

How Do I Get My Article Published in This Journal Anyway?

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In a recent internet discussion, the following advice was given to young faculty members, “Here is How to Make Tenure Fast.” Readers were encouraged to follow these directions, and tenure and promotion would be assured:

- Include in your journal article the citations below.
- Remove the first citation from the list and add a citation to your journal article at the bottom.
- Make ten copies and send them to colleagues.

The claim was made that conscientious adherence to these directions would result in your article being cited up to 10,000 times! A citation rate of this magnitude would surely impress any promotion and tenure committee we know, provided the citations were in “high impact” journals. We are thankful that Illinois Institute of Technology does not base tenure and promotion decisions just on frequency counts of citations, but also on quality and impact in the field. However, we are very well aware that many universities are just concerned with frequency counts. The totally factual example we have presented is just another reminder that the virtue of “quantity versus quality” has manifest itself in certain areas of academe in the form of the proverbial “chain letter.” Yes, publish or perish is alive and well (or not so well, depending on your perspective).

The realities of life in higher education are a constant source of anxiety to all those involved, other than tenured Full Professors. To some, the specter of promotion and tenure committees is just another way that the “haves” exert inappropriate power trips on those who are considered the “have nots.” In a culture where status and financial gain pale against professional sports and reality shows, any bit of leverage one can gather is emotionally rationalized. Perhaps there should be a university faculty reality show, but that is a story for another day. To many, the

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system is just fine the way it is. In a competitive market, standards must be maintained, and someone must serve as a gatekeeper.

Being a journal editor can be similar to putting a target on your back. The very nature of our position often evokes the ire of those striving to achieve lifetime security. On average, the review process for manuscripts takes over a year, with actual publication occurring approximately 2 years after a manuscript first leaves your desk (Be assured that *JSTE*'s editorial process is significantly less). Do junior faculty have the luxury of this amount of time? We think not.

To make the situation worse, some editors choose to exert what we consider undue influence on the review process by routinely rejecting articles without peer review or ignoring the advice of editorial reviewers. We consider this "undue influence," because we feel that the manuscripts published in a journal should reflect the interests of its readers. We do not want the personal or professional views of Norman Lederman and Judith Lederman to solely decide what is of quality and of importance in the area of science teacher education. Many might feel that we are shirking our responsibilities as editors. Isn't it our job to make such decisions and serve as gatekeepers to the quality of the journal?

Although we enthusiastically accept the responsibilities typically associated with journal editors, we are also committed to making our decisions with maximum input from our Associate Editors and Editorial Reviewers, and we are committed to decreasing the time authors are expected to wait for the editorial process to wind its way to completion. We are proud to say that the *Journal of Science Teacher Education* consistently boasts one of the shortest review and publication timelines in science and mathematics education. We are also convinced that the review process for the journal is as fair as is humanly possible and the result is a product that best represents the interests of the membership of the organization. Consequently, each year our June editorial will be dedicated to a detailed description of the editorial review process and a delineation of acceptance rates and reasons for the rejection of manuscripts. We sincerely believe the process of publishing in a scholarly journal should have utmost integrity and be as transparent as possible.

Receipt and Logging of Manuscripts

All manuscripts are processed through the Editorial Manager website. An email is sent to the primary author immediately when the manuscript is uploaded. This email contains the manuscript identification number. Within 48 h, an Editor-in-Chief looks at the manuscript and either assigns an Associate Editor to the manuscript or the manuscript is Withdrawn. A manuscript can be withdrawn because it does not follow APA guidelines or because it is not related to science teacher education. A letter is sent to the primary author informing them of the Associate Editor assigned to his/her manuscript or the issues that have caused the manuscript to be Withdrawn.

Approximately 25 % of submitted manuscripts are Withdrawn upon receipt because they do not comply with our submission guidelines or do not follow APA guidelines. Common problems include inappropriate citation and reference format, no abstract, no running head, no page numbers, tables/figures in wrong location, and

single-spaced text instead of double spaced text. When manuscripts with problems are received, a letter is immediately sent back to the primary author stating that the manuscript has been withdrawn and must be revised to adhere to APA style before it can re-submitted. About 20 % of the manuscripts we receive are NOT specifically related to science teacher education and are sent back to the author without further review. Alternate journals for submission are often recommended. We expect the frequency of these articles to decrease since the publication of our editorial in the February, 2014 issue of the journal.

Assigning Reviewers

Associate Editors and Editorial Reviewers are vital to our journal. Their discriminating reviews help us meet our goal of publishing research-oriented articles and theoretical articles with implications for research to improve the quality of science teacher education. A list of current Associate Editors and Editorial reviewers is included on the inside of the front cover and the following journal page of each issue. Anyone wishing to become an Editorial Reviewer should write the co-editors at the address listed on the inside front cover. A call for Editorial Reviewers is also sent on the journal listserv each Fall.

The Co-Editors assign an Associate Editor to each manuscript and the Associate Editor assigns two Editorial Reviewers to each manuscript, based upon its substantive focus. A “blind” review process is used. Every attempt is made to select Associate Editors and Editorial Reviewers whose expertise and interests are most closely aligned with the focus of the manuscript. Within 3 days after being received by an Associate Editor, each manuscript is sent to Editorial Reviewers. Reviewers are urged to complete their reviews within 1 month. At present, Editorial Reviewers have been taking an average of 4 weeks to complete their reviews.

The Review Process

Keeping in mind the guidelines specified on the Reviewer Form, each Editorial Reviewer completes a detailed review of the strengths and weaknesses of each manuscript. These strengths and weaknesses, along with a recommendation concerning publication, are communicated in writing to the Associate Editor. The Associate Editor reads the reviews and also reads the manuscript. The Associate Editor synthesizes the Editorial Reviewers’ comments and his/her own comments and makes a recommendation to the journal Co-Editors (Norman Lederman and Judith Lederman). As reviews are received by the editorial office, the managing editor enters the information into the database.

The Co-Editors consider the recommendation of the Associate Editor and render a decision. It is our policy to accept the decision of the Associate Editor, given their expertise and prominence in the field. It is only under extenuating circumstances that we would overturn the decision of the Associate Editor and the Editorial

Reviewers. The various decision options are: Accept, Minor Revisions, Major Revisions, Reject, but encourage to re-submit, or Reject.

The logic of the aforementioned process is quite simple. The Co-Editors make every effort to respect the opinions of our Associate Editors and Editorial Reviewers. We fully accept the responsibility of making decisions when there is a clear difference of opinion, but we do not think it is valid to override clearly reasoned decisions by our expert Associate Editors. Using such a process, we can avoid problems often noted in other journals; that is, the journal becomes a reflection of the personal professional preferences and biases of the editor.

What Do Authors Receive?

Immediately following an editorial decision, the author is notified in writing. At this time, the process from submission to author notification of editorial decision is approximately 3 months. The author receives anonymous copies of the Associate Editor's and Editorial Reviewers' comments regardless of the manuscript's disposition.

For rejected manuscripts, authors are informed that they may revise and resubmit their manuscript to the full review process, if desired. This is true for both manuscripts receiving a Reject or a Reject, but encourage to re-submit decision. For manuscripts that receive a decision of Major or Minor Revisions, the authors are notified that, contingent upon certain revisions, the manuscript will continue to be considered for publication. Typically, revisions are made and the manuscript is accepted. However, the co-editors maintain the right to deny publication if the suggested revisions are not made at a satisfactory level.

Authors are given 30 days in which to make revisions and return the manuscript. Before removing a manuscript under revision from our active files, the author is sent two warning notices.

What Happens After Revisions are Made?

Revised manuscripts are sent to the Associate Editor and the original Editorial Reviewers. If it is decided that revisions have been made at a satisfactory level, the author is informed that the manuscript has been officially accepted for publication.

Once a manuscript is accepted, it goes through a copy editing process at Springer and page proofs are sent to the author for revision. The author is responsible for making requested copy edits and returning the revised manuscript to Springer within 30 days.

Once the manuscript has been satisfactorily revised the author is sent a final or galley proof. As we are approaching printing deadlines at this point, turnaround time is often tight for reviewing proofs. The author is requested to read the manuscript carefully for any errors or necessary changes. If no response is received from the author within the allotted deadline, we assume the manuscript requires no changes.

Table 1 Reasons *JSTE* manuscripts have been rejected (69 manuscripts rejected during our editorship)

Overall manuscript	Percent	Manuscript sections	Percent
Not appropriate for journal	25	Unclear purpose for study	19
Too lengthy	7	Weak literature review	21
Weak organization	9	Weak methodology description	17
Use of poor grammar and spelling	7	Weak instrument description	6
Does not contribute new information to the field	29	Weak data analysis description	14
Unclear appendices, tables, and figures	5	Conclusion not supported by evidence	15
Weak connections to K-16 instruction	9	Incomplete description of the study	16

How Can You Improve the Quality of Your Manuscript?

The *Journal of Science Teacher Education* remains one of the most respected international journals in science teacher education because of its high standards. Under our editorship, as of May 1, 2014, 91 manuscripts have completed the review process. Twenty-seven manuscripts have been accepted, which constitutes an acceptance rate of approximately 13 %. These figures do not include manuscripts currently in the process of review.

Most manuscripts are rejected for publication because authors have inaccurately anticipated the focus of reviewers. This means that many, but not all, manuscripts could be made more acceptable for publication if the authors were more experienced with the review process. Table 1 presents the reasons and associated descriptive statistics reviewers have given for rejecting manuscripts during our tenure as co-editors. Please note that articles typically are rejected for numerous reasons. A manuscript rarely is rejected for a single reason (i.e., the infamous “fatal flaw”). Consequently, the percentages included in Table 1 total in excess of 100 %.

The manuscript weaknesses cited by our reviewers are quite similar to those encountered by reviewers for other journals in mathematics and science education. It should be noted that, although a manuscript is rejected because it is considered inappropriate for the journal, it may be perfectly acceptable for another professional journal. Remember, our journal and organization are dedicated to research and theory in science teacher education.

Even the briefest perusal of the items listed in Table 1 indicates a clear pattern, specifically related to research investigations. The categories of “Weak methodology description” and “Incomplete description of the study” clearly overlap, with the latter more inclusive than the former. Combined, these two categories are mentioned for a third of the rejected manuscripts. Conceivably, many authors could easily correct this problem by simply including a more detailed description of the research procedures and design. For investigations that have not considered important details, the advice here would be of little help. The category “Conclusions not supported by evidence” seems to be relevant to those studies in which important design details have not been considered.

Throughout our tenure as co-editors, the categories of “Unclear purpose for the study,” “Does not contribute to the field,” and “Weak literature review” have been among the most common reasons for the rejection of manuscripts. One of the often-cited problems with educational scholarship, research or otherwise, has been the lack of coherence across sub disciplines and/or the building upon prior knowledge. In particular, authors consistently “reinvent the wheel” because they have not carefully examined related literature in their own discipline or a closely related sub discipline. If our scholarship and research is to progress, we must build upon the findings of previous research, and we must attempt to become familiar with the literature in clearly related fields. If science teacher educators want to remain knowledgeable about teaching and learning, we must explore the literature in psychology journals, learning science journals, and generic teacher education journals, instead of remaining solely wedded to the journals dedicated to science education.

Finally, we wish to acknowledge the efforts of our Associate Editors, Editorial Reviewers, and Managing Editor, Selina Bartels. Their efforts are hardly compensated in any material way, and it is all of their work that makes our job so enjoyable.