Editorial Transitions

Katherine Egan Bennett
Managing Editor, Practical Radiation Oncology,
International Journal of Radiation Oncology, Biology, Physics,
and Advances in Radiation Oncology
Give Yourself Time

• Takes about 24 months to transition including advertising, selecting editor; create timeline but be flexible
• Get buy in from outgoing editor, staff
• Work with society for support of plans
• Discuss changes with publisher/production staff
• Once selected, need about six months
Staffing Concerns

- Big issue – staffing: will new staff be at HQ or at editor’s office? Ideally decide before recruitment

- Old model – staff at editor’s office, meant staff turned over when editor did

- New model – staff at HQ, improves consistency, society communication, allows to use staff for other projects, not all editors sold, be flexible
Helping Editor Share Workload

• Plan meeting with new and outgoing editors; discuss transition; ongoing issues; handing over any hard files
• Talk to outgoing section editors, who is staying?
• Name new section editors; builds redundancy in case of conflicts, develops successors
• Create term limits to reduce drama
Cohesive Editorial Board

• Convene conference call with new editorial board, share new vision, get ideas on article types
• Redefine scope – new editor may have different priorities
• Work out handling conflicts of interest, i.e., just institution? Subject matter? Mentor/Mentee?
• Be transparent - publish how COI will be handled

“All in favor of purchasing a boardroom table...”
Revise Article Types, Instructions

• Take a look at article types – are some able to be sunset, add new ones? i.e., book reviews
• Revise article instructions to reflect changes
• Set dates for when changes will take place and warn authors, especially regarding revisions
• Talk about handling revisions that come in after transition date
Work With Staff

• Articulate new vision once formed, introduce new editor
• Ideally have in-person meeting to discuss plans
• Plan for how staff will handle the overlap, i.e., which editor will handle new papers, revisions and for how long
Facilitate Editor Peer Group

• Many editors do job on the side; may not have a peer group to bounce ideas, problems
• Reach out to staff/editors of related journals to make connections
• Arrange conference calls to discuss lessons learned
Share New Vision

• Start talking about new vision, such as in society news, press releases, social media
• Create a buzz about the changes; get people talking about journal
• Some authors may want to get paper reviewed under old rules; allow them time to do so

“I’m glad they set that 140-character limit...”
Manage Expectations

• Some editors will want to change everything right away, i.e., design, author instructions
• Some editorial staff will resent changes
• Set tone of society interaction
• Have him/her focus on big picture first
• Schedule intervals to discuss what’s working, what’s not
Prepare for Unexpected

• You can’t plan for everything; build in flexibility

• Strange things will happen, i.e., retracting 15-year-old paper

• Some changes won’t work; be prepared to go backwards sometimes
Thank you!

Katherine Egan Bennett
American Society for Radiation Oncology (ASTRO)
251 18th St. South, 8th Floor
Arlington, VA  22202
(703) 286-1590
www.redjournal.org
www.practicalradonc.org
www.advancesradonc.org
www.astro.org