

Combined Annual Meeting Session Report: Managing Staff and Volunteers

“Mind the Gap II: Gender and Beyond”

MODERATOR:

Ken Heideman

Director of Publications
American Meteorological Society
Boston, Massachusetts

SPEAKERS:

Patty Baskin

Executive Editor, *Neurology
Journals*
American Academy of Neurology
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Miranda Walker

Senior Publisher
Wolters Kluwer
Baltimore, Maryland

Joan Marsh

Deputy Editor, *The Lancet
Psychiatry*
Oxford, United Kingdom

Jessica LaPointe

Managing Copy Editor
American Meteorological Society
Boston, Massachusetts

“Remote Workforces”

MODERATOR:

Carolyn deCourt

Managing Editor/Marketing
Assistant
J&J Editorial
Cary, North Carolina

SPEAKERS:

Kristen Overstreet

Managing Editor/Senior Partner
Origin Editorial
Leander, Texas

Sonja Krane

Senior Managing Editor, *Journal of
the American Chemical Society*
American Chemical Society
Washington, DC

“Transitions: Managing Your Staff through Change”

MODERATOR:

Beverly Lindeen

Senior Managing Editor
Allen Press, Inc.
Lawrence, Kansas

SPEAKERS:

Kimberly Retzlaff

Senior Editorial Manager
American Water Works Association
Denver, Colorado

Jacob Kendall-Taylor

Editorial Manager, *Proceedings
of the National Academy of
Sciences of the United States of
America*

National Academy of Sciences
Washington, DC

Sheehan Misko

Director, Journals
American Association for Clinical
Chemistry
Washington, DC

“Getting the Most Out of Volunteers: Managing and Leading Volunteers”

MODERATOR:

Angela Cochran

Associate Publisher
American Society of Civil Engineers
Washington, DC

SPEAKERS:

Katherine Bennett

Managing Editor, Scientific
Publications
American Society for Radiation
Oncology
Arlington, Virginia

Gordon MacPherson

Director, Board Governance &
Intellectual Property Operations
IEEE
Piscataway, New Jersey

REPORTER:

Jessica LaPointe

“Mind the Gap II: Gender and Beyond” was a sequel to 2016’s Mind the Gap session, which was itself a continuation of another Mind the Gap session from a previous Society for Scholarly Publishing (SSP) meeting. While the first two Mind the Gap sessions (at SSP and the 2016 CSE Annual Meeting) focused primarily on the gender gap in scholarly publishing, this year, moderator Ken Heideman took the topic in a new direction, expanding the focus to include issues of age, race, class, and mental health.

The first speaker on the four-person panel, Patty Baskin, invited the audience to consider the benefits and challenges of an age-diverse workforce. The oldest generation still working today (roughly born 1945 and earlier) have a unique perspective because of their extensive experience. Also known as the Traditionalists, they remember the time of “traditional” careers, pensions, and stable employment. Baby Boomers, born around 1946 to 1964, constitute many of the senior staff and volunteers in scholarly publishing. They are starting to contemplate retirement and are poised to pass along their accumulated knowledge and wisdom to successive generations. Generation X, born between 1965 and 1979, came of age in a time of transition: they did not grow up with the technology that is universal today, but they quickly adapted to the Internet, texting, and email that arose in their teens. Millennials (born roughly 1980 through 2000) are talented and full of energy that can be harnessed to address emerging challenges, and are particularly suited to managing social media accounts and websites. While these generational generalizations are very broad and should not be taken as definitive descriptions, it is clear that each generation brings its unique perspectives, experience, and skills to the workplace. An age-diverse workforce confers the benefits of the different work and communication styles of these generations.

The next panelist, Miranda Walker, spoke about hiring a racially diverse staff. When applying and interviewing for a new position, people of color face specific challenges. Hiring managers may see them as representatives of an entire racial or ethnic group rather than as individuals. Job openings may not be publicly advertised, and even when they are, preference is given to candidates who are endorsed through recommendations and word of mouth. Because people tend to self-segregate and associate with those who share

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their racial, ethnic, class, and religious categories, staff who are hired through these unseen channels are more likely to resemble the people who are responsible for making the hiring decisions. Even with the best of intentions, managers have unconscious biases that can be difficult to overcome without focused, concerted effort.

Jessica LaPointe spoke next about economic and class diversity, and introduced four action items for increasing such diversity in the scholarly publications workforce.

1. List the salary range in job postings. Including “salary dependent on experience” or leaving the salary line blank makes it difficult for applicants to determine whether it is worth the time and effort to respond to a job listing, carefully tailor and send their resume, and craft a concise yet warm cover letter only to discover they cannot make ends meet on the salary being offered.
2. Rethink how positions are described. If something is not strictly required, consider separating “required” and “desired” skills and qualities.
3. Do not require advanced degrees for non-specialist positions. Keep in mind not everyone is able to spend tens of thousands of dollars to acquire the degrees expected of candidates.
4. Consider candidates who have non-traditional job and educational histories. Many people do not have the luxury of taking an unpaid internship, even during college. First- and second-generation immigrants and people from poor or working-class backgrounds might not have gone to college in a traditional way (might have started later, taken longer to finish, or dropped out). Hiring a great candidate who lists retail or food service jobs on his resume might be a better decision than hiring the one with a master’s degree in publishing.

The final panelist, Joan Marsh, provided a unique perspective from the United Kingdom. She described the impact of mental health on work, and vice versa. Managers can help alleviate the difficulties encountered by workers who face mental health challenges; they may need accommodations (like flexibility about work hours) to do their best work, and these should be offered whenever possible.

Managing a remote editorial workforce comes with its own set of benefits and challenges, and speakers Sonja Krane and Kristen Overstreet covered this topic in session “Remote Workforces”. With more and more people working from home/telecommuting, employers have a larger pool of candidates to recruit from and can save money on all the overhead costs related to maintaining a physical workspace. Working remotely is not for everyone, however: employees must be self-directed and need little

daily supervision. Data and information security is an area of possible concern, and collaboration can be more difficult when coworkers do not work together in the same location.

Some keys for successfully managing a remote workforce are having experienced staff and maintaining open communication throughout the team, using tools such as email, instant messaging, Skype/Google hangouts, group chats, team conference calls, and regular webinars. Sharing photos and bios among the staff helps to establish a sense of community. Clients should be introduced to the staff as a team, making sure they can see photos and bios of all the remote workers, which helps them know they are working with real people who are dedicated to their work. Regular check-ins are critical to keep everyone on the same page and to make sure clients feel their needs are being addressed in an appropriate and timely manner.

Problems with managing remote staff can include a lack of transparency and vague expectations, which can be mitigated by better communication. The danger of individuals going rogue can be harder to address with remote employees, and delayed communication or failure to keep everyone in the loop can exacerbate any management challenges. Remote workforces are successful because of their flexibility, global hours, and self-directed staff who are committed to constant self-improvement. Allowing staff to work remotely results in decreased turnover, providing consistency for editors and authors alike. Long-term remote employees serve as custodians of their journals, and they are invested in the journals’ success. They provide continuity during transitions of editors in chief, and there is less of a learning curve when new editors come on board.

Sonja Krane explained the American Chemical Society (ACS) publications department supports chemists around the world. In contrast to today, 20 years ago manuscripts and reviews were sent by mail, and reviewer databases were on Rolodexes and in filing cabinets. With today’s global workforce, there are authors and editors all around the world. To maintain relationships among volunteer peer reviewers and remote staff, managers must make a deliberate effort to reach out. It is important to establish best practices, like scheduling regular check-ins with staff and using chat and conferencing tools (e.g., GoTo Meeting, Google hangouts) and collaboration tools (e.g., Google docs, Dropbox). In-person meetings can happen during industry conferences (like CSE), which can also be a good place to recruit new remote workers.

Checking in regularly is not always enough. It can help to have weekly half-hour staff meetings using a shared Google doc containing the meeting agenda, notes, and action items. In these meetings, objectives can be set for the coming week, which keeps everyone on the same page. Some of the best options for web conferencing with multiple people include BlueJeans and Adobe Connect.

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There are pros and cons to all web conferencing tools, but most problems are caused by user error. One audience member remarked that it can be nice to have people in the office at least once in a while because it makes for easier communication, and everyone in the office knows when there is something going on.

The challenge of managing staff during transitions was the focus of "Transitions: Managing Your Staff through Change". Kimberly Retzlaff of the American Water Works Association described their previous way of doing things, wherein work tasks were organized by project, in contrast to the new way, wherein tasks are organized by role. When transitioning from the previous way of doing things to the new way, managers should use tools to support communication among team members, such as Basecamp (project management software), SharePoint (tracking charts to share information), and OneNote (which can include action items for issues of the journal).

Change management primarily addresses how to get everyone on board with changes. To foster staff buy in, managers should acknowledge change is stressful and ask what people are afraid of. To maintain continuity, managers should reinforce strategic initiatives and continue to communicate goals to build on existing progress. Regular staff meetings or "town halls" allow everyone to communicate their concerns. "The only constant is change, but it still freaks people out." Throughout change and transition, so it is critical to keep dialogue open.

"The only constant is change, but it still freaks people out." —Kimberly Retzlaff

Jacob Kendall-Taylor pointed out more and more people are working from home each year, and flexible work options encourage staff loyalty. Working remotely is not for everyone; some people "get a little weird" after working a few days in a row at home and need the interaction that a physical office space provides. Training staff can be more difficult when they are not in the office with their manager and other staff, so managers can assign homework, train via webinars, and schedule conference calls. New hires should be made to feel like they are joining a team; they should be informed how best to contact other members of the group (instant messaging, email, etc.).

Expectations for remote employees must be established in writing: regular daily work hours, a reliable home internet connection and a backup plan for internet or electricity outages, minimizing distractions in the home (e.g., noise, children, pets), and appropriate response times for author and editor queries. Managers must be deliberate in how they communicate with employees. One of the advantages of allowing staff to work remotely is increased employee retention.

Professional development is key to employee engagement, so managers should provide training opportunities for staff. Supportive management and job clarity are also critical to maintain engagement, and managers can ask about their hobbies, favorite movies, authors, etc. to develop a rapport with remote staff.

Working from home is attractive to most staff (especially Millennials). They can avoid the stress and expense of commuting and they do not need to dress professionally. It provides flexibility, allows them to avoid weather-related commuting difficulties, and helps support work/life balance. Allowing staff to work more often from home during times of transition can help ease stress, as long as expectations are made clear.

Sheehan Misko talked about how to keep remote staff efficient and productive: it is critical to periodically review who is doing what and if it still makes sense. Are they still the best person for the job (what if they hate it)? Managers need to regularly review whether new resources are needed, and to offer opportunities for challenge to avoid boredom among staff.

People leave their jobs for a variety of reasons. They might have too many or too few responsibilities, a lack of benefits or a lack of opportunities for professional growth, or they might get burned out by long commute. Allowing staff to work remotely helps an organization retain good people. It is also important to welcome new staff by providing effective training and making them feel like part of the team. Talking one-on-one is often more effective than in meetings. Managers should aim to be flexible and let staff work from home when they need to.

Stress in the workplace can lead to high turnover. Acknowledge stress and concerns are real and talk about what is bothering people. Allowing folks to work from home 2 days a week rather than 1 day may help reduce stress. Add fun office accessories (desk accessories/toys); have team lunches, outings; remind staff everyone is in this together; and offer support/offer to listen. Confront conflict head on; mutual respect is key. Expect the unexpected: Some people who seem very different might end up the best of friends. Confidence is infectious: Managers should show confidence in their team and encourage staff to be part of office initiatives (health initiatives/step counts). Letting staff members take on leadership roles can instill a sense of ownership.

Most people are change avoidant; they need lots of information and time to adjust. Managers must clearly explain why they are making a change and explain how it is beneficial for the staff. New trends and initiatives arise every year, and these must be clearly communicated to staff, volunteers, and authors.

To start "Getting the Most out of Volunteers" moderator Angela Cochran asked a series of thought-provoking

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questions: How do you motivate and inspire people if you are not paying them? How do you get acceptance of your mission? How do you channel their energy? How do you say no to them (not saying no is a recipe for disaster)?

“How do you motivate and inspire people if you’re not paying them?” —Angela Cochran

Katherine Bennett explained the senior editors at the American Society for Radiation Oncology (ASTRO) are handpicked by the editor in chief and receive a small stipend. Associate editors are chosen by senior editors, who mentor and manage their own groups of associate editors. Associate editors decide whether to send a paper out for review, and are responsible for finding and cultivating reviewers. They use their personal connections to solicit appropriate papers and recruit reviewers and also represent the journal at conferences. Editors have term limits (3 and 5 years), which they can renew or they can be allowed rotate out of the position. Senior editors manage their own groups, which gives them ownership to build and manage their teams and allocate workflow to their associate editors. Good associate editors are groomed to be the next senior editors/pipeline for editors to move up. Metrics are reviewed on a quarterly basis and compared with other groups, which keeps length of time to decision down via organic peer pressure. Accountability and empowerment go hand in hand.

Speaker Gordon MacPherson described managing volunteer editors by enabling regular meetings, including off-site meetings, and regular phone calls among their editors’ teams. The teams are set up as working groups, and they need to develop actionable items and create reports. Editors are expected to actually do something, which can be a new concept for some volunteers. Staff should remember they work for the volunteers, not the other way around. But the volunteers are engineers and scientists, not publishing experts. As the experts in publishing, the staff can advise volunteers and help them with their goals. Editors and junior-level volunteers should be encouraged to join committees or boards; they can then move up and start mentoring new members. Managers should cultivate good relationships with volunteers to encourage cross-pollination across boards and committees.

One common challenge is how to equitably distribute work among all the volunteer editors: Some editors may do little work, while others take on a much larger share. It is important to know editors’ strengths and what they are passionate about. Less-active editors can be assigned a specific project to get them more involved. People who are quiet on conference calls might not be comfortable speaking on the phone. It can be helpful to ask them directly for their ideas.

Senior editors can benefit from being walked through decisions using hands-on training. Managers should notice

when editors need a chance to step down and let them bow out gracefully or offer to find a co-editor to help (even temporarily). Using a submission system can help to keep track of who has been asked to review and who has been unresponsive. Lots of reviewers agree to review and then are completely unresponsive: It might be time to cut them loose and move on to someone else.

Each of these four sessions highlighted some of the challenges of managing people in scholarly publishing while also providing some advice on best practices. Communication, accountability, and empowerment are essential, whether managing staff or volunteers. It is vital to establish clear expectations and regularly check in to make sure everyone understands the overall goals as well as their individual responsibilities. Both staff and volunteer editors need to feel empowered to make necessary decisions (e.g., delegating tasks) as well as feeling part of a team. Technological tools such as web conferencing and shared calendars can help everyone stay on the same page and feel connected.

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A diverse workforce that reflects the wider world makes an organization stronger, more flexible, and better able to produce innovative solutions to difficult problems. If scholarly publishing organizations fail to adequately recruit, train, mentor, and retain diverse staff, they miss out on the benefits of multiple points of view that come from a variety of backgrounds and experiences. The best person for a job may be someone who did not follow a traditional educational or career path. Having a diverse workforce takes more than a passive intention not to discriminate: It is necessary to look outside the box and be willing to make accommodations in order to find and keep the very best people.

Having staff and volunteers who work remotely around the world confers a number of benefits as well as some drawbacks. Allowing staff to work remotely reduces staff turnover and helps maintain consistency over time. Remote employees are more likely to be available at different times of day (depending on their local time zone), and thus are able to respond to authors and editors outside traditional business hours. At the same time, remote staff and volunteers are in danger of feeling disengaged and going rogue.

Managers must be mindful of how their decisions affect both staff and volunteers. Most people are resistant to change, so any transitions must be handled with care. Clear, effective communication is especially necessary during times of transition, and allowing staff to work remotely can help ease some of the stress caused by transitions.

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Regular and continuous training is needed to help remote staff feel connected to their coworkers as well as to their organization's mission. Training is also vital for editors who need to know how to best perform their roles within the organization. Managers can benefit from training as well, particularly with regard to managing volunteers. New editors benefit from mentoring provided by more established senior editors, and senior editors should be encouraged to recruit and train new editors, with an eye toward smooth successions as senior editors and editors in chief step down from their roles or move on.

Effective management of both paid staff and volunteers requires a firm hand on the wheel as well as a finger on the pulse of both the organization and its staff. Managers must keep everyone focused and working together efficiently, while continually monitoring how they are doing in their roles and whether they need additional training or mentoring to reach their full potential. Managers must be firm enough to rein in rogue remote workers and editors, while being flexible enough to allow their people to take ownership and feel empowered in their roles.