

Learning from One Another: Editors-in-Chief, Researchers, and Publishers

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Windy Boyd, Mike Friedman, and Liz Fathman

The intent of this session was to bridge the gap between editors, researchers, and production staff, and to share knowledge regarding each stage of the publishing process. However, the session quickly evolved into a group discussion regarding unique and shared challenges faced by different types of journals and the people filling different roles within those journals. The panelists began by providing a brief background of their journals and an overview of the role(s) they play.

Windy Boyd, PhD, MPH, is a science editor at *Environmental Health Perspectives (EHP)*, a journal published by the National Institute for Environmental Health Sciences. Because *EHP* is federally funded, all content is open access, with no publication fees for authors. The journal is self-published with a team of in-house editors consisting of federal employees and contractors. *EHP* publishes research, reviews, commentaries, and news, and publishes in an online-only continuous format.

Mike Friedman, PhD, is the Journals Production Manager for the American Meteorological Society (AMS), which publishes 11 journals, available in print and online. He oversees the production process from acceptance through publication and spoke about the value of having an internal technical editing staff to communicate with authors, explain

the publication process, and ensure accuracy in the finalized manuscript.

Liz Fathman, PhD, is director, Print and Digital Media, and publisher at MBG Press, which publishes two journals (*Annals of Missouri Botanical Garden* and *Novon: A Journal for Botanical Nomenclature*). Fathman worked to transition both journals online (in addition to print), ensured they were published on a regular basis, and identified relevant editorial boards. In addition, Fathman worked to expand the readership of the journals by transitioning from content written primarily by and for the MBG research staff to content that appealed to a broader audience. To this end, she instated acting editors-in-chief and strongly recommended they invite associate editors from outside the institution to broaden their reach and the expertise of the respective boards.

One strength of this panel was the fact that they represented distinct positions at very different journals and could speak to both the unique challenges faced by their journals and to challenges that are common across all publishing domains. What follows is a summary of the topics discussed at the session and the overall takeaway. The session continued with questions from the audience and moderator.

What is the role of a technical editor (TE) at each journal?

The takeaway of this discussion was that the role of TE is important, but it is shaped by the journal. For example, at AMS,

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the TE first comes into play following the copyediting stage, to verify that edits did not change the meaning of the content; they check the formatting of technical elements such as figures and math; and they have an opportunity to review the proofs. The TE gives the final approval for publication. By contrast, at MPG press and *EHP*, TEs act in conjunction with peer reviewers, checking the content as well as editing for journal style. However, both Fathman and Boyd agreed that this level of editing does add time to an already complex process.

What has been the biggest hurdle with respect to the gap between your backgrounds and your current positions?

Fathman bounced between academia and publishing and was more familiar with the traditional publishing model. Her challenge was bringing this model to MGB. Additionally, she struggled with promoting the journals on social media. Friedman was a TE before transitioning to his current role and consciously worked on becoming a publisher, rather than a scientist. One benefit conferred by his career path was his network of peers from when he was a researcher. Boyd has been an author, bench scientist, reviewer, and associate editor. During her transition from laboratory work to performing systematic reviews, she noticed how poor scientific reporting can be and therefore wanted to gain experience on the publishing side. Her primary challenge is managing both triage and articles that may require multiple rounds of revisions. Another challenge is to take on the role of editor for authors who are still her peers.

What are the biggest takeaways from the process and what do we need to work on as a field?

All panelists agreed time is key and they each wear multiple hats. Allocating and prioritizing tasks are essential skills.

Boyd stressed that regardless of the manuscript stage, we all need to appreciate and be respectful of others' time; this includes that of authors, editors, and reviewers. Friedman followed by stressing the importance of effective communication with authors and publishers and saving time by encouraging authors to promote their work. Fathman agreed by stressing the importance of "demystifying the process" for authors.

What are your perspectives regarding evolving technologies within the publishing field?

Boyd mentioned that some readers still miss the print version, which is quickly being replaced by online-only access for many journals. By contrast, Friedman indicated that many of the newer scientists are much more accepting of online-only options and the availability of early online release (through advanced or continuous publication). Fathman indicated that MBG's journals are still in print with online access available and that the editor-in-chief of *Novon* prefers the print version.

The primary takeaway from this session was that regardless of journal size, scope, or publisher, the challenges are similar: recruiting, training, and retaining quality associate editors and reviewers; mastering new skills in an ever-changing environment; time management; and communicating information to authors and journal content to readers. Certainly, we can all learn a lot by communicating with our CSE colleagues on a regular basis. From this session, it is clear we all face similar challenges and can help each other by sharing experiences, lessons learned, and best practices. As editors, publishers, and researchers, we must come together as a team, dedicated to the publication of relevant, rigorous, and transparent science.