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Random Thoughts about Volume 34, 2008, and Some Insights into Journal Production

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Editorial

Random Thoughts about Volume 34, 2008, and Some Insights about Journal Production

Connie Foster

Circumstances and deadlines precluded a guest editorial, so I am taking this opportunity at the end of a volume year to highlight subtle changes and underscore ongoing efforts for *Serials Review* during 2008.

Peer Review

Last year we finally got smart and started thanking all of those Board members and colleagues around the world who serve as peer reviewers. *Serials Review* has long held a double-blind peer review process. Reviewers give generously and meticulously of their time and expertise to assist in the acceptance, revision, and rejection process. Having those extra eyes is invaluable to the editor in reaching decisions about content, and an essential part of the scholarly publication process in academia. Submissions are often complex statistically or philosophically. Finding just the right people to delve into the manuscripts is essential. Timeliness, too, is a basic component in the peer-review process. *Serials Review* maintains, what I perceive to be, an excellent publication schedule for manuscripts. From the time of receipt until the release in ScienceDirect or in print, and depending on when the submission is entered in the Elsevier Editorial System (EES) matched against the production process, I generally tell authors (should they ask) that an acceptance for publication means no more than six to nine months turnaround, often much less.

Columns

We are always eager to receive suggestions (and people) for new columns. Our standard ones enjoy long shelf life and many downloads in the Top 25 each quarter. The column editors amaze me with their ideas, expansive content, and clarity of trends. Whether interviews, surveys, site visits, standards, reviews, conferences, conversations, indexes, or burning issues covered by balancing points and tracking e-journal trends—we pass through a great deal of territory in the world of scholarly communications and serials. Cindy Hepfer and Beverley Geer partnered in bringing columns to *SR*; I am profoundly grateful to them both for this vision. With Associate Editor Beverley Geer always at my right hand, I live a good life as an editor!

Citations

Perhaps the single most exciting news this year (reflecting 2007) was *SR*'s ranking #25 out of 56 information/library science journals in Thomson Reuters *Journal Citation Reports*. There are medical, government, law, and pure information science titles in that list. The Impact Factor is 0.761 for *SR*. We are in keenly competitive and astute company! Indeed, one author emailed me when the December 2007 issue of *Library Journal* cited that person's article for discussing problems with versions of articles (web, print, failed links). This is just one example that validates the effect and influence of citations.

Cosmetics and Communication

Even scholarly journals deserve a face lift every now and then. Working with the experienced and committed staff in San Diego, Beverley and I are achieving improved understanding of how copy works in print and in the conversion process to ScienceDirect,

and tables turned, staff who work on various formats are diligently coding column titles, subtitles, column editors and contributors into a more representational and searchable fields (more like print) in the online system, so credit really can be given where credit is due to all who generate or edit content. Going from a print issue to an online issue is not as simple as I envisioned!

We've eliminated some blank front pages by placing the Editorial Board and Column Editors listings verso the cover; we've eliminated column descriptions and contacts from the back matter (assuming people will go online for details at <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/journal/00987913>), yet we retain inside each issue the guidelines for authors and examples.

Now that I've mentioned online, the electronic submission and peer review process has altered in significant ways the acceptance, revisions, and production process. It is one form of technology forced upon me that I thoroughly rely on and the knowledge gained has helped me in other services our campus offers for journal start-ups. One never knows about those transferrable skills! The Elsevier Editorial System (EES) for *Serials Review* is at <http://ees.elsevier.com/serrev/>.

Consistencies in Manuscript Preparation

If any potential authors are reading this, I want to stress the importance of looking at a past issue, reviewing the sample author guidelines and asking questions. A few things at the front end of the process save often immensely frustrating, detailed editing at the end of the process. For example, a basic rule of punctuation (in the U.S.) is that commas and

periods ALWAYS go inside quotations marks. We follow the *Chicago Manual of Style* notes format for our citations. That means, first name-last name, followed by comma, and the article, etc. One other point for our humanities-based approach is to give the author's first name the first time it is mentioned in the article, and then use the last name for subsequent citations. These are probably the most time-consuming changes I make or request that you make in order to have a quality, consistent approach to the overall expectations of the submissions.

I frequently get emails from authors asking if their potential ideas fit the aims and scope of *Serials Review*; I appreciate those inquiries and try to respond promptly. This is a good approach if you are uncertain about your topic and the journal because you do not lose valuable time in sending your manuscript to a journal inappropriate for your topic and you find a good match initially. I think most editors appreciate this.

And the last point, which always bears mentioning, is that one should never submit a manuscript to several journals simultaneously to see which one "bites" first. Usually, now, most journals have a stated policy that you sign off on indicating you have not published or submitted elsewhere.

Content

This fourth issue of Volume 34 represents diverse topics and authors that round out a year in which *SR* extended internationally in substantive ways and presented an exciting blend of North American and global practices, surveys, and issues. Consider the first issue with a substantial focus on Open Access which, despite its ever-present discussion,

is relatively new and experimental for publishers and authors. Previous contributors of a focus issue in Volume 30 updated their articles and new contributors were added, particularly for institutional repository initiatives. Subsequent issues had articles on Pushcart Prize winners, MARC records for comics, e-book subscriptions in India, e-journal studies in Spain, and twenty year of NASIG conference proceedings.

How fitting, then, that Taemin Park (Indiana University) focuses here on the Asian and Pacific Region with “Asian and Pacific Region Authorship Characteristics in Leading Library and Information Science Journals,” a fascinating study. Bradley Brazzeal (Mississippi State University) and Patrick Carr (East Carolina University) examine forestry literature and open access in “The Potential Impact of ‘Public Access’ Legislation on Access to Forestry Literature,” and thus continue the discussion of Open Access with which we first began. The final article is “An Empirical Analysis of the Amount of Publication Fees,” by Svenja Hagenoff, Matthias Blumnestiel, and Bjorn Ortelbach (all associated with the University of Goettingen, Germany, at the time of the study), for a statistical analysis of author-pays model of publishing and fueling further the Open Access considerations.

Complementing these articles is an amazingly comprehensive column prepared by Maria Collins on ERMs for the “Electronic Journal Forum”; three conference reports covering the Ohio Valley, North Carolina, and ALA; a visit to the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum Library (libraries are in the most interesting places); and book reviews on XML and social software.

So, open the pages, select a starting point and be sure to study the reviewers listed at the end. Want to be one? Want to share thoughts about the content or express a different perspective? Interested in serving on the board or editing a column? Send me an email.

We do publish Letters to the Editor; we do listen to your ideas and comments; we do seek volunteers for all aspects of the journal's life.

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