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March 31, 2006

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Invitation to Writers

Links

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Search Archives

## The Nuts and Bolts of Scholarly Publishing

By Nancy McGuire

The job isn't finished until the paperwork is done. For many ONR grant recipients, this means publishing research results in a peer-reviewed journal. In an attempt to demystify the process of writing and submitting a successful journal manuscript, the Chemical Information Division of the American Chemical Society sponsored a symposium entitled "The Nuts and Bolts of Scholarly Publishing" at the ACS national meeting in Atlanta this week.

Five speakers discussed such topics as writing a good manuscript, the peer review process, and journal production. Evelyn Jabri and Sarah Tegen of

ACS Chemical Biology discussed some of the cutting-edge features starting to appear in scholarly publications. Podcasts, RSS (really simple syndication) feeds, wikis, "The Expert," and other features are designed to spur interactivity and to assist experts in understanding the specialized language of the journal.

Dr. George Whitesides opened the symposium with an overview of his approach to journal manuscript writing. Whitesides, a Harvard chemistry professor who has written or co-written more than 900 published journal articles, insists that the students and postdocs under his supervision integrate writing into every aspect of their research rather than putting together a manuscript after a project is finished.

"We use the writing to manage the research," he explained. Organizing a manuscript gives structure and rationality to the research process, revealing gaps where more work needs to be done. Otherwise, researchers can waste valuable time and resources "wandering randomly in intellectual phase space," Whitesides said.

Whitesides has also written extensively for the general public. He stressed three approaches to writing for "audiences other than yourself": informing scientists who read your journal articles; attracting the attention of the general reader in popular press; focusing on action items for the "faceless bureaucrat" who reacts to grant applications; or persuading the hostile or indifferent reader.

"Unless you publish your research, you have wasted your time," Whitesides



"Unless you publish your research, you have wasted your time," said Harvard professor George Whitesides. Photo by Jon Chase/Harvard News Office.

Compiled by Colin Babb; Production Manager: Frank Cruz; Art: Larry Behunek

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emphasized several times during his presentation. He uses the "Saalfeld criterion" named for Dr. Fred Saalfeld, former executive director and technical director of the National Science Foundation, as a guideline: "Assume you have all the money you will ever need, and that your research has gone better than you could ever have expected. Who cares?" In other words, Whitesides said, no matter how thorough or fascinating your research is, it is only worthwhile if it is useful to others. "Fundamental research changes the way we think," he said.