

Editor Responsibilities toward Reviewers

- Assigning papers for review appropriate to each reviewer's area of interest and expertise
- Establishing a process for reviewers to ensure that they treat the manuscript as a confidential document and complete the review promptly
- Informing reviewers that they are not allowed to make any use of the work described in the manuscript or to take advantage of the knowledge they gained by reviewing it before publication
- Providing reviewers with written, explicit instructions on the journal's expectations for the scope, content, quality, and timeliness of their reviews to promote thoughtful, fair, constructive, and informative critique of the submitted work
- Requesting that reviewers identify any potential conflicts of interest and asking that they recuse themselves if they cannot provide an unbiased review
- Allowing reviewers appropriate time to complete their reviews
- Requesting reviews at a reasonable frequency that does not overtax any one reviewer
- Finding ways to recognize the contributions of reviewers, for example, by publicly thanking them in the journal; providing letters that might be used in applications for academic promotion; offering professional education credits; or inviting them to serve on the editorial board of the journal.

Editors have the responsibility to inform and educate readers. Making clear and rational editorial decisions will ensure the best selection of content that contributes to the body of scientific knowledge.

Editor Responsibilities toward Readers and the Scientific Community

- Evaluating all manuscripts considered for publication to make certain that each provides the evidence readers need to evaluate the authors' conclusions and that authors' conclusions reflect the evidence provided in the manuscript
- Providing literature references and author contact information so interested readers may pursue further discourse
- Identifying individual and group authorship clearly and developing processes to ensure that authorship criteria are met to the best of the editor's knowledge
- Requiring all authors to review and accept responsibility for the content of the final draft of each paper or for those areas to which they have contributed; this may involve signatures of all authors or of only the corresponding author on behalf of all authors. Some journals ask that one author be the guarantor and take responsibility for the work as a whole
- Maintaining the journal's internal integrity (e.g., correcting errors; clearly identifying and differentiating types of content, such as reports of original data, opinion pieces [e.g., editorials and letters to the editor], corrections/errata, retractions, supplemental data, and promotional material or advertising; and identifying published material with proper references)
- Ensuring that all involved in the publication process understand that it is inappropriate to manipulate citations by, for example, demanding that authors cite papers in the journal.
- Disclosing sources (e.g., authorship, journal ownership, and funding)
- Creating mechanisms to determine if the journal is providing what readers need and want (e.g., reader surveys)
- Disclosing all relevant potential conflicts of interest of those involved in considering a manuscript or affirming that none exist.
- Providing a mechanism for a further discussion on the scientific merits of a paper, such as by publishing letters to the editor, inviting commentaries, article blogs, or soliciting other forms of public discourse
- Explicitly stating journal policies regarding ethics, embargo, submission and publication fees, and accessibility of content (freely available versus subscriber only)

- Working with the publisher to attract the best manuscripts and research that will be of interest to readers
- In some instances, a publisher may put pressure on an editor to publish a review or article in an effort to increase reprint sales. The editor has a responsibility to readers and the scientific community to resist such pressure.

Editor Responsibilities toward Journal Owners/Publishers

- Conducting peer review of submitted manuscripts
- Complying with the guidelines and procedures of the owner organization, including any terms specified in the contract with that organization
- Making recommendations about improved evaluation and dissemination of scientific material
- Adhering to the owner's and publisher's fiscal policies towards the Journal, at least in so much as they do not encroach upon editorial independence
- Adhering to the agreed-upon mission, publication practices, and schedule.

Responsibilities of Editors toward the Public

Many responsibilities of editors toward the public are carried out through the mechanisms established for the processes and constituencies mentioned above. Editors' roles have benefited society in many ways, from the quality-control measures taken when considering manuscripts for publication to requiring authors to abide by standards that would advance science and deposit information into freely available public databases as a condition of publication (e.g., data sharing). Editors are regularly taking steps to see that the outcomes of the scientific enterprise benefit the public. This includes identifying dual use research, which is research that can be misused to harm the public or its well-being.

EDITORIAL FREEDOM

An editor is responsible for what appears in the journal. The editor's right to editorial freedom may be supported by the following and should be agreed on by both the editor and the journal owner/publisher:

- A journal mission statement
- Written editorial priorities, objectives, and measures of success
- Written editorial policies
- An editorial board, including associate, assistant, and topic editors, that is nominated or appointed by and reports to the editor
- Sufficient support from the parent society, publisher, owner, or other journal sponsors in both funding and staff to carry out the journal's stated mission
- A mechanism for regular and objective evaluation of editor performance by the publisher or sponsoring organization based on predetermined and agreed-upon measures of success
- Direct lines of communication with the publisher, owner, and any publication oversight body
- A mechanism to prevent inappropriate influence on the editor by others and to handle conflicts in an objective and transparent manner with the goal of conflict resolution and maintenance of trust.

Much of the above may be laid out in a contract. The terms of the contract should specify the duration of the editor's appointment and the grounds for termination, from both sides.

Confidentiality

Editors and the publication staff should keep all information about a submitted manuscript confidential, sharing it only with those involved in the evaluation, review, and publication processes.

Editors should consider adding a confidentiality notice to *all* correspondence, including reviewer forms, to serve as a reminder to authors, editors, and reviewers.

To minimize the potential to influence editorial decisions, many journals have policies not to release content to the publication's sales team until it has been accepted or published.

Confidential information should not be used for an editor's own purposes, and editors should take reasonable steps to ensure that such information is not used inappropriately for the advantage of others. In cases of breach of confidentiality by those involved in the peer-review process, editors should contact the involved parties and follow up on such cases until they are satisfactorily resolved.

Editors should set and regularly monitor a conflict of interest policy for editors, reviewers, editorial board members, editorial staff, and authors. Editors should strive for fairness and impartiality in their policies. This can only be achieved if all parties involved in the peer-review process disclose any and all conflicts and allow the Editor to decide how they should be handled. It is also important to recognize that an Editor and/or reviewer can be impartial while nonetheless being in conflict of interest. Since the perception of conflict of interest is detrimental to a journal's reputation, avoiding even the perception of conflict of interest should be a priority. Enforcement of these policies must also be considered: practices to deal with premeditated or inadvertent breaches of the journal's conflict of interest policy should be stated in writing, regularly reviewed, and carried out consistently.

One challenge for editors is to recognize the potential for biases arising from conflicts of interest in the publishing process and to take appropriate action when biases are likely.