

Errata for
Online Journal Articles
in the Physical Sciences:
an empirical study

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What are journal errata?

Corrections, usually

- printed and included in a subsequent issue
- printed separately
- online in subsequent issue or separate area

Importance of published errata:

- vital to scientists using the literature
- enable the preservation of the written record
(fixity of content)

Finding errata

- Citation indexing (print and online articles)
- Subject indexes and abstracts (print and online)
- Tables of contents (print vs. online)
- Publishers' search engines (online)
- E-print servers (online)
- Links from original articles (online)

Limits of this study:

- Empirical approach
- Selected journals in the physical sciences
- Journals have a full-text online presence
- Errata are published within a journal issue
 - . checked at least 3 journals per publisher
 - . checked 3 errata/originals per journal, if present

Reader views online piece at “x”:

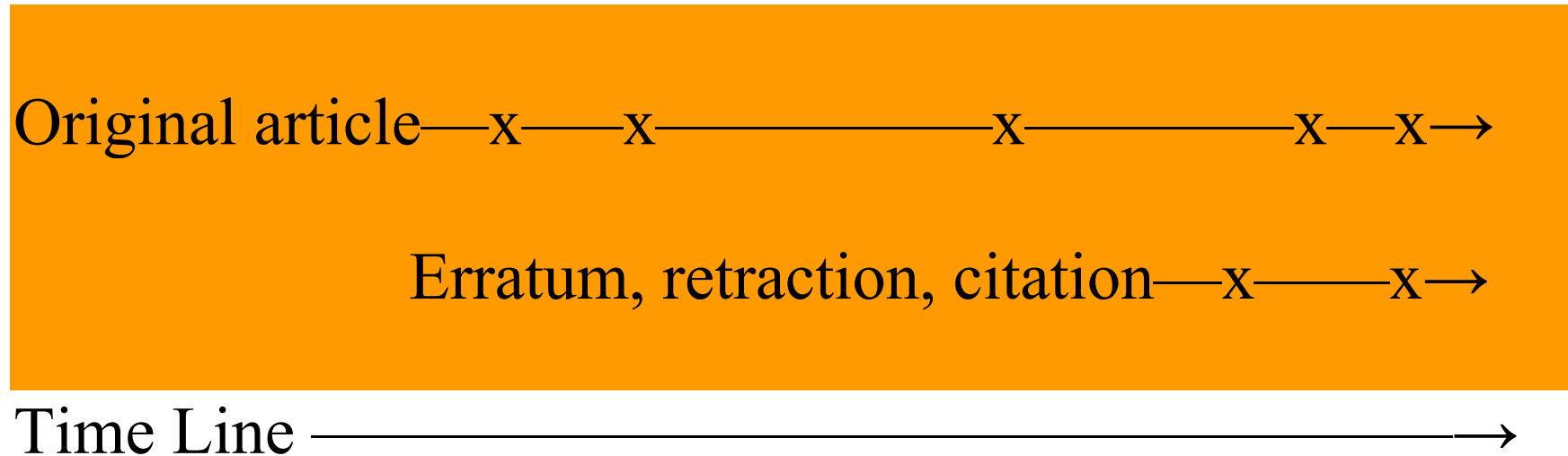
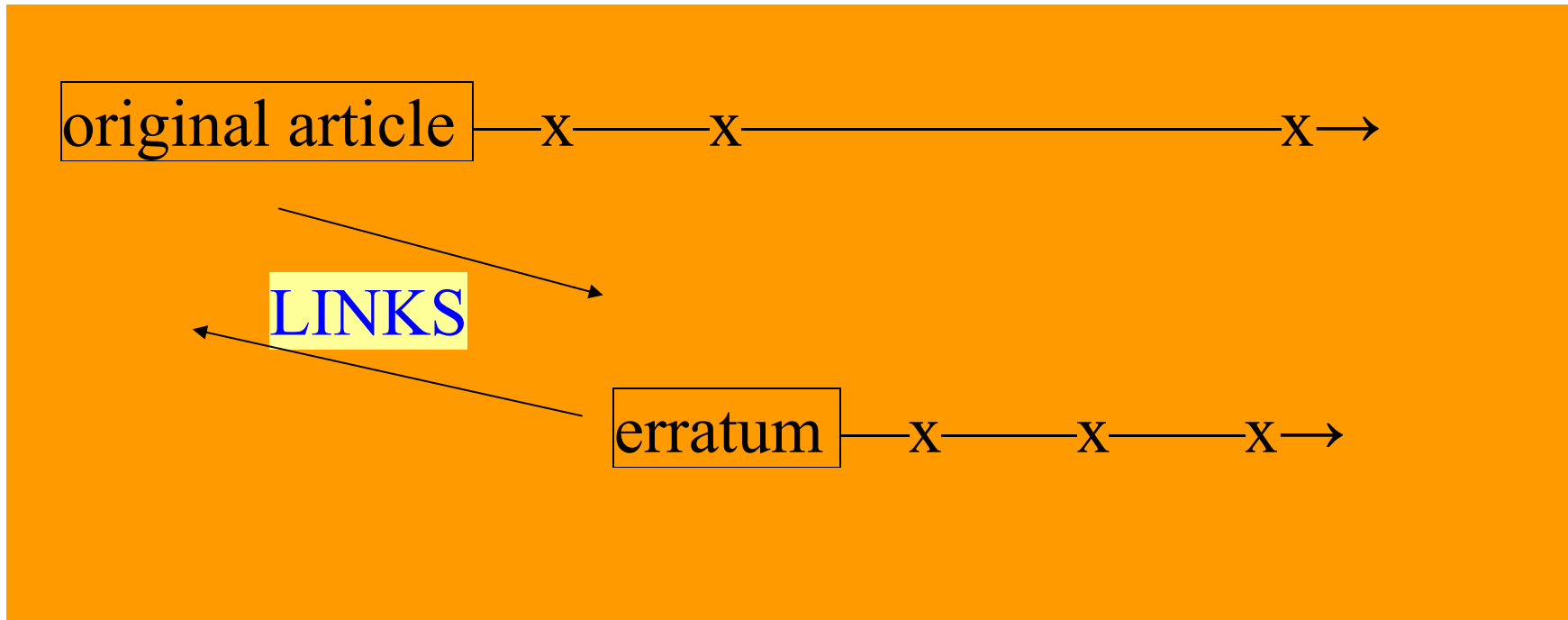


Figure 1.

Original and later publications exist independently.

Reader views online piece at “x”:



Time Line →

Figure 2.

Links in both directions, for awareness and convenience.

Selected Publishers:

- Academic Press
- American Chemical Society
- American Institute of Physics
- American Physical Society
- Annual Reviews
- Elsevier
- Institute of Physics Publishing
- Institution of Electrical and Electronics Engineers
- Kluwer
- Optical Society of America
- Royal Society of Chemistry
- Springer-Verlag
- Wiley

Observed Links

- 42 journals surveyed
- Almost half had links from articles to corrections AND links from corrections to articles
- 10% linked corrections to articles, but not vice versa
- Half of the journals lacked any observed links; some did not include errata in the online versions

Observed Article-Erratum Links, by Publisher

| Publishers | Journals Sampled | Article Linked to Erratum | | | Erratum Linked to Article | | |
|----------------------|---|---------------------------|------|-----|---------------------------|------|-----|
| | | Yes | Some | No | Yes | Some | No |
| Academic Press | Annals of Physics (NY) | | x | | | x | |
| | Atomic Data & Nuclear Data Tables | | | x | | | x |
| | Journal of Magnetic Resonance | x | | | x | | |
| AIP | Applied Physics Letters | x | | | x | | |
| | Journal of Applied Physics | x | | | x | | |
| | Journal of Chemical Physics | x | | | x | | |
| Annual Reviews | Ann. Rev. Astron. Astrophys. | x | | | x | | |
| | Ann. Rev. Fluid Mechanics | x | | | x | | |
| | Ann. Rev. Nuclear & Particle Sci. | x | | | x | | |
| APS | Physical Review D | x | | | x | | |
| | Physical Review Letters | x | | | x | | |
| | Reviews of Modern Physics | x | | | x | | |
| Elsevier | Materials Science & Engineering: R | | | x < | | | x < |
| | Nuclear Physics B | x | | | x | | |
| | Physics Letters B | x | | | x | | |
| | Physics Reports | | | x | | | x |
| | Progress in Nucl. Mag. Res. | | | | | | |
| | Spectroscopy | | | x | | | x |
| Institute of Physics | Journal of Physics B | x | | | x | | |
| | Reports on Progress in Physics | | x | | | x | |
| | Superconductor Science and Technology | x | | | x | | |
| Opt. Soc. Amer. | Journal of the Opt. Soc. Amer. A | | | x | | | x |
| | Optics Express | | | x | | x < | |
| | Optics Letters | x | | | x | | |
| Springer-Verlag | Journal of Biological Inorganic Chemistry | | x | | x | | |

Observed Article-Erratum Links, by Publisher

| Publishers | Journals Sampled | Article Linked to Erratum | | | Erratum Linked to Article | | |
|----------------------|---|---------------------------|------|----|---------------------------|------|----|
| | | Yes | Some | No | Yes | Some | No |
| Academic Press | Journal of Magnetic Resonance | x | | | x | | |
| Amer. Inst. Phys. | Applied Physics Letters | x | | | x | | |
| | Journal of Applied Physics | x | | | x | | |
| | Journal of Chemical Physics | x | | | x | | |
| Annual Reviews | Ann. Rev. Astron. Astrophys. | x | | | x | | |
| | Ann. Rev. Fluid Mechanics | x | | | x | | |
| Amer.Phys. Soc. | Ann. Rev. Nuclear & Particle Science | x | | | x | | |
| | Physical Review D | x | | | x | | |
| | Physical Review Letters | x | | | x | | |
| | Reviews of Modern Physics | x | | | x | | |
| Elsevier | Nuclear Physics B | x | | | x | | |
| | Physics Letters B | x | | | x | | |
| Institute of Physics | Journal of Physics B | x | | | x | | |
| | Superconductor Science and Technology | x | | | x | | |
| Optical Soc. Amer. | Optics Letters | x | | | x | | |
| Springer-Verlag | Journal of Biological Inorganic Chemistry | | x | | x | | |

No Links Found

| Publishers | Journals Sampled | Articles Linked to Errata | | | Errata Linked to Articles | | |
|------------------|---|---------------------------|------|-----|---------------------------|------|-----|
| | | Yes | Some | No | Yes | Some | No |
| Academic Press | Atomic Data & Nuclear Data Tables | | | x | | | x |
| Elsevier | Materials Science & Engineering: R | | | x < | | | x < |
| | Physics Reports | | | x | | | x |
| | Progress in Nucl. Mag. Res. Spectroscopy | | | x | | | x |
| IEEE | IEEE Journal of Quantum Electronics | | | x | | | x |
| | IEEE Photonics Technology Letters | | | x | | | x |
| | IEEE Transactions on Plasma Science | | | x | | | x |
| Kluwer | Journal of Atmospheric Chemistry | | | x | | | x |
| | Journal of Biomolecular NMR | | | x | | | x |
| | Solar Physics | | | x | | | x |
| | Space Science Reviews | | | x | | | x |
| Opt. Soc. Amer. | Journal of the Optical Society Of America A | | | x | | | x |
| Royal Soc. Chem. | Chemical Communications | | | x < | | | x < |
| | Faraday Discussions | | | x < | | | x < |
| | New Journal of Chemistry | | | x < | | | x < |
| Springer-Verlag | Theoretical Chemistry Accounts | | | x | | | x |
| | Zeitschrift fur Physik C | | | x | | | x |
| Wiley | Angewandte Chemie, International Edition | | | x | | | x |
| | Chemistry, A European Journal | | | x | | | x |
| | Journal of Computational Chemistry | | | x | | | x |

HTML Tour

*selected link strategies and examples--
chosen for positive aspects but not necessarily representative*

*Note to website users: these links are not live; please copy and paste into your browser.
Non-subscribers will have access to some examples, but not all.*

1. Use of "See also" note in abstract; use of PACS code for errata
- *Journal of Chemical Physics* (American Institute of Physics)

Examples

Original article abstract with link to erratum as "See also" note:

<http://ojps.aip.org/getabs/servlet/GetabsServlet?prog=normal&id=JCPSA6000115000020009113000001&idtype=cvips&gifs=yes>

Erratum abstract with link to original as "See also" note:

<http://ojps.aip.org/getabs/servlet/GetabsServlet?prog=normal&id=JCPSA6000116000008003502000001&idtype=cvips&gifs=Yes>

2. Use of inset box with related links; link from HTML full text to erratum

- *Annual Review of Astronomy & Astrophysics* (Annual Reviews)

Examples

Original HTML full text article with links, including erratum:

<http://astro.annualreviews.org/cgi/content/full/38/1/191>

HTML erratum with links, including original article full text:

<http://astro.annualreviews.org/cgi/content/full/38/1/191/DC1>

3. Use of notes ("Referred to" and "Referred to by") to link between HTML article abstract and erratum; these links are not included in inset.

- *Physics Letters B* (Elsevier)

Examples

Original HTML abstract (ScienceDirect platform)

http://www.sciencedirect.com/science?_ob=ArticleURL&_udi=B6TVN-3VY01D3-M&_user=501045&_coverDate=02%2F25%2F1999&_rdoc=18&_fmt=summary&_orig=browse&_srch=%23toc%235539%231999%23995519996%2373089!&_cdi=5539&_sort=d&_docanchor=&_acct=C000022659&_version=1&_urlVersion=0&_userid=501045&md5=de396f662ceff86cff987beaca37cc4c

HTML erratum

http://www.sciencedirect.com/web-editions?_ob=ArticleURL&_udi=B6TVN-44RNMSM-2&_user=778139&_coverDate=02%2F07%2F2002&_rdoc=30&_fmt=full&_orig=browse&_srch=%23toc%235539%232002%23994739996%23283397!&_cdi=5539&_sort=d&_acct=C000043102&_version=1&_urlVersion=0&_userid=778139&md5=edf8e8e6307c8bd836b2c7d992f966be

4. Inset box with links; table of contents listing with links to erratum and original

Examples:

- *Journal of Magnetic Resonance* (Academic)

Original article abstract with link to erratum

<http://www.idealibrary.com/links/doi/10.1006/jmre.2001.2313>

Erratum abstract with link to original "referring article"

<http://www.idealibrary.com/links/doi/10.1006/jmre.2001.2435>

Tables-of-contents

a) Erratum is last entry: <http://www.idealibrary.com/links/toc/jmre/153/1/0>

b) Original article on p. 71: <http://www.idealibrary.com/links/toc/jmre/150/1/0>

5. Standard phrase, near beginning, is used to provide links between erratum and original full-text or abstract; navigation frame does not provide connecting link

Examples:

- *Journal of Biological Inorganic Chemistry* (Springer)

Original full-text with link to erratum

<http://link.springer-ny.com/link/service/journals/00775/contents/01/00266/paper/s007750100266ch000.html>

Erratum linked to full-text

<http://link.springer-ny.com/link/service/journals/00775/contents/02/00349/paper/s00775-002-0349-zch000.html>

Challenges for the Reader

- Most links only found in “welcome mat” abstract, not in full article
- Errata included in some issues, absent from others
- Some errata not part of online version
- Some errata not identified as such in contents
- Variations in style
- Broken URLs
- Full citations lacking in abstract

Indexing

- Science Citation Index (ISI) – the best
- Subject indexes – varied coverage
- Publisher search engines – convenient, but not as consistent as SCI
- arXiv.org, physics e/pre-print server – usually includes all versions of article in full

Conclusions

- Excellent models exist
- Improvements in consistency of online journal content and production are needed
- Use of subject terms and classification, such as PACS code for errata
- Standardization for citation style and an accepted location for forward links would improve ease of use