BOOK REVIEW

Title: EDITING SCIENTIFIC BOOKS AND JOURNALS
Author: Maeve O'Connor
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 No figs. 10 appendices and Index

The only fault I could find with this book is that it has been written some twelve years too late to prevent me making many of the errors it warns against, and that I have tried to eliminate slowly on a trial-and-error basis since taking over responsibility for this Journal in 1967. Much of the advice given in this book will go towards further improvements in the future.

The early chapters describe the duties of the editor, how he should be selected, what help he needs, how to appoint referees and an editorial board, and how to persuade these often very senior scientists and clinicians to keep papers moving. The various processes of handling manuscripts at all stages, and the technical processes of preparing them for the printer, are all described in great detail. There are interesting chapters on the printer's and block-maker's techniques, on the financial aspects of publishing books and journals, and a look into possible future developments. The ten appendices show draft contracts with publishers, assignments of copyright, guidelines for authors, referees and reviewers, methods of laying out references (and we already seem to have found the recommended way ourselves, though we could simplify the lay-out and save the printer changes of fount without losing clarity).

Maeve O'Connor is the senior editor of the Ciba Foundation, whose symposia proceedings set the standard for all scientific proceedings, with the possible exception of the Royal Society, which has had some three centuries longer in which to develop. She was one of the principal speakers at a symposium for editors of conference proceedings held this Autumn, organised by the British Medical Journal, and her book gave rise and guidance for most of the discussion of this useful and down-to-earth conference. I would consider "Editing Scientific Books and Journals" essential reading for anyone starting up a journal, or taking over editorship of an existing one, for editors of multi-author textbooks, authors of monographs. Maeve O'Connor's advice applies to the wide circulation weekly international journal as well as to the college magazine, and the style of the book is not only most instructive, but also makes enjoyable reading.

H. E. Robson