readers are not appropriate consumers.

While we work toward solution of these problems, we shall do our best to decrease the costs of publication without sacrificing the quality of the Journal. First, we have

initiated more efficient means to publish the Journal. Waverly Press, Inc., has adopted a new Composition Formatting System that will reduce the need for traditional copy preparation and, at the same time, will increase the accuracy of the final composition. Contributors to the Journal will notice, when they receive galley proofs, that many of the traditional instructions from the redactor have been replaced by cryptic commands to a computer. At first this will be confusing and perhaps unsettling; we have been assured that no matter how incomplete the redaction may appear, the finished product will be as excellent as ever.

Second, some savings will be effected by the manner in which we, as editors, process the manuscripts. A substantial part of the cost of publication results from changes in the galleys requested by the authors or required by our queries to the authors. We plan to make some changes in our editing of manuscripts to help keep such costly changes to a minimum.

Finally, a real saving can be realized if authors make every effort to refrain from suggesting nonessential changes in galley. If, in redaction, we have made modifications to conform to the style preference of the Journal, and the author, in the galleys, returns the text to the original, the cost of publishing that paper increases. Every comma inserted, every comma deleted takes time, hence costs money. In short, we will make a determined effort to provide authors with galleys that should require minimal change. It is our hope that authors, in turn, will suppress the urge to make any alteration that is not essential to the meaning of the text.

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