

On Questions, Community, and Conduits

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How many reviewers should I invite?

Is it OK to add an author after my manuscript has been accepted?

When an editor asks for “all the raw data”—does she really mean all the data?

What’s a preprint?

If my scientific society wants to start a new open-access journal, will our other journals lose submissions?

Let’s face it: we field a lot of questions. And we ask a lot, too. Whether you’re an editor-in-chief, production assistant, managing editor, or publications committee chair for a scholarly society—I suspect you spend a significant portion of your day on one side or the other of a query.

During my early days as a managing editor in an editorial office of one person, our flagship journal *GENETICS* at just more than 80 years old was publishing around 55 articles each month. The print issues had the heft of a phone book. You could practically feel not only the heat of a just-published discovery but also the years researchers spent conducting experiments, analyzing, starting over, writing and revising, and ultimately communicating a complete scientific story to colleagues.

Those monthly journal tomes were weighty in more ways than one. Even though each article seemed self-contained in maybe 13 pages and a supplemental data file, I quickly realized that the network surrounding a paper was in fact vast and complex. Funding agencies such as the National Institutes of Health and grant reviewers played a role in a project’s very origin. Department chairs, international review boards, public information officers, dozens of collaborators, and even companies that supplied reagents or genome sequencers mattered, too. Consider the time spent by academic editors and reviewers evaluating the manuscript and helping the authors to ensure lasting intellectual impact. Copyeditors and compositors, art directors, digital content developers, indexers, and librarians worked behind the scenes. No doubt I’ve missed others.

We mustn’t forget our readers, the ultimate consumers of an article. These readers may be basic scientists who use the findings as building blocks for their own discoveries, physicians who depend on the most up-to-date therapeutic recommendations, climatologists who share data and analyses on global warming, or materials scientists who want to learn about the latest in artificial tissue.



So back in those first months, my predecessor left me with big shoes to fill and (I later realized) scant preparation. I had experience as a human factors researcher at Carnegie Mellon University Libraries, a science writer, and software documentation instructor plus a history of a motley assortment of waitressing, editing, and indie newspaper journalist jobs—all of which came in handy at one time or another when trying to satisfy a disgruntled author or helping to design new journal websites. I know colleagues (many of whom I met at CSE annual meetings) whose backgrounds and paths to publishing are similar. To be frank, most of us as kids didn’t have dreams of being an editor when we grew up.

Despite my inexperience and what seemed like a never-ending whirlwind of changes in scientific publishing, I lucked out. I was schooled daily by a diverse group that included vendors, authors, reviewers, and editors. Most of all, I learned the ropes because of Elizabeth W Jones, a formidable editor-in-chief, yeast geneticist, and pioneer in science education, to whom I owe my career as well as the thick skin necessary to thrive as an editor.

What struck me then and continues to do so now is the assortment of talented, idealistic, curious, and committed individuals in scholarly publishing and, in particular, those involved with CSE. Despite seemingly disparate backgrounds,

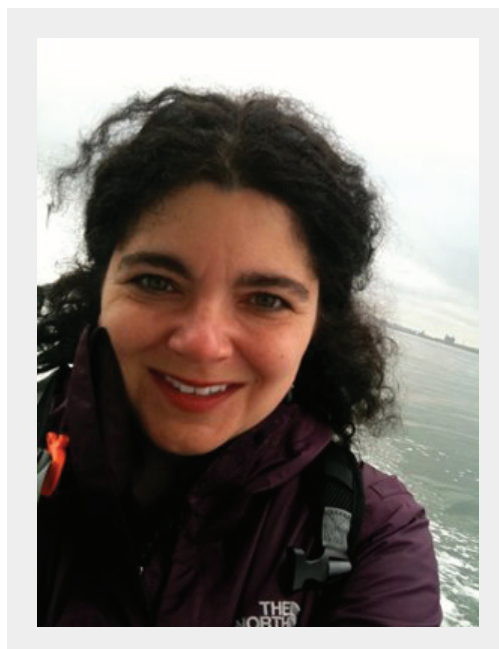
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we have much in common. Ultimately, our community exists to serve science. Through questions we're asked and answers we provide, through our collaborations and creativity, we function as conduits between multiple groups—authors and readers, reviewers and editors, vendors and staff, plus others. Our web of knowledge is broad and deep.

It is in this spirit of acting as a conduit that I hope you will embrace CSE and today's launch of the redesigned *Science Editor*.

Whether it's your first month as a manuscript editor or your 20th year managing a stable of journals, we invite you in. Browse our articles. Learn something new. Then tell people. Be that publishing expert your boss turns to when she's not sure about a new business model. Share with your editors an article about authorship in federal research labs. Encourage an intern to read about career-development options. Advise an author from a developing country who needs access to writing resources. If you missed the CSE annual meeting in Denver or want to refresh your knowledge of a topic, our meeting reports detail session highlights and discussions by leaders in the field whose insights are priceless.

Let *Science Editor* and its articles serve you, as you in turn serve others in the spirit of science and discovery.



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