

Chapter 8. Journal Management

Some of the editing, much of the administration, and all of the printing, production, and distribution of ASA, CSSA, SSSA publications are coordinated by the headquarters office staff. This chapter gives an overview of journal management. Additional details and supplementary information are available from the headquarters office.

EDITORIAL STRUCTURE

Editors-in-Chief

Each society has an editor-in-chief, nominated by the president and confirmed by the board of directors. Each editor-in-chief serves a three-year term and may be reappointed for one additional term. These persons have overall responsibility for all publications of the respective societies. The editor-in-chief of a society serves in an ex officio capacity on that society's board of directors, on the editorial boards of all journals sponsored or cosponsored by that society, and on the intersociety Editorial Policy Coordination Committee (chairship of this committee rotates annually among the ASA, CSSA, and SSSA editors-in-chief).

The editor-in-chief of each society is responsible for appeals of manuscript releases from the journals but in some cases delegates initial appeals to journal editors. Editors-in-chief may also be called on by their society's board of directors to handle special projects or problems and to perform other editorial duties.

Each editor-in-chief makes recommendations to that society's president about appointment and reappointment of editors of journals and other publications. The editor-in-chief also, on behalf of the president and after consultation with the editor, appoints the persons to fill the technical editor posts created by the executive committee of the sponsoring society.

JOURNAL EDITORIAL BOARDS

Journal editorial boards are chaired by the journal's editor and composed of the journal's editor, associate editors, and technical editors (if the journal has them), as well as the editor-in-chief of the sponsoring society(ies), the managing editor of the journal, the headquarters assistant or associate editor(s) who work with that journal, the chief executive officer, and the publications director of ASA, CSSA, and SSSA.

Editor

The editor, who serves as chair of the editorial board, is nominated by the president of the sponsoring society and confirmed by the board of directors. The editor serves for a three-year term and may be reappointed to a second three-year term but may not serve more than two consecutive terms.

The editor is responsible for overall quality of the journal's content, and implements policy decisions approved by the board of directors. The editor and editorial board oversee procedures for manuscript submission, acceptance, release, and publication, as well as the criteria for review and referee of papers. The editor delegates editorial duties to other members of the editorial board and takes an active part in defining the journal's aims, policies, and editorial coverage.

The editors of most ASA, CSSA, SSSA journals receive manuscripts, assign the papers to technical editors or associate editors, and keep records of the status of

manuscripts in review. For some journals, the editor handles the appeal procedure for manuscripts that are rejected.

The editor may write editorials or solicit manuscripts on special topics.

The editor of each journal, after consultation with the editor-in-chief of the sponsoring society(ies), appoints the associate editors for the journal on behalf of the president of the sponsoring society(ies).

Technical Editors

Technical editors (also referred to as co-editors [VZJ]) are responsible for the technical and intellectual content of the journal in their assigned areas. They direct the work of assigned associate editors in reviewing and evaluating manuscripts submitted to the journal. They usually delegate to associate editors the responsibility of corresponding and working with authors when revisions of manuscripts are needed.

For some journals, the technical editors are the ones who notify authors when manuscripts are rejected for publication. Depending on the journal, they may or may not also be the person who accepts manuscripts for publication.

Technical editor positions are created by the executive committee of the sponsoring society(ies). Persons are appointed to fill those positions for a three-year term by the editor-in-chief of the sponsoring society on behalf of the president of that society and may be reappointed but may not serve more than two terms without an intervening term when the person is not a member of the editorial board.

Associate Editors

Associate editors for each scientific journal are appointed by that journal's editor on behalf of the president of the respective society. Associate editors serve three-year terms and may be reappointed for one additional term.

Associate editors are responsible for obtaining a minimum of two reviews of each manuscript (one of those reviewers can be the associate editor) and for evaluating, in a timely manner, the technical and intellectual content and suitability of manuscripts assigned to them.

If so delegated by the editor or technical editor, the associate editor works with the authors to obtain the required changes in manuscripts that are likely to be acceptable after revision.

Associate editors recommend to the editor or technical editor (depending on the structure of a particular editorial board) when manuscripts should be released. Depending on the structure of the board, associate editors may or may not be authorized to accept papers for publication. If not, the associate editor recommends acceptance to the editor or technical editor.

Volunteer Reviewers

Editorial boards regularly call on scientists who are not board members to volunteer their time and expertise to help review submitted papers in a timely manner. Reviewers who find they do not have time to do a review should immediately contact the editor who sent the paper.

The ideal review is fair, unbiased, speedy, and confidential. The ideal reviewer approaches the paper in terms of questions such as "Is the science good?" and "Is it understandable?" or "What does this need to make it clear?" rather than "What are all the little things that annoy me in style or presentation?"

Useful reading for reviewers is Chapter 6 (“Peer Review”) in the ACS Style Guide (Coghill and Garson, 2006).

The Societies strive for unbiased reviews of papers. *Agronomy Journal* and *Soil Science Society of America Journal* have double-blind review procedures; the other journals use single-blind reviews, and volunteer reviewers and editorial board members are asked to decline from reviewing papers of any authors with whom there is a possibility or appearance of a conflict of interest. Reviewers should probably excuse themselves from such a review if they can answer “yes” to one or more of the following questions (adapted from the USDA-ARS).

- Have you had significant and acrimonious disagreements with the authors in the past?
- Are the authors and you coinvestigators on a current research project?
- Have the authors and you jointly published an article in the past five years?
- Are you close personal friends with one or more of the authors?
- Are you working in the same area of research with the authors so that you might be considered to be a competitor or gain an advantage by reviewing the manuscript?
- Are you at the same location as the authors?
- Did you review and approve the manuscript as a peer reviewer prior to its submission to the journal?

This list is by no means exhaustive. If for any reason a reviewer does not believe he or she would be able to give the manuscript an unbiased review, the reviewer should ask for the manuscript to be assigned to someone else.

Managing Editor

The managing editor for each journal is usually an employee of the ASA, CSSA, SSSA headquarters office. The managing editor performs or supervises the steps in copy-editing papers for publication, typesetting, sending proofs to authors, preparing papers for publication, and producing the journal and reprints.