



Workshop on Publication Preparation  
CPAST, Lanzhou University PhD Students, 2014  
中国,州大学,草地农业科技学院

Cory Matthew, James Millner, Brennon Wood

Massey University  
新西兰, 梅西大学

# Outline

- Working situation
- Science philosophy comparison
- At the Editorial Office
- Principle of statement – validation in scientific writing
- Study published papers to detect their manuscript building technique, volume of work, data-message links, etc
- Statistics
- Need for a strong story line or message
- Manuscript preparation points
  - Format
  - Context of citations
  - English polishing

# Working situation:

- Lanzhou University requires an SCI International paper as a condition for graduation;
- Publication acceptance is noticeably more difficult in the last 5 years;
- Professor Hou pushes for high Impact Factor (and it is good for job prospects too);
- Data sets are being partitioned between different students for different papers.

- Dear Dr Robin:

I write to you in regards to manuscript # FP14227 entitled "Towards an overview of whole tiller carbon source-sink patterns in perennial ryegrass (*Lolium perenne* L.)" which you submitted to Functional Plant Biology.

I regret to inform you that after careful reading of your manuscript I have made a decision **to decline your submission to Functional Plant Biology**. While indeed the results presented in your work are of scientific merits, I believe the focus of the manuscript is too narrow for the journal.

Functional Plant Biology is a broad-based interdisciplinary plant science journal, with papers presenting novel results that are not limited to a localised or specialised angle. Most importantly, papers published in FPB are expected to provide a deep mechanistic explanation of the observed phenomena, while your **paper is essentially observational** and falls short of explaining mechanisms behind your observations. Thus, it is recommended that you resubmit your results to more specialised journal with lower IF, where this condition may be not compulsory.

I am sorry I cannot bring better news, but I thank you for considering Functional Plant Biology on this occasion.

Sincerely, Dr Sergey Shabala

# Science philosophy comparison

## Western

- Human need/research question;
- Design experiment to produce data that answer question;
- Collect & analyse data;
- Logically derive what conclusions are drawn from data obtained;
- Inform readers.

## Chinese

- Identify a “system” to study;
- Perturb the system or find a gradient;
- Collect MANY data;
- Because data exist they have a right to be published;
- Publish data;
- Reader will decide how to interpret them.

# At the Editorial Office

- It's hard to find referee's nowadays;
- The Editor needs to protect their journal's impact factor;
- They will do a pre-referee check; wrongly formatted MSS (according to their instructions) are likely to be returned immediately;
- A typical high IF journal has pages for only about 20 – 40% of MSS received so they do a pre-selection and not all are sent to referees .

**Conclusion: we need to be “sharp” in order to succeed**

# Statement / validation

One rule of scientific writing is:

“Statement” (with validation)

Followed by a logical deduction.

“Statement” should be a fact no one can argue with. In introduction supported by a reference. In discussion supported by a reference or own data (table or figure) If the reader can ask “So ... what?” then it’s a problem.

Validation for data is the “method”; data should not be presented without an indication of method.

# Checking structure of published papers

- Try this with model paper 2: pollination of Vicia bean (Australia)

What was the aim?

What did they do?

What tables/figures are given?

What was the conclusion?

# Statistics

- Not well developed in curricula of Universities in China,
- Replication, sample independence, repeat measures,
- Extremely well developed in USA Universities and American Journals
- Example for discussion from the Sunan/Qilian Mountain data (Item 1a, 1b)

# Story line / Message

- Title needs to indicate main content of paper with few words;
- Introduction should outline the necessary background information selected for tight relevance to this paper and close with research aims or questions;
- Data organised to answer the research questions given with key points only highlighted in the text;
- Discussion delivers the interpretation of the data and comparison with and link to other work;
- Close with answer to questions or aims proposed at the start.

Significant time need to develop story line; suggest invite a fellow student to discuss with you. Check story line for audience interest. Not words alone – logic too.

Example: Item 2a, 2b

# Manuscript preparation points

- Format

Hyphen, en dash, space, p P *p P*, Paragraph indents,  
References – completeness, style, chapter in a book,

- Context of citations

- Plagiarism (presenting writing of someone else as if you are the author)

- English polishing