



**Council of Editors of Learned
Journals**
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The Contributions of Journal Editors to the Scholarly Community

Editors of learned and creative journals play a critical role in shaping their disciplines, enhancing the intellectual life of their host institutions, and advancing the external reputations of those 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 belletristic journals make upon the academic community for support.

The Mission of Learned and Creative Journals

The mission of learned and creative journals is to disseminate scholarship and further the arts, while creating communities for exchange within and among disciplines. That fundamental mission remains constant even as electronic publishing and the "open access" movement alter the ways in which we process, disseminate, and consume scholarship. 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. Editors are active, not passive; they are intellectual leaders, not followers. Journals do not merely present and archive research; they actively stimulate and direct inquiry in their fields of study and help create new knowledge. Moreover, editors relate scholarship to the wider domains of society, culture, politics, and history by providing multiple contexts and connections to the "outside world."

Journals are edited, and often published and marketed as well, by scholars who add the burdens of editorship to their tasks of teaching, writing, and research. They do so because they believe in the missions of learned and belletristic 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.

The editor's first task is to find, evaluate, develop, and publish manuscripts that will enrich the discipline he or she serves. As writers themselves, editors contribute editorials, and they frequently oversee the creation of special issues—an undertaking commensurate with editing a 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 and layout, copyediting and proofreading. As another part of their responsibilities, editors often sit on the executive councils of the organizations that sponsor their journals.

Although journals that have many 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. While most journals, large and small, count on institutional support, these smaller and less costly journals—probably the bulk of journals published in the humanities—must rely particularly on help from volunteers and from their colleges and universities.

The Learned Journal in the College and University

Reputable learned or belletristic journals are important assets to institutions of higher learning. Every time an issue is published (as often as six times a year, in some cases, in print and/or electronically), 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. Moreover, when journal 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.

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. This aspect of the editorial charge is rarely discussed, but it should be openly recognized; and editors' contributions, both to scholarship and to academic decision making, should be acknowledged and rewarded.

In summary, journals offer significant collateral benefits to their institutions, and editors are entrusted with weighty responsibility for judging the quality and direction of scholarship on behalf of their institutions and society at large. It is vital to the survival of these publications that they receive financial as well as in-kind assistance, that professional staff be awarded full institutional support, and that editors be recognized for their contributions to their disciplines.

Recommendations

- **Support:**
 - 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.
 - 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.
 - 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.
 - Provide space, equipment, and an operating budget, and, when possible, subvention funding to supplement the modest subscription revenue that humanities journals collect.
 - Assist faculty interested in inaugurating new journals by helping to evaluate need and feasibility, create a business plan, and seek support.

- **Recognition:**
 - Provide editors and professional staff with clear, written job descriptions, and base performance evaluations on those criteria.
 - 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.
 - Specifically, for example, count special issues equally with book-length collections of essays, and editorials equally with articles—weighing considerations of length and substance by the same guidelines applied to any other publication.
 - Grant credit for creative endeavors such as designing layout and covers.