

Editing Services in the Research Medical Library: Who We Are and What We Do

Editing Services is a group of editors in the Research Medical Library who offer editing services and educational programs on scientific writing and publishing. The group was established in 1948, when MD Anderson's first president, R. Lee Clark, hired Russell W. Cumley, a childhood friend, to establish an editorial department for MD Anderson's faculty.

Today, Editing Services performs substantive editing of around 50 journal-article manuscripts each month. In addition, the group edits more than 150 grant proposals each year, for the NIH, ACS, and state and local funding agencies, leading to millions of dollars in funding that can be partially attributed to the group's efforts in helping authors.

Editing Services also offers numerous courses on scientific writing and publishing. Since 2002, Editing Services has offered Writing and Publishing Scientific Articles, or WAPSA, which offers faculty and trainees practical advice on writing biomedical research articles. Editing Services also offers courses on writing K99/R00 and R01 grant proposals. WAPSA and the K99/R00 and R01 grant workshops are offered as on-demand self-paced courses and are also offered throughout the year in a virtual synchronous format. The variety of modalities has allowed thousands of MD Anderson researchers and clinicians to learn from the programs over the years.

In addition to the educational courses, Editing Services hosts a conversation series and contributes to the newsletter you are reading now. The conversation series, Dear Editor, is hosted in collaboration with the librarians in the Research Medical Library and focuses on trends in and resources for

scientific writing and publishing. For example, the series has covered using AI, preparing a manuscript for publication, preprints, and graphical abstracts. The Research Medical Library's newsletter, *[Library News](#)*, includes notices about new tools and services; advice on scientific writing topics, such as journal selection and grant writing; and notable updates in the scientific publishing and grant writing fields, such as updated NIH grant policies and suggestions about the use of AI. Also in *Library News* is a [column](#) on correct and precise word usage for biomedical writing, which has previously been published as a [book](#).

Editing Services also offers one-on-one guidance on written and oral communication. Authors can request a one-time consultation with an editor to discuss their individual manuscript or writing needs. In an effort to provide more personalized help, the group has recently expanded to offering a [writing coaching program](#) for early-career clinical and basic science researchers. This program helps researchers at any stage of a writing project—getting started, writing a first draft, refining a draft, or improving clarity and cohesion, for example. Extending beyond written communication, Editing Services recently launched an [English conversation program](#) to help participants improve their ability to converse in English.

As the scientific publishing field grows and changes, Editing Services will continue to evolve to meet the needs of researchers and clinicians at MD Anderson. Information about Editing Services's educational programs and editing offerings can be found on the Research Medical Library's [website](#).

Resources and Services for Residents and Fellows

Welcome new residents and fellows! The Research Medical Library at MD Anderson Cancer Center is glad you're here, and we look forward to helping you succeed in your programs.

Our mission is focused on supporting the research, education, and publishing activities of the community of students, faculty, and staff at MD Anderson. We provide access to a wide range of biomedical resources and expert research and editing services. Visit us online and take advantage of all we have to offer!

Clinical Tools

Get access to important point-of-care resources, like Up-To-Date and Lexi-Comp. These tools let clinicians quickly retrieve high-quality information on diagnosis and treatment. Learn more [here](#).

Literature Searching

Whether you are giving a presentation, writing an article, or looking for the best evidence in patient care, our librarians can provide expert searching for clinical or academic research, and hospital administration. Learn more [here](#).

Manuscript Editing

Our Scientific editors perform both substantive and copy editing of grant proposals, journal articles, and other reports of original research written by MD Anderson physicians and scientists for funding agencies, professional literature, and other external audiences. Learn more [here](#).

Research & Writing Classes

We offer live and self-paced educational videos, guides, and classes on a wide variety of topics. Our Writing and Publishing Scientific Articles (WAPSA) class series might be of particular interest to residents and fellows. This series of live classes kicks off in late July – you can register online [here](#).

Visit our Education Hub to browse other offerings by popular topic or enroll in one of our self-paced courses to earn a certificate of completion. Learn more [here](#).

Writing Coaching Service

Writing coaches meet virtually with early-career clinical and basic science researchers throughout a writing project to provide one-on-one guidance, support, and feedback. We can help with almost any aspect of writing a

research manuscript, review article, or grant application: getting started (brainstorming, outlining, and planning), writing a first draft, refining a draft, and improving cohesion and clarity. Our goal is to improve our researchers' skills and confidence in writing to support their careers in biomedical research. Learn more [here](#).

Types of Peer Review

All original research articles must undergo peer review before they can be published in a scientific journal. Several types of peer review, and their pros and cons, are discussed below.

Common types

Single-anonymized

In single-anonymized peer review, which is the most common type, the reviewers know the authors' identities, but the authors do not know the reviewers' identities.

- **Pros:** Reviewers can be more honest in their reviews because they remain anonymous; reviewers can consider authors' previous work.
- **Cons:** Knowledge of the authors' identities can result in bias (e.g., due to rivalry or reputation) or discrimination (e.g., due to gender or nationality); reviewer anonymity may result in poorer-quality reviews.

Double-anonymized

In double-anonymized peer review, the reviewers do not know the authors' identities, *and* the authors do not know the reviewers' identities.

- **Pros:** Authors' research may be judged more fairly because of anonymity; both the authors and reviewers avoid personal judgment or criticism.
- **Cons:** Anonymity is not guaranteed (reviewers may be able to identify authors or institutions despite anonymity); knowledge of the authors' identities may allow reviewers to provide more informed judgement.

Open (or signed)

With open peer review, the reviewers know the authors' identities and the authors know the reviewers' identities; this information may be revealed during or after the review process.

- **Pros:** Reviewers are likely to be more civil and thorough since their identities are known.
- **Cons:** Reviewers may be reluctant to criticize more senior researchers and may be less willing to review.

Transparent

Transparent peer review has all the features of open peer review *and* publishes the reviews, the authors' response to the reviews, and the editors' decision letter along with the article. The peer reviewers may be given the opportunity to choose whether to publicly share their identity.

Less common types

Triple-anonymized

Triple-anonymized peer review has all the features of double-anonymized peer review except that the authors' identities are *also* not known to the journal's editors during the review process.

Collaborative

In collaborative peer review, either the peer reviewers collaborate with one another to submit a single unified review of the manuscript *or* the authors revise the article under the supervision of one or more reviewers.

- **Pros:** Reviewers may provide more constructive feedback.

- **Cons:** Reviewers' opinions may no longer be considered independent if they are developed together; reviewers and authors working together blurs the lines between authoring and reviewing.

Post-publication

In post-publication peer review, reviews are provided *after* the article has been published, sometimes without an initial peer review process. The authors then make changes to the article in response to the reviews (both solicited and unsolicited). Post-publication peer review is normally also transparent.

- **Pros:** A wider range of perspectives can be provided; articles can be corrected, improved, and published more quickly; the ongoing public dialogue may better reflect the evolving nature of the field.
- **Cons:** The process is incompatible with a "version of record" and the normal citation process; controversial papers may lead to many (possibly unmoderated) comments and arguments; papers may be published and available for citation with no initial review.

Other approaches

Preprint review

Preprint reviews are online comments on an article that has not yet been published. Articles are posted to preprint servers (e.g., arXiv, bioRxiv, or medRxiv) or journals before being submitted for formal peer review.

- **Pros:** Researchers can share their work with others; the article is available more quickly, allowing for more timely discussions of preliminary results; the process is free and open to everyone, resulting in input from diverse researchers and fields; authors have a chance to improve their article before formal review.
- **Cons:** Reviews may lack rigor and standards; some articles may not receive many reviews; no standards exist for updating or retracting preprints.

For more on preprint reviews, please see [Dear Editor: What are preprints and are they useful?](#)

Cascading (or portable) review

A cascading review is submitted to a journal along with its associated article after the article has been rejected by a different journal. This option is more common when submitting articles to partner or specialty journals from the same publisher.

- **Pros:** Articles do not have to be re-reviewed with each new journal submission, which is more efficient and cost-effective for publishers and reviewers and may allow articles to be published more quickly.
- **Cons:** Larger publishers with multiple related journals have an advantage over smaller publishers; the efficient process may create unethical shortcuts for predatory journals or for authors seeking to publish flawed papers; reviewers may spend more time on controlling the transfer of articles than on assessing quality.

For more on cascading peer review, please see [Unusual terms used in scientific writing and publishing: Cascading peer review](#) (*The Write Stuff*, Autumn 2020).

Resources

The Research Medical Library provides advice on [responding to peer review](#) and [how to write a peer review](#) (*The Write Stuff*, Winter 2022). Editors are also available to help edit responses to reviewers; please note that responses must be submitted along with the revised article for editing. Please email us at RML-Editing@mdanderson.org.

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JoVE: The Journal of Visualized Experiments

If a picture is worth a thousand words, then a video must be worth tens of thousands, and JoVE is an incredibly rich resource for videos on a range of science topics from bioengineering to neuroscience. Founded in 2006, JoVE, or the Journal of Visualized Experiments, is a peer-reviewed journal that specializes in publishing experimental methods in a visual format. The journal offers more than 18,000 videos of laboratory techniques and scientific experiments, and these videos enhance transparency and reproducibility of experimental methods.

JoVE recently released the Encyclopedia of Experiments, a compendium of video encyclopedias of advanced research experiments on topics such as cancer research. Best of all, JoVE is indexed in major databases such as PubMed (MEDLINE), Web of Science, and Scopus, so its publications are readily available in the most popular bibliographic databases. In addition, JoVE provides a wealth of resources for faculty, including open education resources, guides for teaching remotely with JoVE videos, and weekly training sessions to help instructors incorporate JoVE resources to enhance course content and keep students engaged.

[Contact the Research Medical Library](#) if you would like more information on JoVE or any of our other resources.

When to Use "Than" Rather Than "Then"

The words *than* and *then* look and sound similar, but their meanings differ, as do their functions in sentences. One key to distinguishing between *than* and *then* is to remember that *than* indicates a contrast between two things, while *then* usually has to do with a sequence or time.

Than can be used as a conjunction (a word that connects words, phrases, or clauses) or a preposition (a word that introduces and modifies a noun phrase).¹ In either case, *than* indicates a contrast between the word or phrase that precedes it and the word or phrase that follows it.

Examples:

The patient opted for radiation therapy rather than surgery.

Overall survival was longer for mice in the treatment group than for mice in the control group.

The abolitionist Frederick Douglass said, "It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men."

Then is usually an adverb (a word that modifies a verb, adjective, phrase, or another adverb), and it usually relates to a sequence or time.² However, it can also function as an adjective (a word that modifies a noun or pronoun) or as a noun.

Examples:

Cells were washed in cold phosphate-buffered saline and then centrifuged.

The writer H.G. Wells said, "If anything is possible, then nothing is interesting."

In the first example, *then* functions as an adverb that modifies the verb *centrifuged* by clarifying the sequence of events. The second example is an "if...then" statement in which *then* acts as an adverb meaning "as a consequence" to modify the clause that follows; this is an instance in which *then* does not refer to time.

Examples:

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 was signed into law by then-President Bill Clinton.

[Alice said,] "I know who I was when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since then."³

In the first example, *then* functions as an adjective to modify *President*. In the second example, *then* serves as a noun meaning "that time."

References

¹Merriam-Webster.com. Than. Accessed June 5, 2024. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/than>

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³Carroll L. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. BookVirtual; 2000. Accessed June 5, 2024. https://www.adobe.com/be_en/active-use/pdf/Alice_in_Wonderland.pdf