

Workspaces, Board Meetings, and Sponsors

From the President - Jason Roberts

I've recently fallen into one of the work-from-home traps I vowed never to do – monopolizing the dining room table. The dining room is a comfy space with a nice view, and, critically, is air conditioned during what feels like a hotter than normal summer. Consequently it's been dinner-on-laps this last fortnight.

I read with some jealousy as Taylor described in his column last month that his home office was 'cozy'. My usual space is a basement that doubles up as a toddler play area and, to my chagrin, a bathroom for the cats. I'm going to start a thread on the ISMTE discussion forum on describing our workspaces – love to hear from as many of you as possible on this. I suspect most of us labor away in unsuitable spaces. I once visited the editorial office of a small dermatology journal. It was, quite literally, the proverbial broom closet as well as the office of a highly respected publication. Anyway, this summer promises to be a busy one. Later this month the

ISMTE Board of Directors will meet over three days in Baltimore to map out the immediate future of the Society. Lots of great ideas have emerged on directions to take the Society. There is now a need to assess these ideas and sort them by priority and whether they are realistically achievable.

The intentions of the meeting are to:

- Develop a strategy to ensure the growth of the Society;
- Communicate the direction of the Society to the volunteer committees, including the assignment of specific tasks; and
- Assess the financial performance of the Society. We are a not-for-profit organization but obviously need to ensure we have some money in the coffers.

Out of the meeting will come a master plan, upon which we will invite comment. In the meantime,

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Impact Factors, Eigenvectors, and other Metrics

by Iain Craig

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Every year, 'round about June, my inbox begins to fill up with questions from colleagues asking if I know when this year's Impact Factors are going to be released. As the month progresses, these questions increase in frequency until finally the day arrives, and ISI, now part of Thomson Reuters, releases their Journal Citation Reports (JCRs).¹ On release, eager publishers scour the data looking for signs of improvement in their scores. The messages in my inbox then change and ask me to explain why a particular journal, or competitor, has improved or dropped in the manner it did. It's fair to say, June is a particularly busy month for people in my line of work.

So what is this thing called *Impact Factor* that sets the publishing community into a frenzy every summer? Well, in its simplest form, the Impact Factor is just a measurement of

the average number of citations a journal's papers receive in a particular time frame.

Citations to a paper can be given for many reasons, but most commonly they are given to acknowledge the part the older paper has played in influencing the writer of the current paper. For many analysts, citations are a *de facto* proxy for quality: the more citations a paper receives, the higher its inherent quality. The 'citation equals quality' assumption holds true more often than not, but it does breakdown in certain situations. An example is where citations are used in a negative sense (*i.e.*, not lending support to a theory, but instead arguing the theory is incorrect).

Further problems emerge when one examines a journal's Impact Factor and projects that average measure back onto the constituent papers (or authors) within that journal.² It does not

follow that all articles or authors in high Impact Factor journals are themselves high impact. Indeed, typically the case is a small number of a journal's papers will account for a large proportion of the total citations that journal receives in any one year.³

The Impact Factor measures the citations in a 12-month period to all items published in a journal during the two preceding 12-month periods. For instance, the Impact Factors in JCR 2007 (released in June 2008) measured citations from papers published in 2007 to any and all items published in the journal during 2006 and 2005. In order to complete the calculation, the citation figure must be divided by the number of papers published in the journal. The paper count is the number of scientific papers with substantial scientific content published in the previous two

¹ <http://scientific.thomsonreuters.com/press/2008/8462080>

² Why the Impact Factor of Journals Should Not Be Used For Evaluating Research. Seglen, P., British Medical

Journal (1997);314:497. <http://bmj.bmjournals.com/cgi/content/full/314/7079/497>

³ The Skewness of Science. Seglen, P., Journal of the American Society for

Information Science (1992), 43(9):628-638. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/\(SICI\)1097-4571\(199210\)43:9<628::AID-ASI5>3.0.CO;2-O](http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1097-4571(199210)43:9<628::AID-ASI5>3.0.CO;2-O)

years; so in our example above, this would be the number of substantial items published in 2006 and 2005.

The dividing line between papers with substantial or minor scientific content is blurred. Original primary research articles and articles reviewing primary research articles are counted as substantial, whereas meeting abstracts, editorial material, and book reviews are not counted. It is in the middle ground where problems arise, with, for instance, case reports, which are prevalent in the medical literature, often being counted on the denominator in one journal but not another. Short communications, often as a result from conference presentations, are another document type, which can be counted as substantial in one journal but minor in another. Arriving at a classification scheme for each document type in each journal is absolutely central to the acceptance of the Impact Factor as a quality measurement. Because citations to all items are counted on the numerator, irrespective of document type,

the Impact Factor can be manipulated by minimising the types of documents classified as substantial on the denominator.

When studying the citation behaviour of papers, a critical element to consider is the time since publication of the paper. Citations build up over time at different rates according to the subject area and document type.⁴

When studying the citation behaviour of papers, a critical element to consider is the time since publication of the paper.

In general, the life and medical sciences receive citations at a faster rate than the physical sciences, which in turn receive them more rapidly than the social sciences, arts, and humanities. This time dependent nature of citation is characterised by two additional metrics, which are provided in the JCR, the immediacy index and the cited half-life. The immediacy index is a measure of how rapidly citations are

accumulated and is a ratio of citations in the current year to articles published within that current year. A journal which published 50 substantial items in 2007 and which received 100 citations to all items published in the journal that year, would have an immediacy index of 2. There is some evidence of a correlation between immediacy index and Impact Factor, and a rise or drop in immediacy index one year can therefore be a good early signal the Impact Factor is going to rise or drop the following year.⁵

The cited half-life for a journal is the median age of its articles cited in the current year by all journals. In the hypothetical example shown in Figure 1 below, *Journal X* received 1,000 citations from papers published in 2007, including 100 citations to papers published in *Journal X* during 2007. These 1,000 citations were spread amongst all volume years of *Journal X*; 100 citations to papers from 2007, 200 to papers from 2006, all the way back to 25 citations to papers pre-1999. The median age of the cited articles is the point in time by which 500 citations were received. In this

⁴ Impact Factors: Use and Abuse. Amin, M., Mabe M., Perspectives in Publishing (2000), www.elsevier.com/framework_editors/pdfs/Perspectives1.pdf

⁵ Journals of general & internal medicine and surgery: An analysis and comparison of citation. Tsay, M.-y., Chen, Y.-l.,

Scientometrics (2005) 64(1)17-30. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11192-005-0235-x>

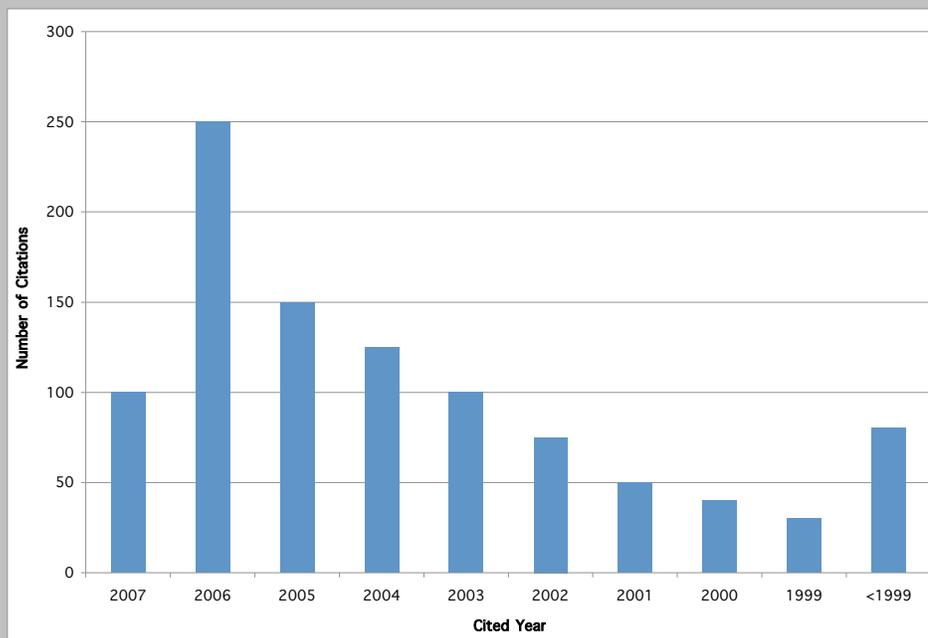


Figure 1. Cited Half-Life

model data-set, 500 citations were received when adding up the citations to articles from 2007, 2006, and 2005. The cited half-life in this case would be exactly 3 years.

I'm often asked whether it is better to have a high or low cited half-life. There is no better or worse as far as I'm concerned. Journals with either low or high cited half-life values can have high Impact Factors relative to their peers. I've heard people argue the case both ways — a low cited half-life is an indication the theories conveyed in the journal's articles are constantly being superseded by new theories,

and that is an indication of a journal at the cutting edge. Alternatively, a high cited half-life is often portrayed as an indicator of the robustness and longevity of the research, meaning the journal publishes research, which is considered fundamental to the field. Both scenarios can be true; it simply depends on the journals being compared.

In recent years new metrics have emerged which quantify different aspects of a journal's performance relative to its peers. Two such examples, the EigenFactor and the SCImago Journal Rank Indicator, use broadly the same methodology

as each other, but different sources of raw citation data, to provide their rankings.⁶⁻⁷ Their analysis relies on eigenvector algorithms, which, simply put, allow for the quality of the citing source to be factored into the ranking equation, rather than simply the number of citations. For instance, a citation from a more prestigious journal will carry more weight than a citation from a less prestigious source. A good everyday example of eigenvector algorithms is Google's PageRank algorithm, which dictates the order results are listed in the search engine.⁸ When a webpage is cited by

⁶ www.eigenfactor.org

⁷ www.scimagojr.com

⁸ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/PageRank>

another highly respected webpage this confers more legitimacy, trust, and confidence about that webpage than if it was referred to by a webpage less well respected.

While the general theories behind the creation of the EigenFactor and the SCImago Journal Rank Indicator indices are comparable (albeit entirely impenetrable in detail), the sources of the citation data differ. EigenFactor, as with the Impact Factor, is based upon citations within the ISI universe of citing sources. Only a subset of scholarly output is indexed by ISI, who indexes approximately 8,700 titles in their Web of Science product, of which the vast majority are journals.⁹ Citations from journals not indexed in the ISI universe do not contribute to the Impact Factor or to EigenFactor. The SCImago Journal Rank Indicator is not based on ISI data, but is based on data from the Scopus citation index. Scopus covers approximately 15,000 journals and, like Web of Science, is multidisciplinary in nature, although there are subject areas in each index, which are covered in greater or lesser

detail than the others.¹⁰

One can see the calculated values for the three metrics mentioned are likely to be influenced by differences between the pools of citing sources. Furthermore, these differences are likely to vary between subjects, and potentially to vary over time as both Scopus and Web of Science add further sources. There is a small but growing body of research comparing the performance of different journals in different ranking systems.¹¹⁻¹² This analysis is relatively straightforward to perform — see Figure 2 (p. 6) for a basic example where the SCImago Journal Rank Indicator (SJR) and the Impact Factor of a selection of dentistry journals are plotted on each axis of a scatter plot. A linear trend line has been fitted to the data, and an R-squared value, indicating the goodness of fit has been calculated. From this one might conclude there is a good correlation between journals scoring highly in terms of Impact Factor and highly in terms of SJR.

While the analysis above is very simple to perform, what is lacking is a large scale analysis

across all subject areas to investigate whether there are patterns to explain why some journals perform well in one system, but not in another, and, even more fundamentally, to ascertain what these different metrics are actually measuring. Given a battery of ranking methodologies covering slightly different journal subsets, over slightly different time scales, the temptation to cherry-pick the metric which provides the highest ranking is surely persuasive.

To sum up, the Impact Factor and its newer, more mathematically complex rivals are still only point-metrics attempting to convey the complex description of what role a journal serves relative to other peer journals. It is clear to me none of these metrics on their own can fully convey the utility of these journals to their communities. It is also clear to me a simple, transparent, one-size-fits-all metric for analysis of journal performance is very unlikely to emerge, and instead, if evaluation of journals is unavoidable, then a composite metric not simply based on citations, would be preferable. 

9 <http://scientific.thomsonreuters.com/products/wos>

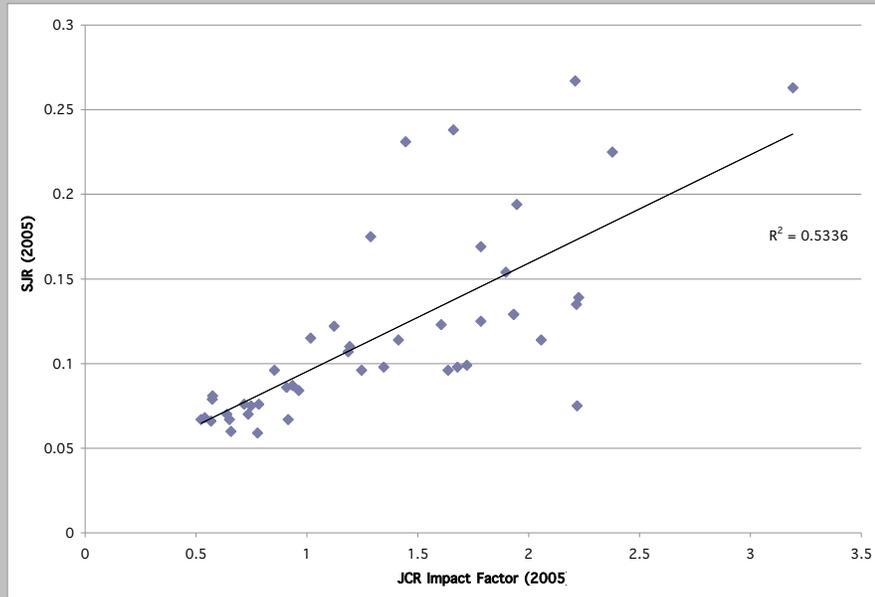
10 www.info.scopus.com/about/

11 Comparison of SCImago journal rank indicator with journal impact factor. Falagas ME, Kouranos VD, Arencibia-Jorge R, Karageorgopoulos DE. FASEB J.

2008. www.fasebj.org/cgi/content/abstract/fj.08-107938v1

12 www.eigenfactor.org/stats.htm

Figure 2.
SCImago Journal Rank Indicator (SJRI) and Impact Factor Plotted Together for Hypothetical Journal



We offer our gratitude to Sage and Aries Systems for their support of ISMTE!



Check your SPAM!

Talley Management and the Directors are hearing from ISMTE members that Society e-mails are ending up in SPAM or Junk folders. Please check your folders for Society e-mail. Talley is doing everything they can to prevent this occurrence.

Bizarre!

Do you have a story relating to your work you would like to share with EON readers? We are looking for 'bizarre,' 'unbelievable,' or 'amusing' stories to publish in a new column. Send your stories to kristen.overstreet@mac.com. (Please don't share any details that might be considered libelous or defamatory.)

if you have any thoughtful observations about what the Society could and should do, please send them along to me at journal@ahsnet.org

I should also note that a portion of the Board meeting will involve developing policies and the establishment of the structure to handle elections in the future. The policies, along with a summary of the Board meeting, will be posted in the members-only part of the website. It's critical ISMTE operations be transparent and a full and frank dialogue between the membership and the Board exists. After the August meeting in Baltimore, the Board will meet via conference call in a structured format on a quarterly basis.

Other News:

I'd like to welcome Informa/Taylor and Francis on board as the latest corporate sponsor. Special thanks go to Colin Bulpitt, who was instrumental in making this arrangement happen. I hope we will see several new members from Informa/Taylor and Francis published journals joining us

soon. We would also like to welcome the support of BMJ Publishing Group (with thanks to Gary Bryan). It means a lot to all of us at ISMTE that two esteemed publishers have decided to support our new society.

Plans are already underway for settling dates and venues for the UK and US meetings, and my hope is we can announce these to you by September. I imagine the UK meeting will take the format of a one-day forum with guest presentations followed by discussion groups and a workshop. The meeting in Baltimore will likely be slightly bigger, probably a two-day event with several topics provided. There will be an opportunity for members to deliver presentations and solicitations for such material will be dispatched around the same time the meetings are announced.

Finally, just a word of encouragement to check out the ISMTE website and the discussion forum. There is a very useful news feature on our website that posts links to news releases from within the industry as well as information

on the latest discussions on the forum. Just this week I found a link to information about the Center for Science in the Public Interest calling for unified conflict of interest disclosures. I would have missed this interesting news item without the help of the ISMTE newswire. Three hundred and eighty-one unique visitors have reached the site since its launch at the start of the year. Not unsurprisingly, beyond the home page, the newsletter pages are amongst the most read.

A stack of unsorted copyright forms await my attention so I'll sign off until next month. I hate to think what my carbon footprint must resemble; receiving by fax, roughly 20 new forms a day (oh, and then the original copy arrives in the mail a few days later). Does anyone handle these purely electronically?

Jason

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A note on English

ISMTE aims to be a truly international society. English will represent our lingua franca, but we would like to stress that in materials published in *EON* or online variations, idiomatic usage and spelling should reflect the origins of the author. No one version of English is preferred over the other.

Article

CrossCheck: Plagiarism Screening from CrossRef¹

by Amy Brand, PhD

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CrossRef's general purpose is to promote the cooperative development of innovative technologies for scholarly publishing and research. The publisher association recently announced a new service, CrossCheck, to aid publishers and editors in screening submitted manuscripts for plagiarism. How did this initiative come about? Where does it fit within CrossRef's broader mission? What specifically is it intended to do and how does it work? These are the questions this article addresses.

CrossRef was founded in 2000 through the joint efforts of a small group of prestigious STM (scientific, technical, and medical) journal publishers. At the time, publishers moving their journals online wanted a way to cross-link journal articles while avoiding the common problem of broken links, or '404 page-not-found' errors. A new infrastructure for persistent identification of

online information, the DOI (Digital Object Identifier) system, had just been introduced. Publishers who recognized the DOI system as their opportunity to create a cross-platform network joined together in a nonprofit, independent association; CrossRef went live as the first collaborative citation-linking network in June of 2000.

In the eight years since, CrossRef has evolved along several dimensions. It interlinks the publications of thousands of information providers and offers a variety of services. It registers approximately 16,000 diverse content items each day, seven days per week. Its members include not only traditional academic publishers and societies, but also institutional repositories that house dissertations, working papers, and datasets; government offices that output technical reports; and Web-based reference environments with

dynamically aggregated pages. It's a complex content world out there, and CrossRef has become the first place publishers turn when they want to work together on new initiatives to harness technology for better information navigation and dissemination.

CrossRef's mission, formally put, is 'to enable easy identification and use of trustworthy electronic content by promoting the cooperative development and application of a sustainable infrastructure'. In 2006, the CrossRef membership identified plagiarism screening as a top priority for the academic publishing community. In 2007, CrossRef conducted a successful pilot with eight publishers, and on June 19th of 2008 the CrossCheck service officially launched. Think of CrossCheck as a new way publishers can work together to ensure the integrity of the published record.

¹ This article is closely based, with permission from the publisher, on another article by Amy Brand entitled "CrossRef:

from cross-publisher reference linking to cross-publishing plagiarism screening in eight short years" to appear in *The*

European Medical Writers Association Journal: The Write Stuff, volume 17, 2008.

'CrossCheck powered by iThenticate' helps academic publishers verify the originality of works submitted for publication. CrossCheck has two parts, a database of scholarly publications and a Web-based tool, iThenticate, to check authored works against that database. The result is a form of computer-assisted editing, in which the process of detecting textual overlap between documents – or otherwise verifying the originality of a document in the absence of any overlap – is largely automated. Clearly, the tool cannot, all on its own, identify plagiarism. A human being has to examine areas of overlap in context and use judgment to determine if intentional plagiarism has occurred or not.

Screening tools like CrossCheck are only effective if they are checking texts against a relevant, comprehensive database. Although there are several plagiarism detection tools in use, they are not well suited to filtering academic content simply because they have not had access to the relevant (often proprietary) full-text literature to screen against. CrossCheck overcomes this with a continuously growing database of archival and

current scholarly literature, text-fingerprinted for accurate document comparison.

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As of July 2008, the CrossCheck database is slated to cover well over 20 million journal articles from the following publishers: Association for Computing Machinery, American Society of Neuroradiology, BMJ Publishing Group, Elsevier, Institute of Electrical & Electronics Engineers, International Union of Crystallography, Nature Publishing Group, Oxford University Press, Sage, Informa UK (Taylor & Francis), Wiley Blackwell, Hindawi Publishing Corporation, American Academy of Pediatrics, Ammons Scientific, Annual Reviews, and Fundacion Infancia y Aprendizaje. With the launch last month, both publisher participation and the CrossCheck database are

expected to grow rapidly.

CrossRef's partner in this initiative, iParadigms, is a leading provider of Web-based plagiarism detection services. Via CrossCheck, publishers can screen documents against billions of pages of open Web content iThenticate has crawled and indexed, in addition to the CrossCheck database itself. When a document is submitted to the service for checking, it does not become part of the database. Instead, the system creates a digital fingerprint of the document based on a special set of algorithms, and that fingerprint is run against the vast database of pre-indexed content. The output of this process is a 'matching report' that lists sources sharing a significant degree of textual overlap with the submitted text.

It is important to note the service will only help editors identify cases of verbatim plagiarism, along with cases that may entail simple word substitution or sentence addition. The system cannot detect subtle forms of plagiarism like paraphrasing or idea plagiarism, and cannot, for instance, detect copying of images and graphs, unless they also plagiarize significant textual elements such as

captions. At the same time, the system sometimes produces false positives when a portion of text has been legitimately duplicated; examples include boilerplate text, bibliographic references, and mathematical proofs.

CrossRef's current priority for CrossCheck is to recruit as much published scholarship into the database as possible. Even publishers who decide not to integrate screening into their editorial processes at this time are encouraged to allow their content to be indexed so others can check against it. A 'CrossCheck Depositor' logo will be used by those contributing to the database to help grow public awareness of the initiative; 'CrossCheck Deposited' tags will be placed on individual publications indexed in the database to help

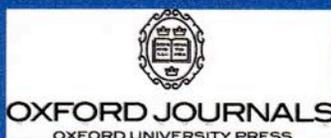
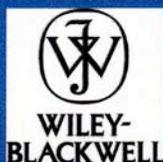
deter future plagiarism.

It's too early to offer definitive advice to editors on where in the editorial process to add the plagiarism-checking step. For now, participating publishers are providing distributed access to the tool, so internal and external editorial staff can use it as they see fit. While some may opt for routine checking of every submitted article, others will only screen submissions a reviewer or editor flags. With iThenticate's open API, CrossCheck is currently being integrated with several manuscript tracking services to better streamline editorial processes around the use of the tool. CrossRef is also working with leading community policy organizations to develop best practices to help publishers use CrossCheck effectively and

ethically and is planning a variety of research projects that will help the community better understand the issues and trends surrounding plagiarism.

CrossCheck is not just a plagiarism detection tool or a database but rather a multi-pronged initiative to make plagiarism-checking feasible for the academic publishing community. The service was created by publishers, for publishers, and its success will depend on the CrossRef membership joining in to allow their published content to play a part. Community interest in the initiative is high, and the future looks promising. CrossCheck is yet another way publishers are working together through CrossRef to ensure the integrity of the published scholarly record. 🌐

Thank you! ISMTE would like to thank the following companies for sponsoring memberships:



American Chemical Society



Manuscript Central™: Search Trick

by Taylor Bowen

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Did you know that in Manuscript Central™ you, as administrator, can get a list of every paper ever submitted to your journal's MC site if you click the 'search' button on the admin dashboard with nothing in the search fields? The search may take a bit longer than most searches, but the results can be very informative (and, of course, you can then export the resulting list and work with it in Excel).

This type of broad search can also be performed from an Editor or Associate Editor dashboard in Manuscript Central™, and the result will be a complete listing of all the papers assigned to that specific person. I like to teach Editors this trick because they often become frustrated when they cannot 'see' older manuscripts they worked on via the dashboard queues display.

Teach a Man to Fish...by not Proxying!

At the spring Manuscript Central™ User Conference I told the attendees during my presentation on 'good practices' in editorial operations that I discourage proxying in my work (even though I also said in the same breath that I *do* proxy when it is absolutely necessary). I saw a few heads shake in disbelief.

Proxying, while a very handy feature, is

actually a form of negative training in my opinion. It is giving the person a fish when it would be better to teach the person how to fish instead. When I proxy I am training someone (author, reviewer, editor) that the procedure for submitting their work into the system is through me. Going through me, though, could possibly cause delays in the process or, worse, may introduce errors in the information being submitted.

It is much better, I feel, to attempt to train users to submit their information themselves into the system. Of course this requires being sensitive to the user's 'state of mind,' if you will, or knowing why the proxying request has come to you. Is the person genuinely busy or about to run out the door for an extended trip? Is the person utterly frustrated with the online system for some reason? Does the user not know how to use the system properly? Or is the person just lazy? If I sense an opening for a 'teaching moment' I will teach; if I sense the user is fed up or truly needs my customer service, I will proxy. If I had my druthers, I would prefer to take the time to teach the user how to submit the information. Next time round, that user will have the confidence and wherewithal to do the online work without asking for help. 🌐

Call for Articles

Please submit articles and ideas for articles to EON Editor, Kristen Overstreet at kristen.overstreet@mac.com.

Families in Society: Thriving in Spite of the Odds

by Kirstin Anderson

From time to time the State has made strenuous efforts to mould the Family according to its needs; but ultimately the State itself must always be moulded by the Family, since it is in the Family that the citizen is made.

—Helen Bosanquet (1860–1925), social theorist and social reformer

Nearly 90 years ago, when ‘charity work’ with vulnerable families was evolving into professionalized social casework, the above quote prefaced the debut issue of a new professional journal, one that strived to blend the scientific with the humane. Originally named *The Family*, and now titled *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services*, this journal is the scholarly social work publication I’ve worked with for almost eight years, three of them as the Managing Editor.

Our social science journal is somewhat different than the STM titles I’ve seen profiled in *EON*: Our editorial, production, circulation, and business functions are all the responsibility of staff who are employees of the Alliance for Children and Families, the United States’ largest national membership association of private, nonprofit social service providers. With its headquarters in Milwaukee and a public policy office in Washington, DC, I and two other journal staffers are part of the Alliance’s communications division.

As Managing Editor, I oversee all aspects of the journal’s workflow. This includes supervising the other journal employees in addition to free-lancers and consultants; administering a half-million dollar budget;

developing requests for proposals (RFPs) and monitoring contracts; maintaining a companion website with archival material, e-commerce, and social media; coordinating an online continuing education program; and generally wearing several other hats at any given time. A typical day for me might be to write a call for papers with our editor (who works remotely from the editorial office, but fortunately is within driving distance for meetings); work with the editorial assistant to process manuscripts; review the copy editing, layout, and design for our next issue with the editorial/production associate; and help put labels on outgoing subscription renewal notices (which can, surprisingly, be a welcome change of pace). Fortunately for me, my co-workers are skilled in their responsibilities and we enjoy an easy camaraderie. We also share a small office, but our space now includes the much-sought-after accessory for a desk job: the elusive window view (even if it is overlooking the parking lot).

My current employment in publishing is not one I would have predicted 15 years ago when I completed my college studies in political science, with the commitment to work in the nonprofit sector, albeit the particular profession not yet decided. So, as either a volunteer or employee, I worked with several nonprofit service organizations such as those working to end homelessness, empower individuals with disabilities, and administer government-funded services to children and families. Each of the positions, like the organizations, was unique, but they shared some commonalities that appealed to me. They all required a significant amount of writing and editing—my preference being editing. Like the

Families in Society

continued

adage, 'Those who can't do, teach,' early on I felt self-conscious about my writing capability but was more assured as an editor. Now I understand the two crafts can be radically different in many respects, and I have a greater appreciation (and envy) of those who do both and do them well.

Another common aspect of my previous positions was a necessity for method and order (a well developed obsession of mine). Never one to believe creativity flourishes in chaos, I placed as much importance on outlines, work plans, process manuals, Gantt charts, and progress reports as I did on writing donor appeals, grant proposals, and community surveys. It was this appreciation of structure that initially led to my employment in 2001 with the Alliance for Children and Families as the communications coordinator in Milwaukee. I learned that following a merger and restructuring, the then 89-year-old organization had discontinued its publications division several years earlier, after a long and respected tenure during which many widely-respected interdisciplinary monographs were developed and produced.

However, the association's sole scholarly periodical was allowed to continue, in deference to its long and venerable history as a core journal in social work, but also due, perhaps, to bureaucratic passivity. It was this inertia that greatly affected the journal's capacity to continue attracting first-rate manuscripts and effectively disseminating its research and practice knowledge. *Families in Society* had been subject to the changing priorities and resource distribution common to organization restructuring. To make matters worse, it was decided a commercial firm would take over as publisher and assume many of the business responsibilities central to the journal's

financial stability. Unfortunately, the transition was not well conceived and gave ample evidence to the necessity for thorough contract negotiation and finance auditing. Even after the journal's publishing was brought back in the Alliance's fold, it was thought at one point its existence would cease.

It was into this environment that I was assigned to the journal exclusively, whereas previously I had split my time between *Families in Society* and other responsibilities in the communications division. Together with a very small cadre (1.5 FTE in business-speak) of likewise dedicated but overworked co-workers, we struggled to keep the new manuscripts coming, the double-blind peer review system functioning, the production timely, and the circulation and fulfillment roles current. It was clear big changes were necessary.

Being self-published is not without its frustrations and challenges, but with the right infusion of capable individuals and smart resources, a distinctive advantage is the ability to quickly assess, reprioritize, and act. We completely reworked our peer-review management system: within a year we were able to internally develop a customized manuscript processing database, and we transitioned from only-paper to a hybrid system, which will be completely paperless by 2009. We maintain 10 e-mail boxes that channel the majority of our communications today between authors, reviewers, readers and subscribers, Web visitors, and permission and royalty services.

We worked with our editorial board and other loyal academic readers to attract promising authors from the field and support a greater selection of editorial content. In addition, our current editor began placing great importance on the scholarly community's

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continued

responsibility to train and cultivate those who mostly toil in anonymity: our consulting editors who serve as volunteer peer reviewers.

After we were able to stabilize the manuscript and production processes, we needed to find more creative ways to leverage our journal content for audience development. We launched a custom website (which will be relaunched with a new interface in 2009) and ancillaries such as a quarterly newsletter, an online continuing education program, and Webinar presentations by authors in order to create additional opportunities that will advance knowledge and capacity in the field.

The fiscal side is more capricious, and all indicators of the scholarly publishing market point toward more bumps in the road ahead. Because we are a nonprofit, the bottom line is always at the forefront of any endeavor—we have no margin for error when it comes to our limited resources. With the advent of

specialized titles being launched with ever more frequency by our competitors, it remains challenging to set our journal apart from the pack and diversify our readership.

These past three years as Managing Editor have crystallized for me the notion that positive editorial development is also sound business development. Quite simply, if there's no one reading your articles, what's the point of all your hard work? It is to this end I became interested in joining ISMTE. I am already taking advantage of ISMTE's networking and look forward to training/mentoring opportunities in the future. In many ways *Families in Society* acts as an advocate for those who serve the most vulnerable in our communities, and I'm thankful for an organization like ISMTE that was created to advocate for me and my colleagues in the professional publishing field. 

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