

GUIDE FOR PREPARATION AND PUBLICATION OF ABSTRACTS¹THE ROYAL SOCIETY²

London, England

GENERAL

1. "Abstract" is a term adopted to describe an author's summary of a scientific paper which is published simultaneously with the paper itself after editorial scrutiny by the editor of the journal in which it is published.

2. The purpose of an abstract is not only to add to the convenience of readers of the journal in which it is published, but also to reduce the cost and to expedite the work of the abstracting journals, and thus to contribute to the general improvement of information services in the scientific field.

3. The abstract should comprise a brief and factual summary of the contents and conclusions of the paper, refer to any new information which it may contain, and give an indication of its relevance. It should enable the busy reader to decide more surely than he can from the mere title of the paper whether it merits his reading.

4. The author of every major paper (excluding notes) is therefore requested to provide also an abstract of it, in accordance with the following suggestions.

STYLE OF WRITING

5. Use complete sentences rather than a mere list of headings. Any reference to the author of the article should be in the third person. Standard rather than proprietary terms should be used. Unnecessary contractions should be avoided. It should be presumed that the reader has some knowledge of the subject but has not read the paper. The abstract should therefore be intelligible in itself without reference to the paper.

¹ Modified from The Royal Society of London's "Guide for the preparation and publication of synopses." The original article was prepared by The Royal Society in fulfillment of a recommendation of the Scientific Information Conference sponsored by the Society in 1948. The original also has been adopted and distributed by U.N.E.S.C.O. as a result of the U.N.E.S.C.O. International Conference on Science Abstracting held in 1949. Permission to publish this was granted most kindly by N. H. Robinson for The Royal Society. Manuscript received, March 1, 1966; accepted, May 16, 1966.

Editor's note: this abstract is published together with K. K. Landes' "A scrutiny of the abstract, II," to give *Bulletin* authors another viewpoint on the writing of abstracts.

² Burlington House, London, W.1.

(For example, it should not cite sections or illustrations by their numerical references in the text.)

CONTENT

6. Because the title of the paper usually is read as part of the abstract, the opening sentence should be framed accordingly so as to avoid repetition of the title. If, however, the title is not sufficiently indicative, the opening sentence should indicate the subjects covered. Usually, the beginning of an abstract should state the objects of the investigation.

7. It is sometimes valuable to indicate the treatment of the subject by words such as: brief, exhaustive, theoretical, *etc.*

8. The abstract should indicate newly observed facts, conclusions of an experiment or argument, and, if possible, the essential parts of any new theory, treatment, apparatus, technique, *etc.*

9. It should contain the names of any new compound, mineral species, *etc.*, and any new numerical data, such as physical constants; if this is not possible, it should draw attention to them. It is important to refer to new items and observations, even though some may be incidental to the main purpose of the paper; such information may otherwise be hidden although in fact it might be very useful.

10. When giving experimental results, the abstract should indicate the methods used; for new methods, the basic principle, range of operation, and degree of accuracy should be given.

REFERENCES, CITATIONS

11. If it is necessary to refer in the abstract to earlier work, the reference always should be given in the same form as in the paper; otherwise, references should be omitted.

12. Citations to scientific journals should be made in conformity with the standard practice of the journal for which the paper is written.

LENGTH

13. The abstract should be as concise as possible. Only in exceptional cases should it exceed 200 words, so as—among other things—to permit it, when printed, to be cut out and mounted on a 3 × 5-inch card.