

Chapter 3. Editorial office

Do you have an efficient, effective editorial office? The administration of a journal is a crucial part of its success and efficiency – to see how your journal compares, check the following list:

	Yes	Could be improved	No
1. Is there one (or more) person tasked with overseeing the administration of submissions and peer review?			
2. Are regular (e.g. annual) reports of the journal's progress provided to all members of the editorial team and the journal publisher/owner?			
3. Are systems in place to respond quickly to authors, reviewers and editorial board enquiries (within five days)?			
4. Is the administration of the journal run in an efficient manner?			
5. Are adequate records retained to inform editors about reviewers, submissions, etc.?			
6. Is a databases of reviewers and authors retained in such a way that searches for appropriate reviewers and previous submissions can be undertaken?			
7. Are all the journal administrative records backed up securely?			
8. Do you confirm receipt of all submissions within five working days?			
9. Do you communicate publishing decisions to authors within one week of the decision being made?			

Online resources and references

In addition to the following resources these websites and references may be useful:

Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) publicationethics.org (accessed January 2017).

Council of Science Editors (2012) CSE's White Paper on Promoting Integrity in Scientific Journal Publications, 2012 Update. www.councilscienceeditors.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3331 (accessed January 2017).

Eastern Mediterranean Association of Medical Editors (EMAME) (2011) *The Manual for Editors of Health Science Journals*. World Health Organization. www.emro.who.int/entity/emame/ (accessed January 2017).

Hames, I (2007) *Peer Review and Manuscript Management in Scientific Journals: Guidelines for Good Practice*. Blackwell Publishers in association with ALPSP.

International Society of Managing and Technical Editors (ISMTE): www.ismte.org (accessed January 2017).

Smart, P, Maisonneuve, H and Polderman, A (2013) *EASE Science Editors' Handbook*, 2nd edn. European Association of Science Editors. www.ease.co.uk

Resource 3A: The operation of the editorial office

Summary: An efficient editorial office is crucial since good administration is vital to the operational success of a journal (as it is to any business).

What is an editorial office?

The term "editorial office" is used as a shorthand term to describe the person or place where the processing of submissions takes place – who looks at articles when they are submitted (by email or online), who manages the process of peer review (selecting and sending invitations by email), dealing with queries, and more. The actual editorial office may, in fact, be the Editor-in-Chief, or may be their secretary, or may be a person (or a team for large journals) in the publisher's office.

Location and communication

The editorial office need not be in the same location as the editors, although it can make communication easier if it is. With online submission the editorial office can be in a different country so long as online communication works well. Some journals outsource their editorial office to specialist companies, and some publishers will provide this service from their office.

It is vital that the editorial office provides timely, polite, accurate and informative communication. They are often the “public face” of the journal – the person that authors, reviewers and the editorial board first speak to. It is important that they give a good impression of the journal through their communication skills.

What is a managing editor?

A managing editor is the title frequently given to the person who supervises the day-to-day operation of the editorial office. The status of the position will change between journals, and may be quite a senior position, or a more administrative, junior position. Commonly the Managing Editors are knowledgeable about the journal subject, and can make decisions on immediate rejection if they decide that an article is out of scope, or otherwise unsuitable for the journal. Sometimes they are given the responsibility to select reviewers independently from the Editors, and to obtain reviewer reports for final decision by the Editors.

Activities

The editorial office is responsible for the following:

- Acknowledging receipt of submissions
 - Sometimes for making a first decision to reject all obviously unsuitable submissions (e.g. in the wrong discipline).
- Ensuring the submission is complete (no missing items, e.g. artwork).
- Ensuring that the editors select the reviewers quickly (sometimes they will select the reviewers themselves).
- Inviting reviewers.
- Sending articles to reviewers, or monitoring those that accept through the online system.
- Chasing late reviewer reports.
- Uploading reviewer statistics in the system (e.g. if they return on time, if they provide useful comments, etc.).
- Dealing with queries (from authors, reviewers, editors).
- Ensuring editors make a decision in a timely fashion.
- Informing reviewers of final decisions.
- Communicating the decision to the author.

- Chasing up revised articles from the authors.
- Ensuring that the editor selects the articles for an issue on schedule.
- The editorial office may also overlap with production and undertake the following:
 - Assembling the issue
 - Sending out proofs, coordinating corrections
 - Finalising the issue ready for press and ready for upload on the website
 - Checking the printed copies are OK for despatch
 - Issuing subscriber labels for despatch
 - Checking the website updates
 - Uploading website news, alerts, etc., as required.

Reporting

An important function of the editorial office is to provide reports to the rest of the editorial team. The reason for this is to track the progress of the journal, to find out how long processes take, and where they can be improved, and if there are any problem areas – for example not receiving (or rejecting all) submissions from a particular region or institution or country. Reports often include:

- Turnaround times (submission to review, to first decision, time to review, time to revise, time to publish, etc.).
- The number of submissions, on what topics and where from.
- The number of rejections, on what topics and where from.
- The percentage rejection/acceptance and revisions.



KEY POINTS

The administration of article submission and progress through peer review to final decision must be handled efficiently. Efficient and reliable processing of submitted articles is an important part of the editorial process and can improve – or ruin – the reputation of a journal.