

◆ One Road to Becoming a Managing Editor

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Health Physics

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Like the recent managing editors of *Health Physics* before me, I was appointed managing editor despite not being a health physicist. My degree is in journalism, and I spent 10 years working as a reporter and news director before coming to *Health Physics* (see sidebar). The other managing editors had degrees in English combined with backgrounds in administration.

My journalism background proved extremely useful in preparing me for my present work. As a television reporter and producer in a medium-sized market, I wrote all my own material. Interviewing scientists and preparing the resulting news stories expanded my understanding of technical fields. The need to write large amounts of copy combined with being a prodigious reader helped to polish my writing skills. Good writing and editing skills are essential for managing editors because they often have to apply them to submitted manuscripts. Although many submitted manuscripts are well written, they often can be shortened or revised for easier reading without degrading the content.

I became managing editor when the journal office was transferred from the Mayo Clinic to the Milton S. Hershey Medical Center, Hershey, Pennsylvania. Although I had no previous experience as a managing editor, several things helped me to learn my new responsibilities quickly. They include

- An opportunity to spend several days in the journal office at the Mayo Clinic working with my predecessor. This crash course allowed me to establish the new office and ease into the process when the office was transferred.
- Access to the former managing editor for months after I assumed that role.
- Close contact with the other staff at the publications office at Williams & Wilkins who were thoroughly familiar with publication of this journal.
- An editor-in-chief who is very supportive

and who thoroughly understands the publication process.

While marketing or promotion of the journal are not specific responsibilities of my managing-editor position, they are areas in which I actively participate. Quarterly sessions are held with the publisher to discuss ways to improve marketing and ultimately circulation. My experience in television and now several years with the journal have reaffirmed that having sponsors of special issues and other advertisers is essential. We are constantly looking for ways to improve relationships with our sponsors and advertisers.

Managing editors do not operate in a vacuum; we must do our work aware of other factors. Because marketing, promotion, and sales affect the editorial office, they require my attention even though they are not my direct responsibility. Although I am not responsible for the budget, I am made aware of expenses and income and try to contribute to improving our overall financial picture, such as by becoming involved in determining sources and the extent of sponsored support for special issues.

Being a managing editor requires time management along with effective communication and interpersonal skills. Much of my time is spent reading and correcting manuscripts to make sure they conform to journal style and to ensure they are written clearly and concisely and are error-free. In addition, I interact with people across the United States and abroad. The people-oriented nature of my job is reflected in the daily communication I have with the copyeditor in Minnesota, our publisher and printer in Baltimore, Maryland, and authors from many places. Extensive daily communication is essential because I have found that most of our problems occur when we are not all communicating.

A typical day illustrates the nature of my job. Today started with my going over blue-lines for our November issue, a task that will likely take all day. This is my final look at the entire journal and my last opportunity to

Health Physics: A Profile

Health Physics, aka "The Radiation Protection Journal", is a monthly publication of the Health Physics Society with a circulation of 9800. It is a peer-reviewed academic journal that contains papers describing pure research as well as many that deal with everyday functions encountered by those in the profession. The monthly issues, which contain 25 to 35 papers each, and an abstract issue for the society's annual meeting all total 2000 pages annually. We also publish 1 to 3 supplemental issues that are sponsored.

The editorial office consists of the editor-in-chief, managing editor, and editorial assistant. Copyediting is provided by a freelance copyeditor. *Health Physics* is published by Williams & Wilkins, Baltimore, Maryland. As a style guide, which is available to authors, we use a modified version of the CBE standards that contains some items specific to *Health Physics*.

Recently *Health Physics* has moved cautiously into the electronic world of publishing. Surveys of the journal's readers (only 6% of whom access journals via computer) show that readers strongly favor increased use of electronic publication but are also very concerned about any increased costs associated with it. *Health Physics* has a home page (http://www.wwilkins.com/health_physics) that presents the journal's tables of contents, article abstracts, and links to other organizations. The tables of contents are also announced each month on an international bulletin board to which many journal readers subscribe. This past year, an Internet column was initiated to help educate our readers on use of the Internet for communication and information access; it has been well received.

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make changes. I'm waiting to hear from an author of a letter to the editor; he has been out of town, and I expect his changes to be few, which is a good thing since changes can be very expensive. I simply need his okay.

A few hours later, I have only minor changes to the issue. The author called to say he had no changes to his letter. I relay my changes to the publisher, completing my tasks for this issue. I expect the issue to be mailed in about 2 weeks.

Today I also received a month's work from the copyeditor—15 manuscripts that I now must prepare for the printer. I usually do this the same day the manuscripts arrive so the galley proofs can be sent to the author as soon as possible. The author of our monthly Internet column, who is in Michigan, has e-mailed his next column to me. Because this item is not peer reviewed, I read the column and e-mail it to the copyeditor, who returns the edited version as soon as possible.

With the *Health Physics* staff all over the country, communication is really a main function of the editorial office. In addition to managing the preparation of each issue, the opportunity for involvement in marketing and in enhanced use of electronics, including our recent movement into electronic publishing, make the job challenging and rewarding. ⑥