Summer is upon us, but the duties of an Editor go on. One of those duties, finding, motivating, and keeping good reviewers, is the bane of a Managing Editor’s existence, so I think you will find this month’s issue particularly engaging. I’m excited to say that Tim Vines from the popular publishing blog, The Scholarly Kitchen, has written an article for us. Read “Obtaining Reviews” by Tim in this issue. In addition, this issue contains a review of the “Building Up Reviewer Loyalty Workshop” from the 2011 ISMTE Conference in Oxford, England, as well as a summary of a reviewers’ course that my journal uses.

The Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) has some excellent flowcharts that guide Editors through difficult situations. They have given me permission to reprint them in EON, so this month we have charts explaining what you should do if you suspect redundant (duplicate) publication. I was excited to get this permission; these charts can be a great benefit to all of us. Look for more charts in the coming months.

Technology surrounds us, whether we like it or not. In this month’s “Whistling in the Dark” column, Brittany Farmer tells us about her journal’s experiences with an iPad app.

Many of us use Facebook for our journals, some use Twitter, but have you considered using Google+? In a “Taming Technology” column, Robert Sumner discusses his experiences with this social network.

I hope you all find some time to enjoy the summer, but first enjoy the June issue of EON!
Obtaining reviews

by Tim Vines

Vancouver, BC

Tim is the managing editor of Molecular Ecology and Molecular Ecology Resources. Before that he was an evolutionary biologist working on hybridization in stickleback fish and fire bellied toads. He is a contributing author to the well-known blog, The Scholarly Kitchen.

One of the enduring challenges for editorial offices is getting a sufficient number of useful reviews back from the referees. Here at Molecular Ecology we’ve had our fair share of successes and failures, and I’m going to use this article as a sort of therapy session for dealing with one of the biggest frustrations of the EO job.

To begin, reviewers are people too. While they usually understand their central role in the validation of science, the position of a particular review in their priority list is going to depend in part on how they feel about your journal. This means that any obstacles left in their path (such as a lack of line numbers, a broken pdf, or an unanswered request for help) will eat away at their goodwill and may stall their review efforts altogether. It therefore makes sense for journals expecting a quick turnaround from referees to expect the same of themselves—how can we help them to help us?

The first point of interaction is sending the review invite. We have found that people don’t much like receiving back-to-back invitations, and it is well worth making sure that invites are spread out. For example, once we get the list of suggested reviewers from the editor, we wait one to two weeks after a potential referee said ‘no’ to the last invite, or a month after they finished their last review for either of our journals. One downside of this is that a list of ten names may have three to four reviewers who we cannot immediately invite, so getting plenty of suggestions from the editor is a big help.

Spreading out invites is not possible if editors are responsible for sending the invitations, as they have no way of knowing whom the other editors are inviting. (As an aside, academic editors may not be the best people to send invites anyway, as they typically have little time or inclination to deal with the myriad of minor issues that crop up.) Duplicate accounts in online peer review systems are also a bugbear here, as it’s possible that different editors will select different accounts for the same reviewer and the EO won’t notice when sending the invites. Since duplicate accounts are always trouble, quickly checking for these just before an invite gets sent can be worthwhile—done regularly this can keep a lid on the number of duplicates in the system.

It is also useful to prescreen suggested reviewers for obvious conflicts of interest, such as being thanked in the acknowledgments or being at the same institution as the authors. Referees in this situation will typically decline anyway and some will go to the trouble of writing a note to explain why, so not sending the invite in the first place saves everyone a bit of time.

Once the invite gets sent, the office switches into “reminder mode.” We send two reminders about our invitation, one at three days and one at five, and we cut off the invite at seven days with a note that says we didn’t hear from them and we guess they are not available to review this one. If people do agree, we leave them alone for two weeks, although we definitely do our best to quickly address any questions or problems that they have. In terms of the number of people to invite, we prefer to make decisions with three reviews, so we start by inviting four and then inviting additional people one by one until three have agreed. If we get two solid reviews in hand before we have a third referee agree, we stop inviting and pass the manuscript back to the editor for a decision.

Most people do get their reviews back in two to three weeks, and we typically do end up with three sets of comments per manuscript. One strategy we use is to tell the overdue reviewers that we no longer
Obtaining reviews

need their comments, particularly when we already have two reasonably congruent reviews in hand. Funnily enough, telling referees that we don’t want their comments is a surprisingly effective way to get them to return their review; we suspect this happens because the referee has already invested a number of hours into evaluating the paper and they’re keen to not let that work go to waste. In addition, some referees are relieved to hear that they don’t need to finish their comments, especially if they’ve been hit with a big work overload or they’re dealing with difficult circumstances. Letting them off in these cases lets them know that you value their time, and this can be very beneficial when you invite them in the future. Finally, our “review no longer needed” email also says that if we don’t hear from them in two or three days, we’ll assume they are unable to finish their review, and this allows us to cut them off and get the paper back to the editor for a decision.

To see how effective a “review no longer needed” email can be, we took a sample of 37 reviewers who were sent this message when they were between five and ten days overdue. Thirteen of them responded that they would still like to send their comments, and these reviews were returned within an average of 2.4 days. The remaining reviewers either said that they had not completed their comments and would appreciate a reprieve, or did not respond at all. These reviewers were all cut off within three or four days. By contrast, a sample of 24 similarly overdue reviewers who received a polite reminder managed to get all 24 reviewes back, but these arrived an average of 6.4 days after the reminder was sent. Even when the three outliers over 10 days were excluded (i.e., manuscripts where we had no alternative apart from waiting for the review), the average return time for the polite reminder was still 4.2 days.

The underlying attitude behind all this is having high expectations of your referees: that they’ll do their best to review the paper and try to get it done in two to three weeks. Above all, work hard to make sure that they communicate with the office, which in practical terms means the office communicating well too. Having a reviewer tell you that they can’t return a review allows you to get on and ask someone else, but if there’s stony silence at a month overdue it’s a coin toss between more waiting or cutting them off. Good communication can therefore save a lot of time. In return, reviewers should have high expectations of you: try to make sure that review files are anonymous, their obvious spelling errors edited out, and that they get a copy of the decision. After all, without reviewers there’s no peer review, and we should be doing all we can to keep them on our side.

The Philosophy of Editing

Every day versus Everyday
Every day means it occurs daily. Everyday is an adjective meaning “ordinary.”

I check my email every day.
Checking my email is an everyday occurrence.

Every one versus Everyone
Every one describes things. Everyone is only used with people. However, every one can be used with people as well, if you are emphasizing them.

I deleted every one of my emails.
Today I believe I got an email from everyone.
Every one of my friends sent me an email for my birthday.
Building up Reviewer Loyalty Workshop
Oxford, 18 October 2011

These are notes taken from the Reviewer Workshop from the ISMTE Conference held in Oxford, England, last October.

Moderator: Sherryl Sundell ME International Journal of Cancer
Notetaker: Diana Epstein Di-Ep Biomedical Editorial Services Ltd

The common goal: To promote high-quality scientific publication in general: (and) specifically, in our own journals.
Loyalty is an important concept and reviewers are peers, experts, and authors. It is important to engage the reviewers effectively in the journal.

There is a need to communicate efficiently to understand the goals and to ensure consistency, credibility, and appreciation.

Reviewer-Editorial office relationship and communication:
There should be good communication, particularly regarding decisions.
Expectations should be understood.
Files should be readable and not corrupt.
The anonymity of the reviewers is preserved.
Ensure all allegations or cases of plagiarism are thoroughly investigated and results communicated to the reviewers who reported them.
Respond by email to all correspondence as quickly as possible.
There should be a note at the top part of system-sent emails indicating that they are automated.
Email templates should be checked and updated regularly.
Individual feedback should be provided.

Understanding reviewers’ goals
To build a career
To enhance their reputation as experts
Interdependency—an author can become a reviewer

Certain papers can be important to reviewers for their own work.

How can the Editorial Office ensure that the review is credible?
Be professional at all times and maintain a professional attitude.
Know how to phrase reviewers’ comments—some reviewers know the science but lack the “bedside manner.”
Know the culture of your reviewers. Know how they like to be addressed—by their title or by their first name. This is a way of establishing a “relationship.”

Showing our appreciation to reviewers
A personal “thank you” letter
Top 5% of reviewers should receive an email from the Editor-in-Chief.
When requested by the reviewers, prepare letters upon request—e.g., green card requests
Promote good reviewers to the editorial board criteria of quality, quantity, and turnaround times
Acknowledgement lists or “thank you” lists should appear at the end of the year in the journal.

Skills and ability for Editorial Office staff to deal with reviewers
Patience
Know the tracking system you work on; avoid misunderstanding
Emails—it is important to know the email templates and check all emails before they are sent out.
A good database should be maintained; dates of availability should be known.
Ensure the database includes the next generation of up and coming doctors/reviewers in the field.
We need to adjust our mind set to accommodate reviewers’ needs.
Know your job, your skills, and your community.
In the Summer of 2011, Google, the ubiquitous search engine monolith responsible for finding pretty much everything you need on the internet unveiled its fourth social networking foray Google+. Billed as the “Facebook killer,” Google+ promised a greatly enhanced social networking experience unseen in its previous attempts at social searching like Google Buzz, Google Profiles, and Google Wave, utilizing the vast array of Google’s user and search data to make sharing information clean and streamlined. With millions already using many of Google’s other products like Gmail and the web browser Chrome, Google has a built-in potential audience to draw from. Yet despite all of the “pluses” in Google’s initial proposal, the adaption of Google+ has been slow and the audiences currently do not have the user numbers that Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn possess. According to a Mashable article published in February of 2012, the people who initially joined are spending less and less time with their Google+ accounts.1 With enthusiasm seemingly fading for what was purported to be a revolutionary social networking engine, is it worth your publication’s time to see what the fuss is all about?

Joining is incredibly easy, especially if you already have a Google account. Google+ will alert you which of your email contacts are also a part of the network, and it will give you suggestions based on the data Google has incurred from your emailing and searching habits. Google+ opens with a layout called the “Stream” that is pretty much a combination of a Facebook wall and a Twitter feed, except it uses the familiar white background and blue touches that are a hallmark of Google (all of this can be customized as well). You can add personal photos and profile information as you would with your Facebook profile. In the “Stream,” you can post text updates or links you may find interesting. There is no character limit, and when you post information, you can customize who gets to see it, as opposed to Twitter, in which everyone can see everything you post (if your profile is not private), and Facebook, which, through the algorithm Edgerank and other privacy customization options chooses who among your friends and the public can see your posts. The manner in which Google+ organizes your connections (“Circles” in Google+ parlance), allows you to manage how you send and receive shared info. What these circles can potentially do is give you one place to house all of your sharing; you don’t have to have a separate account to discuss professional and personal things. All sharing can be performed from one source. You will quickly realize that the engineers at Google have solved all of the inherent problems of all previous social networking incarnations. In November of 2011, Google+ added business pages,2 where a business could take on a Google+ account and enjoy the same sharing functionality of user Google+ pages. There are even more “pluses.” You can carry on a video discussion about anything posted in your stream. Billed as “Google Hangouts,” these video chats increase the interactivity of your posts to levels incomparable in all other social networks.

So what should you do on Google+? Create a Google+ business page for your publication. Post your latest article in your Stream and make it public. Search for users who might be interested in your material and add them to circles based on their interests. By adding people to your circle, they are alerted via email (similar to Twitter), and they will be enticed to circle you as well. One great way to use the hangout feature would be to create a post based on an article published in your journal, then schedule a Hangout with all of the authors of the paper, with the Hangout able to be viewed by potential readers. The possibilities for interactivity with your material are unseen and very exciting.

The program itself is impressive and comprehensive. The functionality is bug-free (unlike the ever-evolving Facebook) and fun to use; simply adding your connections to circles is a fun animated task. Searching for content and users is simple. Making your company’s Stream posts public can attract users in ways a Tweet or a Wall post can’t. And with the integration of Google+ accounts into Google’s search features, your Google+ page can...
be accessed and added by users directly from the search results page. It doesn’t take long to see why this social networking engine gained steam quickly. The high-profile Silicon Valley venture capitalist Guy Kawasaki, who has started his own content aggregation service AllTop is so enthused by Google+ that he wrote a 137-page dissertation on why it is better than all of the other social networks. Reading the eBook “What the Plus! Google+ For the Rest of Us,” you again see how much more Google+ offers when compared with the other applications people have adapted already.

Essentially, the only drawback to moving all of your social sharing functions to Google+ is its diminishing audience.3 Although the site boasted large registration numbers initially, it was soon discovered that a lot of those numbers were dubious and more closely related to the user base of all of Google’s products. The synergistic integration that many of Google’s executives assumed would be obvious upon launch (“People have Gmail and Chrome, therefore they will be Google+ users too”) was not automatic. Users seem to still cling to their Facebook and Twitter profiles, despite both of the networks lacking the features, the functionality, and the integration into the largest search engine in the world. After nearly a year of public adaptation, it seems like the initial buzz might be fading somewhat. One theory as to why the adaptation of Google+ continues to languish to a certain extent is the overall change in philosophy from Google itself. As detailed in a profoundly jarring blog post4 from a former Google executive James Whittaker, the push behind Google+ seems more in the effort to capitalize off of the personal data of users, utilizing the superior software development of Google to amass user data to sell to advertisers. The folks who will assist your publication with social sharing are the same folks who will be turned off, if this is indeed Google’s latest marketing ploy.

I personally have not created a Google+ site for Clinical Chemistry. I feel that concentrating our journal’s social networking efforts on Twitter and Facebook is sufficient enough for the time being. I am greatly impressed with the site and feel that if the audience does indeed adopt it, I will definitely hop aboard.

References:
Whistling in the Dark
Minding the Edges: Further Reflections on the iPad
by Brittany Farmer
Managing Editor, JACC iPad Edition

Glenn Collins’s article “The Cutting Edge is the Bleeding Edge” in the March issue of EON neatly summed up the challenges JACC has faced with its iPad Edition. Reading his article, I find myself “fondly” reminiscing about the early days when the terrain was frighteningly new and our energy was anxiously high. Though we’ve by no means mastered the media, we have since settled into a more comfortable routine. As Managing Editor for the JACC iPad Edition, I’ve built a steady workflow, collecting and modifying supplementary materials, coordinating with various editors and teams, and doing whatever else needs to be done to successfully build and publish the issues. Each week, my team and I work the system without even a hiccup (well, normally), but as Glenn suggested, things were not always so calm. Since I think it’s often better to learn from the trials of others (I know just as well as my brother that a grill top is hot, even though he had the third degree burns to prove it), I’d like to revisit some of the issues Glenn raised and offer some quick advice on how to mind the cutting edges.

My involvement with the JACC iPad Edition started around July 2010. At that point, the ACC had secured an app developer, negotiated with the publisher, and had asked the JACC office to start preparing preliminary materials. Then an editorial assistant, I was asked to collect editorial and masthead photos and bios. The project quickly escalated as we realized that the app developers could not accommodate our supplementary materials as easily as they thought. We not only needed to re-figure how to include our most important supplementary materials—slide sets, related articles, images, videos—but how to modify them to meet the app requirements, which grew more specific by the day. It became clear that for publication to run smoothly, we needed a managing editor, and in October 2010, I was fortunate enough to fill that position.

Pre-release, most of my time was spent creating templates, developing protocols, and hammering out workflows. As publishing on the iPad was a new venture for all involved, the course of action was not always clear. For example, as we drew closer to launching, we needed to decide a publication timeline. Our online journal publishes on Mondays, one week and one day in advance of the print date. The app’s content, however, is generated by ScienceDirect, which publishes the journal content on the following Tuesday. Should we publish the day the content is pulled? Or should we wait a week and publish on the actual issue date? We decided that the iPad Edition should publish as close to the online publication as possible, as a later publication date might discourage readers from using the app. Whether or not this is true, we’re still not sure, but it seems a good bet anyway. Of course, publishing on this timeline was easier said than done. At first, the app was very buggy. Sometimes it failed to pull content from ScienceDirect, and we would spend the day trying to remedy the problem. The fact that we were coordinating across at least three time zones (the app developer was in Sweden, the publishers were in New York and Pennsylvania, and I was in California) made coordination more difficult. On at least one occasion, our app developer conducted a teleconference at 2:00am. My advice to anyone using contractors across different time zones is to (1) figure out well ahead of time when is a reasonable time to meet, and (2) invest in the best webinar and teleconference software you can afford. Also, make sure all necessary people have access to and are trained on the software. For the most part, our teams used GotoMeeting, which
works well enough, but not everyone was familiar with the platform.

Another unexpected challenge we faced was making time for the work. Since we didn’t anticipate the labor involved (it’s almost impossible to anticipate when you’re working with new technologies), we had to scramble for hands and minds. Until a stable workflow was hammered out, everyone was asked to pitch in and tackle disparate tasks, which never failed to pop up at the end of an exhausting day. (“Wait, were you heading home?”) Fortunately, the ACC is staffed with saints and all were willing to help out, despite their tight schedules. My advice for anyone else facing this situation: keep saints on staff.

After about four months of trial and error (and more trial and more error), the JACC iPad Edition was running smoothly. We spent the next few months analyzing the readership reports and found that readership was steadily increasing, but several users complained that the content still took too long to download. As Glenn mentioned in his article, users were not shy about expressing their frustration—peruse the first comments in the iPad Store and you’ll see. We took the feedback seriously and brainstormed various ways to increase download speeds, eventually developing a solution that involved a combination of reducing video file sizes (we now have a video streaming feature) and allowing users to choose to download just the issue or the issue with all supplementary materials. If the users choose to download just the issue, their content is ready in mere minutes, which is great if, say, they’re being hounded by flight attendants to power down. While reading, users can choose to download supplement materials individually, as long as they are connected to WiFi. This feature, I think, is one of our best, and our users have responded very positively to it. I would highly recommend that any journal venturing into the app world offer multiple download options.

The most important thing I learned as Managing Editor of the JACC iPad Edition is that unexpected problems go hand in hand with new technologies. For this reason, I would advise anyone considering an iPad edition to keep things simple at first. The JACC team was rather ambitious in developing an app that offered more than the online or print edition. While I think a sophisticated app should be the ultimate goal, we would have done better to start small. A reliable, nicely designed reader (that doesn’t take forever to download) with little or no additional content would have been easier to produce, and it seems this is what our readership wants. User data reports show that most of our readers do not view our related content. We are trying to better understand why this is, as readers often tell us they want more materials, but the reality remains. We will soon release iPad editions for our sister journals, and they will follow a much simpler format.

While the launch of the JACC iPad Edition was time-consuming, challenging, and often frustrating, the product we have now is worth the effort. In the early days, our mantra “the cutting edge is the bleeding edge” could not have been more true. We at JACC dared to venture into a strange new world of iPad publishing and, being more or less in the dark, sometimes nicked ourselves on corners we could not yet see. But with each drop of blood came another flame of insight, and after a year-and-a-half, we’ve got at least the initial terrain fairly well lit.

Have something to share? If you are interested in writing an article for “Whistling in the Dark,” please contact Meghan McDevitt at mmcdevitt@asge.org.
What I Wish My Managing Editor Knew: Production Editor

To finish the series about what the people we work with wish that we knew, I wanted to have a Production Editor (PE, also known as an Issue Manager) weigh in. For whatever reason, however, finding one willing to write the article proved to be impossible. I then took the approach of asking a number of PEs to contribute, but again met with resistance. One brave woman, though, did send me a list of four points. So thank you to Christy Boos, Leader at Wiley Journal Management. Here is her list.

1. PEs handle more than one journal, so we don’t always know which journal someone is referring to. We also don’t distinguish between articles by title and author. We use our editorial reference numbers and/or DOI numbers. When you contact a PE, please provide these numbers along with the specific journal your article is associated with so that we can more easily assist you.

2. PEs take great pride in their titles. There is a sense of ownership that is no less extensive than that inside the editorial office.

3. Our relationships with repeat authors are fostered; we recognize the importance relationship building has on the continued success of our titles.

4. When you are sending/uploading manuscript files for production, please make sure the batch is complete. It is not saving any time to provide a partial batch, as production cannot commence until everything is received. This can cause confusion and possibly added delay.

Once upon a time, I was an Issue Manager at Elsevier, so I do sympathize with these points. I can attest that we took tremendous pride in our journals and really wanted them to be the best they could be. When the managers decided to switch journals on us, it was often an emotional separation.

Had I been asked this question when I held the position, I would have said that I wish my Managing Editor had a better understanding of the timeline I was forced to operate under. I was always willing to make last-minute changes (and boy, did my Managing Editor have last-minute changes!), but she needed to understand that such changes would probably result in the issue coming out late. The compositors have their own schedules and work on many journals, and sometimes they just can’t make up the time.

If any of you want to ask your PE to weigh in on issues they wish their Managing Editors understood better, please do send their answers to me at dbowman@asge.org for inclusion in a future issue.

Interview With an Expert Series—New Installment!

Are ghosts haunting your journal? Learn all about spooky ghost authors, ghost writing, and ghost management in a new podcast from the ISMTE Training Committee. Listen now to hear host Kathy Clarke interview Sergio Sismondo, PhD, professor of philosophy at Queen’s University, Canada.

Find the interview on the ISMTE website at http://www.ismte.org/Interview_with_Sergio_Sismondo-Ghost_Writing_Haunting_the_Scientific_Literature_Interview_with_Sergio_Sismondo
What to do if you suspect redundant (duplicate) publication

(a) Suspected redundant publication in a submitted manuscript

Reviewer informs editor about redundant publication

Thank reviewer and say you plan to investigate
Get full documentary evidence if not already provided

Check degree of overlap/redundancy

Major overlap/redundancy (i.e. based on same data with identical or very similar findings and/or evidence authors have sought to hide redundancy e.g. by changing title or author order or not citing previous papers)

Contact corresponding author in writing, ideally enclosing signed authorship statement (or cover letter) stating that submitted work has not been published elsewhere and documentary evidence of duplication

Author responds

Unsatisfactory explanation/admits guilt

Write to author (all authors if possible) rejecting submission, explaining position and expected future behaviour

Consider informing author’s superior and/or person responsible for research governance

Satisfactory explanation (honest error/journal instructions unclear/very junior researcher)

Discuss with reviewer Proceed with review

No response

Minor overlap with some element of redundancy or legitimate re-analysis (e.g. sub-group/extended follow-up/discussion aimed at different audience)

Contact author in neutral terms/expressing disappointment/explaining journal’s position

Discuss with reviewer Proceed with review

No significant overlap

Contact author in neutral terms/expressing disappointment/explaining journal’s position

Request missing reference to original and/or remove overlapping material Proceed with review

Note: The instructions to authors should state the journal’s policy on redundant publication

Asking authors to sign a statement or tick a box may be helpful in subsequent investigations

No response

Discuss with reviewer Proceed with review

Unsatisfactory explanation/admits guilt

If no response, keep contacting institution every 3-6 months

Note: ICMJE advises that translations are acceptable but MUST reference the original

A non-exclusive licence to reproduce these flowcharts may be applied for by writing to: cope_administrator@publicationethics.org

Developed for COPE by Liz wager of Sideview (www.lizwager.com) © 2012 Committee on Publication Ethics
What to do if you suspect redundant (duplicate) publication

(b) Suspected redundant publication in a published article

Reader informs editor about redundant publication

Thank reader and say you plan to investigate
Get full documentary evidence if not already provided

Check degree of overlap/redundancy

Major overlap/redundancy (i.e. based on same dataset with identical findings and/or evidence that authors have sought to hide redundancy, e.g. by changing title or author order or not referring to previous papers)

Contact corresponding author in writing, ideally enclosing signed authorship statement (or cover letter) stating that submitted work has not been published elsewhere and documentary evidence of duplication

Author responds

No response

Unsatisfactory explanation/admits guilt

Satisfactory explanation (honest error/journal instructions unclear/very junior researcher)

Consider publishing statement of redundant publication or retraction Inform editor of other journal involved

Consider informing author’s superior and/or person responsible for research governance

Inform author(s) of your action

If no response, keep contacting institution every 3–6 months

Contact author in neutral terms/expressing disappointment/explaining journal’s position
Explain that secondary papers must refer to original
Discuss publishing correction giving reference to original paper
Where editor has reason to believe failure to refer to previous paper(s) was deliberate, consider informing author’s superior or person responsible for research governance

No response

Inform reader of outcome/action

If no response, keep contacting institution every 3–6 months

Contact author’s institution requesting your concern is passed to author’s superior and/or person responsible for research governance

Write to author (all authors if possible) explaining position and expected future behaviour

If no response, keep contacting institution every 3–6 months

Note: The instructions to authors should state the journal’s policy on redundant publication Asking authors to sign a statement or tick a box may be helpful in subsequent investigations

Note: ICJME advises that translations are acceptable but MUST reference the original
Editors may consider publishing a correction (i.e. the link to the original article) rather than a retraction/notice of duplicate publication in such cases

Developed for COPE by Liz wager of Sideview (www.lizwager.com)
© 2012 Committee on Publication Ethics

A non-exclusive licence to reproduce these flowcharts may be applied for by writing to: cope_administrator@publicationethics.org
Training a Great Reviewer
by Deborah Bowman, MFA
Managing Editor of GIE: Gastrointestinal Endoscopy

One of the great strengths of the ISMTE is our ability to tell each other about initiatives we have started with our journals, especially those that work well. My journal, *GIE: Gastrointestinal Endoscopy*, has a course for reviewers, and when I mentioned the course to a couple of people at the ISMTE conference last August, their interest was intense. So in the spirit of the ISMTE, I want to share information about this course with the rest of you.

The Chair of our Editorial Review Board, Dr Lyndon Hernandez, is dedicated to helping us get the best possible reviews. To that end, he developed a Reviewers’ Course, which we have placed on our website. When we register a new reviewer, we direct them to this course and request that they go through it before reviewing any articles. As a side note, we first said that we would require all reviewers to take the course, but we got some push-back from our long-time reviewers, so now it is not required, but is preferred. We tell them, however, that even if they do reviews for other journals, they should go through our course because it will let them know what the editors of *GIE* want and expect from their reviews.

The link takes potential reviewers to a site that includes both the Reviewers’ Course (a PowerPoint presentation) and an example of a good review. The course starts out by listing general principles of peer review. We urge the reviewers, for example, to be polite but specific with their comments, to maintain strict confidentiality, to declare any conflicts of interest they might have, to be punctual, and to stay committed for the long term.

The next part of the course addresses the importance of the article’s research question and identifies the question posed by the authors at the beginning of the study as being even more important than the answer. We ask the reviewers to consider the originality of the study, urging them to do a search for similar studies and to identify any previous studies for the editors.

Reviewers are then urged to check the validity of the study by identifying the study strengths and weaknesses and by considering whether the conclusions are valid. Ethical issues are next; did the authors include their methods for ensuring their study was ethical? Did they include information about obtaining IRB approval?

Presentation of the research is important. Can the reviewer understand what the authors are saying? Do they use too many or too few references? We ask reviewers to consider any issues they might need to tell the editors privately, such as possible ethical issues, conflict of interest they might be aware of on the part of the authors, or plagiarism.

The course then outlines tips for specific types of studies: randomized trials, retrospective trials, and pilot studies. We identify what the reviewer should be looking for in each of these article types and list some common poor reporting practices to watch for. Next we explain how the reviewer should decide whether to recommend acceptance or rejection; what kinds of problems within the article are deal-breakers? Finally, we explain how our editors score our reviewers, pointing out that punctuality, level of detail, and conciseness are important for getting a high reviewer score. At the end of the course is a short test so the reviewer can ensure that he or she understood the most important points. The test is actually constructed so we can tell who has taken it if we want to.
Training a Great Reviewer

At our big annual meeting (Digestive Disease Week), we give awards to our top reviewers (based on the scores given by the editors). The awards are beautiful framed certificates, presented during a ceremony at a reception attended by their peers. These awards are coveted and appreciated, so our reviewers are motivated to do well; most seem to appreciate the guidance the Reviewer Course gives them. Overall, we have seen an improvement in the quality of reviews since we started using the course. In addition, we believe the reviewers who go through the course become better authors, resulting in better articles for GIE.

Want to check out the actual course? Go to http://www.asge.org/PublicationsProductsIndex.aspx?id=2890

Finish this sentence...

Here are the answers we received from last month’s question:

You can spot an Editor anywhere by....

- the way their shirt buttons are all sewn on so the holes are parallel to each other. (Attention to detail affects everything in life!) (Diane Hird)
- her/his ability to always find mistakes with restaurant menus. (Erin Dubnansky)
- the way she grabs some articles to proofread as she runs for cover in a tornado (anonymous)
- her checks, which are signed in red ink (anonymous)
- the nervous tics that increase nearing deadline. (Wendie Howland)
- the way she cringes when she hears Katie Perry sing, “us girls we are so magical.” (anonymous)
- the exasperated look on her/his face when (s)he’s reading words with misplaced apostrophes (apostrophe’s)! (Deana Rodriguez)
- the desk pose: Pursed lips, squinted eyes, and craned necks. (Deana Rodriguez)
- the sheer number and variety of pens in his/her bag/purse. (Mary Chang)
- the mini reference library on his/her bookshelf that includes a good dictionary, style guides, and grammar handbooks. (Meghan McDevitt)

Thanks to everyone who responded! For next month, finish this sentence:

You can recognize an Editor on vacation...

An example is:

by the shoulder knots even the professional masseuse can’t get out.
Calendar of Events

11th EASE Conference
June 8–10, 2012
Tallinn, Estonia
http://www.ease.org.uk/

Licensing your Content
June 19, 2012
http://www.alpssp.org

Editorial Manager User Group Meeting
June 21–22, 2012
Cambridge, MA, USA
December 3, 2012
London, UK
http://www.editorialmanager.com/

Introduction to Journals Marketing
July 3, 2012
http://www.alpssp.org

Fundamentals of Journals Finance
July 11, 2012
http://www.alpssp.org

ISMTE Conferences: Save the dates!
ISMTE U.S. Conference
August 14–15, 2012
Washington, D.C.
http://www.ismte.org

ISMTE European Conference
October 23, 2012
Oxford, UK
http://www.ismte.org

Effective Journal Editorial Management
September 25, 2012
http://www.alpssp.org

Journal Development 2: Strategic Development for Journal Managers
October 2, 2012
http://www.alpssp.org

Thank You
to our Corporate Sponsors!

Platinum Level
Wiley-Blackwell

Silver Level
ACS Publications, BMJ Group,
Elsevier, Informa Healthcare,
Nature Publishing Group

Bronze Level
Aries Systems Corporation, eJournalPress,
Newgen Knowledge Works,
Oxford University Press, ScholarOne
Thomson Reuters

Additional Support: CrossRef

Interested in supporting ISMTE?
Please visit http://ismte.org/supporters.html
ISMTE Editorial Office News

Editorial Office News (EON) is the official newsletter of the International Society of Managing and Technical Editors (ISMTE) and is published monthly. The contents and opinions expressed by the authors do not necessarily represent those of the Society, the Board of Directors, or EON Editors, nor does the publication of an article constitute an endorsement on the part of ISMTE of the authors’ organizations or companies. Submissions are welcome and can be sent to the Editor at the address below. Submissions may be edited for style and format without the author’s permission. Authors must seek permission to reprint any copyrighted material and provide this permission to the Editor.

EON’s content belongs to the members of ISMTE. Users may view and download EON articles for personal, non-commercial use. Use beyond that allowed by the “Fair Use” limitations (sections 107 and 108) of the U.S. Copyright law requires written permission from the EON editor.

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 in idiomatic usage and spelling should reflect the origins of the author. No one version of English is preferred over the other.

Editor:
Deborah Bowman
dbowman@asge.org

Associate Editors:
Meghan McDevitt
mmcdevitt@asge.org
Emily Mueller
emueller@allenpress.com
Susan Scalia
susan@awra.org

Editorial Advisor:
Kristen Overstreet
Kristen.overstreet@mac.com

Section Editors:
Ethics: Ira Salkin
Irasalkin@aol.com
Taming Technology: Lindsey Brounstein
lbrounstein@gastro.org
Whistling In The Dark: Meghan McDevitt
mmcdevitt@asge.org

ISMTE Executive Office:
107 Mantua Pike Ste. 701 #122, Mantua, New Jersey,
USA 08051-1606
TEL: (+1) 856-292-8512
FAX: (+1) 856-292-8513
ismteoffice@gmail.com
Thank You to our Corporate Sponsors!

Platinum Level

Silver Level

Bronze Level

Additional Support

Interested in supporting ISMTE? Please visit http://ismte.org/supporters.html