

# Sustaining Through Training: Preparing the Next Generation of Editors and Peer Reviewers

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The conference hall was packed for the “Sustaining Through Training: Preparing the Next Generation of Editors and Peer Reviewers” session at the 2024 Council of Science Editors (CSE) Annual Meeting, in which the speakers—Ann Tennier, Barbara Gastel, and Kristin Inman—shared valuable information about their experiences with the training of manuscript editors and peer reviewers in diverse settings, including academia and editorial offices at scientific journals (Figure). Following the presentations, the audience broke out into smaller groups to discuss what is being done at other institutions and lessons learned. Experiences were shared with the intent of inspiring new ideas and plans for training the next generation of scholarly publication professionals.

## Experiences at a Society Journal

Ann Tennier, Managing Editor at *Academic Psychiatry*, kicked things off with an overview of the ways in which their journal recruits and supports peer reviewers. Upfront, the editors engage in outreach around why peer review is important through editorials such as “On the art and science of peer review,” which highlights how beyond contributing to the scientific community, serving as a reviewer will help you become a better writer and stay current in the literature.<sup>1</sup> All great reasons to dive in if you are new to the peer review process. Next, in invitation letters to peer reviewers, they link to a review checklist<sup>2</sup> to help guide the reviews and

explain the idiosyncrasies of reviewing different types of studies. Invitees, if new to the process, are welcomed to have a mentor assist with the review and, if experienced, are permitted to ask a trainee to assist (such partnerships in training were a common theme throughout the entire session). If the invitee has to decline the offer, they are asked to provide the name of a colleague who may be available to serve as an alternate, including colleagues who would benefit from opportunities to expand their experience in scholarly publication activities. Tennier noted, “One of the hardest things to do during a review is to secure peer reviewers.”

Academic Psychiatry has commendably created an editorial fellowship program for the training of editors with a demonstrated interest in scholarly writing. First, intensive training is provided; then, fellows shadow an experienced editor for on-the-job training. Toward the end of their fellowship, participants are asked to coauthor an editorial in the journal. To date, the fellowship program has facilitated 40 peer reviews, produced 3 publications, and spurred the creation of a new role at the journal, Senior Editorial Mentor.

In alignment with the journal’s philosophy for publishing, all new peer reviewers and editors are coached to provide collegial and constructive feedback and are made aware that the work they are doing is helping to solve society’s toughest problems.

## Experiences From Academia and Beyond

Next, Barbara Gastel, Professor at Texas A&M University, provided a rich overview of several training opportunities available to those interested in science communication careers and professional development opportunities. Texas A&M offers a science editing course<sup>3</sup> for graduate students that meets 3 hours per week, and *The Copyeditor’s Handbook*<sup>4</sup> is used as the primary text. The meetings are a mix of lectures and discussions, and students take a well-liked field trip to the university press. During the course, students are coached on the nuances of the author–editor relationship, and they write discussion posts, do multiple exercises, interview an editor, and complete 3 editing projects. She explained that it is critically important for editors to learn how to form productive partnerships with authors and not look down on writing mistakes.

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### Peer review checklists and resources

- Environmental Health Perspectives, <https://ehp.niehs.nih.gov/reviewers/resources>
- Academic Psychiatry, <https://link.springer.com/journal/40596/updates/26151164>

### Editing style guides

- AMA Manual of Style: A Guide for Authors and Editors, by the American Medical Association (AMA)
- The CSE Manual: Scientific Style and Format for Authors, Editors, and Publishers, by the Council of Science Editors (CSE)
- The Copyeditor's Handbook: A Guide for Book Publishing and Corporate Communications, Revised, Updated, and Expanded, by Amy Einsohn and Marilyn Schwartz

**Figure.** Summary of peer review resources and editing style guides discussed during the “Sustaining Through Training: Preparing the Next Generation of Editors and Peer Reviewers” session at the 2024 CSE Annual Meeting.

The University of Chicago also hosts a medical writing and editing program,<sup>5</sup> in which enrollees take 5 required courses and 1 elective on topics such as medical copyediting; fundamentals of substantive editing and publication ethics; and preparing tables, graphs, and figures. The American Medical Association's *AMA Manual of Style*<sup>6</sup> is used as a reference. The course is fully remote (using the Canvas learning management system and Zoom) and attracts not only early-career and mid-career professionals, but retirees, too.

Dr Gastel then discussed details of MD Anderson Cancer Center's science editing internships,<sup>7</sup> which are open to undergraduate and graduate students enrolled at several Texas universities. Interns receive training in editing and quality reviews of their work. They also attend workshops on manuscript and grant proposal writing.

Lastly, Dr Gastel capped off her overview with a slew of interesting aspects of other trainings. She focused largely on how MD Anderson, the Mayo Clinic, and the JAMA Network train manuscript editors new to their editorial offices. For at least the first several months, more senior editors review the new editors' work. Dr Gastel also noted the training received by new associate editors at the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) journals. This training includes orientation to the manuscript submission system, receipt of sample manuscript decision letters, and pairing with an experienced associate editor.

### Experiences at a Government-Funded Journal

Supplementing the main presentations, moderator Kristin Inman, a contract editor at Environmental Health Perspectives (EHP), concluded the series of presentations by describing EHP's training program, the Early Career

Research Initiative (ECRI), which launched in 2021. Through the ECRI, early career researchers gain important knowledge about authorship, peer review, and manuscript editing while being mentored by established peer reviewers. Relationship building is facilitated by the Peer Reviewer Partnership Program, where early career reviewers partner with established reviewers. Mentee–mentor pairs are expected to carry out 2 peer reviews over 1 year, wherein they meet to discuss the paper but submit independent reviews. The program is overseen by journal staff and an advisory panel of early career researchers. She noted that for scholars in training, it is “incredibly important to read other reviews.”

### Breakout Discussions

For the breakout discussions, groups were asked:

- What kind of training do you do? How do you implement it? What are the strengths and challenges?
- What have you tried that didn't turn out as expected? What did you learn?
- Is there training you wish to do that you haven't embarked on? If so, what are the barriers, if any?

A lively discussion followed. Mock peer review groups for trainees at educational institutions were deemed of high value. Again, the importance of pairing new editors and peer reviewers with experienced ones was emphasized for quality assurance during the initial training period. The journal managing editors in attendance were very supportive of such coreviews and only ask that these relationships are disclosed. Several attendees commented on the importance of offering incentives to engage in peer review work, such as recognition certificates and awards that can be added to faculty promotion portfolios and even continuing medical

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education (CME) credits like those offered by ASCO. There was a clear desire for more metrics on peer reviews: people want to know how well current training programs are working. There was widespread agreement that there is no one-size-fits-all framework for the design of training programs.

### Key Take Aways and Resources

My own key take away was that there is a great deal of innovation going on in this critical space. Trainings discussed spanned formal–informal and in-person–hybrid–remote mechanisms. The importance of hands-on experience with different forms of editing (i.e., copyediting, substantive editing, and proofreading) and mentorship were recurrent themes. In support of scientific publications, all involved in training activities are encouraged to share resources whenever possible and engage in outreach around the importance of editing and peer review work.

### References and Links

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