

Scientific Publishing Studentship Report

Aims of Project

During my studentship, my general aim was to support the publishing team by performing research commissioning for the esteemed Biochemical Journal (BCJ). I had to understand the scope, themes, and targets of the journal, through discussions with publishing team members and exploration of the journal webpage. The journal aims to increase research article content over review, so this would predominate my commissioning leads. I aimed to access a variety of commissioning sources including competitor journals, meetings/conferences, and specific institutions. Alongside my main commissioning responsibilities, I was provided the opportunity to use twitter as a medium to both source new commissioning resources for the team to use, meanwhile sourcing social media accounts associated with commissioning leads.

Summary of Work

The research commissioning involved investigating commissioning resources including meetings/conferences, competitor journals, research panels, and target institutions. I would research scientists whose work fits the scope of the journal by investigating their publications and research areas, and key metrics such as H-indices and citations. Potential authors who would fit the criteria would be noted down, alongside a recent relevant paper or their expertise. When looking at their publications and research focus, I would often draft a possible review title for them to submit to the journal.

Alongside this work, I used twitter as a source for building the Society's network. Alongside the commissioning leads I would not down a potential author's social media alongside. I searched twitter for potential commissioning resources, including meetings or researchers that fit the journal scope. I also used twitter for marketing purposes, by drafting tweets to promote recent and previous publications.

Outcomes of Project

Overall, I was able to generate 387 commissioning leads, with specific numbers found in figure 1 and 2. When investigating meetings and conferences, there was often a long list of speakers to search for, with many student or early career researchers with few publications. A benefit of using these sources is that there is almost a guarantee that the researchers will fit the scope of the journal. The same was found for using BCJ research panels and editorial boards. When searching target institutions, I found it easier to find high quality researchers, with staff faculty lists providing access to professors and their publications. However, finding researchers' publications and research areas depended on the institution's website which didn't always present this information, so it was often difficult to access this information. Searching competitor journals such as JBC presented easy access to high quality researchers with a scope highly similar to the BCJ.

	Institution type	
	No read and publish deal	Read and publish
Research article leads	287	62
Review article leads	40	4
Review ideas taken forward (thus far)	9	2
Twitter accounts found	143	25

Figure 1: Review and research article commissioning leads for BCJ.

	Commissioning leads
Meetings/conferences	82
US and Canadian Institutions	209
Competitor Journals	44
BCJ research panels/editorial boards	60

Figure 2: Commissioning leads with respective sources.

For [World Mitochondrial Disease Week](#), I collated 5 papers covering a broad range of mitochondrial research articles, which were posted on the Society’s website on a news piece. When looking over the ‘Cell signalling in the 21st century’ collection, I found two possible areas that could be added to the collection – cell migration and cilia. I recommended two published articles in the BCJ that would cover these areas.

When searching twitter for possible commissioning resources, I came across 5 meetings covering a broad range of Biochemical research that the publishing team will hopefully verify. One of the tweets I drafted for the BCJ was published on the journal’s twitter account:



Explore the fascinating biochemical adaptations that facilitate nonshivering thermogenesis in the Columba livia bird. Pani et al discover that seasonal cold induces structural and biochemical changes in skeletal muscles. doi.org/10.1042/BCJ202...

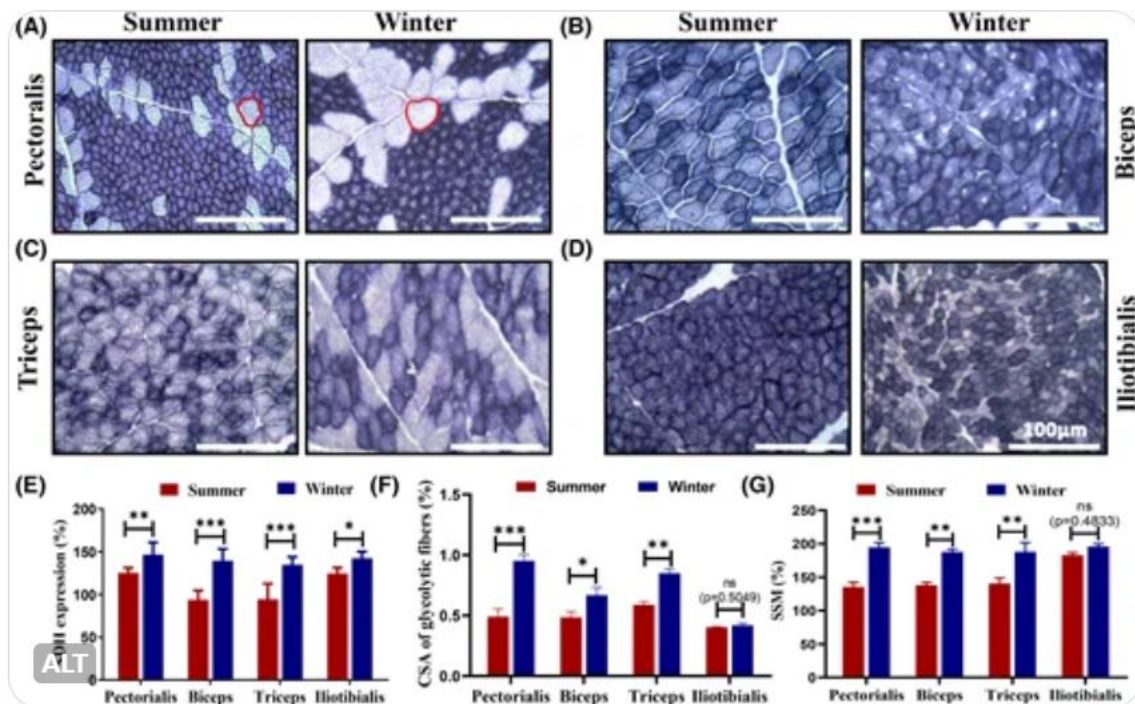


Figure 3: A tweet I drafted to promote a recently published BCJ article.

Impact

I supported the publishing team by increasing article submissions and publications to aid BCJ growth and development. I also helped increase submissions in specific areas as part of the strategy for the BCJ, such as mitochondrial research. Another part of the strategy is to increase the number of institutions with Read and Publish (R&P) agreements which drives uptake of open access articles which is key for growth of the journal. This is the direction that academic publishing is moving in as it maximises article accessibility. Open access uptake is also important as these articles have increased metrics such as readership and citations, thus boosting the profile of the journal and increasing resubmissions

Finding content leads from target institutions aids engagement of researchers and network strengthening in geographical areas. This falls in line with the strategy of outcompeting journals such as the JBC which dominate US/Canadian submissions and publications. It also increases the diversity of publications and readership. Thus, could boost the profile of the journal.

By drafting tweets, I helped disseminate published content to a wider audience. This assists in increasing journal metrics, thus boosting the impact and profile of the journal. Explaining article content concisely through tweets also helps to promote the scope of the journal. Finding twitter accounts associated with commissioning leads should help the Society build their network, increasing the likelihood of new authors submitting papers to the journal.

Discussion

Through my studentship, I gained a strong understanding of the responsibilities and skills required of a commissioning assistant. From my research commissioning to discussions with the publishing team, my understanding of the publishing life cycle was significantly clarified. My understanding of the journal scope and criteria for potential authors strengthened throughout my studentship. I gained a strong understanding of strategy, through learning how the publishing team aims to boost the journal profile through targeting institutions and outcompeting competitors. Involving myself in marketing in social media aided my understanding research promotion, and how it ties in with the strategy of the publishing team. Using twitter helped develop my science communication skills as I had to deconvolute and summarise the paper's aims and findings. I gained key analytical skills during research commissioning, particularly when drafting review titles as I had to have a strong understanding of the science.