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PERSPECTIVE

UNDERGRADUATE
PERSPECTIVES FROM
THE *FINE FOCUS*
STUDENT TEAM,
FALL TERM 2015,
UNIVERSITY OF
AKUREYRI, ICELAND



BIRTA LÍF FJÖLNISDÓTTIR BIOTECHNOLOGY

As an undergraduate science student, I feel like I have the constant urge to expand my knowledge in every possible way. With *Fine Focus* I've reached an unknown area of science, the other side.

When referring to the other side, I'm talking about the process of how things are handled after completing the actual experiments; that is, submitting a paper, based on those experiments and up to the point where it is accepted or rejected. Having said that, I've gotten the opportunity to understand the amount of work spent by each scientist out there performing experiments that leads to the expression of their thoughts and discoveries in articles, which then go through the exhausting review process.

After being a part of *Fine Focus*, I feel like I've realized how much mutual respect is among people from each of these sides, where the

scientist depend on, and trust the reviewers to judge their work with a positive perspective. At the same time, reviewers depend on the scientists to do their work in such a manner that their free time is not poorly spent.

With that new realization, I also feel like my future work as a scientist, or a reviewer, will be better spent since I now know that genuine people out there are doing the same things. I also really believe that these people do their job with good intentions, to make science accessible. *Fine Focus* has not only expanded my knowledge on and respect for people in journalism but it has also opened an expression frame for undergraduate students to publish their work, which otherwise might be lost in the chaotic field of science.

Thank you *Fine Focus*, and last but not least, thank you John McKillip.



PÁLÍNA HARALDSDÓTTIR BIOTECHNOLOGY

I didn't know much about the *Fine Focus* journal until I started the class, although I knew it was a journal for undergraduate students. I decided to take the *Fine Focus* class because I figured, since I plan on submitting papers in the future, I was able to understand the process of journal submissions and principles of how to write a good paper.

The *Fine Focus* class has taught me a lot! I was not aware of the process of journal systems, when journals receive manuscripts or papers until it gets submitted, re-submitted or rejected, I had questions like; "How can I submit a paper?", "Who decides whether my paper gets submitted or rejected?" and "Am I allowed to resubmit?". This class has allowed me to be a part of this

whole process, from receiving a manuscript or paper until the final decision has been made. This takes a lot of time and hard work for editors, reviewers and everybody involved.

I think each and every person in this class has improved the *Fine Focus* journal in many ways, by spreading our knowledge, opinions and suggestions. I highly recommend

students to take the *Fine Focus* class, it is fun, instructive and improves your writing in so many ways.

In addition, I think the *Fine Focus* journal has great potential and will become a platform for many undergraduate students who are taking their first step into the world of scientific publication.



SIGRÍÐUR KRISTINSDÓTTIR FISHERIES SCIENCE

This course has opened up for me the importance of cooperative working and international communication in a world of rapid change in science. The launching of this many-sided *Fine Focus* project is an intriguing initiative. It is a healthy and meaningful way of schooling undergraduates in scientific writing, reading and reviewing a paper. You are reminded of the importance of keeping up with the latest published material.

The course is probably a reflection of how things work out in the field, a combination of teamwork and taking on different tasks with feedback from other scientific milieus.

When selecting three persons from an external worldwide Editorial Board, I came to realize, being a student of fisheries science, the various subdisciplines of

microbiology and how they can relate to other expertise, even outside of biology.

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As a product-based course it challenges our integrity with being held responsible as lead editors for one paper throughout the whole scenario from submission to decision-making, publishing and promotion. You have to work professionally from start and have your research and writing support each other along the process.

This is good training in how to summarise the content of a paper. Peer reviewing taught me the importance of clarity. It all revolves around the

hypothesis when structuring a research paper. You adjust to the language and it is vital for your career to learn from start the rules of ethics, to handle citations and

references with respect. It also puts focus on originality and how good work adds to the body of knowledge.

I am more familiar with how to rate a paper for publishing, the scope of journals, their policies, rate of rejections, regulations and checkboxes. Rejection of a paper is something scientists will have to learn to live with, and we had to rationalize our final decision on student papers as for what to improve.

The situation of this student group is probably distinct from others in this field of study, with exchange students and people of different ages, some with previous work experience. My special contribution to the journal was updating the website. Despite my presence through Skype, with a few burls, being a distance student, I felt amazing as part of the group. John is definitely the right person to run the complicated tasks of this course and keeping up the spirit.



KRISTÝNA TRONEČKOVÁ
JOURNALISM/PSYCHOLOGY

Fine Focus is a great opportunity for me to get to know a real experience with marketing plans and raising funds. The big advantage is the fact that everything is real and not a training of hypothetical situations. *Fine Focus* is an unique opportunity for improving my soft skills, too.

I used my psychological and journalistic knowledge for creating a website called First Giving for potential donors, and for improvement of our existing marketing plan. It was also helpful to share information in the classes; we have made many useful decisions, thanks to brainstorming.

As I am not a microbiology student, I could not develop the ideas regarding this particular field, but I appreciated interesting discussion about this topic as well as proofing the manuscripts, with interesting microbiological information. It has opened the doors to the new world. Also, I liked taking photos for the First Giving website in a lab because students showed us their

tools in examining microbes. I liked that the lessons were open discussion and a friendly atmosphere.

I hope our effort, when we tried to improve the marketing and funding issue, will provide background and better conditions for student's work and manuscripts. I really like the fact that *Fine Focus* is a real journal where I can practice my knowledge. As it is not only theoretical schema, everything that I did was discussed and I could see the changes regarding *Fine Focus* during this semester.

I learned something from marketing and from the system of getting donations, as well as the steps which are necessary for success in this area. I find interesting the communication with administrators of the First Giving site, too. Finally, we could see our result and we can wait what new our effort will bring to *Fine Focus*. I am glad I could be a part of the *Fine Focus* team. Hopefully we did something worthwhile!



SIGÞÓRA BRYNJA KRISTJÁNSDÓTTIR

BIOTECHNOLOGY

My involvement in the *Fine Focus* course has been rewarding and fun. Before I signed up for this course, I didn't know much what I was going into and I was not sure if this course would benefit me and if it would be useful to my study. But really soon I changed my mind. It was really fun to be a participant and learn how the real peer-reviewed journal is produced from start to finish. The *Fine Focus* course has also helped me a lot to step considerably outside my comfort zone. I was trained in critical thinking, I improved a lot reading English scientific articles and my English vocabulary has increased considerably.

I think without a doubt that this course will be useful to me in many ways after

my graduation. In my opinion, a subject like this should be taught in almost all courses that revolve largely about writing and publish articles and it would be a good preparation for students when they start working. I hope that my contribution will help so we will publish a good and well-made peer-reviewed journal, by helping review articles and other important projects within this course.

There was also a large part of the course devoted to marketing and presentation of the journal, and it was very informative, though I was not directly involved in that part. I hope this course will thrive and grow with each period and I look forward to watching this project develop for the better.



SAARA-MARIA KALLIO

INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS

I am a third-year International Business student, and being part of a group of student editors of *Fine Focus* has been an engaging way to relate my theoretical studies to real life, as well as to learn more about the world of microbiology, which used to be like an undiscovered land for me before. Through *Fine Focus*, my interest towards working in multinational teams, challenging myself and gaining experience from multiple fields, such as microbiology, has increased notably.

During *Fine Focus* Autumn 2015, I was mainly responsible for improving the

marketing plan to increase the awareness of *Fine Focus*, especially in Europe, in order to increase the visibility of the journal and thereby the number of submitted undergraduate papers. I enjoyed the most the process of innovative thinking for bringing in fresh ideas for improving the marketing of *Fine Focus*, knowing that out of which eventually the most creative ideas would be selected and applied to the actual Marketing Plan after discussing as a group with the rest of the student editors.

Fine Focus has not only been a truly

interesting course completed as a part of my international studies, but also it will be part of my life again in the near future. As a marketing student, I got offered an opportunity to represent *Fine Focus* at the British Conference of Undergraduate Research (BCUR) in March 2016 in the UK. Through this exciting opportunity I will get to develop my skills in a real world context and gain further practical experience on

international marketing.

I have found it truly fascinating to participate in running the development of an international journal and being part of the growth of *Fine Focus*. Attending the conference in Manchester will not only be a great opportunity for networking but also it will be one step closer to reaching our goals in expanding *Fine Focus* to Europe.



HELGA HELGADÓTTIR
BIOTECHNOLOGY

Taking part in *Fine Focus* has made me better at representing scientific work, both according to structure and content. Being good at representing my work will save time both for me as a writer and others that will read my work in the future. Another important thing that I have learned is to make my material interesting from the beginning and let it stay that way throughout. Keeping material interesting is essential to the readers so they don't lose interest and give up on reading and perhaps miss the good part of the paper.

I have also improved my skills in recognising a good paper, not only a well-written one but also one that involves good scientific practises. Recognising a good paper is critical when searching for

good information on given topic. Learning how the peer review process works in

detail, from submission to publication, is a valuable lesson and will make me more confident when publishing in the future.

Participating in this course also gave me a glance of both marketing and graphics, two fields that I don't know much about but are highly connected to the scientific world. For example, it's useful to know how to promote my work after it has been published.

Overall, participating in *Fine Focus* has given me valuable insight into the scientific world of representing and publishing data, an insight that, unfortunately, many undergraduates don't get.

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What if the next antibiotic is in your backyard?

Post/Biotics is a platform that facilitates finding new antibiotics by integrating citizen scientists in the process of identifying natural substances with antimicrobial properties.

Opportunity

Most known antibiotics are developed from natural extracts, implying a potential new antibiotic could be anywhere. Post/Biotics distributes empirical research to the public by creating a platform and the according tools for participating in this process. The pop-up lab allows anyone to discover substances with antimicrobial values by testing locally available plants, vegetables, fruits, fungi, mushrooms & soil. With the help of the corresponding app, the results are stored on an online platform to create a library of antimicrobials. The value of this “microbial fingerprint” of our environment is significantly important for developing new drugs.

By partnering with universities & pharmaceutical companies, the massive costs for finding new drugs can be diminished when giving access to this platform.

Impact

The coming cost of antimicrobial resistance is 10 million deaths per annum by 2050. This is estimated to cost about 3% of the global GDP. Antibiotic resistance is growing faster than pharmaceutical companies are finding new ones. Corporate Social Responsibility of a pharma company can largely benefit from an educational initiative that promotes growth of young minds in STEM careers in research.

Method

Users test their samples like a crushed bark of a tree in their backyard with the toolkit that contains E.coli bacteria. If the tested tree bark has antimicrobial properties, it will be recognized by the platform and the user is encouraged to submit the original platform. Using gamification, users are incentivized to test different samples, geographical areas, and to use their peers for verifying their findings.



Vision:

Post/Biotics is a vision for revolutionizing drug discovery and raising awareness for the problem of antibiotic resistance.

