Reflections Of A (Former) Student Journal Director

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Molecular Genetics
Sequence patient DNA to understand complex neurological disorders.

Bird window collisions
Section editor for campus newspaper
How do I get involved in a journal?

Did not get position on journal editorial board. Instead, invited to help out with online research co-op program.

Never heard back

Invited to be an editor!
How do I get involved in a journal?

» Leverage or build your skills and expertise
  • E.g. write for *The Varsity*, *the Medium*

» Simply ask or apply!
  • Roles can involve editing; marketing; admin, etc.

» Where do I find student journals?
  • List of UofT student-run journals: https://guides.library.utoronto.ca/student_journals/journal-directory
  • There are also journals outside of UofT!
    • **FSST – Journal of Student Science and Technology**
    • **Undergraduate Research in Natural and Clinical Science and Technology (URNCST)**
    • **Journal of Young Investigators (JYI)**
2016

Bird window collisions

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Gene editing using CRISPR in fruit flies

Molecular Biology [UofT’s Mississauga campus]

2018

2019

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The **STEM Fellowship Journal** is an open-access peer-reviewed journal that publishes scholarly research by high school and university students in the STEM fields.
…What do I have to do as an editor?
Editorial Workflow at the STEM Fellowship Journal

1. Student Research
2. Manuscript Submission
3. Manuscript editing
4. Peer review
5. Address feedback
   - Final editing
   - Copy-editing
6. Publication!
…What do I have to do as an editor?

» Understand your journal’s editorial workflow
  • Use journal guidelines to understand your role
  • Meet deadlines – and communicate!

» Ask for guidance if facing an ethical dilemma

» Want to develop your editorial skills?
  • Attend relevant conferences and join mentorship programs
    • Council of Science Editors (CSE)
    • Society for Scholarly Publishing (SSP)
  • Canadian Association of Learned Journals (CALJ) occasionally hosts webinars and bootcamps
  • Publons’ (free) Peer Review Academy Course

» There are a lot of (free/affordable) resources
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STEM Fellowship

Editorial Board Director

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What is a journal director responsible for?

The short answer: everything.
Editorial Workflow at the STEM Fellowship Journal

1. Manuscript submission
2. Assign to editor with relevant expertise
3. Peer review
4. Address feedback and final editing
5. Copy-editing
6. Manuscript recruitment
7. Keep editorial workflow moving!

- Recruit new editors
- Represent your journal professionally
- Establish new partnerships (with students, journals, publishers...)
- Launch exciting new projects!
- Train editors, offer opportunities for growth
- Recommend your editors to opportunities
- Write recommendation letters

- Communicate with publisher!
- Commission a journal cover!
- Peer review recruitment!
- Publication!

...and so on!

Deadlines!
As the STEM Fellowship Journal’s Editorial Board Director:

» Highlights:
  • Expanded editorial board (in Canada and abroad!)
  • Set up editorial policies
    • Standardized editorial board application (two-step editing test, followed by an interview)
    • Documentation
  • Established new partnerships with academic competitions to recruit new manuscripts
  • Developed new initiatives led by the journal
    • Scholarly Writing Workshops
    • Inclusion of graphical abstracts
    • Exploratory study of student-run journals

CHALLENGES

- How to foster student interest in submitting to these journals
- Student editors lack sufficient background knowledge
- Faculty support is useful, but is a large time commitment

Study: Student-Run Academic Journals in STEM: A Growing Trend in Scholarly Communication. [Link]
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» Not so great things:
  • Most challenging year (be aware of your limits!)
  • Became disillusioned with the academic publishing ecosystem
How do I become an editorial board director?

» Climb the ‘ladder’ in your journal
  • Express your interest in taking on responsibility
  • Display commitment, reliability

» What would you do differently – your vision?
  • Organization is key – keep track of deadlines, which stage manuscripts are, etc.
  • Implement new technology?
    • Open Journal Systems (OJS)
    • Overleaf for journal templates
    • Altmetrics to track online readership
    • ORCID for authors to track publications
    • Pre-print servers: host on your own journal site or use established sites such as bioRxiv
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Science policy, outreach and communication initiatives.

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The future of academic publishing

My challenge to you:

» **Student-run journal sustainability**
  • Do you have transition strategies in place?

» **Accessibility**
  • How does your journal make publishing an affordable, accessible opportunity?
  • How does your published research reach key stakeholders?

» **Equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI)**
  • What are the demographics of your editorial board?
    • Are there women in leadership positions? Do you have editors from all over Canada or representing sub-fields?
  • Is there a gender bias in your journal? [Read more]
    • Female last authors are 6.4% less likely to have their manuscripts accepted by an all-male panel of reviewers
    • For high-impact journals, the likelihood a woman will be published as the first or last author decreases significantly as the impact factor of the journal increases
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