Indexing and Abstracting

The Abstracting Processing

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Purpose of Abstracting

- Give scholars filtered access to the literature
- Give the current awareness to the users
- Serve as a retrospective search tool
- Some abstracts can replace actual articles, some cannot
  - Indicative abstracts
  - Informative abstracts
  - Critical abstracts
Concerns of Abstract

- Economic constraints
  - Cost, time
- Significant material
  - Notes, communications, and letters have minimal significance
- Publication Source
  - Respected publishers
  - New or unknown sources may be temporarily ignored
- Subject interest of the users

Steps in Abstracting – Step 1

- Completeness and accuracy of Reference
- Reference section goes at the head of the abstract
- The elements to be included are standardized, but presentation may be different
- To save space, abbreviation is commonly used for reference
  - Abbreviation should be consistent and follow established rules
  - A list of the abbreviations should be available
The Title

- A good title is a key device in identifying information
- Properly handle title rather than copying it
  - Original title: controlling eating
  - Abstractor’s title: [The use of hypnosis in the] controlling [of compulsive] eating
  - Original title: Eureka!
  - abstractor’s title: Eureka [the discovery of a calorieless beer]!

Good Title

- Descriptive
- Clear
- Brief
- Stating exact topic
Author

- Some convention for presentation of author(s)
  - Last name first
    - Chen, Kuang-hua
  - Add additional authors in the normal order
    - Chen, Kuang-hua, Hsin-Hsi Chen, and John Smith
  - It is best not to use initials

Author Affiliation

- An author’s organization is often of interest to a user
  - Make judgment
  - Contact with authors
- Example
  - Disraeli, Homer (Disraeli Delicatessen, Muleshoe, TX)
  - Chen, Kuang-hua (Department of Library and Information Science, National Taiwan University)
- Sometimes, Author affiliation will be ignored or could not be known
Funding Agency

- If the document is a technical report or a paper based on the results of funded research, the funding agency should be noted in the reference section
- The authors should acknowledge the funding agency
- Include agency name and the grant or contract number

Publication Source

- Key unit of the reference due to its location function
- Follow some standard conventions
- MLA, APA, Chicago Style, etc.
- Common style
  - JournalTitle VolNo IssueNo PageNo Year
Foreign Language

- Indicate the original language
- If it has been translated, the translation source information should be supplied

Steps in Abstracting – Step 2

- Content analysis
- Abstracting is the process of expressing the ideas of other people in one’s own words
  - Who will use the abstracts you create
  - What will the users search for
Sample

Smith carried out the experiment on Tuesday because Monday was a holiday and on Wednesday he had a dentist appointment. Right after lunch he mixed four grams of the Red Stuff with eight grams of the Purple Stuff, put it to boil, and set the timer for exactly four minutes. While the mixture was cooking, he called the dentist’s office to confirm the time of his appointment. At exactly the time that the timer rang, the mixture exploded and destroyed the lab. Smith concluded that four minutes is too long to cook the mixture.

Points of Sample Abstract

- Include
  - Use four grams of the Red Stuff
  - Use eight grams of the purple Stuff
  - Cook the mixture exactly four minutes
  - Mixture explosion resulted
  - Conclusion: Do not cook the mixture for four minutes

- Ignore
  - The day and the time he did the experiment
  - The dental appointment
Indicators for Content Analysis

- Objectives and scope
- Methodology
  - NEW methods
  - Statistical techniques
- Results
  - Validity, reliability, accuracy
- Conclusions
  - What hypotheses were accepted or rejected?
  - What evaluations?
  - What applications or suggestions?
  - Implications related to objectives?
- Other information

Steps in Abstracting – Step 3

- Write the annotation
- Construct a short narrative
  - Outline is useful for construction of abstract
- The length of abstract depends on
  - Length of the document
  - Nature of the topic
  - The facts discussed
  - The technical details
- Less than 250 words
- Less than 100 for communication notes
- Beyond 500 words, the abstract will become review
Steps in Abstracting – Step 3

(Continued)

- The first sentence of an abstract is critical – topical sentence
- Topical sentence should be concise and informative
- The abstract should be complete
- The abstract should reflect the full meaning and purpose of the paper
- Readers should know what the document is about solely from reading the abstract

Steps in Abstracting – Step 3

(Continued)

- The structure of the abstract should be unified and logically developed.
- Trilogy
  - A beginning
  - A middle
  - An end
- Follow the structure of original documents (？)
- Use the words of documents directly (？)
Brevity

- Use “The conclusion is …”
  - Rather than “The results of the study lead one to the conclusion that …”
- Use “Resulting data were …”
  - Rather than “After the experiment was completed the following data were compiled”
- Brevity but not ambiguity

Steps in Abstracting – Step 4

- Identification of abstractor
  - For credit
  - For responsibility
- Initials used commonly with the full name in the preface of publication
- Full names are also used frequently
Steps in Abstracting – Step 5

- Arrangement of the abstracts
- Common form is alphabetical by title
- By author
- By subject descriptor
- Classified
- All of above will be supported by indexes

Editing Abstracts

- Check reference section
- Check the standardization of terminology
- Conform the rules
Evaluation of Abstracts

- Correct citations
- Factual description
- Omission of critical points
- Poor diction and grammar
- Redundant phrases
- Obscure writing
- Conformity to abstracting policy and rules
- Promptness in the publication
- Availability of the abstracts
- The cost
- The quality of supportive indexes
- Authoritativeness of the abstracts
- Brevity
- Satisfaction of users

Example: Biological Abstracts

57744. KHASA, P., V. FURLAN and J. A. FORTIN. (Res. Station, Agric. Canada, Sainte-Foy, Quebec GIV 2J3, Can.) TROP AGRIC 69(3):279-283. 1992. Response of some tropical plant species to endomycorrhizal fungi under field conditions. –Nineteen agricultural and sylvicultural plant species cultivated in Zaire were tested under field conditions for their response to endomycorrhizal fungi. All plant species, except amaranth, showed various degrees of root colonization in non-fumigated and fumigated soil. Eight plant species (African yam bean, wild mung, acacia, leucaena, onion, sweet potato tomato and cassava) were highly dependent on mycorrhizae for normal growth and development. The added endomyhcorrhizal inoculum significantly increased root fungal colonization in 16 of the 19 plant species cultivated.