

Science Editor: Open Access, Easy Access, Evolving Access

Barbara Gastel

Recently, an author of a piece for this column asked whether his article would be openly accessible—that is, freely available on the World Wide Web on publication. He said he thought it would be ironic at best to publish a piece on open access and not have it open. Betsy Fleischer, who edits this column, forwarded the inquiry to me, and I e-mailed this reply:

Science Editor seeks only first rights; authors retain copyright. Thus, as soon as articles appear in *Science Editor*, authors are free to disseminate them as they see fit. Thus, authors can post their articles on their own Web sites, place them in institutional archives, put them in plos.org, republish them in other periodicals, include them in books, distribute copies, or whatever. We ask only that *Science Editor* be identified as the original site of publication.

After 2 years, articles published in *Science Editor* become openly accessible on the CSE Web site. Meanwhile, interested people who don't receive *Science Editor* (and who can't access it online all along as CSE members) can obtain articles by various means, including the following: Of course, they can contact the authors. They can contact CSE headquarters or me; I then provide single copies of articles. (People asking to obtain or make multiple copies of articles are directed to the author.) Also, back issues can be purchased from CSE headquarters. Sometimes I also have extra copies that I can supply.

In addition, I noted that because Unbound is intended only to explore open access, not necessarily to advocate immediate unrestricted access, I found no contradiction with running the column under the usual *Science Editor* operating procedures.

After thanking me, Betsy added: "In fact, your description almost sounds like a mini article to run in Unbound. Would you be willing to write an official summary of *Science Editor's* current open-access policy in the column?"

As a fellow editor, I knew the ploy well—say something of interest, and an attentive editor will ask for an article—and so I could hardly decline. Hence, this column. Although not an official statement, it summarizes *Science Editor's* current approach.

Like many periodicals of nonprofit organizations, *Science Editor* wants both to have its articles widely available and to retain as a membership benefit immediate access to entire issues. Thus, the main features of our approach are those outlined in the e-mail preceding message.

When an issue of *Science Editor* appears, the table of contents is posted on our Web site (www.CouncilScienceEditors.org/publications/cbeviews.cfm). Members can then access the full text of the issue online in addition to receiving their printed copies. Nonmembers who identify titles of interest can obtain individual articles as described above. Authors are welcome to post their articles in open access venues and otherwise disseminate them.

When nonmembers request *Science Editor* articles from me, I normally provide them the same day. Meanwhile, I commonly chat with the requesters, obtaining information that can aid me as editor. Articles that we think may especially assist science editors can become open-access on our Web site without the 2-year lag.

This approach lets anyone obtain *Science Editor* articles of interest but retains full online access as a membership benefit. Some nonmembers may claim that they lack access to desired articles in *Science Editor*—as, surprisingly, did an annual-meeting speaker who had both my e-mail address and considerable experience in tracking down information. All it requires in our case, as in that of many publications over the years, is a little initiative.

Meanwhile, like many publications, we continue to evaluate our approaches to access. The topic of access is evolving (hence the decision to include the department Unbound), and we welcome thoughts that may aid in our deliberations. But beware, I'm an editor, and so you may be recruited to write.

BARBARA GASTEL (b-gastel@tamu.edu) is editor of *Science Editor*.