That’s a brilliant idea! You know it is…but now you have to convince the Editor-in-Chief or your Society to listen to you and understand what an amazing idea you have. How can you present your brilliance in a way that will make everyone take you seriously? This month, Nicole Adams, Lecturer at the University of Dayton, explains how to approach your team in her article, “De-Mystifying the Proposal-Writing Process.” She gives practical ways to organize the proposal so your audience will listen and give it the attention it deserves.

How is your journal handling lower ad revenues? The Editors and Governing Board from the journal Gastroenterology decided to make up the difference by charging authors for submitting and publishing in their journal. Erin Dubnansky and Christopher Lowe have now weathered the storm, and they list the pros and cons and explain how their journal implemented this radical idea in their article, “Charging Ahead.”

QR codes—those little black and white blots of ink you see everywhere—can be used to great advantage in your journal. Meghan McDevitt of Gastrointestinal Endoscopy explains how her journal uses them. Also in this issue, we continue our publication of the COPE flowcharts to help guide you through the problems that you face every day. And please don’t miss my article about the advantages of reading on an e-reader in “What Good Old Days?”

By the time you read this, the ISMTE North American Conference will be over. Next month’s issue of EON will contain summaries and reviews of the conference. Whether you were able
to attend or not (and lots of you did!), you’ll want to read about anything you missed. But first, enjoy the great ideas in this issue, and don’t forget to sign up for the ISMTE’s first webinar, “Defend Your Journal Against Image Manipulation and Fraud” on November 7 from 2pm to 3pm EST.

The Philosophy of Editing

Are you wrong to say, “We ate a healthy meal”? Strictly speaking, yes; people are healthy, but food is healthful (or not). A grumpy, retired English teacher made me aware of this distinction years ago when she blasted me for using the wrong word in a magazine article, but in truth, phrases like “Make Whoop-de-Doos part of your healthy diet” are so frequently used that they might soon become accepted. Language evolves, and as Editors, we are its guardians. We can decide that “a healthy meal” is fine but “Me and Mary seen it” is not. Please, oh please, decide that “Me and Mary seen it” is not all right. Healthy versus healthful is your call.

Conversion to English units

Are 45.36 graham crackers 1 pound cake?  
Is 1 millionth of a fish 1 microfiche?  
Is the weight an evangelist carries with God 1 billigram?  
Is half of a large intestine 1 semicolon?  
Are 2,000 mockingbirds 2 kilomockingbirds? (Say it out loud!)
When I enter the classroom on the first day of my Report & Proposal Writing class each semester, the students’ faces reveal some common questions: How many reports and proposals are we going to have to write? Are they all, like, 20 pages long? And (understandably) how is this class possibly going to be the least bit interesting? The course is offered as one of a few options—among Business Communication and Technical Writing, for example—which undergraduate students in business, criminal justice, and nutrition & dietetics must take to meet a professional writing requirement. The course title is at once telltale (they can bet they’ll be writing reports and proposals) and a deterrent (you’ve got to admit, it sounds a little dry).

One of the first things I’m sure to mention on that first day is that, in today’s workplace environments, reports and proposals are usually brief and often considered “informal.” Suddenly I see a shift in students’ faces akin to something like, “Okay, I’m listening.”

Professionals write proposals to solve problems, provide services, or sell products. Simple enough. But to create a set of guidelines for creating effective proposals, we should categorize them a bit further in two ways: solicited vs. unsolicited and informal vs. formal.

**Solicited proposals**, those initiated by a request for proposal (RFP) by an organization needing a specified service or product, are in essence a competitive bid and therefore must be written to show that the organization’s needs can be met, usually at a price that beats or is commensurate with other bidders. **Unsolicited proposals** are not requested formally but are submitted by enterprising companies or individuals looking for work or to complete a special challenge. In some cases, persuasion becomes even more key in unsolicited proposals because the receiver may not have identified a need yet for the product or service being proposed.

The level of formality a proposal requires is often determined by the scope or length of the project being proposed. Formal proposals differ from informal proposals not so much in style but in size and format. For example, *formal proposals* can range from 5 to 200 or more pages and are often organized into many more parts, possibly including a copy of the RFP, letter of transmittal, abstract, executive summary, title page, table of contents, and appendices. **Informal proposals** on the other hand, are typically under five pages long and include only the following basic elements: Background (including the problem and purpose), Proposal Details (including a plan and schedule), Staffing Considerations, Budgetary Information, and a Closing (possibly including an authorization request and a summary of the key benefits).

While the above categories are important to consider before getting started, the following tips can be useful for a proposal of any kind.

**Overcoming writer’s block.** Even though writers of workplace proposals know generally what needs to be included, many stare at a blank screen for a while before they’re able to get started. It doesn’t help that most proposals must be completed under pressure to meet tight deadlines. Creating a bulleted list of what the customer is looking for (upon examining the RFP closely and repeatedly) can help you get started and keep you heading in the right direction.

**Persuading the reader.** The most important thing to remember when writing proposals is that they are, in essence, sales presentations. They must be persuasive and not merely mechanical descriptions of a service or product to be provided. To this end, they must (1) emphasize benefits for the reader, (2) detail your (or your company’s) expertise in the specified area (testimonials from previous satisfied clients or customers can be a useful tool for accomplishing
this!), and (3) make it easy for the reader to understand and respond.

**Grabbing the reader’s attention.** Persuasion should begin immediately in the opening of a proposal. To provide an effective “hook” to engage the reader, consider one or more of the following:

- Identify a problem or worry item and promise a solution and then detail it later in the proposal.
- Specify a key issue or benefit that you feel is at the heart of the proposal.
- Mention a noteworthy resource exclusively available to you (years of experience, well-trained staff, or latest technology).
- Hint at superior results with previous customers, with details to follow later in the document.

The key in grabbing the readers’ attention, though, is sincerity and attention to their specific needs – which you should be intimately familiar with before writing the proposal.

**Using proven company approaches.** Thankfully, it is not necessary to re-invent the wheel each time out. In fact, there are benefits to giving readers what they expect to see; it can reinforce the existing relationship (if a repeat customer), as well as allow them to navigate the proposal more quickly. Many organizations have existing templates that expedite the proposal-writing process. Just be sure to proofread closely to ensure that all content is tailored and current in each and every proposal.

Considering these tips can not only make proposals engaging to read—which optimizes the chance that they will be accepted—but can also make them interesting to write. This can be especially important because the writing of proposals is a task that most professionals have to fit in among many other responsibilities. Yet, proposals drive business, which renders their importance immeasurable.

Acknowledgements:
Charging Ahead

Christopher B. Lowe, Assistant Managing Editor, Gastroenterology
Erin C. Dubnansky, Senior Director of Scholarly Publishing American Gastroenterological Association (AGA)

It was the start of the summer, 2010. The days were long, the sun was bright, and the AGA publications staff was looking forward to a quiet few months following the hectic bustle of our annual May meeting. But then, innocently enough, an associate editor of one of our journals said, “I have an idea.” Oh no, we thought. And with that, our summer became one of dramatic change for our flagship journal, Gastroenterology.

The idea, as it turns out, was to introduce submission and page fees for authors of original-research submissions. “But that’s crazy!” we said. Well, maybe we didn’t say that out loud, but we certainly thought it. No other journal in our field charged these fees—why should we be the first? Several concerns rushed to the surface—did we have the technical capability to charge fees? Would our authors balk at paying them? We were already pressed to capacity with work—how much staff time would be involved with this initiative?

As we grappled with the answers to these questions, one thing became clear fairly quickly—the Gastroenterology board of editors and AGA leadership liked the idea—“Why not?” they said. At a time when print advertising revenue was down, offsetting those losses with author fees was attractive to them. With that support, a simple idea became a major decision and ultimately an unprecedented step not only for our journal, but for our specialty as well.

TO CHARGE OR NOT TO CHARGE? THE PROS AND CONS OF AUTHOR FEES

The AGA is no different from most non-profit associations in that all major decisions must be vetted by various stakeholders of the organization. To that end, we needed to create a sound rationale for implementing an author fee program. The rationale was built on a consensus reached among staff, the associate editor with the original idea, and the other Gastroenterology editors. Both pros and cons were considered.

The Pros

Revenue

First and foremost, an author fee program would generate revenue. The extra revenue would enable the journal to stay on the cutting edge of the ever-changing landscape of scientific publishing. With the advent of social and new media, the pressures to publish content quicker than ever before, and the need to constantly develop new products that serve the needs of our readers, having an additional funding source would provide us with the resources necessary to explore and implement new opportunities.

Discouragement of Poor-Quality Submissions

A second, and also important, reason was to discourage the submission of poor-quality papers. Such discouragement would reduce the submission burden on staff, editors, and reviewers. At least in theory, only articles with a chance of acceptance would be submitted and thus our editors and reviewers could focus solely on papers that might one day grace the pages of our journal.

Alignment with Other Major Journals

Although no other journal in our specialty of gastroenterology and hepatology charged submission or page fees, comparable journals in other disciplines did. Our editors and society leadership believed that charging author fees would bring us in line with these other journals and solidify the perception that Gastroenterology is a major player in the world of scientific publishing.
The Cons
Quick Review, No Refund

What would happen, some of our editors questioned, if authors received a quick decision on a paper that wasn’t externally reviewed? Wouldn’t they be upset and demand a refund? Was it ethical to charge authors for a decision that was rendered in 48 hours or less? The concern, obviously, is that we’d have a collection of disgruntled authors on our hands.

The Competition

Our field is chock full of high-quality journals that continually jockey for position, working hard to attract the highest-quality science possible. Some editors and staff were concerned that our author fee program would result in the loss of key articles to our major competition. In particular, we were concerned about authors of clinically oriented papers—typically the types of journals they submit to do not have submission or page fees.

RESEARCH AND REVIEW

Ultimately, in the eyes of our associate editors, the pros outweighed the cons. But before we could move forward with implementing author fees, more research and vetting awaited us. To ensure we aligned our fees with industry standards, we reviewed the fees of several comparable journals. Based on that information we determined that fair author fees were $75 per submission and $100 per page for accepted articles. To encourage membership to our organization, we decided on a 15 percent discount for the page fees if the corresponding or first author were an AGA member.

In addition to settling on the dollar amount for our author fees, we also investigated the technical aspects of using our manuscript tracking system to process them. Luckily, our system was equipped to plug in an e-commerce feature—that we could use for an annual fee—that would enable us to seamlessly charge the $75 submission fee. Unfortunately, processing the page fees would require a manual workaround and we ultimately ran into several challenges with the collection of this revenue—we’ll discuss these challenges later. Additionally, it became evident that, based on logistics and organizational policy, our accounting department would need to be involved in the development and distribution of page-fee invoices. Finally, we learned that for all fees paid via credit card, we would incur a 3% to 5% charge per transaction.

Armed with the rationale, fee amounts, and confidence that we could technically process author charges through our manuscript tracking system and accounting department, we embarked on the rigorous review process required by our organization. The first body to evaluate the proposal in its entirety was our publications committee. After careful deliberation, the committee recommended to proceed with the plan. Our governing board, which consists of four officers and several councilors, then reviewed the proposal, along with the publication committee’s recommendation. The governing board seriously considered all sides of the plan and ultimately gave it the green light, provided that the program would cease if our original-research submissions decreased more than 15 percent compared to the previous year.

IMPLEMENTATION

The governing board’s approval of the fee proposal in November 2010 was great news. The bad news was that it left us little time to actually implement a system for charging fees by the target date of January 1. Fortunately though, as mentioned earlier, our manuscript tracking system, Editorial Manager, had just recently introduced Commerce Manager (CM). CM was designed to implement various fee structures and business models seamlessly into the manuscript submission process. Using CM, our authors were required to pay the $75 submission fee via PayPal or credit card as one of the final steps of submission. Authors could also be invoiced for page charges through the system via email and subsequently pay online once their papers were published. We determined that this software was both our best and most convenient option for setting up fees by January.

Following a lengthy training session and practice with a test version of our site that incorporated CM, the AGA’s tech support staff established a PayPal account that would transfer the fees to the AGA. This process provided some
unexpected snags, as we did not consider that the version of PayPal we licensed for submission fees was different from a version we had previously licensed for other accounts. It took us almost right up to the end of December to sort out the logistics. Nevertheless, we were able to activate CM as part of our submission site, on schedule, on New Year’s Day, 2011.

CHALLENGES
Once CM was activated, it did not slow down the editorial office’s processing of new submissions at all. However, a few other recurring challenges and issues arose that initially required a good deal of staff time to resolve. We received a small number of requests for assistance each month from authors who had difficulty paying online. Over time, we began to identify some of the most common causes of author payment errors, which allowed us to troubleshoot and assist authors faster and more efficiently:

- **Author enters wrong billing information;** usually incorrect credit card info, or info that doesn’t match what was already stored in their PayPal account.
- **Credit card processing delay;** on rare occasions, authors will be automatically notified that payment was complete, but because the funds did not fully transfer right away, are prohibited by the system from completing submission for another 24 hours or so.
- **Author’s country is not supported by PayPal;** we were told by a PayPal representative in spring 2011 that a small number of nations are blocked from the PayPal system due to persistent fraud and credit issues. In those cases, we have to arrange for those authors to pay through the AGA accounting department offline. So far this has only affected two or three authors.

Even though authors receive a confirmation email from PayPal once they’ve paid, approximately two-to-three (primarily international) authors each month request a custom invoice with more detailed information for reimbursement purposes. After a few of these requests, our accounting department provided us with a simple invoice template that now only takes each staff member about five minutes to customize.

The most challenging development arose in summer 2011, however. That is when the first papers that were eligible for page fees began to be accepted. Initially, these articles were a small trickle of the monthly total, but now usually all of the 25 to 30 original papers published in each issue are invoiced. Page fee invoices emailed to published authors through CM include a hyperlink that authors can follow to pay online, as they would a submission fee. But, even much more so than with submission fees, these emails don’t sufficiently resemble a true invoice for author records or reimbursement purposes. Therefore, our accounting department usually creates several custom page fee invoices each month, after the first round of invoices are sent through CM. That combined with the dozen or so follow-up emails sent to past-due authors each month, has created an added workload that we are still seeking ways to reduce.

REPORTING
As with most new programs in our publishing portfolio, we are required to provide status updates and outcomes to various bodies including our publications committee and governing board. Given the importance of our author fee program from a financial standpoint as well as from a number-of-submissions standpoint, we provided data to these bodies on a monthly basis soon after the program launched in January 2011.

We looked at a variety of data points for our submission fees, comparing the same time periods in 2011 and the previous year. Specifically, we tracked the total number of submissions per month, the number of submissions broken out by clinical versus basic science and international versus domestic origin, and the amount of revenue generated. This careful monitoring allowed us to safely state that although submissions dropped somewhat, the decrease was not significant—and in fact, it came nowhere near the cutoff threshold. Additionally, we noticed a downward trend in the number of clinically oriented submissions and in the number of submissions from abroad. Again,
these decreases were slight and our leadership remained unconcerned.

We intend to continue tracking this information during the second year of the program to see if the original trends remain or if any new trends emerge. Our major objective with this tracking is to ensure that we’re not simply collecting revenue at the expense of precipitously declining submissions—from any category.

RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS
Somewhat to our surprise, feedback we have received from authors about the new fee structure has largely been neutral. While it’s safe to assume no one is thrilled about the expense and extra steps of paying fees, the editorial office has received relatively few complaints that the policy is unfair or unnecessary. It gradually became clear that most authors paying our submission and page fees were being reimbursed by their institutions or funding agencies. The number of authors who have complained that the fees are cost-prohibitive is in single digits, and they were mainly authors who were from developing nations—in those cases, based on the World Bank’s guidance on which nations are considered developing, we waive the fees.

In the end, the decision to implement submission and page fees for Gastroenterology has proven a success and provided the AGA with a surge of valuable new revenue, while the headaches of implementation have mostly long since subsided.
Whistling in the Dark: Implementing QR Codes into Your Journal

By Meghan McDevitt, GIE: Gastrointestinal Endoscopy, Editorial Assistant

QR codes (short for Quick Response codes) are those Rorschach inkblot-type squares you may have noticed popping up on everything from magazine advertisements to ketchup bottles. They are a type of barcode that when scanned, send users to a URL that is programmed into the QR code. Anyone with a smartphone or tablet has the capability to scan a QR code and link to its contents almost instantaneously.

QR codes can link to anything that contains a URL, so the possibilities are nearly endless as to what happens when a user scans a code. For example, they can link to videos, coupons, advertisements, websites, or social media pages. The best part about QR codes is that they are free and simple to create and are exceptionally easy to use.

So, how would QR codes benefit a scientific or medical publication? In GIE, many of our articles include videos, which are uploaded to the GIE website. If a subscriber is reading through the print version of GIE and wants to view the accompanying video, he or she must logon to the website, search for the article, find the video, and wait for it to play. We thought that QR codes would be a great way to integrate technology into our print publication and seamlessly link our readers to online content.

Selecting a QR Code Generator

After some initial research on QR codes, we set about finding the right generator to suit our purposes. A quick Google search revealed hundreds of options with various extras, prices, and pros and cons. We settled on Delivr, a free service that provides basic analytics and a simple dashboard that keeps track of every QR code created. While this works for us, we recommend exploring the options out there to find the one that works best for you and your journal. Most generators offer basic services for free but may charge fees to view analytics or to produce more creative codes (changing the color or embedding an image inside the code).

Choosing Content

At GIE, we decided to use QR codes with accompanying article videos and our supplementary author interview series. Decide what you want the QR code to link to—a video, a blog, an editorial? Just remember that scanning a QR code should add value or provide a call-to-action, so don’t just link users to your homepage. QR codes and any accompanying text should be clear about what happens when the code is scanned. (See Figure 1 for an example from GIE.) Finally, make sure that users are directed to a smartphone-friendly destination. Nothing is worse than having to scroll from one side of the screen to the other while trying to read a website not enabled for mobile devices.

Creating Codes—the Process

We had to re-work our production schedule to create QR codes each month before our compile date. We take the video in question (an article video or author interview) and put it on our YouTube account. The videos are uploaded as Unlisted until the issue is released; that way, no one can view or search for the video unless they have the link (contained in the QR code). Once the article is published, the video is made public to encourage traffic through searches (the QR code continues to link to the video).

Once there is a URL for the video, it’s a simple process to copy and paste the video URL into Delivr to create the QR code. The code itself is downloaded as a .png file and saved with the article ID number. These .png files are then sent to our Issue Manager, who typesets it at compile, along with the blurb that explains what it is and how to use it.
Ignoring the time it takes to upload a video to YouTube (which can take some time depending on the file size), a QR code can be generated in a matter of seconds and you can be scanning it with your smartphone and linking to content immediately.

**Tracking and Analytics**
Delivr offers basic analytics and a simple dashboard that collects and organizes every QR code created. This allows us to see how many views each code has had, where the code was scanned, and what type of device was used. Since implementing QR codes into GIE in February 2012, our usage has grown slowly but surely. And it’s fascinating (if slightly creepy) to see that a user in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil scanned a particular author interview on August 9 at 3:55pm using an Android device.

**Simple, Fast, and Free!**
You may have noticed a slight repetition of two ideas: ease of use and simplicity of creation. Using one of the many available generators, you can create a QR code in less time than it takes to read this article. Once you’ve decided on the content that the code will link to, there’s no good reason not to start using them! With the increasing prevalence of smartphones and tablets and the ever quickening pace of technology, QR codes are a simple tool that bridges the gap between hardcopy publications and online content.

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**Use your mobile device to scan this QR code and watch the author interview. Download a free QR code scanner by searching ‘QR Scanner’ in your mobile device’s app store.**

**Figure 1**
What Good Old Days?

by Deborah Bowman, MFA

I have an iPad. I also have an iPhone. I also have a Kindle. Good lord, my purse is heavy!

The thing is, I’m not a 20-something youngster. I’ve reached the age where I’m supposed to be getting set in my ways, complaining about those new-fangled inventions, reminiscing about the good old days when we had record players and clotheslines, and yelling at neighborhood kids to get off my lawn.

Ok, I’ve been tempted to do that last one, but for the most part, I find this to be an exciting time to be alive. True, my house is full of books—I have loaded shelves in every single room—and I love the sight, feel, and smell of them; I reach for them every day. But yes, I’ve taken the leap to an e-reader as well. Here, in my experience, are the top 10 ways that e-readers triumph.

1. **Travel**—My Kindle currently has 240 books on it, including fiction, non-fiction, reference, poetry, and drama. Traveling with more than one or two physical books is cumbersome, and you are left with little choice when you have a chance to read. The Kindle has a screen that allows you to read easily in sunlight, as well. I have read on the beach in Jamaica without any sunlight glare.

2. **Built-in features**—You can change the font size; set bookmarks; write your own notes, which you can keep for your own use or share with friends via Twitter or Facebook; and access the built-in dictionary at any time just by moving the cursor to the word in question.

3. **Free books**—Some of the free books are by new, unknown authors (and yes, some are really bad), but many classics are free. Yes, free. What a thrill it is to search for books by authors like Charles Dickens, Mark Twain, Bram Stoker, or Charlotte Brontë and find out that you can get their work without paying a penny. Even with newer books, most (though not all, inexplicably) are less expensive when you buy them electronically. In addition, you can search on New York Times Best Sellers, New and Noteworthy books, or allow the device to suggest books it thinks you might like. (Yes, I shuddered when I typed “it thinks.”)

4. **Ease of shopping**—I adore bookstores; I shop in them regularly and I hope they never disappear. But picture this: you are reading a magazine like *Time* in the middle of the night and come across a book review. You realize this is a book you would like to read, but you know you won’t get to a bookstore for several days or longer. When you do get to the store, you can’t, for the life of you, remember the title or author of the book you wanted to buy. Instead, you could have reached for your e-reader, searched for the book, downloaded it, and begun reading it, all in less than 5 minutes, without even getting out of bed (assuming that you keep your e-reader within reach of your bed). This advantage also comes into play if you are out with friends or at a conference when you hear about a book. You can get it right then and there, while you are thinking about it.

5. **Book research**—Maybe you don’t want to buy; you are just driving yourself crazy trying to think of the title of the Jane Smiley book that is a modern version of King Lear. Look up Jane Smiley…voila! *A Thousand Acres!* (Great book, by the way.)

6. **Magazines**—Face it; e-reading is the future. I don’t know whether print will go away completely, but more and more magazines and newspapers are available via e-reader, and
they are uploaded to your device automatically when they become available.

7. **Games**—Want to take a break from reading? My Kindle has over 300 games that can be downloaded and played at any time.

8. **Blogs**—Kindle currently hosts over 12,000 blogs. Most charge a 99-cents-per-month subscription, but if you’d like a Zen thought of the day delivered to your e-reader or want to follow someone’s thoughts on vegetable gardening or what Kim Kardashian is wearing, it’s worth it.

9. **PDFs**—I had my Kindle for several months before I realized I could email PDFs to myself and they would appear on my reading list alongside my books. When I find an article that I want to read later, whether for work or for fun, I can email it to my Kindle address and it waits for me there.

10. **Multi-media**—Talk among publishers increasingly involves multi-media. Published material will include link-outs, music, videos. I know...sometimes you just want peace and quiet with you and your book. You can do that, too. It’s all about options.

The world today is like a swimming pool with no cover; it’s full of all kinds of random things that have fallen in. But if you find an empty space where you can splash around, you can have a great time. This is the most exciting period in history to be a part of publishing. I can’t wait to see what happens next.

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**Finish this Sentence....**

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

**As an Editor, I feel like Alice in Wonderland when...**

…I ask the editor-in-chief “Would you like option A or B” and he says “Yes.” (Erin Dubnansky)

…the Editor-in-Chief says, “All ways are my way.” (anonymous)

…authors don’t follow the manuscript author guidelines. (quoting the Red Queen, “Off with their heads!”) (Wendy Krank)

…the Production Editor starts to sing, “You’re late, you’re late, for a very important date.” (anonymous)

…I receive the revised version of a manuscript, which is in poorer condition than the initial submission. (Ira Salkin)

…the reviewer comments are reminiscent of Tweedledum and Tweedldee (Diana Epstein)

…our authors become curiouser and curiouser. (anonymous)

…I’m tired of feeling only 3 inches high. (anonymous)

For next month, answer the following question. Your answer can be either funny or serious.

**The best part of the North American ISMTE conference was...**

Email me with your answer at dbowman@asge.org, and it will be published in next month’s issue of EON.
Changes in authorship
(a) Corresponding author requests addition of extra author before publication

1. Clarify reason for change in authorship
2. Check that all authors consent to addition of extra author
3. If all authors agree:
   - Get new author to complete journal’s authorship declaration (if used)
   - Amend contributor details (role of each contributor/author) if included
   - Proceed with review/publication
4. If authors do not agree:
   - Suspend review/publication of paper until authorship has been agreed by all authors, if necessary, via institution(s)

Note: Major changes in response to reviewer comments, e.g. adding new data might justify the inclusion of a new author.

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Changes in authorship
(b) Corresponding author requests removal of author before publication

Clarify reason for change in authorship

Check that all authors consent to removal of author

All authors agree

Amend author list and contributor details (role of each contributor/author)/acknowledgements as required

Proceed with review/publication

Authors do not agree

Suspend review/publication of paper until authorship has been agreed

Inform excluded author(s) that if they wish to pursue the matter they should do this with their co-authors or institutions rather than the editor

Most important to check with the author(s) whose name(s) is/are being removed from the paper and get their agreement in writing.
Changes in authorship
(c) Request for addition of extra author after publication

- Clarify reason for change in authorship
  - Ask why author was omitted from original list – ideally, refer to journal guidelines or authorship declaration which should state that all authors meet appropriate criteria and that no deserving authors have been omitted

- Check that all authors consent to addition of extra author
  - All authors agree
    - Publish correction
  - Authors do not agree
    - Explain that you will not change the authorship until you have written agreement from all authors
    - Provide authorship guidelines but do not enter into dispute
    - All authors agree
      - Publish correction if needed
    - Authors still cannot agree
      - Refer case to authors’ institution(s) and ask if/they to adjudicate
      - Publish correction if required by institution(s)

To prevent future problems:
(1) Before publication, get authors to sign statement that all listed authors meet authorship criteria and that no others meeting the criteria have been omitted
(2) Publish details of each person’s contribution to the research and publication
Changes in authorship
(d) Request for removal of author after publication

Clarify reason for change in authorship

- Author(s) gives acceptable reason for change
- Author(s) alleges fraud/misconduct

Check that all authors agree to change (including excluded author)

- See flowchart for fabricated data
- Author(s) has difference in interpretation of data

Suggest author(s) put views in a letter and explain you will give other authors a chance to respond and will publish both letters if suitable (i.e. correct length, not libellous)

- Author(s) writes a letter
- Author(s) does not agree to write letter (or writes something unpublishable)

Contact other authors explaining what is happening

- Other authors submit response
- Other authors do not wish to respond

If author insists on removal of name and other authors agree, then consider publishing correction

Publish both letters
Publish minority view letter

Ask why author wishes to be removed from list – refer to journal guidelines or authorship declaration which should state that all authors meet appropriate criteria.
Ask if author suspects fraud/misconduct

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What to do if you suspect ghost, guest or gift authorship
(see also flowcharts on Changes in authorship, as such requests may indicate the presence of a ghost or gift author)

- Review acknowledgement section and authorship declaration (if supplied)
  - and/or*
- Send copy of journal’s authorship policy** to corresponding author and request statement that all qualify and no authors have been omitted (if not obtained previously)
  - and/or*
- Request information (or further details) of individuals’ contributions***

** Note: initial action will depend on journal’s normal method of collecting author/contributor info

*** Note: Marusic et al. have shown that the method of collecting such data (e.g. free text or check boxes) can influence the response. Letting authors describe their own contributions probably results in the most truthful and informative answers.

- Authorship role missing (e.g. contributor list does not include anybody who analysed data or prepared first draft)
  - ‘Ghost’ identified
  - Suggest missing author should be added to list

- Listed author does not meet authorship criteria
  - ‘Guest’ or ‘gift’ author identified
  - Suggest guest/gift author(s) should be removed/moved to Acknowledgements section

- Satisfactory explanation of author list

- Doubts remain/need more information
  - Try to contact authors (Google names for contacts) and ask about their role, whether any authors have been omitted, and whether they have any concerns about authorship
  - Suggest missing author should be added to list
  - ‘Ghost’ identified
  - Try to contact authors (Google names for contacts) and ask about their role, whether any authors have been omitted, and whether they have any concerns about authorship

- Proceed with review/publication
  - Review your journal’s instructions to contributors and submission forms to ensure clear guidance and prevent future problem

** Note: including clear guidance/criteria for authorship in journal instructions makes it easier to handle such issues

*** Note: Marusic et al. have shown that the method of collecting such data (e.g. free text or check boxes) can influence the response. Letting authors describe their own contributions probably results in the most truthful and informative answers.

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• Industry-funded study with no authors from sponsor company (this may be legitimate, but may also mean deserving authors have been omitted; reviewing the protocol may help determine the role of employees - see Gotzsche et al. and commentary by Wager)

References

Calendar of Events

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

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

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

Getting the Most from Journal Publicity
October 25, 2012
http://www.alpsp.org

Beyond the Rhetoric: New Opportunities in Open Access
November 20, 2012
http://www.alpsp.org

Editorial Manager User Group Meeting
December 10, 2012
London, UK
Presprint Manager User Group Meeting
December 11, 2012
London, UK
http://www.editorialmanager.com/

Project Management for Publishing
December 11, 2012
http://www.alpsp.org

2013 European Meeting of ISMPP
January 22–23, 2013
London, UK
http://www.ismpp.org/

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