

**The Contributions of Journals and Editors to the Scholarly Community
and the Responsibility of Universities to Foster Academic Communication
through Scholarly and Creative Journals
Revised July 2011**

Editors of learned and creative journals play a critical role in shaping their disciplines and in enhancing the intellectual life and advancing the reputation of their host institutions. In recognition of editors' contributions to scholarship, the Council of Editors of Learned Journals has prepared this statement to assist administrators and members of appointments committees, personnel committees, and other administrative councils in assessing the professional activity of journal editors, offering appropriate recognition and rewards, and evaluating the claims that learned and creative journals make on the academic community for support. Unless executive administrators and other academic leaders remain committed to vital scholarly communication, all in the academy will suffer, and individual institutions will lose the prestige and visibility that learned and creative journals afford.

The Mission of Learned and Creative Journals

Learned and creative journals disseminate scholarship and further the arts, while creating communities for exchange within and among disciplines. Journals constitute a fundamental repository of knowledge and a cumulative record of the theory and history of a given field that even published books cannot match. Their mission remains constant even as electronic publishing and the "open access" movement alter the means and conditions of publication. Editors—with the help of editorial boards and peer reviewers—must still decide what contributions are most valuable and interesting, solicit and evaluate scholarship and creative work, and help authors improve their research and writing. Both editors and journals are active, not passive. A journal can focus attention on a newly relevant topic or prompt discussion around a time-honored academic concern. Moreover, editors relate scholarship to the wider domains of society, culture, politics, and history by providing multiple contexts and connections to the "outside world."

The Role of the Editor in Academic Discourse

Journals require committed editors. In addition to the demanding tasks of teaching, writing, and university service, editors commit to journals because they believe in the missions of learned and creative journals to promote scholarship, the arts, and research, and because they have the abilities, energy, tact, and vision suited to the goals of scholarly and creative communication. Editors are committed to serving the careers of others, nurturing the work of younger scholars, and promoting knowledge and high academic standards in their fields. They play a fundamental role in the tenure and promotion process and in the development of superior educational instruction.

The editor's first task is to ensure and uphold the quality of the journal as a representative of an academic discipline. To that end, editors must find, evaluate, develop, and publish outstanding manuscripts. To preside over refereeing they must be familiar with many specialists and possess the communication and interpersonal skills necessary to shepherd a piece through rigorous dialogue. Editors frequently oversee the creation of special issues—an undertaking commensurate with editing an essay collection in book form. Many editors must also take a direct hand in every phase of journal production and management: advertising and public

relations, subscriptions and circulation, budget management, design, typography and layout, copyediting and proofreading. They may have to supervise a staff of professionals, student workers, or volunteers. And editors often sit on the executive councils of the organizations that sponsor their journals.

The Responsibility of Research Institutions to Academic Communication

Although journals that have numerous institutional subscribers and are published by commercial houses are able to support their editors with stipends and staff, many journals are published by nonprofit organizations that set subscription rates to cover only the costs of production and do not collect publication fees from contributors. Most journals, large and small, must count on institutional support, and the smaller and less costly journals—perhaps the bulk of journals published in the humanities—must rely particularly on help from volunteers and from their colleges and universities. Deleterious decisions made in hard economic times have highlighted the intellectual and professional consequences to academic and research institutions. While the sizes of these institutions and the journals once supported by them vary, the degree of harm to the institution and the academy at large is consistently great. Too often, a journal that entails a relatively slight financial burden is the object of funding cuts simply because its academic mission appears too specialized. But even when the contents are specialized, the values that journals instill are universal. Journals are the institutional curators of the culture of professional and civil debate and of clear and effective communication. As educators, we teach our students to think, research, and express our insights and discoveries. Journals are the prime medium for practicing what we aver. It is imperative, then, that research institutions heed their responsibility to protect the academic communication that journals make possible.

In the wider landscape of scholarly communication, universities are further urged to expand their roles as publishers of scholarly journals, to support increasingly sustainable models for their production and dissemination so that access to scholarly information continues to be affordable to research libraries and academic institutions worldwide.

The Contributions of Learned Journals to the Academy

Reputable learned or creative journals are important assets to institutions of higher learning. With every issue a journal renews and enhances its institution's reputation nationally and internationally. Housing a journal on campus is not unlike sponsoring an institute in terms of the recognition it brings to a campus. When editors draw their colleagues and students into the editorial process, their journals become focal points of intellectual ferment and excitement, powerful centers of education for undergraduates, graduate degree candidates, and postgraduate professionals alike. The reviewing and editorial process provides an indispensable form of continuing education for both authors and reviewers.

In recent decades, the academic community has increasingly entrusted journal editors with the responsibility of helping establish professional certification. As publication in peer-reviewed journals and books has become a criterion for academic employment, promotion, and tenure, personnel committees have invested the editors of scholarly publications with considerable power. Promotion and tenure, as they occur at major universities today, are inconceivable without the hard work of journal editors, and editors' contributions, both to scholarship and to academic decision making, should be acknowledged and rewarded. The

survival of scholarly publications depends on financial as well as in-kind institutional support and recognition of the contributions to editors to academic disciplines.

Recommendations

• Support:

- o For editors who are full-time faculty members, grant release time in proportion to the hours and energy required to keep a journal vital and timely.
- o Hire professional staff conversant with the journal's subject matter and trained in the full range of specialized skills needed for the intellectual and technical business of scholarly publishing.
- o Employ undergraduate and/or graduate students as editorial assistants, thereby providing indispensable help with the journal's operations, while also enhancing students' degree work and teacher training with valuable and marketable experience.
- o Provide space, equipment, and an operating budget, and, when possible, subvention funding to supplement the subscription revenue that humanities journals collect.
- o Assist faculty interested in inaugurating new journals by helping to evaluate need and feasibility, create a business plan, and seek support.

• Recognition:

- o In hiring, tenure, and promotion deliberations, value editorial experience and initiative in equal measure with other evidence of scholarly engagement, and define in advance how editing will be weighed vis-à-vis other kinds of professional activity.
- o Specifically, for example, count special issues equally with book-length collections of essays, and editorials as significant publications—weighing considerations of length and substance by the same guidelines applied to any other publication.
- o Provide editors and professional staff with clear, written job descriptions, and base performance evaluations on those criteria.
- o Grant credit for such creative endeavors as designing layout and covers.