



The AIRInforma experiment: peer-reviewed public dissemination of science in Italy

Federico Forneris (1,2), Luca Cassetta (1,3), Teresita Gravina (1,4,5)

(1) AIRI (International Association of Italian Researchers) airinforma@gmail.com, (2) The Armenise-Harvard Laboratory of Structural Biology Department of Biology and Biotechnology University of Pavia Via Ferrata, 9 27100 Pavia - Italy (federico.forneris@unipv.it), (3) MRC Centre for Reproductive Health, Queen's Medical Research Institute, University of Edinburgh, 47 Little France Crescent, EH16 4TJ (Luca.Cassetta@ed.ac.uk), (4) MIUR (teresita.gravina@istruzione.it), (5) Department of Mechanical Systems and Infrastructures, Guglielmo Marconi University, Via Plinio, 44 00193 Rome, Italy (t.gravina@unimarconi.it)

Public dissemination of science to the public is often negatively affected by biased, incorrect information distributed over the world wide web through social networks and weblogs. In Italy, the lack of correct scientific information has generated several important issues, raising concerns by the international scientific community in several occasions over the past five years.

Our association AIRIcerca (International Association of Italian Researchers, <http://www.airicerca.org>) has recently started a novel scientific dissemination initiative to the general public in Italy. The project is based on 1) direct involvement of researchers (with academic or industrial affiliation) in article preparation and publication and 2) introduction of a peer-reviewing system similar to that applied in conventional scientific publishing. Our initiative, named AIRInforma (<http://informa.airicerca.org>) has already published more than 10 original articles and 3 meeting reports, in Italian language, about various fields of scientific research, ranging from social sciences to evolutionary biology, mathematics and medicine. The editorial board is composed of approximately 20 Italian scientists working all over the world and voluntarily contributing to the AIRInforma initiative. Submitted manuscripts are initially evaluated by the editorial board and, if suitable, they are assigned to four non-anonymous reviewers selected by the editorial board for accurate evaluation. Two reviewers are selected based on their specific expertise on the topic presented in the manuscript (expert reviewers), and two are specifically selected as working on distant fields (naive reviewers). The purpose of naive reviewers is to provide feedback on the efficacy and clarity of the information for the general public.

So far, AIRInforma has established a novel channel of scientific communication in Italy, receiving excellent feedback and reaching more than 8000 new unique visitors every month on our website and social network communication pages. Recently established collaborations with other scientific blogs will facilitate the expansion of our public and of our pool of authors, which is constantly growing. Following the initial enthusiasm and success of our initiative, we are considering to convert AIRInforma into an effective scientific publication by obtaining digital object identifiers for our articles in order to increase their impact and facilitate their dissemination.

We are strongly convinced that a correct scientific information to the public will be more and more relevant in the future, and we are confident that AIRInforma will contribute solid milestones of correctness and scientific accuracy to the complex landscape of scientific communication in Italy.