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Book Review: *Writing and Presenting Scientific Papers (2nd edition)*. B. Malmfors, P. Garnsworthy, and M. Grossman

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BOOK REVIEWS

Writing and Presenting Scientific Papers (2nd edition). B. Malmfors, P. Garnsworthy, and M. Grossman. Nottingham University Press, Manor Farm, Main Street, Thrumpton, Nottingham NG11 0AX, UK. Available from Blackwell Publishing, P.O. Box 570, Ames, IA 50010-0570. 2004. Paperback, 153 pp., \$39.99. ISBN 1-897676-12-3.

Writing and Presenting Scientific Papers is not about the mechanics of writing and presenting scientific findings but the art of communicating science. This book is the second edition of a book first published in 2000 and incorporates many suggestions gathered from readers of the first volume. It also includes a new section on research proposals, book reviews and writing about statistics. The overall purpose of this book is to help readers understand that effective communication of science is a critical responsibility of all scientists. Readers of this book will gain an appreciation of the value of effective communication. The authors use a simple ABC (Accurate and Audience-adapted, Brief, and Clear) approach as the framework of their presentation. If all of us follow these simple ABCs, the goal of effective communication will be achieved.

In my 24 years in various roles in the *Agronomy Journal* and as a reviewer for a large number of journals, I have observed many of the problems discussed in this book, and I found some helpful suggestions in it that I intend to apply in my next paper. Our writing skills are never too seasoned not to pick up some helpful hints, so this book will benefit everyone from undergraduates preparing a scientific report to mature scientists seeking to improve their writing skills. This book would be a valuable addition to your bookshelf; however, when your classmates or colleagues find out you have this book, it may be hard to keep in your office.

The second chapter of the book describes a scientific paper and the table at the end of the chapter, which details the intent of each section of a paper, can be used as a checklist to help writers determine if they have “hit the mark” with their writing. If we compare each paper, after it is written, with this checklist, we can improve communication with the reader. Subsequent chapters deal with the use of tables, figures, and statistics and provide useful hints for authors. Chapters describing styles of scientific writing provide helpful ideas on how to relate style to audience. Chapter 4 describes how authors must be aware of the different styles of writing to communicate effectively with their audience. Coupling this chapter with Chapter 6 on “Improving Your Writing” provides a good framework for determining how we all can become better communicators.

The authors have gone beyond discussing the skills and mechanics of writing and shepherding a paper through the review process (Chapter 9) to include discussions of literature searches (Chapter 8), training students in writing (Chapter 12), and reviewing papers and presentations (Chapter 13). These are critical topics that are part of the writing and reviewing process and these chapters will help all authors. As a reinforcement of the theme of communication, two chapters (Chapter 10 and 11) deal with oral and poster presentations. These two chapters provide hints that can help all of us communicate with our audience more effectively. I challenge all crop scientists to consider how much more effective communi-

cators we would be if we adopted the concepts described in this book.

I believe that all of us can become more effective communicators. We often gain communication skills by observing those we consider to be good communicators; however, the authors have captured these concepts for written and oral presentations in an easy-to-read book that allows all of us to have an expert on our desk. I would recommend this book to students, teachers, researchers, writers, and reviewers to improve everyone's communications skills. This is one of those books that can help all of us.

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