COMMENT AND OPINION

The health sciences librarian as scientific entertainer

Blaca San José Montano

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.3163/1536-5050.103.2.010

Editor’s Note: Shakespeare as an entertainer gave us insight to a culture. If he had been just an historian listing facts, we would never have been interested. Librarians often are in a didactic situation where considering Shakespeare might be useful.

Introduction

The health sciences librarian as scientific entertainer encourages students to be authors in scientific journals. In this role, we teach basic and contemporary authors culture accompanied by the famous figure of William Shakespeare.

University hospitals create, apply, and share knowledge and innovation. As such, they have three main roles: caring for patients, teaching, and doing research. Health sciences librarians (HSLs) are transverse supporting units in the institution, embedded in the “virtuous circle” of scientific publishing that leads to more research that leads to more publishing (Figure 1). HSLs not only provide high-quality information to researchers, but also promote knowledge creation and diffusion through publication.

The librarian is a go-between in the scientific community, located between the information and the production of knowledge. A systematic literature review of 1990 to 2012 identified new roles such as the embedded librarian, with two prominent types: the liaison role and the informationist role [1]. The embedded librarian as advisor and supporter to the institution’s research is described as being involved in the process of publishing scientific papers, distributing them, keeping the research data, and managing their visibility and impact [2,3].

Publications in scientific journals from hospitals have been falling in recent years, arguably because of the social and political context of economic crisis and the consequent increase in workload, resulting in changes in priorities.

The University Hospital of Mostoles in Spain is a second-level general hospital with a very active clinical practice. It is a teaching hospital for specializing postgraduates and, at present, has 159 residents in 25 different specialities. Furthermore, pregraduate medical students and medical postgraduates work in the hospital.

The library with its teaching role and the librarian as research informationist have an opportunity to strengthen the scientific publication culture of the undergraduate and postgraduate trainee as well as the existing hospital staff. To exploit this opportunity and improve research output, we created an introduction to the basic and contemporary culture of the scientific author.

Purpose

The objective was to create a program to encourage students to publish and to be authors in scientific journals. There are three specific objectives:

■ To create the curiosity necessary to facilitate students’ learning and motivation to be scientific authors, using the interest generated by a famous historical figure, Shakespeare

■ To acquire a basic culture of the scientific author as an inherent role in health professionals’ lives

■ To get the maximum curricular return value from participation and work in research

Methods

The structure of the learning sessions was “five Ws and one H” (why, who, where, what, when, and how) to answer the basic questions concerning science authors. Shakespeare is one of the most important English writers (according to the “Stratfordians,” who do not question his authorship [4]). His life is used as an example and a reflection of the importance of publishing as an essential strategy in professional development.

Content

The program attempts to answer the following questions.

1. Why publish and what for? Shakespeare is considered the greatest playwright in the English language. The reason we know of his work is because it was not just played in theatres, but it was also published. However, his work was only published eight years after his death, by two actors from his company. Five essential reasons for publishing (while alive!) are:

I. As health care professionals, our activities (caring for our patients, teaching, and doing research) form a virtuous cycle that generates knowledge (Figure 1).

II. Science is an ever-moving discipline, evolving through human activity. Biomedical research aims at increasing our quality and expectancy of life.

III. Belonging to our hospital is an opportunity. The university hospital is the core of translational research, applying knowledge to patient care and developing new knowledge.

IV. The society of knowledge is based on the creation and further diffusion of new information.

V. For the student, it affects “How my work is valued.”

Synthesis: Why and what for to publish? As one student stated, it is important “Because it is both my and our interest, because it is using an opportunity provided by our hospital and because it improves my curriculum vitae by means of scientific communication of my work.” Shakespeare said: “Strong reasons make strong actions” [King John].

2. Who should publish? Shakespeare did not have high-degree
During the J Med Lib Assoc 103(2) April 2015

Comment and opinion

There are different types of authorship. Marušić et al. in a systematic review established different kinds of authorship depending on the author’s involvement [6].

Synthesis: We should share and be involved in building new knowledge for the development of our personal curriculum vitae, among other reasons. Scientific work is usually produced by means of the collaboration of several authors, learning through research and experience. Shakespeare said: It is not in the stars to hold our destiny but in ourselves [paraphrased from Julius Caesar].

3. Where to publish? Shakespeare never published anything while alive. In the sixteenth century, plays were written to be represented in the theatre. Shakespeare worked in several posts in the Lord Chamberlain’s Men Theatre Company, finally becoming its coproprietor. Theatre companies required royal protection and patronage; therefore, after the death of Queen Elizabeth I, the company became the King’s Men, seeking King James I’s protection.

For that reason, consider the characteristics of scientific journals: When publishing, one should search for the greatest diffusion and impact on the professional community. Scientific journals are the main tool to broadcast biomedical scientific works, and publishing in them is highly valued in the professional curriculum vitae. Therefore, one should try to publish in a journal with the best possible rating on quality, diffusion, and scientific value. An essential quality indicator of the scientific journal is the peer-review process, which is considered the only fair and efficient way to evaluate scientific works. The presence of the journal in databases and repositories (indexing) is also important.

Synthesis: Scientific work is heavy duty work that should be rewarded by publishing the resulting manuscript in the best possible journal, both in quality and diffusion. “Destiny is the one shuffling the cards, but we are the one playing the game” [attributed to Shakespeare].

4. How to publish? During the sixteenth century, the author’s position was precarious. The plays became property of the company. The Elizabethan plays that were eventually published were written so much later and played so often that they appeared without the author’s name. Shakespeare has not left us any holographic manuscript.

For this reason, consider copyright and the open access (OA) movement: The author has inalienable moral rights and exploitation or patrimonial rights that are assignable. This was the rule governing scientific publication when authors sent a manuscript and it was accepted. The publisher asked for a signed “copyright transfer agreement,” through which the author gave the publisher all exploitation rights. However, this is changing. Since the 1990s, the OA movement establishes two key routes: “green route” and “gold route.” The “gold route” involves publishing in a full open-source journal or website. Self-archiving in a repository (“green route”) is a concept that is gradually gaining ground.

This alternative form of publishing will increase in the near future, so when we are considering submitting a manuscript to a journal, it is important to verify the editorial policy regarding authorship and permission to upload the paper to a repository.

Synthesis: OA should be part of our publication culture to preserve our rights and to improve our work’s diffusion. Furthermore, this will help us to adapt to the new research and evaluation space, in a world where data and contents will increasingly be OA published. “Learning is an appendage of ourselves; wherever we are, our learning is also” [attributed to Shakespeare].

5. What to publish? The success of Shakespeare’s works is partly due to his knowledge about other works and his ability to elaborate on them, enlarging them and contextualizing them with his time and giving them a new life through his insight.

For this reason, consider the types of articles and topics published in scientific journals: There are several types of works that can be published in a scientific journal: original articles, review articles, theoretical works, editorials, literature reviews, case reports, letters.
to the editor, and so on. To find out the new research tendencies in health sciences, some editors such as Baiget and Torres-Salinas suggest consulting the Thomson Reuters Research fronts through the free ScienceWatch service [7]. Other useful resources are the Web of Science or the Essential Science Indicators, which help identify relevant tendencies and emerging research areas on data supplied from more than 13,000 journals. One should also perform a thematic review of the journal to which the paper is being submitted.

Synthesis: We should consider which are the most active issues, judge their originality, and evaluate if our work is in the scope of the journal we have chosen. It is useful to consider its lines of interest, its sections, and the "information for authors" section. Shakespeare said: "Our doubts are traitors, and make us lose the good we oft might win by fearing to attempt" [Measure for Measure].

6. When to publish? Five years before his death, Shakespeare retired to his native town, Stratford-upon-Avon, and was finally buried under the Holy Trinity Church presbytery. He paid a large amount of money to be buried there, and he seemed to consider his prestige so short lasting that, as was usual in his times, he thought his bones would be removed from his tomb in order to reutilize it. Maybe for this reason, he demanded that the following epitaph be written on his grave:

Good friend, for Jesus’ sake forbear, To dig the dust enclosed here. Blest be the man that spares these stones, But cursed be he that moves my bones.

For that reason, the best moment to publish is now! Any moment is good to share our knowledge, enhance its quality by peer review, diffuse it, and improve our curricula vitae.

Final synthesis: As discussed in this paper, and phrasing it in Shakespeare’ words, publishing is “to be or not to be, that is the question” [Hamlet]. To this question, only oneself can answer.

Discussion

Students are under intense pressure, so teaching and stimulating research are very important [8]. Active learning procedures improve learning and retention [9]. The author’s conference attendees were delighted to be introduced to the life of the famous Shakespeare, and this let us play with their curiosity to convey basic information for future authors, while retaining their interest.

HSLs are ever more involved in this partner/supporter role in the institution’s research, and from this go-between function in the technological and scientific development by offering assistance to the professional’s needs, we are becoming “scientific entertainers,” facilitating daily scientific work. Scientific entertainers are defined as strategic figures for a correct function and development in the medium and long term [10]. Concerning the entertainer’s function, it should be stressed that all research stems from individual learning (practice and action), and that this is what will provide answers to and opportunities for our institutions, our staff, and our students. HSLs have an excellent tool for this: their lifelong learning in order to strengthen the health staff empowerment, adapting to the scientific context and adding value to society and to their institutions.

Conclusions

Since its first presentation on December 2013 until July 2014, this lecture has been given 8 times, for 220 students (103 nursing students, 117 medical students). The attending students offered a mean evaluation of 9 on a satisfaction scale from 0–10. Its acceptance has led to its incorporation into the introductory teaching for nursing and medical residents for the next year. The attendees show special interest on the normalization registries (international author registries) for new authors and the information on OA and its international consequences and implications both in Spain and abroad. Hopefully, this will keep them tuned to new developments, such as the incorporation of OA into research data management.

Although it is still too soon to evaluate its long-term consequences, we believe this is promising work for the library, as a neutral service providing clinical information and promoting the librarian role to that of a scientific entertainer, advising on tools and quality indicators in the research that is carried on in the hospital.

Training programs on scientific publication focus primarily on how to develop a scientific article but do not stress the basic culture of author. To publish and be an author is a basic role of our future professionals. Learning about authorship can be done from a library through its librarians, who manage research advisory services, and can provide information about strategic publishing, research profiles, and alternative publishing models. The librarian knows the requirements, characteristics, and evaluation criteria of the author and the changes that are developing.

Acknowledgments

The author expresses her gratitude to Dr. Manuel Varela and to his daughter Sara Varela, for their translation support for this article. A Journal of the Medical Library Association reviewer provided significant editorial assistance.

"Brevity is the soul of wit" [Hamlet]
106

J Med Lib Assoc 103(2) April 2015

Comment and opinion

1. Librarians: a systematic review, 1990–2012. J Med Lib Assoc. 2013 Oct; 101(4):268–77. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.3163/1536-5050.101.4.008.
2. Shumaker D, Talley M. Models of embedded librarianship: research summary. Inf Outlook. 2010;14(1):27–35.
3. Talley M. Success and the embedded librarian. Inf Outlook. 2011;15(3):25–8.
4. Bate J. El genio de Shakespeare. Madrid, Spain: Espasa Calpe; 2000.
5. Barnard R. A short history of English literature. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Basil; 1994.
6. Marušič A, Bošnjak I, Jerončič A. A systematic review of research on the meaning, ethics and practices of authorship across scholarly disciplines. PLOS One [Internet]. 2011;6(9):e23477 [cited 24 Feb 2014]. <http://www.plosone.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0023477>.
7. Baiget T, Torres-Salinas D. Informe APEI sobre publicación en revistas científicas. Gijón, Spain: Asociación Profesional de Especialistas en Información; 2013.
8. García Melchor E. Problemas de los residentes: ¿cómo podemos solucionarlos? Semin Fund Esp Reumatol. 2009;10(3):100–3.
9. Herur A, Kolagi S, Chinagudi S, Manjula R, Patil S. Active learning by play dough modeling in the medical profession. Advan Physiol Edu. 2011 Jun 1;35(2):241–3.
10. Ortega-Calvo M, Santos JM, Lapetra J. The scientific entertainer in primary health care. Atención Primaria. 2012;44:549–54.

Received October 2014; accepted December 2014