

The Editorial Office in Transition

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Change is scary, emotional, and personal, and moving an editorial office is a particularly daunting task; but with proper planning, the transition need not be chaotic. Factors to consider include the office location, a timeline, staffing, and finances.

Whether the office will reside with the new editor-in-chief (EIC), the society, or the publisher is a decision that should be made before the EIC is recruited. Locating the office with the EIC eases communication via face-to-face meetings and requires less dependence on e-mail and manuscript-management systems, but finding qualified people and suitable space on or near a campus may be difficult and expensive. Locating the office with the association guarantees a permanent office location and minimal future transition costs, but the EIC may have to rely on less-qualified staff in his or her office, and the journal office may not be a good fit within headquarters. Locating the office with the publisher ensures a permanent office location, minimal future transition costs, and trained staff with onsite backups, but the lack of separation between the editorial and business operations may be problematic and present potential conflicts of interest. Regardless of location, using a Web-based database

ensures easier communication among the editors, staff, editorial board, authors, and reviewers and saves time and money in the peer-review process.

The outgoing managing editor should be particularly attentive to the current staff's sensitivities by thanking them and ensuring that they enjoy sufficient incentives to stay through and be available beyond the transition.

The outgoing managing editor should provide the incoming managing editor

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and EIC with the titles and duties for each position. If it is possible, the outgoing managing editor should assist in interviewing new editorial-staff candidates. By asking the current staff what is working well, what needs improvement, and what should be changed, the incoming managing editor can gain a sense of which policies and procedures to maintain and which to reconsider. Also, although the new office will be busy initially, it is important not to overstaff.

Overlapping the staff's tenures by staggering layoffs allows duties to be successively transferred from the old to the new staff through each stage of the review process. Determine the print and online production schedules, and decide when the new office will assume full control.

The EIC and incoming managing editor should be allowed to change workflows and procedures, and the EIC should be encouraged to put his or her mark on the journal right away, perhaps in the form of editorial

notes or commentaries if the articles were accepted during the tenure of the previous EIC.

The incoming managing editor should understand the vision of the EIC. Together, they should review standing editorial policies, outline needed new policies, and review the authors' guide for necessary updating. If manuscripts are backlogged, it may help to increase the rejection rate or publish more pages if feasible. If the manuscript flow is insufficient, the EIC can recruit authors and put out a call for manuscripts.

Finances are an important consideration in any transition. Budget the new office's startup costs, including recruiting; training and travel; office lease; furniture, equipment, and supplies; and, if needed, a Web-based manuscript-management system (including data conversion and training). Prepare a separate annual budget for the new office, and expect to run concurrent offices for anywhere from 2 to 12 months (depending on the size of the journal, its operational structure, and other factors), which may increase costs by 50-100%.

In closing the old office, the outgoing managing editor sells or donates leftover furniture, equipment, and supplies; ships the final manuscripts (including any "problem children") to the new office; arranges for termination of the office utilities; and provides the post office with a change of address.

Although the transition to a new editorial office is unlikely to be completely free of hassles, sufficient planning and organization will go a long way to smoothing the process for all participants and ensuring the uninterrupted publication of the journal. 