The Changing Role of the Editor/Editorial Office with Emerging Technologies

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Editorial Office Changes
- Online environment has changed everything...
  - Most journals now use an Electronic Editorial Office (EEO) system
  - Online Publication, often ahead of print delivery
  - New methods to publish data online: movie files, large tabular matter, color images
- Focus: making your journal more attractive to authors

Electronic Editorial Offices - changes
- Efficient receipt, processing and tracking of submissions
- Improved performance indicators:
  - Increasingly expeditious turnaround time to first decision (less time with editors, managing editors)
  - Diminishing time in review (manuscript with reviewers)
  - Speedier and easier delivery of materials to publisher/production department

Electronic Editorial Offices - changes
- Increased Submission levels
- Geographic diversity of submissions
- EEO’s reduce the cost of operating an office

Electronic Editorial Offices - changes
- Automatic or easier handling of tasks:
  - System generated emails reduce delays; allows time for redeployment to other editorial office activities
  - Reference checking; links in HTML version of submission to reference databases
  - Check figure quality and authenticity
  - Standardized submission procedures reduce time to prepare manuscripts for peer review

Electronic Editorial Offices
- Still a role for editorial office staff:
  - Staff can concentrate on “best practices” and outward-facing activities (building relationships, encouraging submission)
  - System reports and manuscript tracking lead to efficiency drives
  - Devote more time to manuscript preparation for publication
  - Staff can do more research and analysis on journal performance
Electronic Editorial Offices - Authors

Successful journals continually attempt to:
- receive the best papers
- maintain/increase submission levels
- assess the performance of competing titles

Recruit Authors  Retain Authors

Compete to receive submissions

EEO – Ensuring Author Satisfaction

Quick turn-around time: submission to decision

Communicate Effectively - Reassurance:
- submissions handled with care
- Comprehensive and thoughtful reviews

Absence of publication delays

EEO – Author Expectations

What expectations do authors have?
- Benchmark lead-times amongst competition
- Determine ideal (realistic) turn-around time – and promote it
- Diminishing turn-around times across the industry
  further fuel author appetite for rapid decisions

ScholarOne (Manuscript Central): average time to first decision across every paper submitted to every journal - 52 days

EEOs – Effective Communication with Authors

Receipt confirmation email should manage review time expectations

Encourage authors to use manuscript tracking capabilities in your EEO (inform them of this in your receipt confirmation email)

Anticipate delays – inform authors if a delay has arisen

Either through EEO or Publisher’s own website, authors can track manuscript progress in production

EEO – Effective Communication

Communication faux pas:
- Making promises you cannot deliver
- Failing to follow-up
- Contradicting previous statements
  (problematic with special dispensations)
- use the Notes function

EEOs typically have a submission template. Use these to control the flow of information. Few authors read Instructions for Authors.

Make sure you communicate clearly the responsibilities of the author
- Submission process should have a statement with check box confirming the article has not been submitted elsewhere
- Statement on authorship and access to data
- Conflict of Interest (where applicable)

Submission templates speed up time to get manuscripts ready for peer review
Use your final decision emails to select feedback

Use a simple feedback site such as Survey Monkey – provide link in decision emails

Faster delivery and more comprehensive reviews enhance the likelihood of retaining authors

EEOs provide a basic operating framework for peer-review, but it is a powerful tool if used smartly

Remember reviewers are also authors!

EEOs – Enhancing your peer review process

EEOs address the need for speed:

- Invite rather than assign reviewers
- Use search terms rather than keywords to track down reviewers in your system
- Use reviewer data to make informed selections

EEOs – strategies to deliver prompt decisions: search terms

Use the search-term chosen by the author to display names of potential reviewers

Reviewer search terms

Current workload

Quality/timeliness of reviews score

Ineligible reviewer

EEO - strategies for delivering prompt decisions – search term selection
### EEO – strategies for comprehensive reviews

**Develop a detailed reviewer scoresheet as part of your EEO-based peer review process**

In addition to free-text boxes, ask specific questions that force reviewers to consider certain issues.

If Associate Editor/Editorial Board member makes a recommendation before EiC final decision, have a Priority Score function built in the EEO. Useful if acceptance levels are high.

### EEO – strategies for comprehensive reviews

**Provide reviewers with all comments**

Most EEOs as routine will send automatic confirmation of receipt of review. Reconfigure your site to send an email to all reviewers of a manuscript with all comments on the paper.

Keep reviews anonymous to avoid embarrassment. Reviewers like to see other comments, but also helps those that provide a weak review: see the quality of other reviews.

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### EEO – speeding up the review process

**Reduce the required number of reviewers**

- **Manuscript delayed by no response from third invited reviewer**

**Consider pre-screening reviews**

Most journals reporting significant growth in submissions. Not matched by corresponding increase in the number of quality manuscripts received.

To combat over-working reviewers, obviously weak manuscripts are being screened and rejected.

### EEO – speeding up the review process

**EEOs – the future of editorial office operations**

With rising submission levels:
- Editorial offices must become more efficient. Performance data is more accessible.
- Staff need to ensure they understand the data.
- Outward facing (listening to author)

Editorial staff are increasingly full-time, freelance professionals, often located remotely.

**EEOs – the future of editorial office operations**

EEOs are great equalizers

Small titles are using the same tools as large editorial offices.

Competition for best papers is growing – poor service can undermine a good Impact Factor and sink a small title.
Using online publication to attract authors

EEOs can improve your peer review process, but you can offer more to authors at publication:

- Delivery ahead of print
- Pre-Press
- Supplementary data/files

Online Publication

Rather than batch manuscripts for production on issue basis – send regular batches for publication once the typesetting process is completed.

Manuscripts receive Digital Object Identifier for citation purposes

Online Publication ahead of print

Online publication is attractive to authors:

- Diminishes time from acceptance to publication (counts as official date of publication)
- Useful for quarterly/bi-monthly journals
- Help reduce publication backlog

Probably need to educate authors on online publication ahead of print

Manuscripts linked in to reference databases for citation purposes

Supplementary data files

Work with your publisher to provide and promote your capability to offer additional online resources:

- Tables
- Color images
- Movie files

Supplementary data files - movies
Resources

Encourage your editorial office staff to become more informed:

International Society of Managing and Technical Editors: www.ismte.org

Council of Science Editors: www.councilscienceeditors.org