

22 Responsibilities of a Journal Editor

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The selection of the “right” editor for a journal is one of the most important decisions made by a nonprofit publisher. (Some organizations call the outside editor “editor-in-chief,” I use the term “editor” to mean the same position.)

The editor is the “gatekeeper” for the journal. Anything published in the journal passes her desk. What authors think of your organization is influenced by your editor as she is the “face” to the world. She represents you and your organization. In addition to “front-line” dealings with authors, the other major responsibility of the editor is the administration of the peer review process.

The journal peer review process has three purposes. The first is quality control, to eliminate major errors in papers. Secondly, the review process should ensure fair

treatment of authors. Thirdly, the reviewing encourages the publication of papers that contain new and useful findings.

The success of your journal will depend on the performance of the editor. The job of the editor is to “make things happen!” As a staff publisher it is your job to make sure the editor knows what her responsibilities are.

In some instances the nonprofit will pay for the cost of an editorial assistant to handle the purely administrative functions of editing a journal. Or the editor’s institution may be reimbursed for the cost of administrative support for the editor. The responsibilities will vary from journal to journal but these twenty-two responsibilities are the core of the editor’s job.

A journal editor’s responsibilities are to:

1. Implement and adhere to the journal’s editorial policy.
2. Assist in developing and revising editorial policy.
3. Actively solicit (commission) articles from leaders in the field.
4. Determine if an article is concerned with the subject matter of the journal.
5. Accept/reject articles for review.
6. Develop reviewer guidelines, editorial rating criteria, and training materials for reviewers.
7. Select, appoint, train and provide direction to editorial review board members.
8. Select peer reviewers to review articles.
9. Ensure that reviews are qualified, impartial and fair.
10. Evaluate performance of editorial review board members and coach when appropriate.
11. Maintain reviewing schedules by ensuring that reviewers meet agreed-upon reviewing deadlines.
12. Preserve the confidentiality of the review process.
13. Maintain a log of articles under consideration, rejected, accepted pending revision, and accepted as final.
14. Assist authors in developing articles to the fullest potential.

15. Maintain all communications with all authors and reviewers in a courteous and diplomatic manner.
16. Develop a backlog of at least two issues of accepted articles.
17. Ensure that all authors respect Copyright Law and advise authors when to seek permission to use copyrighted material.
18. Check all manuscripts for completeness, references, tables, figures suitable for reproduction, legends, abstracts, permission to use copyrighted material, and mailing address for proof.
19. Work closely with publisher's production staff in maintaining production schedules and in all editorial production work.
20. Provide an annual report to the board of directors and periodic management reports to staff publisher.
21. Assist in planning and organizing of semiannual/annual editorial board meetings.
22. Provide for an orderly transition of editorship at the end of term.

Nonprofit publishers operate in a unique environment, one that can sometimes be both frustrating and challenging. As a publishing executive experienced in both the nonprofit and commercial sectors, I saw a void in the availability of practical management information for the nonprofit publishing executive. I decided to remedy that situation.

Publishing Management for Nonprofit Organizations: Principles for Associations, Foundations and Societies, (1997, 165 pp.) is unique as it presents a broad overview on how to succeed as a nonprofit publishing manager. Read *Publishing Management for Nonprofit Organizations* to pick up practical advice from a management perspective.

About John B. McHugh

John B. McHugh is a publishing management consultant and industry commentator. He has held management positions at Houghton Mifflin, Richard D. Irwin, and Wadsworth, Inc. At the American Society for Quality, McHugh served as Publisher and Director of Programs.

McHugh's articles have appeared in *Association Publishing*, *Association Trends*, *The Book Marketing Update*, the *COSMEP Newsletter*, *Independent Publishing*, the *PMA Newsletter* and *Small Press*. McHugh also conducts on-site training workshops for publishers.

Other McHugh Publications of Interest:

Managing Publishing Rights: Acquiring, Protecting and Selling, 158 pp., 1998. \$90.00. Item M-16

Permissions Management for Requestors and Grantors: Dealing with Copyright and Fair Use, 62 pp., 1996. \$70.00. Item M-14

Publishing Management for Nonprofit Organizations: Principles for Associations, Foundations and Societies, 162 pp., 1997. \$85.00. Item M-15

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Electronic Rights for Publishers: Protecting Your Interests, 31 pp., 1996. \$22.00. Item MP-7

Book Publishing Contracts: An Introduction, 68 pp., 1996. \$70.00. Item M-13

Managing Book Acquisitions: An Introduction, 100 pp., 1995. \$65.00. Item M-12

College Publishing Market, Third Edition, 100 pp., 1995. \$65.00. Item M-11