CHAPTER TEN

Getting Your Journal Indexed and Using Resources for Editors

TOPICS

- Indexing
- MEDLINE, PubMed
- CINAHL
- Thomson Reuters Scientific
- Resources for editors

OBJECTIVES

After completing this chapter, the participant should be able to

1. Describe the procedures for indexing in MEDLINE.
2. Discuss how CINAHL indexes professional journals.
3. Identify the issues surrounding “impact factors.”
4. Identify three resources for editor education and support.

Is your journal listed by any of the important bibliographic indexes? This is essential knowledge for an editor, and should be a topic you address early once you accept an editorship. If you’ve worked in academia you might understand indexing, or you might not; it’s doubtful that clinicians have given much thought to the topic at all since it isn’t an everyday part of practice. Even if you know what indexing is, you probably don’t know how journals become indexed, or why it’s important just where your journal is being indexed. So now, we’ll try to provide you with enough information to pass a fictitious course in Indexing 101.

When a potential author, a nursing student, or anyone at all wants to find information about a health topic from a published journal, they will almost always look for that information in an index, which is now usually a site on the Internet to compile data about authors, titles, journals, and subjects. Probably the most common indexes in our field are MEDLINE and CINAHL, although there are others such as PsycINFO (http://www.apa.org/psycinfo/). Many nurses have used these indexes when they were in school and writing assignments, or gathering background data for a quality improvement project in the clinical area. Did you ever wonder how the journals become listed on MEDLINE or CINAHL? Are all journals listed? Is your journal listed? If your journal is not indexed, why not? And how will anyone find the literature you’re publishing if you’re not indexed? Several of the common indexes will be described in this chapter.
MEDLINE

MEDLINE is the acronym for Medical Literature Analysis and Retrieval System Online, the US National Library of Medicine’s (NLM) database which covers medicine, nursing, and health. According to their website, MEDLINE contains over 16 million references to scholarly journal articles in 5,000 worldwide biomedical and health journals (NLM, 2008a). They state that about 47% of the cited articles are published in the US, about 90% are published in English, and about 79% have English abstracts written by authors of the articles. MEDLINE uses MeSH (Medical Subject Headings) keywords to organize the citations. On their website, they describe MeSH as the “National Library of Medicine’s controlled vocabulary thesaurus. It consists of sets of terms naming descriptors in a hierarchical structure that permits searching at various levels of specificity” (NLM, 2008b).

For many decades, MEDLINE was available only in libraries, and only through librarians. That began to change in 1987 when the NLM developed GratefulMed, a software program that allowed end users to search the MEDLINE databases. One decade later, GratefulMed was completely transitioned to PubMed (Public MEDLINE) for the Internet, and all the materials in MEDLINE were made available to the general public at no cost. PubMed contains material other than professional journal citations, including links that can lead the reader to sites containing full text articles for publishers who participate in this service, and links to citations for articles similar to the topic you are searching. Now anyone with access to the Internet can use the URL www.pubmed.gov to enter the MEDLINE database and search the literature. This is often how readers will find the articles in your journal.

Applying for Indexing in MEDLINE

As one of the most frequently used databases in health, MEDLINE is a sought-after index for all professional journals. Journal indexing in MEDLINE, however, is not automatic. Journals must apply to be included, and not all journals that apply are accepted. Consequently it is essential that you, as an editor, know what is entailed in becoming indexed in MEDLINE.

The NLM website describes the inclusion process this way:

“The decision whether or not to index a journal for this service is an important one and is made by the Director of the National Library of Medicine, based on considerations of both scientific policy and scientific quality. The Board of Regents of the Library sets policy for the Library. The Literature Selection Technical Review Committee (LSTRC) has been established to review journal titles and assess the quality of their contents…. There is a rough analogy to the National Institutes of Health’s (NIH) decision-making process, with respect to research grant awards. Namely, the relative scientific merit of individual grant applications is determined by Study Sections in the same way journals are evaluated by LSTRC…. LSTRC frequently incorporates the review and advice of outside experts in the subject area. As a result of these reviews, currently indexed titles may be dropped and new titles added. The LSTRC meets three times a year and considers approximately 140 titles at each meeting. Additional titles are considered in reviews of specialty coverage” (NLM, 2007).

The process of applying for indexing in MEDLINE is often handled through the journal publishing company. Nevertheless, the editor needs to be fully cognizant of all the requirements for inclusion in MEDLINE, and is responsible for assuring that the journal meets all the criteria before an application is sent forward. If your journal is not indexed in MEDLINE and you would like to be indexed, you first need to see that you meet the stated criteria for inclusion, and then discuss this with your publisher. In order to apply, editors or publishers should access the required “MEDLINE Review Application Form” at http://wwwcf.nlm.nih.gov/lstrc/lstrcform/med/index.html.
What Criteria Must your Journal Fulfill for Indexing in MEDLINE?

These are the guidelines as they appear on the NLM website as “critical elements” of journals chosen for inclusion in MEDLINE:

- The scientific merit of the journal’s content is most important. Content should be original, and should contribute to the field. Relevant content includes original research, analysis and discussion of clinical observations, analysis of philosophical, ethical, or social aspects of health sciences, critical reviews, evaluation of statistical methods or procedures, or discussion of case reports.

- Within the journal, there should be an explanation for readers about how articles are selected, how peer review is accomplished, that it has ethical standards, that authors have no financial conflicts of interest, that errors will be corrected, and that there is a place in the journal for readers to give both positive and negative opinions about content.

- The journal should contain articles about “core biomedical subjects.”

- The journal is evaluated for its layout, printing, graphics, and illustrations.

- Journals which contain mostly reprinted articles, reports of association/society activities, abstracts of the literature, news items or book reviews are usually not chosen for indexing.

- Journals which are not printed in English must meet the same criteria as those written in English, and the majority of published articles must contain an English-language abstract before being considered.

Be sure to consult the MEDLINE website yourself to read all their many requirements before you submit an application for indexing in MEDLINE (NLM, 2007).

CINAHL

CINAHL (Cumulative Index of Nursing and Allied Health Literature) began as an index for printed literature in nursing, and is currently the database which contains the largest number of nursing citations. Now, however, it also contains citations to allied health literature such as speech pathology, nutrition, and physical therapy, among many others, with 2,593 journal titles (www.cinahl.com). In addition to citations, CINAHL includes full text of articles for some nursing journals and newsletters, as well as standards of practice, practice acts, government publications, research instruments and patient education material such as audiovisual and education software.

CINAHL is a proprietary index, and therefore not free to the public; users must pay a fee to access it. Most times the fee is paid by a health science library and the users of CINAHL are hardly aware of the fact that the general public cannot view CINAHL without a library. According to their website (http://www.ebscohost.com/cinahl/), their mission is “to provide quality information, products and services to our customers throughout the world... to serve the growing needs of health care professionals, students, librarians and consumers by improving existing content of the database while creating new ways to incorporate emerging knowledge.”

What Criteria Must your Journal Fulfill for Indexing in CINAHL?

One of the best pieces of news for editors of nursing journals is that CINAHL is a comprehensive index, and it is not necessary to apply for inclusion. This is one less area of worry for any editor!
THOMSON REUTERS SCIENTIFIC

Thomson Reuters Scientific is a division of Thomson Reuters, and used to be called Thomson ISI (Institute of Scientific Information) http://www.thomsonscientific.com. It is an international business which develops and markets multiple products, some of which are databases and search tools in the sciences. Attempting to explain the complexity of what they do is beyond the scope of this handbook, and therefore we will explain one issue only—that of becoming indexed in their database. In the world of editors, one of Thomson’s most controversial products is the ISI Web of Knowledge, a database which is sold to libraries and publishers, and covers “over 9,000 international and regional journals and book series in every area of the natural sciences, social sciences, arts and humanities” (Thomson Reuters, 2008a).

Impact Factors

Once a journal is indexed in ISI Web of Knowledge, it can be assigned an “impact factor” by Thomson, a calculation of the number of times a journal is cited in articles, but only in journals already indexed by Thomson. Impact factors for journals are released yearly in a Thomson report called “Journal Citation Reports.” You might have heard of impact factors, generally understood by academicians to mean a hierarchy (of sorts) of professional journals. Impact factors have become, over the past few decades, a sought-after, and divisive badge of honor for journals. Some universities, in fact, insist that faculty only publish in journals with high “impact factors,” and that all faculty publications considered in promotion or tenure packets be in journals indexed in ISI Web of Knowledge. This is extremely controversial, and there have been numerous articles in professional journals challenging the entire concept of impact factors, decrying their use as any marker of professional significance, as well as questioning their scientific integrity (Craig, 2007; Editorial, 2005; Hernan, 2008; Ketefian & Freda, 2008; Monastersky, 2005; Porta & Alvarez-Dardel, 2008; Roessner, vanEpps, Hill, 2007; Rothenberg, 2008; Szklo, 2008; Wells, 2007; Wilcox, 2008). The World Association of Medical Editors (WAME) [which will be described more fully later in this chapter] has suggested that journal editors “look beyond impact factor as a summary statistic and present other indicators of journal visibility, such as circulation, number of published articles, and distribution of citations. Such demographics of a journal should be regularly published to inform journal readers and authors” (WAME, 2004).

According to Monastersky (2005), in some countries in Europe and Asia, faculty hiring, cash bonuses, and the awarding of doctoral degrees can be dependent on number of publications in high impact journals. High impact journals, therefore, are flooded with manuscript submissions, while journals not chosen for indexing can suffer from lack of quality submissions, thus narrowing the scope of quality articles throughout the literature. This is compounded by the fact that scientists from around the globe have questioned the entire mathematical schema used by Thomson for calculating impact factors, and how those very calculations can influence what editors choose to publish. Articles which review a subject, for instance, often yield more citations for a journal than research articles; this results in a higher impact factor for the journal publishing the review article. Conversely, publication of a risky new research study might yield fewer citations, and thus not be considered for acceptance in some journals which are concerned with having higher impact factors. ISI Thomson Scientific themselves have urged, in their writings and at professional meetings, that impact factors not be used for faculty advancement, to no avail (Garfield, 2005). It seems that the ability to attach a number to the importance of a journal for publication is a
desired outcome for some universities. Journals which are not indexed by ISI are outraged by their exclusion, and frequently write about this (Monastersky, 2005; Rossner et al, 2007). Journal editors debate the topic of indexing by ISI Web of Knowledge and impact factors endlessly, and you should understand what these arguments are about.

**Becoming indexed by Thomson Reuters Scientific**

Thomson Reuters Scientific does not index all journals, and, as a matter of fact, is extremely selective in which journals they choose. Although their website states that they provide “comprehensive coverage of the world’s most important and influential journals” (Thomson Reuters, 2008b), they state that, according to their analyses, a “relatively small number of journals publish the bulk of significant scientific results.” It is their goal to index those journals, and those journals only.

A committee of Thomson staff (whom they call “editors”) chooses the journals which are indexed. They are said to review about 2,000 journals each year, and choose about 10% to 12% of those submitted. They also state on their website that they constantly review the journals which are in their index, and remove those with declining standards. According to their website, “The Thomson Scientific editors performing journal evaluations have educational backgrounds relevant to their areas of responsibility as well as experience and education in information science.” We know of no nurses who work with the journal selection committee.

**Nursing Journals and Impact Factors**

The subject of nursing journal inclusion in ISI’s Web of Knowledge has been described in the literature, but will be summarized here (Craig, 2007; Freda, 2006; Johnstone, 2007). Regarding impact factors, Johnstone (2007) has written that “… if nurse authors… publish only in ‘elite’ journals (many of which may be outside of nursing), the capacity of the nursing profession to develop and control the cutting edge of its disciplinary knowledge could be placed at risk” (p.35). In 2004 Dr. Freda became aware that of the 7,500 journals included in Web of Knowledge, only 33 were nursing journals, and in her initial investigations about this, she was told by Thomson that the field of nursing was “fully covered” by this number of journals. Dr. Freda disagreed, for since obtaining an “impact factor” is controlled by indexing by ISI, the fact that so few nursing journals were included meant that authors at many universities which require only “impact factor” journal publications for promotion and tenure was causing nursing knowledge to be artificially narrowed into a small number of journals. She decided that Thomson needed to be educated, and that a wider group of nursing journals needed to be indexed by Thomson. She engaged INANE in these efforts, and a series of meetings with ISI ensued around this topic, during which nursing editors forged an extremely successful collaboration with librarians from the Medical Library Association (MLA). In the end, lobbying by the INANE group along with the MLA librarians had a most successful outcome, for ISI increased their nursing journal “coverage” by 23 journals (74%) in 2006. In 2008, we learned that Thomson had increased their nursing journal coverage to 75 journals, so it is apparent that they are working toward the goals we agreed to when we met with them. See this URL for the current list of nursing journals which are indexed by ISI and therefore have impact numbers: [http://scientific.thomsonreuters.com/cgi-bin/jrnlst/jlresults.cgi?PC=D&SC=RZADD](http://scientific.thomsonreuters.com/cgi-bin/jrnlst/jlresults.cgi?PC=D&SC=RZADD) Editors can learn about their journals’ impact factor in the Thomson Reuters product Journal Citation Reports, usually obtained through a health science library, or through your publisher.
What Criteria Must your Journal Fulfill for Indexing by Thomson Reuters Scientific?

You need to find out if your journal is indexed by ISI. If it is not, then you’ll need to assess if it meets the criteria for inclusion. According to their website, these are the criteria they use for inclusion of journals:

- A journal must be publishing on time; they consider timeliness a marker for a “healthy backlog of manuscripts essential for ongoing viability.” Journals which are published chronically late will not be considered.
- Journal must follow “international editorial conventions,” so articles can be easily retrieved. This means that the journal title must be informative, the article titles have to be descriptive, abstracts have to be available, references must be complete, and there must be address information for every author.
- Journals published with their full text in English are the focus, since, according to Thomson, “English is the universal language of science at this time in history.”
- Peer review is essential, and funding sources for all research must be delineated.
- A journal’s content should enhance the literature in the specialty
- International diversity is expected for authors and for editorial board members.

Applying for Indexing by Thomson Reuters Scientific

If you want your journal to be considered for indexing in ISI, you should first discuss this with your publisher, for it could be that your publisher wants to initiate the application process. This is what needs to be done to start that process:

- Write a letter stating your desire to be indexed.
- Include in that letter the full title of your journal, the ISSN (international standard serial number), publisher’s name and address, the Editor’s name and address, and a brief statement on the unique features of the journal and how it is distinguished from other journals in the field.
- We suggest that since nursing has made such a strong effort to increase the number of nursing journals in ISI recently, you might want to emphasize how your nursing journal expands nursing knowledge and complements the nursing journals already indexed by ISI.
- Thomson Reuters Scientific will not evaluate any back issues of your journal, so don’t bother sending any. They require at least three consecutive current issues of your journal in order to evaluate it. They want you to send them your most current issue of the journal, and then each subsequent issue as soon as each is published. Send to this address:
  
  Publication Processing Department
  Thomson Reuters Scientific
  3501 Market Street
  Philadelphia, PA 19104
  USA

  Please see the Thomson Reuters Scientific website for more complete information, including the selection criteria for online journals.

RESOURCES FOR EDITORS

INANE

There are many professional groups for editors of health journals, but only one specifically for nursing editors. That is the International Academy of Nursing Editors (INANE), a group whose
acronym started out as a sort of odd joke in the 1970s, but has nonetheless stuck. INANE is not an organization in the sense of being a dues paying membership society, but is rather a loosely organized group of nursing editors. Despite its lack of formal order, INANE has convened annual conferences all over the world consistently for the past 25 years, demonstrating how valuable editor education and networking truly is. At its annual meetings, “members” present 2 days of education for each other, covering such essential topics as copyright law, electronic manuscript tracking systems, peer review, ethical issues, and many others. In the past few years INANE has developed a website (www.nursingeditors-inane.org) which helps keep nursing editors informed of future conferences (held every August). INANE has also begun a listserv, and instructions for joining this listserv can be found on their website.

Both of us feel that INANE has been an essential part of our education as editors, and we attend every INANE conference possible. We urge all new nursing editors to learn more about INANE, and to go to the annual meetings. While the educational programs are wonderful, even better is the ability to network with other editors, learning formally and informally from each other.

**Other Organizations and Websites for Editors**

There are other organizations and websites which can serve as resources for editors, some of which are listed here by the URLs. Many are topic-specific, such as those which concentrate on ethics, or appropriate format for publishing research. Here is a sampling of some of the resources available to you as an editor:

- **American Society of Healthcare Publication Editors** [http://www.ashpe.org/](http://www.ashpe.org/) This organization offers prizes each year for areas in health publishing such as “best editorial,” “best cover design,” and many others. Contact your publisher to see if they are members of this society and then decide if you want to apply for any of their awards

- **World Association of Medical Editors [WAME]** [http://wame.org/](http://wame.org/) This is a virtual organization which exists as a listserv and website, and is organized with officers who have specific responsibilities such as policy development. Their listserv is a very active one, and free to join. The contributors tend to be medical editors from around the world asking questions about editorial ethics and/or practices, and, in our opinion, can be very informative. WAME has been very active in developing policy statements for editors, all of which can be accessed freely on their website. Some of their policy statements include:
  - Definition of a peer reviewed journal
  - Authorship
  - Registration of clinical trials
  - Ghost writing by commercial companies
  - Recommendations on publication ethics for medical journals
  - Impact factors
  - Geopolitical intrusion on editorial decisions
  - Responsibilities of medical editors
  - Regional workshops for medical editors
  - Journals role in managing conflict of interest
  - Free journal access for poor nations
  - Relationship between editors-in-chief and owners

- **Council of Science Editors [CSE]** [www.councilscienceeditors.org](http://www.councilscienceeditors.org) This is a formal organization, with dues, annual meetings, and scientific presentations about editing. Nursing editors
have often attended the CSE annual meetings and pronounced the experience helpful. They
also offer courses on editing, mostly as a part of their annual meetings.

- **Committee on Publication Ethics [COPE]** [http://www.publicationethics.org.uk/](http://www.publicationethics.org.uk/) COPE is also a formal organization with officers and meetings, but focuses strictly on ethical issues in publishing.

- **Nurse Author Editor** [http://www.nurseauthoreditor.com/](http://www.nurseauthoreditor.com/) This is an international publication designed strictly for nurse authors and nurses, editors, and published by Blackwell. It is free at the website, and publishes articles about publishing in professional literature. This website also contains a complete list of all the nursing journals published, with the editor and journal website included. This part of the website is particularly useful for authors looking for the appropriate home for their manuscript. As an editor, you should contact the editor of this website and be sure that your journal is included.

- **Mediterranean Editors and Translators (MET).** [www.metmeetings.org](http://www.metmeetings.org) This organization holds training meetings for editors about writing, editing and publishing.

- **International Committee of Medical Journal Editors [ICMJE]** [http://www.icmje.org/](http://www.icmje.org/) This is a group of medical editors who have annual meetings. Their focus is uniform requirements for submission of manuscripts to biomedical journals.

- **CONSORT** ([www.consort-statement.org](http://www.consort-statement.org)) CONSORT is a group which is dedicated to how randomized control trials are reported in the literature. Its acronym stands for Consolidated Standards of Reporting Trials. The CONSORT Group produces what they state is an “evidence-based, minimum set of recommendations for reporting randomized controlled clinical trials. It offers a standard way for authors to prepare reports of trial findings, facilitating their complete and transparent reporting, and aiding their critical appraisal and interpretation.” The CONSORT statement is endorsed by most of the major medical journals.

- **European Association of Science Editors [EASE]** [http://www.ease.org.uk/](http://www.ease.org.uk/) This is an organization of science editors who meet regularly, publish their own journal about editing, and offer courses for science editors.

**CONCLUSION**

As a professional journal editor, you are responsible for making sure that your journal is indexed in the best bibliographic indexes so potential readers can find the articles you publish. MEDLINE, CINAHL, and Thomson Reuters Scientific are 3 of the common indexes for nursing journals. This chapter has described these, as well as provided suggestions for how to become indexed. Additionally professional organization resources have been provided, any or all of which can enhance your knowledge and your expertise as an editor. As editor, it is your responsibility to assure that your journal is listed in the most important indexes in your field, and also in directories of nursing and healthcare journals such as Nurse Author Editor. You should also periodically check to be sure that the information about your journal is correct.

**REFERENCES**


CE Questions

1. As the editor, you should have a discussion with your publisher about the process of bibliographic indexing and where your journal should be indexed.
   a. True
   b. False

2. Editors whose journals are not indexed by MEDLINE must do the following:
   a. Send MEDLINE one complete year of issues of the journal.
   b. Be sure that the journal contains information about conflict of interest of authors.
   c. Be sure that the names of peer reviewers for the journal are contained in each issue.
   d. Write a cover letter describing how your journal intends to meet the MEDLINE criteria in the future.

3. Which of the following statements about the process for becoming indexed in CINAHL is true?
   a. A formal application is required.
   b. A description of how peer review is accomplished must be included.
   c. No application is required.
   d. The editor must submit a cover letter describing the journal’s focus on nursing.

4. Thomson Reuters Scientific
   a. Developed the impact factor citation analysis.
   b. Indexes 100% of the scholarly journals published today.
   c. Has stated that impact factors analysis is appropriate for use in university decisions on faculty advancement.
   d. Does not require that journals be peer reviewed to be considered for indexing.

5. Impact factors are
   a. The most important marker of scientific integrity of a journal.
   b. A sought-after, divisive badge of honor for journals.
   c. A numerical accounting of how many times a journal is cited in any other published journal.
   d. Released every 5 years.

6. The International Academy of Nursing Editors
   a. Is an official, dues-paying association for nursing editors.
   b. Has meetings for editors about every 4 years.
   c. Is a loosely organized group of nursing editors that meets yearly.
   d. Is only one of many official organizations developed specifically for nursing journal editors.

7. What does the Council of Science Editors do?
   a. Holds annual meetings with scientific presentations about editing.
   b. Focuses exclusively on uniform requirements for submission of manuscripts to biomedical journals.
   c. Dedicates their efforts toward how randomized trials are reported in the literature.
   d. Focuses exclusively on ethical issues in publishing.

8. Which of the following statements about CINAHL is correct?
   a. Editors must complete a comprehensive application to be indexed by CINAHL.
   b. CINAHL is available free to the public through its Web site.
   c. CINAHL indexes the fewest number of journals published in nursing.
   d. As a comprehensive index, CINAHL lists all nursing journals, and no action on the part of the editor is needed to be included.
9. Between 2004 and 2006, Thomson Reuters Scientific increased the number of nursing journals they index by
   a. 12%.
   b. 25%.
   c. 74%.
   d. 93%.

10. MEDLINE indexes
   a. 5,000 journals.
   b. 10,000 journals.
   c. 100,000 journals.
   d. 500,000 journals.

The Editor’s Handbook: An Online Resource and CE Course

TEST INSTRUCTIONS

• To take a test, go to www.nursingcenter.com/editorshandbook.
• If you have not previously purchased this course, you must log in to www.nursingcenter.com, purchase the entire book for $69.95 or this chapter for $15.95.
• To earn a continuing nursing education certificate, you must successfully complete the test(s) and evaluation questions. The passing grade is 70%.
• Registration deadline is December 31, 2011.

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