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From the Editor

Nulla dies sine linea – Thinking torments, prose punishes, and other daily exercises for forest scientists

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The Finnish Society of Forest Science has been publishing science for nearly 120 years, but *Silva Fennica*, our regular scientific journal series, is now celebrating its 60th anniversary. This milestone is certainly a reason to celebrate, but it also calls for unsparing self-reflection and work ethics, in the true spirit of Pliny the Elder. High-quality scientific publishing is especially crucial today, when impressions fill the information space and anyone can declare themselves an expert on a whim.

Scientific publishing improves the world on two fronts. Changing the world for the better doesn't happen by luck; it requires correct, reliable knowledge. *Silva Fennica* serves its readers – the forestry sector, researchers, and forest observers alike – by publishing open, peer-reviewed research. This service mission is best fulfilled through the principles of open science, in which our journal has been a pioneer. In addition to free access to articles, open science includes making research data, calculation codes, and mathematical models openly available.

The daily choice of a researcher

On the other hand, scientific writing and publishing improve the world from the perspective of individual researchers. This world-bettering does not happen without pain: *thinking torments, prose punishes*.

Humans are built to be lazy, not to be scientists. Without use, writing fitness withers, skills degrade, and the virtuoso penman turns flabby. Every day, we make choices between the right path and the easy path. Which do we choose? Being a researcher is a decision that must be renewed every single morning. Clear scientific text does not materialize without effort.

Gaius Julius Caesar was not only a military commander, a dictator appointed by the Roman Senate, and Cleopatra's lover, but also a reformer of the Latin language. Caesar's contemporary, the renowned orator Cicero, described Caesar's Attic writing style as pure, clear-lined, and well-defined - in a word, elegant. *Elegans* means "one who knows how to choose well". Caesar's prose has been compared to an ancient statue: simple, bare, and beautiful. These exact epithets also describe good scientific writing.

Nuda Veritas

Part of the pain of writing stems precisely from this exposure, this nakedness of the text. For better or worse, writers are always laid bare through their work. Often, once the obscuring, convoluted academic jargon and scientific boilerplate are stripped away, what lies beneath is not the toned six-pack of an ancient statue, but a flabby academic beer belly.

At its worst, this flabby academic physique manifests in articles as experienced co-authors dodging responsibility. The author list boasts the names of postdoctoral researchers, docents, professors, and research directors, yet the text reads like that of a beginner. The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau. The testimony is contradictory.

I base my next assertion not only on my role as Editor-in-Chief, but on long-standing experience in research organizations, projects, doctoral supervision, and observing academia at large: I claim that many co-authors do not even read the manuscripts bearing their names. Or if they read them, they don't understand them. Or if they understand them, they don't care. I am not sure, which of these alternatives is the most repulsive. This observation is not limited to *Silva Fennica*; it plagues the academic world broadly and internationally.

Strength training for the next 60 years

The fastest and most cost-effective way to raise the standard of science is for co-authors to start reading their own articles. And writing them. This requires making the right choices, putting in the effort, and dedicating working hours to the core of science. It hurts and it stings, but at the same time, it builds the muscle tone of scientific craft. Perhaps even veteran researchers can yet train experts to achieve a scientific six-pack that they needn't be ashamed to display in print.

As someone approaching the age of sixty myself, I recognize the importance of strength training for future health. The future of *Silva Fennica* – and the broader forest science community – depends on the scientific muscle tone of our entire community. Achieving the next 60 years of scientifically robust health demands self-respect, the banishment of self-pity, and a resolute decision every single morning: *Today, I am a researcher*.

Annamari Laurén
Editor-in-chief