Geoscience Canada

The Art and the Science of Writing Geoscience Reports

Nean Allman

Volume 26, numéro 4, december 1999

URI : https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/geocan26_4br01

Aller au sommaire du numéro

Éditeur(s)

The Geological Association of Canada

ISSN

0315-0941 (imprimé)
1911-4850 (numérique)

Découvrir la revue

Citer ce compte rendu

Allman, N. (1999). Compte rendu de [The Art and the Science of Writing Geoscience Reports]. *Geoscience Canada*, *26*(4), 202–202.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Art and the Science of Writing Geoscience Reports

By Brian Grant, P.Geo.
PO Box 8076
Victoria, British Columbia V8W 3R7
1999, 192 p., spiral bound, $55.00, available from the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada
34 King Street East, 9th floor
Toronto, Ontario M5C 2X8

Reviewed by Nean Allman
Allman & Associates Corporate Communications
255 Yonge Boulevard
Toronto, Ontario M5M 3J1

We might not want to admit it, but most geoscientists, and a lot of other people, would probably benefit considerably from reading The art and the science of writing geoscience reports. Why? Because, in addition to listing what should go into a geoscience report, this manual will help novice writers learn how to convey information effectively, and should prompt more experienced authors to reflect on and improve their writing habits and communication techniques.

Brian Grant is a geologist with 30 years of experience in exploration and development in Canada and overseas. Twelve of those years involved editing government publications and establishing report standards. He is a member of several geoscience organizations, and for 10 years produced *The Gangue,* the newsletter of the Mineral Deposits Division of the Geological Association of Canada. Currently he is an Associate Editor of *Geoscience Canada.*

He wrote this book for the authors and editors of geoscience reports, especially mineral industry project reports, providing advice on how to prepare reports professionally for a wide variety of audiences and with a wide variety of objectives.

The book covers a lot of ground. Its chapters discuss the initial concepts of manuscripts; basic report elements, from the introduction to results and recommendations; how to credit information sources; the elements of graphic design and layout; and report illustrations. There is a chapter on digital data, computer editing, map and photo scanning, and cartographic techniques; and another on peer review, editing and proofreading. There are chapters on grammar, recommended geoscientific spelling, language and the geosciences (discussing, for example, overworked and misused words), capitalization, punctuation, hyphenation, abbreviations and symbols, numbers and measures, measurements and conversions, and the sources of the author's rules and inspiration. Appendices cover common bibliographic references, core logging notes, fieldtrip guidebook guidelines, and tips for oral presentations. Also outlined are the proposed exploration "Best Practices" guidelines and requirements for reporting exploration information contained in National Instrument 43-101 produced by the Toronto Stock Exchange and the Ontario Securities Commission.

Such a wealth of detail could be overwhelming, but it is not. The information is useful, concise, well organized and well presented. The book's 6-inch by 9-inch format makes it a manageable size. The judicious use of two colours of ink, a reader-friendly type for headings, and the presentation of the text in short, easily identifiable, sections, all contribute to an attractive and welcoming product.

Whether or not others agree with every suggestion in the book is immaterial. The contents establish a framework, and benchmark, against which geoscience report writers and editors can compare and measure their efforts, and those reading reports can assess their worth. The guide is also a handy reference for anyone whose mind has gone suddenly blank over some grammatical or to-hyphenate-or-not point.

Early on in the book, authors are encouraged to consider the potential client group they are addressing and design the product with that audience in mind. This reviewer can only say, "Hear, hear!" Too often, in our enthusiasm for our project, we forget the first rules of communication, which are to ask the purpose of the project, identify the target audience and deliver the message in a manner that will appeal to that audience. In essence, that means asking "Why? Who? How?" about a project, as well as the important "What?" question, which is fully addressed in this book.

The manual does have some typographical errors, and subheads with hiccups (they are not aligned properly). It also contains at least one example of "Do as I say, not as I do", listing "focused" under the Recommended Geoscientific Spelling section, but using "focussed" in the acknowledgements. However, these minor annoyances detract little from the comprehensive content and presumably will be corrected in the second edition, already in preparation.

The art and the science... is a useful reference work and deserves to be kept within easy reach.