Starting a Fully Open Access Journal: The Academy-Owned Publishing Guide is designed to help researchers and research institutions understand Open Access (OA) journals and when transitioning one or more titles to a fully-OA publishing model. It also served as a guide to practice for beginners and scholars who are seeking to understand the peer review process, editorial and publishing processes, journal publishing workflows and scale, journal promotion and discovery strategies to attract readers and authors, coordinating a successful special issue, Google Scholar Indexing, Scopus Indexing Registration Process, Web of Science Core Collection Indexing Registration, Journal Management Practices Tales from the Trenches, launching a new journal, and identifying the right journal submission.
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Atianashie Miracle A. has worked as a research analyst for Hightail Consult Limited in Accra, Ghana, and as a Publishing Assistant in a peer-reviewed journal for the Catholic University College of Ghana. Chukwuma Chinaza Adaobi is the founder of Medicine Communication and Research Portals, which provides news, and consulting services on health.

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ACADEMY-OWNED PUBLISHING GUIDE

LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing

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ABOUT THE BOOK

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This book informs us that the ability to pivot and create a new route when things don't go as planned is what creativity is all about. In order to demonstrate the creative process, we utilized the hero's journey as a metaphor. It explores the concept of creation not as a one-time event, but as an ongoing process packed with unique discoveries and limitless opportunities. Open access journals and peer-reviewed academic journals are faced with the same issues, which we've seen and documented. Because of this, we have written this self-taught handbook to instruct you in the most efficient way possible.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Atianashie Miracle A. has worked as a research analyst for Hightail Consult Limited in Accra, Ghana, and as a Publishing Assistant in a peer-reviewed journal for the Catholic University College of Ghana. He has also worked as a Data Operator, Course Team Writer, and Turnitin Plagiarism Software Evaluator for numerous research institutes and as one of His Illustriousness's inspection services specializing in Academic Journal Management and Software Development. He is currently working as a Neural Network Tutor, Freelance Writer, Lecturer, and Consultant and holds honorary fellowships, workshops, and conferences at various universities. Miracle Research focus on Public Health Technology, Big Data Interpretation, Testing and Penetration, Business Intelligence, Content Management, Neural Network, Transitions and Trajectories, and Image and Video Steganography with Cryptosystems.

Chukwuma Chinaza Adaobi is the founder of Medicine Communication and Research Portals, which provides news, consulting services and perspectives on health. She speaks nationally and internationally on topics related to health professionalization; she is a distinguished researcher; she received the Best Research Award for her contribution and Honorable Achievement in Innovative Research from the International Research Awards for New Science Inventions (NESIN 2021 Awards). The prize is given in recognition of her outstanding contributions to scientific research and publishing. Adaobi research interest include Symptom Science, Clinical Judgment and Decision-making, Wellness, Self-Management, and End-of-life and Palliative Care.

FOREWORD

It was one Wednesday afternoon, very busy at the lecture theatre, and I was called to the Vice Chancellor's office. There I met Atianashie Miracle and Chukwuma Chinaza Adaobi. I recalled, "Dr. Agyepong, these scholars have been tasked to provide some assistance to reactivate our journal which has been dormant for years, please come on board," said my VC, Prof. Kwadwo Adinkrah-Appiah. I initially thought they were not academically endowed, as I perceived them to be too young and just being curious. Little did I know that Miracle and Chukwuma had the qualities and competence in research and innovative analysis, and this was unveiled after working with them for a couple of months. This reminded me of the adage "don't judge the book by its cover".

I am therefore honored and had no hesitation as a senior lecturer of Pharmaceutical Sciences to write the foreword of this self-explanatory handbook which serves as a guide to young scholars seeking to understand the peer review process and journal publishing workflows. The book is engaging, easy to read aloud for emphasis, and contains noteworthy sayings that can serve as affirmations, thought starters, or calls to action. I enjoyed reading this book because it underscored for me the relevance and practicality of managing a peer review journal in a more professional and scholarly way.

The book titled "Starting a Fully Open Access Journal" is an academy-owned publishing guide designed to help researchers and research institutions understand Open Access (OA) journals and transition one or more titles to a fully-OA publishing model. It covers Google scholar indexing, Scopus Indexing, web of science core collection indexing registration processes, journal management practices, tales from the trenches, launching a new journal, and identifying the right journal for submission. The book solves the challenges and problems which are commonly faced by open access journals and peer-reviewed academic journals. Hence, this self-taught handbook is written to guide you in the most efficient way possible.

Nicholas Agyepong, PhD
Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences.
Sunyani Technical University, Ghana.
August, 2021

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INTRODUCTION

Open access is a broad international movement that seeks to grant free and open online access to academic information, such as publications and data. A publication is defined 'open access' when there are no financial, legal or technical barriers to accessing it - that is to say when anyone can read, download, copy, distribute, print, search for and search within the information, or use it in education or in any other way within the legal agreements. Open access is a publishing model for scholarly communication that makes research information available to readers at no cost, as opposed to the traditional subscription model in which readers have access to scholarly information by paying a subscription (usually via libraries). One of the most important advantages of open access is that it increases the visibility and reuse of academic research results. There is also criticism, and the aspect of quality deserves extra effort. The principles of open access are set out in the Berlin Declaration on Open Access to Knowledge in the Sciences and Humanities (2003). This declaration has been signed by many international organizations for academic research, including all Dutch universities and research organizations.

Are you working with a scholarly society or institution starting a fully Open Access (OA) journal or thinking about transitioning one or more titles to fully-OA publishing models and wondering where to begin? You're not alone. As efforts to realize an open online scholarly communication ecosystem become more prevalent and increasingly urgent across disciplines in response to funder mandates, many publishers are eager to dip their toes in the OA waters. And there's no question that now is a great time to initiate OA pilots, with more potential journal models and time and cost-saving digital publishing opportunities to explore than ever. But moving from ideation to execution can be tricky. If you're starting a journal from scratch, there are countless aspects of publication development to consider from defining the journal's aims and scope to establishing its editorial board. And even OA flips require revisiting fundamental elements of journal plans, with financials chief among them.

Article I

WHEN TO FLIP AN EXISTING JOURNAL AND WHEN TO START A NEW ONE

"To flip or not to flip?" that is usually the first question for organizations with active journal programs to answer when exploring OA publishing options. In this section, we'll cover what "flipping" journals to OA means and how to determine when to flip titles and when to embark on journal launches. **If you're not working with existing journals, you can go ahead and skip this part**.

The term "journal flipping" refers to transitioning one or more paywalled titles to an OA publishing model. As noted in the introduction, this guide focuses on fully-OA publishing, or when a journal makes all of its articles freely available to read immediately upon publication under an open copyright license (e.g., CC BY). Fully-OA publishing is different from hybrid OA, where a journal has a mix of subscription and OA articles. Fully-OA titles are often referred to as "Gold" or "Diamond" OA, with the latter distinguishing journals that are both free to read and free to publish in. Though publication charges are not inherent to "Gold OA." In recent years, many publishing organizations have started testing journal flipping approaches. The 2020 Society Publishers Accelerating Open Access and Plan S (SPA-OPS) project represents one of the most expansive initiatives to bring together societies and university libraries to explore viable OA transition options.(Niles et al., 2020)

Flipping existing journals has many benefits, including starting OA publishing efforts with a:

1. Clear space in the marketplace to fill
2. Built-in journal readership/following
3. Established journal reputation and impacts (e.g., Journal Impact Factor, altmetrics tracking, etc.)

Your organization's ability to flip any journal to OA will depend on buy-in from all of its publishing stakeholders. If you're working with an external publisher partner, you'll have to present the idea to them. If that publisher is not interested in moving to an OA model, then you may have the option to embark on an OA flip on your own or with the help of a new partner. For example, some mission-driven university presses are open to working with/launching new OA titles. But be sure to read the fine print of any contracts you have. Many corporate publishers require organizations to sign over the rights to their journals when they enter a publishing agreement, essentially transferring journal ownership to the publisher. If you find yourself in this situation, starting a new journal is likely your only option for OA publishing. Since the mid-1990s, a growing number of journal editorial teams and some scholarly societies have left paywalled titles with corporate owners to start OA alternatives. Such instances have been coined “journal declarations of independence.”

Of course, beyond journal ownership, finances are usually the primary concern in any conversation about transitioning subscription titles to OA. Scholarly societies and university presses that depend on subscription revenues to support their organizations will have to weigh the potential of different OA funding options. And they may need to seek additional alternative income streams to make a sustainable transition. In some cases, launching a new title may be a more viable entrée to OA if your team needs time to explore transition approaches that require changes to your overall organizational business model like Transformative Agreements (TAs). We dig into OA funding models in the section below.

In a 2021 CHORUS Forum recap, publishing consultant David Crotty stated the following helpful basis for defining sustainability: “generating enough revenue to support the services you offer, and to provide some level of surplus to both allow your organization to thrive and to continue to maintain and develop more publishing services.”

Overall, when deciding between flipping journals to OA or launching new titles, teams need to think about their long-term publishing goals and available resources, not only in terms of funding but also bandwidth. If your team has the resources and desire to expand your journal program, launching a title may offer the dual benefit of being able to serve a wider readership and pilot a new OA model in isolation. For example, when the American Society of Clinical Oncology was developing plans for the *Journal of Global Oncology,* they decided to use it as an opportunity to try fully-OA publishing under a pilot funding model separate from their other titles. However, if your team is already struggling to maintain the journals you have, starting another one is not likely to be your best option. (Bjork & Korkeamaki, 2020)

Article II

STARTING AN OA JOURNAL MAKE SURE YOU HAVE A NICHE TO FILL AND COMMITTED EDITORS

If you are not in a position to flip an existing title, you can always start a new OA journal instead. You obviously don't want to launch a journal on a whim. Be sure to determine if and where there is a need in your discipline for a new journal to fill either by: introducing a title on an underrepresented topic or in an area where there are no OA options or offering a better publishing experience than existing journals. For example, you might aim to provide a faster time to decision or produce articles in more modern digital formats.

Renowned mathematician Timothy Gowers explained how he identified a niche for his academic-led journal, Advances in Combinatorics, in a publication launch statement: "the rough level that Advances in Combinatorics is aiming at is that of a top specialist journal such as *Combinatorica*. The reason for setting it up is that there is a gap in the market for an 'ethical' combinatorics journal at that level that is, one that is not published by one of the major commercial publishers, with all the well-known problems that result. (Kulczycki et al., 2020)

If you've determined there is a niche for your new OA journal to fill, it's time to start compiling its editorial team. As founding members of a journal, bear in mind that the flagship editors will have to be prepared to handle tasks touching ALL aspects of journal operations. Founding editors must be ready to take on everything from submission and peer review process development to supporting early publication promotion. Even if your organization has dedicated publishing staff, any journal launch will require all hands-on deck. So be sure the editorial team you build has the time and ability to take on this commitment.

With a publication niche and team established, you can take the first steps towards setting up your journal. We recommend creating an initial draft of your journal's "aims and scope" to start (i.e., the primary goals of your journal and the research topics it will cover), which you'll want to include on the About page of your website. You should be able to condense your aims and scope into a single overview paragraph.

Below are overview paragraph to be considered for your journal's aims and scope. Areas that may warrant more detail include:

1. Fields/subfields that your journal covers (note whether articles must fit within a subfield or can be of general interest)
2. The nature of the research you seek: practice-oriented, theoretical, or either
3. Selection criteria: such as originality, interdisciplinary interest, timeliness
4. Types of content your journal accepts (e.g., original research articles, book reviews, etc.)

In addition to formalizing your journal aims and scope, now's the time to pick a title for it and apply for an International Standard Serial Number or ISSN. An ISSN is a unique 8-digit code used to identify print or electronic media. Your ISSN will make it easier for discovery services to find and index your journal, as well as signal to readers the seriousness of a publication. Getting closer to publishing, you'll also need to apply to register Digital Object Identifier (DOIs) for your articles through an official agency. Registering DOIs for articles with accompanying metadata will create persistent links to them and help you expand their reach. Many indexing services require journal articles to have DOIs, and some discovery services use DOI registration metadata to find content.

Article III

FIND THE BEST FUNDING MODEL FOR YOUR OA JOURNAL FLIP OR LAUNCH

Now, to the big question, how can your organization sustainably fund new or flipped OA journals?

What's become increasingly apparent in the development and analysis of OA funding options is that there's no one-size-fits-all model. As explained by Associate Professor at Hanken School of Economics Mikael Laakso, who published one of the earliest reviews of approaches to converting subscription journals to fully-OA, the best OA funding route for an organization will depend on a variety of internal and external factors. For example, the willingness and ability of an editorial team to take on cost-cutting measures and the national context, such as the availability of long-term OA subsidy options in a country, can both have a significant impact on an organization's OA publishing options.

Journals affiliated with university libraries or departments may have the benefit of receiving institutional subsidization in the form of funding or sponsored publishing tools and services. For example, many university libraries are launching publishing programs and providing resources to faculty interested in starting journals, including content hosting and peer review management support. Journal programs based out of universities may also be eligible for grants to support academy-led publishing efforts.

University press journal programs may also receive institutional funding, but they will likely require additional income streams. And scholarly society publishing programs generally have to come up with independent funding models. In these cases, it may be possible to seek financial support from grants or charitable organizations, particularly to get new titles off the ground, but coming up with self-sufficient funding is essential to maintain journals over time. For example, when ASCO launched the *Journal of Global Oncology* with plans to fund the title via APCs, they used a combination of grants and donations to cover APCs during the first year of publication to attract submissions and build up the journal's following and then moved to an APC-based funding model after. (Bjork & Korkeamaki, 2020)

Your organization will have to assess possible OA routes based on your particular internal and external resources and funding opportunities. The SPA-OPS project identified 27 possible OA journal models to consider (note: not all of them are fully-OA), in the following categories:

1. **Transformative agreements:** Agreements made between a publisher and a library or consortium in which the library or consortium pays a fee to make all of the articles published by researchers affiliated with their organization available fully OA
2. **Cooperative infrastructure and funding models:** Libraries and publishers entering strategic publishing partnerships and co-funding publishing infrastructures and services
3. **Author self-archiving:** Commonly known as the "Green OA" model, where final articles are immediately archived by authors under a CC BY license
4. **Article transaction models:** Author-facing fees fund OA publications such as article processing charges (APCs) or submission fees
5. **Open publishing platforms:** Authors post their articles to open platforms prior to peer review and peer review is then conducted post-publication, usually with some sort of article processing fee (F1000 is an example of this)
6. **Other revenue models:** A variety of alternative revenue streams from crowdfunding to advertising to subsidies
7. **Cost reduction:** Taking steps to streamline publishing operations and use more affordable publishing tools and methods

When it comes to journal funding, remember to also keep in mind the limitations that some models may pose, even if they seem attractive at the outset. For example, APCs can be difficult for disciplines where authors lack designated funding, and they tend to create added administrative work for authors and journals. That's not to say that the APC route can't work for one or more journals at your organization, but rather, if you're considering APCs, you should do the due diligence to ensure most authors will have access to the necessary funds. Using a service like Copyright Clearance Center's to help authors manage OA publishing charges can also make a big difference.

Article IV

DEVELOP OR REVISIT JOURNAL EDITORIAL AND PUBLISHING PROCESSES

Let's move on to publication planning. If you're starting a new OA journal, you'll, of course, be developing its editorial and publishing processes from the ground up. And even if you're flipping one or more journals to OA, you'll need to revisit some aspects of your previous publication plans. Journal flips can also be a great time to identify new ways to streamline operations and lower publishing costs, such as transitioning to an online-only publishing model as the Microbiology Society did in March 2021.

Among fundamental areas of publication planning all teams should consider, whether starting or flipping OA journals, are:

Core journal policies:

You'll need to map out core policies for your OA journal(s), including publication ethics and submission guidelines for new journals (e.g., manuscript formatting requirements like citation style) and copyright policies for new or flipped titles. You can find information on setting up ethical policies and submission guidelines.

When it comes to copyright, bear in mind that even OA journals need to have clear licenses (saying content is fully "open" is not enough). Many recent funder initiatives require that authors or their institutions retain the copyright of their work and that articles be published under a Creative Commons CC BY license or equivalent. funders will also consider CC BY-ND licenses in select circumstances. Once you've decided on a copyright license structure, be sure to include the details in your author guidelines. (Kothari et al., 2014)

Peer review processes:

If you're starting a journal, developing editorial policies and processes will likely take up a large chunk of your launch time. At the highest level, you'll need to outline the type of peer review the journal will use whether it be single-blind, double-blind, or open peer review and the steps you will take to vet incoming submissions. Your peer-review process outline should also include: how you will initially evaluate submissions, the number of reviewers you will invite per manuscript, the number of reviews rounds you will accept (it's a good idea to limit this, and the reviewer feedback you'll expect. All journals should make their peer review policies available on their website.

Even if you're flipping a journal, it's worth revisiting your peer review workflows to look for optimization opportunities to improve your time to publication and free up editorial team bandwidth. Doing so can help your team support other aspects of your publishing program, such as journal promotion or developing new content products that can provide additional income streams for your organization. Be sure to look at all current and potential software options from the point of view of authors and reviewers in addition to editors to evaluate how user friendly they are. On a more technical note, whether starting or flipping a journal, you may also need to establish a plan for collecting and releasing annual peer-review statistics.

Publishing processes:

Whether launching or flipping an OA journal, you'll also need to consider your publishing processes. Journal launches will, of course, entail figuring out a hosting solution, creating a publication website, and making initial archiving and indexing plans. For journal flips, you likely won't need to change any of these publication elements, but, as with peer review, you can look for opportunities to streamline your operations and lower costs. Ways organizations might do this include looking for more efficient digital publishing tools and services and/or working to bridge gaps between peer review, production, and publishing.

When it comes to cutting publishing costs, one of the lowest-hanging fruit opportunities for many organizations with existing journals is eliminating printed issues like the Microbiology Society did. Another benefit of moving away from printing journal issues is that it can enable organizations to adopt digital-first publishing formats, including publishing articles in HTML to provide a better online reading experience and making them available on a rolling basis. The Microbiology Society chose to move to rolling publishing and now makes all of its articles immediately available online in monthly 'open issues.'

Publishing data and reporting:

Also, be sure to figure out ahead of time whatever data you will need to assess the success of your OA initiatives and how to collect it. For this step, you must first choose a source of insights (such as financial records) to monitor your OA journal or program's development and sustainability. As noted by Erich van Rijn, Director of Journals and OA at UC Press, "In the old subscription ecosystem, it was easy to determine whether something was working or not because it all came down to whether it was generating subscriptions. But in an OA publishing ecosystem, all of the data points are changing, and we've got to change how we're evaluating the success of different products."

The financial data your organization requires will, of course, depend on the OA model(s) you employ. For organizations taking transformative routes to OA, such as TA agreements or Subscribe-to-Open (S2O) models, there will also be a need to provide journal program data to institutions and funders. This was discussed during the third 2021 CHORUS Forum. For example, organizations flipping journals via TAs will need to report on the proportion of OA articles they are publishing over time. And organizations using a Subscribe-to-Open (S2O) model will want to collect institutional usage statistics. To promote financial transparency, some funders, like the members of Alition, are also beginning to encourage or require publishers to provide data breaking down the cost of their publishing services and any associated fees. (Gonzalez-Galarza et al., 2020)

Regardless of the OA publishing model you choose, you should ideally also collect readership analytics to determine whether your audience is growing over time and how. This includes article page views, download counts, and referrers. You can even share article-level readership data with authors to help them demonstrate alternative impacts of their work.

Article V

FIND THE RIGHT TOOLS TO STREAMLINE YOUR PUBLISHING WORKFLOWS AND SCALE THEM OVER TIME

The success of any OA journal or program will depend, in large part, on the tools and systems used to run it. As noted in the previous section, during OA journal launches, it's imperative to choose publishing solutions that will be logistically sustainable. And journal flips can also be a prime opportunity to reevaluate your current publishing software and services mix.

Some key considerations when looking for or reevaluating journal tools and services include:

1. **Technical barriers and available support:** It's best to avoid tools with high learning curves or that require advanced technical knowledge unless you have an IT team. For most journals/publishing programs, software that is easy to set up, has minimal upkeep, and that comes with technical support for editors (and ideally authors and reviewers) will be the best option.

2. **Level of manual work required:** Manual tasks can make scaling your journal difficult and increase room for error (especially when you wade into more technical territory like depositing metadata into a DOI registration agency). As your publication grows, look for tools to automate peer-review tracking and affordable services you can use to outsource or automate labor-intensive aspects of journal publishing, such as DOI registration, index deposits, and XML creation.

3. **Gaps between peer review and publishing:** It's important to consider how well journals are set up to move manuscripts from decision to publication. If your team can't easily integrate the peer review, production, and publishing solutions you're using, it may be creating extra work.

4. **Real and hidden costs:** Consider not only the upfront costs of the tools you're using but also the "hidden" costs of your organizations' technical resources and time.

Be sure to outline your organization's specific needs before exploring new or alternate peer review and publishing solutions.

Article VI

DEVELOP JOURNAL PROMOTION AND DISCOVERY STRATEGIES TO ATTRACT READERS AND AUTHORS

At any stage of OA journal publishing, organizations should also work to expand the reach and reputation of their publications to attract more readers and submissions. To do this effectively requires a mix of journal promotion and discovery strategies.

How about we begin with marketing? An increase in the competition for readers has made it clear that marketing is crucial to sustaining a following for a publication. Your team should actively promote new and timely content, calls for papers, and even calls for reviewers on a regular basis. There are many possible promotion outlets to explore, including:

1) Becoming active on social media platforms like Twitter and LinkedIn
2) Starting a publication blog or podcast
3) Setting up an RSS feed or email alerts for your latest content

You can find examples of how different publishers are approaching journal promotion.

https://blog.scholasticahq.com/post/7-examples-of-great-journal-promotion/#blogging-journal-history-of-ideas.

Like when selecting publishing tools and services, keep in mind the real and hidden costs of different promotion channels and aim to select the most efficient mix for your team. Journals that collect publishing analytics can use that data to help inform their promotion decisions by tracking which of their chosen channels are resulting in readers and which aren't.

When starting or flipping an OA journal, there's another aspect of marketing and promotion to consider — authors' awareness and understanding of the benefits of OA publishing. Depending on the level of uptake in your discipline, authors may be more or less versed in the concept of OA publishing. It's a good idea to conduct some market research (e.g., via interviews, surveys, or social listening) to gauge the level of interest in OA among scholars in your field and what steps your team may need to take to help educate potential authors about OA publishing. For example, the

American Physiological Society (APS) recently ran an author survey and accompanying webinar on “Open Access: What Researchers Need to Know Now.”

Moving to content discovery, all journal teams should prioritize article indexing in both mainstream and scholarly search engines and databases. This will require having a solid search engine optimization (SEO) and indexing strategy — topics that require their own blog posts. At the highest level, effective journal search engine optimization and indexing requires making content available in formats that machines can easily ingest and “understand,” including producing HTML articles for SEO and XML article-level metadata for indexing. (Wang et al., 2020)

Journal SEO and indexing can get pretty technical, so you’ll likely want to seek tools and services to help. For example, Scholastica offers a digital-first production service that generates PDF, HTML, and full-text XML article files in a fraction of the time of traditional processes and an end-to-end OA journal hosting platform that includes integrations with discovery services.

Increasing journal awareness and discoverability will open the door to generating bibliometric and altmetric impacts.

Article VII

ORGANIZING A SUCCESSFUL SPECIAL ISSUE [WITH ADVICE FROM A GUEST EDITOR

Amid your academic journal's release of usual articles and issues, it can be nice to change things up occasionally and do something a little special. We're talking about publishing a special issue composed of the latest research on a chosen theme. Periodically compiling special issues is a great way to expand the reach and impacts of your journal by zoning in on novel and timely topics that are sure to pique the interest of readers. Special issues also present a natural opportunity to invite notable scholars in your journal's discipline to serve as guest editors, which can help to raise the profile of your publication. Guest editors can widely promote your special issue via their professional networks and solicit articles from experts they know who are working on related research.

As compared to regular issues, special issues will require some additional planning on the part of your editorial team, mainly around developing a process for working with guest editors. But once you have a system in place, you should be able to organize special issues with relative ease. In this blog post, we're rounding up five tips for running a successful special issue, including advice from Darryl Stephens, Director of the Pennsylvania Academy of Ministry, who has served as a guest editor multiple time. Stephens shares his perspective on how journals can ensure guest editors have a positive experience working on special issues. Let's get to it!

Make an informed topic decision

The success of any special issue begins with its topic. Your chosen topic should be tight in scope, so your special issue remains focused but broad in interest to attract enough relevant submissions and readers. Depending on your journal's discipline, you may have the opportunity to compile special issues from papers submitted for one or more conferences or symposiums throughout the year, which can be a highly effective way to plan relevant special issues. But special issues don't have to coincide with events; you can also use available quantitative and qualitative insights to select a special issue topic. Among ways to find inspiration for special issues include:

1) Reviewing article-level metrics that your journal tracks, such as page views, download counts, and referrals from external websites to identify particularly popular or newsworthy research topics
2) Reaching out to your editorial board, reviewer base, and/or past authors to solicit special issue suggestions via email
3) Posting a call for special issue proposals to your journal website or blog, including the scope of special issue topic areas you accept and how to submit ideas
4) Observing which topics are trending in your discipline on social media, in academic and mainstream news, and at industry events among other outlets
5) Considering influential milestones in your journal's discipline, such as anniversaries of key findings

Guest editors can also help to identify and shape special issue topics. In his most recent experience serving as a guest editor for *Religions*, Stephens said he had the opportunity to guide the direction of the special issue he worked on and felt that it created more value for him and the communities he served. "This special issue allowed me to set the parameters for a conversation about the future of the field of Christian ethics. I was able to cast a vision and invite scholars to join in this conversation," he said.

Time your special issue right

The timing of your special issue can also have an impact on its outcomes, including the guest editors you're able to secure, the volume of relevant submissions you're able to attract, and the reception of your final publication. Be sure that you'll have enough time to manage all of the logistics for your special issue including, finding and inviting guest editors, coordinating peer review, and compiling the final publication around any hard deadlines, such as a conference or anniversary. Keep in mind that guest editors may need quite a bit of lead time to adjust their schedules to accommodate special issue work, and authors will need ample time to learn about the issue and prepare relevant papers.

Even if you don't have any hard deadlines for your special issue, think about how the timing of its release may affect its performance. Ask yourself — will this topic still be timely in one year or even six months? Additionally, consider whether there might be a soft deadline you want to work around. For example, you may want to plan special issues during points in the year when you tend to experience lulls in submissions because they can consist of mostly (or solely) invited articles, reviews, and commentaries. (Sheikhy-Chaman, 2020)

If you don't have any deadlines in mind for your special issue, you can defer to your lead guest editor to set a timeframe for it. Stephens said he was able to decide the timeframe for the last special issue that he worked on and based his decision around diversity and inclusion goals for the publication. "I chose eighteen months, thinking that this would give me the opportunity to recruit diverse voices and perspectives," he said. Ultimately, Stephens said he felt the extra lead time was helpful to an extent, but he would aim to plan future special issues in a year or less. "I set out inviting many women, scholars of color, and persons from outside the US. As often happens, persons of color who showed initial interest were pulled in many competing directions. Scholars of color are tapped for many committees and other responsibilities. Of the eight published articles, two were written by scholars of color, two by women, and two by persons outside the US. Even with the extra lead time I built into this process, it was very difficult to achieve gender, racial, and ethnic diversity. Inspired by MDPI's efficient review and publication process, I will likely choose a nine-month timeline next time I serve as a guest editor."

Make sure your call for submissions is focused

Before going over workflow particulars for your special issue and putting out a call for papers, it's best to first clearly define the scope of your chosen theme among your editorial team and any guest editors you appoint to manage it. A good way to do this is to identify all the sub-topics you'd like your special issue to cover under the umbrella of your chosen special issue theme. Then consider where there may be relevant broader connections between your special issue topic and other topics within or beyond your journal's discipline on which you'd consider submissions.

It's important to maintain a thematic focus throughout special issue planning to ensure the final publication is cohesive and that all articles fall under your journal's overall aims and scope without becoming too specialized. Ideally, your special issue theme should help to facilitate a wider conversation within your field. "The whole is greater than the parts," said Stephens reflecting on what makes a successful special issue topic. "Especially for a journal like *Religions*, which covers a huge array of disciplines, special issues allow scholars to aggregate their work in ways that provide accessibility and fruitful interaction."

Have a clear process for working with guest editors

Another key to organizing a successful special issue is making your guest editor onboarding process as seamless as possible. Generally, journals will invite one scholar to serve as a lead guest editor for each special issue they produce, and they may also seek 2-3 additional guest editors. Keep in mind that your guest editors won't have a lot of time to learn the ins and outs of intricate editorial processes, so aim to provide them with peer review workflows and tools that are as clear cut as possible.

During his most recent experience as a guest editor for *Religions*, Stephens said he appreciated that the journal had a straightforward peer-review process with tools to automate manual tasks, as well as staff editor support. "After I conducted a preliminary review of a submission (sometimes returning it to the author for revision right away), the MDPI portal allowed me to make comments, suggest reviewers, and send it out for review. Potential reviewers were contacted by the MDPI staff and asked to provide either a review within ten days or a list of recommended colleagues who might review the submission. It rarely took more than two weeks to receive thorough, substantive reviews from two scholars." said Stephens. "The author was then given ten days to revise the article. If the article had been recommended for extensive revision, the original reviewers were given the opportunity to offer feedback on the revision. This process was amazingly efficient and produced very substantive and thoughtful reviews." Following the above process, Stephens said most articles were published in under two months. "Every aspect of this process worked well from my standpoint (and from the standpoint of authors I later spoke to)."

If you use a peer review system, you can add guest editors to that platform so they can use its submission tagging and tracking functionality to manage your special issue in a process similar to the one Stephens described. Be sure to make clear to guest editors what you'll expect from them at each stage of peer review and ensure that they will be able to take on that level of commitment, especially if you don't have staff editors who will be helping. Once you have a special issue process in place and your guest editors have been onboard, schedule weekly check-ins to stay up-to-date on the progress of your special issue. (Turnbull et al., 2004)

Promote your special issue via relevant outlets

Finally, the key to any successful special issue is promotion! You should begin advertising your special issue when you issue your call for papers to attract as many relevant submissions as possible, and then you'll of course want to widely promote the final issue once it's released. Use all promotion channels available to you, such as:

1) Journal social media profiles, like Twitter and Facebook
2) Supplementary content outlets (e.g., journal blog, podcast, or YouTube channel)

3) Editor/author/reviewer email lists
4) Announcements section in your current issue

If you work with a publisher that has a marketing team, be sure to also reach out to them for support promoting your special issue via their online channels. Additionally, remember that your editorial board's professional networks are an invaluable outlet for sharing publication news. Remind your editors to mention the special issue in one-on-one conversations and at any events they attend. Be sure to also ask your special issue's guest editors to promote your call for papers among their colleagues both in person and in any relevant forums in which they participate.

To reach the widest readership possible, you may also want to consider making your special issue Open Access if your journal isn't already. In his experience serving as a guest editor for *Religions*, Stephens said the fact that the special issue was OA gave him the opportunity to share it more widely than he would have been able to if it was subscription access. "I really appreciate being able to send the article links out to colleagues and students, knowing that readers will have no trouble accessing this scholarship," he said. "After this experience, I hesitate submitting my work to a journal with a 2–3-year embargo, knowing that colleagues and students will have difficulty accessing my work."

Article VIII

WHY HAVING YOUR JOURNALS INDEXED IN GOOGLE SCHOLAR MATTERS AND STEPS TO GET STARTED?

If you ask any researcher which online outlets, they use to find relevant journal articles, there's a good chance that Google Scholar will be at the top of their list. The 2018 report on "How Readers Discover Content in Scholarly Publications "report found that researchers rated academic search engines as "the most important discovery resource when searching for journal articles," and Google Scholar is among the most widely used free academic search engines available. A survey conducted in 2015 on 101 Innovations in Scholarly Communication also found that 92% of academics surveyed used Google Scholar. (Donthu et al., 2020)

With so many researchers using Google Scholar, it's a search engine that all journal publishers should prioritize. Google Scholar stands apart as one of the most accessible and sophisticated academic search engines available. Inclusion in Google Scholar can help expand the accessibility, reach, and, consequently, the impacts of the articles you publish. Despite the seemingly magical ability of Google to answer any search query with endless results, it's important for publishers to know that the search engine can only index content its crawlers are able to find (more on crawlers below!). Google Scholar also has specific inclusion criteria. If you want all of your journal articles to be added to Google Scholar, you must take steps to ensure that they can be found by the search engine and that Google Scholar recognizes your journal website as a legitimate source. In this blog post, we overview how Google Scholar works, the benefits of Google Scholar indexing, and what you need to know to have your journal articles added to Google Scholar. Let's get started!

What is Google Scholar exactly and how does it work?

Since you're reading this blog post, you likely know about Google Scholar as an academic search tool. But you may not be entirely sure of how Google Scholar processes content or how it compares to Google's general search engine. Before we get into the specific benefits of Google Scholar and its inclusion requirements, let's first take a look at what Google Scholar is exactly and how it works. Like Google, Google Scholar is a crawler-based search engine. Crawler-based search engines are able to index machine-readable metadata or full-text files automatically using "web crawlers," also known as "spiders" or "bots," which are automated internet programs that systematically "crawl" websites to identify and ingest new content.

Google Scholar has access to all of the crawlable scholarly content published on the web, with the ability to index entire publisher and journal websites as well as the ability to use the citations in the articles it has indexed to find other related content. Google Scholar includes content across academic disciplines, from all countries, and in all languages. Recent research, including Michael Gusenbauer's article "Google Scholar to overshadow them all? Comparing the sizes of 12 academic search engines and bibliographic databases," has found that Google Scholar is the world's largest academic search engine, containing over 380 million records.

A common misconception about Google Scholar is that it indexes all of the content it has access to regardless of the content type or quality. This is not the case. Rather, as explained in "Academic Search Engine Optimization (ASEO): Optimizing Scholarly Literature for Google Scholar & Co.," Google Scholar is an "invitation-based search engine." This means that "only articles from trusted sources and articles that are 'invited' (cited) by articles already indexed are included in the database." On its website Google Scholar states, "We work with publishers of scholarly information to index peer-reviewed papers, theses, preprints, abstracts, and technical reports from all disciplines of research and make them searchable on Google and Google Scholar."

In order for your journals to be considered for inclusion in Google Scholar, the content on your website must first meet two basic criteria:

1. Consist primarily of journal articles (e.g., original research articles, technical reports)
2. Make freely available either the full-text or the complete author-written abstract for all articles (without requiring human or search engine robot readers to log into your site, install specific software, accept any disclaimers etc.)

From then your journal website and articles will have to satisfy certain technical requirements, which we explain below. Before we get into that, let's first have a look at some of the particular advantages Google Scholar provides journals and how to determine whether your papers are being featured in the search engine.

Why should I get my journals indexed in Google Scholar?

We've talked about the broad research benefits of Google Scholar, but you may be wondering the specific benefits of Google Scholar indexing for the journals to publish. Google Scholar indexing can greatly expand the reach of your journal articles and improve the chances of your articles being read, shared, and cited online.

A primary benefit of Google Scholar is that, unlike other databases, its search functionality focuses on individual articles, not entire journals. So having your articles indexed in Google Scholar can help more scholars discover the journals you publish when those articles show up in keyword and key phrase searches.

Getting your journal articles indexed in Google Scholar will:

1. Increase the reach of your individual journal articles because more scholars will be likely to find them
2. Give scholars an easy way to gauge how relevant your articles are to their research based on the article title and search snippet you provide
3. Help resurface old articles from the journals you publish — Google Scholar takes citations into account and shows more frequently cited works earlier in search results

For open access journals the importance of Google Scholar indexing is even greater. If you want your content to be accessible, making it freely available isn't enough — you have to be sure that anyone can find your journal articles on the web and that they aren't only available to scholars with access to subscription-based academic abstracting and indexing databases or prior knowledge of your journals (i.e. scholar knows to search for your specific journal website). Google Scholar makes it possible for anyone to freely search for and find relevant scholarly content on the web from anywhere in the world.

How can I tell if my journal is being indexed by Google Scholar?

As noted, Google Scholar doesn't just index all of the content it can access on the web. Rather, it seeks to index content from what it deems to be "trusted" publication websites. If other articles from trusted websites have cited a journal article Google Scholar will know to index it, but any content that is not published on a "trusted" website and that has not been cited by an article already included in Google Scholar will not be indexed right away. In order for Google Scholar to deem a journal website trustworthy, it must follow all of Google Scholar's technical guidelines. Journal publishers should also contact Google Scholar to request inclusion in the index. If you're not sure whether your journals are being indexed by Google Scholar, you can quickly check by searching your journal website domain. (Pulikowski & Matysek, 2021)

(e.g. www.examplejournal.com) in scholar.google.com.

What steps can I take to get my journals indexed by Google Scholar?

If you find that one or more of the journals you publish are not yet being indexed by Google Scholar, you'll need to take some steps to get them added to the search engine.

Google Scholar has thorough Inclusion Guidelines for Webmasters (https://scholar.google.com/intl/us/scholar/inclusion.html) that detail how to get your articles added to the index.

Some steps you may need to take include:

1. Checking your HTML or PDF file formats to make sure the text is searchable
2. Configuring your website to export bibliographic data in HTML meta tags
3. Publishing all articles on separate webpages (i.e., each article should have its own URL)
4. Making sure that your journal websites are available to both users and crawlers at all times
5. Making sure you have a browse interface that can be crawled by Google's robots
6. Placing each article and each abstract in a separate HTML or PDF file (Google Scholar will *not* index multiple articles in the same PDF)

Google Scholar's indexing guidelines can get pretty technical. If your journal or journals are currently hosted on a standalone website that you had custom-built or that you're hosting via an outside provider like WordPress, you'll need to either work with available internal IT resources to make any necessary updates or hire a web developer. (Gusenbauer & Haddaway, 2020)

If you don't want to deal with the technical aspects of getting your journal articles indexed in Google Scholar, you may want to consider moving your journal to a website hosted on a journal publishing platform that can take care of Google Scholar indexing for you. For example, Scholastica is already recognized as a trusted site by Google Scholar so all journals that publish via Scholastica journal websites are automatically indexed with no extra work on the part of the editors. Some journal databases, such as JSTOR or Project Muse, are also indexed by Google Scholar. So, if you publish via a Google Scholar indexed aggregator or database, or if you regularly upload articles to one, you may also be able to have articles added to Google Scholar through it. You'll want to check with any journal hosting platform or aggregator to make sure that they support indexing in Google Scholar.

Article IX

JOURNALS INDEXED IN SCOPUS

Scopus is the leading indexer of scholarly research with an impressive global readership that actively welcomes new contributors as long as they meet strict criteria, of course! Have you been wondering whether Scopus could be a good fit for your journal or journals? And vice versa? If so, read on to learn more about what Scopus has to offer and how you can set about navigating its application process.

Scopus indexing

Going back to basics, applying to have the journals you publish added to abstracting and indexing databases is one of the best steps you can take to reach more readers, authors, librarians, educators, and beyond. Getting journals added to well-known general and disciplinary indexes helps to increase their academic standing and influence, which can, in turn, improve their article citation chances. And many indexes also provide citation counts and readership metrics for the content they cover, making it easier for journals and their authors to track the impacts of articles over time. Since its founding in the early 2000s, Scopus — which describes itself as a "source-neutral abstract and citation database curated by independent subject-matter experts" has been recognized as one of the top research indexes. At the time of writing this blog post, Scopus includes over 25,100 titles from 5,000 publishers, spanning 240 academic disciplines with a staggering 76.8 million core records. Scopus encompasses research across scholarly disciplines but consists primarily of science and technology articles. (Baas et al., 2020)

How to apply to have a journal indexed in Scopus

Now that we've covered Scopus basics, and considerations for if and when to apply, let's get into the nitty-gritty of its indexing criteria. Of course, to maintain a strong reputation, top indexes like Scopus have strict inclusion requirements and will only admit publications that are established and precisely match the needs of their academic audience. Specifically, Scopus has a rigorous selection process overseen by its Content Selection and Advisory Board (CSAB). The CSAB is an international group of scientists who are experts in their respective subject areas. So, what is required for a journal to be indexed in Scopus?

In a nutshell, to qualify for consideration, a journal MUST:

1. Publish peer-reviewed content and have publicly available peer review policies/processes listed on its website
2. Have content relevant to an international readership (Note: Titles matter! For example, if a journal title includes a country name, it will be assumed to be more regionally focused)
3. Provide English-language abstracts and titles
4. Include references in Roman script
5. Be a serial title that's published regularly (i.e., bi-monthly)
6. Have ISSN International Centre registration
7. Have a publicly available publication ethics and malpractice statement (COPE, WAME, ICMJE, and CONSORT all offer helpful templates)
8. In general, Scopus also requires that journals have a publication history of 2+ years

Note: If you have any doubts about whether your title meets the minimum criteria, you can skip ahead and check out the Scopus Title Suggestion.

(https://suggestor.step.scopus.com/suggestTitle/step1.cfm)

Form to give the process a trial run. It allows you to save a draft of your application at any time, and you can return to it whenever you choose.

Preparing to apply

Before committing to the Scopus application process, keep in mind that if and when your journal is ready for review, it'll be measured against several yardsticks spanning five categories as detailed below.

For a successful outcome, be sure to tick as many of these boxes as possible!

1. Journal Policy:

- Include a cogent editorial policy on the journal website and a list of editorial board members with their academic affiliations
- Clearly explain the type of peer review the journal follows on its website (i.e., single-blind, double-blind, open review)
- Demonstrate diversity in the geographical distribution of both editors and authors

- If relevant, the journal should list clear information on OA publishing options (i.e., criteria, costs)

2. Content:

- All journal content should make an academic contribution to the field
- Journal article abstracts should be clear and easily readable
- Published content should be of high quality and conform to the stated aims and scope of the journal
- Articles should be well-formed and demonstrate readability (i.e., correct grammar, appropriate sentence structure, etc.)

3. Journal Standing:

- Demonstrate citedness of journal articles in Scopus
- Demonstrate editor standing for this, you'll need to have URL(s) for online professional information regarding the main handling editor(s) (i.e., a curriculum vitae/resume, institutional homepage, current affiliation and history of affiliations and awards/grants)
- Clearly communicate the journal's publishing organization/its role

4. Publishing Regularity:

- There should be no delays or interruptions in the journal's publication schedule
- The journal should have an uninterrupted publication history of 2+ years

5. Online Availability:

- Journal content should be available online
- An English-language version of the journal homepage should be available
- The journal's homepage should be of high quality (i.e., necessary information is front and center, the page is easy to navigate)

<u>The application process:</u>

Once you feel that you're good to go in terms of Scopus' criteria, it's pretty easy to apply to be added to the index. First, make sure you have your three most recent journal issues or nine articles plus a table of contents in PDF format ready to upload to Scopus as samples. Then head to the pre-evaluation of Scopus submission page. and fill out the form there.

(https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.readyforscopus.com/&sa=D&source=editors&ust=1626373798218000&usg=AOvVaw1KeIkaO5QvH9w5BZfdmQID)

While we don't have the space to list all of the form items in this blog, the following give a flavor of the "yes/no" questions that you'll need to answer:

1. Does the journal have a minimum two-year publication history? (Reminder: this is required)
2. Is the journal peer-reviewed?
3. Does the journal have a DOI?
4. Are the journal's editors' experts in the subject areas it covers?
5. Is copyright and licensing information described on the journal's website?
6. Is the content of the articles consistent with the stated scope and aims of the journal and of high academic quality?
7. Are the tables and figures in articles clear and well configured within the content (i.e., not just copied-and-pasted from Excel)?
8. Is the content of the articles logically structured, easily readable, and understandable?
9. Are the aims and scope of the journal available in English and presented on its website?

Of course, there's no guarantee that your application will be successful, but if your journal meets the criteria detailed in Scopus' evaluation checklist, you should have a good chance of being accepted! Once your application is ready for submission and evaluation by the CSAB, the final step is to submit a completed Title Suggestion form. At this point, you're likely wondering how long it will take to get an answer from Scopus. According to the Scopus website: "This varies. We want to ensure that all content submitted is given the appropriate attention. Things like publication schedule and how you deliver content to Elsevier, after acceptance, can affect the time as well."

The good news is that Scopus allows publishers to track the progress of their evaluation process. If your journal is accepted, you'll be contacted via email by an Engagement Manager who will guide the process from there.

Putting it all together

Clearly, for publishers looking to leverage all the benefits of having their journals indexed, Scopus has a lot to offer not least its reputation for academic rigor and its article-level metrics tracking. And, without doubt, content included in Scopus reaches many of the world's top research institutions. But there's no denying that the application process is exacting. And, as noted, when considering applying to Scopus or any other index, you'll want to weigh its potential benefits alongside other possible options first. Indexing is a long-tail strategy, so prioritizing the best match for your publication stage and needs is paramount. If you're keen to go ahead with Scopus indexing now, you'll probably have further questions that we've not been able to cover here. Be sure to check out the FAQs for Scopus Content Providers page for the most up-to-date application information. (Tennant, 2020)

Article X

HOW TO GET A JOURNAL INDEXED IN WEB OF SCIENCE CORE COLLECTION

For many scholarly publishers, getting their journals added to the Web of Science Core Collection is one of their top indexing goals. Web of Science (WoS) is one of the largest and most reputable global citation databases. Its Core Collection encompasses six citation indexes in the sciences, social sciences, arts and humanities, and collectively contains more than a billion searchable citations spanning over 250 disciplines. WoS is unique in that it indexes all of the metadata within each research output it contains, including every cited and citing reference, creating linkages between the indexed research and the wider scholarly literature. WoS indexing can increase journal discoverability and is also a precursor to getting a Journal Impact Factor.

If you've never applied to have a journal added to the WoS Core Collection before, you likely have *a lot* of logistical questions like: What are the WoS Core Collection inclusion requirements? How does the WoS Core Collection application process work? How long does it take for a journal to be evaluated? And the list goes on! At the original scientific journal board, we've heard many questions from journals using our platform about how to approach WoS indexing. Recently, we reached out to the WoS support team to learn more about what to expect from the WoS Core Collection application and evaluation process. In this guide, we share insights from that outreach and overview what you need to know about getting a journal added to WoS for the first time.

A big thanks to the WoS support team for responding to our questions!

Understanding how WoS aggregates content

Before digging into the specifics of how to apply to WoS Core Collection, let's take a look at how WoS is organized. At the highest level, WoS is a platform that aggregates research from multiple citation databases. The WoS support team explained, "WoS contains both selected content, in Web of Science Core Collections (Science Citation Index Expanded, Social Sciences Citation Index, Arts & Humanities Citation Index, Emerging Sources Citation Index, Book Citation Index, and Conference Proceedings Citation Index), specialty databases also produced by

Clarivate (Biosis Citation Index and Biosis Previews, Derwent Innovations Index, Data Citation Index, Index Chemicus, Zoological Record), specialty databases produced by other organizations and hosted on the Web of Science platform (MEDLINE, FSTA, CABI, Inspec), and multidisciplinary national or regional databases that are also hosted on and integrated with our Core Collection (Chinese Science Citation Database, SciELO, Russian Citation Index, Korean Journals Database, and others in development). In total, over 20 rigorously curated indexes, and 35,000 unique journal sources, along with 100,000 book titles and 200,000 published conference proceedings are part of Web of Science."

With multiple databases nested within the WoS platform, there are different ways for journal's articles to be indexed by WoS. You can check to see if your journal is already indexed in WoS via the Master Journal List. WoS support explained, "Only journals, books, and proceedings that have been selected by our in-house editors are indexed for these products."

Indexing requirements for WoS Core Collection

Before applying to have a journal added to WoS Core Collection, it's important to ensure that it meets all of the selection criteria. Initial WoS Core Collections selection is based on a set of 24 "quality criteria" designed to assess the journal's publishing process and content. All journals, regardless of discipline, are assessed based on the same 24 quality criteria, which include:

1) Basic publication information (e.g., journal title, journal publisher, ISSN, contact details)
2) Article titles and article abstracts in English (note: WoS requires English language bibliographic information for indexing)
3) Presence of a peer review policy
4) Timeliness and/or publication volume
5) Scholarly content quality and relevance
6) Website functionality/journal format
7) Editorial board information including composition and affiliation details
8) Author information including author distribution and affiliation details

Journals that pass all 24 quality criteria are included in the Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI). All journals are also evaluated against four impact criteria — so WoS Core Collection has 28 evaluation criteria in total. The WoS support team explained, the four impact criteria are designed to select for the most impactful journals in a given field of research, using citation activity as a primary indicator. Citation analysis is conducted at the journal level, author level, and editorial board level. At this stage, a comparative citation analysis per category is carried out." Journals that meet *all 28* WoS Core Collection selection criteria are added to WoS Core Collection's flagship indexes based on subject areas covered Science Citation Index Expanded, Social Sciences Citation Index, and/or the Arts & Humanities Citation Index. (Pham et al., 2021)

You can find the complete list of selection criteria on the WoS Core Collection Editorial Selection Process page.

While WoS Core Collection uses the same indexing criteria for all journals, WoS does have subject expert editors and reviews each application in the context of the journal's discipline. The WoS support team said, "our editors are knowledgeable of the way publication and citation behaviors vary in practice in different subject areas. Those differences are taken into consideration." Once added to WoS, journal evaluation for WoS Core Collection is ongoing. So, journals that are not added to one of the WoS Core Collection flagship databases during their initial application review will be regularly reassessed for inclusion and added to appropriate flagship collections if/when they meet the four impact criteria. If at any point, a journal no longer meets the inclusion criteria for any of the WoS Core Collection databases, then, it will be expunged.

WoS indexing for open access journals

If you publish one or more open access journals and wondering how WoS Core Collection indexing may vary for those titles, you should know that there is no difference in indexing criteria or opportunities for OA journals. The WoS support team explained, "only the quality and impact of the content itself is considered, not business model. When selecting, evaluating and indexing journals, Web of Science Core Collection is completely agnostic to publishing model."

It is worth noting that WoS is a subscription-access index, so in order to expand the reach and impacts of research as widely as possible, OA journals will likely want to apply for inclusion in other freely available scholarly databases and indexes as well. For example, all OA journals can apply for inclusion in the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) and there are many freely available discipline-specific indexes, such as PubMed Central for journals in the biomedical and life sciences.

Process for submitting a WoS application and what to expect during the evaluation process

Once you know that your journal meets the inclusion criteria for WoS Core Collection, you can start the application process. The WoS Core Collection application can be found in.

https://mjl.clarivate.com/wos-journal-submission/wos-journal-submission.html

Publishers should review the Electronic Journal Submission requirements on that page to make sure they haven't missed any of the more specific application criteria listed (e.g. "bibliographic information in Roman Script") and then select "Ok" to confirm adherence and continue to the application form.

Once your journal application form has been submitted, WoS will begin its three-part evaluation process, which consists of:

1) Initial triage: to review that the journal adheres to basic publication and best practices (e.g., ISSN, peer-reviewed)
2) Editorial triage: to check publication quality and adherence to bibliographic requirements
3) Editorial evaluation: to review editorial standards this stage also includes assessment for the four impact criteria

The WoS support team said that they communicate with publishers as needed throughout the evaluation process to ensure they have all of the necessary information to conduct a thorough journal assessment. "Our editorial team will interact directly with the publisher and, as needed, the editor and members of the editorial board as we conduct and complete evaluation. Editorial decisions are publisher independent, and the evaluation is done at the level of the named source publication – i. e. a journal, book series, conference proceedings volume, or single-volume book."

WoS Core Collection is highly selective with a 10-12% acceptance rate for the three flagship collections. The WoS support team said that the acceptance rate for the Emerging Sources Citation Index is generally higher. If your journal does not get accepted to WoS Core Collection from your initial application, you can re-submit your application once you've made the necessary publication updates. If a journal fails to meet any of the requirements during the "initial triage" or "editorial triage" stages, they can resubmit their application as soon as they've taken the necessary steps to fulfill the criteria they missed. If a journal fails to meet any of the requirements at the "editorial quality evaluation" stage, they will be required to wait two years to resubmit their application.

Time to get started

When, that was a lot of information! But now you're ready to start the WoS application process. For more detailed information on WoS Core Collection indexing, be sure to visit the Editorial Selection Process website and check out their "Overview of journal evaluation process and selection criteria" PDF guide

https://clarivate.com/webofsciencegroup/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/08/Journal-Evaluation.pdf

Once accepted into WoS Core Collection, the benefits for journals are many, including enhanced journal reputation and discoverability.

Article XI

JOURNAL MANAGEMENT PRACTICES TALES FROM THE TRENCHES

Since the Original Scientific Journals inception, we've spoken with dozens of publications managers and editors to learn about how they approach journal planning and development at the individual title and publishing program level. In this guide, we bring together insights from six experts managing academic journals in STEM, the humanities, and the social sciences on how to:

1) Refine your peer review processes and speed up time to manuscript decision
2) Improve editorial team training and alignment
3) Grow your publishing reputation and attract more quality submissions
4) Make actionable strategic plans to further your broader journal goals

<u>Optimizing your editorial workflows:</u>

For most teams, one of the biggest challenges is always trying to make improvements to the peer-review process to conserve the most valuable resource: time. Whether you're trying to reach a major milestone, such as cutting your time to manuscript decision by half, or you're simply trying to shave off a few hours of editorial work each week or month. More efficient peer review processes mean happier editors, authors, and reviewers, as well as more opportunities to further other journal initiatives, such as cultivating new online promotion channels. It can be difficult enough to make time for all of the manuscripts that have to be marshalled through peer review, let alone analyze and update existing workflows. The primary areas where teams would like to see change can also often feel outside of their control. For example, all editors know the struggle of waiting on referee comments despite sending multiple reminders or having to chase authors for manuscript revisions. It can feel like there's little to be done to alleviate workflow bottlenecks in these types of situations. (Sattari et al., 2021)

The question for most teams isn't whether there are aspects of their peer review process that they could improve, but how to set achievable goals. It can be difficult enough to make time for all of the manuscripts that have to be shepherded through peer review, let alone analyze and update existing workflows. The primary areas where teams would like to see change can also often feel outside their control. For example, all editors know the struggle of waiting on referee comments despite sending multiple reminders or having to chase authors for manuscript revisions. It can feel like there's little to be done to alleviate workflow bottlenecks in these types of situations. Jennifer Mahar, Executive Peer Review Manager at Origin Editorial, has helped journals reach workflow goals big and small. She advises teams to start by identifying workflow bottlenecks at both the points they can and can't directly control, and to then take an iterative approach to finding solutions or ways to mitigate those situations, beginning with the areas they have the most agency over. "There are things that you can control in the editorial office, and then there are things that you can help control," said Mahar. "For example, an area of the process that you have 100% control over is how quickly you complete initial quality checks when new papers come in the door. But once you pass off a manuscript to a journal editor, you don't really have control over how long the next step in the process will take. The main thing at these handoff points is to focus on setting clear parameters."

Mahar said a common struggle for many teams is trying to set new peer review deadlines or requirements without having a full understanding of which areas of their process are actually causing the most significant delays or which have the most or least optimization potential. "Before you decide on any sort of deadlines, you have to audit your current process to see how you're doing. "Dig into why each step is taking as long as it does currently to see what if any improvements are possible," she said.

To help journals identify achievable workflow optimization goals, Mahar said she always starts by digging into the data. "I've found that's the best way to get to your desired result whatever that may be," she said. "You should go through and audit your time for quality checks, assign to editor, peer review, decision, revisions, etc. To determine where you are before you decide where you want to go". Within your peer review system, you should have the ability to figure out, turn by turn, how long your papers are taking to roll into each of these steps."

Susan Altman, managing editor of Global Environmental Politics, echoed the importance of tracking journal metrics. "I keep stats on all of the basic things," said Altman. "I look at the number of manuscripts submitted by year, how many go through peer review, how many are desk rejected, and how many get rejected at the first or second phase of review." Altman recommends that journals also track metrics about their peer reviewers, including average days to complete an assignment by reviewer. Like many editors, one of her biggest struggles is trying to get reviewers to complete assignments on time. For Altman, tracking reviewer turnaround metrics is an easy way to get the big picture of which of her reviewers are the timeliest.

Additionally, Altman tracks all of the review requests that she sends in order to avoid reaching out to the same reviewers too often. “We know that all of our reviewers have a lot on their plates,” she said.

A word to the wise when pulling journal metrics, Mahar advises editorial teams to use medians rather than relying on averages and to track the same data points over time. “Always use medians, so it pulls out useless long data tails,” she explained. “And, of course, always report the same data. You don’t want to ever veer from your core metrics.” Mahar also advises journals to be transparent about their manuscript handling metrics, including time to first decision and total manuscript turnaround time. “Those are KPIs that you really should share with authors. And if you have a great time to first decision for example, if it takes you 25 days that’s something you should be happy to post,” she said. “Some editors don’t want to share manuscript handling time with their authors, but I don’t understand the point of trying to keep it a secret, that won’t serve you any good. I think you should be as transparent as you can.” Overall, tracking journal data and conducting regular operational audits will help your team determine how you’re doing and the best solutions to alleviate current or even potential challenges. Ideally, journals should aim to audit their workflows on an annual or bi-annual basis. “You won’t be able to fix a problem or make an improvement until you know where you stand,” said Mahar. “If you do a nice audit of what’s going on, you’ll know exactly where your time is being taken.

Remember to start where you are. There’s a powerful quote by former professional tennis player Arthur Ashe, “Start where you are, use what you have, do what you can.” In any endeavor, whether it’s trying to level up your tennis game or optimize your journal workflows, focusing on setting goals within your reach without getting overwhelmed by the information, resources, or capabilities, you may not have right away is paramount. You don’t want your team to become overwhelmed by change and simply stick to the same workflow because it’s how things have always been done. We all know that the span between a routine and a rut is just one hop, skip, and a jump away! Early on in your journal optimization efforts, you may not have all of the data you need to identify hyper-granular process improvement goals, and that’s OK. In this case, your initial goal may simply be to start collecting peer review data. Over time, as you assess your journal performance, you’ll also have to think critically about the kinds of improvements you can realistically make without setting your bar too high. For example, if your team is just meeting your current peer review deadlines, rather than setting goals around going faster, you may want to focus on finding ways to more easily hit your existing targets first.

Anita Harris, managing editor of SubStance, said her team has made sticking to their current peer review schedule their number one goal. They're looking at where they can mitigate internal and external time constraints to help volunteer editors and reviewers more consistently turn manuscripts around within their desired timeline. “On a regular basis, we’re really just trying to make sure that manuscripts are being reviewed according to schedule,” she said. “I’m tracking average review time, average days to revision, and things like that. Right now, it’s more about meeting the deadline we have than trying to make it more aggressive.” So, remember to start where you are and to focus on streamlining your existing processes before looking to make new improvements. Help your team get into a solid peer review rhythm and then look for ways to move faster, if possible, not the other way around.

Common peer review bottleneck areas and solutions

Once you’ve audited your current journal processes, it’s time to determine if and where you can implement workflow optimizations. Look for low hanging fruit opportunities to start, and remember to focus on tackling what you can control first and then looking for ways to help what you can’t. Here are some of the main peer-review bottleneck culprits and proven optimizations.

Manuscript screenings:

When it comes to making editorial workflow optimizations, one of the primary areas all journals should look at is their initial manuscript screening process (i.e., technical checks or quality checks done before substantive manuscript review). Quality checks should not significantly draw out a manuscript’s time to first review. Yet, that can become the case if editors front-load too many quality checks steps that could and should be pushed to later in peer review. Early in the submission process, it’s important to stay focused on the primary goal of quality checks to ensure manuscripts meet core criteria (e.g., abstract and complete references), and not get bogged down with too many stylistic concerns. “I think a light touch at initial QC is so important. And knowing how to do that goes back to the numbers, " said Mahar. “You have to dig into your data and look at how many papers you’re rejecting out of hand. If 30 - 40% of your papers are being desk rejected and you’re triaging them first, then your staff is wasting a lot of time on formatting issues.”

To help save quality check time, Mahar said some of the journals she works with have started accepting PDFs for initial submissions. “we tell authors that we don’t care about their separate figure file types. That has helped us, and our authors, save time,” she said. “Of course, this solution will not work for all journals, particularly journals that need figures to be high quality for reviewers like immunoblots. In that case, a PDF might not cut it. So, it's important to think through where you can trim some fat without issue."

Author instructions:

Another area where journals can set themselves up for peer review delays, even before a manuscript is submitted, is their instructions for authors. Journals that have vague or overly complicated instructions for authors are more prone to receiving incorrect or incomplete manuscript submissions that require extra editorial attention. That's why it's so important to regularly assess your instructions for authors. Journals should first ensure that their instructions for authors are easy to find from their homepage — authors shouldn't have to hunt for this! And they should ensure their instructions for authors are in sequential order, so they're easy to follow, using clear language for non-native English speakers. From there, Mahar advises journals to focus on making author instructions as concise as possible. "I think, generally, you have to minimize the number of things you ask authors to do when they first submit. When you have too many specifications, the authors start to get confused," said Mahar. "Then you end up having to send papers back and potentially waste two or three days. I think most journals should minimize the amount of stuff they ask for in the initial submission, ideally keeping it to a page, and then add more formatting instructions in revisions if they have to."

Mahar advises journals to focus on "trimming that fat" in their author instructions, mainly by cutting out unnecessary steps and winnowing down lengthy blocks of text. "Your author instructions should be as simple and straightforward as possible. Of course, use bullets or tables for information, it really helps the reader." She also advises journals to date their author instructions. "If you don't date your instructions for authors, then you'll never know when you last updated them!" When optimizing your journal's instructions for authors, make sure that authors can also easily access any supplementary information they may need to make their submission decision or prepare their paper. This includes your journal conflict of interest statement, copyright policies, open-access policies, figure permissions, and ethical guidelines.

Finally, be sure to clearly state your journal aims and scope to reduce the number of submissions you receive that are outside the realm of your publication. Whether you're constructing or revising your journal's submission page, take the time to carefully read through your aims and scope section to look for potential holes. It's possible that you already have everything covered, but there is also a chance that you've left out information that authors could benefit from. Your aims/scope section should include the following:

1. The mission of your journal • The fields/sub-fields that your journal covers
2. A list of article topics or specific areas of interest to your journal (if applicable)
3. The nature of the research you seek: practice-oriented, theoretical, or either
4. The types of content your journal accepts (book reviews, original research, etc.)

Editorial holdups:

Journals can also experience delays if editors are not adhering to deadlines. Mahar said, in her experience, rather than ignoring deadlines, the issue is usually editors not knowing what's required of them. "One of the biggest things that I've found over the years is often editors just don't know what's expected of them. So, during onboarding, you have to fully train each editor and explain to them the journal's expectations. And then, of course, just know that life gets in the way sometimes, and you have to understand that," she said. Additionally, Mahar said keeping transparent workflow times can be a way to help editors stay on track. "We are very transparent with our editors for one of the journals I work with, and we share everybody's performance stats on a slide. Then we don't even have to talk about it really, the editors see how their peers are doing, and if one editor is taking 45 days to make a decision when everyone else is taking 30 days, they will usually self-correct." Another area to look out for when it comes to editorial processing times is delays caused by authors. "Often, unfortunately, [time is] being taken with authors during revisions. In a case like that, you may have to start requiring authors to get their papers back to you in 30 days. That can be a little tough to do. But, if you're a highly competitive journal, you may have to take that kind of stance," said Mahar.

Reviewer responsiveness:

Finally, one of the most challenging aspects of peer review for journals to control that can make or break their manuscript turnaround times is reviewer responsiveness. What steps can journals take to try to improve their reviewer response rates? Mahar said it's important to start with the numbers. "I would look at the data and first figure out your current rate of agreeance," she said. "If you have a 30% agreeance rate, then you know you should at least double the number of reviewer suggestions from the outset, because you're probably not going to succeed at getting the first two reviewers you ask."

Mahar said, at most of the journals she works with, she asks editors to double the number of reviewers they suggest to avoid delays caused by having to ask for more options. Of course, getting reviewers is just the first challenge. From there, editors have to ensure review comments are submitted in a timely manner and work to cultivate reviewer retention over time. Susan Altman said she's found that the best ways to retain reviewers are keeping assignments simple and to the point, without building in too many supplementary guidelines, and always showing appreciation. "There are only 4 or 5 questions that we ask reviewers to answer," said Altman. "We ask them to comment on the organization of the manuscript, whether or not it's appropriate for the journal, how well the content ties into what's been done in the field before, and how well written it is. We get really thorough reviews that way." After she receives each review, Altman said she makes a point to send a thank you letter acknowledging the reviewer's time and effort.

Note: Journals must, of course, ensure manuscripts have a clear shot at publication before sending them out for peer review reviewers should never be the initial screen for submissions. Many journals have come up with innovative ways to structure their editorial teams and manuscript screening processes to make desk reviews as expeditiously as possible and lighten the workload they place on external reviewers.

Journal policies, procedures, and team alignment

Develop clearly documented journal policies and procedures. At the core of an efficient peer review process is clear editorial policies and procedures. It's important for journals to include high-level peer review policy information on their websites and to maintain more detailed internal policy and procedure documentation that editors can reference as needed keeping up with the latest disciplinary best practices. Starting with your journal website, ensure that you have a clear peer review policy statement overviewing the guidelines and processes your journal follows. This should include an overview of your journal's:

1. Peer review type (e.g., single-blind, double-blind, open review)
2. High-level peer review steps and timeframe (including your revise and resubmit process)
3. Publication ethics guidelines

From there, focus on developing more in-depth internal journal policy and procedure documentation. While documenting editorial processes in detail may seem like a lot of upfront work, particularly if you feel like your team is already well aligned, there are many time-saving benefits to doing so. Documenting your editorial processes will help bring to light current or potential workflow bottlenecks that need to be addressed. It will also create a point of truth for your team to reference as you update journal policies and procedures to meet new requirements. "You should always have a handbook for your editorial office with your journal policies and procedures," said Mahar. "That handbook file should live somewhere it can stay forever, and it should be updated at least on an annual basis. I would suggest making a big document and creating subsections in it with processes and policies by [editorial] role. The handbook is invaluable when onboarding new editors. I think it can also become a tome, so you need to try to keep it a 'handbook light' with highlights."

Journals should ensure they're keeping up with ethical best practices by following the core policies outlined by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), which has many resources editorial teams can link out to in their handbooks, including flowcharts with steps editors can follow in the event that they suspect a common ethical concern, such as duplicate publication or changes in authorship. Additionally, journals should adhere to ethical policies and editorial norms within their discipline. For example, medical journals should follow the recommendations outlined by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE). Other organizations with standards and best practices for upholding publication integrity include the Council of Science Editors (CSE), the European Association of Science Editors (EASE), and CrossRef.

Keep in mind that your editorial processes and documentation may have to evolve rapidly at times to keep up with changes such as new publishing norms or funder criteria. For example, some funder mandates like **PLAN S** contain specific metadata requirements. It's vital to not only verbally communicate these kinds of updates but also document them, with links to supplemental guides as needed, so editors can find the latest information fast. Know the hallmarks of effective editorial teams. What makes some editorial teams more organized and efficient than others? In her experience working with different journals at Origin Editorial throughout the years, Jennifer Mahar says she's come to find that there are certain hallmarks that set apart the best teams from the rest, mainly:

1. Clear editorial roles: Every member of the journal team should have defined responsibilities based on their role.
2. Strong communication channels: Editors should be able to easily communicate what they're working on, handoff manuscripts, and get answers to questions as needed.
3. A foundation of trust: There must be trust among team members, particularly from the editor in chief, so that designated processes can flow smoothly without check-in delays.

Of all the hallmarks described, Mahar said trust is really the key, and it should stem from the most senior editors.

"One of the things that I think Original Editorial prides itself in is that we onboard folks that understand what it's like to work with an editor-in-chief we know that editors have pulls on their time and that what they are doing for the journal is probably only a part of their overall responsibilities, so they really can't start walking too far into the weeds trying to manage on a manuscript-by-manuscript basis. The editor-in-chief needs to trust the journal process and that their team knows what they're doing. In the same way, each of the team members need to trust each other to play their parts."

In order to build a foundation of trust among team members, Mahar says journals should have established processes for onboarding and training new members — again, this is where having clear policy and procedure documentation is key so that editors always know what they're supposed to be doing and where to go if they need help. "Train them and show them exactly what they are supposed to be doing and then trust the process and each individual," said Mahar. Harkening back to her first years as a managing editor for SubStance, Anita Harris said having a clearly defined role and communication channels helped her to find her confidence and trust her journal process. "It can be hard when you're starting out because you don't want to step on people's toes, but you also don't want to ignore things that need to be addressed. I think I've gotten better at asking for things and setting expectations, and I think having clear processes, like ways to send reminders for example, is so helpful with that," she said.

Building up quality submissions and publication reputation:

Take steps to attract more quality submissions. In addition to workflow optimization, all journal teams should be focused on getting more quality submissions. Early-stage journals must, of course, work to develop their reach and reputation to bring in quality papers. And even longstanding journals that have traditionally experienced natural growth must continually take steps to solicit top-quality research to stay competitive. What can your team do to increase the number of quality submissions your journal receives? Below are some steps you can take.

Prioritize journal promotion and seek contributions from top scholars:

Of course, to attract more quality submissions to any journal, you have to regularly promote it. At the highest level, be sure that your editorial team is actively fostering conversations about your journal with fellow academics in person and online — use the power of word of mouth to your advantage. From there, online promotion will likely be your best bet in terms of affordability and reach. Some top options include:

1. Posting calls for papers and new article highlights from social media profiles
2. Building an email list to send journal updates to authors' and readers' inboxes
3. Starting a publication blog to post journal announcements and author highlights (you can even solicit guest blogs from authors!)

Over time, you can use publishing analytics to identify which online channels are working best for your journal. For example, if you find that Twitter is a top referral source, then you know that promotion channel is serving you well. On the other hand, if you're regularly posting journal updates on Facebook and find that Facebook only accounts for a tiny portion of your website referrals, you might want to rethink using that social media outlet and try focusing on another instead. Another great way to build your journal's reputation and consequently attract more top submissions is directly soliciting contributions from notable scholars in the field. Early-stage journals that may have a hard time competing with established titles for original research can do this by seeking short pieces like editorials from leading scholars. In this situation, special issues can come in handy. Publishing special issues can offer a natural opportunity to solicit contributions pertaining to specific subject matters. We cover more on special issues below.

Leverage your editorial board:

Whether your journal was recently launched or it's been around for years, one of the best steps you can take to raise its profile and attract more quality submissions is to invite prominent scholars to serve as editors. If you're still building out your core editorial board, you should work to bring on well-known scholars in the field. For journals that already have an established editorial board but want to foster additional scholarly affiliations, a great way to engage with leading academics is to seek a pool of consulting editors that you can call upon to do a certain number of manuscript reviews per month or year, like Sociological Science. You can also encourage submissions from your consulting editorial board members. Another way journals can broaden their scholarly influence to attract more quality submissions is by inviting notable academics to serve as guest editors for special issues on particular topics of interest in the field. Anita Harris, Managing Editor of SubStance, said publishing special issues has been a great way for SubStance to grow its submission volume. "Running special issues is something we realized we're sort of dependent on at certain times if we're experiencing a lull in submissions because it does ebb and flow," said Harris. "Cultivating special issues has really helped with that, and through them we attract new authors that we might solicit additional articles from."

Focus on author satisfaction:

Finally, one of the best things your journal can do to attract more submissions is continuously working to improve your author experience. In addition to working to streamline your peer review process, be sure to assess all aspects of your submission experience from the author's point of view, including making sure that:

1. Your peer-review system offers an intuitive user experience for authors with easy access to user support
2. You're sending valuable peer review feedback, and limiting revise and resubmit rounds
3. Any article processing charges your journal has been reasonable for scholars in your discipline (if funding open access articles via APCs)

In addition to making your submission and peer review process as painless as possible, your journal can provide added value to authors by helping them promote their published articles. For example, you might post new article highlights on your social media channels and also provide authors with publishing data like article page views and download counts to help them gauge how many readers they're reaching. If authors like working with your journal and feel that it's worth their while, they'll be more likely to submit again and encourage others to do the same.

<u>Make strategic planning a part of your journal processes</u>

Hold journal strategic planning meetings with stakeholders. Operating academic journals entails publication planning on multiple levels. In addition to more tactical editorial planning, it's important for journal managers and editors to consider where their journals fit into their wider publishing program. Journal program leaders need to ask how are our publications supporting broader organizational goals now, and how should they in the future? Determining the answers to these types of questions is where strategic planning comes into play. Dana Compton, Editorial Director for the American Society of Civil Engineers and former Senior Consulting Associate at KWF. Consulting, has worked with various journal programs to help them improve their processes from the editorial level up to strategic planning. She said all journal programs, regardless of size, should aim to have annual strategic planning meetings with their publishing organization leaders. "I think it's important for any publication regardless of size, maybe even more so for smaller organizations because resources are limited. How will one ensure that they're using their resources towards the most appropriate goals?" said Compton. "For example, smaller societies can use strategic planning as an opportunity to look at evidence to understand what their membership wants, what their author base wants, and what their readership wants. From there they can figure out 'here's where we are today' and decide 'here's where we need to go next.'"

Compton said these strategic planning meetings should include publishing organization and editorial stakeholders, to bring different perspectives to the table. "Who's involved in these meetings is journal and organization-dependent, but typically they involve your editor-in-chief (and that editor may have deputy or associate editors that he or she wishes to involve), representatives from your journal or publications committee (if your organization has one — certainly a big share of that committee is society leadership), your publisher (if you have a publishing partner), your executive and managing editors, publications director, marketing director, and other key staff or leadership who have real insights into where the publication should be going," she said. "It's important to involve everyone who will be working towards the plan so that they understand the goals and have a stake in the decision-making process." Among key development areas Compton recommends journals focus on are author and reviewer satisfaction, OA and open data policies, and the current and future role of journals in organizational business development. In the fast-changing publishing landscape, Compton said linking journal and organizational strategic planning is becoming more important than ever. "Changes in OA policies, funder mandates, and open data requirements, for example, are all things that organizations need to be thinking about in terms of how it will impact their journal programs, and that editorial teams need to be thinking about in terms of how it will impact their workflows," she said.

<u>Focus on broader organizational goals</u>

When setting strategic goals, remember to focus on furthering the aims of your publishing program without going into "in-the-weeds" journal workflow audit mode. Strategic planning can touch on the internal workings of publications but should always be centered on reaching broader program objectives rather than refining individual journal processes — save that for operational audits. Broader strategic objectives might include finding ways to expand content reach among relevant audiences or to make your journal program more sustainable. Anita Harris said sustainability is something that the SubStance team has been focused on at annual meetings. As part of that, they've considered the possibility of moving fully online.

In these conversations, Harris has been able to share article usage stats and input on author and reader expectations. “That’s what a good meeting is for, to give all stakeholders a chance to contribute to the conversation,” she said. “Right now, the libraries will subscribe to our journal, for instance, but there’s a smaller and smaller base that’s actually getting the print version. In terms of researchers who use our articles, they’re mostly downloaded from our publisher Johns Hopkins University Press. But we also know that some authors still value print. So, there are different considerations to think about.”

Editorial teams can support their publishing organization in strategic planning meetings by not only suggesting opportunities to improve or expand existing journal activities but also suggesting ways that journals can support other aspects of the organization. For example, Compton said editorial teams can provide insights around additional products that could be developed from journal content. “Something we’ve talked about at ASCE is ways we can translate journal content for practitioner audiences, to think outside of the academic market, particularly as universities and libraries are up against many budgetary constraints,” she said.

“Everyone should be asking, “what are other outlets for this content?” It doesn’t mean you have to be producing completely different content. It could mean translating what you have in a different way.” Journals published by societies can also look for ways to support membership growth and member programs, such as continuing education. “I think an editorial team that kind of supersedes individual divisions is one way to approach that, to have representatives from different sides of the society at the table talking about shared topic areas and new content and promotion opportunities,” said Compton. “At ASCE, one of the things we’ve talked about is having common taxonomy across the organization, which can help make it easier to integrate content digitally.”

Decide next steps and set metrics for success

Once you’ve discussed journal program challenges and opportunities in relation to your publishing organization’s mission, it’s time to start identifying actionable next steps. “Understanding the current situation is a crucial first step. Then you can have a discussion about vision, short- and long-term goals, and where your strengths lie vs. where improvement can be made,” said Compton. “I think for journals, a good way to drill down can be to look at each of the functional areas (i.e., editorial, production, and technology) and define 3-5 goals.” Each goal should, of course, have associated stakeholders and action steps to ensure follow through. Compton added that it’s important to have metrics for each goal, even if that means making an educated guess for a new initiative. “I think, in any strategic planning, defining upfront what metrics you're going to look at to decide whether you've been successful or not is so important. I think that can be a little harder if you're trying something new with publications because you don't have past data to build off of. But having some sort of mechanism to determine if something looks to be working is important," she said. "For example, maybe you've decided to produce a new kind of content. In that case, you're probably going to want to look about three months down the road to see what sort of readership it's gotten and whether it's reaching the intended audiences. If you're going out for practitioners and finding that the content isn't being consumed by that group, then that may be telling you something about its value in the market you're targeting." Once you've set your goals and metrics, remember to regularly assess your progress as you go, rather than waiting till the next meeting. "You want to continually assess how you are doing against the plan, perhaps by looking at your financials or your publication statistics month-by-month or quarter-by-quarter, and identifying available resources and where to put them," said Compton.

Article XII

LAUNCHING A NEW JOURNAL FEW QUESTIONS TO CONSIDERED

Based on Our experiences of this process, here are a few questions on how to run a successful scientific journal

1) What is the journal's purpose? What unique niche will it fill?
2) What is the administrative structure of the journal? Editorial board? Advisory board?
3) What standards will you use to judge articles for inclusion?
4) Who will do copy editing and proofreading?
5) What is the format of the journal? Print, online, or both?
6) Is the journal going to be Open Access, available only by subscription, or a combination?
7) Where is the journal going to be hosted/printed? Is there a Memorandum of Agreement (or Memorandum of Understanding) that spells out expectations for the journal and the host/printer?
8) Who will obtain the journal's ISSN from the Library?
9) What are the terms for the journal's publication agreements with authors?
10) How will the journal be funded initially? How will funding for the journal be sustained?
11) How will you recruit peer reviewers?
12) How will you solicit content?
13) How will you advertise your journal?

Article XIII

PEER REVIEW

Peer review is the foundation of quality in research for both books and journals, ensuring that published research is rigorous, ethical and significant to the discipline in question. On this section you will find information about how to review both books and journal articles, as well as some frequently asked questions.

1. **<u>Peer Reviewing Journal Articles:</u>**

The purpose of this guide section is to give a practical introduction to conducting effective peer reviews, especially for those who are new to the process. While the information here is generally applicable to all journals with standard peer review practices, it's important to ensure that you take into account any specific instructions given by the particular journal you are reviewing for.

a) Why peer review?

As well as contributing to the quality of the research corpus in your field, conducting peer reviews can benefit your own career as a researcher. The benefits include:

1	Learning more about the editorial process. By reviewing a paper and liaising with the editorial office, you will gain first-hand experience of the key considerations that go into the publication decision, as well as commonly recommended revisions.
2	Keeping up to date with novel research in your field. Reviewing also gives you a glimpse of emerging research in your discipline, sometimes months before it is to be published.
3	Having an opportunity to demonstrate your expertise in a field. It is becoming more common for researchers to use their review experience as evidence of their expertise when applying for funding or job applications, whether this is done informally or through validated reviewer recognition sites such as Publons.
4	Some journals are also experimenting with providing direct incentives to reviewers, such as payments, discounts on article processing charges and access to content.

b) Types of peer review

Peer review can be conducted in a range of ways, as listed below. The advantages and disadvantages of each generally stem from attitudes to openness: on the one hand many academics believe that reviews should be visible to all, and on the other hand it can be argued that anonymity protects the reviewer and allows a more objective, candid evaluation. Single-blind is still the most common form, but publishers and journals are currently experimenting with other kinds of review in response to the changing needs of the academic community.

1. Single-blind peer review: The author does not know the identity of the reviewer, but the reviewers know the identity of the author.
2. Double-blind peer review: Neither author nor reviewers know the identity of the other.
3. Open peer review: The identities of authors and reviewers are known. In this model, reviews are also sometimes published along with the paper.
4. Post-publication peer review: In some models, particularly for experimental open access publishers, manuscripts are reviewed after they have been published. These reviews are most often open and published alongside the article in question.

c) Before you review

1. The following steps have usually taken place before you are asked to review an article:
2. Author submits an article to their chosen journal using an online system, or occasionally directly to the editor.
3. The editorial office will check that the article complies with the instructions for contributors, for example, with regards to formatting or language level, and will send it back to the author if changes are needed.
4. The handling Editor will make the decision on whether to send the paper to peer review, based on its fit for the journal and apparent academic quality.
5. The handling Editor will find appropriate reviewers, either by drawing on their own network, or by asking a specialist on the editorial board to suggest suitable reviewers.
6. Invitation to peer review sent out to selected reviewers.

d) Writing your review

Once you receive the invitation to review, you will usually need to go through the following steps. This process is intended to describe the general basis for creating an effective review, but it can vary according to the particular requirements of the commissioning editor, or according to your own preferences. **Accepting or rejecting the invitation to review.** If you receive an invitation to review, you will need to let the journal know if you are able to complete the review within the requested deadline. Consider the following questions when deciding whether to accept the invitation:

Do I have the appropriate expertise to review this article? If you are not confident of your ability to assess the article's quality, you should feel free to discuss this with the editor. It may be that you are still able to comment on specific aspects of the article, or that it is better to decline the review this time. This discussion will also help editors to target their review invitations more effectively in the future, especially if you clarify your own areas of expertise, and, where possible, provide alternative suggestions for reviewers.

Do I have any conflict of interest regarding this article or its author? Conflicts of interest include anything that might impede your ability to give an unbiased assessment of the article. By only accepting reviews that you are able to assess fairly, you are preserving the integrity of the peer review process. Do declare any potential conflict to the editor who has invited the review. If you'd like to learn more about conflicts of interest, the COPE guidelines on peer review are a good place to start. (Krueger et al., 2021)

Do I have the time to conduct this review effectively? Most review invitations will include a deadline for receipt of the review. If you will be unable to complete the review by this deadline, you should let the editorial board know. If you are not able to accept the invitation to review, it is best to send your response as quickly as possible so that the journal is able to find alternative reviewers. Where possible, it is also common practice to suggest alternative reviewers if you are not able to review.

2. Read journal guidelines

Some journals will issue peer review guidelines when you accept an invitation to review. These might suggest the key considerations and a recommended structure for your review. If there are guidelines, it is important to read them carefully before you start the process, and adapt your review and your considerations to suit the journal's requirements. If you are unsure as to whether there are any particular requirements, the handing editor will be able to let you know.

3. **First reading: Overview of article and contribution**

On your first reading, you should be aiming to form an overall impression and understanding of the article. You may wish to make some notes on these first impressions, focusing on recent related work in the area, responding to the article's statement of purpose, and thinking about the impact that you feel that the article might have on the general body of research in your discipline.

4. **Second reading: Detailed reading**

Once you have read the article once and formed a broad impression of it, you should undertake a second, more detailed reading of the article, with the aim of giving a rounded and objective evaluation. You may wish to consider the following aspects of the article:

1. **The article's contribution to the discipline**
   a) Does the article make a contribution to the discipline?
   b) How significant is that contribution?
   c) Do the authors adequately explain the importance of the article in the discipline?
   d) Is the article a good fit for the journal in question?

2. **Academic rigor and accuracy**
   a) Is the methodology or argument used in the article sound?
   b) Does the article make a reasonable interpretation of the data or sources?
   c) Is there sufficient evidence to substantiate the article's claims?
   d) Are the appropriate references cited, and are there any other references that you would recommend as essential to the article?
   e) Are those references cited assessed fairly by the author?
   f) Is the information (e.g., data, formulae, quotations, references, tables and figures) in the article accurate, and correct?

3. **Style and structure**
   a) Is the structure of the article clear and well organized?
   b) Does the author introduce and contextualize the aims of the article effectively?
   c) Does the author summaries the conclusions of the article effectively?
   d) Is the language in the article clear, and correct? • Does the abstract accurately present the article's aims, argument and conclusions?

Many reviewers find that it is useful to make notes related to each of these areas as they complete the first reading of the article. Using these notes, you can then complete your review by substantiating your evaluation with examples from the article.

4. **Writing your Assessment**

Once you have read the article and made notes on both your broad and detailed impressions, you have the raw material for writing your review. Many reviewers choose to summaries their thoughts in the first paragraphs of the review, and then, in the second half of the review, move onto a more detailed substantiation of their recommendations, with suggestions for revisions where needed. Your review will be guiding the editor when deciding on one of four routes, listed below:

1. **Accept without revision:** Very rarely, an article will be accepted for publication without any revisions requested.
2. **Minor revisions needed:** The article is mostly sound, but with some small changes required to the argument, interpretation of the results, or references. Minor revisions might include:
   a) A small amount of editing to the language, to improve how the article's findings or argument are communicated
   b) Small additional experiments to complement the main body of the article
   c) Including a small number of new citations or mentioning additional topics
   d) Tweaking the interpretation of the results or evidence

You should give a detailed assessment of those minor revisions you believe to be essential to the quality of the article. Suggestions for other, but non-essential, improvements to the article are also welcomed, but you should clearly differentiate these in your review from those which you consider to be essential. This will allow both editor and author(s) to prioritise your recommendations effectively

3. **Major revisions needed:**

The principle of the article is sound, but it will be necessary for large changes to be made in order to prepare it for publication. Situations in which major revisions may be requested include:

a) If the article has major structural issues that need to be rectified by significantly reorganizing the text
b) If more experiments are needed to support the aims of the article
c) If the argument needs to take into account a whole new topic

d) If existing analysis of the data/evidence is flawed and needs to be re-worked

Your review can help to guide the major revisions needed, so do include suggestions for major revisions if you feel that they are essential for the success of the article. However, do bear in mind the fact that major revisions can cost the author(s) further time and money, so it is important to provide clear reasons for the necessity of further work, and to give an accurate assessment of whether the article will be academically sound should these revisions be made. You should also include your recommendations for minor revisions in your review, even if you are recommending major revisions, so that the author(s) can address all of the issues with the article during the revision stage.

4. Inappropriate:

If the article is not sound in principle or methodology, or does not make any significant contribution to the field, it may be rejected by the editor. If you believe that there are major problems with the article, it is important to give objective reasons and evidence for this. This will ensure that the editor understands your concerns when they are called upon to make a final decision, and in turn helps the author to develop their future research according to your feedback.

5. Submitting your review

Once you are confident that your review accurately reflects your professional opinion of the article, submit it to the handling editor. Once you are confident that your review accurately reflects your professional opinion of the article, submit it to the handling editor by the agreed deadline. This is sometimes done through online peer review management systems, such as Scholar One or Editorial Manager – if so, the handling editor will give you instructions on how to submit your review. Once submitted, the editor handling the submissions will read and consider your review, and will make a decision on how to progress with the article. The editor will collate the reviewers' recommendations and send them to the author.

6. Revisions

You may be called upon to review the article again once the author has had chance to make the necessary changes. In this case, it is helpful to compare your initial review against the changed article, to make sure that the changes that you proposed have been made successfully. You may also suggest additional changes, in the manner of a first review. For most articles, there will be one or two revision stages, depending on the number and nature of revisions needed.

7. **After you review**

The final decision will be taken by the handling editor, who will collate the final comments on the revisions. If the article is accepted, the final files will be handed over by the author so that the publication process can begin.

8. **Peer review FAQs**

Please note that these frequently asked questions have been written with journal articles in mind, though some may be applicable to reviewing book proposals.

Role of the reviewer

How do I decide if I should accept a review?

There are many things to consider when deciding whether to review. It may help to ask yourself the following questions:

a) Do I know the journal? If you haven't heard of the journal, check that it is trusted and respected
b) Am I happy doing a review under the model used by the journal?
c) Do I have time to complete the review by the deadline?
d) Do I have the necessary expertise to review this content?

How long should I spend doing a review?

The time it takes to review an article varies depending on a number of factors, including:

a) Your familiarity with the topic
b) The complexity of the paper
c) The length of the paper
d) Your experience as a reviewer
e) The clarity and presentation of the article

In one 2008 study (1), the median time it took was about 5 hours, and the mean was about 9 hours.

What should I cover in my review?

Things that should be assessed in a review are:

a) The paper's contribution to the discipline
b) The academic rigor and accuracy of the paper

c) The style and structure of the paper

Some journals will give clear instructions on what to cover, or will present you with a form to fill out as part of a review.

How should I format my comments?

The format of the comments will depend on the journal you are reviewing for. Some journals accept in-document comments, while others use writing and editing software. Make sure to follow instructions for reviewers, if available, and quote line and page numbers when using evidence from the article.

Ethics and best practice

Is there a code of conduct for peer reviewers?

The best place to find out about your duties and responsibilities as a peer reviewer is the website of the Committee on Publication Ethics, or COPE.

(https://www.publicationethics.org/)

How do you pick reviewers?

Editors may invite reviewers based on their own knowledge of the field, references in the article, through various searches with keywords, through journal or society databases, recommendations by the author or through industry tools. If you're interested in becoming a reviewer for a journal published by The Originals Scientific Journal, you can get in touch with the editor for the relevant journal (you'll be able to find their name on the journal page) or email **reviewers@originaljournals.com**

Do you monitor the performance of peer reviewers?

Different journals have different policies about monitoring peer reviewers, but usually, yes, they do. Tools in submission systems can provide metrics on rejection rates to invitations to review, reviewer turnaround times, and time since the reviewer's last review. Monitoring peer reviewers is important to:

a) Avoid overworking peer reviewers
b) Ensure good, constructive, fair reviews and reviewers are valued
c) Track future editorial board potential.

Do you ever block reviewers?

This would depend on the situation, but this does not happen often. Occasionally, journals may try to organize their reviewer database, and will mark reviewers as inactive if a reviewer:

a) Requests it
b) Never responds to invitations
c) Frequently agrees to review without completing a review
d) Repeatedly submits inappropriate or unprofessional reviews.

How do I become a peer reviewer?

There are various ways to become a peer reviewer including:

a) Being active at conferences, seminars, societies and even through social media or blogging
b) Publishing articles
c) Making sure your ORCiD record is up to date
d) Reaching out directly to a journal's editorial team.

Portions of these FAQs were originally presented by Jennifer Wright, Research Services Manager, at a University of Cambridge Office of Scholarly Communication event, "Helping Researchers Publish."

Mark Ware (2008) Peer review in scholarly journals: perspective of the scholarly community results from an international study. Information Services & Use, Volume 28 Number 2, p109.

Article XIV

IDENTIFYING THE RIGHT JOURNAL FOR YOUR SUBMISSION

Journals Checklist

The checklist is a means that will help you discover what you need to know when assessing whether or not a journal is a suitable venue for your research.

<u>Are you submitting your research to a trusted journal?</u>

Is it the right journal for your work?

1. More research is being published worldwide.
2. New journals are launched each week.
3. Many researchers have concerns about predatory publishing.
4. It can be challenging to find up-to-date guidance when choosing where to publish.

How can you be sure the journal you are considering is the right journal for your research?

Reference this list for your chosen journal to check if it is trusted.

<u>Do you or your colleagues know the journal?</u>

- Have you read any articles in the journal before?
- Is it easy to discover the latest papers in the journal?
- Name of journal: is the journal name the same as or easily confused with that of another?
- Can you cross check with information about the journal in the ISSN portal?

Can you easily identify and contact the publisher?

- Is the publisher's name clearly displayed on the journal website?
- Can you contact the publisher by telephone, email, and post?

Is the journal clear about the type of peer review it uses?

- Does the website mention whether the process involves independent/external reviewers, how many reviewers per paper?

- Is the publisher offering a review by an expert editorial board or by researchers in your subject area?
- Does the journal guarantee acceptance or a very short peer review time?

Are articles indexed and/or archived in dedicated services?

- Will your work be indexed/archived in an easily discoverable database?
- Does the publisher ensure long term archiving and preservation of digital publications?
- Does the publisher use permanent digital identifiers?

Is it clear what fees will be charged?

- Does the journal site explain what these fees are for and when they will be charged?
- Does the publisher explain on their website how they are financially supported?
- Do they mention the currency and amount of any fees?
- Does the publisher website explain whether or not waivers are available?

Are guidelines provided for authors on the publisher website?

- For open access journals, does the publisher have a clear license policy? Are there preferred licenses? Are there exceptions permitted depending on the needs of the author? Are license details included on all publications?
- Does the publisher allow you to retain copyright of your work? Can you share your work via, for example, an institutional repository, and under what terms?
- Does the publisher have a clear policy regarding potential conflicts of interest for authors, editors and reviewers?
- Can you tell what formats your paper will be available in? (e.g., HTML, XML, PDF)
- Does the journal provide any information about metrics of usage or citations?

Is the publisher a member of a recognized industry initiative?

- Do they belong to the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE)?
- If the journal is open access, is it listed in the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ)?
- If the journal is open access, does the publisher belong to the Open Access Scholarly Publishers' Association (OASPA)?

Complete the check list and submit your article only if you can answer 'yes' to most or all of the questions above.

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