

## Strategies for Small Journals

**Chair:**

**Ann Link**

*Journal of Immunology*  
Bethesda, Maryland

**Panelists:**

**Leslie Neistadt**

*Journal of Athletic Training*  
Columbus, Georgia

**Poly Potter**

*Emerging Infectious Diseases*  
Atlanta, Georgia

**Reporter:**

**Barbara Gastel**

Texas A&M University  
College Station, Texas

Well-established journals with large circulations, frequent publication, and relatively broad-ranging content tend to receive much of the attention at meetings for science editors. Yet many editors attending such meetings work for journals of more limited scope. At the session "Strategies for Small Journals", editors described measures that two such publications have taken to function effectively.

Leslie Neistadt began by describing the *Journal of Athletic Training*, of which she is managing editor. The journal, she noted, is a quarterly peer-reviewed publication with a circulation of about 26,500; it receives about 120 manuscripts per year, about 25% of which are accepted for publication. The editorial office staff consists of Neistadt (40% of whose time is allocated to the journal) and a full-time editorial assistant.

The smallness of the staff poses challenges, Neistadt observed. For accessibility, she tries to make sure that either she or her assistant is in the office throughout the workday. They plan for vacation absences carefully. To maintain continuity during transitions between editorial assistants, Neistadt tries to have terms overlap and provides a detailed manual of procedures. Other challenges to the journal include space and financial limitations.

Neistadt described how the journal is trying to attract more high-quality manuscripts. It is diversifying its editorial board and reviewer pool, posting exhibits at sports-medicine meetings, and soliciting manuscripts for potential publication. Also, meetings of the association that sponsors the journal include workshops for authors and reviewers.

Running a small journal has advantages as well as challenges, Neistadt emphasized. Staff has the satisfaction of working closely with authors, reviewers, and others. There is hands-on participation at almost every step. And changes are much easier to effect than at a larger publication.

Poly Potter, managing editor of *Emerging Infectious Diseases*, presented strategies for journals that, like hers, are small at least partly because they are new. *Emerging Infectious Diseases* was established in 1995 by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Submissions have reached 600 manuscripts per year, circulation is 21,000 on paper and 15,000 electronic, and the journal has five full-time staff members. The journal appears six times per year.

Potter identified challenges that the journal faced at first and briefly described

how it addressed them. The journal had had to meet the standards for inclusion in major indexing databases, to establish an editorial board that would function well and lend credibility, to be posted on the World Wide Web in readily accessible formats, to develop instructions for authors, to set up a database of peer reviewers, and to establish a reader base. Potter indicated that as a young journal with limited submissions, *Emerging Infectious Diseases* has lacked the luxury of rejecting papers only because they need rewriting.

One advantage of small, new journals, Potter observed, is that they sometimes can move faster than larger, established journals. For example, one timely paper submitted to *Emerging Infectious Diseases* was peer-reviewed and posted on the Web within 5 days.

Potter noted that new journals also face the broader issues of establishing a niche, establishing credibility, and maintaining momentum. "Being a small journal", she said, "is just an invitation to grow."

In the discussion period, editors from two other small journals described approaches to the improvement of papers. One editor said that volunteers from his society mentor authors whose papers show promise but do not meet the journal's standards. The other editor noted a "pre-peer-review" process in which authors whose papers are unready for peer review receive advice on improving their papers for resubmission.

Participants appeared interested in holding future sessions on strategies for small journals. 🐼