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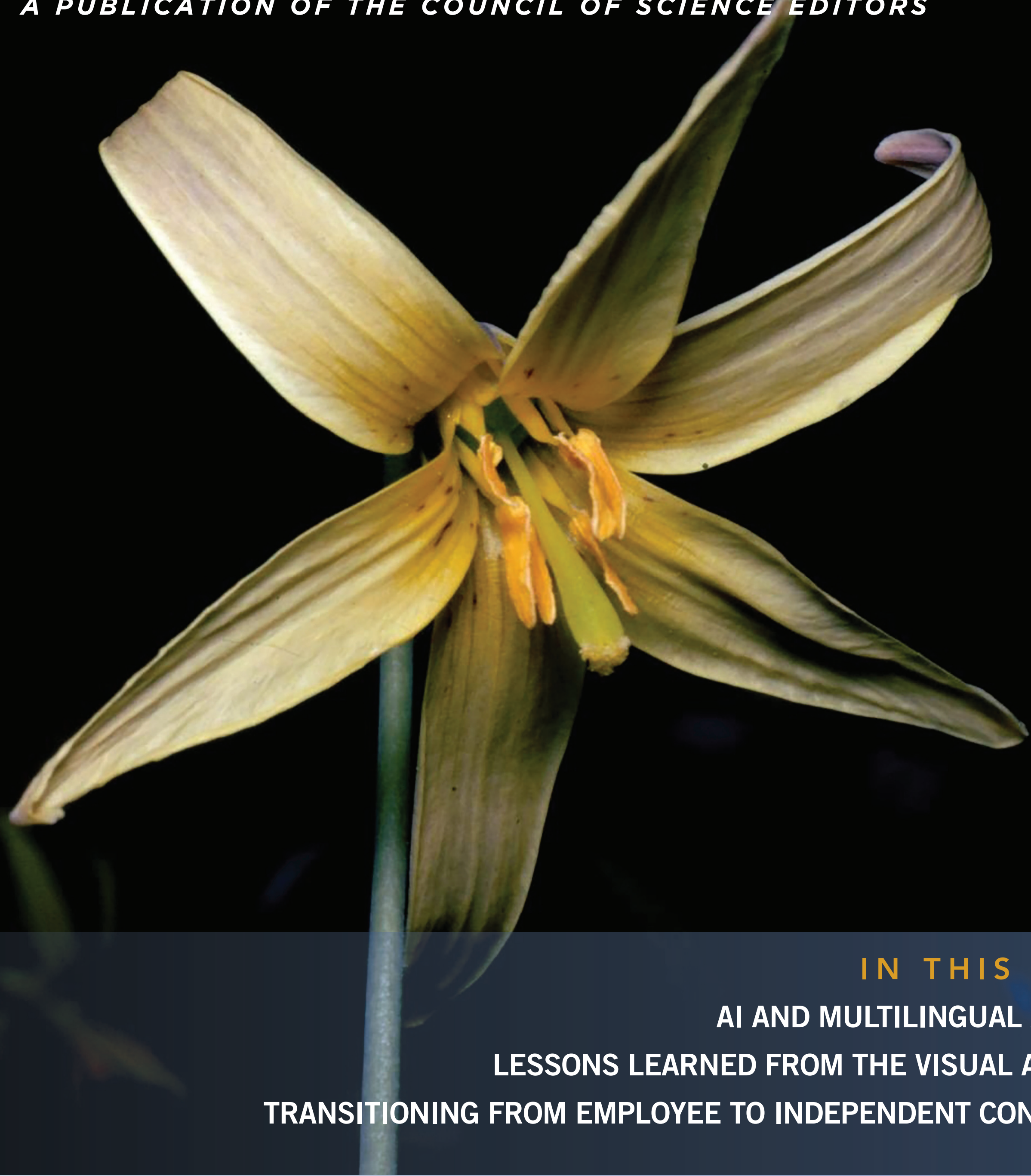

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CSE Fall Virtual Symposium

The CSE Fall Virtual Symposium is a two-day event hosted annually by CSE for scholarly publishing professionals of all experience levels. These virtual gatherings offer the opportunity to hear from thought leaders about industry trends, network with colleagues, and spark inspiration that can inform the activities at your own organization.

The 2024 Fall Virtual Symposium will be held November 19 and 20. More information to come! For updates, visit https://www.councilscienceeditors.org/fall-virtual-symposium

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On the cover: *The cover of this issue of* Science Editor *is adorned with a photo of trout lily flower. As noted by CSE President and amateur naturalist Glenn Landis in his interview in this issue, the trout-lily is "a flower that blooms above ground for 1 month, and then the rest of the year it grows into ground. It looks like a trout because the leaves are speckled, like a rainbow trout, and you can only see it before the tree canopy comes in" and obstructs the sun. In most places, the trout-lily blooms from late April through mid-May, coinciding with the CSE Annual Meeting, from which the first batch of reports for the 2024 meeting are in this issue.* ***Credit:*** *Trout Lily. U.S. National Park Service (https://npgallery.nps.gov/). Public domain*

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Artificial Intelligence: What the Future Holds for Multilingual Authors and Editing Professionals

Felix Sebastian and Rachel Baron

Observations and predictions based on two rounds of surveys among primarily Chinese-speaking researchers conducted in early and late 2023.

A Tumultuous 2 Years

The increasing availability of generative artificial intelligence (AI)-based tools such as ChatGPT for writing and editing, among other academic tasks, has prompted considerable debate among researchers, universities, publishers, journals, and other stakeholders over the boundaries separating the ethical and unethical use of such tools.

Some, such as the *Science* family of journals and the University of Hong Kong, initially imposed strict restrictions on the use of ChatGPT and other AI tools, both deeming the use of AI-generated text as plagiarism.[1,2] These restrictions have since been relaxed,[3-5] reflecting a general movement in academia, both in education and research, from outright bans to embracing productive and ethical use.

Authors for whom English is not a first language (hereafter, multilingual authors) face greater barriers to publication than their native English-speaking counterparts.[6,7] Multilingual authors have traditionally relied on editing or translation services to ensure their manuscripts meet journals' requirements for high standards of English. However, not all can afford professional language services, and their use increases the costs associated with publishing. Generative AI tools can be a game-changer for multilingual researchers, bringing much-needed equity to academic publishing and eliminating English fluency as a barrier to research dissemination.[8]

As managers at a company providing (100% human) academic editing services, we were interested in how the authors we work with, the majority of whom are multilingual, perceived the recent developments in AI and how their perceptions have evolved over the last year. Therefore, we ran 2 rounds of online surveys in early and late 2023, 6 and 12 months after the public launch of ChatGPT 3.5, respectively.

Here, we present data from these surveys and share insights into the evolution of attitudes toward AI use for writing and editing among primarily Chinese-speaking multilingual authors. Combining respondent data with insights from our experimentation with AI tools, we also present our views on what the future holds for multilingual authors as well as editing professionals.

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Survey and Respondent Details

A self-developed 16-question online survey, written in English, was conducted in May 2023 (T1) and November 2023 (T2). We invited authors, primarily multilingual and either current or prospective clients of AsiaEdit (an academic language solutions company offering editing and translation services with a focus on Chinese-speaking regions, including mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan) to participate in the survey by email and social media posts. Participation was voluntary and anonymous.

The surveys were completed by 245 respondents (T1, n = 84; T2, n = 161). Questions on the specifics of the use (non-use) of AI tools were only shown to respondents who reported they had (had not) used such tools (Figure 1). In return for their participation, the respondents were offered discount coupons redeemable for AsiaEdit services. The samples were not matched between the 2 survey rounds.

Survey Results and Our Interpretation

Awareness and Use of AI Tools for Writing and Editing

At both T1 and T2, awareness of *AI tools for writing and editing* (hereafter "AI tools" for brevity) was very high,

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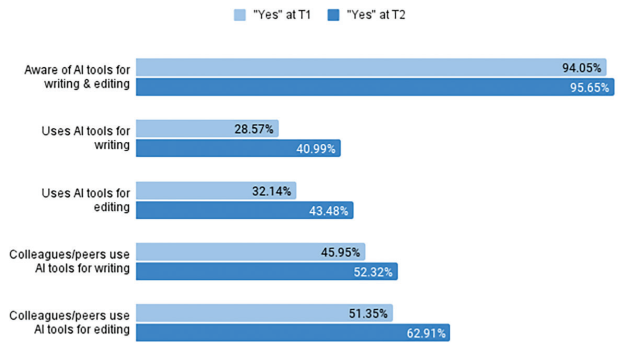

Figure 1. Change in awareness and use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools for writing and editing from T1 (May 2023; n = 84) to T2 (November 2023; n = 161).

with 94% and 96% of respondents reporting some level of awareness, respectively.

Attitudes toward AI use in academic writing and editing have generally relaxed over the past year, with more respondents using and/or having a positive outlook toward such tools at T2. Specifically, over the 6-month period between the surveys, the percentage of respondents who had used AI-based tools for *writing* research manuscripts at least once increased substantially from 29% to 41%, with the corresponding percentage for *editing* research manuscripts increasing from 32% to 43%. These statistics are supported by respondents' open-ended comments, with one stating, "In my research field, I've found that AI is helpful for English grammar, choosing appropriate words, sentence expression, etc."

We also asked all respondents whether they were aware of their colleagues and peers using AI tools. Consistent with the evidence of increased AI use among the respondents themselves, the T2 survey revealed increases of 7% and 11% in the use of AI by the respondents' colleagues/peers for writing and editing, respectively.

Attitudes Among AI Users

The subset of respondents who reported AI use (T1, n = 22; T2, n = 66) were asked to provide more detailed information about the specific tools they used and for which tasks they used them (Figure 2).

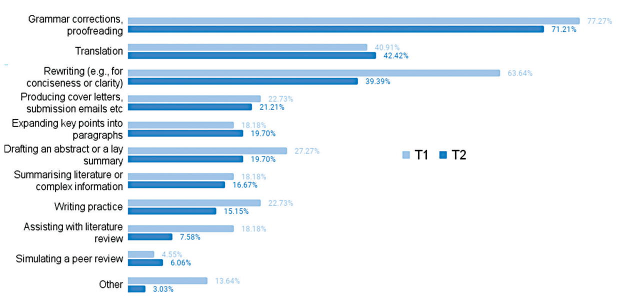

Figure 2. Changes in artificial intelligence (AI) tool use cases reported at T1 (n = 22) and T2 (n = 66).

In terms of the AI tools used, at T1, ChatGPT was the most popular, used by 73% of AI users in our sample, followed by Grammarly at 55%. At T2, the corresponding percentages were 85% and 62%, indicating the increasing popularity of ChatGPT. This is in contrast to the findings of a survey of around 700 respondents across 82 countries by De Gruyter,[9,10] which found that "Only [a] few scholars are using ChatGPT/GPT-4 regularly for their work." However, our trend is more in line with a study of more than 6,000 German university students, in which 49% of the sample reported using ChatGPT/GPT-4.[11]

At both T1 and T2, the top reported use cases for AI tools were grammar corrections/proofreading, rewriting, translation, and drafting abstracts/lay summaries. These dominant use cases are consistent with those reported in other surveys and studies. For example, the De Gruyter survey reported that "the most popular AI tools among scholars are focused on language support,"[9] and the German study reported "text creation" and translation as top use cases across several research fields.[11]

Surprisingly, our results show that the use of AI for editing, proofreading, and rewriting tasks declined between T1 and T2, despite the overall increase in the use of AI. Perhaps authors are finding, similar to our own experience, that while AI can produce near-perfect text in terms of grammar and spelling, it can actually increase the overall workload because of the additional need for fact checking and verification.

Overall, AI tools appear to be supporting a niche in academia currently served by professionals such as editors and translators, or those with excellent language skills in a research or peer group. These findings lend further credence to the claim, or hope, that AI tools could bring more equity to academia by partially reducing the cost and time of overcoming language barriers. "Very positive. They are equalizers," quipped one respondent when asked about their AI outlook.

Attitudes Among AI Non-users

Questions specific to the non-use of AI tools were shown only to respondents who did not report using AI tools for editing or writing.

Among this non-user segment, rather surprisingly, the percentage of respondents who planned to use AI-based tools for writing or editing *in the future* dropped from 53% to 40% between May and December 2023. Given the statistics indicating increased AI adoption overall, this perhaps indicates that those who initially adopted a wait-and-see approach had started using AI by the latter half of 2023 (“Not now – but not ‘never’”[9]), while those with a stronger objection to AI use appear to remain unswayed.

While both survey rounds indicated (lack of) trust and (potential) ethical issues as the top broad reasons for AI non-use, again consistent with the De Gruyter survey,[9,10] the specific reasons have evolved between the 2 rounds (see Figure 3). At T1, about 50% of AI non-users were concerned about unintended plagiarism arising from the use of generated content (52%), the lack of clear policies about AI use from journals and publishers (52%), and the inaccuracy of AI suggestions (48%).

Concerns about inaccuracy (48% → 64%), plagiarism (52% → 61%), and lack of clarity from journals/publishers (52% → 50%) carried over into November, although the slight decrease in the latter suggests that journals and publishers may have started to provide clearer guidelines. Similarly, the guidelines and press releases issued by Hong Kong universities between May and November[3,5,12-14] seem to have allayed a major concern raised by non-users at T1: “Research/publication ethics - Lack of clear policy about AI use from my institution/department” (44% → 27%).

In the meantime, authors seem to have become much more aware of the potential privacy and data confidentiality risks (36% → 52%), perhaps due to the flurry of OpenAI data breach news reports released between the 2 rounds.[15-17]

Disclosure Beliefs

Both AI users and non-users were asked whether the use of AI for writing or editing needs to be mandatorily disclosed. In both rounds, nearly two-thirds of respondents urged disclosure for writing, while only half considered disclosures necessary for editing. Clearly, authors see writing and editing as distinct contributions to the publishing process, probably because writing is more closely associated with “original ideas” than editing.

In contrast, journals, publishers, and professional associations who have produced guidelines on AI use and disclosure largely do not make this *writing vs. editing* distinction. Several guidelines use all-encompassing terms, such as “using LLM tools” (*Nature*[18]) “usage of AI tools” (Council of Science Editors[19]), and “production of submitted work” (International Committee of Medical Journal Editors[20]), while others explicitly refer only to writing. *NEJM AI*[21] is a positive outlier in that it analogizes AI use disclosure to disclosure of third-party copyediting services. It is possible that journals and publishers view copyediting—especially if done by the authors themselves using AI tools—as part of the writing process, whereas (multilingual) authors do not.

Some open-ended responses further indicate that authors see the use of AI as akin to that of other software and tools used in research and publishing:

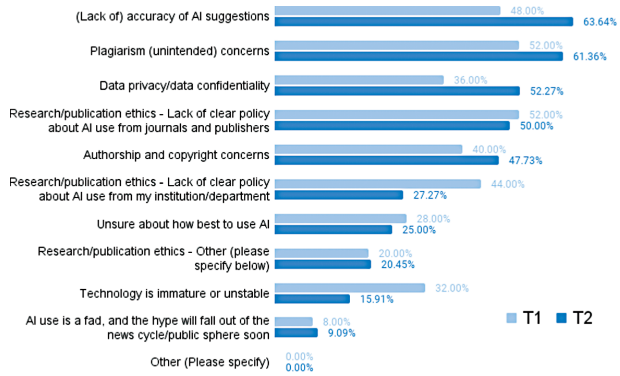

Figure 3. Reasons for artificial intelligence (AI) non-use at T1 (n = 25) and T2 (n = 44).

- “AI tools are just tools, similar to word processors and Google Scholar that authors are using extensively.”
- “It is here to stay. We need to embrace and find ways for it to be universally accepted in both the teaching and research fields. It is a very powerful tool but only that!”

What the Future Holds…

At T2, a larger proportion of respondents (11% increase) endorsed the statement that AI writing tools will become “an essential tool that all writers will use,” reflecting the overall theme of increased adoption of and positive outlook toward AI tools. Moreover, when asked about respondents’ favorability toward a “hybrid” editing service, in which a human editor would review the output of an AI editing tool, resulting in lower editing fees and no compromise on quality or data security, 50% of respondents responded favorably in both surveys, with about 34% as yet undecided.

Our opinion is that these results are driven primarily by potential cost savings for authors. “Human editing is financially unviable for adjunct faculty, so an AI-Human hybrid may help,” commented a respondent at T2. Our internal business data also suggest that 50% of clients opt for the least expensive editing option (i.e., the slowest return option).

Given everything discussed thus far, we expect the use of AI writing and editing tools to become increasingly normalized over the coming years, with the effectiveness and sophistication of the underlying technologies, legal clarity (e.g., on copyright), policy clarity (e.g., from publishers, journals, and universities), and authors’ willingness to use these tools all increasing.

Therefore, we present writing- and editing-related recommendations for authors, publishers/journals, and editors—based on our survey data and a year’s worth of our own experimenting with AI tools—to help all involved prepare for what appears to be an inevitable AI-integrated future.

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…For Authors

At present, we would not advise the use of AI tools for either writing or editing without a thorough review by a human before manuscript submission. We elaborate on this below, in our advice for editors, but it is important to emphasize to all users, and especially those with non-fluent levels of English, that AI can sometimes produce serious errors that can be "hidden" within AI's superficially accurate output.[22]

…For Publishers and Journals

While the current lack of clarity in the guidelines can affect authors of any linguistic background, including those for whom English is a primary language,[23] it disproportionately affects multilingual authors because journals disproportionately ask that their manuscripts be copyedited for clarity, grammar, and style compliance before (re)submission.[6]

We recommend that guidelines on AI use disclosure must also explicitly refer to writing and editing as separate tasks. Another solution, proposed in a recent article[24] by Avi Staiman, a leading voice on AI use in academia, is to clarify which routine AI-assisted tasks require disclosure and which do not. We are agnostic on whether AI-assisted copyediting needs to be disclosed, because currently not all journals or publishers require the disclosure of third-party human copyediting services, and not all authors choose to disclose their use of such services.

…For Research Copy Editors

We recommend that copy editors consider developing and offering a *post-editing* service to authors. In the translation industry, to *post-edit* is to "edit and correct machine translation output … to obtain a product comparable to a product obtained by human translation."[25] Post-editing has been reported to increase translator productivity, with the extent varying depending on factors such as linguist skill, machine translation output quality, familiarity with the tool, and expected final output quality.[26] As AI tools improve further, copy editors may be able to adopt a similar model, passing on the efficiency gains to the clients by offering lower editing costs but offsetting income losses by appealing to a larger audience, who may have previously found 100% human services unaffordable. However, we strongly believe that author consent must lie at the heart of such services: editors must never use AI tools on author manuscripts without author consent, as also argued by Blackwell and Swenson-Wright.[27]

We do not anticipate the availability of AI tools to eliminate the need for human copy editors, as both language skills and domain expertise remain essential to evaluate the grammatical and technical accuracy of the output. This view is also reflected in what our respondents ranked as the most useful features of an AI editing tool in both survey rounds: "seeing revisions as tracked changes," "explanations for changes made," and "ability to submit to review by a human." "Sometimes the outputs of AI tools are questionable. It is troublesome to verify the validity of the contents," said one respondent, with another adding, "Human editing must still be the major and the last step to safeguard the quality and ethics of writing/editing."

We do caution those in the editing profession to look out for the U-shaped employment polarization that seems to be occurring in the translation industry: an increase in low-paid and high-paid roles but a decrease in mid-paid roles.[28]

Disclosures and Acknowledgements

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Improving the Performance of Research Journals: Lessons Learned From the Visual Abstract

Andrew M Ibrahim

Scientific journals are under significant pressures to attract high-quality articles, curate them, and ensure their dissemination. As journals experiment with new strategies to optimize their performance—expedited processing, online-only publication, open access, video summaries, transparent reviews, prepublications prints, concurrent releases, social media investments—the visual abstract provides several lessons learned for journals and editors to make their upcoming efforts more effective.

Journals have a long history of using images to bring attention to their articles. For example, the central illustration[1] was created as a visual entryway to an article, with a summarizing key image. Similarly, graphical abstracts also brought a visual summary of research articles. The visual abstract was a subsequent development I created in 2016 that brought distinct features to the visual summary of research articles (Figure 1):

- Reproducible templated layout tailored to study design and outcomes
- Silhouetted, solid icons
- Use of monochromatic colors with black text

The templates were made open source and since 2016, more than 100 journals and institutions have adopted them in their dissemination strategy.[2-15] Several journals and institutions now showcase their visual abstracts in dedicated libraries, including those from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,[16] the *New England Journal of Medicine*,[17] and *The Journal of the American Medical Association*.[18] While each has added their own branding and style (e.g., addition of more colors, proprietary images), they generally follow the same templated layouts.

The appeal of adopting the visual abstract was not just aesthetic. To date, multiple prospective randomized trials have demonstrated the visual abstract to be a superior dissemination strategy compared to text or other images.[3,15,19,20] In the original trial, the visual abstract led to articles being read nearly 3 times as often.[3]

While the visual abstract has been written about extensively (including broader applications beyond research dissemination to direct clinical care[21]), it also provides a number of illustrative lessons learned for journal editors that I summarize below.

Great Ideas Should Be Shared

As soon as it became clear that the visual abstract represented a novel and compelling strategy to disseminate research, an important decision needed to be made: would this be a proprietary tool limited to 1 journal or would it be an open source for iterative improvement and collaboration? As the developer of the visual abstract, I am thankful I chose the latter because it allowed for important growth and expertise to develop. For example, the first visual abstract primer was written by a single author and totaled 9 pages, while the most recent version[22] has 12 authors bringing their unique expertise to more than 50 pages of guidance. Without question, I would not have identified several of the innovations described by others (e.g., the "methods bar" by Dr Chelsea Harris,[23] see example at ResearchGate[24]) on my own.

Design (Usually) Cannot Be Delegated

Once the visual abstract gained popularity, the obvious question arose: how do you create one? While I led several workshops around the world, recorded YouTube videos[25] and updated the visual abstract primer, many journals struggled.[10,11,27,28] Namely, many journals assumed that

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The views presented here are solely that of the author and do not necessarily represent those of their institution or journals they have worked with.

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Table. Resources to create and improve visual abstracts.

Resource	Source	Description	URL
Visual Abstract Primer (4th edition)	Andrew M Ibrahim	Full PDF guide to creating a visual abstract, written by multiple journal editors	https://www.SurgeryRedesign.com/resources
What is a Visual Abstract? And How to Create One?	Andrew M Ibrahim	Video summarizing the history of the visual abstract, its broad applications, and an introduction to creating one	https://youtu.be/bOXSNCjXAKg
Visual Abstracts	The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)	Best practice advice and examples from the CDC	https://www.cdc.gov/pcd/for_authors/visual_abstracts.htm
Visual Abstract for Beginners	American Association of Hip & Knee Surgeons	Beginner walk-thru of creating a visual abstract	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e4Ani6SKakg
Visual Abstract Design Resources	Elsevier	Index of design and guideline resources for creating a visual abstract	https://researcheracademy.elsevier.com/uploads/2022-11/Resources%20for%20visual%20abstract%20by%20RA_Nov2022.pdf
Visual Abstract Scoring Rubric	*Annals of Surgery*	Design and accuracy rubric to evaluate visual abstract quality	https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35801709/

authors of scientific articles were also equipped with design sensibilities. As such, many journals began *requiring* authors to submit visual abstracts. The results of that requirement came through in a recent systematic evaluation of 25 academic journals that adopted the visual abstract and ranked them based on their design quality.[28] There was notable variability, with many journals consistently lacking the needed design quality to make the visual abstract effective. In the accompanying editorial,[26] a call was made to reconsider the requirements unless journals can provide design support for authors.

Rapid Adoption Needs Investment in Quality Control

As many journals began adopting the visual abstract, a few started to recognize the need for quality control. Notably, journals made investments in the visual abstract, including designated visual abstract editor roles and in-house designers. The benefits of these types of investments were three-fold. First, this often led to added diversity among editorial boards, as the visual abstract editor in most journals was someone early in their career who otherwise would not have a role on the board. Second, these standardized roles were often created in parallel to templated guidance that helped ensure a minimum level of quality and accuracy for each visual abstract. Third, support from journals to execute a visual abstract helped counter resentment from authors who felt they were being asked to take on a task they were not equipped to perform. Although many authors have taught themselves or taken formal courses to create visual abstracts, journals still need to place safeguards and curate visual abstracts, just as they would article content, with guidelines and processes.[5,14,26,27,29] Some best practices and guidelines are summarized in the Table.

No Substitute for Excellent Content

Over my career, I have been asked to create visual abstracts for articles and refused. While the visual abstract can enhance and elevate a manuscript, it is no substitute for excellent writing. Articles that are poorly written, do not have clear outcomes, lack consistency throughout the section, or simply lack rigor will not do well as visual abstracts. In other words, the easiest way to successfully disseminate a research article is to first have an excellent, rigorous, well-written article. More and more, I find myself editing the text of visual abstracts rather than images to facilitate article dissemination. For all the important tools we explore for article dissemination, great science and writing remains foundational.

Clarify the Need You Are Trying to Address

Why has the visual abstract been successful? It fills multiple needs. First, modern audiences are far more visual, with shorter attention spans. In our early pilot work, we found that visual abstracts could be comprehended in less than 10 seconds

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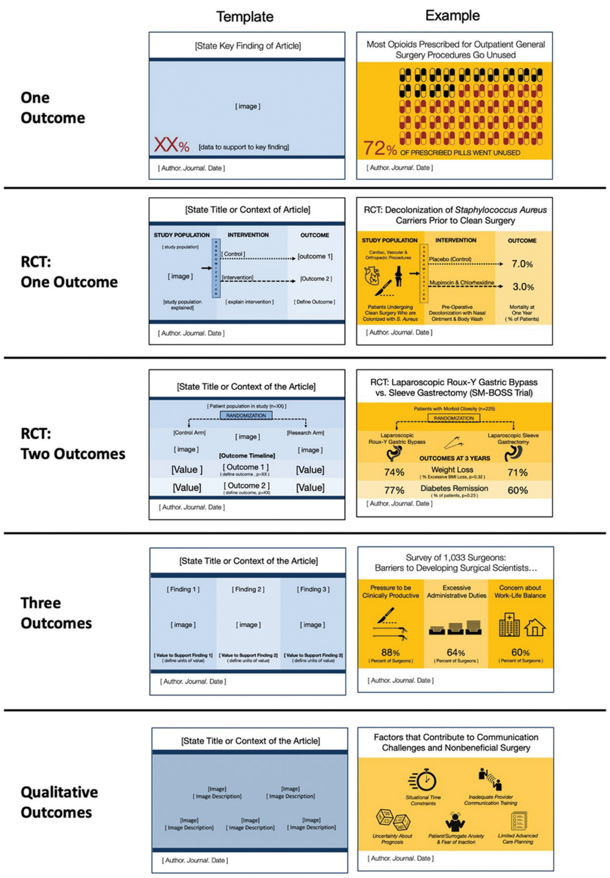

Figure 1. Visual abstract templates and examples. Examples provided by Andrew M Ibrahim MD, MSc; templates from initial visual abstract prototyping and subsequent application.

compared with about 75 seconds for text abstracts. In doing so, the abstracts resonated with busy readers who just needed concise previews of articles before deciding what to read. Second, modern audiences are flooded with unprecedented waves of information screaming for their attention. The visual abstract contrasts those signals with a clear and accessible message, which paradoxically made it stand out. In fact, as seen in Figure 1, part of the monochromatic color schemes was to stand out with simplicity. Third, readers of research articles often also present work themselves. The visual abstract is an easy "ready-made slide" for a presenter to use in a talk (Figure 2). In other words, the visual abstract fulfills a day-to-day need of many readers.

Your Audience May Be Broader Than Anticipated

One of the earliest surprises about the visual abstract was its popularity outside our traditional audiences. Early on, many visual abstracts were translated to other languages by readers who felt they needed to be spread to non-English audiences. In general, few journals readily translate their articles, and the visual abstract became a gateway to engaging a different audience. The visual abstract was also warmly welcomed by those in the media. It provided a much more concise and accessible summary of the research work to help a reporter identify an author or journal they wanted to contact for an interview on a specific content area. Several times, we noticed the uptake of a research article in the lay press after we released the visual abstract.

The visual abstract will likely continue to evolve and serve journals as an effective strategy to disseminate research. More importantly, its history always provides us with important frameworks, guidance, and safeguards for how future innovations in scientific journals can be harnessed.

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Making the Leap: Transitioning from Employee to Independent Contractor

Erin Landis

The proverb "look before you leap" is usually sage advice and one that is commonly understood in the English language. The phrase admonishes you to consider the consequences of the decision you're about to make—a decision that might be hasty or risky. Sometimes, however, looking before you leap can cause unnecessary pause and it's better instead to go with your gut—in other words, trust your intuition. That's precisely what I did when I decided in late 2021 to make a monumental change in my career; I transitioned from being a full-time employee to an independent contractor (IC). Admittedly, I leapt without looking (or at least I didn't look very much) and have never second guessed my decision. While I'm not encouraging others to make such an important decision in the same manner, for me it worked. It was the right time in my professional and personal life to make such a change.

The Backstory

For the 20+ years after graduating college, I held jobs in traditional employment settings. You know the drill—I went into an office (until hybrid was a thing), I received benefits such as health insurance, retirement savings plans, paid leave, etc. For me, that's really all I knew for those 2+ decades, and it provided a sense of security and normalcy. I was doing what everyone else I knew was doing. I was somewhat aware of people taking other paths—for example, someone I supervised ultimately left the job to become a freelancer and start her own business. At the time, I was shocked she would do so—how would she guarantee regular income? Where would her health insurance and other benefits come from? How would she secure clients? It was so foreign and scary to me I dismissed it as something I would never consider.

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But fast forward to late 2021, and new circumstances (the pandemic being one of them), as well as a greater sense of professional confidence, I realized that going out on my own wasn't so scary. When Origin Editorial's senior partners, Kristen Overstreet and Jason Roberts, PhD, approached me to join their team, explaining that everyone at Origin was an IC, I didn't shrink from the opportunity. Instead, I decided to embrace it. In short, I leapt (Figure).

The Practicalities

Once I made the jump to becoming an IC, I had to hit the ground running to address the myriad practicalities that come with this form of work. There are many ways to do this, so my experience is by no means the only way—nevertheless, I share it here to help others think about what they'll need to consider if they make the same transition. The first step I took was to establish my own company. While I didn't *have* to do that, I viewed doing so as beneficial for many reasons, including asset protection (severing direct connection between my business and myself as an individual), tax flexibility, and professional image. There are different types of companies you can form; for example, a limited liability corporation (LLC), an S or C corporation, or others.[1] In my case, I decided to use LegalZoom to form my business, as they had the resources and expertise to guide me through the process and ensure that I stay compliant with government rules and regulations.

Getting My Financial House in Order

After my company was established, I then turned my attention to the financial matters of my business—primarily accounting and taxes. I worked with a business adviser to set up a basic Excel file to record my business's revenue and expenses. I would later provide this file to my accountant for tax purposes. I also worked with the business adviser to determine what salary I would pay myself, ensuring that I withheld enough money to account for the business and personal taxes I would owe. To make things easier for myself, I decided to use a payroll company to pay myself a salary—this ensured that I could easily run a monthly payroll

Figure. There are many important considerations when transitioning from an employee to an independent contractor that can be loosely categorized into "Practicalities" and "Mindset."

and have the payroll company pay my taxes on my behalf. I had no desire to run afoul of the IRS. Finally, I alerted my personal accountant that I owned a company now and retained him to prepare annual tax returns for the company, as well as ensure I was filing all other necessary business-related paperwork with the IRS. The expenses associated with both the payroll company and the accountant are write-offs for my business.

Becoming My Own IT Specialist

As an IC, you quickly realize you are your own IT person. I could no longer run to someone else to fix my printer or figure out why Word wasn't opening properly. All IT troubleshooting fell to me. This meant I had to research IT-related problems by watching YouTube videos or reading discussion forums. While in some cases the learning curve was high, I quickly became proficient at solving basic-to-intermediate-level problems (you'd be surprised to learn how many other people on the Internet have the same technology problems that you do). I was also responsible for purchasing and installing all the software necessary to run my business and perform work for clients. This was a bit of a sticker shock at first, but I soon succumbed to the reality that such purchases were the cost of doing business and would be considered write-offs.

Setting Up Benefits

Becoming an IC means you no longer have an employer providing benefits to you. In terms of health insurance, I was in the privileged position of being able to join my husband's employer-provided plan. I realize that for many people, this is not an option. However, that shouldn't discourage you from considering becoming an IC, as I know many people who have health insurance plans through the federal Health Insurance Marketplace[2] (also known as the "Marketplace" or "Exchange") under the Affordable Care Act, commonly known as Obamacare. Having a retirement plan is another critical component of making the switch from employee to IC. Where I worked previously, not only was I part of a company-sponsored plan and contributed a percentage of my salary to my retirement account each month, so did my employer. I was therefore able to consistently build toward a nest egg for retirement. Becoming an IC meant I was no longer part of an employer-provided plan, which meant I had to establish a new plan. I worked with my existing retirement-plan provider to roll my account into a Simplified Employee Pension (SEP) IRA (a list of the types of self-employed retirement plans can be found here[3]). Once that was completed, I began to have my newly founded company contribute a certain dollar amount to the plan each month.

As an IC, you no longer have a set number of paid sick/personal and vacation days. You essentially set your own schedule, which means when you take personal days—whatever the reason—you have nothing to record and no tally to keep. This was a huge adjustment for me, as I was used to maintaining a timesheet. Now, as an IC, I handle sick days by simply telling clients that I'm unwell and will be back to work as soon as possible. In my case, I'm not negatively affected financially for this—I still get paid. However, I know for some ICs, this means they go without pay for those hours or days. The same is true for vacation—in some cases ICs can work it out with their clients that they're still paid for their leave whereas in other cases they'll not receive payment for the time they miss.

The Mindshift

Aside from the various practical activities that accompanied my transition from employee to IC, perhaps the most

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significant adjustment was the shift in mindset I had to work through. Abruptly, after years of having a boss to whom I was accountable, I was my own boss. Technically, I reported to no one—that didn't mean, however, that I wasn't accountable. I had clients for whom I needed to provide services and so I was certainly accountable to them. But did I have performance evaluations or routine check-ins with a supervisor anymore? No. Did I have to tell someone when I was taking time out of my day to go to the doctor or take my children to an appointment? No. Did I have to work during a set window of time each day? No. At first, I felt strange not documenting my absences from work or telling someone where I was for every minute of the day. But gradually, I became accustomed to my newfound freedom and came to appreciate it deeply, as it afforded me the opportunity to both have a satisfying career while also raising my children and participating in as many of their activities as possible.

Being an IC also means you can choose what type of work you want to do, with whom you want to work (client-wise), and how much work you want to do. You aren't wedded to work that you dread or that you find unfulfilling. I have found this to be incredibly liberating, as a good portion of the work I did in employed settings was uninteresting to me or didn't match my skill set. I also appreciate the variety that comes with being an IC. I now can mix and match what I do, choosing the types of assignments I enjoy and to which I can make a meaningful contribution.

A less exciting mind shift for me was the realization that I no longer had an HR department at my disposal to handle personnel issues—I had to grapple with how to address issues with the performance of fellow contractors in an entirely different way. Additionally, it was a hard pivot for me to learn that I could no longer direct people what to do, as I am not technically anyone's manager or supervisor. I had to learn (and am still learning) how to guide my fellow contractors' work versus telling them specifically what to do. Finally, becoming an IC means I no longer go into an office and only see people at in-person meetings and conferences. While I can't imagine ever having to work in an office again, being an IC can be a bit isolating, as you're sometimes working with clients who are all physically together in an office and you're the only remote team member. I have found that it's critically important that I make time to socially connect with my colleagues either via video conference or in person at meetings and conferences, or locally, if we live near each other. Certainly, I have become more intentional at forging these relationships than I was previously, as an employee.

Before submitting this article to *Science Editor*, I asked a friend and colleague who had made the same transition from employee to contractor to review what I had written. Namely, I wanted to ensure the content resonated with her. She told me that sitting on her desk is a coaster that reads "Leap and the net will appear." Wow—there couldn't have been a more fitting summary for my career-transition experience. Not only did the net appear, but it came with boundless opportunities and a newfound perspective that going out on my own wasn't nearly as scary as it seemed, and in fact, was exciting and invigorating.

Disclaimer: Since I am not an attorney, accountant, or financial advisor, nor am I holding myself out to be, the information contained in this article is not a substitute for financial or legal advice. If becoming an independent contractor is a path you'd like to consider, please seek advice and information from a professional who is aware of the facts and circumstances of your individual situation.

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James Butcher: An Editor and a Publisher

Jonathan Schultz

When James Butcher started his weekly *Journalology*[1] newsletter in August 2022, it quickly became a valued resource for tracking and understanding the many changes occurring in scientific editing and publishing. In his more than 20 years in the industry, James has held many roles, from reporter to editor to publisher, and he brings that experience to his balanced and pragmatic analysis. Recently, *Science Editor* spoke to James about what makes a good editor and publisher, how he stays on top of industry developments, and what the future may hold.

Science Editor: Let's start by telling us a little about your background: how you got started in scientific editing and publishing?

James Butcher: I'm a neuroscientist. Well, not really because I haven't worked at a lab bench for 20-odd years, but I still think of myself as a neuroscientist. I did a PhD in neurophysiology at the University of Bristol. After that, I worked as a medical writer for a pharmaceutical company for a year, and then I worked for a popular science magazine called *Inside the Human Body*. It was a "part-work"—subscribers got a new issue each week, which was divided into sections. The idea was to help readers learn a little about anatomy, physiology, emergency medicine, and so on. It was a consumer magazine and had a very high circulation. I was the token scientist. Most of the other people on the team were arts graduates, but they were amazing editors. They helped me understand how to write good headlines and what makes good copy. I did that for a year, and then I got a Senior Editor job at *The Lancet*. I couldn't believe how lucky I was to be working in that environment, reporting on big stories like the Human Genome Project, and reading science as a peer review editor. I launched *The Lancet Neurology* as the Editor in 2002, had a brief stint at *PLOS Medicine*, and then came back to *The Lancet*, the flagship, as Executive Editor.

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After about 7 years as an editor, I joined Nature Publishing Group as publisher of what was then the Nature Clinical Practice (NCP) journals. There were 8 journals, which had been launched between 2004 and 2005, and when I joined in 2008, they weren't doing particularly well, commercially or editorially. I was managing the editorial teams and was also responsible for the financial performance of the journals. We rebranded the NCP journals to *Nature Reviews*, turned them around, and increased the quality. I took on the whole *Nature Reviews* portfolio, and then became involved in the launch of *Scientific Reports* and *Nature Communications*. A few years later, I became the publishing director for the *Nature* journals, responsible for all of the *Nature* journals in terms of their business performance. In 2019, I became Vice President of the Nature Research and BMC journals, leading a team of 500 editors in more than 15 countries. It was a hell of a job.

SE: What do you consider the main difference is between being an editor and a publisher?

Butcher: I don't think there are many people who have done both jobs. I think that's one of the things that gives me a different viewpoint to most other people in the industry—I've peer reviewed hundreds of papers and can see the editorial point of view, while also understanding the business requirements. I was trained and taught about editorial independence and the importance of being thorough, of doing high quality peer review. Then from a publishing perspective, I have a bit more of a pragmatic opinion. Editors tend to be idealistic, which is good and that's what they need. But as a publisher, you have to be a bit more pragmatic. You've got financials that you need to hit, you've got revenue targets, you've got costs that you need to control, and you need to be pragmatic about how that works.

I would argue the best publishers have a deep understanding of editorial workflows and values and know where the line is. If you push the commercial angle too far, you're not doing your job properly. You also need to push back against senior management, as appropriate, but you can't be totally idealistic as a publisher. You need to be pragmatic about the business because that's fundamentally

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what you're responsible for. I look back, and when I was an editor, I was totally idealistic, hated corporate life, hated the idea of making money from science. I went on a journey over time. When I was managing the *Nature* editorial team, who often had a strong dislike for corporate values, I would often think "I was just like you 15 years ago," because a lot of people go on that journey. You start off thinking it's all very simple, and then as you move on and learn more things, you realize it's a bit more complicated than that.

It's a different mindset. On the Nature journals, many of the publishers had been editors themselves. Annette Thomas, Alison Mitchell, and Sarah Greaves were all editors who moved into publishing. I think that's what made Nature Publishing Group a pleasure to work at. We were a bunch of scientists. Some of us had more of a business leaning, some of us were much more editorial, but everyone cared primarily about providing a good service for researchers and for science. And if you can make some money out of it as well, great. But generating revenues was never the primary driver, an outlook that was fundamental to our success.

SE: What led you then to switch to consulting and starting the newsletter?

Butcher: It was a mixture of different things. We've got two young kids. They're now 6 and 8, and during the pandemic, they were 3 and 5 or so. In many ways, I had my dream job. I was running the Nature journals, but I was also working very long hours. It was quite a difficult time for the Nature Journals with the open access transition: there was a lot of pressure from above, pressure from below, pressure from outside, and pressure on myself to do it right and not mess it up. I wasn't seeing my kids, and during the pandemic that made it even harder. I took a look at myself, and asked: What do I want to do for the rest of my life? Do I want to be one of those people who's working constantly, traveling, and not seeing their kids? The answer was "no."

That wasn't what I wanted out of my life. My wife and I decided to sell the London house and move up to the northwest of England, where the property prices are cheaper and where my wife's family are all based. We've got a family network in the northwest that during the pandemic we didn't have access to. I'd been working on the Nature journals for 15 years, and I also fancied doing something different.

I miss being part of the team, and I miss my *Nature* friends, but you can't have it all. I have no regrets. It's absolutely been the right thing to do. For most of last year I worked closely with Clarke and Esposito, while also doing some stuff on my own, including the newsletter. I'm now working full time as an independent consultant, content creator, and coach.

The reasons for doing the newsletter are two-fold: first, I wanted to have an outlet for my thoughts. I enjoy writing *Journalology*. I used to do occasional newsletters for the *Nature* team, but I'd do it for 1 or 2 weeks, and then something urgent would come up, and it wouldn't happen again. Now that I'm my own boss, it gives me that flexibility to say, you know what, I'm going to spend 5 or 6 hours this week writing this newsletter. Partly because as a consultant, you need to raise a profile, of course, but also because it helps me to think through what's going on in publishing. I've always read the news wires, but it's not until you sit down and write and think about the implications of this week's news that you start putting the different pieces together. I certainly remember more than I did back in the day when you read a news story and then emails would come in or you'd be in a meeting and then you'd never really process what you'd read.

I feel that one of the things that made me a good editor and a good publisher is that I was on top of what was going on in science and in publishing, and I feel the same as a consultant. If people are going to pay me to give them advice, I need to know what's going on. So, it's not entirely altruistic, but if I didn't enjoy the process, I wouldn't do it.

SE: To your point about staying on top of things: it is daunting sometimes. How do you stay on top of the news wires and the developments in scholarly editing and publishing?

Butcher: Mainly, it's RSS feeds. Back in the day, I used Google Reader, and when they shut that down, I moved over to Feedly. I've been gathering RSS feeds for at least 15 years, probably longer. I guess over the years, I've spotted what sites produce interesting things, and if they've got an RSS feed, added it to my RSS feed list. I process in excess of 500 articles a week, I would imagine, plus the PubMed searches (I've got RSS feeds from PubMed as well), which can be hundreds and hundreds. I don't read them all but tend to do keyword searches or scan them. There's a lot that's coming through and a lot of it isn't of broad enough interest for inclusion in the newsletter.

When I was thinking about starting the newsletter, I thought about how do I pitch it? I didn't want it to be another source entirely about the business of publishing. I'm writing it for editors, but often I'm talking about the business side of things. I'm trying to keep it relatively simple, but I think it's really important for editors to understand the world that they're working in and how it's changing. I'll cover some research integrity things or something new about open peer review, which are very editorial, but a lot of it is the business of publishing. But I've always got an editor in mind when I'm writing, particularly an academic editor, someone who's

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a professor at a university: How can I help them understand what's going on?

Or it may even be a professional editor, a *Nature* editor who's new to publishing. I'm always thinking of someone who's at the early stages of their career. I'm trying to keep it at a high enough level so that someone who works in user experience, who wants to understand publishing better, can pick it up and at least get the gist of what's going on. I think there's a real need. If you don't understand the commercial decisions that are being made by executive teams, it can all feel a bit like "Why are they doing that?" There's likely a very good strategic reason that publishers, commercial and not-for-profit, go down certain paths, and I want to try and help people understand that. It helps me to think it through as well.

SE: As you've been digging through all those feeds, what would you say is the most surprising or interesting insight from your first year or so of the newsletter? What are the topics that are jumping out to you that you maybe didn't think that you would be focusing on a year ago?

Butcher: AI (artificial intelligence) is probably the biggest story, but I haven't covered AI much. I'm certainly no technophobe, but there's a bit of me that wants to watch and wait and see what happens.

The newsletter is framed on my personal experiences, and I was particularly interested in what's happening in terms of the tensions between quality versus quantity. I've got my two hats, my editor hat and my publisher hat. The editor hat says, "quality matters." The publisher hat—in an open access world where revenue per article is much higher under a subscription model than under an open access model—realizes that you need to increase quantity to survive. I was fascinated to see how quickly perceptions changed last year. I'm thinking in particular of what happened with Hindawi and Wiley. I wouldn't have predicted that in terms of the financial knock on. To be fair to the Wiley executive team, they stood up in front of their shareholders and told them they had a problem, but then the share price fell off a cliff.

What worries me is that other publishers will see what happened to Wiley and will be more likely to push things under the carpet, which I think would be disastrous for our industry. We're at a tipping point: We've got paper mills and we've got academics under massive pressure to publish. An open access business model means that publishers are willing to publish as many papers as hits their quality thresholds, which to some degree, are set arbitrarily. Under a subscription model, there were always page budgets, there was always a cap on article volumes because it was hard to monetise those extra papers, which isn't true under an open access model. So, I think it will be fascinating to see what happens over the next few years.

In the newsletter, I've done a deep dive into Frontiers,[2] not because I've got a downer on Frontiers, but because I'm really interested in what's happening there. There are a lot of society publishers who've really struggled off the back of competing with Frontiers, and their output has dropped significantly because Frontiers is outcompeting them by offering something authors want. And then to see Frontiers' article outputs change so dramatically.[3] I missed the initial inflection and was 2 or 3 months behind the curve. I guess that trying to spot those trends and how open access business models are changing for better and for worse in scholarly publishing is something I find very interesting. On top of that, you've got AI, which is going to boost paper mills, but also make it easier to detect fraud. I think it's going to be a lot more transparent, and that's a really, really good thing.

SE: When you're researching a topic or diving into a database, do you ever get to a point where you're not sure if anyone else is actually going to be interested in this, and if so, what do you do?

Butcher: It's a very good question. I must admit the last 2 weekends, I have spent a lot of time looking at Dimensions and writing about Frontiers rather than playing with kids, which is somewhat ironic since I told you earlier that I left the corporate job so I could spend more time with the kids.

Email used to be the bane of my life. In every corporate environment, you get thousands of emails. Now I send an email to over 3000 people, and I might get 2 or 3 replies a week. I never know how it's being received. Occasionally, I hear something on the grapevine and people say they enjoyed the newsletter. Some weeks you get a lot more new subscriptions than other weeks, so it's likely that emails are being passed around, and more people are signing up. You kind of get indirect feedback and a little bit of direct feedback. But I feel that I'm writing blind, and that's quite a weird feeling actually. Over the last year, I've had enough people saying nice things and not many unsubscribers, so I'm probably doing all right.

SE: Are you traveling to meetings and different conferences to see what's going on?

Butcher: Trying to. When you're independent, a travel budget means something, right? Your money. So I'm going to some meetings because it's nice to get out and about and meet people. It's nice to meet old friends and meet new people and get the industry's pulse, but I need to get the balance between traveling and actually doing some work that pays the bills.

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SE: You touched on this, but where do you think scientific editing and publishing is going in the next few years? What do you think you'll be covering in 2025?

Butcher: I genuinely don't know. I strongly suspect that AI is going to develop in good ways and bad ways. I'd like to think there's going to be more transparency. I think we are on the move toward open research, and that will mean more transparency. But whether or not the recent failures in terms of the open access business model will mean that more publishers are more reticent about moving to open access. It's possible, but I think anyone who thinks they know where it's going is probably somewhat deluded.

This year, *eLife* is going to be an interesting one to watch because it's the poster child in many ways for the PRC (publish, review, curate) model. Will they get delisted by Clarivate? I've looked at the small print on the website. To me, if you read the small print, it looks as though they might, but we'll see what happens. Just simply because they're effectively publishing papers that have failed peer review, right? Because the authors are able to choose whether to publish a paper or walk away with it right after the peer review. Even if the reviewers come back and say it's rubbish, the authors can still choose to publish. If *eLife* loses its Impact Factor, will their submissions fall off a cliff in the way that's happened for every other journal? If they don't, that's interesting because it says that the particular community doesn't care about Impact Factors, but all of the historical evidence suggests that probably wouldn't be the case.

The big picture outside of publishing is how academic reward systems change. There are lots of different organizations that are trying to change how academics' performance is measured. Judging researchers by the journals that they publish in is a proxy measure. If that changes, if people develop new ways of measuring an academic's performance, that could change publishing hugely.

SE: Any thoughts you want to leave the reader with?

Butcher: One of the things I'm trying to do (and this is going to sound a bit grandiose) is champion editorial values, while helping editors to understand the commercial environment that they are working in. The vast majority of editors are academics who are trying to fit in their editorial work alongside their teaching commitments, their research, or clinical commitments, and they're being an editor between 10:00 AM and 12:00 PM 3 nights a week. That system, where we're asking academics to act as editors, is very different from the world that I've worked in, where you've got full-time professional editors who're spending 50 hours a week reading papers as their primary job.

It will be interesting to see how that changes over time, because academics are under massive pressure. They're being pulled in so many different directions. Fundamentally, if we need to collectively spend more time on research integrity, how are academic editors going to do it? It's not about capability, it's about time. How are they going to be able to manage that? If they can't do it, how does that change the role of an editor? I think there are some big existential questions there, and it will be interesting to see what happens in the future. In the newsletter, I try to champion editorial values and bring different types of editors together to think about the issues that affect all of them. If I can help in a small way, that would be a win.

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Glenn Landis: Helping CSE Flourish

Jonathan Schultz

Whether it's a journal portfolio or backyard garden, Glenn Landis has a passion for encouraging growth. As the Senior Director of Publications at the American Society of Hematology (ASH), Glenn oversees an expanding scientific and educational portfolio of biomedical journals and educational content, helping hematologists conquer blood diseases and disorders. As incoming Council of Science Editors (CSE) President, he takes the reigns of a rebounding CSE with the goal of further strengthening the organization and providing new opportunities for its members. In this interview conducted in early April, Glenn discusses plans for his CSE presidency, the benefits of volunteering, and the importance of staying open and curious.

Science Editor: How did you get involved in scientific editing and publishing, and what career path led you to this current position?

Glenn Landis: My father was a local reporter for some 40 years; his entire professional career at one newspaper, the Reading Eagle in Reading, Pennsylvania. He started out doing farm reports—very rural, very agricultural—and he ended his career in the obituary section, which to him seemed like a natural progression. So publishing was always something that I gravitated to.

My first editorial experience was with Ken Kornfield at the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO), and after 14 years there, I moved over to the American Society of Hematology, where I've been now for over 9 years.

SE: What do you enjoy most about working in scientific editing and publishing?

Landis: It's very robust, in terms of challenges and opportunities. There are so many different aspects to science publishing, in terms of where we as publishers fit into the funding of science and the career ladder and communicating science to readers and the public. It's quite an enormous and always evergreen task and I enjoy the challenge, so to speak.

For ASH, our challenge now is growing the portfolio. When we partnered with Elsevier (in 2020), we had a plan to start new titles and move into new spaces to make sure we fulfill the mission of serving our hematologists. Since then, we've launched 2 new journals last year and 3 more on the way this year. We're very excited about these journal launches and the value they bring to our readership and our scientists.

SE: In May, you become the CSE President. What has CSE meant to you and your career and what do you look forward to doing as president?

Landis: I'm so grateful for the opportunities CSE has given me. I've been a member for over 20 years and served in different positions for CSE for over the years. I started at the CSE Membership Committee, then became the Membership Chair, co-chaired the 2011 Annual Meeting in Baltimore with Mary Beth Schaeffer, and was later elected as Treasurer and then Vice President. This past year as President-Elect of CSE has been an amazing experience, and I'm so thankful for it. CSE has been pivotal in my professional growth and success. I remember attending meetings early in my career and short courses in different locations, and I have always been thankful and inspired by CSE's positive and engaging culture and focus on education. I continue to be inspired by the CSE community, and as president, I hope I further nurture the community and support that collaboration and innovation for everyone else.

SE: Are there any initiatives or projects you're hoping to work on this year as president?

Landis: As we've reported out, over the last year we transitioned management of CSE to Riggs Enterprise. We're very thankful for our partnership with Riggs, and we're working now to shore up procedures with our association provider to make sure that we leverage and utilize Riggs to provide the value of membership and unique experience

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that we're all accustomed to with CSE. Big picture, that's the main focus, as it was for (outgoing CSE President) Shari Leventhal. I also want to make sure that the annual meeting experience is an amazing one that is an inspiration for attendees, and we can support engagement year-round through CSE Connects, webinars, and the Fall Symposium, along with *Science Editor*, the new CSE Manual, and the work of the CSE Committees. There are so many chances throughout the year to remain engaged and inspired and learn from others in our community of scientific publishing professionals.

SE: Under the leadership of now President-Elect Emilie Gunn, CSE recently reimagined their committee structure[1] to make it easier to become involved in CSE and follow a clearer path toward taking a leadership role. As you mentioned earlier, you started out at CSE on the Membership Committee and becoming co-chair of that committee led to further leadership roles, right?

Landis: That's right, and that's part of our focus infrastructure and committee support of CSE. We are working to make CSE a modern organization that provides opportunities for members who want to get engaged to grow within the CSE volunteer community, and their career path, and maybe become a president someday. I think the goal is not only for these committees to run efficiently and effectively, but also provide a transparent path to volunteer leadership at CSE. We're very thankful for the amazing work of Emilie and her team.

SE: Shifting gears a bit, from a personal perspective, what would you say are the skills, abilities, and personal attributes that you have found to be essential in this industry?

Landis: What I've learned the hard way is that I think being inquisitive and open to new ideas is essential. In other words, always approaching challenges, problems, or situations with curiosity and not having preformed judgment, but rather keeping an open mind. Being stuck in my old ways and my own views is not productive in the long term or beneficial to the journals I supervise and the portfolio I oversee. Being curious allows me personally to grow and also hopefully then for our journals and our portfolio to grow.

SE: That is especially important now as everything seems to be in a constant state of flux, and just when you think there's a new paradigm in scientific publishing, that seems to be changing too. It's definitely a good asset to be able to think creatively.

Landis: STM publishing continues to evolve at an amazing pace in terms of technology, challenges, requirements, etc. Providing opportunities for our CSE community to connect with these new technologies will remain a theme during my presidency. CSE can create that space, at the Annual Meeting or in the Fall Symposium or in *Science Editor*, for best practices for engaging those new technologies, platforms, or ideas. I have always enjoyed learning from others. We did this because X, Y, and Z reason, and learning from their wins and losses and their mistakes has always been part of the CSE community, and I want to make sure we keep that going.

SE: You clearly have a love of science publishing, but if you hadn't followed this career path, what might you be doing?

Landis: When I was younger, I was into hiking and the outdoors. I lived in a tent for 3 summers serving at a summer camp. As a potential professional career, I could have been a park ranger. I look back on these moments with some fondness, being outdoors and hiking.

Something that might surprise you is how much I enjoy landscaping and gardening. I have a collection of ferns in my yard, and I'm a member of the local Fern Society and Maryland Native Plant Society.[2] I have a fascination with plants and the complexity and diversity of insects, ferns, and wildflowers. Right now, there's quite an amazing plant you can see on trails. There's something called a trout-lily,[3] a flower that blooms above ground for 1 month, and then the rest of the year it grows into ground. It looks like a trout because the leaves are speckled, like a rainbow trout, and you can only see it before the tree canopy comes in. It soaks up the sun, and right now it's so sunny because the canopy in Maryland hasn't developed. The natural world is purely fascinating, for sure.

SE: A trout-lily spotting sounds pretty exciting.

Landis: It truly is.

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Peer Review Innovations: Insights and Ideas from the Researcher to Reader 2024 Workshop

Tony Alves, Jason De Boer, Alice Ellingham, Elizabeth Hay, and Christopher Leonard

Introduction

The Peer Review Innovations workshop at this year's Researcher to Reader Conference in London brought together 30 colleagues from various facets of scholarly communications, including publishers, institutional librarians, open research advocates, consultants, and service providers. In keeping with the overall ethos of this popular annual industry event, our collective goal was to share insights from across the scholarly community and to explore possible innovative ideas that could help improve peer review for all stakeholders engaged in this process.

Setting the Scene

Before discussing ideas to improve peer review, the workshop agreed on the parameters for our discussions, defining peer review as *the timeframe between the submission of research to a journal or other platform for publication, and the editorial decision by that journal or platform to publish the work*. Whilst not a perfect or all-encompassing definition, this was intended to give a workable frame of reference to the workshop participants for the three 1-hour sessions during the 2 days of the conference.

We also discussed the current state of peer review, asking the participants to vote for 1 of 4 options. The vast majority of the group (93%) felt that peer review is in need of major improvements to meet the needs of its various stakeholders (Figure 1). No one in the group felt that peer review in its current state is working well most of the time—perhaps unsurprising in a workshop dedicated to discussing peer review innovations!

This exercise not only illustrated the participants were aligned in their perception that peer review requires a major rethink, it also created a sense of urgency and purpose in the room.

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Threats, Pain Points, and Successes

In session 1, the workshop participants, working in 5 groups, were asked to list the threats, pain points, and successes (described during the session as "things that work well") in peer review in its current state. The workshop participants collectively prioritized the following main threats, pain points, and successes:

Threats

- Generative artificial intelligence (AI): fake papers, fake people, fake everything
- Integrity: fake journals, fake papers, fake reviews
- "Publish or perish" culture: institutional incentives
- Deficiencies in scholarly rigor and ethics
- Misconduct

The consensus from the group was that the culture of publish or perish incentivizes misconduct, and generative AI provides readily available tools that make misconduct easier.

Pain Points

- Proof of identity and lack of industry collaboration for identity management
- Finding reviewers due to lack of training and a lack of standards/consistency
- Overloaded teams and systems: crumbling under pressure, working with small reviewer pools and too many papers
- Finding suitably qualified peer reviewers
- Time pressure for researchers and peer reviewers

The overall sense was that the difficulty in finding qualified reviewers is exacerbated by the inability to fully trust reviewer identity, which is related to the lack of knowledge about possible reviewers outside of mainstream western institutions.

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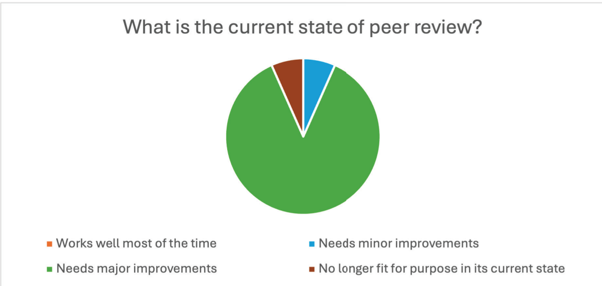

Figure 1. Breakdown of survey responses from attendees of the Peer Review Innovations workshop at the 2024 Researcher to Reader Conference. The survey question was "What is the current state of peer review?"

Successes

- Concept of peer review: cumulative trust indicator
- Open peer review: can this help with trust?
- Longevity: peer review has been around for over 100 years; hard to make a behavior change
- Improves science
- Using AI tools to find peer reviewers

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the participants found it easier to identify specific threats and pain points than specific successes, which were more thematic in nature. Fundamentally, peer review is a strong and valued concept; it signals trust and improves science, but its mechanics need major attention to cope with the numerous threats and pain points.

Gaps and Innovations

Session 2 asked the participants to think about what would enable "perfect peer review": focusing on gaps that need addressing, current successes that can be enhanced or extended, and areas for innovation and new thinking.

The session used an adapted version of the "1-2-4-All" framework for generating, discussing, and refining ideas—in this case, "1-2-Table" for each of the 5 groups. Starting with individual ideas, participants then discussed their respective ideas in pairs before coming together as a table to prioritize their top 5 ideas.

Key themes from this session were the following: changing culture and incentives upstream from the peer review process; embracing technology that can be trusted as being critical and reliable, rather than purely generative; creating and adopting industry standards; and a push toward prompt, effective, and constructive peer review.

Practical Solutions and Blue-Sky Thinking

At the start of session 3, the various ideas shared by each workshop group in session 2 were categorized for a Slido poll in which participants were asked to rank their top 5 ideas in order of preference (Figure 2):

Researcher Focused

- Formal training and mentoring for early career researchers
- Recognition (e.g., continuing professional development, research assessment)
- Monetary incentives (e.g., paid-for peer review, article processing charge discounts)
- Foster a community of peer reviewers to share experiences and best practice

Institution Focused

- Provide researchers with the space, time, and resources to undertake peer review
- Formal training for researchers
- Disincentivize malpractice (e.g., stop publish or perish)
- Recognize peer review in researcher career development

Metadata and Infrastructure Focused

- Widely adopted persistent identifiers (PIDs)/user authentication (e.g., ORCID, something else?)
- Easier, more efficient metadata capture throughout the workflow
- Infrastructure to support portable peer review

Technology Focused

- Reduce friction and delays in the peer review workflow
- Automated tools to reduce administrative burden on journals when triaging submissions
- Automated integrity checks upstream, presubmission
- Automated reviewer finding and matching tools
- Embrace AI as part of undertaking the review process
- Enable collaborative peer review for greater transparency and engagement

Culture Focused

- Recognize and engage with differences in the culture of peer review globally
- Prioritize quality over quantity in submissions and published research
- Take a longer-term view on the research lifecycle

Top 5 Areas for Innovation

The workshop participants voted for the following top 5 areas, and each group was assigned 1 of these ideas to discuss: (1) practical actions that individuals and their organizations can take immediately; (2) realistic medium-term actions for adoption by the scholarly communications community; and (3) blue-sky ideas if money, resources, and time are no obstacle.

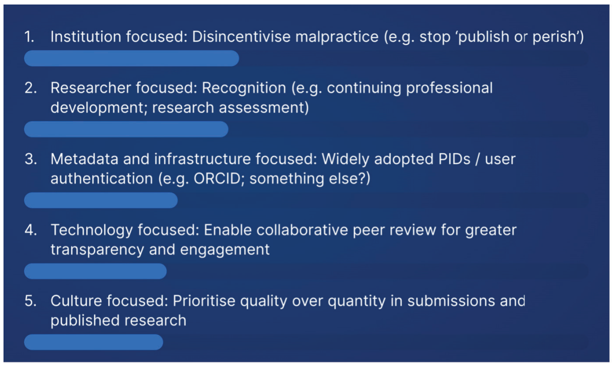

Figure 2. Top 5 areas of innovation in peer review.

It is interesting that the bottom-ranked idea (no. 20) was that of monetary payment for peer review. Whether this reflects wider industry sentiment, or just the collective view of the 30 participants voting on these 20 specific ideas, is a moot point.

Disincentivize Malpractice

Immediate Practical Actions

- Greater awareness and education across the scholarly community
- Campaigning by industry bodies
- Greater volume and consistency of resources between publishers

Realistic Medium-Term Actions

- Greater consequences for malpractice at an institutional level—monetarily and reputationally

Blue-Sky Thinking

- Stop publish or perish!
- That being said, there will always be a push for some form of relative measurement of researchers and institutional research performance—will bad actors simply find ways to game the alternatives?

These solutions point to a consensus that researcher malpractice stems from institutional incentives and that it is the researcher's organization that is ultimately responsible for monitoring and punishing bad actors. Publishers can police the process, and tools can be developed to aid the publisher in that process, but it is the researcher's employer who has the greatest sway over researcher behavior.

Recognition

Immediate Practical Actions

- Extend current initiatives such as CoARA, ORCID Peer Review Deposit, and ReviewerCredits
- Improve the level and consistency of feedback provided to peer reviewers

Realistic Medium-Term Actions

- Devise more effective measures for quality control in peer review—reviewer rankings?
- Funder-driven initiatives for recognizing peer review contributions
- Enable readers to provide feedback—affirmative or critical—in open peer review and post-publication peer review

Blue-Sky Thinking

- Extend peer review quality measures upstream to institutions to encourage them to value and recognize the time spent by their researchers in undertaking peer review

Professionalization of peer review appears to be the solution across all categories. Today peer review is seen as a volunteer activity, done on one's own time. Implementing training, carving out time during working hours, and institutionalizing recognition for researchers who engage in peer review might go a long way to increasing the willingness of researchers to perform this important service. Interestingly, as noted above, there is little support for actually paying peer reviewers for their efforts. This may be a result of the demographics of the participants, which was largely publisher-centric.

Widely Adopted PIDs and User Authentication

Immediate Practical Actions

- More widespread (ideally near universal) adoption of ORCID by scholarly publishers

Realistic Medium-Term Actions

- Funders to contribute to the financing of widespread/standardized PID adoption as part of their investment in safeguarding the version of record
- Use PIDs such as ORCID to track and share data on aggregated quantity of reviewers
- Use PIDs such as ORCID to disambiguate reviewer identities and to engage with previous reviewers

Blue-Sky Thinking

- Globally standardized metadata—for instance, on article types, institutions
- Interoperable peer review standards

In many ways, the solutions are already in place but are clearly underutilized for a variety of reasons. For example, ORCID was enthusiastically embraced early on, and usage continues to grow; however, although we would like to see

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even wider adoption, a bigger value add for publishers would be some element of verification at ORCID, like the Know Your Customer protocol in financial services. Then, we could be confident that the person we are communicating with is the right person and not an imposter. Similarly, NISO, Crossref, and other organizations maintain and promote standards for metadata and recently, a Peer Review Terminology Standard was developed jointly by STM and NISO. The challenge is getting the entire ecosystem utilizing these standards, especially funders and institutions.

Collaborative Peer Review

Immediate Practical Actions

- Consider for adoption on specific journal titles

Realistic Medium-Term Actions

- Create a taxonomy of reviewer contributions—ideally as an extension of CRediT for author contributions—for a more holistic view of researcher activity in scholarly communications

Blue-Sky Thinking

- Develop an industry platform (or platform standard) that supports collaboration, transparency, engagement, and equity among all stakeholders in the peer review process

Similar to recognition, collaboration focuses on the peer reviewer as the central character. Because peer review is usually a solo endeavor and tends to take place in the dark, the activity is seen as a burden, and there is increasing mistrust in the process. Finding ways to open up the evaluation process, introducing more collaboration, and allowing (acknowledged) early career researcher participation might be solutions to these issues.

Prioritize Quality Over Quantity

Immediate Practical Actions

- Improved submission software systems
- Ensure researchers are choosing the right journal or platform for their research
- Reduce the focus on publishing at volume

Realistic Medium-Term Actions

- Quality is subjective—we need a consistent or standardized definition of what constitutes a high-quality submission
- Train scholars on writing effective abstracts
- Move away from a seemingly endless cascading process used by some publishers to retain submissions within their portfolio
- Look at the motivations behind researchers submitting too many papers to too many journals

Blue-Sky Thinking

- Change the incentives driving publish or perish
- Develop standardized abstract analysis tools for faster and more accurate triage and peer reviewer identification
- Adopt a "two strikes and out" industry rule for submitted research—if a submission is rejected by 2 journals, irrespective of publisher, it cannot be considered by any other journal. How workable is this idea?

The final area for innovation is perhaps the hardest to achieve since it involves an overall cultural change in how research is published and the incentives that drive researchers to publish. Reducing "salami-slicing" and limiting cascading are tactics, but the larger solution, again, lies with funders and research institutions who reward quantity.

There are vast differences in how research is conducted and reported across disciplines, including unique cultural idiosyncrasies and discipline-specific traditions, making standardization challenging. There is also an indication that technical systems need to modernize to deploy more AI-type tools to identify and fix quality issues, but like the previously mentioned challenge, there are many players, many different technologies, and many varied requirements from discipline to discipline.

Summary

The most potentially contentious innovation from the workshop is the final one discussed by the participants and shared here, the "two strikes and out" idea. It will be interesting to see if the idea of restricting the number of times a paper can be submitted to any journal, before it effectively becomes void, is either desirable, workable, or fraud-proof. It would certainly require industry collaboration and technological capabilities to support such a move. And would it be regarded as being in some way prejudicial toward certain authors or global regions? These considerations notwithstanding, it was certainly fun to end the workshop with such a hot topic for discussion and further debate!

Having established our parameters, defining peer review as *the timeframe between the submission of research to a journal or other platform for publication, and the editorial decision by that journal or platform to publish the work*, and having established consensus during the first

(continued on p. 62)

Sustaining Through Training: Preparing the Next Generation of Editors and Peer Reviewers

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The conference hall was packed for the "Sustaining Through Training: Preparing the Next Generation of Editors and Peer Reviewers" session at the 2024 Council of Science Editors (CSE) Annual Meeting, in which the speakers—Ann Tennier, Barbara Gastel, and Kristin Inman—shared valuable information about their experiences with the training of manuscript editors and peer reviewers in diverse settings, including academia and editorial offices at scientific journals (Figure). Following the presentations, the audience broke out into smaller groups to discuss what is being done at other institutions and lessons learned. Experiences were shared with the intent of inspiring new ideas and plans for training the next generation of scholarly publication professionals.

Experiences at a Society Journal

Ann Tennier, Managing Editor at Academic Psychiatry, kicked things off with an overview of the ways in which their journal recruits and supports peer reviewers. Upfront, the editors engage in outreach around why peer review is important through editorials such as "On the art and science of peer review," which highlights how beyond contributing to the scientific community, serving as a reviewer will help you become a better writer and stay current in the literature.[1] All great reasons to dive in if you are new to the peer review process. Next, in invitation letters to peer reviewers, they link to a review checklist[2] to help guide the reviews and explain the idiosyncrasies of reviewing different types of studies. Invitees, if new to the process, are welcomed to have a mentor assist with the review and, if experienced, are permitted to ask a trainee to assist (such partnerships in training were a common theme throughout the entire session). If the invitee has to decline the offer, they are asked to provide the name of a colleague who may be available to serve as an alternate, including colleagues who would benefit from opportunities to expand their experience in scholarly publication activities. Tennier noted, "One of the hardest things to do during a review is to secure peer reviewers."

Academic Psychiatry has commendably created an editorial fellowship program for the training of editors with a demonstrated interest in scholarly writing. First, intensive training is provided; then, fellows shadow an experienced editor for on-the job training. Toward the end of their fellowship, participants are asked to coauthor an editorial in the journal. To date, the fellowship program has facilitated 40 peer reviews, produced 3 publications, and spurred the creation of a new role at the journal, Senior Editorial Mentor.

In alignment with the journal's philosophy for publishing, all new peer reviewers and editors are coached to provide collegial and constructive feedback and are made aware that the work they are doing is helping to solve society's toughest problems.

Experiences From Academia and Beyond

Next, Barbara Gastel, Professor at Texas A&M University, provided a rich overview of several training opportunities available to those interested in science communication careers and professional development opportunities. Texas A&M offers a science editing course[3] for graduate students that meets 3 hours per week, and *The Copyeditor's Handbook*[4] is used as the primary text. The meetings are a mix of lectures and discussions, and students take a well-liked field trip to the university press. During the course, students are coached on the nuances of the author–editor relationship, and they write discussion posts, do multiple exercises, interview an editor, and complete 3 editing projects. She explained that it is critically important for editors to learn how to form productive partnerships with authors and not look down on writing mistakes.

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Figure. Summary of peer review resources and editing style guides discussed during the "Sustaining Through Training: Preparing the Next Generation of Editors and Peer Reviewers" session at the 2024 CSE Annual Meeting.

The University of Chicago also hosts a medical writing and editing program,[5] in which enrollees take 5 required courses and 1 elective on topics such as medical copyediting; fundamentals of substantive editing and publication ethics; and preparing tables, graphs, and figures. The American Medical Association's *AMA Manual of Style*[6] is used as a reference. The course is fully remote (using the Canvas learning management system and Zoom) and attracts not only early-career and mid-career professionals, but retirees, too.

Dr Gastel then discussed details of MD Anderson Cancer Center's science editing internships,[7] which are open to undergraduate and graduate students enrolled at several Texas universities. Interns receive training in editing and quality reviews of their work. They also attend workshops on manuscript and grant proposal writing.

Lastly, Dr Gastel capped off her overview with a slew of interesting aspects of other trainings. She focused largely on how MD Anderson, the Mayo Clinic, and the JAMA Network train manuscript editors new to their editorial offices. For at least the first several months, more senior editors review the new editors' work. Dr Gastel also noted the training received by new associate editors at the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) journals. This training includes orientation to the manuscript submission system, receipt of sample manuscript decision letters, and pairing with an experienced associate editor.

Experiences at a Government-Funded Journal

Supplementing the main presentations, moderator Kristin Inman, a contract editor at Environmental Health Perspectives (EHP), concluded the series of presentations by describing EHP's training program, the Early Career Research Initiative (ECRI), which launched in 2021. Through the ECRI, early career researchers gain important knowledge about authorship, peer review, and manuscript editing while being mentored by established peer reviewers. Relationship building is facilitated by the Peer Reviewer Partnership Program, where early career reviewers partner with established reviewers. Mentee–mentor pairs are expected to carry out 2 peer reviews over 1 year, wherein they meet to discuss the paper but submit independent reviews. The program is overseen by journal staff and an advisory panel of early career researchers. She noted that for scholars in-training, it is "incredibly important to read other reviews."

Breakout Discussions

For the breakout discussions, groups were asked:

- What kind of training do you do? How do you implement it? What are the strengths and challenges?
- What have you tried that didn't turn out as expected? What did you learn?
- Is there training you wish to do that you haven't embarked on? If so, what are the barriers, if any?

A lively discussion followed. Mock peer review groups for trainees at educational institutions were deemed of high value. Again, the importance of pairing new editors and peer reviewers with experienced ones was emphasized for quality assurance during the initial training period. The journal managing editors in attendance were very supportive of such coreviews and only ask that these relationships are disclosed. Several attendees commented on the importance of offering incentives to engage in peer review work, such as recognition certificates and awards that can be added to faculty promotion portfolios and even continuing medical education (CME) credits like those offered by ASCO. There was a clear desire for more metrics on peer reviews: people want to know how well current training programs are working. There was widespread agreement that there is no one-size-fits-all framework for the design of training programs.

Key Take Aways and Resources

My own key take away was that there is a great deal of innovation going on in this critical space. Trainings discussed spanned formal–informal and in-person–hybrid–remote mechanisms. The importance of hands-on experience with different forms of editing (i.e., copyediting, substantive editing, and proofreading) and mentorship were recurrent themes. In support of scientific publications, all involved in training activities are encouraged to share resources whenever possible and engage in outreach around the importance of editing and peer review work.

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exercise—that peer review *needs major improvements*—the participants were quite productive identifying threats and pain points, while struggling to come up with specific answers to what are some successes. Settling on *the concept of peer review* as a success, this motivated the room to find solutions to secure its foundations and build a better infrastructure. There were many ideas for specific innovations, like better use of PIDs, ORCID, reviewer recognition, and quality assessment tools.

However, there was overwhelming recognition that the biggest change factors are institutions and funders who control the purse strings and manage the reputations of researchers. Publishers who manage the peer review process can create rules and utilize technology to improve peer review, but the innovation that might make a difference lies with changing the publish or perish culture that drives researchers to overwhelm the system, create peer reviewer shortages, and foster mistrust of science.

We hope this workshop provided food for thought for the participants and for the wider scholarly communications community. We look forward to ongoing collaboration with colleagues as we take these themes forward in future discussions.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank all of the workshop participants for their wholehearted contributions to the conversations, debates, and outputs. We are also extremely grateful to Mark Carden, Jayne Marks, and the Researcher to Reader 2024 Conference organizing committee for the opportunity to develop and deliver this workshop.

Gaining and Measuring Article Attention

MODERATOR:
Dr Sarah Wright
American Veterinary Medical Association

SPEAKERS:
Dr Sarah Wright

Michelle Herbert
Digital Science

Tom Hinds
University of California, Davis – School of Veterinary Medicine

Dr Kat Sutherland
Ontario Veterinary College, University of Guelph

REPORTER:
Denise Kuo
Origin Editorial

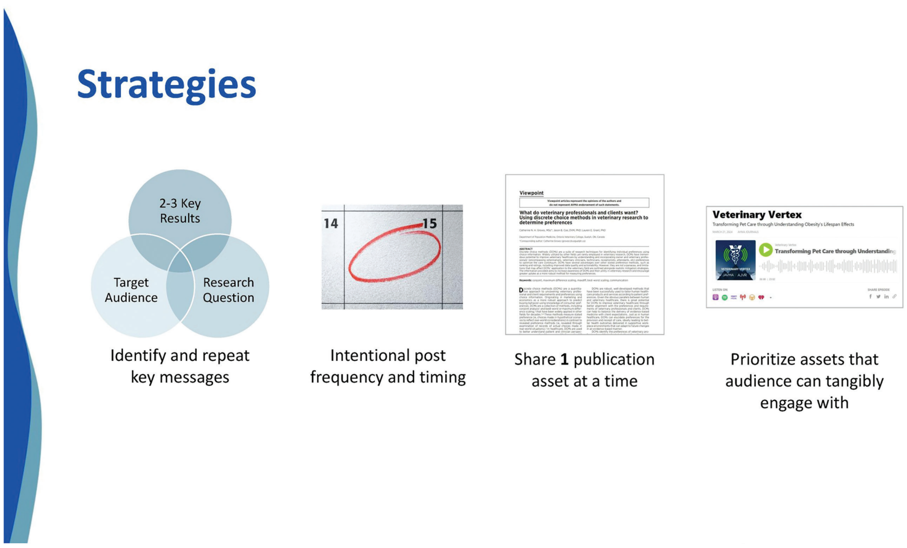
Dr Sarah Wright set the stage by emphasizing the importance—even power—of social media in scholarly communication and then introduced each speaker in turn. Offering different perspectives through the lens of an author, an editor, and an institution, Dr Wright, Tom Hinds, and Dr Kat Sutherland discussed strategies and experiences they each encountered while working to attract article attention. Focusing on the measurement of article attention, Michelle Herbert described how Digital Science's Altmetric badge and tools support all participants seeking to measure article attention.

Researcher Dr Kat Sutherland shared her experience as a member of an author group that intentionally laid out a strategy to share and amplify their work using LinkedIn (Figure 1).

Dr Sutherland's group communicates their work on LinkedIn using 3 different structured formats depending on the content type to maximize consistency. The research team typically releases a single post per week and always hyperlinks to the content that is hosted on their team website. The team is also careful to include just 1 asset (e.g., 1 article or resource) in each post, and they do NOT repost their own content. Since each piece of content will only be shared through 1 post, the team makes sure to tag all relevant contributors including collaborators, author institutions, and funders.

Varied content takes the form of research, speaker highlights, team member highlights, and resources such as a podcast or webinar. Since the team does not repeat posts, to enhance audience engagement, they create infographics that are centered around key research findings and relevant resources. Each infographic is unique and posted once but may include findings and resources that were previously shared through a different type of post.

As an Associate Editor for the *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* (*JAVMA*) and the *American Journal of Veterinary Research* (*AJVR*), Dr Sarah Wright strives to inspire author loyalty through the journals' social media strategy. Similarly to the author's perspective presented by Dr Sutherland, structured post formats are important, but for *JAVMA* and *AJVR*, the selection of format is determined by the intended audience and social media platform, which may be Facebook, X, Instagram, LinkedIn,



https://doi.org/10.36591/SE-4702-13

or a podcast. Also, it is common to repeat content across platforms, but each post is tailored in structure and message based on the platform's audience (Figure 2).

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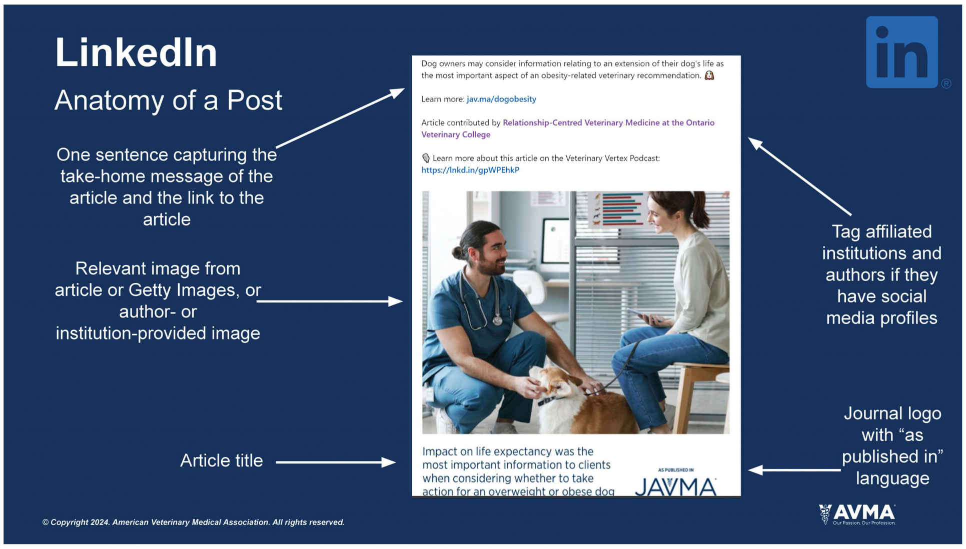

At the University of California, Davis – School of Veterinary Medicine, Tom Hinds and team work to create an atmosphere at the institution that encourages researchers to engage in media promotion, both through news outlets and social media platforms. This is accomplished by 1) members of the leadership team setting an example by personally engaging in media activities, 2) providing media training to researchers, and 3) regularly celebrating results of media engagement. In addition to encouraging researchers to engage with media, the team works to cultivate relationships with many different media outlets with a goal of drawing attention not only to recent studies conducted by researchers at UC Davis – School of Veterinary Medicine, but also other content from the school. The team receives monthly reports that detail the attention received by the studies through various outlets, including social media, but the amount of information can be overwhelming and difficult to digest as they seek to measure the impact of the team's hard work (Figure 3).

The struggles that Hinds and team have encountered in understanding how attention is measured was a perfect lead-in to the final presentation in the session by Michelle Herbert from Digital Science. Herbert emphasized the importance of persistent identifiers such as a DOI or PubMed ID for the tools developed by Digital Science to produce an Altmetric badge. The inclusion of a persistent identifier as the URL hyperlink in social posts on X, Instagram, Facebook, etc., ensures the post is counted when the Altmetric badge is updated. While Herbert could not guarantee it will happen in 2024, her confirmation that Digital Science is interested in having a conversation with LinkedIn to include posts on that platform in the Altmetric badge and Explorer in the future was warmly received by everyone in the room. In the meantime, LinkedIn does provide their own metrics on the platform that can be utilized by anyone to measure the attention of their own account and activity on the platform.

As the session wrapped up, the entire panel agreed that social media can be effective for every organization and journal, but it is important to find out where the target audience is for your research group, department, university, or journal and then utilize the best platform or channel to reach that audience. One final piece of advice that the speaker panel endorsed was that each platform does a good job of recommending the best day and time to post content on the platform; following the advice of the algorithm will result in good engagement with the post. It really works!

All Together Now: Multi-Journal Approaches to Submissions Standardization

MODERATOR:
Katie Murphy
Senior Managing Editor
KGL

SPEAKERS:
Joel Schanke
Editorial Operations Supervisor
Cell Press

Jonathan Schultz
Sr Director of Journal Operations
American Heart Association

REPORTER:
Alice Ellingham
Director
Editorial Office Ltd

The session "All Together Now: Multi-Journal Approaches to Submissions Standardization" provided a comprehensive overview of the challenges and benefits associated with standardizing submission processes across multiple journals.

Synopsis and Key Points

The session commenced with a focus on the significance of standardization in optimizing manuscript submission processes. It was emphasized that while standardization facilitates efficiency and enhances editorial oversight, implementing it across diverse fields of study and journals poses challenges. The primary goals included reducing manual processes, increasing author and peer reviewer satisfaction, elevating the level of editorial oversight to maximize the efficiency of editorial staff, and adhering to industry best practices.

Case Studies and Strategies

Jonathan Schultz discussed the American Heart Association's editorial cascade model and the implementation of a submission portal to streamline the manuscript review process across multiple journals, with a focus on attracting and keeping good manuscripts.

At the point of submission, authors can select multiple journals and order them by preference. Triage editors go into the portal and consider each submission, choosing to pass or reject. Once a journal chooses to review the submission, it is transferred seamlessly into the destination journal for review.

One unexpected downside was most authors only selected one journal—more education is needed to encourage them to select more than one at point of submission.

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Joel Schanke provided insights into Cell Press's approach, focusing on improving author experience, success, and staff efficiency through a pre-pilot initiative, which then led to the integration of a fully functional multi-journal platform.

If an author chooses to submit to multi-journal submission (MJS), they then can choose 2–5 journals from which they would like consideration. The paper is triaged, and the decision of whether these journals wish to review the submission or a transfer offer is sent to the authors for their information. If reviewed at MJS, then the submission is reviewed by one set of independent reviewers, and the handling editor will then send a single decision letter to the author, outlining the decision of each journal that reviewed their paper (e.g., a revision plan or a transfer offer to an individual journal). It's then up to the author to decide how they would like to proceed, therefore determining the journal(s) best suited for their paper.

Questions and Responses

The session included a dynamic Q&A segment, where attendees engaged with the speakers on various aspects of submissions standardization. Some of the key questions and responses included the following:

- **Impact on Acceptance.** Jonathan highlighted that the multi-journal platform could lead to acceptances in journals that authors might not have previously considered, thus broadening the scope of potential acceptance.
- **Efficiency in Journal Selection.** Joel mentioned that the platform facilitates quicker identification of the most suitable journal for submission compared with traditional transfers.
- **Role of Triage Editors.** Both speakers clarified that triage editors, including EICs, play a crucial role in assessing manuscript suitability and guiding the submission process.
- **Author Education.** Jonathan emphasized the need for further education to encourage authors to select multiple journals for submission, thus maximizing their chances of acceptance.

(continued on p. 73)

The Structure of CSE Committees and How to Get Involved

Emilie Gunn, Andrea Kunz, and Emma Shumeyko

Introduction

Council of Science Editors (CSE) is lucky to have a large group of volunteers who contribute their time and expertise to make the organization successful. Over time, as CSE has grown and increased the scope of work, 28 committees were established. With so many active volunteers and ongoing programs, it was becoming difficult to clearly delineate the responsibilities of each committee as work began to overlap and change over time. In 2023, the CSE Board of Directors formed a task force to review all CSE volunteer groups and make recommendations regarding the overall structure, individual committee missions and charters, and committee activities.

Findings

Compared to other societies of similar size, CSE has an unusually large number of committees and various programs and offerings. While this underscores the value and importance of the work the organization does, the Committee Task Force realized that realigning the committees to clarify responsibility for each program would make committee work easier for volunteers and allow CSE to make better informed decisions regarding programs and offerings.

Recommendations for Committee Structure

Ultimately, the task force realized a need to reduce the number of committees through consolidation and pause some programs. The task force suggested the following changes regarding committee structure and responsibility:

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1. **Align the Program, Fall Symposium, Webinars, Short Courses, and Podcasts under the Education Committee.** These groups all oversee the production of educational content in one format or another, so it made sense to keep them together to streamline gathering and accessing ideas for the educational content members want to consume.
2. **Convert the Sponsorship Committee to a subcommittee of the Finance Committee.** These 2 groups monitor and make decisions that impact the financial state of CSE. They should benefit from being paired together.
3. **Move the Web Editor position under the Marketing Committee.** Many of the updates the Web Editor makes are for the purpose of promoting CSE offerings. Since the Web Editor already works closely with the Marketing Committee, it seemed natural to formalize that relationship.
4. **Change the name of the Membership Committee to Membership and Community.** This committee is not only responsible for increasing and maintaining membership of CSE, but also for events that foster community among members, such as networking events or CSE Connect.
5. **Move responsibility for Book Club under the Membership and Community Committee.** Book Club is intended to prompt discussion, and by definition, a club is a group of like-minded individuals with a similar interest, as a community should be.
6. **Move *Scientific Style and Format/CSE Manual* and *Science Editor* under the Editorial Policy Committee.** This will allow for more streamlined communication between the groups that oversee CSE publications and current issues in publishing in general.

How To Be Involved

CSE is an active organization, with many committees and volunteers. There are many avenues for involvement and many benefits, both to you and to CSE.

Volunteering for CSE is a valuable opportunity to network with other publishing professionals, gain new skills and give back to the publishing community. As you get to know others in your field and learn about what they do, you are

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Table. Committee descriptions at-a-glance.

Committee	Subcommittee	Primary Purpose
Executive	—	Determine CSE's strategic initiatives and exercise the authority of the Board of Directors in the management of the Society between regular meetings of the Board of Directors, as necessary
	Awards and Honors	Recommend the recipients of the annual CSE Award for Meritorious Achievement, the CSE Distinguished Service Award, and the CSE Certificate of Appreciation
	Nominating	Conduct the annual nomination process, vetting candidates and presenting a recommended slate for elected office
Education	—	Produce content to educate CSE members, including the Annual Meeting, Fall Symposium, Short Courses, and Webinars
	Program	Plan sessions for the Annual Meeting; members are expected to organize a specific session for the event
	Fall Symposium	Plan sessions for the Fall Symposium; members are expected to organize a specific session for the event
	Webinars	Plan and organize the schedule of CSE webinars
	Short Courses	Plan and execute short courses through suggesting content, timing, and potential faculty
Finance	—	Monitor and make recommendations for the financial health of CSE
	Sponsorship	Support the procurement of sponsors to help CSE carry out its mission
Marketing and Communications	—	Develop and execute marketing strategies to support specific CSE events and initiatives
	Web Editor	Monitor, edit, and update website content on an ongoing basis
Membership and Community	—	Promote membership in CSE, develop concepts for membership retention and growth, plan and execute activities to promote connection between members
	DEIAA	Support CSE in establishing an organizational infrastructure, culture, and capacity among its leadership, members, and the profession at large to deliver programmatic activities and training to integrate DEIAA best practices
	CSE Connect	Plan and implement frequent CSE Connect sessions for CSE Membership
	Industry Advisory Board Oversight	Manage all operational activities of the Advisory Board to increase membership, refine existing CSE products and services, and develop strategic communication opportunities with commercial organizations and societies
Professional Development	—	Promote professional development within CSE and work to serve editorial professionals in the sciences by providing a network for career development
	Certificate Program	Create a supportive network for career development by managing and advancing the operations of the CSE Publication Certificate Program
	Mentorship	Support the development of early career individuals by managing CSE's Mentorship Program that pairs them with veteran CSE members in a one-on-one setting
Editorial Policy Committee	—	Serve as a resource regarding editorial and publishing policies applying to publications in the sciences
	Science Editor	*Science Editor* serves as a forum for the exchange of information and ideas among professionals concerned with editing and publishing in the sciences; the Editorial Board works with the Editor in Chief to suggest ideas for potential articles
	SSF/CSE Manual	Oversee regular updates and production of the CSE style manual

Abbreviations: DEIAA, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Anti-Racism, and Accessibility; *SSF, Scientific Style and Format.*

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The DEI Pendulum: Despite Backlash, the Work Must Continue

Otito Frances Iwuchukwu and Amy Ritchie Johnson

If a pendulum sways gently to the ticking of time, we would be hard pressed to describe the current zeitgeist around diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives as anything but gentle. The pendulum has swung so far in the opposite direction that it is hard to believe just 4 years ago, in 2020, we had most organizations affirming their commitment to the principles of DEI.

The impetus for this article came from the work of a subgroup of the CSE DEIA (A is for accessibility) committee charged with reviewing materials posted on the CSE DEIA resource page,[1] which was previously described in *Science Editor*. The page review, a common practice for web-based resources, yielded a discomfiting observation—some of the links either did not exist any longer, or were replaced with a general webpage that no longer referenced DEI. One major academic publisher had previously posted a statement entitled "Committed to Inclusion and Equity, We Stand in Solidarity with Black Communities – Because Black Lives Matter," but now that link lands on a general main page.

The question of why organizations and decision makers would make such an about-face on advancing the cause of DEI is a multidimensional one at best, with no easy answers. Because organizations exist within a system of rule of law, they follow the direction of legislation around what is possible with DEI efforts. And organizations in scholarly publishing are no different. Prior to the U.S. Supreme Court decision against affirmative action in June 2023, many states had begun either drafting or enacting their own bills legislating DEI. Many of the state laws have impacted the publishing industry.

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We have recently been privy to conversations on book banning in schools and school systems in the K-12 sector.[2] This was followed by louder rhetoric that impacted DEI efforts in higher education (where one of us currently works). To keep track and keep the conversation front and center, the Chronicle of Higher Education maintains a DEI legislation tracker covering the contiguous United States.[3] The tracker shows states where anti-DEI legislation has been passed and codified into law, and for others the status of any bills making their way through the various legislative chambers.

The scholarly publishing industry is an important part of any democracy-leaning society, and it is important for us to take a broad view of the state of DEI and the impact of anti-DEI rhetoric on the work we do, which is foundationally to promote and communicate peer reviewed research, particularly in the sciences. Therefore, the impact of anti-DEI legislation is not just words on paper. Professions and livelihoods are being impacted. University of Florida and The University of Texas at Austin recently laid off dozens of employees and shuttered offices to comply with the laws.[4] Although these are public institutions that are completely subject to the rule of law, some of these employees have ancillary ties to publishing. Some were authors, reviewers, journal editors, or associate editors of publications in their chosen fields. Their job losses are a secondary loss to the business of publishing.

Not only professions and livelihoods are impacted by anti-DEI efforts, but also childhood and young adult education, community and patient health outcomes, and international relations from immigration to scientific research. It can be argued that DEI, or lack thereof, reaches into every aspect of our lives. How did the pendulum swing so quickly, from 2020 to 2024? Strong change can expectedly receive strong backlash. A study on attitudes of a representative sample of U.S. residents showed that only 46% of U.S. people who believe racial problems are rare were in support of DEI training.[5] Results like this provide some data-based insight into assertions that anti-DEI efforts are rooted, partly, in racism.[5] (Consider also the onslaught of legislation in the

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past few years that is anti-trans and anti-women's health access.)

So, what happens now? Action. Difficult conversations, accountability, and action. These tenets are the deeply rooted tree that pro-DEI advocates can cling to in the current storm of backlash.[6] Anti-DEI efforts across industries have effectively chilled conversation and action around DEI initiatives. As Toni Morrison has said, the function of racism is distraction.[7] These efforts against DEI create colossal distraction, purposely, to diminish our strength and separate us from one another so that we cannot achieve our goal of equity. This inevitably makes it harder for us to have other difficult conversations, for instance around antisemitism, or lack of diversity in authorship, or how scientific research is designed and conducted, or the impacts of tenure and impact factors on the quality of scientific research. These conversations are crucial to the future of scholarly publishing, especially with the rapid influence of artificial intelligence, and thus our diligence in DEI is needed now more than ever.

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sure to find ways to improve your own job and start to build a larger pool of expertise you can draw from when you need guidance. Volunteering is also a good way to demonstrate to your employer that you are dedicated to your profession and looking to continuously learn and improve.

CSE could not operate without the time donated by volunteers, and the more people who choose to get involved, the more diverse ideas committees will have to work with. The Board of Directors encourages all members to review the committees in the table and find one to volunteer for. Members can go to https://www.councilscienceeditors.org/committees to indicate their interest in a particular committee, and the chair of that committee will respond to you with more information. [Note that you must be a CSE member to volunteer.]

Path to Leadership

Every year, CSE holds elections for open positions on the Board of Directors. For example, in 2024, we elected a Vice President, a Treasurer, and a Director. Those elected to the Board typically have a long track record of service to CSE. Many of them have served as committee chairs or have led other initiatives or subcommittees. Their service on the board is a recognition of their prior contributions and dedication to CSE, often over the course of many years. Those interested in eventually joining the Board of Directors should start with committee service. Committee Chairs are often selected from those currently serving on the committee, and service as a committee chair is a good way to demonstrate your commitment to CSE and experience. This is not to say that each of these steps is required before being nominated to run for elected office, but generally the best way to progress toward leadership is to volunteer and make your ideas and expertise known.

Conclusion

CSE's mission is "[t]o serve editorial professionals in the sciences by providing a network for career development, education, and resources for best practices." It is the work of the committees to carry out this mission and bring it to reality. If you are interested in contributing to that effort, we hope you will join a committee!

Acknowledgement

Andrea Rahkola also participated in the work of the task force, and we extend our gratitude for her valuable contributions.

Ask Athena: Disputed Territories, Plain Language Summaries, and Reference Style

Ask Athena is *Science Editor's* advice column for your most challenging publishing and editing questions. Submit your questions to scienceeditor@councilscienceeditors.org.

Ask Athena: Maps With Disputed Territories

Dear Athena,
We have recently seen an uptick in maps that feature disputed territories in our manuscript submissions. We follow the UN Country Designations and maps, and we try not to publish maps with disputed territories, but our journal specialists do not formally check/QC for these at submission. We have been relying on editors and reviewers to point these out and then ask for updated maps. However, as we are running into this more, we find that we miss some this way. I was wondering what other journals do? Do you enforce the use of certain maps or borders? When and how do you check for it? We're also mindful of the workload of our editorial staff, so any workflow suggestions/examples to do this in an efficient manner are much appreciated.

—Don't Want to Start an International Incident

Dear International Incident,
To answer this important question, Athena turned to Jessica LaPointe, Managing Copy Editor, American Meteorological Society, for her insights:

"This is an issue we've been dealing with for some time at the American Meteorological Society (AMS). In 2018, the AMS Council made the following policy statement:

> *The American Meteorological Society remains neutral with respect to land-based political borders and names or references to land-based locations in AMS journals. However, no borders or territorial boundaries should be shown over oceans and adjacent seas, gulfs, or other oceanic water bodies on figures in AMS publications (https://www.ametsoc.org/index.cfm/ams/publications/author-information/formatting-and-manuscript-components/ams-style-for-geography-and-oceanography-terms/)*

Currently, we query the author in the proofs, citing the policy above and requesting the author submit new figures, if needed. This does involve some staff resources as it relies on the technical editors noticing the lines in the figures and adding the author query. To save staff time, it could potentially be addressed earlier during peer review or with some kind of disclaimer, as in Springer Nature. How best to handle this is an ongoing question in the AMS publications workflow."

Thanks for the assist, Jessica! Athena also did a quick search of some of the major publishers' websites and found many have very similar statements published on their websites (see below for a handful of examples). Journals, societies, and publishers would be wise to have similar

At Ask Athena, we recognize that there are often a variety of opinions and options when faced with sticky situations, especially those that do not have an obvious answer. We do our best to provide sound guidance but appreciate that others may have a different view. In the spirit of open communication, we would love to hear your thoughts and answers on the questions we cover in the column. Email us at scienceeditor@councilscienceeditors.org.

Answers to Ask Athena questions are a group effort by members of the CSE Education Committee.

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policies stated clearly on their websites, no matter the internal process for monitoring adherence to the policies.

- **Elsevier.** "Elsevier remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations." (https://www.elsevier.com/legal/elsevier-website-terms-and-conditions)
- **Frontiers.** "Frontiers Media SA remains neutral with regards to published territorial descriptions, maps, and author affiliations. All territorial claims are solely those of the authors, and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, the publisher, the editors, or reviewers." (https://www.frontiersin.org/guidelines/policies-and-publication-ethics#open-access-and-copyright)
- **Wiley.** "We ask authors to be cognizant of the fact that the legal status of countries and regions are often disputed and to be mindful of the messages you may be sending to readers when selecting maps that cover such territories. Wiley recognizes that the global community includes diverse opinions on many issues, and we believe the best way to reflect these diverse views is to be neutral on any jurisdictional claims as a publisher and to defer to author and editor discretion. However, please flag any maps showing disputed territories and/or discuss any concerns with your managing editor or primary Wiley contact." (https://authorservices.wiley.com/asset/book-author-documents.html/Permissions-Guidelines-for-Authors.pdf)
- **Springer.** "Political Neutrality Policy: Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations. We do not take political positions and should not support political parties or endorse political candidates.

We achieve this by being politically neutral (which includes not donatig to political parties or endorsing politically-driven boycotts) while respecting the editorial independence of the media in respect of our content. This means that, while editorial content in Springer Nature publications might sometimes take a political position, it should not be seen as a reflection or otherwise of the company's position. Editorial content is not influenced by the company and vice versa" (https://www.springernature.com/gp/policies/book-publishing-policies).

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Ask Athena: Can a Plain Language Summary Be an Acceptable Secondary Publication?

Dear Athena,
Our publisher's permissions office recently received a request from an author to publish a plain language summary of their article that we had published. This publication would appear in another journal.

The article we published is copyrighted by our society publisher, so we are uncomfortable having this published in another journal. The author cited that plain language summaries of publications are beneficial to the public, and they would ensure the original publication was cited. Is there any guidance in this area? Plain language summaries of publications are new to us.

—*Plain Jane*

Dear Plain Jane,
Your question is a good one. Journals have been publishing plain language summaries for years, and principles on developing them are available, but we can understand that having this publication in another journal may seem like a new idea.

Plain language summaries (or PLS) are summaries of articles written in easy-to-understand, nontechnical language. They are typically short and may accompany the article at the time of publication, and some may include graphical summaries for visual learning. Other plain language summaries are standalone, peer-reviewed articles that may be published alongside or after publication of the original article. These are sometimes called plain language summaries of publications (or PLSP).

According to the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors,[1] a plain language summary would be an acceptable secondary publication, as long as the following criteria are met:

1. The authors have received approval from the editors of both journals (the editor concerned with secondary publication must have access to the primary version).
2. The priority of the primary publication is respected by a publication timeline negotiated by both editors with the authors.
3. The paper for secondary publication is intended for a different group of readers; an abbreviated version could be sufficient.
4. The secondary version faithfully reflects the authors, data, and interpretations of the primary version.
5. The secondary version informs readers, peers, and documenting agencies that the paper has been published in whole or in part elsewhere, and the secondary version cites the primary reference.
6. The title of the secondary publication should indicate that it is a secondary publication (complete or abridged republication or translation) of a primary publication.

CSE's *Scientific Style and Format's* section on redundant publication2 also describes when this publication may be justifiable:

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> *Significant findings published in the journal of one specialty or profession warrant republication in the journal of another specialty or profession to reach an audience that otherwise might not readily have access to the findings; here, too, the journal editors and publishers of both publications should be informed of, and agree to, the redundancy.*

Plain language summaries can indeed be beneficial to a general audience. They are accessible to the public and link back to the original article. They promote dissemination of the information from your (obviously) important article to a wider audience than your journal may typically have, which may pull more readers back to your journal. For more discussion on PLS, Emilie Gunn's recent *Science Editor* article on the topic[3] may be of interest.

In the end, the decision to approve secondary publication is up to the publishers in collaboration with the authors of the original article. Publishers should also clearly outline if or when such secondary publication is acceptable in their policies.

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3. Gunn E. Give it to me straight: plain language summaries and their role in scholarly journals. Sci Ed. 2024;47:12–13. https://doi.org/10.36591/SE-4701-09.

Ask Athena: Reference Style and The CSE Manual

Dear Athena,
In a cover letter that was returned to our editorial office with a manuscript revision, the corresponding author expressed displeasure at having to ensure that reference citations were formatted according to our style, specifically about the number of authors listed. We follow the rule in the eighth edition of *Scientific Style and Format*, which is to include up to the first 10 authors, and if there are more than 10 authors, include all 10 followed by "et al." This is clearly outlined in our journal requirements online, which the authors agree to follow when their manuscript is submitted.

This is not the first time an author has expressed such displeasure with this style point. It does seem excessive to list the first 10 authors, and I'm finding that other style manuals require fewer author names in references. Our editorial office is considering other style formats that might ease this author burden for future papers. Any suggestions?

—Ruffled by References

Dear Ruffled,
It can certainly be frustrating for authors to meet different formatting requirements for different journals. It's possible this author does not use (or is not aware of) EndNotes or other reference management tools that are designed to simplify and expedite the process of compiling reference lists.

In your particular case, your journal instructions are available to the author, and the author agreed to follow your journal formatting rules when they submitted their manuscript. On the other hand, many journal production teams incorporate their own software tools to accurately and expeditiously format references during the copyediting process. It is entirely up to your editorial office and production resources whether this is an issue worth pushing for.

That said, rules change and style manuals are updated. As it happens, in the recently released ninth edition of *The CSE Manual* (the successor to the eighth edition of *Scientific Style* and Format), the "number of authors" rule has been updated—largely for the same reason that has been irking your authors until now. Athena asked Peter J Olson, ELS, Freelance Manuscript Editing Coordinator at the JAMA Network and one of the four editors of Chapter 29 ("References"), for details on this update.

> *The new rule is to cite only up to the first 5 authors, and for references with 6 or more authors, the list is truncated to the first author followed by "et al." This update was modeled after reference styles adopted by some of the more prominent journals in the scholarly publishing industry—most notably* Science *and* The Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences *(PNAS)—and is intended to promote efficient and concise citation of references, particularly in online and mobile platforms. The truncation to a single author when there are more than 5 authors also avoids the somewhat awkward situation of relegating a sixth author to "et al." status in a reference that is merely 1 author name over the limit.*

With this change in mind—and assuming you want to follow the most current CSE style—you will find yourself facing the decision of how and when your journal should transition to the new reference format. In all likelihood, this decision will be influenced by your journal's size, workflow,

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and/or frequency. If you have a small journal that publishes infrequently, it may not be all that labor-intensive to make a clean shift from one issue to the next, since you will probably have a relatively small number of articles that need to be retrofitted for consistency. On the other hand, if you have a voluminous journal with a high frequency, and you'd rather not go through the trouble of reediting multiple reference lists, it may be just as well to allow an issue (or 2, or 3) to have a mix of the "before and after" reference styles from article to article and simply accept it as a minor and temporary casualty of the transition. If you take the latter approach, you could consider proactively addressing the short-term inconsistency by publishing an editor's note in the first issue that incorporates the new style; doing so could help minimize your readers' confusion while also letting them know that you haven't abandoned your editorial standards.

Thank you, Peter, for the details of this change. We at Ask Athena are excited about the recent release of the ninth edition of *The CSE Manual.*

Always,
Athena

(Continued from p. 65)

- **Editorial Collaboration.** Joel and Jonathan addressed concerns about editorial independence and unintentional bias, emphasizing the importance of collaboration and selecting editors with a willingness to work across journals.
- **Standardization.** Joel reiterated the presence of standard questions across journals to ensure consistency in the submission process.

Conclusion

This session provided valuable insights into the complexities and benefits of standardizing submission processes across multiple journals. It highlighted innovative strategies and new system workflows, supporting the vision of attracting and retaining high-quality submissions within a journal portfolio.

The Story of the JU Fanny Pack Trilogy: The Last Rodeo

Jennifer Regala

"Why can't we get all the people together in the world that we really like and then just stay together? I guess that wouldn't work. Someone would leave. Someone always leaves. Then we would have to say goodbye. I hate goodbyes. I know what I need. I need more hellos."

—Charles M ~~Schultz~~

From May 3 through 6, 2024, I traveled to San Antonio, TX, for the annual meeting of the American Urological Association (AUA). I served as the Director of Publications at the AUA starting in June 2020, during full COVID lockdown. And yes, you read the past tense correctly. I intended to say "served" because my last day at the AUA was May 6, the last day of the meeting itself. I loved every single second of my tenure with the AUA, where I oversaw the publications department, including the peer-reviewed journals, *The Journal of Urology* (JU), *Urology Practice* (JPU), and *JU Open Plus* (JUOP); a print newsmagazine/digital ecosystem, *AUANews*; the production of a CME product, *Update Series*; and multiple annual meeting-related offerings. I am proud of my work at the AUA, most especially the initiatives around DEI and open peer review introduced for JU, getting UPJ indexed, and launching our brand new Gold Open Access journal, JUOP. And it was the amazing *AUANews*, which began as a slim print-only publication and evolved into a robust urological news empire, that led me to my decision to leave the AUA for another opportunity—but more on that in a bit. Always on a quest for personal relevance,[1] I knew the time was right to leave the AUA, but before I did, it was important to me to showcase these beloved publications in epic fashion.

I've written articles and spoken at industry events about my passion for social media and journal community engagement, but I am most asked about the JU Fanny Pack (intentional caps), which debuted at the AUA's first post-COVID in-person meeting in 2022[2] and reappeared in 2023 in a shocking pink (for anyone new here, pink is my favorite color). As Dr Siemens said in our recap article from last year[3]:

> *In comes the pink fanny pack! No advertisement needed. Three or four strategic handouts, with subsequent tweets, to friendly influencers (aka the popular kids), and the buzz is palpable. Fans of the journal (authors, readers, reviewers, editors) flock to the publication's booth. Selfies everywhere comparing the coolest way to brand the must-have accessory. It's not a joke. Everyone knows what this is about. It's low tech, fun, retro, and with just a tiny bit of anti-establishment rebellion to the theater and seriousness of the meeting itself.*

With the successes of 2022 and 2023 fresh in our memories, we set out to make our 2024 publications booth and assorted swag the best we have ever offered. Spoiler alert: We made "it" happen. We connected with our community of readers, authors, editors, and reviewers to make them feel like every single one of them was an important part of the journal community. Legitimate, deep engagement must be the foundation of every journal, and using the annual meeting in-person environment to cultivate that inclusion is a must.

This article is my final take on the fanny pack trilogy, but I am eager to see what my AUA colleagues come up with next year. I know it will be the awesomest.

What Did We Give Away as Pubs SWAG This Year?

The Iconic JU Fanny Pack

In 2022, we started out tentatively, with a black JU fanny pack. Despite the drab color, meeting attendees crowded our booth to get their hands on the limited supply of this questionable fashion accessory. That first year, our selfie station was mobbed with folks having their photos taken wearing it cross-body (the cool kids) or around the waist (the traditionalists). Until the next year, I continued to see tweets and receive messages from fanny pack enthusiasts who wore the bag on rounds, out jogging, to hold doggie bags while walking their pets, you name it. More importantly, though, these individuals remembered the fun editorial

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Opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions or policies of their employers, the Council of Science Editors, or the Editorial Board of Science Editor.

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office employees they met because of the fanny pack, and they felt like they belonged. Presubmission inquiries and reviewer pools increased. We began to get friendly emails with constructive criticism that allowed us to improve our processes. We built trust and connections that were worth the $3.26 we paid for each individual fanny pack.

In 2023, though, the fanny pack exploded. The bold pink was a sensation. This bag was the thing everyone wanted. And the frenzy over it continues until this day. This fanny pack has been pictured at preschool "pink" days, in Pride month parades, as part of Halloween costumes, and so much more. A week doesn't go by without me receiving a personal text from a physician sharing a whimsical pink fanny pic photo with me. Silly, yes, but essential to the community that must serve as the foundation for any successful publishing program.

We debuted a "JU Red" fanny pack in 2024. More conservative in nature, the fanny pack was still fun and sought-after, but the fervor had definitely died down in comparison with the pink 2023 offering. That was okay, though, because we had something new…

Taylor Swift-Style Friendship Bracelets

These bracelets were undoubtedly a hit (Figure 1, online). Branded in each publication's colors, with four different varieties available, attendees swarmed the booth to get their hands on these bracelets. Social media teemed with photos of the bracelet stacks. I am hoping to see pictures of these out and about at the Taylor Swift Eras Tour this summer (hint hint urological community, don't let me down).

The JU Pet of the Month Calendar

The pet calendar was back with a vengeance. One photo showed two Nashville pups dressed up for a bachelorette party. Dr Stacy Tanaka was quick to show everyone who came to the booth her January calendar dog, Chase.

The UPJ Conference Drawstring Bag

This item maybe is not the most exciting—but it's the most visible. I highly recommend ordering enough of these for the entire expected attendance because you'll see it on everyone's back. Plus, it's great to bring home for a gym bag, for a kid to use for a slumber party, or for a shopping trip.

The JUOP Chip Clip

Who doesn't need a good, quality chip clip? Enough said. Buy the best clips that your budget can afford, and your authors will think about you every time they reach for their favorite snack.

The AUANews *Global Focus Issue*

AUANews has multiple focus issues each year. In March 2023, we published an article focusing on the global state of urology. Although it was an online-only edition, we bundled those articles into a print feature to distribute at the meeting. Our attendees loved these.

Last, But Certainly Not Least: The Light-up Pink Cowboy Hats and Hot Pink Bandanas for the Reviewer Rodeo

This year, we debuted the first-ever AUA Reviewer Rodeo. A cross-departmental effort of the Convention & Meetings, Guidelines, Research, and Publications teams (Erin Kirkby, Katie Phipps, and Kristy Riordan were co-organizers of this event), we had worked together for many months to look at the persistent AUA problem of an overburdened peer review network. Knowing that reviewer training and rewards are important to incentivizing peer review, we decided to host this brand-new event for medical students, residents, fellows, and other early career researchers. But how would we lure attendees to this free event? Enter the promise of secret swag. On social media, we promised that never-seen-before swag would be distributed at the Rodeo, and that was enough for us to get a robust turnout. I truly wish you could have seen the delight on the faces of these potential reviewers when we handed out the most glorious pink sequined cowboy hats with custom bands that read "AUA REVIEWER RODEO 2024." Things really got lively when they learned the hats lit up with a pulsing hot pink light. The best part of the event was when the most elite editorial leadership in global urological research donned the hat and posed for photos (Figure 2, online). It's hard to be afraid of peer review when you see the 2 Editors-in-Chief of the most prestigious journals in your field wearing a pink light-up cowboy hat. We capped off the giveaways with hot pink Reviewer Rodeo-branded bandanas.

What Didn't Make the Cut?

- Temporary tattoos of the faces of Editorial Board members. Note that we had their permission to do it, but the logistical nightmare of wet washcloths to apply the tattoos was a bit daunting.
- Life-sized cardboard cutouts of the Editors-in-Chief to place at the booth. This idea would have been amazing, but we ran short on time and money.
- Bucket hats. Because who doesn't love a great bucket hat? These are pricey but worth a future look.
- Knee-high socks. My friends at the American Society of Plant Biologists (ASPB) and I gave *The Plant Cell*-branded socks away at the 2019 ASPB annual meeting. Those beauties had a fanny pack-like reaction from meeting attendees.

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Parting Tips and Tricks

1. Go big or go home. If you're in San Antonio, TX, then you need to embrace the location and theme and get pink light-up cowboy hats.
2. Involve your Editorial Board members and do it early. Trust me, they'll enjoy it, and it's a fun break from the daily editorial doldrums to suggest swag and get in on the fun.
3. Align with your doc stars (or your journal community's equivalent). These are the people you need to boost the social media fun around your conference efforts organically. Have them help you boost your efforts via their own networks.
4. Provide an escape. When selecting swag, here's how I like to think through the process: Whether you're a urologist or a plant biologist or work in the humanities, your day-to-day work life is tough stuff. You're saving lives and making tough decisions and clawing for resources. When you show up to an annual meeting, you want to feel part of something. What are the things that can provide a fun escape, if even for a few days?

"A Good Time Was Had by All"

When I worked on the Severna Park High School Talon as the Features Editor my senior year (Class of 1991; go Falcons!), my biggest pet peeve was when a reporter would hand in a story about a school dance and say "A good time was had by all." At the same time, I did want the story to encapsulate the fun and excitement of the event. So with no shame in my game, I am happy to report that, indeed, a good time was had by all at AUA24 in San Antonio, TX.

Community engagement remained a focal point, and it was so satisfying to see the individuals we have worked so hard to build relationships with over the years. We have watched these professionals grow in their careers and couldn't be more proud of the role the AUA publications has played in those stories.

A huge personal surprise of the meeting for me was when our *AUANews* Editor-in-Chief, Dr Stacy Tanaka, showed up at the meeting with thousands of hot pink badge lanyards for attendee name tags (Figure 3, online). Half of these read "UROLOGISTS LOVE JENNIFER REGALA." The other half read "JENNIFER REGALA IS THE BESTESTESTEST" (I love to tell people they are the bestestestestest). I will never forget this kindness, and I loved Dr Tanaka's delight when she saw her swag go viral. A career highlight for sure.

I ended the conference in a snapshot with Dr Muhammed A Moukhtar Hammad, a fellow at UC-Irvine Health. This ending was so beautiful and apt because I gave the very first fanny pack to him in 2022, and we shared the very first selfie featuring it. He received the very last fanny pack I will ever distribute, and we shared the last meeting selfie.

What's Next?

I am super excited to share that I started working at Wolters Kluwer Health on May 20, 2024, as an Associate Director, Publishing. I will be working with news platforms similar to *AUANews*. Stay tuned to this space for my thoughts on how newsmagazines and digital ecosystems are the future of scholarly publishing.

Acknowledgments

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the Editors-in-Chief of the AUA's publications (Dr Robert Siemens, *The Journal of Urology*; Dr Stephen Jones, *Urology Practice*; Dr John Davis, *JU Open Plus*; and Dr Stacy Tanaka, *AUANews*). You all are phenomenal individuals who came together to form the most amazing editorial leadership team I've ever seen. You made remarkable magic happen under the umbrella of "The Voice of Urology," and I will be rooting you on forever and ever.

The most important thank you of all goes to my beloved Martha Keyes, who is the ultimate scholarly publishing professional. She knows peer review, production, analysis, ethics, strategy, and so much more inside and out, but more importantly, she has so much fun and passion while she works relentlessly to get the job done. Martha, you're my permanent partner in crime and dear friend for life even if we don't work side by side every day.

Be sure to check out the #AUA24 hashtag on social media (X, LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook, and even TikTok) for great science, fun memories, and awesome photos and videos. Major hat tip to the AUA's Communications team, Caitlin Lukacs, Corey Del Bianco, and Travis Smith, who were responsible for the meeting's exceptional vibe and worked tirelessly to elevate all AUA24 programming, including the promotion of the publications programming and lots of showcasing of the fun swag.

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