

## EDITORIAL

# Simplify, simplify

JAMES H. MORRISSEY\* and DAVID LILICRAP†

\*Departments of Biological Chemistry &amp; Internal Medicine, University of Michigan Medical School, Ann Arbor, MI, USA; and †Department of Pathology &amp; Molecular Medicine, Queen's University, Kingston, ON, Canada

---

To cite this article: Morrissey JH, Lillicrap D. Simplify, simplify. *J Thromb Haemost* 2019; 17: 711.

---

More than 150 years ago, Henry David Thoreau famously wrote: “Our life is frittered away by detail... Simplify, simplify.” We often think of those words when submitting papers to scientific journals. When we both started doing scientific research, submitting a paper to a journal was actually quite simple. One typed up the paper and placed it, together with a cover letter, in an envelope and mailed it to the editorial office. Nowadays, almost all scientific journals have gone over to “convenient” web-based submission forms that collect a myriad of detailed data about the study, the manuscript, each of the authors, the funding agencies that supported the study, and much more. The upshot is that submitting a single paper to a journal can take hours of work, and the nature of the information requested by the journals makes it difficult if not impossible for researchers to delegate this process to others. Many journals—including the *Journal of Thrombosis and Haemostasis*—decline the majority of submitted papers without outside review. On top of that, journals typically have quite picky formatting requirements for manuscripts, such that researchers spend substantial amounts of time formatting their paper to submit to a journal, and then re-formatting it for another journal when the first one doesn't want it, and so on. Given that the average rejection rate of journals is about 62% for the approximately 2.5 million articles published each year, Khan *et al.* estimated that researchers are spending at least 1.5 million person-hours each year *just reformatting papers for resubmission*<sup>1</sup>. And this doesn't count the time that authors spend entering all the detailed, required information into journals' web sites.

It is perhaps not surprising that there is a growing movement asking scientific journals to go over to “format-free” submissions policies<sup>1</sup>. The philosophy behind this movement is that, since most papers are declined without outside review, it shouldn't be necessary for authors to meticulously format their paper for a specific

journal just to have its scientific content evaluated. We have embraced this idea, and our new editorial policy is that—provided all the required parts of a manuscript are present and readable—authors do not have to format their paper or references specifically for our journal when first submitting an article to us. If the editorial decision is to request revisions, we then ask the authors to format their paper for JTH (since the majority of revised submissions are ultimately accepted for publication). In addition, we have spent some time reviewing our journal's submission process, and have tried to greatly reduce the amount of information we require authors to enter into our web site when first submitting a manuscript.

Against this backdrop of working to simplify and streamline the submission process, we are also considering the idea of requiring every author to have an ORCID and to enter that unique identifier when submitting papers—a policy which some publishers are already implementing<sup>2</sup>. Ultimately, this may streamline the submission process (since the ORCID site should have the author's latest address and contact information). And ORCIDs have the added benefit of essentially eliminating ambiguity if an author has a common name. On the other hand, requiring ORCIDs does create more work (at least initially, if not all authors have registered for one yet). For this reason, we have decided to make ORCIDs optional now, but are considering making it mandatory in the future. If authors have strong opinions about our journal requiring ORCIDs—or suggestions for further streamlining the submission process—we welcome hearing from you.

## References

- 1 Khan A, Montenegro-Montero A, Mathelier A. Put science first and formatting later. *EMBO Rep* 2018; 19.
- 2 ORCID Open Letter – Publishers. <https://orcid.org/content/requiring-orcid-publication-workflows-open-letter>