

Integrating Mentorship Into Your Daily Work

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In our work as scientific publishing professionals, many of us routinely serve as mentors—to authors, junior colleagues, new copy editors, and others. For this session, Barbara Gastel (a long-time mentor herself) brought together 3 experts to share their perspectives on how different types of mentoring can be integrated into our daily work.

Senior Scientific Editor Erica Goodoff works directly with faculty and trainees at The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center on research proposals, grant applications, and other documents. With a background in liberal arts, she started her career as a managing editor at a small publishing house and now considers mentoring, both formal and informal, an important aspect of her role at MD Anderson. In working with authors, she aims to present the content as clearly as possible without suppressing the author's voice. She often edits in stages: substantive comments followed by line editing. Thoughtful querying can help authors focus the information in their papers.

Goodoff's department, the Research Medical Library, offers 1-hour workshops and presentations on various aspects of writing and publishing scientific articles, reminding authors that the department is always ready to assist them. With language, style, and scientific fields constantly evolving, the editors mentor each other to stay professionally relevant.

The Scientific Editing Internship through the MD Anderson Research Medical Library exposes students to the many responsibilities of scientific editors. Goodoff recognizes the potential barriers and costs inherent in an internship program but believes that investing the necessary time and effort in these students is worthwhile, allowing her to determine if they might function well as future employees.

She notes that thoughtful discussion with interns and new editors provides an atmosphere of psychological safety, which is crucial to learning good editing judgment.

Managing Editor Katie Duelm is a graduate of the Texas A&M Master's Program in Science and Technology Journalism, which Gastel coordinates. Duelm oversees all aspects of book production, including copyediting, design, and reviewing proofs with authors at Texas A&M University Press. She supervises interns, junior colleagues, and new copy editors. Mentoring these individuals through projects such as more straightforward scholarly monographs provides small and immediate boosts to their confidence. As they gain expertise, she allows them to work on bigger and more complex books. Duelm's interns have a desk in her office, which enables them to listen to and learn from her conversations with colleagues and authors and ask follow-up questions. As Goodoff does, Duelm sees internships as a pipeline to develop editors who might eventually join her team. Furthermore, she invites nonintern students to visit her workplace and learn what editors do. Inevitably, some students determine that becoming an editor is not a desirable career path, which is still a valuable insight.

Duelm advises mentors to exhibit grace when new editors make mistakes, as they certainly will. Praising accomplishments while offering gentle feedback allows interns and early-career professionals to both recognize their progress and acquire skills to apply to the next project. She stresses the importance of work-life balance to all mentees.

Journal of the American Society of Nephrology Editor-in-Chief Rajnish Mehrotra is a professor of medicine and head of the Division of Nephrology in the Department of Medicine at the University of Washington and the president of the International Society for Peritoneal Dialysis. He sees his editorial role as articulating a scientific vision for his journal, developing a culture of peer review to achieve that vision, and being accountable for the journal vision and culture. Mentoring team members helps them to fulfill that vision.

Adhering to the highest standards for data reporting and data sharing is critical. When overseeing the decisions of the Deputy, Associate, Junior Associate, and Visual Abstract Editors, Mehrotra asks 3 questions:

1. If the finding is true, does it represent a meaningful advance in our knowledge?

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<https://doi.org/10.36591/SE-4803-07>

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2. Were the research methods valid?
3. Are the results applicable to the wider population of patients with the problem?

Mehrotra's editors and staff span the globe, and the absence of informal daily mentoring can be a challenge for clinicians and scientists who lack training in editorial operations. To promote engagement, his team has a weekly call in which they discuss the principles of peer review, decision-making, and how to always keep the larger context

in mind. Despite the generally hierarchical relationships, learning is both bidirectional and ongoing. Mentoring authors is another important responsibility of the entire team.

The 3 speakers offered individual and yet similar views of workplace mentoring. A willing and thoughtful mentor can markedly influence a mentee's career path. However, the mentor also benefits by sharing expertise, helping to develop new editors, and contributing to the editing profession. The mentor-mentee relationship can indeed be productive and gratifying for both parties.