Enhancing Peer Reviewer Selection and Meeting Reviewers' Needs for Development, Feedback, and Recognition

MODERATOR:
Ingrid Philibert
Senior Vice President, Field Activities, Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education
Executive Managing Editor, *Journal of Graduate Medical Education*
Chicago, Illinois

SPEAKERS:
Tamara Hanna
Senior Acquisitions Editor, Editorial Development
American Chemical Society Publications
Washington, DC

Mary Warner
Assistant Director of Publications
American Geophysical Union
Washington, DC

REPORTER:
Barbara Biemeck
Publishing Services Manager
Sheridan Journal Services
Waterbury, Vermont

As there is much discussion and scrutiny involving journal peer review these days, this session offered insights and ideas to develop effective processes for reviewer selection and retention. Ingrid Philibert opened with, "Why this session?" She noted the need to consider "the care and feeding of reviewers" because most scientific journals rely on peer review. "Journals compete for a finite number of peer reviewers." New reviewers need development, and all reviewers warrant greater recognition, as in the academic community, peer reviewers "do not get as much recognition as researchers." Philibert suggested peer-reviewer educational programs could make it easier for editors to select the right reviewers, evaluate peer reviewers more effectively, and keep meaningful data on all reviewers to make informed decisions. It's important to recognize both senior and junior reviewers and perhaps also to reward those who suggest another reviewer when they are first invited but cannot accept.

Tamara Hanna began by presenting findings of a recent Wiley reviewer survey regarding peer-reviewer goals and motivation. "Peer reviewers said they want to serve as reviewers to reciprocate and because it's expected." Surveyed reviewers sought to pay back the community for the review of their own work, she noted.

Hanna also shared information gleaned across American Chemical Society (ACS) publications, including reviewer training and rating, as well as ways to expand the reviewer pool and leverage expertise to reduce reviewer fatigue. Steady growth in submissions is driving the growing need for reviewers at ACS, so the society educates reviewers who "typically learn on the job." Through ACS On Campus modules, junior reviewers learn what to do and what not to do. "We can get reviewers, but then editors don't necessarily use them. How do we get them to want these reviewers?"

ACS On Campus uses tools such as the Expertise Form, Reviewer Locator, and Reviewer History to help match needs and resources through input from those involved. Editors also rate reviewers on a three-point scale. By keeping detailed reviewer histories, ACS analyzes data on the use and productivity of reviewers. In her closing remarks, Hanna noted it's important to educate, encourage, and appreciate peer reviewers, and she shared the program's message: "We love reviewers!"

Mary Warner provided statistics from the American Geophysical Union (AGU) publishing program, which received 13,000 submissions and published 6,000 papers in 2015. Submissions at AGU were also on the increase in 2016 and are being handled by more than 100 editors and 450 associate editors, supported by 22 in-house staff. Peer-review goals include speed without sacrificing quality and an easy process for authors, editors, and reviewers: a first decision in fewer than 60 days (fewer than 30 days for "rapid publication") and a simple review form to guide authors and reviewers as they "click through the system." Potential reviewers have 48 hours to respond to an invitation before an alternate is contacted. The editor is notified as soon as two reviewers have agreed to review, and reviewers are notified of the final decision by email.

To expand the reviewer pool and address reviewer overload, AGU seeks to keep to the average of two to three reviews per year and attract more international reviewers to match the increase in worldwide author submissions. The program uses expertise and key words to help editors find appropriate reviewers in its database. Reviewers are encouraged to update their profiles upon login. Authors

CONTINUED

are encouraged to complete expertise profiles, as are AGU fall meeting presenters. At the AGU fall meeting and other conferences—and at universities in the United States, China, and Japan—reviewing workshops are offered.

AGU uses a five-star system to evaluate reviewers on timeliness and quality; editors can see each reviewer's history and staff can add notes regarding any concerns about the reviewer. To recognize reviewers, the program sends review information to ORCID; sends review-acknowledgment letters upon request; thanks reviewers each year in the journal; hosts reviewer-appreciation receptions; and, for top reviewers, provides complimentary personal subscriptions to a journal of the reviewer's choice.

"It's important to provide feedback to reviewers to allow them to grow in reviewing skill," noted Warner. "Pay attention to your reviewers and appreciate their value—the peer-review process depends on reviewer participation and review quality."