

# Fostering Diversity and Inclusion for Editorial Boards and Publishing Leadership

**MODERATOR:**
**Brit Stamey**

 J&J Editorial  
 Cary, North Carolina

**SPEAKERS:**
**Amy McPherson**

 Botanical Society of America  
 Saint Louis, Missouri

**Jessica Slater**

 Science/AAAS  
 Baltimore, Maryland

**Frances E Likis**
*Journal of Midwifery & Women's Health*  
 Nashville, Tennessee

**Celia Braithwait**

 Wolters Kluwer  
 Baltimore, Maryland

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In times of open science, it is fundamental to discuss inclusion, equity, and diversity in scientific publishing, because we have many problems to solve inside the scientific community before being against or in favor of this movement, or even to help in its development.

This session, moderated by Brit Stamey, was anchored by the perspectives of 4 different speakers discussing and encouraging societies and journals to take ownership of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives.

Amy McPherson, Director of Publications for the Botanical Society of America, introduced the session by presenting the society's publications,<sup>1</sup> the Annual Botany Conference,<sup>2</sup> and the education program, Planting Science,<sup>3</sup> all of which are involved with DEI issues. The journals have diverse editorial boards with associate editors from countries other than the United States and almost the same number of men and women, as well as an Early Career Advisory Board. In addition, they have an open call for self-nominations to include interested members of the society, and provide links to associate editors to help them expand their pool of reviewers. The PLANTS Grants program<sup>4</sup> engages students from underrepresented groups to increase diversity in the botanical scientific community. The students receive funding to attend the Annual Botany Conference, workshops, and networking events, and also receive mentoring from graduate students, postdocs, and faculty. The Botanical Society of America has exclusive events for their LGBTQ community, and they are learning how to support Black members. McPherson stressed that it is not easy to be

inclusive because we have to expand our bubbles and educate ourselves to change an entire system and structure that historically excluded people from science. To change this reality, she suggests that professional societies work together on DEI issues to make society, scholarship, and scientific publication more representative.

Jessica Slater, Executive Assistant to the *Science* Editor-in-Chief, started her presentation with a strong statement: "Science has a diversity and inclusion problem." She stressed that it is our duty to make science more inclusive and equitable, taking diversity as a starting point. However, we cannot do that without being transparent. We must start by acknowledging and correcting the biases in scientific publishing against women, non-Western countries, developing nations, race, and ethnicity. Around 5 y ago, *Science* started to discuss their need to improve gender equality with authors and referees. As a result, they asked their Board of Reviewing Editors to appoint at least one female referee for every paper submitted to the journal. In 2018, they also began to collect demographic information from reviewers and authors that submitted reports and research articles to *Science*. Research data showed the predominance of White men in publishing and peer review at the journal. Slater said that *Science* received positive comments on this data collection, but it was pointed out that there was a need to include variables such as sexual orientation and disability status. Collecting demographic data is helping *Science* editors build a list of changes that need to be made to reach their goal of representing all the members of the existing and future scientific community.

Celia Braithwait presented a set of activities developed to promote inclusion for Wolters Kluwer and with its customers, as well as some DEI tools. She showed 2 surveys that collected data on racial, ethnicity, diversity, and gender in scientific publishing and the publishing industry. The first one<sup>5</sup> revealed the prevailing presence of White people and men in editorial boards, peer review, and authorship of manuscripts. The second one<sup>6</sup> showed the predominance of White, cis-gendered women, straight, and nondisabled people in the publishing industry. Wolters Kluwer is working to change this scenario by seeking events and webinars for its editorial boards, editors, and society partners concerning DEI in publishing. They are offering the PaperPal Preflight author

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service that uses artificial intelligence to help authors identify grammar errors in their manuscripts. This free tool enables editors and journals to reduce cost per submission and time to publication. Publishers can also select papers from regions underrepresented or have a guest editor representing that region in its journals. Among the DEI tools recommended by Braithwait are the chapter “Bias-Free Language” of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*,<sup>7</sup> the glossary *The Language of Inclusion*,<sup>8</sup> the *Antiracism Toolkit for Allies*,<sup>9</sup> the Microsoft Word tool to check for inclusive language, and Project Impact,<sup>10</sup> dedicated to reducing healthcare bias in skin of color.

Frances Likis, Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Midwifery & Women's Health* (JMWH), shared some tips to promote DEI initiatives at their journals. She highlighted that it is a complex task involving time, effort, dedication, lifelong learning, flexibility, and humility.

The first tip is to be transparent, publishing content about this topic and providing instructions and inclusive language guides for authors. For her, inclusive language in journals is an important aspect of DEI work, and must be respectful, accurate, unbiased, inclusive, and consistent with preferences of individuals and communities being discussed. She mentioned an editorial she had written<sup>11</sup> and pointed out the existence of several inclusive language guides that others can use.

The second tip is to assess the context and current state of your journal, society, and discipline. In addition, we should consider areas of diversity and inclusion, such as age, ethnicity, gender and gender identity, geographic location, professional career, and race.

The third tip is to engage your editorial board. To evaluate your editorial board in terms of diversity and inclusion, she suggests the following questions: Are the members diverse? How are members recruited? Are the members committed to fostering DEI?

The last tip is to solicit relevant content on DEI issues and promote that content. For example, she mentions calls for papers discussing health equity and asking in the peer review form: “Is this manuscript free of stereotypes or bias, and sensitive to issues of diversity, inclusion, and equity?”

A recent change to JMWH's cover was another initiative toward fostering diversity and inclusion (Figure). The first cover, created in 1979, depicts a woman with her baby. However, the cover adopted in 2019 represents people instead of just pregnancy, and is, therefore, more gender neutral, explained Likis.

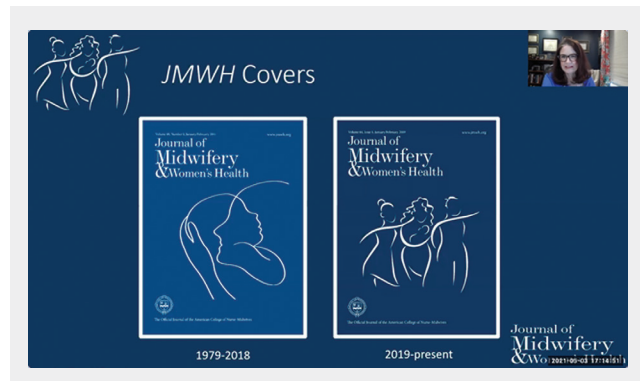


Figure. Updated cover for *Journal of Midwifery & Women's Health*.

The speakers showed us that fostering diversity and inclusion in our editorial boards is more than being open to differences and talking about them. It requires systematic actions through editorial boards and/or institutions, a willingness to learn and listen to people with different realities, culture, and ways of thinking, trajectories, or even those excluded from science or those who are part of the scientific community and do not feel represented. In this DEI journey, we are not free of committing mistakes, but it is fundamental to find and recognize them to build a science more equitable and without biases. After all, science is a common good.

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