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# Developing a Society Journal Utilizing the Triad Framework

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**NURSE AUTHOR & EDITOR, 2020, 30(2), 2**

Dissemination of knowledge is a cornerstone of any profession. One vehicle for sharing professional knowledge is publication of peer-reviewed manuscripts in professional journals. Nurses use this method to share scientific knowledge such as research, reviews, and case reports.

Nursing journals are categorized through their ownership.<sup>8</sup> Some nursing journals are owned by nursing organizations or societies and are published in collaboration with a publishing company. Other journals are owned solely by publishing

companies not associated with professional nursing groups. While journals, despite ownership, possess similar structures and goals, society journals present distinct opportunities and challenges.

As knowledge in a particular branch of an established area of nursing develops, research, clinical evidence, best practice, and communication are encouraged initially through professional conferences which typically disseminate information through poster and podium presentations. To close the dissemination loop, this information is further developed into manuscripts and published in peer-reviewed journals which capture the specific specialty audience. As the specialty body of knowledge grows, along with the fledgling organization, a logical next step is for the organization to develop its own journal specific to the knowledge base being created.

The triad of journal, society, and publisher is a unique partnership with ethical, business, and professional challenges guiding this relationship. The purpose of this article is to describe this relationship, discuss opportunities and challenges, and present a pathway for the successful creation and growth of society journals.

## **FOCUS OF A SOCIETY JOURNAL**

The focus of a society journal is stated in the journal's posted information and reflects the society's mission, vision, and core values. The journal's clear focus directs authors in the appropriateness of topics for submission in addition to article types the journal accepts and the intended audience.<sup>10</sup>

## **TRIAD: JOURNAL, SOCIETY, PUBLISHER**

When developing a society journal, it is helpful to conceptualize the working relationships of the journal (Editor and Editorial Board), society (Members and Board of Directors), and publisher (journal liaison and administration) as a triad

(see Figure 1). Each triad member has multiple obligations within their area of responsibility, but all are ultimately accountable to optimal functioning of the whole. Clear communication from the start is imperative as the journal's mission statement and articles of operation are written. Input from all triad members ensures that all points of view are addressed early in the process. Triad members base foundational documents on journalism best practice and ethics resources including the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE), and International Academy of Nursing Editors (INANE) guidelines (see Table 1). The concept of institutional memory needs to be part of a society journal's articles of operation as relatively frequent turnover of triad members will necessitate a plan for ongoing communication and orientation of new members. The articles of operation should be posted and transparent to allow for ongoing education of all triad members, especially new journal and society leaders, in basic knowledge of publishing ethics and guidelines. Being proactive in this ongoing, repetitive education allows the journal and organization to do their part in meeting the journal's mission.

Figure 1: The Society Journal Triad Framework



(McIltrout, Hood & Browne, 2020)

Respect for the underpinnings of how a journal is operationalized using COPE guidelines allows for all triad members to focus on how their corner of the triad can best meet the overall goal. Editorial freedom is the cornerstone of the COPE guidelines that protects any member of the triad from undue influence on topic or advertising decisions. All members of the triad must understand that the triangular relationship is difficult and often involves volunteers with other time commitments; the process and relationship need constant assessment, evaluation, and nurturing. Most potential problems can be resolved early on through open and frequent (scheduled) communication, allowing for constant flow of new individuals entering the triad on a scheduled or non-scheduled basis.

**TABLE 1: RESOURCES FOR BEST PRACTICES FOR EDITORS**

| Content | Resource                         | Reference  | Additional information   |
|---------|----------------------------------|--|--|
| Ethics  | COPE                             | Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE). <i>Promoting integrity in research and its publication</i> . Retrieved from <a href="http://www.publicationethics.org">www.publicationethics.org</a> | INANE Email Update list, Annual INANE Conference, Formal COPE Forums |
| Ethics  | COPE                             | Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) Council. (2019). <i>COPE guidelines: A short guide to ethical editing for new editors</i> .   |  |
| Ethics  | Council of Science Editors (CSE) | Council of Science Editors Editorial Policy Committee. (2018). <i>CSE's white paper on promoting integrity in scientific journal publications</i> .  |  |

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|--|-------|--|--|
| How to be an Editor                              | INANE | Nicoll, L.H., & Chinn, P.L. (2019). <i>The Editor's Handbook</i> (3 <sup>rd</sup> ed.). Philadelphia, PA: Wolters Kluwer.  | INANE Email Update list, Annual INANE Conference, <i>Nurse Author &amp; Editor</i> , open access online publication, INANE Website, <a href="http://nursingeditors.com">nursingeditors.com</a> |
| Roles and Responsibilities, Publishing questions | ICMJE | Recommendations for the Conduct, Reporting, Editing and Publication of Scholarly Work in Medical Journals: <a href="http://www.icmje.org/recommendations/">http://www.icmje.org/recommendations/</a> | <a href="http://www.icmje.org">http://www.icmje.org</a> ; This is a searchable, living document!   |

A journal owned by a nursing society certainly has many advantages. The most important is that two-thirds of the triad (editorial board and society members) are content experts. Societies are composed of members on a continuum from novice to expert in a particular field; there is an opportunity to solicit and publish content relevant to all members. Members are also interested in their nursing sub-specialty as demonstrated by their society affiliation. A willing population exists where the triad can encourage publication, recruit authors and reviewers, and mentor novice authors. The society often negotiates with the publisher to provide a journal subscription, either at no cost or a discounted rate, as a member benefit. A well-run journal with excellent triad communication can increase each society member's satisfaction and professional growth along with the journal's circulation, which increases revenue to the publisher and society.

## SOCIETY JOURNAL OPERATIONS

When establishing a society journal, it is important to develop a mission statement, articles of operation, and a strategic plan based on the society's mission and vision. Journal goals are developed and evaluated on a defined timetable. Annually, the publisher delivers a report to the Editorial Board and society containing the publishing data from the previous year. Articles purchased, society membership, advertisement revenue, continuing education data, article readership, and national and international reach are shared. The Editorial Board analyzes the report and adjusts goals and plans accordingly. For transparency to the society members, all publisher's reports and Editorial Board meeting minutes are disclosed to the society. This practice ensures that needed adjustments are made to the journal and society's scope and mission as indicated.

The concept of editorial independence should be addressed early in journal development. The triad is encouraged to develop and publish a written agreement of maximum editorial freedom in the journal guidelines and society website for full transparency.<sup>4,7</sup> Editorial independence comes with responsibilities as well; meticulous attention to COPE guidelines provide direction as difficult circumstances arise.

All triad members should be thoroughly familiar with and follow COPE guidelines, including *Guidelines for Managing the Relationships Between Society-Owned Journals, Their Society, and Publishers*.<sup>1</sup> These guidelines direct editorial independence, journal management, commercial issues, and website transparency. Ongoing education to triad leadership and members addresses the challenge posed by triad turnover and threat to institutional memory.

## **SOCIETY JOURNAL EDITORIAL BOARD**

Editorial board member practices, including size and selection processes, vary widely.<sup>4</sup> The roles of the society journal's Editorial Board members include

reviewing, contributing publications, article solicitation and promotion, mentoring, development and revision of journal policies, and participation in journal strategic planning. Editors are responsible for outlining expectations of Editorial Board members, determining an evaluation plan, and defining terms of Editorial Board membership.

Society Editorial Board members are typically volunteers, do not receive compensation, and view their work as a professional responsibility. Editorial Board members with a variety of skills and experience can enhance the efficiency and innovation of a journal. Terms of service consider Editorial Board productivity; these terms may vary but must contribute to the overall efficiency of the journal. Often, society journal board members serve multiple terms; members with longevity function as historians who assist with institutional memory for the journal and triad. Journal guidelines determine if Editorial Board members must also be society members. A dedicated, loyal and engaged board working as a team with the Editor can produce a high-quality journal with Editorial Board additions and replacements as new personnel and journal needs emerge. If the journal continues to flourish, an Editor often serves several terms per the journal guidelines. Initial and ongoing communication within the triad surrounding mission statement and articles of operation guide these decisions.

## **POTENTIAL AUTHORS FOR A SOCIETY JOURNAL**

Assessment of the journal's audience by the society journal editor is extremely important. Considerations include society size, whether the society is a general organization or specialized, and type of members (new nurse graduates, experienced researchers, or combination). This information determines article types the editor pursues. For instance, new graduate nurses may prefer to read case review articles while experienced researchers may prefer scientific articles by seasoned authors. A small specialized society journal may receive most of their

submissions from the society members. In this case, it is important to have a variety of article types and accept various levels of articles from new as well as experienced authors.

A goal of the triad is development of writing talent by the society's professionals. Author mentorship is recommended with education on writing and publishing provided by society educational programs. These educational programs provided by Editorial Board members allow familiarity with the society membership and is a source of article recruitment and mentorship.

## **ETHICS**

As a new editor, the impact of publication ethics may seem obvious. However, as the society editor's experience grows, a deeper understanding of publication ethics provides an infrastructure that guides publication management. The International Academy of Nursing Editors (INANE) is an international organization of nurse editors and reviewers that creates educational opportunities for new editors, including workshops, mentoring awards, online community support, and a handbook for editors.<sup>8</sup> The INANE Email update list provides instant access to leading nurse editors and is one of the most supportive and encouraging corners of the internet. INANE collaborates closely with *Nurse Author & Editor*. This online, open access publication publishes content specifically written for nursing editors, peer reviewers, editorial board members, and authors. Articles, many based on INANE Email update list queries, are well researched and extraordinarily helpful.

The leading publication ethics resource is the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE). Most professional journals belong to COPE, providing their editors access to the resources of the organization. The ethical content is extremely valuable, easily searchable, and well-referenced. Journal editors may

confidentially present ethical issues via the website. Cases are presented and discussed at the COPE forum, allowing ethics experts to comment and make recommendations. Since the content is de-identified, this is a safe space for new editors to reach out and receive advice from experts.

Another resource is the Council of Science Editors (CSE) White Paper on Promoting Integrity in Scientific Journal Publications.<sup>2</sup> Information is organized by role: editor, author, publisher, and journal. The statement provides insight into how journals operate and where conflicts may arise. For instance, the editor's ethical obligation to the reader is to provide content that is valid, useful, well-written, and accessible. The editor's ethical obligation to the author is to provide meaningful feedback in a respectful, collaborative, nurturing tone. The editor's obligation to the publisher is to expand readership and advertising funding. These ethical and work obligations can potentially be conflicting; having a resource that addresses the fundamental obligations and inner workings of editorship is critical. The CSE White Paper also addresses scientific integrity and how to proceed in cases of dishonest behavior, including authorship conflict.<sup>6</sup>

## **CONTRACTS**

New editors often are asked to sign a contract delineating their obligations to their society or publisher. The draft contract should be reviewed by a contract attorney who represents the editor. No matter how experienced the editor, legal representation is necessary to identify potential contract issues and to assist in contractual negotiations. One point to consider is compensation; will the editor be compensated, and if so, will it be based on achieving certain goals? Ensure that the ethical obligations of all parties are clear in the contract, particularly in regard to editorial freedom. Clarity around editorial freedom is critical with parameters documented in detail. Finally, pay attention to how the contract termination clause is structured; does the contract automatically renew on a certain date, and how

can each party terminate the agreement? Additional considerations in a contract include the ability to work for another journal if exiting a current journal and a non-compete clause.<sup>3</sup>

## **IMPACT FACTOR**

For many authors, a journal's impact factor (JIF) is an important aspect when choosing where to submit their work. The Thomson-Reuters' Institute of Scientific Information created a complex calculation of article frequency; Clarivate Analytics now publishes yearly list of journal impact factors. This is an important component for authors in academia who are required to publish articles in well known, high impact journals.<sup>11</sup> Controversy over JIF worth stems from concerns that technical aspects of the JIF calculation may not determine a high-quality article or journal.<sup>11</sup>

Oermann<sup>9</sup> discussed concerns with JIFs as they relate to society journals. She found that clinical specialty journals were more likely to have a lower JIF than nursing research journals. The content from a clinical article may have clear value for patients of a particular nursing specialty, but not generate adequate citations to establish or raise the journal's JIF. The society, and possibly publisher, may have expectations that the editor applies for indexing (a lengthy process) or publishes articles that will increase the impact factor. While the editor can do the former, increasing the JIF is typically not within an editor's control. Journals may not be ready to apply for a JIF for many years and some smaller society journals with a specialized reader and author reach may have difficulty qualifying for an impact factor. Nicoll and Chinn<sup>8</sup> have a good introduction to JIFs in their handbook.

## **CONCLUSION**

The successful society journal advances the particular knowledge base that meets the evolving clinical and research needs of a specific, vulnerable population. The opportunities and challenges associated with the society journal are numerous;

exceptional and repetitive communication, transparency and following ethical guidelines by all triad members supports the evolution of the triad's goals.

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