

Solution Corner

continued

extended his approach, so we decline to cite this reviewer's research extensively. We have, however, added a paragraph to the discussion section of our revised paper that addresses the issue he raised."

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I prefer the "run-it-up-the-flagpole" approach rather than checking beforehand to see whether the chief editor is inclined to salute. The author has been given a clear choice: "Make the indicated changes or give your reasons for not doing so." This is the usual procedure for journals I have dealt with in recent years. Although I would be taking the risk of spending time in vain, I would make as many of the desired changes as possible, explain in a cover letter which changes were made and which were not, and send the revised manuscript and letter to the editor who sent the terse instructions (who will probably be thrilled to have successfully avoided trying to advise me). The chief editor would need to review the criticisms and look at the whole revised manuscript and is not likely to do this effectively during a telephone conversation.

It might be possible to satisfy both reviewers by shortening the introduction and discussion and adding some methodologic details. Even if I felt the manuscript could

not be shortened by as much as one-third, I would shorten it somewhat and explain why nothing else should be removed. Twenty-five years of experience in writing and editing journal articles has shown me that editors will generally accept an author's efforts to accommodate reviewers without compromising points that the author thinks are important.

The matter of a reviewer's requesting discussion of his own work is one that came up in connection with a manuscript I edited recently. The authors opted to cite two of the articles and gave a thorough explanation of their reasons for not citing the others. The editor accepted this solution.

Compromise and courtesy are perhaps the most important defenses for this situation. Thank the reviewers for their comments, and be respectful but not obsequious.

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New Question: A Question of the Reader

The editor of an international journal wants to know more about who the readers of the journal are and what they think of its content and format. She therefore is thinking of doing a readership survey. What main advice do you have for this editor? What resources, if any, do you suggest that she consult?

Letter

RSVP

Now that copyeditors have taken their pet peeves on an airing (*CBE Views*, Sep-Oct 1999;22:149), perhaps it's time to let authors take their bêtes noires for a walk around the block.

As both an author and an editor of some years' standing, I mention only one concern: prompt correspondence regarding submitted material, or lack thereof. Some editors quickly and conscientiously acknowledge receipt of typescripts or galleys; some do not.

I've never known an author who was not anxious to know that a submission to an edi-

tor was received in good order. Any prepared piece, no matter how weighty or trivial, is precious to its author. All it takes to ease the angst is a promptly mailed postcard, or a telephone call, or, better yet, an e-mail message conveyed at nearly the speed of light.

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