

Kennedy's Mailbag: What Are Revealed and What Are Not Revealed?

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HIGHLIGHT

Kennedy, the Editor-in-Chief of *Science*, recently opened his mailbag and showed some example letters that he had received. But he did not mention any of the letters that were addressed to him for criticizing his action on handling the Hwang's research and publishing scandal in *Science*. Why?

ABSTRACT

Objectivity is a cornerstone of science. However, is *Science* objective? In handling the top scandals like Hwang's stem cell research and publishing fraud, *Science* has condemned authors and even their hosting institutions but not its own reviewers and editors. In fact, when its Editor-in-Chief recently opened his mailbag, the rejected submissions that criticized his mishandling of the Hwang scandal were nowhere to find. Kennedy was not only out-of-the-touch of the reality of Hwang's scandal; he is actually careless in dealing serious publishing problems in *Science*. Should such person be kept as the Editor-in-Chief for *Science*?

KEY WORDS

Mailbag, Objectivity, Research scandal, Publishing mistake, Public responsibility

After months of silence (*Logical Biology* 6: 14-16, 2006), Kenney finally resumes his writing of Editorial. This time, he opened his mailbag (*Science* 311: 1213, 2006) to reveal some of his rightful actions and his intelligent concerns.

I respect and fully support his position on the Donato's case (*Science Express*, 4 January 2006) for academic freedom and his denouncement against censorship. I also admire his really bold action in publishing the ORNL paper against some strong decay. However, I have some troubles in understanding why his right senses and standards were not consistently applied across the board.

Over the past months, I have submitted many different manuscripts to *Science* and some of them were directly addressed to Kennedy (*Logical Biology* 5: 372-377, 2005). However, so far *Science* has rejected all of them. The rejected manuscripts include some commenting on *Science's* handlings of the Hwang *et al's* stem cell research scandal

(*Scientific Ethics* 1: 3-7, 24-27, 37-39, and 40-42, 2006). A letter even specifically criticized Kennedy for his "out of touch" behaviors in this case (*Scientific Ethics* 1: 14-16, 2006). However, not only these contributions were unjustifiably denied for publication, they were not even revealed in the now opened mailbag of Kennedy.

A recent letter published in *Science* states that "objectivity is a cornerstone of science" (*Science* 311: 1240-1241, 2006). However, when selecting a manuscript for publication, how objective *Science* is? Has *Science* really objectively revealed its own problems in examining its mistakes in publishing fraudulent research in high-profile? Why *Science* did not publish some contributions that show its own problems? Is the suppression of such criticisms a true form of censorship?

As Editor-in-Chief of *Science*, Donald Kennedy has enormous power in influencing

scientific research and even formulation of ethical standard for scientific research and publishing. He can use his journal to express whatever his opinions, including sharply criticizing the US governmental agencies and even the President (*Science* 307: 1533; 308: 467; 309:1301; 310: 195; 310: 589; 310: 1245, 2005). As scientific research is now heavily shaped by the taste of scientific journals and as most scientific journals are following the lead by the “high-impact” “top” journals, the Editor-in-Chief of *Science* may even be perceived as a King in science.

For the promotion of objectivity in science and the advocacy of ethical behaviors among scientists, I appeal our King of science set up a good example

and really use his good senses and right standards on all aspects of scientific publishing, including publishing warranted criticism for him.

* Submitted to *Science* on 2006-03-03. *Science* stated on 2006-03-24 that the letter “is under consideration for possible publication in *Science* magazine”. However, on 2006-04-07 it stated that “Although we are not planning to publish it, we have forwarded a copy of it to the appropriate editors for their information. We received many more letters than we can accommodate and must reject most of those submitted”.