

Overview of CSE Connect: SSP DEIA Committee on Building DEIA in Editorial Roles and Peer Review

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CSE Connect¹ hosted an event on October 8, 2024, with the purpose of discussing the C4DISC² Focused Toolkit for Journal Editors and Publishers: Building Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in Editorial Roles and Peer Review.³ The discussion included representatives from the Society for Scholarly Publishing⁴ (SSP) DEIA committee: Shaina Lange, Managing Editor, American Society of Nephrology and Sue Harris, Managing Editor, *American Psychologist*, American Psychological Association. CSE Connect is an online event consisting of a 15-minute presentation by experts, followed by 30 minutes of questions and discussion.

Lange and Harris discussed how the COVID-19 pandemic brought diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) issues to the forefront of scholarly publishing's collective consciousness, spurring many efforts to rectify deeply rooted inequities. Importantly, the scholarly publishing community began to consider what these practices would look like and the long-term goals of these efforts. Not only will increasing the diversity among editorial boards, reviewers, and editorial staff benefit marginalized communities, but the efforts will also improve the quality of the peer review process and expand the scope and reach of the journal. Harris and Lange noted that these efforts can be improved by appointing a dedicated DEIA associate editor to identify gaps in the peer review process, as well as any harmful content within papers. However, many organizations might not have resources for one dedicated DEIA editor, so it is alternatively recommended that a DEIA task force be created to meet consistently and examine new projects by paying specific attention to the DEIA goals of the organization.

Part of measuring progress in increasing diversity is collecting and reporting demographic data. Gathering this data can be sensitive for respondents, leading Lange and Harris to encourage journals to provide clear rationale for why the data are being collected and how they will be used, and to ensure that the responses are optional and anonymous. Participants in the CSE Connect event discussed this process in more detail, querying how often other journals requested this information and in what manner. Some participants noted they send out an annual survey to request updated contact and institution information, folding in a request to include DEIA responses as part of that annual request. Others noted they included a reminder in the system to complete the information every 6–8 months, allowing for respondents to note their decline in participation as well to avoid repeated requests.

When speaking of recruiting more broadly and intentionally, Harris and Lange discussed examples of recruitment strategies to reach underrepresented communities. Editor fellowships and peer review training programs have been used to give clear guidance to less experienced individuals and provide the tools to succeed in further participation within the scholarly community. One participant noted that reviewers could opt in to complete a reviewer training course and then be marked in the system as having completed the course. This allows the editorial team to expand their pool of potential reviewers and identify qualified individuals who editors may not have worked with previously. Many of the top reviewers at this particular journal came from the peer review training course, increasing the confidence in the participants throughout the peer review process. Other participants noted that they proactively reached out to various top institutions in their field to recruit diverse individuals to participate in these training programs. By working with the professors and directors of various programs, they were more successful in identifying who could fit the criteria of the journal's diversity

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search. Another participant discussed how they used their manuscript tracking system to allow peer reviewers to give credit to any students who aided in the review. Recognition for the mentees can also give greater visibility to early career professionals who are building experience in a field.

In discussing the C4DISC toolkit, Harris and Lange emphasized that every journal is at a different point in the process of working toward greater equity and inclusion. Some journals are fighting against limited resources or ambivalent editorial boards, whereas others may struggle to implement programs or find next steps to meet their

goals. By using resources like the C4DISC toolkits, every organization can identify gaps in their knowledge and incrementally improve the diversity of their scholarly journal.

Please visit the CSE Connect Web page¹ to join future events.

References and Links

1. <https://www.councilscienceeditors.org/cse-connect>
 2. <https://c4disc.pubpub.org/>
 3. <https://c4disc.pubpub.org/toolkit-editors-and-publishers>.
 4. <https://www.sspnet.org/>
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