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4 WEEKS AGO EDIT

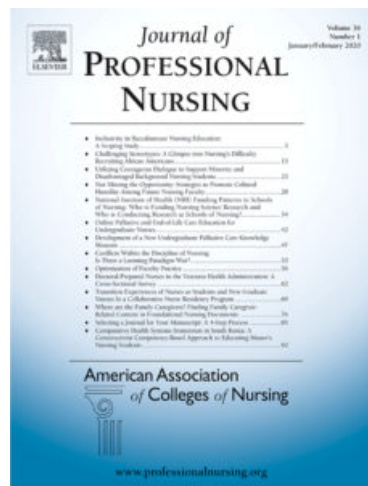
Collaboration of an Editor and a Managing Editor

Working from a Distance: The Collaboration of an Editor and a Managing Editor

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Publishing a professional journal requires the collaboration of authors, reviewers, editorial boards, editors, managing editors, and publishing company staff. The purpose of this article is to describe one successful model of distance collaboration between the editor and the managing editor for the *Journal of Professional Nursing (JPN)*. We describe the role of the editor and the managing editor in each step of the publishing process. Although the editor resides in Salt Lake City, Utah and the managing editor works in Washington, DC, they employ a seamless procedure for processing the manuscripts.



The *Journal of Professional Nursing* is the official publication of the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN). The focus of the journal is baccalaureate and graduate nursing education, educational research, faculty issues, policy related to education, educational administration, and education and practice partnerships. The managing editor is employed full-time as the Editorial Director of AACN with many other editorial responsibilities in addition to serving as the managing editor for *JPN*. AACN pays the editor an honorarium for her work. The AACN does not control or influence editorial content, but its Board of Directors occasionally submits topical suggestions to the editor and

managing editor for special issues of the journal.

STEPS IN THE COLLABORATIVE PUBLISHING PROCESS

Obtaining Peer Reviews

Authors submit manuscripts to *JPN* via an electronic system managed by the publisher, Elsevier. The managing editor initially screens the submitted manuscripts for a match of the topic with the purpose of the journal. Unfortunately, approximately 20% of the submitted manuscripts are egregiously inappropriate for the journal, as they are clinically focused or center on staff nurse issues. The managing editor rejects these manuscripts outright, and they do not undergo peer review. The remaining manuscripts are forwarded to the editor via the electronic system.

The editor screens the manuscripts and determines if they are to be rejected or sent out for peer review. Rejection occurs when papers are very poorly written, offer no new perspective on a topic, or do not answer the “so what” question. The editor also rejects research reports when an author has violated the basic principles of research and/or statistics. If deemed valuable, the editor selects peer reviewers for the manuscript. She has created a database of reviewers and uses that list to select peer reviewers who have experience and/or expertise in the topic. She then forwards the name of two peer reviewers to the managing editor, also through the electronic system. The managing editor handles the invitation process for the peer reviewers, making sure a reviewer is in good standing and has not been overburdened with review requests by *JPN*.

The goal for each manuscript is to obtain two quality peer reviews. However, getting two reviewers for each manuscript is often a challenge. Reviewers do not always respond to the electronic invitation, and the editor and managing editor are left to wonder if the email address is wrong, if the invitation went to spam mail, if the reviewer is ill or on vacation, or if the reviewer is just too busy to respond. If reviewers do not respond to the electronic invitation in a timely way, the managing editor re-sends the invitation through the electronic system. At this point, the editor also sends a personal email to the reviewer. The personal email helps us know if the reviewer’s email is current. Getting a personal invitation from the editor can act as a “nudge,” although that is not guaranteed! Sometimes, reviewers respond to the personal email indicating that they found the electronic invitation in their spam folder. Other potential reviewers indicate they have lost the invitation in their huge list of emails and request the invitation be sent again. Still others decline the invitation but may suggest alternate reviewers. Over the past five years, an increasing number of reviewers have declined the invitation to review, indicating they are too busy to take on the task. Thus, finding willing peer reviewers often can be a frustrating and tedious task, which slows the publication process significantly.

Once reviewers agree to evaluate the manuscript, they are asked to return the review within three weeks. However, they often get busy or distracted and miss the deadline. The managing editor sends

reminders of past due dates via the electronic system. The editor sends a personal email to ask reviewers if they are still planning on completing the review and if so, when they will send the review. The personal emails have been helpful as some reviewers admit they cannot complete the review as promised, thus enabling the editor to find another reviewer. Once again, the personal email from the editor seems to have some *gravitas* in the eyes of reviewers and prompts them to resolve the issue, one way or another.

Processing the Peer Reviews

As each review is returned, the managing editor sends the review to the editor. When both reviews are received, the electronic system sends a special alert to the editor indicating the manuscript is ready for the editor's attention. The editor reads the reviews to determine if they will be helpful to the authors. Unfortunately, though asked to provide substantive comments, some reviewers only mention spelling, punctuation, grammar, and American Psychological Association (APA) reference style and make no remarks about the content of the manuscript. These types of reviews are essentially useless, as the editor relies on informed feedback on the substance of the manuscript. (Copy editors address spelling, punctuation, grammar, and APA style for accepted papers.) When such a review is received, the editor must start over and contact another reviewer to obtain a quality helpful review.

Once two quality reviews are obtained, the editor reads the manuscript and writes a review for every manuscript, even when the recommendations from the reviewers is to reject and the editor concurs. The goal of writing an extensive review for a rejected paper is to help authors learn from their mistakes and prevent authors from being too discouraged to ever try publishing again. The editor carefully reads both reviews and may point out to the author the need to follow (or not follow) specific suggestions from the reviewers. The editor then makes the decision to accept the manuscript, ask for a revision, or reject. Rarely are first submissions accepted as written, as reviewers make valuable comments that the author can use to improve the manuscript. The editor enters the decision in the electronic system and sends the editor's decision and review to the managing editor. The managing editor notifies the author of the editor's decision and sends the peer reviews and the editor's review. If the decision for the manuscript is revise, the author is given a due date for return of the revised manuscript.

Handling the Revised Version of the Manuscript

Ideally the author returns the revised manuscript via the electronic system by the due date. It is remarkable though that numerous manuscripts are never revised and returned to the journal. As a result, authors have wasted a great deal of their precious time as well as the time of the reviewers, the editor, and the managing editor. If a revised manuscript is returned, the managing editor notifies the

editor via the electronic system. The editor carefully reviews the revised version of the manuscript and compares the revisions to the comments made by the reviewers and to the editor's comments. The editor then notifies the managing editor of the decision to accept the revised version or that the author needs to be informed that all the requested revisions have not been addressed adequately.

Producing the Final Product

Accepted manuscripts are available immediately via the publisher's [online site](#), not assigned to any particular issue. However, for assigned printed issues, the editor and managing editor compile articles as appropriate, usually giving preference to those who have been in the queue the longest time. Exceptions to that general rule are when there is a special issue or special section within an issue.

ADDITIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE EDITOR AND THE MANAGING EDITOR

The editor is responsible for writing an editorial for each issue or for working with a guest editor to write the editorial. The managing editor helps with suggestions for editorial topics and identifying potential guest editors. The managing editor completes the final edits for all the editorials.

The managing editor serves as the liaison for the journal with AACN. In addition, the managing editor is the main contact person for communication with the publisher's production team. The editor, managing editor, and publisher's representative work collaboratively to host editorial board meetings at which the publisher's report is reviewed and discussed

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL DISTANCE COLLABORATION

Although the editor and managing editor work via a distance partnership, their success can be attributed to open and honest communication. They are in frequent contact via email or phone regarding the processing of manuscripts. Their collaborative efforts are built on respect for each other's expertise and contributions. They keep each other abreast if they are going to be on extended leave or "off the grid" for some other reason so that there is no gap in the processing of the manuscripts. This successful distance collaborative system for producing a journal can be a model for other journals.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Patricia Gonce Morton, PhD, RN, ACNP-BC, FAAN is Dean Emeritus, University of Utah College of Nursing. She has been the editor of the *Journal of Professional Nursing* since January 2013. Previously, she served for 7 years as the editor of *AACN Clinical Issues*, a journal sponsored by the

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EDITOR ROLE



Leslie Nicoll

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Editor-in-Chief

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PhD, MBA, RN, FAAN