

nism for attribution in the scientific literature. To appropriate a database entry without attribution and imply that the data were generated de novo would be plagiarism, but to use data from a public database as the basis for further analysis is entirely appropriate and widely accepted within the academic community.

DAVID J. STATES

Department of Genetics, Center for Computational Biology, Washington University School of Medicine, St. Louis, MO 63110, USA. E-mail: states@ccb.wustl.edu

References

1. www.nhgri.nih.gov/Grant_info/Funding/State-ments/RFA/data_release.html
2. M. J. Cinkosky, J. W. Fickett, P. Gilna, C. Burks, *Science* 252,1273 (1991).

Structured Abstracts for Technical Journals

OUR READING OF THOUSANDS OF technical journal abstracts in myriad disciplines shows substantial information non-uniformity in the nonmedical records' abstracts. They can vary in information volume, information categories, and information clarity. Commonly, research purpose, results achieved, and potential applications are not evident.

We do not find these problems in the bulk of the *medical* literature. Most medical journals require that authors address canonical categories in the abstract and full-text article, based on recommendations made over a decade ago (1). The experience of the medical community with these structured abstracts has been well documented (2). Structured abstracts are slightly longer than unstructured ones, have slightly longer underlying articles, and have more useful information content. They produce no negative impact on creativity or originality and are widely accepted as a positive improvement.

The advantages of structured abstracts are so obvious, we do not understand why they have not been implemented in the nonmedical journals. The costs are minimal and the potential benefits would be substantial. We recommend that all technical journals require the following generic structured abstract categories for both original research and review articles: Background, Objectives, Approach, Results, and Conclusions. Each journal could also establish subcategories to accentuate information of value to its unique

discipline, as many medical journals have done.

RONALD N. KOSTOFF,^{1*} JAMES HARTLEY²

¹Office of Naval Research, 800 North Quincy Street, Arlington, VA 22217, USA; ²Department of Psychology, Keele University, Staffordshire ST5 5BG, UK

*To whom correspondence should be addressed.

E-mail: kostoff@onr.navy.mil

References

1. Ad Hoc Working Group for Critical Appraisal of Medical Literature, *Ann. Intern. Med.* 106, 598 (1987).
2. J. Hartley, *Bull. Med. Library Assoc.* 88, 332 (2000).

CORRECTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

NETWATCH: "Latin America Field Guide" (4 May, p. 815). The bird in the photo accompanying the item is a tufted coquette, not a dark-rumped petrel.

REVIEW: "Genealogical and evolutionary inference with the human Y chromosome" by M. P. H. Stumpf and D. B. Goldstein (2 Mar., p. 1740). In column 3, paragraph 2, headed "Ancestral haplotypes and present variation," the last sentence should have read "...nodes 1 through 4 back to the node at time T_3 ," not "...at time T_2 ."



CREDIT: LARRY MASTER



We're In It For The Science

The **National Cell Culture Center** is a non-profit resource sponsored by the NIH to support basic research by providing access to cell culture services at minimal cost. Working with the Center, your cell line or custom protocol is adapted for larger scale production. Cells or cell secreted proteins are delivered in the quantity and frequency you desire, enabling you to focus more of your valuable resources on fundamental research problems.

Thousands of scientists from every major research institution throughout the country have accessed the Center for their cell culture needs. Let us help you with your research. *Visit us on the web at www.nccc.com*

Sponsored by the National Center for Research Resources, National Institutes of Health.

National Cell Culture Center 
Dedicated to Supporting the Biomedical Research Community